The Historic District Survives
By Ana Steffen, Cultural Resources Coordinator

Not once, but twice during the Thompson Ridge Fire I sat beside Highway 4 and watched helplessly as fire swept down Redondo toward the old wooden structures and the ancient trees near the Baca Ranch Headquarters Historic District. I admit I shed more than a tear or two because I was certain the Historic District was lost. But in both instances the firefighters tasked with structure protection fought back the blaze and saved the old cabins. (To read more: VCT Photographer Remembers Fallen Firefighters on page 11.) The cabins were safe from fire but now we were faced with the task of saving them from the monsoon floods that would soon follow.

The HQ area sits atop an alluvial fan formed during several thousand years of water draining off mountain slopes, flowing through the narrow valley cut by La Jara Creek and then spreading out to form a gently sloping arc of sediment and rock debris. We knew that heavy summer rains would make this a high risk location for the cascading water, tumbling rocks, and floating trees that we saw at Cerro del Medio following the Las Conchas Fire. The Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) assessment provided a key set of recommendations to address this risk. The focus was on the structures: how to provide “point protection” to the significant historic cabins in time

(continued on page 3)
The Board of Trustees is composed of seven members appointed by the President of the United States and two who serve ex officio (Superintendent of Bandelier and Supervisor of Santa Fe National Forest). The appointed Trustees generally serve four-year terms and, except for the Chair, receive no compensation for their work.

The Valles Caldera Trust oversees the Valles Caldera National Preserve, formerly the privately owned “Baca Ranch.” The 89,000 acre property is located in the Jemez Mountains in northern New Mexico. It was purchased by the federal government in 2000 under the Valles Caldera Preservation Act. The property is known for its huge meadows, abundant wildlife, meandering streams, and remarkable scenery. The mission of the Trust is to create a successful model of public land management that protects and preserves the unique values of the Preserve. Toward that end, the Trust will operate the Preserve as a working ranch; endeavor to become financially self-sustaining; meet the varied needs of visitors; strive to use and steward the multiple resources of the Preserve; and work collaboratively with our neighbors.

If you would like a copy of the Comprehensive Management Framework, the Annual Report to Congress, the State of the Preserve, or notices regarding events, public Board meetings, or planning of the Valles Caldera National Preserve, contact:

The Valles Caldera Trust
PO. Box 359, Jemez Springs, NM 87025
505-661-3333 (phone); 505-661-0400 (fax)

From the Chairman
By Kent Salazar, Valles Caldera Trust

Familiar faces return to the Valles Caldera Board of Trustees. Dr. Melissa Savage and Dr. C. Kenneth Smith were welcomed back to the Valles Caldera Trust Board of Trustees during the September meeting in Pojoaque. President Barack Obama reappointed them to the board nine months after their previous terms expired in January of 2013.

By statute each Trustee position is filled with a specific expertise needed to guide the management of the Preserve. Dr. C. Kenneth Smith resumes his position on the board as the Trustee with expertise in sustainable forest management. Dr. Smith is a Professor of Forestry and Geology and University Forester at the University of the South in Tennessee. Previously, he served as Director of New Mexico’s Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute at New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas, from 2007 to 2009. He was first appointed to the Board 2010.

“I look forward to reconnecting with Dennis Trujillo, the staff at the Preserve, my fellow Trustees, and all the stakeholder groups that pay close attention to the activities in the Preserve,” said Smith. “I am honored to be reappointed as a Trustee, and I hope that we can all work together to keep the Preserve functioning smoothly while its long-term fate is decided.”

Dr. Savage will resume her post as the required Trustee with expertise in the natural and cultural history of the area. She is the director of the Four Corners Institute, a non-profit organization that provides scientific advice to communities restoring their natural environments. She was first appointed to serve on the Valles Caldera Trust Board in 2010.

“It is great to have them back on the Board. Their professional expertise combined with their knowledge of the challenges facing the Valles Caldera Trust will help us make the decisions necessary to maintain this beautiful landscape.”
to stave off potential damage and be sufficiently robust to withstand future monsoons. We implemented the BAER Team recommendations that included removal of debris and building of sandbag walls, log barriers, and concrete barriers. Together, these measures enhance their individual strengths.

Sandbags were arranged in low walls three feet tall and five feet wide at the base the building foundations. The sandbag walls divert some water but their primary function is to absorb the force of floods flowing across the surface. A foot tall wall of water wields a mighty punch when you consider that a cubic foot of water weighs more than 60 lbs. That could be enough to knock a historic cabin off its fragile rock or log foundation.

Log barriers were created with numerous large trees that were damaged from the fire. A large skidder was used to strategically move 60 trees, each 20 feet long or more, into secure positions were they could catch floating debris like branches, rocks, and boulders. The trees form a loosely interlocking web across the landscape behind the cabins. Water will flow under the web while it catches debris and keeps it from damaging the sandbag walls down slope.

Manual debris removal eliminated several tons of wood chunks scattered behind the cabins. The wood debris was moved elsewhere to minimize the damage if swept up in water flows, and logs suitable for firewood were piled for later use.

Concrete barriers were placed at carefully selected locations to divert heavy flows of water. Concrete “Jersey” barriers were positioned after flows began, so we could see where they might do the most good.

The BAER-recommendations were put to the test by the heavy September monsoon rains. La Jara Creek jumped its banks carrying sediment, rock, and debris. Overland flows cascaded across the area from the Bond Cabin to the Cowboy/Greer Cabin. The driveway beside the Bunkhouse became a new river running a foot deep and 6 feet wide. Thankfully, the fortifications held and not one historic building was damaged! Future monsoons will put our reinforcements to the test again, but for now we are grateful and hopeful that the measures we have taken will protect the Historic District for years to come.

La Ventana en los Valles

(continued from page 1)
**Moonlight Events & Free Days Highlight Winter Recreation**

Snowshoeing, cross country skiing, and sleigh rides highlight a full calendar of activities and events at the Valles Caldera National Preserve this winter. In addition, two free trail access days will be offered.

**Winter Hours**

The Preserve will be open Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. at the Valle Grande Staging Area. The Preserve will be open every day December 20 through January 5, except Christmas Day. The Preserve will be open Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 20th & President’s Day, February 17th. Open every day free of charge are the Valle Grande Trail, Coyote Call Trail, and the surrounding area on the south side of Highway 4.

**Free Days**

Public Appreciation Day, Sunday, December 15th and Winter Trails Day, Sunday, January 12th. Enjoy free skiing and snowshoeing! Carpooling is recommended for these free events because parking is limited. Check in & check out required at the Valle Grande staging area.

**Christmas Trees**

Sales begin after Thanksgiving on Friday, November 29th, and will continue through December 23rd at the Valle Grande Staging Area. You can cut your own tree for the permit cost of $10. A map of the cutting area will be provided with your permit. High clearance vehicles are recommended; chains or 4-wheel drive may also be necessary if snow conditions exist. If you prefer, you can simply purchase a pre-cut Christmas tree at the Visitor’s Center for a fee ranging between $20 and $30.

**Skiing and Snowshoeing**

The season opens December 6th, weather permitting. Fees are $10 for adults, $8 for seniors (62 and older), and free for accompanied children (15 and under). Adult and senior five-day passes are available for $40. Reservations are not required but all must check in and depart from the Valle Grande staging area. A limited number of snowshoes are available for rent at $15 for adults and $10 for youth.

**Special Moonlight Events**

Four Saturday Moonlight Events dot the schedule on December 14; January 18; February 15, and March 15, 5 p.m. – 9 p.m. Enjoy the full moon guiding your self on skis or snowshoes. Permits are $10 for adults and $8 for seniors. Accompanied children 15 years and under are free. Walk in registration welcome with available parking. Visitors should prepare for high elevation, winter mountain weather, and night conditions.

**Sleigh Rides**

Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides will offer visitors an hour long excursion through the winter landscape. Rides are $30 for adults, $24 for seniors and youth, and free for kids five years of age and younger. Reservations are recommended to guarantee a seat but drop-ins will be accommodated if there are seats available.

For details on events and reservations call 1-866-382-5537. Weather or other unforeseen circumstances may force cancellation of activities or closure the Preserve. Please call our hotline (505) 469-6842 for up-to-date information about weather, available activities, closures, and more.
Supporting the
Valles Caldera National Preserve
for Present and Future Generations

News from Los Amigos

Success Stories from the Field

By Barbara Johnson, Los Amigos

It is always a pleasure for me to spend a day in the Preserve. It is especially nice if the goal is to showcase all the great work Los Amigos has done, which Jack Crane and I got to do September 12 when Richard Prather visited from Region 6 Environment Protection Agency (EPA). A guided tour of our work is really necessary because its nature is low impact and therefore, hard to even notice! It is our intent to minimize disturbance of the ground as much as possible so that vegetation grows back quickly and naturally. In the tour, we looked at last year’s work first and then what was finished this summer. You can see where we broke ground two months ago, but it won’t take long for it to look like nothing ever happened.

Richard was impressed with the success of our designs. Thanks are due to all of our partners, contractors, and volunteers (see right). We hope he will visit us again. I just hope it doesn’t rain next time! As most New Mexicans can agree, it’s always a relief to see precipitation. But, since it rains infrequently, I haven’t owned a raincoat in years! Throughout the day, I had a quarter-inch of water in my shoes and pants soaked to my knees! I’m sure some volunteers reading this are chuckling at my complaints. At the July workshop this summer they endured a serious rainstorm that flooded tents and caused several people to sleep in their cars.

(continued on page 10)

THANK YOU!
For helping us this year

Alex Rice
Andy McCraw
Barb Diver
Bill Zeedyk, Zeedyk
Ecological Consulting
Bob Nordstrom
Bob Tilley
Braden Belliveau
Brigette De Saint Phalle
Claire Catlett
Colin Pena
Dale Counce
Damon Stevens, VCNP
Darlene Crane
Diego Cristy
Dolores Barbero
Ed Lucero
Gale Smith
Hamish Thomson
Heather Vonsegger
Jach Cuisine
James Sanders
Jen M. Zawacki, Keystone
Restoration
Ecology (KRE)
Jim Count
Jim Lunn
Johnny Yapa, VCNP
Kristina G. Fisher, Albuequerque
Wildlife

Federation (AWF)
Kristin Van Fleet
Kyle Cochrane
Laurie Marnell
Lee Otteni
Lonnie Strait, VCNP
Maggie Davis
Marilyn Szydłowski
Mark D. Bremer
Michael “Scial” Scialdone, AWF
Michelle Freeman
Nina Wells, NMED
Norma McCallan
Peggy Gauteur, Los Amigos
Phil Carter
Rachel Boothby, Los Amigos
Raphael Cristy
Rich Diver
Robert McKee
Rodney Conant
Sam Beard
Santha Kutarina
Sequoyah S. Rice
Stephen Bokannon
Steve Vrooman, KRE
Tanya Critchfield
Van D. Clothier,
Stream Dynamics
The year of 2013 has been interesting to say the least. In the beginning, we were filled with excitement for the year to come. Our administrative assistant shared our story and recruited new volunteers at public events like the Santa Fe CommUNITY Day and La Montanita Co-Op Earth Day Celebration in Albuquerque. We had a full schedule of summer activities including volunteer work weekends, trail maintenance, geology tour, and old timers barbecue. We were also nearly finished with a large grant proposal with many other fundraising ideas in “the works.” As we near the end of the year, it is good to remember our good intentions rather than our dismay at the hardships that came our way.

Around the time of the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP) review process we were writing our spring newsletter. We were hopeful that the CFRP would award us $340,000 to undergo a four-year thinning project of the forest above the Historic District, but in a strange hand of fate, the Thompson Ridge Fire took care of this area on its own! Near the completion of the newsletter, came two tragedies. Long-time supporter of the Valles Caldera National Preserve Steve Stoddard passed away on May 27, 2013. Los Amigos lost a great friend and director, and the Trust lost one of its original trustees. To express our gratitude for all that he contributed, we donated $1,000 to the Steve Stoddard Scholarship Fund, which he began in 2000 with the stipend money he earned from Valles Caldera Trust board.

Then came the Thompson Ridge Fire, which put all summer events on hold and cancelling several. The spring newsletter was also on the verge of being printed. As our Valles Caldera Trust partners managed the fire, we had to determine if it was a good idea to disseminate time-sensitive information when it was unknown when the Preserve would reopen? It was difficult to make the final decision but we decided it would be best to save our resources for an even better post-fire edition. Now here it is! Its a bit late due to the government shut down, but that’s another story!

May we have more good things to report in 2014. Please come out and join us, in the field or on the Board! Read Peggy’s article on page 7 for more details.

Doug Fraser, Los Amigos de Valles Caldera, Chair
**Seeking Directors**  
*By Peggy Gautier, Los Amigos*

The current Los Amigos Board of Directors is seeking qualified and interested people to serve with us. As the official “friends” group of the Valles Caldera National Preserve, we support the Preserve for present and future generations through outreach, education, restoration, and collaboration.

In recent years, we have been most successful at raising money and implementing ecological restoration projects. To date, we have obtained $981,710 in grant funding that has gone directly to restoration work in the Preserve. If you include the in-kind value that we provide personally and through volunteer workshops it is well over a million dollars!

Our response to cutbacks in Federal and State funding for the environment is that we will continue low-cost restoration techniques as well as explore new ways to support the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Recently we met with John Rufli of Friends of Land Between The Lakes to learn about how his organization has been successful at supporting its public land partner.

Please consider applying for this excellent opportunity to steward the Valles Caldera National Preserve by building the capacity of Los Amigos to provide more services. You may mail or email your resume/qualifications and letter of interest to me:

Peggy Gautier, Vice-Chair, Los Amigos de Valles Caldera  
855 Calle David, Santa Fe, NM 87506  
peggyg@thuntek.net

---

**Los Amigos Membership**

Los Amigos currently has over 200 members. If you are interested in joining, you may visit our website, www.losamigosdevallescaldera.org, or make your check payable to Los Amigos de Valles Caldera and send it to:

Los Amigos de Valles Caldera  
3250 La Paz Lane  
Santa Fe, NM 87507

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Type</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>$35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior (62+)</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Family</td>
<td>$35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Order Your Morton Print to Help Restore the Bond Cabin!**

Los Amigos de Valles Caldera is selling signed and numbered 18” by 22” lithographs of *Peace in the Valle* by Gary Morton (see page 6), for $125, which includes shipping and handling. The proceeds from the sale of the prints will be used for restoration work on the Bond Cabin.

To order, please see the Los Amigos website, www.losamigosdevallescaldera.org, or mail a check with your order to Print, Los Amigos, 3250 La Paz Lane, Santa Fe, NM 87507. Prints will be given free to each new Los Amigos Lifetime or Obsidian Guild member.

**Obsidian Guild**

The Valles Caldera Obsidian Guild recognizes individuals who provide support for the Valles Caldera National Preserve through planned gifts. Membership belongs to those who have made deferred gifts to Los Amigos de Valles Caldera through one or more of the following methods:

» Provision in a will or revocable trust;  
» Retirement plan beneficiary designation; or  
» Life insurance policy beneficiary designation.

Members of the Obsidian Guild share a common bond of generosity and visionary leadership, nourishing the Preserve’s unique assets. For further information, please contact Larry Icerman, licerman@aol.com.
Ever wonder why the “Thompson Ridge Fire” was never actually on Thompson Ridge? Well, when the fire began on May 31, 2013 at approximately 3:15 p.m., a mistake was made reporting the map coordinates of the fire origin. The coordinates placed the fire 1.7 miles NW of the actual location, the Sulphur Springs Subdivision, also known as “Ranchos de La Cueva.” As a result, during the first few hours of the fire, news agencies and others reported that a fire started in the Thompson Ridge Subdivision and evacuations were being conducted. In reality, the fire started as a result of a downed power line on private property within the Sulphur Springs subdivision.

The fire burned 23,900 acres, most of which were on the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Only 38 acres of U.S. Forest Service land and 34 acres of private property were involved. The fire did not burn with the crown-fire intensity and severity of the Las Conchas fire. In fact, much of the forests burned in a way that was beneficial to the forest ecosystem. The excess ground fuels burned but the soil structure remained relatively intact. The acreage subjected to the high severity burn was on steeper slopes, while almost 18,000 acres experienced low severity or unburned conditions. Unfortunately, one of those high severity areas was on the steep slopes of Valles Caldera land above the Sulphur Springs subdivision.

As the fire grew, firefighter reports of wildlife escaping the flames increased. One team scooped up a small bear cub that was separated from his mother. The hungry, thirsty, and frightened young bear weighed less than five pounds and suffered burns to a rear foot and above his left eye. He was taken to Espanola where Dr. Kathleen Ramsay, DVM treated the burns and nursed him back to health.

Before the fire was fully contained, a Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) team was assembled to address potential human life and property emergencies during the aftermath of the fire. The team assessed potential impacts for flooding, soil erosion, hazardous trees, and threats to private and public lands.

The BAER team recommendation for the two high severity burn areas was seeding with a "weed (continued on page 9)
free” local seed mix and mulching with straw. Valles Caldera officials determined seeding or mulching the Redondo Peak could result in the spread of non-native seeds into the Valle Grande. The U.S. Forest Service concluded that mulching was not an option because heavy monsoon rains would wash the mulch away. The solution was to seed almost 400 acres above Sulphur Springs with 26,985 lbs of non-reproductive barley.

Ongoing mitigation of road flooding and erosion hazards was a critical piece of the BAER team actions. The monsoon season rushed in with a vengeance, causing numerous road washouts on Valles Caldera and Forest Road 105 (the road through the Sulphur Springs subdivision). BAER team actions included the installation of drainage features, debris removal, culvert cleaning, and road grading.

The BAER team focused particular attention to the protection of cultural sites and the historic ranch buildings on the Caldera. The Granite Mountain Hotshots from Prescott, AZ. fought hard to save the structures from the Thompson Ridge Fire the night of June 4th. All but one of those brave firefighters later lost their lives in the Yarnell Hill Fire 26 days later in Arizona. (To read more: VCT Photographer Remembers Fallen Firefighters on page 11.)

Since the buildings are in the middle of a flood plain, measures were taken to divert the floodwaters and reduce the battering ram-force of the debris they carry. The heavy lifting included placement of almost 9,000 sandbags around buildings, and installation of 400 feet of concrete barriers and 60 felled trees upslope of the cabins to redirect floodwaters and check debris flow.

Overall, the BAER project was a huge success thanks to the team led by BAER Implementation Incident Commander John Barksdale. He was assisted by Jennifer Wellington and personnel from the U.S. Forest Service, Santa Fe County, and Las Vegas, New Mexico. They were joined by the Valles Caldera staff of Scott Compton, Ana Steffen, Tim Haarmann, Marie Rodriguez, Johnny Yepa, Lonnie Strain, and Damon Stephens. Because of their Herculean effort, the job of protecting the Preserve was accomplished in little more than 30 days.
For those who wished they could have attended the tour with the EPA, here is a table of our accomplishments. Steve Vrooman of Keystone Ecology conducted baseline monitoring in 2011 for tasks specific to the 319 Grant, which provided funding. He conducted extensive post-implementation monitoring in October 2012 and returned in March 2013 to film the Spring runoff. We have had amazing results from all of our treatments, even though they have been seriously flooded by sediment from the Las Conchas Fire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Impairment</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artesian Well Headcuts</td>
<td>Headcuts, trail drainage</td>
<td>Sediment</td>
<td>Headcuts repaired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tres Arroyos</td>
<td>Hand built plugs, 5 Plug and Pond structures</td>
<td>Sediment</td>
<td>Sediment captured in ponds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tres Arroyos</td>
<td></td>
<td>Temperature</td>
<td>Water held in ponds 2 months longer than in 2012 (through May and June 2013), entering San Antonio Creek for 2 extra months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenceline Trail</td>
<td>5 trail drains (rolling dips)</td>
<td>Sediment</td>
<td>Several hundred yards of sediment in gully once flowed into creek, now no erosion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Antonio Bank Treatments</td>
<td>Point bar sod treatment, bench sod treatments</td>
<td>Sediment</td>
<td>.5 miles of San Antonio Creek in the most eroded reach repaired and further bank erosion prevented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Antonio Bank Treatments</td>
<td></td>
<td>Temperature</td>
<td>All treatments narrowed the channel at over-wide meander bends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Rosa Tributary Wetland Erosion Treatments</td>
<td>Machine: Zuni Bowl and Filter dam treatments. Hand-built, log structures in gully.</td>
<td>Sediment</td>
<td>At least 3,100 tons of sediment captured from going into San Antonio Creek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>About 50 Zuni bowls and one rock dams in 1 mile of Santa Rosa Creek</td>
<td>Temperature</td>
<td>Santa Rosa Creek is now perennial in sections, with permanent pools, contributing water to San Antonio Creek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina’s Spring Plug and Pond</td>
<td>Five machine-built plug and pond structures</td>
<td>Temperature</td>
<td>Increase in wetland area (at least 2.75 acres), flow into late spring (end of May)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sediment</td>
<td>Plug and Pond structures, as well as wetland area capture almost all sediment from tributary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabin Wetland (See pictures below)</td>
<td>Three hand-built plug and ponds, increase of 1,200 feet of spring-fed channel</td>
<td>Temperature</td>
<td>Increase in wetland area of at least 1.7 acres in the last year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Cabin Wetland, Project manager Barbara Johnson observes as sod is packed to form a channel plug that reroutes the water into the new channel. The new channel fills within hours, but the new channel does not extend to the river so water begins saturate the subsurface.
Like many of you, I was in complete shock after hearing reports of 19 fatalities on a fire in Arizona June 30th. After a little investigating, I realized the fire was near Prescott, home base of the Granite Mountain Hotshots, and that they were assigned to the fire. My heart sank. A few hours later, news reports would confirm what I had feared; all but one member of the elite hotshot crew had perished in the fire.

I had the distinct honor of working alongside the Granite Mountain Hotshots on the Thompson Ridge Fire in early June. I was hired by the Valles Caldera to photograph firefighting efforts to save the historic cabins and old growth trees at the ranch headquarters, and I was partnered with one of their squad bosses for the night. Serving as my unofficial escort, he kept watch over me throughout the operation, ensuring my safety and using every opportunity to teach me about fire.

On one occasion, the squad boss stopped me to attach a glow stick to my hard hat so I would not get run over while taking photos in the road. Another time he reminded me of the hazards of working around snags and being aware of one’s surroundings. When dawn broke later that morning and hazard trees were being removed, he provided me a narrated play-by-play of how to properly fell a tree. Although having “media” on the fireline is sometimes seen as a distraction, the squad boss made me feel completely accepted and part of the crew that night, going out of his way to keep me safe and informed.

Although I spent only the one evening with the crew, I was extremely impressed by their professionalism and knowledge. Most of the crews working the fire that night were from Arizona, and there was a close camaraderie among them. Under intense pressure from a rapidly expanding fire, the division of about 80 firefighters executed the burnout operation with extreme precision. Communication was phenomenal; tactics were on target; and execution was flawless. Protecting wooden structures from a firestorm of embers is no small task, and yet not even a single fence post was singed that night, much less a cabin. They were true professionals in every sense of the word, and I was honored to have been witness to such a carefully orchestrated defense.

I think former hotshot Jesse Sievers summed it up best in a letter to the editor during the Las Conchas fire of 2011. He wrote, “One of the last, true, dirty, gritty, gun-slinging jobs in the United States is that of a wildland firefighter. These firefighters slip into the community as a shadow, relatively unnoticed and unconcerned with the spotlight eyes of the media. These wildland firefighters are the crews that do the backbreaking line construction for 16 hours at a time, grab a bite to eat, and start again in another eight hours until the fire is out. These are the folks that slip in as a shadow and leave without anyone knowing their names (Los Alamos Monitor, July 5, 2011).”

May we never forget their names or take for granted the ultimate sacrifice made by these brave and selfless men. Rest in peace those who were lost, and comfort for the surviving crewmember Brendan McDonough.

VCT Photographer Remembers Fallen Firefighters

By Kristen Honig

The Historic District cabins were periodically hosed down with water to protect them from the frightfully close fire. (Photo: Kristen Honig)
Valles Caldera Trust Photographer Remembers Fallen Firefighters

Kristen Honig was the Valles Caldera photographer during the Thompson Ridge Fire. The night of June 4th the fire threatened the History Grove and Historic District. The Granite Mountain Hotshots from Prescott, Arizona battled the fire that night and Kristen photographed the fight. **On page 11**, read her personal account of the night and tribute to the team that had all but one of its twenty members perish in the Yarnell Hill fire less than a month later.

[Above] Surrounding flames, visible in the windows of the historic cabin, illustrate the challenge at hand for firefighters. [Top Right] Three members of the Granite Mountain Hotshots discuss the fire behavior of a night burnout operation. [Bottom Right] Firefighters keep their “eyes to the green” looking for fires that might ignite outside the fireline by flying embers. (Photos: Kristen Honig)