

Ca Ventana en los Valles

*News of the Valles Caldera National Preserve
from the Valles Caldera Trust*

Frank Bond Visits Boyhood Home for First Time in 30 Years

“That’s where I was thrown from a horse for the first time,” mused Frank Bond during a recent visit to the ranch that was his boyhood home during the New Mexico summers of the 1940’s, 50’s and 60’s. The Valles Caldera was known as Baca Location # 1 during the days when the Bond family ran cattle and sheep. Purchased by Frank’s grandfather in 1918, the property remained a part of the Bond ranching empire until it was sold in 1962. The property changed hands



Dr. Bob Parmenter, Dennis Trujillo, Frank Bond, and Gary Bratcher at the oldest cabin in the historic district. (Photo courtesy of Rourke McDermott.)

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; strive 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.

once again in 2000 when the U.S. Government bought it and created the Valles Caldera Trust (VCT) to manage what is the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP).

VCT Executive Director, Gary Bratcher, hosted the visit with help from Preserve General Manager Dennis Trujillo and Dr. Bob Parmenter, the VCT Science and Education Director. Bond last visited his boyhood haunt more than 30 years ago.

“I was pleased to see that much of what I remembered remains the same,” he said. And his memories of living life as a cowboy on the Valles Caldera are many.

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The Valles Caldera Trust

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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.

If you would like to receive 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 for management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve, contact
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Bond Visit

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"I lived the historical life of a cowboy. The daily routine included riding horseback and working exactly the same way as cowboys of a hundred years before. And I liked it."

Of course, there was the occasional surprise during the work day. Once, while mending fences with a crew from Cochiti Pueblo, Bond and his team were unceremoniously thrown to the ground by Mother Nature.

"A storm was a couple of miles off in the distance, but the skies were sunny and bright where we were repairing the break in the fence," he recalled. "All of a sudden the wire came alive, and we were knocked unconscious to the ground. I don't know how long we were out cold, but when we 'came to' we had a better appreciation of lightning strikes on fence lines."

When asked to discuss his fondest memory of summering on the Valles Caldera, Bond searches and smiles. Obviously there are many, and they all rise to the level of "favorite." Collectively, they create the memory.

"The experience was it," he says. "The opportunity to live a very unusual life as it was traditionally lived is the greatest memory of all."

And what about that first tumble off a horse? Did he climb back into the saddle and ride off into the sunset?

"I was six years old and I broke a collar bone, a few ribs, and had a concussion," he laughs. "I took a long, bumpy ride on a dirt road to St. Joseph's hospital in Albuquerque."

More visits to the Preserve are in the Bond future and more reminiscences are planned to be penned for *La Ventana en Los Valles* newsletter. Stay tuned.

Dr. Ray Loretto Elected Chairman Valles Caldera Board Welcomes New Trustees

Dr. Melissa Savage and Dr. C. Kenneth Smith are the newest appointees to the Valles Caldera Board of Trustees. They are the first Trustees appointed by President Barack Obama and fill positions left vacant since January of 2009. By statute each trustee position is filled with a specific expertise needed to guide the management of the Preserve. Their appointments leave one unfilled position on the nine member board.

Dr. Savage replaces former Board Chairman, Bill Kelleher, as the Trustee with expertise in the natural and cultural history of the area. She is the director of the Four Corners Institute, a nonprofit organization that provides scientific advice to communities restoring their natural environments.

“The Valles Caldera Preserve is a very special place, with its own set of challenges and opportunities,” said Dr. Savage. “The Preserve has initiated an excellent program to restore resilience and integrity to its forest and meadow ecosystems.”

Dr. Savage is also a forest geographer with a specialty in fire ecology and the southwestern conifer ecosystems. She is an Emerita Professor of Geography at UCLA and currently an adjunct professor at the University of New Mexico. She has an M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of Colorado.

Dr. C. Kenneth Smith replaces James Gosz as the trustee with expertise in sustainable forest management. He is a professor of Forestry and Geology at the University of the South in Tennessee. No stranger to New Mexico, Dr. Smith is a former director of New Mexico's Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute at New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas.

“I will draw on my experience with New Mexico forest and watershed restoration to provide input into



the multiple restoration projects facing the Preserve,” said Dr. Smith. “Fortunately, there is a staff of highly qualified land management professionals who I am confident can get the job done.”

Dr. Smith remains active in regional water issues and serves on the board of the Sewanee Utility District. He also spent three years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Guinea, West Africa, conducting forest research and management projects. Dr. Smith received his Ph.D. and M.S. from the University of Florida, and his B.S. from Colorado State University.

Also joining the board is Erin Connelly, who fills the void created when Santa Fe National Forest Supervisor Dan Jiron was transferred to another post in California. As Interim SFNF Supervisor, Connelly will serve on the board until a permanent replacement for Jiron is named.

Drs. Savage and Smith attended their first Board of Trustees meeting in September when the Board elected Dr. Raymond Loretto chairman. He will take over for Stephen Henry whose term expires on January 16, 2011, which is the same day trustee Ed Tinsley's term ends.

Dr. Loretto is the new Chairman of the Board of Trustees. He will take over for Stephen Henry whose term expires on January 16, 2011, which is the same day trustee Ed Tinsley's term ends.



[Above] Dr. Ray Loretto, new Chairman of the Board of Trustees. [Far Left] Dr. Melissa Savage. [Left] Dr. C. Kent Smith. (Photos courtesy of Rourke McDermott.)

A Fond Farewell from Chairman Steve Henry

Looking back over the last two years, I am amazed at how much the Board of Trustees and the Preserve staff accomplished both organizationally and on the Caldera itself.

- The multiple use-sustained yield forage Environmental Assessment was completed and a decision made on proceeding with a livestock program that has included an outstanding research program in cooperation with New Mexico State University on high altitude congestive heart failure in beef cattle.

- A business model used to demonstrate measures necessary to become financially self-sustaining was completed and presented to the public and Congressional representatives. This document was instrumental in making the public and federal staff aware of the resources that would be needed to achieve the legislative mandate of financial self-sufficiency.

- We have a new and attractive building to greet visitors on the Preserve.

- Six years of financial audits have been completed with the Trust receiving unqualified audits for the last two fiscal years.

- Preserve staff has greatly expanded the recreation programs and, together with increased advertising and outreach efforts, has resulted in an increase in visitor use from 700 visitors in 2002 to more than 24,000 in 2010.

- The Trust rented, updated, equipped, and began using a new Science and Education Center in Jemez Springs. The Center has hosted numerous groups and just recently was highlighted in a positive article in the *Albuquerque Journal*.

- The main route on the Preserve was upgraded for several additional miles to facilitate travel.

- Revenue is up due to increased visitation, use of the new Science and Education Center, and changes made for overnight use of the Lodge and Bunkhouse.

- The human access and use Environmental Impact Statement is well on its way to completion.

- Staff submitted a nationally competitive proposal for funds to perform a ten-year forest restoration program on the Preserve, and it was granted (some on the review team indicated the Trust proposal was the best one received!).

- The Trust continues to receive rave reviews from users concerning the condition of the Preserve,

the professionalism demonstrated by staff, and the quality of visitors' experiences.

Let me be clear that I attribute all this progress primarily to the hard work and dedication of Executive Director Gary Bratcher and the entire staff at

the Trust, but also to the bold direction and guidance provided by all the individuals of the Board.

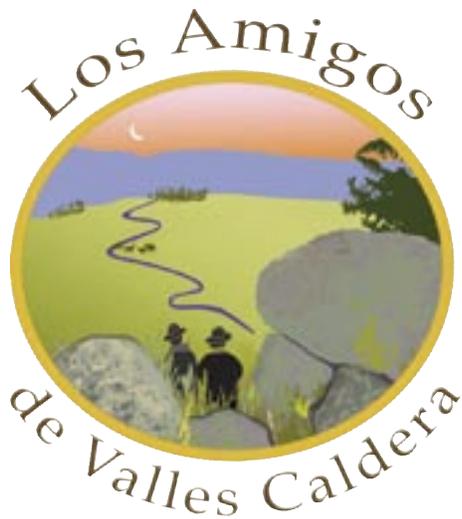
I close this message by highlighting what I believe to be the two most important pressing issues for the Trust, that of securing the Science and Education Center for the long-term, and the need for significantly increased involvement of the U.S. Forest Service. At present, the Center is leased on a year-by-year basis, with no guarantee that it will be available for our use beginning sometime early next year. It could go up for sale at any time. Our Congressional delegation has been advised of this situation and needs to be continually reminded of its importance.

Lastly, provided that the Preserve is not transferred to the National Park Service in the near future, I believe it is of utmost importance that the administration of the U.S. Forest Service in Albuquerque and on Capitol Hill becomes much more involved in the big general issues of the Preserve. After all, the Preserve is a unit of the Forest Service under the law and at some point in the future may become its property to manage. The Forest Service needs to become more active in advocating for and collaborating with the Preserve concerning the annual budget, its capital improvement needs, its development, and its deferred maintenance needs.

At our September meeting, Dr. Ray Loretto was elected chairman beginning October 1. My time as chair is ended and my term on the Board will expire in January 2011. Good luck to you, Ray, and to the Board, and I know you will do well.

Thanks, and I really enjoyed it!!





News from *Cos Amigos*

Supporting the Valles Caldera
National Preserve
for Present and Future Generations

Busy Year for *Cos Amigos*!

by Jack Crane

This year has been a busy one for Los Amigos de Valles Caldera. Along with providing volunteers for daily and special events on the Preserve, we were involved in two major activities—trail maintenance, and the Alamo Canyon wetlands restoration.

Trail Maintenance

During six days in the spring and early summer, Los Amigos sponsored a group of 16 members and friends, varying between six and 12 people daily, to identify, fell, and clear hazard trees and other debris from Preserve trails. Eight of the workers represented volunteer organizations in the Albuquerque area (New Mexico Cross Country Ski Club and Friends of the Sandia Mountains). Sam Beard (Los Amigos) made contact with them and coordinated their activities. They had four certified chainsaw operators with hazard tree identification training and experience. Los Amigos volunteers were mostly local Los Alamos or Jemez Springs members, but two were from Santa Fe. The Preserve provided quarters for some of the volunteers for two nights in the upper A-Frame in the Headquarters area. Meals and bedding were furnished by the volunteers.

We met at the Valle Grande Staging Area before 9

a.m. on May 8, 2010 for coffee and donuts. Kim

DeVall, Preserve Recreation Specialist, outlined our duties and gave a safety briefing. Sam Beard discussed hazard tree evaluation methods and other safety items before we headed out for a full day's work in the woods.

The group worked in one to four teams over various days. We worked on the South Mountain, Cerro Abrigo, Cerro Seco, and Coyote Call trails. Those working

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[Top left] The crew at Alamo Canyon, learning how to make a Zuni bowl rock structure. [Left] Success! (All photos are courtesy of the author.) [Above] Photos from Steve Vrooman of Keystone Restoration Ecology as part of his monitoring of this project.

Busy Year for Los Amigos!

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the South Mountain Trail had to hike in up to 1½ hours carrying chain saws and other gear. Even at that, they felled 83 hazard trees and cleared over 2.5 miles of trail.

Traveling in 4x4's, teams felled 76 hazard trees and cleared the 6.2 miles of Cerro Abrigo Trail and 26 hazard trees and 4.9 miles of Cerro Seco Trail. Other than hiking with a chainsaw, work was minor on the Coyote Call Trail.

In sum, the volunteers felled 185 hazard trees using their own equipment, cleared over 15½ miles of trail, expended many people-hours, and drove several hundred total miles from their homes in their own vehicles at their own expense to be there. They are to be commended.

All the volunteers worked hard and enjoyed one another, the wildlife, and the beautiful views. There are more hazard trees to be felled, especially on South Mountain, so Los Amigos hopes to be back next year.

Alamo Canyon

To complete work on our wetlands grant, on August 20, 21, and 22, Los Amigos volunteers joined the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation and others to build a large number of rock structures to control and disperse soil erosion alongside the road that runs through Alamo Canyon.

Priority for the grant this year was to complete rock structures. We were disappointed that we didn't get to Alamo Bog to continue building fence enclosures to protect the rare Bog Birch. However, Jack Crane did lead a crew to deliver materials to the enclosure sites while Sam Beard and Dan Benton, Los Amigos certified sawyers, cut fence corner material on site. We will have to wait until next year to slog around in the bog again!

Our contractor, Craig Sponholtz of Dryland Solutions, Inc., had already constructed many "rolling dips" to control road surface water runoff, and had built rock structures to mitigate erosion from the dips. He had also constructed an impressive number of rock structures to disperse water and sediment on one large geothermal well pad to convert it to a wetlands area.

Craig also placed piles of rock at the various sites to aid in our volunteer project. After a hands on, working demonstration by wetlands restoration expert



and designer Steve Vrooman of Keystone Restoration Ecology, Gene Tatum, AWF Project Leader, divided the 38 participants into teams. The group went to work on

Zuni Bowls (nothing to do with pottery), one rock dams (certainly not one rock), and contour morains (more like a many rock fan). AWF volunteers have had lots of experience building these structures from past projects, and there were a variety of site conditions to show their skills on here and they did. Many of these are truly "works of art" in rock. The Los Amigos volunteers joined right in. Dale Counce did excellent work with the rock, while Jim Counce kept her supplied by wheelbarrow.

Additional Site

Since we had a certified sawyer, the group took on an additional site. Guided by Steve, 6' to 8' logs were placed to line the bottom of a deep arroyo. Peggy Gautier and Joe Thompson were leaders in covering them with tons of soil. Dan Benton cut and limbed dead trees and downed logs into manageable lengths, while his able assistants Jim Loner, Doug Thiesen, and Matt Gagnon carried them to the arroyo. It is planned that the contraption will collect sediment and raise the channel level. Rock structures were placed in several headcuts to further control erosion.

As in the past, the Preserve allowed our volunteers to camp overnight at the mouth of the canyon within walking distance of our project sites. The entire group enjoyed a burrito breakfast on Saturday morning, cooked by AWF's Michael Scialdone, aided by volunteers; he also cooked burgers for the potluck dinner that evening. Some Los Amigos members camped out for one or two nights with the AWF volunteers. Everyone enjoyed the conversation around the campfire in the very cool evenings. The group voted to come back next year to build the two enclosures, maintain rock structures, and use the remaining minor rock piles for new work as needed. It is a rare event that we would like to do again next year; perhaps more members will join us, as the work is interesting and the camaraderie is exceptional.

2010 Catch-a-Dream Hunt

by T.K.Thompson

The Valles Caldera Trust recently helped a personable young man accomplish a memorable event from his "bucket list." Jordan Martin, age 15, from North Augusta, South Carolina, had an all expenses paid elk hunt on the Preserve on September 17, 18, and 19, 2010. His hunt was a collaboration of the Catch-A-Dream Foundation, Valles Caldera Trust, and the State of New Mexico.

Catch-A-Dream (www.catchadream.org) grants once-in-a-lifetime outdoor experiences to children 18 years old or younger who have a life-threatening illness. Catch-A-Dream's singular purpose is to provide consumptive use outdoor experiences to fill the "gap" created when the Make-A-Wish Foundation established a national policy that precludes granting a child a wish that involves hunting or use of "...firearms, hunting bows, or other hunting or sport-shooting equipment." Hunting and fishing are used as tools to expose these kids to the wonders of outdoor experiences, and to instill in them a hope for the future that differs from the bleak and sterile world of medical facilities, treatments, and hospital gowns.

Jordan was accompanied by his mom, Deanna Robert, and his granddad, Bobby Hollowell. The hunt party included Walt Taylor, the local Catch-A-Dream Host, and Dennis Trujillo, Mick Trujillo, and Johnny Yepa of the Preserve staff.



Jordan at the Baca Lodge on the morning after the hunt, surrounded by his mom, Deanna Robert, Walt Taylor of Catch-A-Dream, and his grandfather Bobby Hollowell. (Photo courtesy of the author.)

The Catch-A-Dream foundation furnished transportation for Jordan's party, a full set of camo clothing, food, cooks, taxidermy services, meat processing, and transport back to Jordan's

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New Price!

Order Your Morton Print to Help Restore the Bond Cabin!

Los Amigos de Valles Caldera is selling 350 signed and numbered 18" by 22" lithographs of *Peace in the Valle* by Gary Morton (see page 8). Each is \$125, which includes shipping and handling. The proceeds from the sale of the prints will be used for restoration work on the Bond Cabin, such as pouring a new foundation, eliminating the drainage problem, etc. (All work must be approved by the Trust and be compatible with State Historic Preservation Office requirements.)

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.

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Doug working in front of the Valle Grande. (Photo courtesy of Kathy Fraser.)

From the Chair, Doug Fraser

First, let me hope that all of you had great holidays. It was a great year at the Preserve.

Secondly, I want to thank outgoing Board Chairman Stephen Henry. It was great working with you, Steve (and your lovely wife!), and I agree with you that the securing of a long-term lease for the Science and Education Center is essential (see page 4). We look forward to working with the new Board chair, Dr. Ray Loretto, and the new Trustees, Drs. Savage and Smith.

Finally, we will need a great many 2011 summer volunteers. We will be doing intensive work on our San Antonio project (through our two grants from the EPA and the New Mexico Environment Department). Please call Jack Crane (575-824-3648) or Barbara Johnson (505-474-6689) and sign up! WE NEED YOU!

We are planning our first work weekend in May at the San Antonio Cabin, on the 20th, 21st, and 22nd. The Trust is allowing us to camp out at the cabin site, and we will spend a couple of days moving sod. By transplanting sod from one area to another, we will plug a small animal-made ditch that is draining the wetlands and redirect this flow to a low-lying area on the left terrace of the creek. This will raise the water table of the wetland, and redirect the flowing exiting the wetland to a natural swale, which will become another wetland. This volunteer project was postponed from last year.

There will be other work opportunities as well, on the beautiful Preserve, most of them including camping out for the weekend (if you so desire). We hope you will join us!



*Peace in the Valle
by Gary Morton*

Winter Recreation Opportunities



Winter activities on the Valles Caldera National Preserve will begin on December 18, 2010, weather permitting, and if the snow stays, will end on March 27, 2011. The Preserve will be open daily during the holiday season of December 18th thru January 2nd (closed on December 24 & 25) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.. After January 2nd, the Preserve will be open only on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

In addition, the Coyote Call Trail and surrounding area on the south side of State Highway 4 are open for skiing and snowshoeing, free of charge, everyday during daylight hours.

Day use skiing and snowshoeing permits are available as snow and weather allow. Cost is \$10 per adult, \$8 per senior (62 years and older), \$5 per youth (6-15 years), and free for kids 5 years and younger. Five-day passes are available for \$40 each. No pets are allowed on the Preserve, only working assistance animals. No advance reservations are required. You must check in and depart from the Valle Grande staging area.

Two free days will be offered this season: Public Appreciation Day, December 20th, and Winter Trails Day, January 8th! Free skiing and snowshoeing will be offered from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Check in and check out at the Valle Grande staging area are required to take advantage of this opportunity.

On December 31st, start a new tradition by attending our 2nd annual Fire & Ice New Year's Eve Celebration from 6 p.m.-1 a.m. There will be

fireworks, hot cider, refreshments, and more. Fees are \$25 per adult, \$20 per senior (62+ years), \$15 per youth (6-15 years) and free for kids 5 years and younger. This event does not fall on a full moon so participants should bring headlamps.

Special moonlight events will be offered if snow conditions permit. The January 15th and February 19th moonlight events run from 6 p.m.-10 p.m. and cost \$15 per adult, \$12 per senior (62+ years), \$10 per youth (6-15 years) and free for kids 5 years and younger. Visitors should come prepared for high elevation, winter mountain weather, and night conditions.

Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides offer visitors an hour-long ride through the winter landscape. From aboard, you will experience the elements, the solitude of winter, and possibly the wildlife of the Preserve. A guide will share the interesting history and lore of the old Baca Ranch, offering you insight into its past and its future. Ride costs are \$30 per adult, \$24 per senior (62+ years), \$15 per youth (6-15 years), and free for kids 5 years and younger. Reservations are recommended to guarantee your spot; drop-ins will be accommodated only if there are seats available on the day of the ride. The rides fill up fast, so make your reservations early. Sleigh/wagon ride dates include December 18-19, 22-23, 27- 29, January 2, 16-17, 29-30, and February 11-13, 26-27.

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A Nice Long Look at What's Right Under Your Feet!

by Billy Meyer, a Biology Science Technician

What's your favorite thing to watch at the Preserve? Probably the elk. Squinting through binoculars you can see them, ears piqued, watching you back as they take turns feeding and keeping a lookout. Or maybe it's the coyote as he slinks mischievously into the tall grass watching you over his shoulder. Is it the turkey that you seem always only to glimpse briefly in silent retreat, or the raptors wheeling unconcerned high above? No doubt there's plenty to look at, but next time you are out on the Preserve, or anywhere that demands the observation of the beauty around you, take a moment as you stand there to look straight down at the ground below you. All that grass is like a foundation upon which the spectacular and unique ecosystem of the Preserve is built. If it doesn't seem so spectacular yet, look into exactly how integral these plants are to all the other majestic and inspiring things we enjoy watching out here.

There are some people who do this all day, every day, as the summer comes to an end. You may glimpse them as you look out across the vastness of the valleys. Light colored, broad brimmed hats that appear to float in that sea of grass, periodically bobbing out of sight, submerging and resurfacing along the bright yellow measuring tape stretched out and flickering in the wind. Not nearly as interesting as those bull elk or red-tailed hawks, but if you had the patience you would notice those hats making an easy progress down that tape. When they finished you would likely have a better understanding of what the elk up the meadow had been doing, so here's a closer look at what the "vegetation monitoring crew" is up to out there in the valleys of the Caldera.

Under each of those hats is a Biological Science

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Cross-country skiing on the Preserve.
[Right] Winter sleigh ride.
(Photos courtesy of Rourke McDermott.)



Technician who works on the Preserve-wide vegetation monitoring project: the "veg crew." They are observing what plants grow in what areas, and in what densities.

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Winter Recreation

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Scheduled Events

December

- 18-23: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 18-19: Wagon/Sleigh Rides
- 20: Public Appreciation Day
- 16-31: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 22-23: Wagon/Sleigh Rides
- 27-29: Wagon/Sleigh Rides
- 31: Fire & Ice New Year's Eve Celebration

January

- 1-2: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 2: Wagon/Sleigh Rides
- 7-9: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 8: Winter Trails Day
- 14-17: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 15: Moonlight Event
- 16-17: Wagon/Sleigh Rides
- 21-23: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 28-30: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 29-30: Wagon/Sleigh Rides

February

- 4-6: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 11-13: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 11-13: Wagon/Sleigh Rides
- 18-21: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 19: Moonlight Event
- 25-27: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 26-27: Wagon/Sleigh Rides

March

- 4-6: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 11-13: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 18-20: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing
- 25-27: Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing

What's Under Your Feet

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The idea is to provide this year's input in an ongoing, detailed look at what kinds of plants are growing in all the different ecosystems on the Preserve, and how those plant communities are changing over time. Because it is a range trend study there is a body of data that extends back nearly to the beginning of the Preserve in 2001. That means that just about every year since then somebody has taken the time to look at the plants that are growing in the same spot over and over, year after year. The location is fixed, but of course time keeps rolling on so we get what a photographer would think of as a time-lapse photo of the vegetation in that area. This is extremely valuable not only because we learn more about the plants, but because we learn about the relationship of the plants to the climate, grazing pressure, fires, restoration efforts, invasive species, and a host of other variables.

How It Works

Most "veg sites" are set up with one center point. From that center point three 100 meter tapes are extended to 0 degrees North, 120 degrees, and 240 degrees, effectively dividing the compass into thirds. Each member of the crew takes a "poker" or thin metal rod with 5 centimeter graduations marked on it and begins to walk the line. Every meter they stop and poke the rod vertically to the ground and record the height and name of the tallest plant touching it and the name of every plant touching thereafter, and finally the ground composition where the poker comes to rest. Do this for 300 points at a sight every year for 10 years and you get a pretty good sample that describes the trends in that area. All of that information is entered into a computer and specific formulas can be used to extract meaningful data like frequency, percent cover, and percent composition for individual plants.

Why We Do It

Why is it important to know these things about the plants so often left under foot? Grass, from an ecosystem perspective, is the cornerstone, the start of everything here. The elk, the fish, the bear, the turkey, all depend on the grass. We can learn a lot about an ecosystem by watching the plants that it depends on for existence. These grasses and small forbs are the first to recover from fire, road building, erosion, or other

disturbances. They anchor the soil in riparian areas and provide sediment and temperature control for the streams, a function that is vital to the fisheries. They give us an idea of what the elk are eating. They keep us up to date on what and how much the cows are grazing in particular areas, and, by using fenced enclosures, we can see what the same area looks like without grazing pressure.

Monitoring grasses and forbs is the best way to keep track of noxious weeds and invasive species. It helps us to understand what is a problem, what is not a problem, and what might be an issue if we don't take steps to mitigate.

With the planned restoration projects, the bank of vegetation information we have will be an invaluable resource for monitoring the progress and effectiveness of restoration efforts. The truth is the Preserve would be more like a lukewarm mud hole than a mountain valley without grass! Nothing against lukewarm mud holes, but I think we would all agree that it's pretty nice as it is. The information that we gather from monitoring vegetation allows us to make informed decisions about land management, ranging from restoration to ranching, from road building to hunting.

You don't have to give it hours a day for weeks at a time, but when your eyes next wander over those magic vistas, whether enjoying the misty morning light or scanning for movement along the tree line, let them drift down to the ground in front of you and take a moment to get acquainted with some of the founders of this place. They were here in the beginning and, since it can't be done without them, they will be here till the end.



Catch-A-Dream

(continued from page 7)

home in South Carolina. The Valles Caldera Trust furnished the Preserve access permit, accommodations at the Baca Lodge, and guide services. The State of New Mexico furnished the non-resident elk tag.

This is the third year that the Preserve has sponsored such a hunt and the second hunt that has been awarded to Catch-A-Dream Foundation. Preserve Manager Dennis Trujillo stated, "We just want to try to get these kids an experience of a lifetime." He went on to say that the Preserve is an excellent piece of public land that lends itself to this.

Both Mick and Dennis had Jordan on a good bull (6x6) the evening of the first day of the hunt, about 30 minutes from sunset. Jordan got pretty nervous and turned and said he was shaking too much. Jordan had just finished a bout of chemotherapy before coming out to New Mexico and wasn't quite up to par. Dennis told him to take a deep breath and squeeze the trigger. He took the approximately 280 yard shot and shot over the elk's back. That evening he went to bed a little down and tired, although he could still whip everyone at Scrabble!

The next morning Mick and Dennis, along with Jordan, Jordan's mom, Deanna, and Catch-A-Dream Host Walt Taylor, took off, with Johnny Yepa and Jordan's grandpa Bobby Hollowell in another pickup. Mick spotted a nice bull headed towards the Jaramillo Valley from the Valle Grande. As they approached an area where they could look across the hillside, Walt caught a glimpse of the animal making its way across a little opening. Although the altitude of the Preserve made it very difficult for Jordan to get around, that short window of time gave Jordan and Dennis enough time to walk a very short distance up along a road. Dennis got the shooting sticks ready and Jordan, never

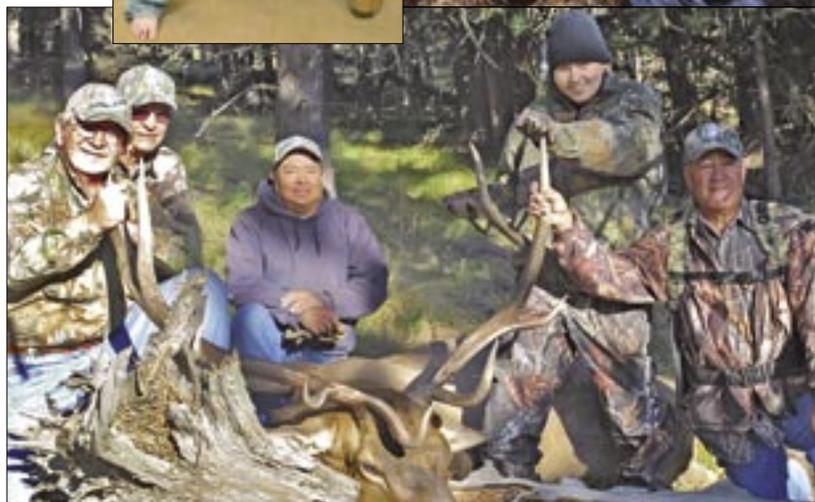
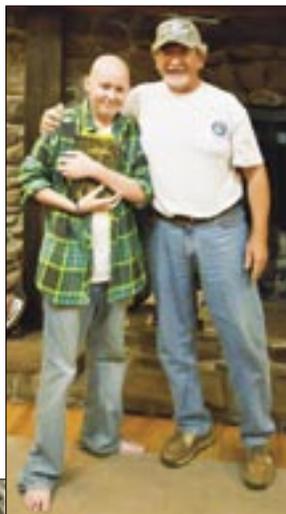
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having shot the 7mm08 Winchester rifle before, rested the gun and made a perfect shot as the bull moved across the small opening and into the timber. The bull trotted a short distance and dropped. Talk about one happy, smiling individual—that's what it's all about!



[Top left] Jordan at the Lodge with Walt Taylor. (Photo courtesy of the author.) [Top right] Jordan with his trophy elk. [Bottom] Walt Taylor, Mick Trujillo, Johnny Yepa, Jordan, and Dennis Trujillo after Jordan shot his elk. (Photos courtesy of Walt Taylor.)