

Ca Ventana en los Valles

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

Gary Bratcher Joins the Trust as the New Executive Director

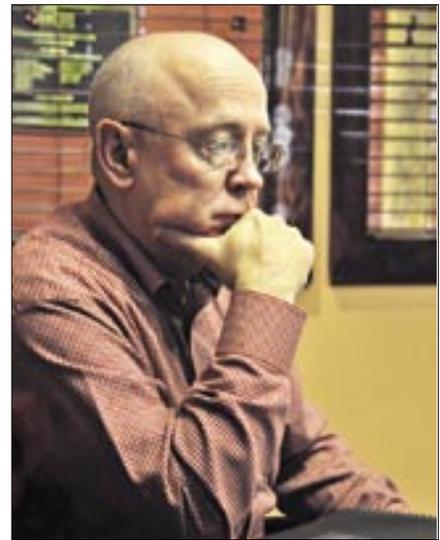
The Valles Caldera Trust is pleased to announce the employment of Gary D. Bratcher as Executive Director.

Mr. Bratcher, who started January 5, has over 30 years experience in supervision and management. He started his career in agricultural operations and management with the United Fruit Company in the Republic of Honduras. His career with United took him from Honduras to Colombia, Costa Rica, and the Corporate Office in New York City. Upon leaving United, Gary joined the Del Monte Banana Company, today known as Del Monte Fresh Produce. At Del Monte, he served in executive positions in sales and production operations in Florida,

the Philippines, Guatemala, and Costa Rica. He ended his career with Del Monte as President and CEO in Coral Gables, Florida.

After a short retirement, Gary was appointed to the position of Cabinet Secretary for Economic Development by the State of New Mexico and subsequently served as Interim Chief Executive Officer of the New Mexico State Lottery. He also served on several Boards and Commissions for the state, including the New Mexico Space Commission, is a Past Chairman of the New Mexico Border Authority, and was on the Board of Leadership New Mexico.

Bratcher grew up in Artesia, New Mexico, where his family owned and operated farming operations producing cotton, alfalfa, grain, chile, and livestock. His wife, the former Jeanette Machura, is from Carlsbad, New Mexico. Mr. Bratcher is a graduate of Eastern New Mexico University with a Bachelor's Degree in Agribusiness and a Master's Degree in Business Administration.



Gary Bratcher. (All photos in this newsletter are courtesy of T.K.Thompson, unless otherwise indicated.)

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.

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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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Welcome to New ED

(con't from page 1)

Gary is bilingual, speaking English and Spanish. Gary and his wife were living in Decatur, Texas, and raising quarter horses before joining the Trust.

In accepting the position with the Trust, Bratcher said, "I am looking forward to playing a role in the most unique program in the country dealing with public land. The concept of organizing and operating a financially self-sufficient working ranch within a national preserve is something new and the success of this venture will be a big factor in the government's ability to create similar preservation programs for public benefit. I look forward to working with the Board, the Trust staff, and the public to achieve this."

Former Valles Caldera Board Chairperson William Keleher said "the Preserve is fortunate to engage an Executive Director with both private and business experience. Gary understands the mandate of Congress that the Preserve become financially self-sufficient, yet, he also understands the Preserve is extremely important from an environmental and recreation standpoint. Also, if the Preserve is to become financially self-sufficient it must do so while at the same time working in harmony with the other mandates of Congress."



New Executive Director Gary Bratcher, former Acting Executive Director Lucia Turner, and Los Amigos Chair Doug Fraser at a Los Amigos meeting.

From Trust Chair, Steve Henry

I have been Chairman of the Valles Caldera Board of Trustees for a total of three days as I write this note. I am honored and humbled that the Board elected me to this position, and I look forward to our work for the next few months. Expect me to occasionally stumble along the way; I solicit your indulgence. I will miss the wisdom, charm, intelligence, and integrity of Bill Keleher's recent Chairmanship. But most of all, I will miss his easy smile that invited participation in discussion by both the Board and the public. Nonetheless, Bill is still active in his Albuquerque business and has graciously offered his services for anything I may need.

New Executive Director

As most readers may know, the Trust recently brought on board a new permanent Executive Director, Mr. Gary Bratcher. Gary comes to the Valles Caldera National Preserve from a strong business background. He was in private industry for over 30 years and retired as a top executive in a very large and successful business. He then served as New Mexico's Cabinet Secretary of Economic Development for Governor Gary Johnson. The Board looks forward to utilizing Gary's experience to help us think "out of the box" as per our mandate to operate in the grand experiment of combining both government and private industry concepts in the operation of the Preserve.

Planning

The Trust is, with some degree of earnestness, putting focus on our sustainability mandate. We have begun the planning process to address public access and use on the Preserve. An experienced and knowledgeable interdisciplinary team has been assembled to put together all the pieces over the next several months and to solicit public participation at various intervals in that process. I encourage all interested stakeholders to participate.

Soon, we hope to have available for your examination a dynamic business model with several alternatives of a number of possible activities that could be considered for the Valles Caldera. It will be used to help inform the planning process. Under almost any business scenario that I can envision (as you who have visited the Preserve are aware), significant capital investment in infrastructure will be necessary to accommodate



(Photo courtesy of Steve Henry.)

future increases in visitor access and use. Acquiring the necessary capital will be a challenge. We may be seeking capital funding through our Congressional delegation, through partnerships with private businesses, and other opportunities that we may yet discover.

Elk Hunting

In the current New Mexico legislative session, the Trust will be working with the Legislature to provide for a change in state law that, if enacted, will allow the Trust the potential to derive increased revenue from our elk hunting program. This change in the law asks that resident New Mexico public land elk hunters make a sacrifice of some of their existing hunting opportunities on the Preserve. Several individuals and sportsmen's organizations have agreed to do so. The elk hunts on the Preserve provide more revenue to the Preserve than any other single activity.

Coss

It is with a deep sense of loss that I announce the passing of Trustee Jim Range on January 20, 2009, after a short illness. As the Board representative for non-profit conservation organizations, Jim brought many new ideas and considerable understanding of how things work in our nation's Capitol. Jim had a great ability to boil our discussions down to the bottom line. He was an attorney affiliated with a highly regarded law firm in Washington D.C. Among several other conservation affiliations and Boards, he served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, one of the largest grassroots conservation organizations in America. The whole conservation community will miss Jim.

Summer Recreation Preview

by Rob Dixon, Outdoor Recreation Planner

This year is shaping up to be our best year yet in recreation. The Valle Grande Staging area will be open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. starting May 21, 2009 and continuing through mid-October. Below is a breakdown of our activities, including our core programs, special events, facility rentals, group tours, and volunteer opportunities.

Core Programs

We will be offering fishing, hiking, equestrian trail riding, mountain bike riding, van tours, and star gazing events as part of our core program. Fishing will be available Thursday through Monday on the East Fork of the Jemez River and on San Antonio Creek. New this year will be the reservation system and the opportunity for drop-ins to fish on the Preserve. We have added a few new guided hikes and will continue the favorite unguided hikes, including our two free hikes. Equestrian trail riding and mountain bike trail riding will continue to alternate weekends in the Banco Bonito area. We have added a few new van tours and improved wildlife, history, archaeology, and botany tours. The very popular one-hour tours of the headquarters area will run Thursday through Monday. We are expanding the star gazing program to take advantage of the star-filled nights on the Preserve. Please visit our website for more details.

Special Events

These exciting special events are designed to take advantage of the Preserve's unique landscape:

- May 30 and 31—Cruise the Caldera Fun Mountain Bike Ride. Roughly 80 miles of roads will be open for you to choose from.
- June 2-4 —Photo Expedition. This three-day event will allow you, your camera, and your own vehicle access to remote part of the Preserve.
- June 6 and 7—El Cajete Fair will include fun, games, skill demonstrations, and history.
- June 13—Run the Caldera Marathon and Half Marathon. This is a run through the heart of the Caldera.
- June 14—Caldera Mountain Bike Challenge, with 25, 50, and 100 mile endurance races.

- June 27—Adult Fly Fishing Clinic.
- June 28—Youth Fly Fishing Clinic.
- June 28—Storyteller Night (dinner and stories).
- July 20—Equestrian Endurance Race (American Endurance Ride Conference sanctioned event).

Many more events are being scheduled. Check our website for events in July and beyond.

Facility Rentals

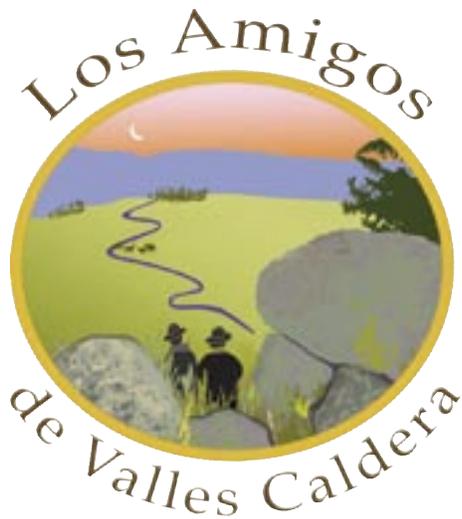
Just for the day or for overnight, our facilities are available for weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, club events, business meetings, company parties, or educational tours. Facilities available this year on a reservation basis are the Casa de Baca Lodge (sleeps 16) and the Bunkhouse (sleeps 13). Please visit our website for more details or call 505-428-7722 for reservations.

Group Tours

We encourage visitors to participate in our scheduled activities when possible. For groups of 20 or more we can explore options that allow your group to experience the Preserve together. Please call 505-428-7722 for more information.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the heart of our programs. We have multiple opportunities each day of the summer season. Our programs have been successful because of the quality and number of volunteers who have helped out. We will be looking for volunteers to help with all of the events described above. There are even opportunities to lead events as volunteers. In addition to the events, we are always looking for volunteers to help answer visitor questions in our stores and at the pullouts. If you are a dependable person and are willing to spend some of your valuable time helping the Preserve, it will go a long way toward the success of the Preserve. Contact Kim DeVall at 505-428-7737 or kdevall@vallescaldera.gov to volunteer for recreation events or Los Amigos Volunteer Coordinator, Greg Kendall, 505-412-3843.



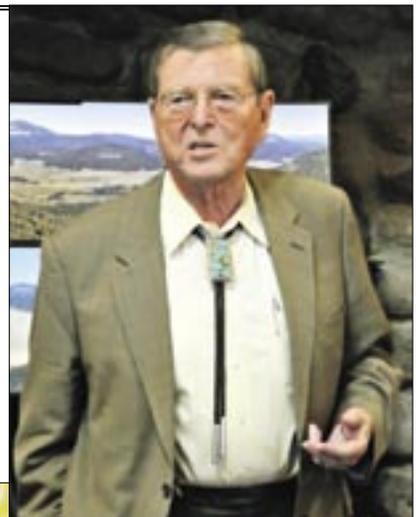
News from *Cos Amigos*

Supporting the Valles Caldera
National Preserve
for Present and Future Generations

Cos Amigos and the Trust Thank Senator Pete Domenici

Los Amigos and the Valles Caldera Trust said “thank you” to retiring New Mexico Senator Pete V. Domenici on October 30 at the Casa de Baca Lodge. The then current Board of Trustees, former Trustees, the Los Amigos Board, and VCT staff gathered to enjoy a ranch barbeque, planned and cooked by Tracy Hephner and members of Jemez Pueblo and a chance

strumental in the purchase of the Preserve and in setting up the Trust to run it. He continued his support by each year making sure the



to share stories and appreciation for the Senator’s unwavering support of the Valles Caldera National Preserve.

The Senator was in-



Trust had the money it needed to run the Preserve.

In appreciation, Los Amigos gave the Senator the #1 print of *Peace in the Valle* by Gary Morton and made the Senator an Honorary Life-

(con’t on page 9)

Calendar of Los Amigos Events 2009

As we begin our third year, Los Amigos members will have a number of opportunities to enjoy the Preserve—and to help it. We hope you will take advantage of these opportunities.

[Right] Putting coyote fencing around a propane tank last year.



[Far Right] Kirt Kempter at the geology tour last year. [Top, page 7] Dendroglyph in the History Grove.

[Middle, page 7] Cerro Seco Trail sign eaten by a bear. [Far right, page 7] Work party at Alamo Bog last summer. (Photos on pages 6 and 7 courtesy of Greg Kendall.)

Season Opening Cleanup Day

Saturday, June 6th

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Los Amigos members will help the Preserve clean up around the Historic Headquarters and other areas of the Preserve in preparation for the summer recreation season. We will do minor maintenance, clean up and plant flowers. Bring a lunch.

During lunch, a member of the Preserve staff will provide us with the latest information in their specific area of interest.

Caldera Marathon Work Days

Friday, June 12th & Saturday, June 13th

(Times to be determined)

Los Amigos will help the Preserve's Recreation Staff prepare for the Marathon on Friday. On Saturday we will help with the Marathon by staffing water stations and helping with other duties. The Preserve's Outdoor Recreation Planner, Rob Dixon, will lead this effort. What better place to spend a lovely June day than helping out on the Preserve?

Journey into the Geologic History of the Preserve

Saturday, June 27th

8:45 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Please join us for an exciting and popular geologic

tour of the north rim of the Valles Caldera led by local geologist, international tour guide, and Los Amigos member, Kirt Kempter. This is the third season for this tour and it's just as popular as ever, with views that will knock your socks off.

Departing from Española at 9:00 a.m., we will drive west on Forest Road 144 (also known as 39-mile road), stopping at several view points as we wind our way into the northern Jemez Mountains. As we ascend the back side of Chicoma Peak, there will be spectacular views of the Rio Grande Rift, Pajarito Plateau, and other geologic features of the northern Jemez Mountains. The



road also cuts through the core of an old volcano, active 10 million years ago.

Our

destination will be a picnic lunch stop along the north rim of the Valles Caldera known as "Hunter's Point." Here you will find the most spectacular views of the northern portion of the caldera. A lecture at this stop will provide a geologic history of the caldera since the massive eruption occurred 1.2 million years ago. This dynamic story includes multiple lakes and volcanic eruptions within the caldera since its collapse. We will finish up with a tour through the Preserve to the Valle Grande Staging Area.

Kirt is offering this tour as a fundraiser for Los Amigos.

A high-clearance 4x4 vehicle is required for this tour, as we will be traveling over very rough roads. Room in vehicles may be available for those without a high clearance vehicle on a first come, first served basis. If you haven't taken this tour yet, don't miss out!

Lunch provided! Cost: \$35/person; max: 35 participants.

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2009 Events

(con't from page 6)

Dendroglyph Tour Saturday, July 11th

In 2007, Colleen Olinger led a group of volunteers in the study of dendroglyphs (tree carvings)

on the Preserve. Colleen has graciously volunteered to lead us on a tour of some of the dendroglyphs that her crew found. We will meet for lunch (BYO) at 12:00 noon at the Valle Grande Staging area and then board vans at 12:45 p.m. for the drive to Alamo Canyon. We will hike to the area where the dendroglyphs can be found.

Cost: TBD; max: 24 participants.

Old-Timers and Members BBQ and Hike Sunday, July 19th

This event permits members to enjoy a day on the Preserve, starting with a hike at 9 a.m. Last year, hikers were driven in the Preserve's vans

to the foot of Cerro Seco for a seven-mile hike led by Greg Kendall. The hike provided gorgeous views of the Valle San Antonio as it wandered in and out of tall pines and aspens on an old two-track logging road. This year we hope to hike up South Mountain from the Valle Grande Staging Area.

For non-hikers, we are meeting at 4 p.m. at a location to be determined for introductions, a lecture, and dinner. We will be inviting Trust Board members and the many "old-timers" who spent years on the Preserve before it was purchased by the government.

We hope you will join us again for a day of fun, food, hiking, and reminiscing!

East Rim Hike Saturday, August 1st

Greg Kendall will lead a hike from Pajarito Mountain to Cerro Grande and then on to the Cerro Grande parking area on Hwy 4. We will meet at 8:30 a.m. at the intersection of the Camp May Rd. and the



new Ski Hill By-Pass Road. We will then drive cars to the Cerro Grande hike parking area and leave half of them there. We will drive to the Pajarito ski area and ride up the lift. August 1st is a hikers lift day at Pajarito Ski Area (there is a lift fee). The trail crosses into the Preserve and then later out again. The views are outstanding. This will be an opportunity to travel into an area that is normally not open to hiking. It's going to be an adventure!

Alamo Bog Wetlands Work Days and Campout Friday, August 14th – Sunday, August 16th



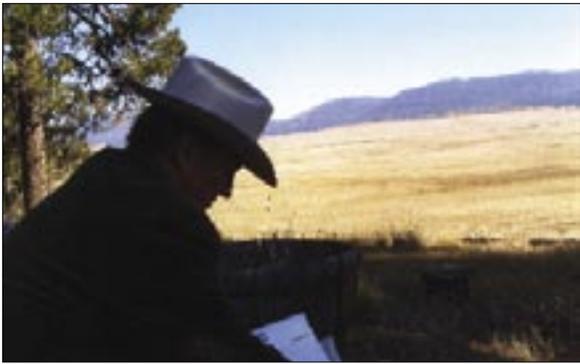
Join Los Amigos and the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation (AWF) as we work over a weekend protecting the rare Bog Birch in Alamo Canyon on the west side of the Preserve. Last year we worked with the AWF to put up fencing around patches of Bog Birch, but our work was not completed. There are other patches that need protection from the hungry elk that love Bog Birch shoots. We will be camping at the entrance to Alamo Canyon on a flat bare ground area suitable for a large group. It's a fun group that loves to work hard, and the camping isn't too shabby either!

We have other events in the planning stages including Environmental Work Party Days, Cleanup and Science Work Days, a Western Dinner and Cattle Loading Event, a Fall Aspen Viewing Tour, and other Special Events volunteer opportunities.

Check our website for more details on these and other events throughout the season (www.losamigosdevallescaldera.org).

If you would like to reserve a space for one of our activities, please send an email to Los Amigos (info@losamigosdevallescaldera.org) with your name, phone number, number in your party, and other pertinent details—or call 505-412-3843.





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

From the Chair, Doug Fraser

The New Year has brought many changes. Los Amigos looks forward to working with the new Board Chair, Steve Henry, and the new Executive Director, Gary Bratcher. We are also looking forward to starting work on our restoration projects (*Restoring Wetlands and Wet Meadows on the Valles Caldera National Preserve* and *Restoring San Antonio Creek*), with the help of our many volunteers, and to continuing to help the Preserve by fundraising for restoration of the Bond Cabin. We hope you are taking this opportunity to purchase a print (see page 10) of Gary Morton's beautiful painting of the cabin.

We should have many opportunities this year for members to get "dirty" helping to protect bog birch, build structures to retard erosion, and restore riparian habitat.



Peace in the Valle
by Gary Morton

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We are also planning a number of new events for our members—see pages 6 and 7—and we hope you will take advantage of them. They are largely the brainchild of our Vice Chair, Greg Kendall. If you have ideas for events or projects, or anything that you would like to see Los Amigos do, please contact Greg or me. We always appreciate hearing from our members.

We hope the New Year brings many blessings to all of you.

Domenici

(con't from page 5)

time Member of Los Amigos. The Trust presented him with a silver belt buckle, with the Valles Caldera brand on it.

The Senator spoke about the process of purchasing and setting up the Preserve and told the assembled crowd that his health was not as bad as originally thought. He said he had not yet decided what he might do while retired from his 37 years in the U.S. Senate.



[Page 5, top]

The Senator. [Page 5, middle left] The Senator and the "thank you" cake.

[Page 5, middle right]

Former Trust Chair Bill Keleher, the Senator, and Los Amigos Chair Doug Fraser.

[Page 5, bottom]

Preserve Manager Dennis Trujillo, the Senator, Bill Keleher, Doug

Fraser, and

Brad Traver in the main room at the Lodge. [This page, top] Former Trustee Palemon Martinez and artist and rancher Gary Morton. [Middle left] Staff enjoys the opportunity to meet the Senator. [Middle right] Then Trustees Brad Traver, Ray Loretto, Tracy Hephner, and Bill Keleher with the Senator. [Above left] Tracy and the Senator. [Above right] Former Trustees John Caid, Palemon Martinez, Larry Icerman, David Yepa, Gilbert Zepeda, Barbara Johnson, and Steve Stoddard with the Senator (also present was former Board Chairman Bill deBuys, who had to leave before the picture taking). [Bottom right] Steve Stoddard and the Senator at the Lodge in front of photos of the Preserve.



Winter Recreation on the Preserve

by Kim DeVall, Recreation Supervisor

Our 2009 winter activities started December 27, 2008, and will end March 30, 2009, weather permitting. This season we have had approximately 11,000 acres and over 20 miles of groomed trails open for day use cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. All winter activities are based out of the Valle Grande staging area on Highway 4.

The Preserve has been open to cross-country skiing and snowshoeing every Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. No reservations are needed, but check in/out at the Valle Grande staging area is required. Fees are \$10 per adult, \$8 per senior (62 years and older), \$5 per youth (6-15 years), and free for kids 5 years and younger.

Have you ever tried skiing by the light of the moon? It's guaranteed to be one of

your most memorable experiences. It's Mother Nature shining her best light on you. On February 7th and March 7th, weather permitting, moonlight events will be held at 6 p.m. Reservations are not required and permits may be purchased at the Valle Grande staging area. Please come prepared for high elevation mountain weather and night conditions. Check in/out at the Valle Grande staging area is required. Fees are \$15 per adult, \$12 per senior (62 years and older), \$10 per youth (6-15 years), and free for kids 5 years and younger.

This season we have scheduled two free public appreciation days for skiing and snowshoeing, on January 25th and March 1st.

The Coyote Call Trail, and surrounding area south of Highway 4, is open daily for free skiing and snowshoeing during daylight hours. This area will not be groomed. Signing in/out at the trail head is required.

We are also gearing up for our 2009 Summer Recreation season. Please see the Preview on page 4. We will begin taking reservations in February, so please check our website www.vallescaldera.gov frequently to see what activities have been posted.



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 \$225, 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, P.O. Box 416, Jemez Springs, NM 87025.

Prints will be given free to each new Los Amigos Lifetime or Obsidian Guild member.

2008 Elk Hunt Overview

by Dennis Trujillo, Preserve Manager

Sunset on Monday, November 24th, brought the VCNP 2008 elk hunts to a close. All 10 hunts were completed with a 100% safety record, meaning there were no reportable accidents requiring auxiliary medical or emergency assistance. In general, hunters were pleased with their VCNP hunt experiences as documented on their elk hunt surveys.

Major positive themes mentioned in the surveys were: 1) excellent staff support, 2) well-managed hunts, 3) strong emphasis on integrated safety and hunter ethics, 4) appreciation of the hunt sub-unit draw system, 5) Preserve beauty, 6) still the best public land hunt available.

Major negative themes mentioned were: 1) decreasing elk numbers (sentiment voiced by return customers), 2) number of coyote sightings, 3) lack of deer, 4) fewer big bulls (sentiment voiced by return customers), 5) excessive non-hunter traffic.

Success Rate

This was the second year of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDG&F) Rule for hunts on the Valles Caldera National Preserve, Game Management Unit 6B.

NMDG&F issued 77 bull tags in 2008. Of this number, 75 hunters harvested 49 bulls resulting in a 65% success rate. We estimate that ~ 95% of all bull hunters had an opportunity to harvest an elk. The majority of unsuccessful hunters passed up bulls because they did not meet their antler size goals. Of the 49 bulls taken, 22 scored over 300 inches of antler growth/spread according to the Safari Club standards.

NMDG&F issued 150 antlerless tags in 2008. Of this number, 136 hunters harvested 54 antlerless elk resulting in a 40% success rate. We estimate that ~ 75% of the antlerless hunters had a fair chase opportunity to harvest an elk. Most unsuccessful hunters claimed that their lack of success was due to fewer elk on the Preserve as compared to previous years.

Ways to Apply

In 2008, the Trust offered some of the best elk hunting on public land in New Mexico. Lottery chances were available at \$25 each for a mature bull or either sex hunts. Lottery chances for antlerless hunts were offered at \$15 each.

There were three ways to apply directly for the 2008 Valles Caldera National Preserve Elk Hunt Lottery. You could mail a completed 2008 Lottery Ticket Purchase Form to the Valles Caldera Trust, c/o the Public Lands Interpretive Association (PLIA), apply online at www.vallescaldera.gov/comevisit/elk, or call PLIA on a toll free number and apply by phone.

The state quota was applied to the lottery where 78% of all licenses were issued to New Mexico residents. Non-residents who chose to use an outfitter received up to 12% of the available licenses and non-residents who applied to hunt without an outfitter received up to 10% of the available licenses. The use of outfitters was optional.

Purchasing a lottery chance entered the name of the person into a computerized drawing. A person could purchase up to 20 chances per hunt code and enter as many hunt codes as desired.

Winners received an access authorization from the Trust which permitted them to present the authorization to the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and purchase an elk hunting license. The Valles Caldera Trust Access Authorizations were not transferable. Those entering the Valles Caldera National Preserve elk hunt lottery were also eligible to enter the NMDG&F state drawing for other game management units. Applicants selected to hunt the Valles Caldera National Preserve (Game Management Unit 6), were removed from the regular NMDG&F drawing.

Orientations

The Trust held 10 mandatory hunting and safety orientations at the Jemez Springs Administra-

(con't on page 12)

2008 Elk Hunt Overview

(con't from page 11)

tive Office Conference Room. Members from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and National Wild Turkey Federation, along with staff from the NMDG&F, provided volunteers for some of our hunts.

Happy Hunters

Matthew Montoya from Blanco, New Mexico, wrote the following after his third hunt on the Preserve:

"I have been fortunate enough to hunt in the Valles Caldera three times. I

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[Above] Matthew Montoya and his bull. [Right] Zach Comino proudly displays the bull his father, Paul Comino of Weed, New Mexico, harvested during the muzzleloader hunt. It is a 337 point bull. (Photos courtesy of Dennis Trujillo.) [Below] The Preserve is now covered in a beautiful blanket of snow.

was skeptical about purchasing a lottery ticket as I am unlucky and never win anything. In 2004 I purchased one ticket and drew the tag. Since then I have had two very special hunts in the Caldera. I have harvested three bulls in the 300 class range. All hunts were the first archery hunt.

•2004 Bull #1 was 328 inches (called in on 7th day of hunt).

•2006 Bull #2 was 305 inches (called in to a tree stand 5th day of hunt).

•2008 Bull #3 was 361 inches (spot and stalk on 4th day of the hunt).

"I would like to commend you and your staff and the Valles Caldera on setting up the hunts for the hunter to have a 'REAL' hunt. Hunting the Caldera is not easy, it is a REAL elk hunt and requires hard work and dedication. All three hunts were hard earned. None was easy and that is one of the reasons it is so special."

