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National Preserve hires DEA to determine effects of public access

DENVER, Colo. – July 21, 2009 – The Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP) is an 88,900 acre unit of National Forest land located in north central New Mexico. The VCNP was acquired by the federal government in 2000 through the Valles Caldera Preservation Act. The name “Valles Caldera” refers to the geologic setting of the landscape – a largely intact caldera containing expansive grasslands interspersed with forested domes. Nearly 75 miles of perennial waters flow from the forests and meander through the grasslands. Besides its geologic origins and dramatic scenery the VCNP is famous for its herd of Rocky Mountain elk estimated at approximately 3000 head.

In an experiment in public lands management, the VCNP is managed by a wholly owned government corporation created by the enabling legislation: The Valles Caldera Trust (VCT). The trust is governed by a presidentially appointed board of trustees. Goals for site development and management include protecting and preserving resources and values; providing multiple uses, sustained yield of renewable resources, public access and use, and benefits to local communities and businesses; enhancing the objectives of surrounding forest service land, and optimizing revenues. This last goal reflects the most unusual part of the experiment, which includes a benchmark of financial self sufficiency by 2015.

The trust selected David Evans and Associates, Inc. (DEA) to develop an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the location and construction of visitor facilities, including a visitor center, parking, ancillary trails, and infrastructure. The EIS also will guide future development on the VCNP, generally determining the type of development that could occur in the future as well as the location and scale of such development. DEA is tasked with facilitating collaborative public workshops, public meetings and preparing a draft and final EIS, which would include alternative development. The development of alternatives includes visitor use, transportation planning, and economic analysis.

For more information about DEA, visit www.deainc.com.

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