

STATEMENT OF  
RAYMOND LORETTO  
CHAIRMAN, THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
VALLES CALDERA TRUST

Before the

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
MAY 11, 2011

Concerning

S. 564 -- VALLES CALDERA NATIONAL PRESERVE MANAGEMENT ACT

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am Raymond Loretto, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Valles Caldera Trust, and I am here on behalf of the Presidentially appointed members of the Board of Trustees to express our views about S. 564, the Valles Caldera National Preserve Management Act. The Trust supports the management and protection of the nationally significant natural and cultural resources found at the Valles Caldera National Preserve.

Since the Trust inherited the Preserve eleven years ago, our capable staff has led an effort to improve the ecological conditions on the landscape while increasing public access and use. Of special note, our staff, in collaboration with personnel from the Santa Fe National Forest and several other organizations, successfully competed for funding in the USDA's Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program and restoration and monitoring activities will proceed across the Preserve this summer. In addition to improving the ecological condition of the Preserve, our science and education programs have blossomed, and the Preserve now hosts numerous research and educational outreach projects. Although public access to the Preserve is limited by a lack of infrastructure and the need for environmental analysis, we increased participation in our recreational programs last year, and we anticipate even higher numbers of visitors in the coming season.

Since the Trust was formed in 2000, one of our mandates was to operate the Preserve as an economically self-sustaining organization. In the past decade, the Board of Trustees made an

honest effort to take the necessary steps to achieve this goal, but during this period, it has become clear that capital improvements to make the Preserve financially self-sufficient are either too costly or unacceptable to the major stakeholders in the region. Although approximately 20% of our annual operating costs are covered by revenues from our various programs on the Preserve, it now appears that the Valles Caldera Trust will not meet the financial self-sufficiency goal that was a major objective of our enabling legislation. In light of this fact, a majority of the presidential appointees on the Board of Trustees feels that the proposed transfer of the Preserve to the National Park Service is justified.

At this time, I would like to briefly comment on four sections of the proposed legislation. First, the Board of Trustees recognizes the proposed bill's stated goal to retain all eligible employees currently working for the Preserve. We also applaud another of the bill's stated goals, to protect the traditional cultural and religious sites within the Preserve, in consultation with Indian tribes and pueblos. The bill also requires the Secretary to undertake activities to improve the health of forest, grassland and riparian areas within the Preserve. Should S. 564 be enacted, we hope that the restoration of forests and watersheds that have been planned and implemented by the Trust and the Forest Service at the Preserve would continue under the management of the National Park Service. In addition, we hope that S.564 continues the Science and Education Program established under PL 106-248 (Valles Caldera Preservation Act).

In conclusion, we believe that the outstanding landscape that is the Valles Caldera National Preserve deserves the best stewardship possible, situated in a stable administrative structure that is permanent and adequately funded for public use and appreciation. The Board of Trustees of the Preserve believe that the National Park Service would provide that home, thus, we support S. 564, the Valles Caldera National Preserve Management Act.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions.