



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:
D18(2510)

DEC 29 2009

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bingaman:

I am pleased to transmit the update report on the Valles Caldera National Preserve (Preserve) in New Mexico. The report was prepared in response to your June 24, 2009 letter, requesting a reconnaissance study to assess the potential for including the resources of the Valles Caldera in the National Park System as a national preserve. In his follow-up letter of July 27, 2009, Acting Director Dan Wenk proposed that the study effort focus on feasibility factors related to the potential for inclusion in the system, and that it provide an update of earlier assessments of the site.

The National Park Service (NPS) has conducted several studies that have found the Valles Caldera eligible for inclusion in the national park system, the most recent being the 1979 Study of Alternatives, New Area - Valles Caldera, New Mexico. In considering eligibility, proposed additions to the National Park System must (1) possess *nationally significant* natural or cultural resources; (2) be a *suitable* addition to the system; (3) be a *feasible* addition to the system; and (4) require *direct NPS management*, instead of alternative protection by other public agencies or the private sector. The scope of this report is limited to the first three criteria, and the need for NPS management is not addressed.

The report updates the feasibility section of the 1979 study, presenting information on changes in the study area since 1979 and an analysis of feasibility factors in light of existing conditions. The key finding is that the feasibility for the Preserve to be managed by the NPS has been enhanced by three principal changes in conditions: federal acquisition of the site; the introduction of visitor use and resource protection measures by the Valles Caldera Trust (Trust); and the enhancement of site understanding through natural and cultural resource inventories and scientific investigations sponsored by the Trust. The report also considered changes in circumstances relating to the suitability and national significance criteria. New information that confirms the earlier work and contributes to the understanding of how these two criteria are met is presented.

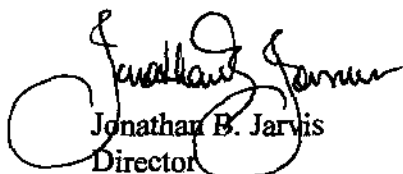
The Honorable Jeff Bingaman

2

Should you have questions regarding the update report, please contact Patrick Gregerson, Washington Office, Chief of Park Planning and Special Studies, at 202/354-6971.

An identical letter is being sent to the Honorable Mark Udall.

Sincerely,



Jonathan B. Jarvis
Director

Enclosure