



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Valles Caldera National Preserve  
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## Valles Caldera National Preserve News Release

**Release Date:** December 17, 2021

**Contact:** Brian Smith, Environmental Protection Specialist

### **Valles Caldera Proposes Interim Infrastructure Improvements to Valle Grande District**

**Jemez Springs, NM** – Valles Caldera National Preserve is seeking comments on a proposed project to make interim infrastructure improvements within the park's Valle Grande District to enhance visitor experience, accessibility, interpretation of the park's natural and cultural values, and recreational opportunities. Infrastructure improvements are also needed to reestablish the park's entrance fee collection program that will generate funds to address critical deferred maintenance needs.

Most of the improvements the park envisions would be interim in nature – meaning they could be removed in the future based on decisions made in long-term management plans for the area while also allowing the park to more effectively manage visitors and protect park resources while these plans are being developed.

There are two distinct areas of the park which currently receive the majority of visitation: 1) the entrance station area situated in the middle of the Valle Grande near Cerro La Jara along the main park entrance road; and 2) the Baca Ranch Cabin District located on the north side of the Valle Grande comprising the various former ranch buildings constructed during the period of private ownership. The park is interested in making meaningful interim improvements in these locations that would support improving visitor enjoyment while managing visitors to protect park resources.

The park is considering how to make the Baca Ranch Cabin District more accessible to people with disabilities and facilitate visitors accessing this area without the need for a backcountry vehicle permit as is currently the case. To realize this goal, the park is considering the creation of a new parking area near the cabin district, building improvements to make them accessible to people with disabilities, the addition of a new interpretive trail in and around the cabin district, an automatic gate that does not require visitors to get out of their vehicle to open and close, subsurface utilities to existing historic buildings, and trailhead kiosks at existing trails which would provide better information to visitors.

To reestablish the park fee collection program, several changes may also be required at the entrance station area in the Valle Grande. These could include redesigning vehicle circulation to direct vehicles to a fee collection booth, improving visitor parking and trailhead kiosks to access existing trails in the area, removing legacy livestock corrals, and installing an automatic gate that does not require visitors to get out of their vehicle to open and close.

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The park is seeking feedback from the public on these and other ideas to improve visitor experience in the Valle Grande District and how to protect important natural, prehistoric, and historic cultural resources in this area.

These improvements would remain in place over the short-term foreseeable future as the park works on completing a General Management Plan and Front Country Development Concept Plan. It is estimated that some of these interim improvements could be in place for 5-10 years, and their benefits and impacts should be considered within that context. Once the park has solidified the long-term vision and direction for the management of this area, facilities could be retained, removed, relocated, or modified in accordance with the desired long-term plan.

Project information can be viewed, and written comments submitted using [the Planning, Environment and Public Comment \(PEPC\) system](#), retrieve “[Valles Caldera Interim Infrastructure Improvements Project \(106210\)](#)” to provide comments electronically. Comments may also be mailed or faxed to the address or fax number listed below. Comments will not be accepted by email or in any other way than those specified above. The public comment period for this project begins on December 22, 2021 and is open through January 14, 2022. Comments must be received by 11:59 pm Mountain time, January 14, 2022.

**Mail Comments to:**

Valles Caldera National Preserve  
Attn: Brian Smith  
PO Box 359  
Jemez Springs, NM 87025

**Fax Comments to:**

575-829-4141  
Attn: Brian Smith  
Valles Caldera National Preserve

**Public Comment Considerations**

- Bulk comments in any format (hard copy or electronic) submitted on behalf of others will not be accepted.
- Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personally identifiable information, be aware that your entire comment – including your personally identifiable information – may be made public at any time. You may ask us to withhold your personally identifiable information from public review, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.
- The proposed project is an undertaking as outlined under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (36 CRF § 800). As such, we welcome comments about historic properties or other cultural resources that fall within the project area.

<https://www.nps.gov/vall>

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