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NEWS RELEASE

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Valle Grande Staging and Visitor Information to Reopen

Jemez Springs, NM—The Valle Grande Staging Area on the Valles Caldera National Preserve will reopen Wednesday, July 13th. The staging area, located in the Valle Grande, off NM 4 near mile marker 39, has been closed due to the Las Conchas fire since June 26th, when staff and visitors were forced to evacuate. The area remained closed to the public during fire operations as crews and equipment used the road to access the fire and to stop its westward spread.

The staging area offers people a spectacular view of the Valle Grande. At this time visitors can see firsthand the aftermath of the Las Conchas fire safely and legally (areas off NM 4 are still closed due to high fire danger). Visitors can also get up to date information on the fire as well as area closures and restrictions. Recreation activities such as hiking, fishing and tours will not be offered until current forest restrictions and closures are lifted. Fire restrictions are managed across administrative boundaries and the restrictions on the Valles Caldera National Preserve will be lifted in concert with the surrounding Santa Fe National Forest.

Access to the area burned in the Las Conchas fire area may continue to be limited even after fire restrictions have been lifted. Marla Rodgers, the trust's Fire Management Officer, won't speculate as to when the burned area may be open. "We cannot commit to a timeframe until we have been able to assess all the potential hazards. Our priority will be to provide for public safety and resource protection. With that said, we do not intend to unnecessarily limit public access. We are beginning to assess potential safety concerns at the same time we are looking at emergency rehabilitation needs." Dennis Trujillo, who took over as the Trust's Executive Director in May, will ultimately decide when and what portions of the burn area within the preserve can be open to the public. ###