

CHAPTER 10.

Summary and Conclusions

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The land use history of the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP) extends back in time thousands of years. Given the great length of time involved and the many culturally diverse communities—Native American, Hispanic, and Anglo-American—that have interacted with this place, it is not surprising that this history evidences tremendous technological and organizational variability in how people have used and constructed affiliations with the VCNP. Nonetheless, throughout this long history, the VCNP was, and continues to be, peripheral to major centers of residential settlement and areas of intensive economic land use.

The archaeological record is a principal medium for tracing the human occupation of the Valles Caldera before the arrival of European explorers in 1540 and the subsequent establishment of the Spanish colony in 1598. Using artifacts and other durable material traces that survive the ravages of time (e.g., obsidian debitage, chipped stone tools, charred botanical materials, a few fragments of animal bone, and the remnants of stone fieldhouses), archaeologists have constructed a history of land use by Archaic period hunters and gatherers (5500 B.C.–A.D. 600) and pre-Columbian Pueblo Indians (A.D. 600–1600), who are among the forebears of the people of the Pueblo of Jémez and the other Pueblo communities (chapter 2).

Investigators cite the hunting of game, the gathering of plant resources, and the collection of obsidian for the manufacture of stone tools as the main reasons for the short-term, warm-season use of the locale.

Archaeological evidence also documents that Pueblo groups from the upper Río Jémez Valley farmed the Banco Bonito within the VCNP during the Classic Period (A.D. 1300–1600). In addition, by tracing the broad distribution of Jémez obsidian across the northern Southwest from archaeological sites dating to the late Pleistocene and the early Holocene, researchers infer that Paleoindians were the first people to visit the caldera.

As documented by Governor Juan de Oñate, who had passed through the Valles Caldera on his way from San Juan Pueblo to the Jémez Pueblo of Giusewa during the first years of his administration of the New Mexican colony, Spanish colonial authorities clearly were aware of this place (chapter 3). Even though the colony expanded its settlement reach following the Pueblo Revolt (1680–1692), the presence of Navajo raiders, who periodically raided Hispanic and Pueblo settlements near the Valles Caldera, were major impediments to the regular

occupation of the VCNP during the Late Spanish Colonial period (1692–1821). Punitive military expeditions led to further exploration of this locality and its natural resources. As exemplified by the Miera y Pacheco Map of 1779, it is certain that this knowledge of the Valles Caldera and its rich grasslands had drawn the attention of New Mexican herders and ranchers by the third quarter of the eighteenth century. By 1800, Hispanics began using the lush grazing lands that eventually were to become the Baca Location No. 1 (Baca Location) and the VCNP.

The Mexican period (1821–1846) is notable in the Valles Caldera's land use history for two reasons. First, this period saw the introduction of a new cultural community to the Valles Caldera landscape: Anglo-Americans entered the area as trappers as part of a highly regulated trading partnership between New Mexico and the United States. The second was the Mexican government's issuance of two land grants, the Luis María Cabeza de Baca Grant (1821) and the Town of Las Vegas Grant (1835), that embraced the same acreage along the Gallinas River of north-central New Mexico (chapter 3).

The start of the U.S. Territorial period (1846–1912) saw the U.S. Army fighting the nomadic tribes of the Southwest and forcing them to settle on reservations. With the decline of threats by Native America raiders, Anglos and Hispanics began large-scale—although seasonal-commercial use of the Valles Caldera. The ill-fated hay-cutting expedition led by Santa Fe entrepreneurs Robert Nesbit and Hiram R. Parker in 1851 under contract to the U.S. Army was the first recorded commercial venture in this locality under the new administration (chapter 3). The questionable circumstances of both Nesbit and Parker's contract and their claimed losses following the attack of their haying party by a group of Navajo raiders was a harbinger of the self-interest profiteering that was to profoundly shape the Valles Caldera's land use history over the subsequent 150 years.

The overlapping Las Vegas land grant rights, created by Mexican authorities during their brief administration and subsequently confirmed by the U.S. Congress in 1860 during the U.S. Territorial Period, forever changed the legal basis of land use rights in the Valles Caldera (chapter 4). To resolve the land grant conflict, María Cabeza de Baca's heirs relinquished their Las Vegas claim in 1860 in exchange for U.S. Congressional authorization to select an equal amount of land in five square blocks elsewhere in the Territory of New Mexico. The first block they chose was the Baca Location in

the Valles Caldera, to which they formally received title in 1876 after the New Mexico Surveyor General completed the survey of the property.

These legislative actions transformed the Valles Caldera from an unspecified tract of “vacant land” to a legally defined entity known today as the Baca Location. With the conveyance of formal rights to Luis María Cabeza de Baca’s heirs, executive, legislative, and judicial authorities viewed the Baca Location as consisting of occupied land, even though the property still would not support sustained habitation by anyone for decades. Moreover, through the issuance of legal title to the land grant, the land and its individual resources, including pasturage, timber, minerals, and game animals, gained formal status as properties over which the land grant’s authorized owners alone controlled rights of access, use, and disposition (chapter 9).

The legal definition of the Baca Location as a land grant whose owners held exclusive property rights has had significant and lasting consequences. The first effect concerned access and use rights. Specifically, it was no longer legal for Native American communities and private entrepreneurs, such as trappers or hay cutters, to enter the Baca Location without consideration (chapter 5). The second consequence was that the land grant’s owners possessed the right to sever particular access and use rights from the land (chapters 6, 7, and 8). The legislative actions of the U.S. Congress rendered obsolete the traditional aboriginal view that the Valles Caldera was a place imbued with certain inseparable qualities whereby resources, including the land, water, plants, animals, and minerals, obtained meaning in relationship to one another (chapters 5 and 9). The definition of the Baca Location, built on the Western idea that the land and its resources were discrete, quantifiable commodities, occurred just as the United States was incorporating New Mexico into its national economy and society (chapter 3).

New business opportunities, created by a combination of local growth and increased access to major markets in the Midwest and East, were becoming apparent in New Mexico by the late nineteenth century. As the Valles Caldera became increasingly attractive as an economic property, speculation on future market conditions and commodity trading led to yet another transformation in the landscape’s uses and political status.

Motivated by self-interest, two of Luis María Cabeza de Baca’s grandsons, Francisco Tomás Baca and Tomás Dolores Baca, claimed inflated interests in the Baca Location. In transferring their interests to fierce competitors unrelated to the Baca family, the Baca brothers established the legal basis for the partition suit of 1893, which Joel Whitney brought against Mariano Sabine Otero and others. In its resolution, the partition suit led to the extinction of all the rights that Luis María Cabeza de Baca’s heirs had in the Baca Location. Through a series of suspect legal dealings and business transactions, the tract became the exclusive property of Mariano Sabine Otero and his family (chapter 4).

Following Otero’s death, the Redondo Development Company acquired the Baca Location in 1909. This corporation subsequently severed the timber and mineral rights from

the ranch land in 1915 when it first mortgaged the tract’s timber rights to raise capital for other business interests (chapter 4; see also chapters 6, 7, and 8). With the development of roads, sawmills, and other infrastructure that made this once remote tract accessible to development, this action provided the foundations for the most intensive use of the Valles Caldera in its history. Moreover, the segregation of land rights from timber and mineral rights made the Valles Caldera a battleground for competing commercial interests.

The more than century-long use of the Valles Caldera’s rich rangeland for herding sheep underwent modification when George W. and Frank Bond purchased the Baca Location’s surface rights in 1918. The terms of the purchase contract, however, stated that Redondo Development Company would retain a 99-year right to the property’s timber and one-half of its mineral interests (chapter 6). The Bond brothers were allowed to cut only sufficient timber for building necessary ranch facilities and for use as fuel. Clearly, the Bond brothers bought the Baca Location as stockmen, and the terms of their purchase agreement were designed to ensure that their livestock operations would not adversely affect the property’s timber value.

Although the Bond brother’s business was based on the traditional *partido* system of sharecropping sheep they greatly intensified the intensity of grazing on the tract to earn huge profits, often at the expense of the *partidarios* (sharecroppers) who ran sheep on their ranchlands, until the end of World War II. With the decline in wool prices following the war, the Bond family business operations shifted to cattle ranching and the leasing of range rights to independent interests, including the King family.

The Bond estate subsequently sold the Baca Ranch to James Patrick Dunigan in 1963. Under Dunigan’s stewardship, the Baca Ranch saw a variety of range improvements within a business enterprise based, in part, on more effective use and long-range management of available grasses (chapter 6). Dunigan also diversified his ranch land operations in the 1960s and 1970s to include commercial elk hunts (chapter 5), geothermal exploration (chapter 8), and leases for Hollywood filming. He also experimented with training thoroughbreds at high altitude to see if he could improve their performance in races at lower elevations.

The Redondo Development Company had waited 26 years for the conditions that would make its investment in the Baca Location fully profitable. Its sale of the tract’s surface grazing rights to the Bond Brothers in 1918 was just one part of their long-term strategy. Redondo Development Company expected additional profits from the income that the timber would bring when loggers could economically transport timber to sawmills. After all, with the development occurring throughout New Mexico at the time, the depletion of nearby private timber holdings, and the restrictions increasingly imposed by the U.S. Government on loggers working federal lands, the Redondo Development Company realized that the Baca Location’s timber had a waiting market.

The commercial introduction of efficient logging trucks was a key technological innovation; costly railroad investments no longer were necessary. The Civilian Conservation Corps’

construction of an improved road that linked Los Alamos with Jémez Springs in 1935 fulfilled the final economic requirements. Redondo Development Company sold its 99-year timber right to Firesteel Lumber Company, which, in turn, immediately transferred its interest New Mexico Lumber and Timber Company. The Valles Caldera, which represented the last large tract of rich timberland in the Jémez Mountains held in private ownership (therefore, not subject to federal restrictions), finally opened to commercial logging that same year (chapter 7).

The timber operations initially harvested mature ponderosa pine, white fir, and Douglas fir, leaving stands of smaller diameter pulpwood trees alone. In addition, loggers left a few mature trees in cutting areas for natural reseeding. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the public outcry over the logging operations began to grow and talk of incorporating the Valles Caldera as the center of a new national park generated interest. In addition, Dunigan, a developer and rancher with environmental interests who was antagonistic to the logging industry (and vice versa), purchased the Baca Ranch in 1963 (chapter 7).

Consequently, T. P. Gallagher, Jr., the president of the reorganized New Mexico Timber, Inc., began to fear that his business interest would never realize the 2017 maturity date of Redondo Development Company's original 99-year timber lease. Simultaneously, plans for a pulp mill in the region and a change in New Mexico law permitting the harvest of trees as small as five inches (12.5 cm) in diameter created a market for previously non-commercial wood resources. In addition, the decade-long attempt by New Mexico Timber, Inc., to develop a market for aspen logs began to enjoy success. Within this changing economic, social, and political environment, Gallagher intensified his logging, including the use of clear-cutting practices based on chain and boom tree harvesting technologies, to maximize his logging profits. In combination, competing land use values among logging, ranching, and environmental interests fueled the most concentrated cycle of destructive land use activity in the Valles Caldera's history (chapter 7).

Dunigan and Gallagher engaged in a protracted cycle of lawsuits over the validity of the 99-year timber lease and the damages inflicted on the environment during logging. They resolved their conflict in 1970 when Dunigan's business, Baca Land and Cattle Company, bought the Baca Location's timber rights from New Mexico Timber, Inc., in 1972, just two days before the parties were scheduled to return to court for a renewed round of litigation (chapter 7). Following this transaction, Dunigan and his estate allowed only limited logging activity.

The hope of striking gold and silver was a motive in the Spanish colonization of New Mexico. Although the prospectors did not find great mineral wealth in the Jémez Mountains, they located sufficient quantities of sulphur that caused Mariano Sabine Otero to launch short-lived sulphur mining operations at the beginning of the 1900s. In addition, interest in geothermal development in the VCNP is now more than four decades old. With some of the VCNP geothermal rights still remaining in private ownership and the federal mandate for the VCNP to become a economically self-sustaining

enterprise, geothermal development continues to represent a potential land use activity.

The occupation of the Valles Caldera by Native American and local Hispanic groups for small-scale hunting, gathering, and mineral collecting, as well as for ritual purposes, is under-represented in the documentary record (chapters 5 and 9). For example, ethnographic resources demonstrate that Pueblo communities have clearly sustained cultural and historical affiliations with the Valles Caldera throughout the Historic period and into the present. These communities include neighboring settlements (e.g., the Pueblos of Jémez, Santa Clara, and Zia), as well as villages located at great distances (e.g., the Pueblo of Zuni in west-central New Mexico) (chapters 1 and 9). Just as with the Pueblos, available documentary evidence indicates that Apache, Navajo, Ute, and Hispanic groups made periodic visits to the Valles Caldera.

Historical and ethnohistorical documentary records often overlook the occupation of the Valles Caldera by traditional, land-based Native American and Hispanic communities because it places comparatively low value on commonplace, subsistence level economic activity. Ethnographic accounts, however, reveal that the region's Native American and Hispanic communities used the Valles Caldera for food, medicines, and other economic or recreational purposes. In the process of their interactions, traditional communities have developed a comprehensive knowledge of this tract's environment and the resources that it offers. For instance, this study finds that of the more than 500 native plant species identified in the VCNP, 350 taxa were used, or are likely to have been used, by Native American and Hispanic communities that maintain associations with this place for secular and ceremonial purposes (chapter 5).

Available ethnographic information, which has recorded valuable insights into aspects of the oral traditions and histories maintained by Native American and Hispanic communities, also indicates that many culturally diverse peoples hold the Valles Caldera in regard for important social and cultural reasons that transcend economic concerns. These groups have interacted with this tract, not as wilderness, but as an essential part of their respective community's landscapes (chapters 5 and 9). Their visits to the Valles Caldera were not undertaken just to satisfy some material need, nor was this locality merely a convenient stopover during long journeys across the Jémez Mountains. The mountains, water, caves, volcanoes, calderas, lava rock, shrines, trails, plants, and minerals encompassed by the VCNP boundaries have helped organize and give meaning to the land use activities of communities traditionally associated with this location.

When viewed in combination through an anthropological perspective, available historical, ethnohistorical, and ethnographic evidence pertaining to the Valles Caldera's land use history reveals that this locale is a multi-layered landscape. Today, diverse Native American, Hispanic, and Anglo-American communities maintain meaningful relationships with the Valles Caldera for their own purposes (chapter 9; see also appendices II and III).

Although seldom visible to casual observers who visit the VCNP today primarily to experience the location's majesty

first-hand, the Valles Caldera land use history is part of a dynamic cultural process. Subtle social and ideational contexts, which do not attract much public attention, underlie how each community has interacted historically with the Valles Caldera and used its many resources. A significant challenge for the management of the VCNP is the recognition, acceptance, and valuation of the cultural diversity inherent in living land use traditions that contribute to the Valles Caldera being much more than just a scenic mountain landscape