



Valles Caldera National Preserve
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior

LIVESTOCK GRAZING			
TITLE SUBJECT: Livestock Operations Plan			
TYPE OF DIRECTIVE (Policy/SOP/etc.): Operations Plan		EFFECTIVE DATE: January 2020	
AMENDS/REPLACES/RESCINDS: 2018 Livestock Operations Plan	SUPPLEMENTS: N/A	DISTRIBUTION TO: Public	
Submitted By: Martina Suazo, Plant Ecologist	Date: 1/14/2020	Approved By (Signature/Title): Jorge Silva-Bañuelos, Superintendent	Date: 1/23/2020

1. Authority

A. Livestock grazing will operate pursuant to §3043(b)(6) of Public Law 113-291 (16 USC 698v-11(b)(6)), and under the Valles Caldera Trust's Implementing Decision of the 2009 Environmental Assessment (EA) entitled, "Multiple Use and Sustained Yield of Forage Resources", in accordance with the authorized interim use of existing management plans. (16 USC 698v-11(c)(3)(B))

2. Timeline of Events

- A. VALL Cattle Grazing Application Public Announcement: ~June 1st d
 - 1. *Special modification for 2020 only: January 24, 2020*
- B. Application Submission Deadline: ~August 1st
 - 1. *Special modification for 2020 only: March 11, 2020*
- C. Lottery Drawing: ~September 1st
 - 1. *Special modification for 2020 only: March 16, 2020*
- D. Permit Signature Deadline: ~October 1st
 - 1. *Special modification for 2020 only: April 1, 2020*
- E. Document Submission Deadline: May 1st
 - 1. Cattle Manifest - Template will be provided by NPS
 - 2. Proof of Vaccinations
 - 3. Safety Plan
 - 4. Interpretation/Research Program Plan – criteria and template provided by NPS
 - 5. Cattle Delivery Plan
- F. Final Stocking Level Determination by NPS: ~May 1st
- G. Cattle Entry: June 1st
- H. Cattle Exit Plan Deadline: September 1st
- I. Cattle Exit: September 30th
- J. Final Research/Interpretation Report: December 1st

3. Livestock Grazing Season

A. The grazing season extends from June 1st through September 30th of each year.

4. Grazing Locations

A. The locations available to grazing are located in the Rincón de los Soldados and the Valle de los Posos (refer to map). The fenced areas are 1,343 acres in size. These areas have stock tanks that provide water throughout the summer.

5. Stocking Rates

A. The number of livestock supported in the preserve's designated grazing areas is based on the preserve's forage utilization model, which supports an average of 163 Animal Units per Month (AUM). Stocking rates may increase or decrease, within the range of 67 – 273 AUM, based on forage availability, utilization rates, and spring precipitation/soil moisture. If forage availability decreases due to low spring precipitation/soil moisture, drought, fire, or other factors, the grazing season may be cancelled entirely.

B. Range conditions in early May will determine the exact number of livestock to be admitted to the preserve. Once the NPS makes its stocking rate determination on or around May 1st, the authorized stocking rate will not decrease, except for reasons of drought, fire, or other unforeseen natural event(s). Any reduction in livestock numbers or termination of the grazing season due to unforeseen events will be at the discretion of the NPS, in consultation with the permittee. The NPS will work with the permittee to ensure that adequate consideration is given to alternative actions and that adequate time is permitted to arrange for transporting livestock from the preserve.

C. Consistent with the Environmental Assessment, the animal unit equivalents are as follows: cow/calf pair, bull (bovine), horse = 1.0 AU; steer, heifer, yearling = 0.7 AU.

D. Elk grazing also is included in the stocking rate calculation. For purposes of calculating forage utilization, an adult elk = 0.6 AU, and elk are assumed to be present in the grazing areas for eight (8) months/year. The elk density within the grazing area is computed using the estimated elk herd size on the preserve multiplied by the ratio of grazing area to the total area of the preserve; the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish has estimated the elk population size on the preserve to be approximately 2,000 individuals. The grazing areas comprise 1,343 acres of the 88,900-acre preserve. Hence, the following calculations are used to derive the livestock stocking rates.

STOCKING RATE CALCULATIONS (FORAGE VALUES IN LBS DRY WEIGHT)						
Pasture Name	Total Acres	HIGH MODEL	MID-HIGH MODEL	AVERAGE MODEL	MID-LOW MODEL	LOW MODEL
Rincón and Posos	1,343					
Total forage (lbs dry weight)		2,780,903	2,284,058	1,787,213	1,355,244	923,989
Total forage available to elk and livestock (40% of grand total).		1,112,361	913,623	714,885	542,097	369,596
Elk allocation (30 elk for 8 months @ 0.6 AUM)		129,600	129,600	129,600	129,600	129,600
Remaining forage for livestock (lbs)		982,761	784,023	585,285	412,497	239,996
Stocking rate (AUM), where 1 AUM = 900 lbs/month for 4 months.		273	218	163	115	67

6. Herd Composition

A. The livestock herd may be composed of cow-calf pairs, yearling steers, replacement heifers, bulls, or any combination thereof based on the operator's permit request.

B. Pregnant cows that are more than 4 months into their gestation term will NOT be permitted on the preserve due to the risk of them calving while on the preserve during the grazing season. This situation creates a high risk of predation by coyotes, bears, or cougars, and the NPS seeks to avoid loss of livestock to predators or habituating native predators to attacking and feeding on domesticated livestock.

7. Cost Recovery

A. The NPS is required to recover costs related to administering the livestock grazing program. However, it is the park-unit level policy to set cost recovery rates at no more than fair market value, based on an annual assessment of market rates for the State of New Mexico, generally between \$20.00 and \$25.00 per AUM.

B. To recover the costs of administering the program, the permittee shall pay the NPS the AUM fee, prorated on a daily basis based on entry and exit dates; no additional costs to the permittee are anticipated. Half of the total cost must be paid on or before entry of livestock into the preserve. The remaining half shall be paid upon removal of livestock at the end of the annual grazing period, no later than thirty (30) days from receipt of the final invoice issued by the NPS. If weather (drought) or fire conditions require the removal of livestock prior to the permit's expiration date, the NPS will adjust the cost to the permittee accordingly.

C. Provided proper notification, if an animal is removed from the preserve for any reason and not replaced, the permittee will not be charged the AUM fee for any days following its removal. The permittee is responsible for reporting dead livestock immediately on the day of discovery to the NPS permit coordinator to receive a prorated AUM fee for the animal. If not reported, the permittee will continue to be charged the monthly rate until notification is received. If the permittee fails to report the death of an animal, the monthly rate will still be charged and no credit will be given.

D. A fee of \$2.00/day/head will be assessed for livestock that remain on the preserve after the expiration of the permit.

E. Any unpaid debts to the NPS will disqualify a permittee from consideration for this or future permit.

8. Livestock Grazing Program Supervision

A. The person named on the permit as in charge of the permitted activity on-site must have full authority to make any decisions about the activity and must remain on-site at all times during livestock delivery, removal, and rotations, and on-site on a routine basis each week. The person shall be responsible for all individuals, groups, range riders, livestock owners, etc. involved with the permit.

B. A copy of the signed Special Use Permit is to be carried in all vehicles. A vehicle permit tag shall be placed on the dashboard of each vehicle used by the permittee.

C. The permittee is solely responsible for the health and viability of the livestock. The NPS is not responsible for, or financially liable for, any livestock losses, fatalities, injuries or illnesses while livestock are on the preserve.

9. Maintenance of Equipment and Supplies

A. The NPS will ensure that fences are intact and functional at the beginning of the grazing period. The permittee is responsible for minor fence repair during the grazing season, with materials provided by the NPS.

B. The permittee shall provide all equipment, supplies, labor, supervision, incidentals, and services that are necessary and adequate to the performance of the permit.

C. The permanent improvements constructed or existing for use in conjunction with the permit are the property of the United States Government unless specifically designated otherwise in writing or covered by a separate agreement. They will not be removed nor compensated for upon the expiration or cancellation of the permit.

10. Access to Grazing Locations

A. Access to the preserve by the permittee is limited to the designated grazing locations and designated motorized vehicle routes and parking areas, as depicted on the attached map, unless otherwise directed by the NPS. Should the authorized motorized vehicle routes become impassable, the NPS will work with the permittee to identify an alternative motorized vehicle route.

B. Delivery and removal of livestock will be made using the VC-0401 road via NM State Route 4 to the Rincón de las Soldados corrals. Deliveries may begin on or after the start date of the permit. Removal of livestock at the end of the grazing season must be completed on or before the end date of the permit.

1. Due to the undeveloped nature of the VC-0401 access route, semi-trucks are not authorized for cattle delivery. Truck and trailer must be utilized for cattle delivery and removal.

2. Trailers used for the purpose of transporting livestock to/from the preserve must be in good working condition to ensure the humane treatment of the animals being transported. The NPS reserves the right to deny entry into the preserve of any vehicle towing a livestock trailer that is in a condition that could pose a risk of injury or death to the livestock during transport.

C. Ailing or debilitated livestock may be removed by the permittee at any time, upon notification of the NPS permit coordinator, who will coordinate access to the preserve and maintain appropriate documentation for prorating costs. The permittee must provide the NPS with the animal's tag number, and any other information the NPS determines to be necessary. Replacement of removed AUs is permitted on a one-for-one basis, and must be coordinated with the NPS permit coordinator.

D. The use of corrals and other livestock-related equipment located within the designated grazing locations is authorized (refer to map for details). The permittee is responsible for hauling in water for use in watering troughs located within the Rincón pasture corrals and shall coordinate water hauling activities with the NPS permit coordinator in advance.

E. Commercial activity, including the buying and selling of livestock, within the preserve is not authorized.

11. Livestock Delivery and Removal

A. The permittee shall submit a request in writing to the NPS permit coordinator, at least 30 days advance, to schedule the delivery and removal of livestock from the preserve. The NPS permit coordinator will coordinate access to the preserve and the timeframe during which delivery/removal of livestock may occur. The delivery and removal of livestock shall occur during normal operating hours, and NPS personnel must be present.

B. By May 1st, using an NPS-provided form, the permittee will provide the NPS with a list of livestock owners, number of head per owner, image(s) of owner's brand, ear-tag numbers and any other information that NPS determines to be necessary to identify ownership of livestock.

C. NPS staff will be on-site to inventory cattle upon delivery and exit.

D. Proof of treatment of animals such as veterinarian paperwork, producer-signed logs, or receipts from purchase of vaccinations and de-wormers will be required by May 1st prior to entry of livestock. Cattle must be vaccinated with Cattle Master 4 or equivalent, Ultrabac 8 or equivalent and Ivomec Pour-On or equivalent prior to entry. Horses will have a current Coggins test and inspection papers issued by the NM Livestock Board or out-of-state equivalent.

E. The administration of booster vaccinations on-site is authorized, and the timing of which shall be coordinated with the NPS permit coordinator.

12. **Herd Movement and Rotations Schedule**

A. Rotation of livestock between the two grazing locations (Rincón de los Soldados and Valle de los Posos) is mandatory and the responsibility of the permittee. Livestock rotations will be monitored by NPS personnel. Subject to any minor modifications agreed to by the NPS and the permittee, livestock shall be rotated on or near the following dates:

1. June 1: Entry to Rincón de los Soldados with all AUs.
2. July 15: Move entire herd to Valle de los Posos.
3. August 15: Move entire herd back to the Rincón de los Soldados.
4. September 30: Entire herd departs preserve via the corral in the Rincón de los Soldados.

B. Range rider(s), hired by the permittee, will provide herd movement management on a routine basis; livestock within the grazing areas must be herded away from water and valley bottoms to upland areas at least three (3) times per week to prevent over-utilization in the valley bottoms and near stock ponds.

C. Any dog(s) used in the operation of the permit, must be controlled at all times (by voice or leash), free of fleas and ticks, and current on all vaccinations. Proof of current vaccinations for rabies, parvo, and distemper must be provided to the NPS for each working stock dog brought into the preserve.

D. The use of domestic horse(s) is permitted, provided that humane treatment is accorded the animal(s) at all times and all regulations related to animal use are strictly observed. All animals must be under physical control at all times, and it is the responsibility of the permittee to provide the animal(s) with water and certified weed-free pelleted feed when stabled or corralled. Horses may be stabled or corralled on the preserve, and when are not in use, they may be kept in the portable pens in the Rincon de los Soldados. There is no fee for stabling horses overnight on the preserve, provided the animal(s) are fed certified weed-free pelleted feed. Any horse(s) feeding on forage in the preserve will be considered as one (1) AU for purposes of cost recovery. The permittee is responsible for the routine removal from the preserve of any horse manure that accumulates within the portable pens. Tying stock directly to trees or other sensitive preserve resources is prohibited.

13. **Stray/Escaped Livestock**

A. The NPS will notify the permittee via phone and in writing (email) of any stray livestock observed and/or reported outside the designated grazing locations of the Rincón de los Soldados or the Valle de los Posos. The permittee will round up and return any stray livestock to the appropriate grazing location within 72 hours of notification by NPS staff. The permittee will be charged \$10/day per head for any livestock not returned to the authorized grazing location after that time period.

14. **Range Condition Monitoring**

A. Range condition monitoring will be the responsibility of the NPS, in collaboration and consultation with the permittee, and may result in alterations to the grazing plan or removal of animals from certain areas of the preserve.

15. **Invasive Species Prevention**

A. To prevent the introduction of noxious weeds into the preserve, vehicles (except those identified for commuting) and trailers shall be washed (particularly the wheels and undercarriage) prior to entering the preserve. The NPS reserves the right to deny entry into the preserve of any vehicle and/or trailer that does not meet this condition.

B. All feed brought into the preserve must be certified weed-free and will be contained so as to not allow its deposition in the preserve.

16. Permit Cancellation

A. The permit to graze livestock on the preserve may be suspended or cancelled in whole or in part by the NPS after written notice for failure to comply with any of the terms and conditions specified in the permit.

B. Furthermore, the NPS reserves the right to modify or terminate the permit in the event of severe drought or natural disaster such as wildland fire, if such an event reduces the available forage to levels at or below those needed to provide for wildlife and ecosystem services. In the event the permit is terminated due to drought or other natural disaster, the permittee will not be responsible for costs associated with periods not grazed. Any reimbursement will be made on a pro-rated basis.

17. Fire Return Interval

A. According to historical data, the grasslands within the Rincón de los Soldados and Valle de los Posos had a historical fire return interval of 3-12 years and 6 – 8 years, respectively. Therefore, to mimic natural fire return intervals for purposes of ecological health and resource benefit, the NPS will seek to rest and burn the grasslands within the authorized grazing areas every ten (10) years as described in the following table, during which time grazing will be suspended for that season. Should conditions not allow for the safe implementation of a prescribed fire during the planned year, the NPS will seek to burn the grasslands the following year. The livestock grazing program will resume the year following the implementation of a prescribed fire in the authorized grazing locations.

2021	Rest Grazing Areas	2031	Rest Grazing Areas	2041	Rest Grazing Areas
2022	Rx Burn	2032	Rx Burn	2042	Rx Burn

18. Program Safety

A. Prior to livestock entry, the permittee shall develop a safety plan, approved by and in consultation with the NPS, that identifies potential hazards and accident prevention measures associated with all proposed activities.

B. Emergency contact information for individuals conducting activities authorized in the permit shall be provided to the NPS prior to livestock entry.

19. Scientific Research and/or Public Education

A. In compliance with the preserve's legislative authority on grazing (16 USC 698v-11(b)(6)(B)), the permittee shall carry out a plan, provided to the NPS for review and approval, that furthers either (1) scientific research, or (2) interpretation of the ranching history of the preserve.

B. The plan shall be submitted for review by the NPS no later than May 1st of the grazing year, and the NPS will seek to coordinate and finalize the plan with the permittee by May 15th.

C. The permittee shall submit to the NPS a final report of the approved science and/or interpretation project describing activities, data, results, and interpretation of the results by December 1st following the end of the grazing period.

D. The use by the permittee of the preserve's horse barn and paddocks may be considered on a case-by-case basis based on the proposed scientific research and/or interpretation plan described in the permittee's application. The NPS reserves the right to suspend or terminate this use at any time.

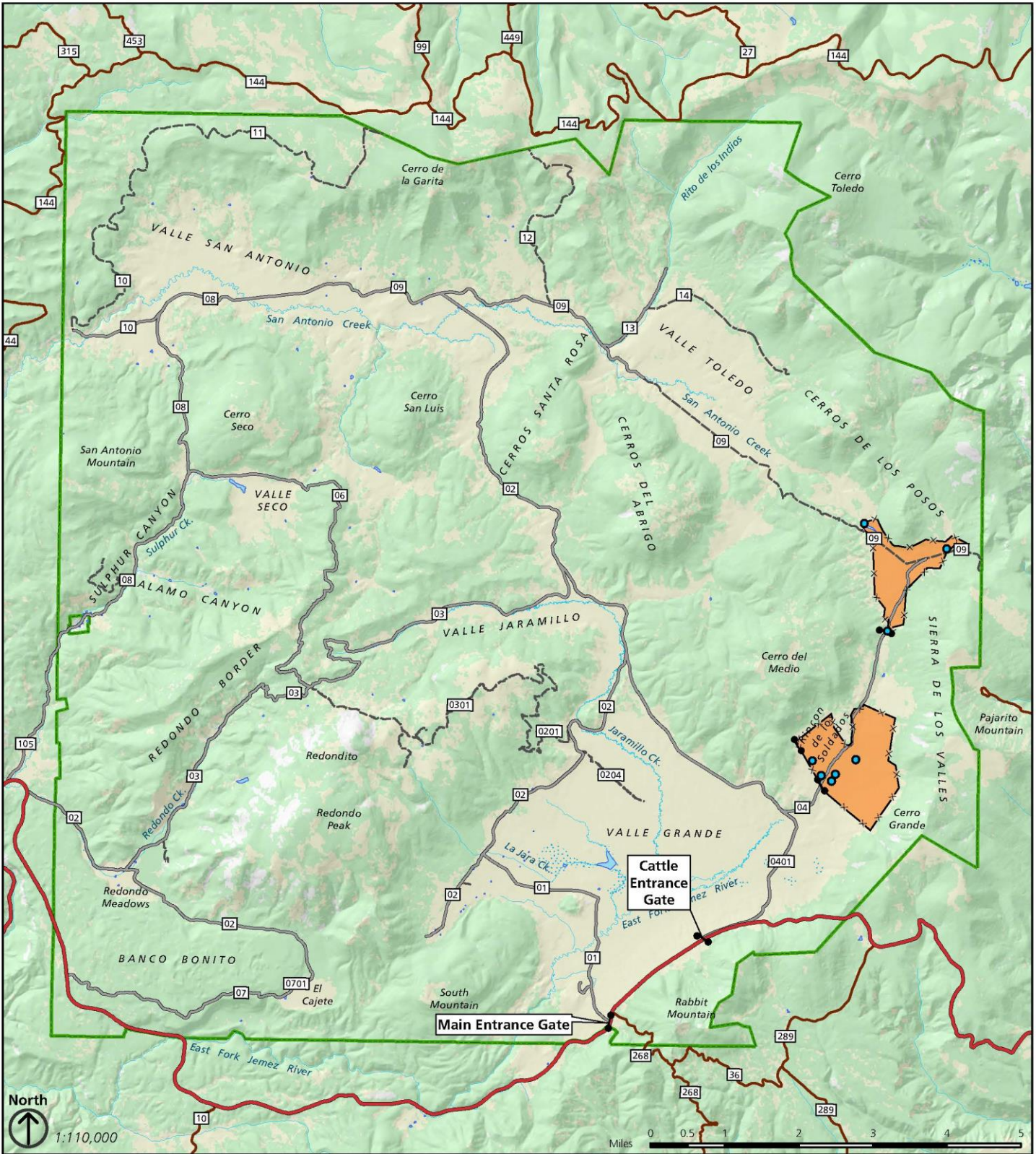
E. Any un-submitted reports to the NPS will disqualify the permittee from consideration for this or future grazing permit.

F. Criteria for scientific research project:

1. Project must follow the basic elements of the scientific method which include but are not limited to: Introduction, Hypothesis, Methods, Results, Conclusion
2. Include photos, diagrams, maps, tables, charts, graphs, and any type of visual aid necessary for communicating project elements.

G. Criteria for public interpretation project:

1. Project must help tell the story of grazing, past and present, within the Valles Caldera landscape. This will require working with the preserve's chief of interpretation & education or designee to ensure information that is presented or distributed to the public follows the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting the preserve.
2. Potential projects may include but are not limited to public presentations, interpretive exhibits or waysides, and educational videos.
3. Project plan must include a description, audience to be reached, objectives, dates, contact information for key personnel and partners, and a method for evaluating the effectiveness of the project.



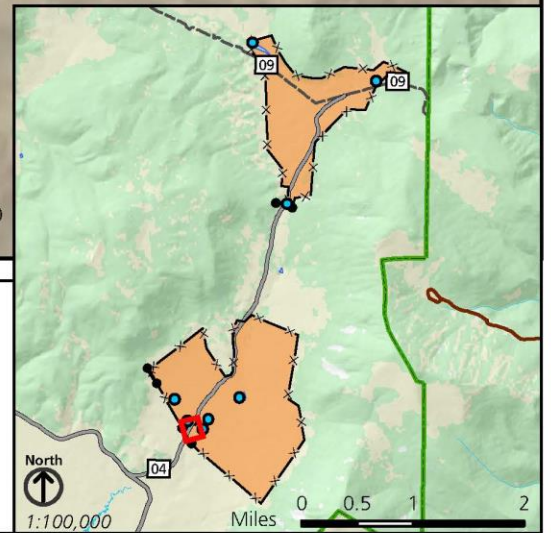
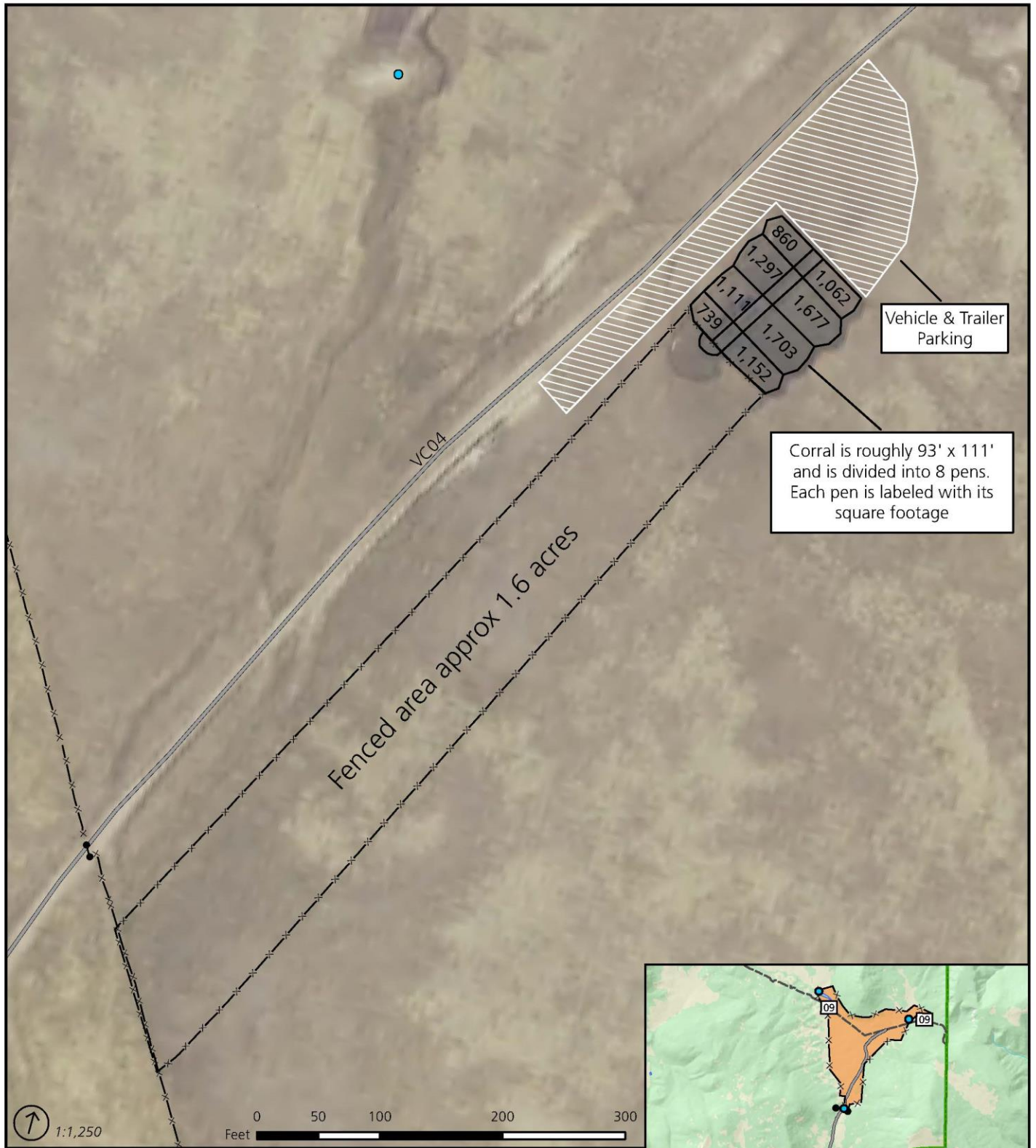
Valles Caldera National Preserve

Grazing Areas



M. Shelley, January 2020

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|--------------------|
|  | Grazing Areas |  | Authorized Roads |
|  | Gates |  | Use-Specific Roads |
|  | Stock Tanks |  | SFNF Roads |
|  | Pond/Playa |  | State Route 4 |
|  | Reservoir |  | Preserve Boundary |
|  | Wetland | | |
|  | Perennial Streams | | |



Valles Caldera National Preserve

Rincon Corral Area



M. Shelley, January 2020

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Grazing Areas | Fence |
| Gates | Authorized Roads |
| Stock Tanks | Use-Specific Roads |
| Pond/Playa | SFNF Roads |
| Wetland | State Route 4 |
| Perennial Streams | Preserve Boundary |