

NEW APPOINTMENT TO VCNP BOARD, AT LAST

Yesterday, the White House appointed Kent Salazar to fill one of three open seats on the Valles Caldera National Preserve Board of Trustees. Kent will hold the seat designated for an expert in wildlife management.

Kent Salazar has worked professionally on wildlife and hunting related issues for a number of years. He held a position on the New Mexico State Game Commission under Governor Bill Richardson and is a Regional Director for the National Wildlife Federation.

According to the New Mexico Wildlife Federation website: “Kent is a lifelong resident of New Mexico and an avid hunter and outdoors person. His family roots are in Northern New Mexico. He currently lives in Albuquerque, but still has farms in Lucero and Peralta, New Mexico. Kent has a B.S. in Biology from the University of New Mexico, and is retired from the City of Albuquerque Environmental Health Department where he served as a division manager for twenty years. He also worked for Wilson Engineering as an environmental planner and served as coordinator for the Land of Enchantment Clean Cities program, a nonprofit alternative fuels coalition. He currently operates an environmental consulting business.”

Caldera Action has had occasion to work with Kent and New Mexico Wildlife Federation which has actively supported efforts to transfer management of the VCNP to the National Park Service. Kent is a fair and genuinely kind person.

Caldera Action sends its congratulations to Kent and we look forward to working with him over the months to come.

Two VCNP Trust Positions Remain Open

Two seats remain open on the VCNP Board of Trustees after the appointment of Kent Salazar. These are the seats for “financial management” and for “nonprofit conservation organization” designated by the VCNP’s enabling legislation.

The members of the VCNP Board of Trustees are appointed by the President of the United States. Caldera Action has been in contact with New Mexico’s senators over the many months these positions have been vacant to encourage appointments be made soon. We are hopeful that the long wait for a full board will be over soon.

Part of the reason many people have been encouraging National Park Service management of the VCNP is this politically appointment process for the VCNP Trust. A small piece of land in New Mexico should not need a group of managers appointed by the President of the United States. Not only is this process inefficient, it has the potential to inject some partisan overtones into the VCNP management process.

The 18 national preserves that the National Park Service manages have a single manager or superintendent who has moved up the career ranks. Though we are grateful for the dedication and service of the VCNP Board of Trustees, a single professional manager would be a more efficient and stable source of supervision for the staff and a more reliable point of contact for the interested public.