

## Valles Caldera National Preserve Draft Management Zone Concepts & Desired Conditions Table

This table includes more-detailed descriptions of the draft zone concepts and desired conditions under consideration at Valles Caldera National Preserve during this management zoning process. The planning team has created a newsletter which includes an overview of management zoning and a concise summary of various zoning approaches under consideration by the park. We suggest reading that newsletter first at [https://parkplanning.nps.gov/VALL\\_zoning](https://parkplanning.nps.gov/VALL_zoning).

	Visitor Engagement Zone	Self-Guided Zone	Backcountry / Self-Reliance Zone
<b>Purpose/ Zone Concept Summary</b>	This zone is where most short-term visitors to the park will go. These easy-to-reach areas may have higher visitor use and visitor density. Visitors are provided with opportunities to experience, appreciate, and connect with park resources in a more developed setting. Most of the development, visitor services, and facilities in the park are in this zone, and could include things like a visitor center, amphitheater, paved roads, parking areas, full-service restrooms, picnic areas, developed campgrounds, and administrative facilities and utilities. Most public roads in this zone would be open year-round. Visitors are offered a variety of opportunities for all ability levels, including onsite interpretation and education to learn about park resources.	In this zone, visitors have an opportunity to venture into the park away from the main hub of activity to directly experience the sights and sounds of the natural landscape. The zone includes development and facilities that are dispersed and designed for low to moderate densities of visitors, such as trailheads, parking, well-engineered multiple use trails, occasional waysides/signage, vault toilets, picnic areas, and primitive campsites. This zone includes transportation corridors to explore the park, and most facilities would occur within these corridors. Public roads in this zone would be open seasonally. Although a degree of self-reliance and outdoor skill is necessary, areas in this zone are not so remote that they require a high level of skill or preparation.	This zone encompasses large contiguous areas of the park, where natural processes, ecosystem function, and wildlife behavior are prioritized, and visitors can experience solitude in diverse natural landscapes with few encounters with other visitors. Areas in this zone are remote and undeveloped, requiring a higher degree of outdoor skill and self-reliance. Beyond primitive trails and minimal signage, there are no maintained visitor facilities.
<b>Natural Resources Desired Conditions</b>	Emphasis in this zone is on engaging visitors through interpretation and education about the natural resources at the park and their long-term stewardship. Best management practices are implemented to retain natural processes, but alterations to develop essential visitor and administrative services and resulting effects (e.g., ground-compaction, soil disturbance, vegetation management, changes to wildlife behavior due to sounds and smells from human activity, and effects to viewshed and soundscape from people and vehicles) may occur within or directly adjacent to developed areas.	Natural processes and landscapes are promoted in this zone, in balance with opportunities for visitors to interact with the natural setting. Natural processes and landscapes generally remain unaltered and modifications for visitor use are minimal and unobtrusive. Some legacy human development (e.g., historic cabins) may be retained to support visitor activities. Areas of limited development are few, dispersed to avoid concentration of human impacts, and designed specifically to minimize resource impacts from visitation.	The conservation of natural and biological resources is prioritized in this zone. Natural systems and processes prevail, and natural sensory resources are generally unaltered. Alterations for human use are rare, most legacy human developments are removed, and the effects of human influences diminish through time. Restoration and active natural resource management are used to achieve natural functioning and character of forests, vegetation, wildlife, and hydrology.

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Cultural Resources Desired Conditions	In this zone, visitors will have opportunities to understand and appreciate all periods of the park's human history. Certain cultural sites (e.g., historic cabins) may be interpreted for public education, and historic resources and landscapes are maintained to retain historic setting for each area's period(s) of significance. Historic structures may be adaptively-reused for visitor interpretation or administrative purposes.	Cultural resources in this zone provide a sense of both historic and prehistoric settings, with visitors directed to locations where they can enjoy appropriate cultural experiences. Certain cultural sites (e.g., historic cabins) may be interpreted for public education, and historic structures may be adaptively-reused for visitor interpretation opportunities or administrative uses related to visitor experience or resource protection.	The prehistoric-era character of the natural landscape is emphasized over historic-era character, with cultural landscapes providing visitors an opportunity to experience the non-agricultural heritage of this high elevation setting.
Visitor Opportunities & Experiences Desired Conditions	Opportunities are offered for all ages, skill levels, and abilities. Learning and recreational opportunities are provided for those with a limited amount of time to spend at the park (1-2 hours). This zone highlights the park's fundamental resources and values and offers a high level of visitor orientation and facilitated interpretive programming. The zone contains the typical suite of visitor amenities and trails of all types, along with interpretive displays/exhibits, potable water, food services, and other services such as equipment rental. This zone accommodates high levels of visitor use and density. This zone also provides a high level of accessible experiences and opportunities for all visitors, focusing on universal design principles.	Visitors are provided with geographically dispersed opportunities to discover and enjoy the park's fundamental resources and values. This zone will have the highest diversity of recreational opportunities, suitable for half- or full-day visits. This zone includes vehicular corridors, and most of the facilities in the zone (e.g., trailheads, picnic areas) occur in these corridors. The zone contains a well-engineered and maintained single-and multiple-use trail network. Recreational opportunities are distributed to avoid high visitor concentration in any one area. Visitors are offered a sense of adventure and independence, but still can rely on a moderate level of support through guidance such as signage, waysides, and maps. Some preparation may be needed to explore this zone (e.g., food, water, maps).	This zone provides opportunities for exploration, solitude, and deep immersion in the park's fundamental resources and values. Visitors need to have a higher degree of self-reliance and outdoor skill, including navigation, to explore this zone. This zone has the lowest level of use, visitor density, and human encounters. This zone is not suitable for high density activities or events. Visitors utilize a primitive trail network to move about the zone in a manner that protects and preserves the quality of surrounding natural and cultural resources. Visitors can expect to encounter only a limited number of visitors or staff; however, visitors should not expect solitude all of the time. As a self-reliance zone, visitors are prepared to not rely upon other individuals.

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Degree and Character of Development Desired Conditions	<p>Development is provided for high visitor capacity and to accommodate employees, while being designed in a compact manner that harmonizes with the natural and cultural character of the various settings within the zone. Vehicular travel is on paved or improved gravel roads, most with year-round access. Appropriate levels of parking are available for different vehicle types, including motorcoaches.</p> <p>Visitor facilities may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• visitor center, contact station, entrance station, amphitheater, night sky observatory</li> <li>• parking (cars, vehicles hauling trailers, and motorcoaches)</li> <li>• full-service restrooms, picnic areas, waysides</li> <li>• trails of all kinds, ranging from surfaced to primitive, single- and multi-use trails</li> <li>• developed campgrounds, overnight facilities</li> <li>• retail services: bookstore, food, gear rental, guided tours (foot, bike, horse, van)</li> </ul> <p>Operational/administrative facilities may include: offices, laboratory, scientific installations, employee housing, public water system, utilities, &amp; waste disposal/recycling.</p>	<p>Development is limited and more primitive, consisting of relatively small and dispersed nodes focused on interpretation and visitor experience, and designed to avoid excessive clustering of people, vehicles, and/or facilities. Visitor vehicle travel is only within the designated corridors on improved or maintained gravel roads; road access is seasonal (spring-fall). Parking areas are small and accommodate fewer numbers of cars.</p> <p>Visitor facilities may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developed trailheads with smaller parking areas, vault toilets</li> <li>• trails of various kinds including well-engineered/maintained single- and multiple use trails</li> <li>• signage, waysides, interpretive kiosks</li> <li>• primitive campgrounds</li> </ul> <p>Operational/administrative facilities may include: backcountry cabins, grazing-management infrastructure (e.g., corrals), and scientific installations.</p>	<p>This zone has the lowest level of development, mostly limited to trails, fences, and installations necessary for safety, resource protection, and promotion of ecosystem management (e.g., communication towers, approved scientific monitoring, with installations subject to review on a case-by-case basis). Legacy development is mostly removed or restored to a natural landscape.</p> <p>Little to no development or visitor facilities. Beyond the trailheads in the Self-Guided zone, visitors will encounter only primitive trails with limited signage. No public access roads; no parking areas.</p> <p>Operational/administrative facilities may include: fencing, scientific installations, radio repeaters. Some vehicle access routes may be maintained for administrative use, such as fire and other emergency services.</p>

### Note:

- Park zoning identifies and describes the appropriate variety of desired future resource conditions and visitor experiences to be achieved and maintained in geographically distinct areas of a park. Zoning does not propose specific developments; rather, it is used as a basis to inform future planning and decision-making.
- Any future development or specific management actions analyzed in other plans / projects will require further environmental compliance and planning prior to implementation.