

# VALLE VIDAL

## *Information Packet*

---

-Valle Vidal fact sheet  
*page 1*

-Valle Vidal Core Values Statement  
*page 2*

- Frequently asked questions about coalbed methane  
*pages 3 - 4*

- The Forest Plan Amendment process  
*page 5*

- Four things you can do to help protect the Valle Vidal  
*page 6*

- Contact information  
*page 7*

Information provided by the  
Coalition for the Valle Vidal. For  
more information about the  
Coalition, or to find updates,  
please see [www.vallevidal.org](http://www.vallevidal.org)



# THE VALLE VIDAL

## WHERE (AND WHAT) IS THE VALLE VIDAL?

The Valle Vidal is a 100,000 acre unit of the Carson National Forest. It is located between Cimarron and Costilla, near the Philmont Scout Ranch. Coalbed methane, a type of natural gas, is located under the eastern 40,000 acres of the Valle.

## WHY IS IT SO SPECIAL?

Known as New Mexico's Yellowstone, the Valle Vidal attracts hunters, anglers, hikers, campers and wildlife viewers from New Mexico and across the country. It is home to both New Mexico's largest elk herd (and the state's only once-in-a-lifetime elk hunt) and the Rio Grande cutthroat trout. The Valle is home to 3,000 Boy Scouts every summer. With its high-quality streams, firewood and grazing, this valley is also a vital resource for Northern New Mexico's rural and agricultural communities.

## WHO OWNS THE VALLE VIDAL?

The Valle Vidal belongs to the citizens of the United States. The Valle Vidal is public land, transferred to the federal government by the Pennzoil Corporation in 1982 in order to protect its beautiful scenery and unique wildlife resources.

## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

The oil and gas industry is moving aggressively to open the Valle Vidal to full-scale coalbed methane development. The Carson National Forest is now preparing for a public process to assess whether or not coalbed methane leases should be issued on the eastern half of the Valle Vidal. If allowed, this development will drastically change the Valle Vidal forever. Find out more on pages 3-4.

## WHAT'S THE CONTEXT?

The Raton Basin covers approximately 2.6 million acres. The 40,000 acres of the Valle Vidal represents approximately 1.5 percent of that area.

In the Forest Service's *Reasonably Foreseeably Development Report (RFDS)*, experts calculated that between 191 and 507 gas wells could be drilled in the Valle Vidal. The actual number of wells depends on exploration results and future decisions about the minimum spacing between wells.

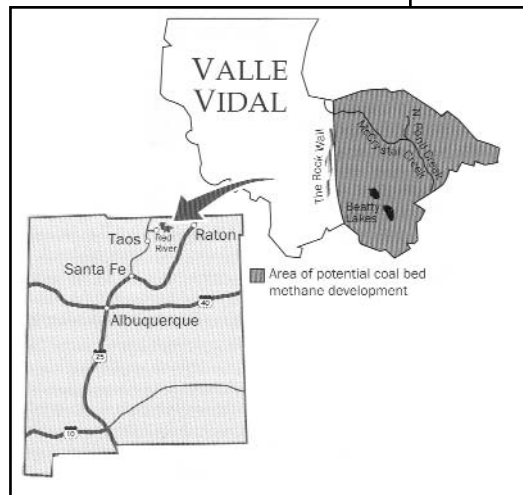
Using the figures cited in the RFDS, experts estimate that **there is enough natural gas under the Valle Vidal to power the United States for a minimum of 11 hours, and a maximum of 36 hours.**

## The Coalition for the Valle Vidal

The Coalition for the Valle Vidal includes a broad spectrum of New Mexicans as well as others beyond our state who support this cause. The Coalition currently boasts a membership of more than 70 local, regional, and state organizations, including individual businesses, business associations, city governments, non-profits, and individual citizens from a variety of interests and professions. Our membership includes people spanning a broad range of society's occupations --business leaders, ranchers, outfitters and

guides, outdoor enthusiasts, scientists, attorneys, engineers, writers, artists, local government officials, and retirees, among others. All of these people -- whether Republicans, Democrats, or politically unaffiliated -- offer varied points of view about the present and future of the Valle Vidal.

Almost 90 percent of the coalbed methane regions in five Rocky Mountain states are already available for leasing by the energy industry, and vast areas are already producing coalbed methane. The Valle Vidal is a tiny parcel of land by comparison, and should be kept free from industrial development for future generations to enjoy.



# COALITION FOR THE VALLE VIDAL CORE VALUES STATEMENT

The Valle Vidal of New Mexico is a national treasure, beloved by sportsmen, ranchers, outfitters and guides, local business, concerned citizens, outdoor enthusiasts, and conservation groups. In accord with the Valle Vidal's inherent beauty and value, we believe the following:

- 1. The Valle Vidal's watersheds are of paramount value, and its waters the lifeblood of the land's wildlife and our communities;**
- 2. The Valle Vidal is a vital resource to a sustainable future for northern New Mexico's rural and agricultural communities;**
- 3. The Valle Vidal provides unique recreational and sporting opportunities for families, hunters, anglers, boy scouts, and other outdoor enthusiasts;**
- 4. The Valle Vidal provides a home for abundant wildlife populations, and holds intrinsic ecological importance and scenic beauty;**
- 5. The Valle Vidal should be managed for the benefit of the people - all of the people.**

Based on these values, we believe that it is a grave mistake to exploit this special place for the principal benefit of the energy industry. Consequently, the Valle Vidal should be closed to energy leasing and development, and thereby protected for the benefit of present and future generations of all Americans.

**As of January 2005, the Core Values Statement is endorsed by:** American Outback Adventures, Cimarron | Amigos Bravos | Audubon New Mexico | Baby Blue, Taos | Bear X-ing, Red River | Blue Fish Clothing, Taos | Blue Moon Art Gallery, Taos | Blue Moon Eclectics, Cimarron | Blue Lotus Clinic, Taos | Carson Estates Water Associations | Cimarron Chamber of Commerce | Cimarron Village Council | Cimarron Realty | Cloud Tipi Enterprises, Dixon | Conservation Voters NM | Co-op Construction, Taos | Costilla Valley Studio Tour Group | Cottonwood Corp. | Dragonfly Café and Bakery, Taos | Duran's Conoco and Grocery Store | Dwelling's Revisited, Taos | Edge Habitat Mountain Center | Fairholm Builders, El Prado | Flying Pig Ironworks, Taos | FX-18, Taos, NM | Gypsy 360 Café, Arroyo Seco | Head in the Clouds Productions, Raton | Jim Leahy Designs, Taos | Kachina Motel, Questa | Linda Upholstry, Taos | Masonry Structures, Inc, Albuquerque | Margret Nes Fine Arts, El Prado | Nora Jacquez, Attorney | North Star Inn, Arroyo Seco | Magpie Farm Landscape and Design | Moby Dickens Bookshop, Taos | Mudd N Flood Mountain Shop | National Wildlife Federation | NM Republicans for Environmental Protection | NM Audubon Council | NM Environmental Law Center | NM Conservation Voters Education Fund | NM Wildlife Federation | Oil & Gas Accountability Project | Peregrinations | Poetry, Funk and Finery, Taos | Ronnie Lee's Supper Club, Taos | Stephen Rose, Attorney | S&S Ferrier Service, El Prado | Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society | Sheva Café, Taos | Solar Eyes Productions, El Prado | Sue Strebe Real Estate, Guadalupita | SW Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility | Taos County Commission | Texas BBQ and Baking Company | Taos Co. Noxious Weed Alt Mgmt Committee | Taos Gems and Minerals | Taos Land Trust | Taos Landscaping Inc. | Taos Mountain Outfitters | Taos Mountain Wood Works, El Prado | Taos Mountain Electronics | Taos Tack and Pet Supply | Taos Town Council | Thal Equine, LLC, Ranchos de Taos | The Alternative Energy Institute, Tahoe City, CA | Truchas, NM Chapter of Trout Unlimited | United Chevrolet/Toyota Company, Raton | Wild Earth Llama Trek Adventures, Questa | Native Plant Society of NM, Taos | Iamscapes Landscape Design, Inc., Taos | The Four Corners Institute | Village of Eagle Nest | Gypsy 360 Café, Arroyo Seco | Zervas Design Sans Limites, Taos

**If you support the work of the Coalition, please let the businesses listed here know that you appreciate their support for the Valle Vidal when you give them your patronage.**

# WHAT IS COALBED METHANE & OTHER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **Q: What is Coalbed Methane?**

A: Coalbed Methane (CBM) is natural gas (primarily methane) that is trapped within a coal formation or seam. When coal seams are saturated with water, the methane is attached or held to the coal by the pressure of the water.

## **Q: How is Coalbed Methane (CBM) extracted or produced?**

A: Wellpads, generally 2-3 acres in size, are scraped clean of vegetation to accommodate vehicles, trailers, fuel tanks, drilling equipment, "reserve pits" for containing drilling and fracturing fluids, and gas and water pumps. Each well is connected to the others with pipelines, compressor stations, electric lines and roads. Typical CBM projects in the United States are spaced one well per every 160, 80, 40 or 20 acres.

The extraction of CBM involves pumping millions of gallons of water from the coal seam, in order to reduce the water pressure holding the gas to the coal seam. After the water is removed and the pressure is reduced, the methane is released from the coal, and can be extracted. One or more of several "stimulation" techniques may be used to further encourage the flow of gas to the well.

## **Q: What is "Produced Water"?**

A: The water removed from the coalbed during CBM development is known as Produced Water. Produced water is not often potable, given its association with coal seams. It can also contain high levels of toxins and carcinogens from chemicals used in the drilling process. Current New Mexico regulations mandate that produced water in the Raton Basin be reinjected back into the ground, although in 2003 legislators attempted to pass a law that would subsidize energy companies to pump this water into local rivers.

More than 420 million gallons of water were produced in association with CBM development in Colfax County, from October 1999 to April 2003. The average CBM well in the Powder River Basin in Wyoming pumps out 15,000 to 20,000 gallons of brackish water daily.

## **Q: Aren't they already drilling for CBM in the Valle Vidal?**

A. No. Large areas of the Raton Basin are currently

being developed for coalbed methane, and most of the 2.6 million acres of the basin are available to industry for further gas production. The Valle Vidal represents only 1.5 percent of the area of the Raton Basin, and is a special place that should be set aside and protected.

## **Q: How many wells would be drilled in the Valle Vidal?**

A: Industry experts have calculated that 190 to more than 500 gas wells would be drilled in the Valle Vidal. The actual number of wells depends on exploration results and future decisions about the minimum spacing between wells.

## **Q: Won't CBM development in the Valle Vidal be good for the economy?**

A: CBM development will have a negative impact on the sporting, recreation, tourism, and hospitality industries in the area. Hunting and fishing, including guide/outfitter fees, currently provide a substantial source of revenue for the region. The short-term economic benefits resulting from CBM drilling don't outweigh the long-term, sustainable revenue the Valle Vidal that the Valle already generates.

## **Q The Valle Vidal isn't a roadless wilderness area, what's all the fuss about?**

A: The Valle Vidal was never intended to be a roadless or wilderness area. This does not lessen its value as a wildlife sanctuary for the New Mexico's largest elk herd, as a haven for hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts, and as a vital resource for the surrounding ranching and agricultural communities.

## **Q How much public land is already available for CBM drilling in the West?**

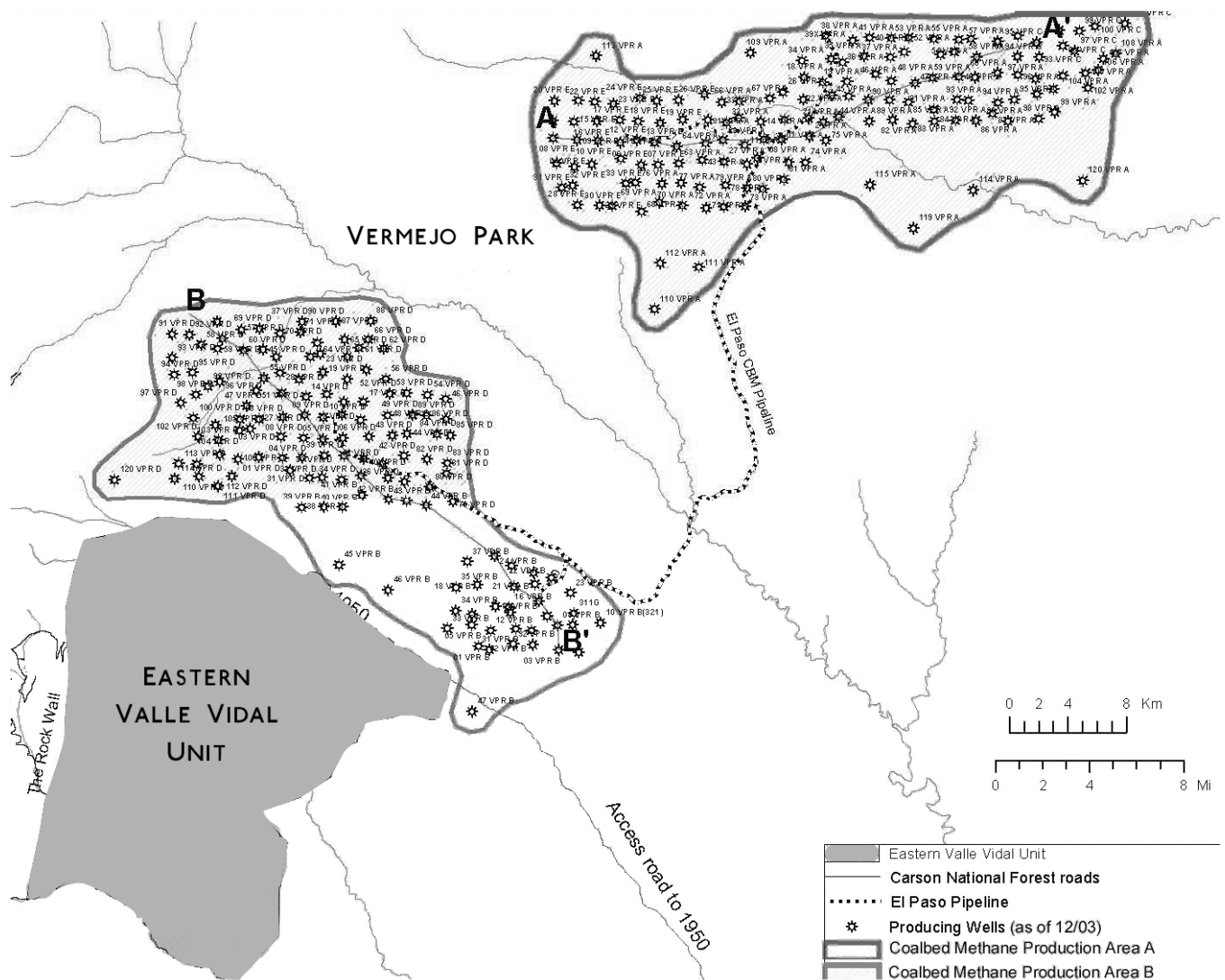
A: 88 percent of natural gas resources -- more than 122.6 trillion cubic feet -- occurring on federal lands in Colorado, New Mexico, Montana, Utah and Wyoming are already available for leasing and development. More than 87.6 trillion cubic feet of gas is available from non-federal lands in the region.

Over 42,000,000 acres of BLM lands are currently under lease for oil and gas extraction, although only 11,413,000 acres under lease were in production in 2002.

[Wilderness Society BLM Oil and Gas Leasing Fact Sheet in reply to the BLM EPCA Inventory Fact Sheet, January 15, 2003]

*continued, next page*

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS, CONTINUED



Above is a map taken from the Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenario (RFDS), issued by the Forest Service in July 2004. The RFDS states that between 191 and 507 gas wells could be placed in the Valle Vidal.

The Valle Vidal is represented in grey. Above and to the right are the CVM wellfields on the adjacent Vermejo Park Ranch, where El Paso Corporation uses 160 acre spacing. Each circle represents a wellpad.

**Q: Why should we be concerned about CBM development?**

A: CBM wells are connected by a network of roads, pipelines, and compressor stations, that destroy the scenic quality of the landscape, fragment rangeland habitat, and displace local wildlife populations. Over time, wells are spaced more closely together, in order to extract the remaining methane. Under current guidelines, CBM producers are not held liable for damages to public health and safety, or to the environment.

For more information, or to link to the *Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenario* issued by the Forest Service, see [www.vallevidal.org](http://www.vallevidal.org).

# **THE THREE-STAGE COALBED METHANE DECISION PROCESS IN THE VALLE VIDAL**

## **STAGE 1. FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT**

The Forest Service must prepare a "Forest Plan Amendment" to determine whether or not coalbed methane development is suitable in the Valle Vidal and to consider the land's overall management. This stage is supposed to begin April 2005, and may be completed by September 2006.

Formal public participation is provided at three points:

- (1) At the beginning of the process, the public can provide input on the scope of the project and identify issues that should be considered and concerns that should be addressed;
- (2) Once a *Draft Forest Plan Amendment* is prepared, the public can review it and provide comment; and
- (3) Once a *Final amendment* is completed, but before a formal decision is reached, the public can *object* to the Forest Plan Amendment.

## **STAGE 2. LEASING ANALYSIS**

If the Forest Service determines in the Forest Plan Amendment (Stage 1) that the Valle Vidal is suitable for oil and gas development, the Forest Service will then prepare another analysis to determine whether or not to allow the sale of oil & gas leases. Stage 2 begins once Stage 1 is complete. Assuming Stage 2 begins September 2006, it may be completed within 18-24 months.

Similar to a Forest Plan Amendment, formal public participation is provided at three points:

- (1) At the beginning of the process, the public can provide input on the scope of the project and identify issues that should be considered and concerns that should be addressed;
- (2) Once a *Draft Analysis* is prepared, the public can review it and provide comment; and
- (3) Once a final decision to allow leasing is reached, the public may administratively *appeal* the decision (which is a bit different from a Forest Plan *objection*.)

## **STAGE 3. DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS**

If oil & gas leases are sold (Stage 2), the Forest Service waits for the oil & gas company - the *lessee* -- to submit a development proposal. The Forest Service then prepares a project-specific analysis to assess the location of wells and rilling infrastructure such as roads, pipelines, utility lines, waste pits, and other infrastructure, and to design a plan of operations to control how development will proceed. The Forest Service must diligently involve the public, and provide notice, but the specific level of public participation during Stage 3 can vary.

# YOU CAN PROTECT THE VALLE VIDAL

## 1. WRITE LETTERS.

The Forest Service is in process of defining how the Valle Vidal will be managed for various activities and development. The actions and management strategies will be laid out in the scoping comment period (March-May, 2005). To prevent the Forest Service from excluding an alternative (example, closing the Valle to CBM development) and management (resource protection that does not include CBM development) we strongly recommend that you write and your friends write a prescoping letter to the Forest Service that addresses three (3) questions:

**WHAT ARE YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE VALLE VIDAL?** -- Express favorite personal experiences. Have you been camping in the Valle? Horseback riding? Hunting? Let the Forest Service know how you enjoy the Valle Vidal.

**HOW DO YOU VALUE THE VALLE VIDAL?** - Express the things about the Valle Vidal that you value most, such as personal inspiration, natural beauty, wildlife, rights to a continuing source of high quality groundwater and surface water, etc.

**WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL VISION FOR THE VALLE VIDAL?** - What do you want most for the future of the Valle Vidal? Offer suggestions on specific things you want for yourself and our posterity based on experiences and values, such as wildlife protection, fishery enhancement, stream protection, wetlands protection, groundwater protection, forest regeneration, hiking trails, campgrounds.

Emphasize protection from gas leasing/industrial development now and from mineral entry and other extractive uses in the future. Close with a strong appeal to the USFS to prohibit oil & gas leasing/drilling in the Valle Vidal.

**REMEMBER YOUR ADDRESS!** Your comment can't be put into the official record unless you legibly include your name and address. Find contact information on page 7.

## 2. ENDORSE THE CORE VALUES STATEMENT.

Nearly 100 local governments, organizations and businesses have already signed the Valle Vidal Core Values Statement (see inside cover) to publicly affirm their concern that the Valle Vidal be protected from energy development.

---

## 3. VOLUNTEER.

Your time is tremendously valuable to the efforts to protect the Valle Vidal. **Help is needed throughout New Mexico with:**

- |                           |                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| ⇒ Door to door outreach   | ⇒ Business outreach |
| ⇒ Public events/tabling   | ⇒ Phone trees       |
| ⇒ Letter Writing Campaign | ⇒ Data Entry        |
| ⇒ Media Relations         | ⇒ Public Art Event  |
| ⇒ House Parties           | ⇒ and more...       |

---

## 4. MAKE A CONTRIBUTION.

The Coalition for the Valle Vidal is a grassroots effort that brings together individuals and non-profit organizations. Your tax-deductible contribution\* is critical to our work.

With your money, we fund numerous activities, including: **Outreach activities** such as public events, mailings, and media outreach, **technical experts** to ensure that our arguments are based on sound science and economic evidence, and **legal advocacy** to ensure that citizens are able to participate effectively in the process.

*\*For your contribution to be tax-deductible, please donate through Amigos Bravos, a tax-exempt organization. Amigos Bravos serves as the fiscal agent for the Coalition for the Valle Vidal. PO Box 238, Taos, NM 87571 - please note on your check or money order that this contribution is for the Coalition for the Valle Vidal - or donate online at [www.vallevidal.org](http://www.vallevidal.org).*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** on any of these items, or to schedule a presentation for your group, please contact Jim O'Donnell at (505) 758-3874 OR AT [jodonnell@vallevidal.org](mailto:jodonnell@vallevidal.org). **THANK YOU!**

## **SEND YOUR LETTERS TO:**

the Coalition for the Valle Vidal,  
for inclusion in batch mailings,  
or send them directly to  
the officials listed below.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Coalition for the Valle Vidal**  
P.O. Box 238, Taos, NM 87571  
www.vallevidal.org

**Jim O'Donnell, Outreach Coordinator**  
(505) 758-3874 | jodonnell@vallevidal.org

**Oscar Simpson, Sportsmen's Campaign**  
(505) 345-0117 | oscarsimpson3@yahoo.com

---

**Senator Pete V. Domenici**  
328 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-6621 | (202) 228-0900 fax

**Senator Jeff Bingaman**  
703 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-5521 | (202) 224-2852 fax

**Representative Tom Udall**  
1414 Longworth Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 25-6190 | (202) 226-1331 fax

**Governor Bill Richardson**  
State Capitol Room 400  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
(505) 476-2200 | (505) 476-2226 fax

**Harv Foresgren, Regional Supervisor**  
U.S. Forest Service, Southwestern Region  
333 Broadway SE  
Albuquerque, NM 87102  
(505) 842-3301 | (505) 842-3110 fax

**Martin Chavez, Forest Supervisor**  
Carson National Forest  
208 Cruz Alta Road  
Taos, NM 87571  
(505) 758-6300 | (505) 758-6213 fax

**FOR MORE INFORMATION  
& UPDATES:**

**WWW.VALLEVIDAL.ORG**