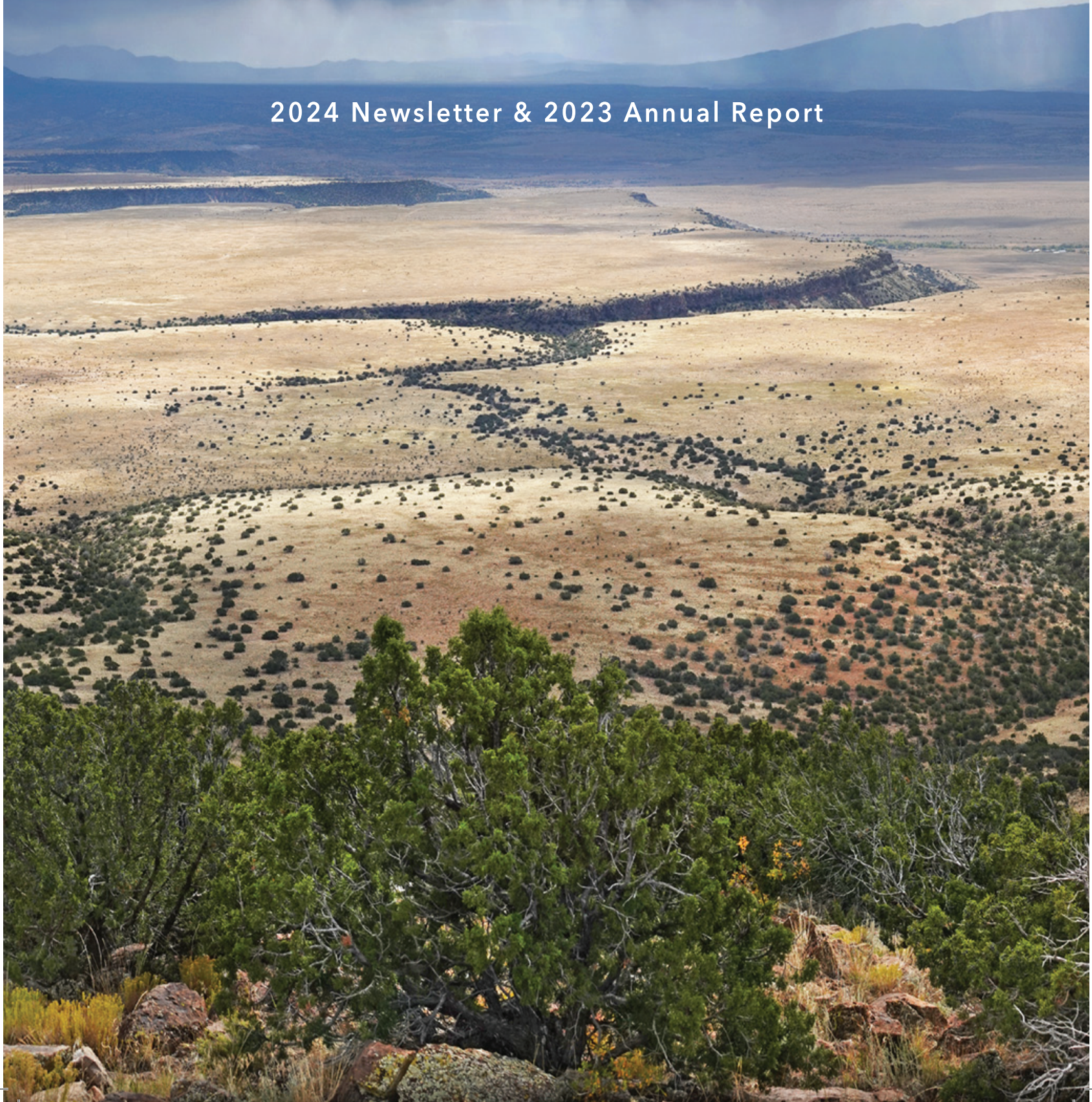




SANTA FE CONSERVATION TRUST

2024 Newsletter & 2023 Annual Report





Above: Sarah Noss, Executive Director, addresses SFCT supporters at our annual thank you party.

SFCT's Instream Flow Project

Funding helps protect streams and riparian areas

In an increasingly arid climate and in a state that encourages people with surface water rights to use them or lose them, SFCT is working with the help of the Wallace Genetic Foundation to find a healthy middle ground in putting that water to beneficial use for all of us. Healthy stream flows support a healthy ecosystem as well as community water supplies. They provide habitat for fish and wildlife, enhance our outdoor recreation and add to the beauty of the outdoors. New Mexico landowners have legal options to keep more water in streams without losing their water rights.

SFCT is using the funding to provide assistance to fellow land trusts and landowners interested in possibly dedicating water rights to instream flows. Our attorney, Matthew McQueen, is available (without expense to the land trust or landowner) to discuss ways to improve flows in rivers, including creating an instream flow right. He can help to assess, structure, process, and document transactions (including working with authorities such as the Office of the State Engineer) to change the place and purpose of use of water rights to instream flows and then, if desired, include those water rights as part of perpetual conservation easements with natural habitat conservation values. Our goal is to assist in restoring water to rivers and protecting that water over time, and we're fortunate to have a donor who has provided a small grant to fund those services. We hope that the projects funded through this grant will generate useful lessons for everyone working on water issues with private landowners in NM. We look forward to sharing outcomes and continuing to learn from each other.

Interested in learning more? Get in touch with us at info@sfct.org.

SFCT needs a permanent home

Our current office lease runs out in July 2025, so SFCT is looking ahead and wondering if we can purchase a permanent home for the organization. SFCT has the duty of perpetual care of the conservation easements we hold, meaning we literally have to be around forever to ensure the conservation values we protect are upheld. Since 2016, our staff has grown from 5 to 9 employees and we have no room to expand in our current location. Looking ahead, we feel we could use at least 3,000 sf of office space, plus some storage for our tools and archives. Got any ideas for us? If you can help us build equity instead of renting office space, we'd love to hear from you. Get in touch with us at info@sfct.org.

SANTA FE CONSERVATION TRUST

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as of January 1, 2024

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Above: the Swimming Hole conservation easement on the Pecos River.

From the Executive Director

2023 was our 30th anniversary at SFCT, and what a year it was! We wanted to offer as many gatherings as we could to give you the opportunity to learn about and participate in our work. We had two free star parties, a host of Insider Tours, a fabulous gathering at Santa Fe Prep's Sun Mountain Field, a wonderful trip to Bears Ears and 13 workshops out at the Galisteo Property to demonstrate restoration techniques on a property stressed by climate change. So many people participated last year! Over 100 came to help on our workshops, and we had to squeeze in an additional 200 new donors at the end of this report—all people who were moved by our work and wanted to help.

It is gratifying to know that what we do resonates with so many of you. As you read through this issue of EarthLines, you'll see how your support is manifesting in our work. We are seriously pursuing the creation of conservation corridors by making it easier for a wider diversity of landowners to participate in conservation through innovative funding opportunities, made possible by your generous donations.

You'll see how our trails and community programs are filling the gaps in access to nature for many in our community. Building an accessible trail on our Galisteo Property is in service to the almost 19,000 citizens in Santa Fe County who live with a disability and those of us who need an easier trail experience in the grandeur of the Galisteo Basin. Access to the outdoors is not just for the non-disabled or the young. Everyone needs the solace and health giving benefits of nature, and you'll read about what we are doing to fill those gaps.

You'll also read about how our 30th led us to some introspection about changing the name of our property in the Galisteo Basin. Not only are we trying to fill the gaps in access to nature, but our error in calling the land in Galisteo the Conservation Homestead makes us realize we have some gaps in our own organization. Over one-tenth of our population is Native American, and, to deepen our work and relationships with our community, we need to have Native voices and wisdom guiding our work going forward. You can read more about this process in the following pages.

We hope you'll enjoy this in-depth look at the work of the Santa Fe Conservation Trust as we enter our 31st year. Protecting the ecology of northern New Mexico, dealing with climate change and helping both people and land flourish together takes everything we've got, and we couldn't do it without your support. If you like what you read here, please give as generously as you can. Together we can build a more just and equitable world, brimming with nature and people who want to protect her.

Sincerely,

Sarah Noss
Executive Director





Above: View of the Galisteo Property, Summer 2024.

Rich opportunities emerge for SFCT after thirty years of conservation

Sometimes birthdays are an opportunity to assess where you are so you can decide if it is where you want to be, and, if not, figure out what you need to do to get there. Last year's 30th anniversary for the Santa Fe Conservation Trust was no different. We had a moment to celebrate our successes, but we also had the opportunity to see that there are some things we still need and want to do to help the organization grow into its fullest potential. Our revelation about the need for growth came in the form of a conversation we had with Chris Chavez, who at the time was the cultural preservation officer for Kewa Pueblo, and it had to do with the name of the Conservation Homestead, our 300-acre property in the Galisteo Basin. In conversation with Chris while talking about the history of the land, we asked if the word "homestead" should be changed, and he said, without missing a beat, "yes." He went on to explain that the history of homesteading was a painful period for Native Americans, and that, if we want the property to be welcoming to everyone,

including Native Americans, we should consider that the word "homestead" evokes memories of land loss and dispossession for Native Americans. While this particular property was never officially homesteaded as part of the Homestead Act of 1862, it was still referred to as a homestead, and marketed as such, and we carried the word forward without realizing the impact it has on many in our community. So, until we come up with a new name, we call the property simply "the Galisteo Property," because we don't want to use a word that causes anyone pain.

Since talking to Chris and with others about the name, we have found that our original process for naming the property was flawed because we didn't have a diversity of voices at the table to weigh in on it. In particular, we didn't have Native American voices at the table, nor did we realize, when the Board approved it, that not everyone present felt comfortable enough to share their reservations about the name. It might seem like renaming the property should be a quick and simple process, but we now see an open door of opportunity for us to strengthen the organization by bringing in the gift of voices not present in our 31-year history, voices that will enrich the soil from which our programs grow. We are centering Native voices and we are working to ensure that all stakeholders are cultivated, honored and heard in our decision-making going forward.

SFCT's core work is about protecting the iconic landscapes we all love. But land has a complicated history, especially in northern New Mexico where signs of human occupation go back thousands of years. At the Galisteo Property, we had an archaeological survey done of our proposed trails before we put them in. During this process, we found a projectile point that dated back to 5,000 BC. Think about all the history—the life—that has transpired there! Just as gazing at the stars can produce a sense of awe and humility, so, too, can the history of



Left: Participants in the Green Schools Conference hike on the Galisteo Property in March, 2024.

the land. There is so much more to it than just parcel boundaries or a deed of ownership, colonial concepts of land that prevail today. Land literally supports all life, connects us to each other and everything above and below it. So, it is ironic that the environmental movement has not fully represented the diversity of people who care about nature and who are disproportionately impacted by climate change and the loss of biodiversity.

There is much work to do to be sure that our land protection efforts and community programs equitably benefit the diverse communities of northern New Mexico. And, as illustrated above, we know that there are many in our community who we still need to engage. To authentically build these relationships means cultivating respect, trust, cultural humility and cultural sensitivity while addressing economic and other barriers many face in joining our work. You'll see us working on these goals both internally in our hiring and board recruitment, but also as we deepen our commitment to these principles in our conservation and community work, and of course, as we rename the Galisteo Property.

As we move into the next 30 years of SFCT's life, we are grateful for the opportunity that the renaming of the Galisteo Property has given us—to build deeper and more authentic partnerships with more people in our community so that everyone has a place in our work and can see themselves reflected in loving the land and protecting it.



Above: Passport to Trails field trip with Nina Otero Community School students to the Galisteo Property in April, 2023.

Put Your Thinking Caps On!

We hope that you will participate in the renaming of the Galisteo Property. Later this summer, we will be sending you a survey via email (and posting it on our website) that will solicit your ideas for a new name. We will also be meeting in smaller groups and one-on-one with people who have historical or cultural connections to the land. Your input will help to inform the recommendations that the steering committee will make to the SFCT Board. We'd like to get a new name in place by the opening of the new accessible trail to be built on the property, which we hope will be completed by the spring of 2025.

SANTA FE CONSERVATION TRUST

Mission, Vision & Values

While SFCT's mission and vision statement has been guiding our work for years, the Board recently approved a statement about the organization's values, called "Opening the Door of Conservation to Everyone." If these words resonate with you, please join us in our work by donating, volunteering or participating in our programs.

Mission

The Santa Fe Conservation Trust partners with our community to keep northern New Mexico's living lands and people flourishing together. We protect culturally and environmentally significant landscapes, ignite people's passion for nature and enable the continual regeneration of our healthy place.

Vision

We envision a future where everyone in northern New Mexico cherishes nature and works to preserve it for this and future generations.

Opening the Door of Conservation to Everyone

The Santa Fe Conservation Trust actively fosters an organization and conservation movement that is intentionally diverse, equitable and inclusive. We look to nature as our guide, working to support and connect a human ecosystem that is equally complex, resilient, thriving and full of variety.

We acknowledge that land in northern New Mexico carries with it a complicated history that includes successive and ongoing waves of displacement and dispossession. We also acknowledge that land conservation and the environmental movement have historically underrepresented a diversity of people who cherish the natural world and want to protect it.

Looking forward, we aspire to create a better future by building a representative, engaged and passionate conservation community dedicated to keeping Northern New Mexico's living lands and people flourishing together. To that end, we focus our programs, policies and plans on providing equitable access to nature for everyone in our community and creating opportunities for inclusion. We recruit, hire, retain, and promote a diverse staff. And we recruit board members who represent the lived experiences of the people we serve to ensure the diverse viewpoints of our community inform our decisions and actions.

The Santa Fe Conservation Trust recognizes that this long-term commitment is an ongoing process that requires continuous learning, growth, monitoring and improvement.



Above: Tecolote Ranch conservation easement, near Las Vegas, NM.

30 years and counting at SFCT

How our conservation work is evolving to benefit your quality of life

Back in 1993 when the Santa Fe Conservation Trust started, climate change wasn't discussed much, but today, almost every American has a story to tell about how it has impacted their lives. The planet is warming, and for us, this is no time to rest on our laurels, or to continue to do things the way we did over the past three decades. Last year, SFCT celebrated 30 years of conservation work in northern New Mexico while realizing that we must continue to evolve. We must respond effectively to the accelerated rate of climate change, which has changed our work in fundamental ways since our founding.



Above: View of Picacho peak from the baseline documentation for SFCT's first easement on Atalaya in 1993.

From our first conservation easement behind St. John's College to today, SFCT now protects over 46,000 acres from the Los Pinos River valley by the Colorado border to the historic ruts of the Santa Fe Trail winding through the larger ranches near Las Vegas.

We are proud of what we have accomplished with the landowners who have partnered with us over the past 30 years. Conservation, however, isn't as simple as it was 30 years ago when SFCT first started. Big problems, like habitat degradation and climate change, are showing us that the site specific, parcel

by parcel approach we started with may not be enough to sustain the biodiversity, ecological function and climate resilience of a whole landscape.

We want to continue individual acts of conservation as those opportunities become available to us. But because of a warming planet, we must also focus on protecting larger, landscape-scale areas to make an impact going forward on a more systemic level. Larger conservation corridors will allow plants and animals to move to habitat more suitable to their survival. This will help protect the biodiversity that sustains us and future generations. At 31-years-old, SFCT is now working to create connectivity in three ways:

- by working with our current landowners to expand existing conservation easements,
- working with landowners adjacent to established conservation easements to place their land in conservation, and
- looking for larger conservation worthy parcels next to to forests or open space.

Not all the landowners we will be reaching out to will have the financial capacity to pay for the transaction costs associated with conservation easements. So thanks to donors like you, SFCT is able to provide funding to open the door of conservation to more people. When more people can participate, the more our work can benefit you by lessening the impact of climate change on our region.



SFCT's Quickstart and Total Transaction Funds

To make our conservation work more inclusive, we are fortunate to have the funding available to help landowners with significant conservation properties put conservation easements on their land. The **Quickstart Fund** is designed as a revolving fund that helps landowners with the upfront costs of putting a conservation easement on their land. It is then paid back to us when the landowner receives cash from selling their State of NM transferrable tax credit to an entity doing business in NM that really needs a State tax credit, like PNM for example. When Quickstart landowners receive the cash, they pay us back to enable another landowner to start the process of protecting their land. The **Total Transaction Fund** comes from the earnings from our \$1 million endowment. Once a year, we apply those earnings without repayment toward a conservation easement on property that is of high conservation value. These funding mechanisms are a huge innovation in our work, and one that will help us create the connectivity that is so important to protecting the ecology of our region.

Conservation truly does impact climate change and improve your quality of life. Preserved open space improves air quality because trees and plants give us oxygen to breathe and clean the air of pollutants. The vegetation serves as a "carbon sink," pulling CO₂ from the atmosphere through photosynthesis. Water quality is improved because vegetation slows runoff and reduces erosion so our precious rainwater can sink into the ground and replenish our aquifers. By slowing runoff, streams and streambeds are protected and the amount of pollutants entering receiving waters is reduced. Conservation boosts biodiversity because wildlife and plants depend on undisturbed open space for their food, shelter and reproduction. And larger conserved areas also allow for more public recreation while boosting biodiversity and ecological health.

Thirty years ago, we didn't need to think about the health of the land as much as today. The National Academy of Sciences recently published research showing how improved stewardship of larger landscapes can mitigate 11.3 billion tons of carbon dioxide per year. That amounts to 37% of the mitigation needed

between now and 2030 to keep global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celcius. So, if landowners know how to bring the land back to health, they can help to pull carbon out of the air to reduce the impact of climate change.

That's why SFCT is now teaching restoration techniques at our Galisteo Property to demonstrate how to restore land stressed by climate change. Extreme weather events can bring heavy downpours, so we are showing people how to deal with erosion, to manage rainfall, spread it out and allow it to sink into the parched ground. We are taking out invasive plants and trees to allow the water table to rise so it can revive and nurture native plants. A reseeded project is underway with native grass seed on a 14-acre area where the ranch buildings used to be. A dryland wildlife drinker has been installed, a solar pump added to the well is now providing water to a second plumbed drinker, to lure back the pronghorn antelope and sustain other animals that live on and migrate through the property. Because this piñon/juniper landscape is similar to properties that the majority of northern New Mexicans live on, this work will benefit not just the 300-acre Galisteo Property, but also all who live here as the knowledge filters out to more and more landowners.

As you can see, being a land trust is not as simple as it was 30 years ago when we started. We now need to protect larger, connected landscapes to lessen the effects of climate change and provide upfront transaction funding so more landowners can participate. We need to keep the land healthier and teach others restoration techniques.

You can see how all of this is manifesting in our conservation work on the following pages. We depend on your generous support to make this work happen. Please go online and make a donation today!

Below: Irina and Ian Aeby led the effort to protect the Aeby family property in 2023 with the help of Quickstart funding.





Above: Aeby Family Conservation Easement

2023 conservation easement projects

Expanding recreational access and connectivity

Last year SFCT partnered with landowners and other conservation groups to protect 1,175 acres of high-conservation-value land in our service area of Santa Fe, San Miguel, and Rio Arriba counties. From bosque along the Rio Grande to your view from the Galisteo Basin Preserve, these conservation easements ensure perpetual protection for some of our favorite places.

Aeby Family Conservation Easement – 58 acres

SFCT was thrilled to work with the Aeby family to conserve their special place along the Rio Grande in La Mesilla, south of Española. This 58-acre parcel is an example of intact bosque, woodland, and grassland within a neighborhood that has mostly been subdivided into ½-acre to 2-acre residential lots. The Rio Grande forms the western property boundary, and to the north lies thousands of acres of open space at Santa Clara Pueblo. Because of the property's connectivity to other open space, this project contributes to landscape-scale habitat conservation efforts along the river.

Notable wildlife species known to use the land include bald eagles, sandhill cranes, and beavers. The conservation easement also formalizes the Aeby family's longstanding tradition of allowing neighbors and other recreationists to walk and bike on the trail that runs from Rio Arriba County Road 114 to the Rio Grande. This conservation effort with public access is a huge gift to the Española community as there is very little access to the

Rio Grande in Española. There is currently no public parking on this property or adjacent streets, but anyone who is able to walk or bike to the property is welcome to use the trail. Parking may be developed in the future, and we will keep you posted about that.

You can read more about the Aebys and their connection to this land on page 14 of last year's annual report here: sfct.org/news/publications/

This was SFCT's inaugural "Quick Start" fund project, which is designed to help landowners overcome the hurdle that transaction costs can pose to getting conservation easement projects completed. With this program, SFCT covers transaction costs with an agreement from the landowner that they will pay us back once they receive tax benefits from their conservation easement donation. Then, SFCT can use the money to help another landowner, and so on, resulting in more land protected! Give us a call if you'd like to learn more about the program.



Galisteo Basin Conservation Easement Transfers – 1,117 acres

One of SFCT's conservation focal areas is the Galisteo Basin, which is a beautiful and relatively undeveloped expanse south of the City of Santa Fe. The Galisteo Basin serves as an important corridor for wildlife moving between the Sangre de Cristo foothills and the Ortiz Mountains. A lucky hiker might see pronghorn antelope, mule deer, and even an elusive black bear here. As climate change continues to alter temperature and precipitation patterns, keeping wildlife corridors like this open will ensure species can move in response to changing conditions.

In 2023 SFCT was happy to partner with Commonweal Conservancy to complete the transfer of eight conservation easements, covering 1,117 acres in the Galisteo Basin. These easements were donated to Commonweal Conservancy by private landowners between 2004 and 2009 to complement

**Top: New conservation easement off of Camino Los Abuelos.
Bottom: New conservation easement off of Spur Ranch Road.**

Commonweal's work at the Galisteo Basin Preserve. (The easements all protect land adjacent or very close to the Preserve). Recently, Commonweal and SFCT decided it made more sense for SFCT to ultimately hold and steward these eight conservation easements, since easements are our specialty. The easements range in size from 29 acres to 210 acres and fall in a swath from Spur Ranch Road to Camino Los Abuelos. Many of the easement properties are visible to hikers, bikers, and equestrians using the public trails at the Galisteo Basin Preserve, so protecting these lands from development keeps intact the view for all of us. We've enjoyed getting to know our new landowners and look forward to working with them in the future. Thanks to Commonweal Conservancy for their commitment to the Galisteo Basin!

To learn more about conservation easements, go to sfct.org/protected-lands/conserving-land



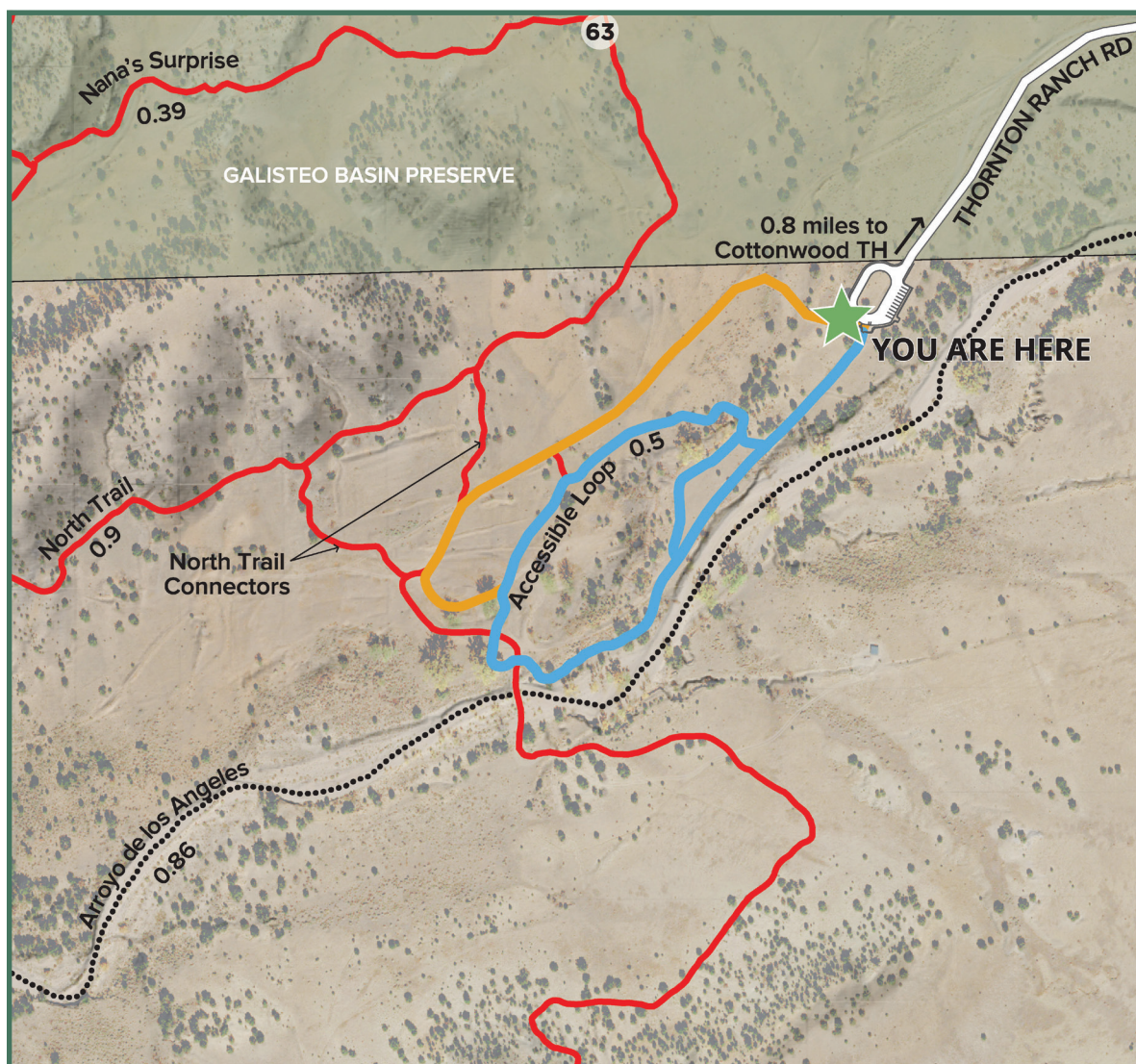
Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund

Speeding up the pace of conservation throughout New Mexico

Over the past few years SFCT joined with a broad coalition of conservation, recreation, and agriculture groups to advocate for permanent conservation funding at the state level. This coalition's work finally paid off with the historic passage of SB-9, the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund, which was signed into law by Gov. Lujan-Grisham on March 23, 2023. The bill originally set aside \$100 million to provide a sustainable source of money for existing state conservation programs that have long been underfunded. It was a great start, and during the 2024 session—thanks to the bipartisan legislative champions Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth, Senator Steven Neville, Senator George Muñoz, and House Appropriations Chairman Nathan Small—the amount of money in the Legacy Fund was increased to \$300 million. Because the \$300 million will be invested, the fund could increase to \$460 million by fiscal year 2050 to generate more income for statewide conservation programs. Before this investment, New Mexico was the last Western state without a dedicated source of conservation funding, which meant that there was no state funding to match federal dollars to leverage our land and water conservation efforts. With this historic appropriation, annual funding will be made available for 10 existing state programs spread across six agencies, prioritizing land and water stewardship, forest and watershed health, outdoor recreation

and infrastructure, agriculture and working lands, historic preservation, and wildlife species protection. State programs that will be supported by the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund include the River Stewards Program, the Healthy Soil Program, the Outdoor Equity and Trails+ Programs, and the Natural Heritage Conservation Act (NHCA) program. SFCT has been lucky to receive grants through several of these programs in the past. For example, the Healthy Soils program will help us restore rangeland in the Galisteo Basin, the Trails+ program will help us create trail connectivity and accessibility for more members of our community, and the Natural Heritage Conservation Act program will help us work with a more diverse group of landowners to voluntarily conserve their properties using conservation easements. We're overjoyed that the programs will have now reliable funding to help us complete more excellent projects in the future.

We look forward to the significant conservation outcomes in store for New Mexico as a result of the new Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund. Thanks to everyone who supported its passage! To check out the many great projects already completed through these state programs, see the enchantmentfund.org/map.



Left: Close up of interpretive signage for the trailhead at SFCT's Galisteo Property, including the planned accessible trail loop (in blue). Trail planning and construction is being largely funded by a Trails+ grant from the NM Outdoor Recreation Division. More information on this project on page 14.



NEW MEXICO
OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION





Legend

SFCT Protected Properties

2024 Property Dots

SANTA FE CONSERVATION TRUST

PROTECTED PROPERTIES & SERVICE AREA MAP

SFCT holds 109 conservation easements and owns 4 conservation properties.
We work primarily in Santa Fe, Rio Arriba and San Miguel Counties,
with two conservation easements in Taos County.

SFCT Protected Lands County Breakdown as of 12/31/2023		
County	Acres	Properties
Rio Arriba	6,389.07	8
Santa Fe	18,774.7	88
San Miguel	21,352.4	15
Taos	42.16	2
Total	46,558.33	113



Above: SFCT's 300-acre property in the Galisteo Basin.

Galisteo Property update

2023 Advances at the Galisteo Property benefit the whole community

SFCT is using its 300-acre Galisteo Property as a conservation showpiece to demonstrate techniques we can all use to protect the land in the face of advancing global warming. In early June, the *Santa Fe New Mexican* reported that *global climate models project an average temperature increase across New Mexico of 5 to 7 degrees over the next 50 years. But the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources reported in 2020 that average annual temperatures already had risen around 3 degrees over the last 50 years as measured at weather stations. For the first time on record, global warming has exceeded temperatures of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) over a 12-month period, European climate monitors have said, in what scientists called a "warning to humanity."*

We've all seen how New Mexico's climate is getting hotter and drier. This means earlier springs, hotter summers, wildfires and flooding, and less predictable winters. Precipitation patterns are also changing, with more intense droughts, a greater proportion of precipitation falling as rain rather than snow, and more extreme weather events like flashfloods.

As temperatures climb, the world is losing species at a rate 1,000 times greater than at any other time in recorded human history. One million species are at risk of becoming extinct within the next few decades.

So, it's become increasingly important not just to protect land but also improve its resilience to climate change. In 2023, SFCT hosted 13 workshops to demonstrate techniques to improve the

land's health. Over the course of 2023, 128 volunteers came out to finish up three projects that were started in 2022. They finished the installation of 150 rock structures that slow down and spread rainwater to prevent erosion on the 14-acre area where the ranch structures used to be. They also worked on finishing up the eradication of invasives in the wetland area to allow the water table to rise up to benefit native plants. We also finished a New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) Healthy Soil grant to reseed the 14-acre area where the ranch structures used to be. We are so grateful to the many volunteers who helped us make such great progress. But that's not all! Yates and Susan Coulter worked with SFCT staffers Melissa Houser and Melanie Solis Alvarez to install a dryland drinker, which includes an 1800-gallon water tank and a water catchment structure to harvest rainwater to fill it. That was a major undertaking requiring heavy equipment, which the Coulters happened to have on hand. We are grateful to them, and so are the wildlife that have been enjoying access to water.

Thank you to all our volunteers who are demonstrating the power of restoration at the Galisteo Property!

Want to donate your time or money to help speed this work forward? We welcome and need your support. You can donate using the envelope provided, or online at sfct.org/donate or become a volunteer by signing up at sfct.org/support/volunteer/

Below: a camera catches local wildlife as they investigate and enjoy the new drinker.



Reseeding



Rock Rundowns



Invasive Species Removal



Dryland Drinker Installation



2024 goals for restoration and infrastructure development at the Galisteo Property

- Renaming the property
- Implementation of The Cornell Lab of Ornithology Land Trust Grant to do a bird count at the property and improve the riparian areas
- Apply for the 2024-2025 Healthy Soils Grant from NMDA to continue the restoration of the 14-acres, as well as rangeland restoration efforts on the entire property — **Declined**.
Grant budget was \$24,400. Can you help us move this work forward with a generous donation?
- Start the creation of a Rangeland Management plan
- Building relationships with stakeholder partners who might utilize the property for their programs while helping us implement our needs.
- Installation of the Accessible Trail and parking lot
- Finalize interpretive signage for the Accessible Trail
- Solar well Installation and the creation of a plumbed drinker in the riparian area — **Done!**
See story on page 22.

Below: installing rock rundowns in an erosion-prone area on the Galisteo property





Above: Accessible Trail User Group field visit in May, 2023.

Trails are for everyone

An update on SFCT's accessible trail in the Galisteo Basin

In February 2023, the Santa Fe Conservation Trust (SFCT) was awarded over \$90,000 from the State's Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) to plan and design a half-mile accessible trail loop that will also connect with the existing five miles of trail at our property in the Galisteo Basin. We are excited to share that this effort has made significant progress in the last year and is on track for construction this fall, with an opening tentatively planned for spring 2025.

This accessible trail project promises to provide rural Santa Fe County with a new trail option that will provide equitable access for the approximately 19,000 people living with a disability in Santa Fe County. Through our partnership with the state's Outdoor Recreation Division and their Trails+ grants, which aim to provide funding to increase access to the outdoors for all New Mexicans, this project enhances opportunities and accessibility to trails and nature for the disabled community in rural and southern Santa Fe County, as well as nearby residents of western San Miguel, eastern Bernalillo, and northern Tarrant counties.

We have completed the construction documents after holding several listening sessions with individuals living with disabilities and local nonprofits working on behalf of those with disabilities as well as representatives from City and State disability commissions. These sessions provided invaluable insights and helped us shape a trail alignment that will meet the needs of and be inclusive for all users.

In addition to these sessions, a field visit was organized where this group of advocates and individuals with disabilities walked the proposed half-mile loop to show us challenges and opportunities, as well as educating us about the unique needs of this community. During the visit, participants highlighted the importance of shade not only at the trailhead but at various points along the entire trail. They also described the challenges posed by steep grades for those using mobility devices and the need for wider trails so that those who are hard of hearing can walk side by side and sign to each other. The group shared in the excitement of Marco, a young man from Taos living with a disability that confines him to his wheelchair, who shared his longing for natural experiences and a place to come where he can be safe and seen. With the help of his caregiver and SFCT's Tim Rogers, Marco made the entire flagged route in his

chair, giving us a firsthand perspective on how difficult it is to experience this unimproved landscape in a mobility device.

Based on the feedback from those listening sessions and the field visit, we are developing interpretive signage for the accessible loop that will provide all trail users with education about the land, flora and fauna, and human history of the area. There will also be trail rating signs to help those with disabilities navigate the loop by providing information on the slope of the trail sections as well as surface types.

To ensure the trail's safety and accessibility, there will be a small parking area at the end of Thorton Ranch Road with handicap spaces. We also will widen the road to ensure safety and accessibility for emergency vehicles, and make improvements to the crossing at Arroyo de los Angeles to stabilize it so it doesn't get washed out when the rains come.

We extend our deepest thanks to the State of New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division for the design and planning funding, Surroundings, our landscape architecture firm, for drawing up the plans, and especially JenkinsGavin for their guidance and representation with the County to get us to the building permit stage. We also send a special shout out to the individuals living with disabilities and those who represent them, for sharing their lived experiences with us to improve the design of the accessible trail. This project would not be possible without their support and first-hand knowledge and expertise.

This fall, Rocket Ramps and their subcontractors will be building the accessible trail and amenities. Redline Excavating will create the parking lot, widen the road and improve the arroyo crossing. We hope to obtain construction funding with a second grant from the State's Outdoor Recreation Division Trails+ Fund. If awarded, it will require SFCT to provide matching funds in cash or in-kind. Please support this project with a donation today, and label it "accessible trail."

We will share updates as we move closer to making this accessible trail a reality. Thank you for your continued support and dedication to making nature accessible to everyone. Together, we are building a legacy of inclusivity to the natural world.

¡Vámonos! Santa Fe Walks

*Join us on walks and hikes through
the end of October*

Our mission begins: “The Santa Fe Conservation Trust partners with our community to keep northern New Mexico’s living lands and people flourishing together.” Our community conservation program, ¡Vámonos! Santa Fe Walks, strives to embody the essence of that statement by bringing together folks of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities—our community—to have shared experiences in nature. Whether it’s a stroll to SWAN Park on the southside, the Santa Fe River Trail in the heart of town, or the Dale Ball trails in the foothills, everyone has a need, as humans, to discover and foster their own relationship with nature. Without it, our community and the living lands that sustain us will not truly flourish and that is why Vámonos exists.

For some, cultivating this relationship with nature is easy while for others it is made more difficult because of physical limitations, not knowing where to walk, not liking to walk alone—all issues that have created inequitable access to nature. With Vámonos, we believe everyone deserves to be included and made to feel welcome and safe while enjoying a walk or just time spent outside.

While there are no “cure-alls” or magic pills out there, walking with community may be as close to one as there is, given the many benefits it provides. Time spent outside walking with others addresses physical, mental, emotional and social health needs. While the pandemic is behind us, the lingering social effects of that experience persist. “With the pandemic it really isolated older folks and now with Vámonos I feel like I am breaking out, emotionally and physically,” regular walker Ron Bourtayre expressed at one of the walks in 2023.



It is never too late to start or to build upon your relationship with nature. Come join us for an hour-long weekday walk or two-hour weekend hike this summer and feel like Myriam Morales does, a regular who shared: “I wouldn’t be as healthy, I wouldn’t be as happy; and thanks to Vámonos, I discovered parts of Santa Fe I’ve never seen, and I’ve lived here decades.”

Vámonos kicked off its sixth and most exciting walking season in May with a goal to have 1,000 participants walk with us. With 30 free walks and hikes throughout the City Different and beyond through October, check out our schedule at www.sfct.org/ Vámonos and we will see you on the trails!



NEW MEXICO
OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION



¡Vámonos!

SANTA FE WALKS

of Participants by Year

Year	Participants
2018	318
2019	542
2020	pandemic
2021	393
2022	487
2023	501
Total	2,241

Safe Routes to School

SFCT completes pilot project for the Santa Fe Public Schools

It was back in 2020 when SFCT, along with the City of Santa Fe and the Santa Fe Public Schools first started visualizing what a Safe Routes to School program could do for our town. What would happen if you could get more of the 7,000 kids and their families in the Santa Fe Public Schools from K-8th grade to walk or bike to school instead of being driven? The benefits were many!

- Traffic in the morning and afternoon would be reduced. Air quality around our schools would improve, as there would be fewer cars and trucks idling while they wait to drop off or pick up their children.
- The schools could lower costs by reducing the need for as many buses.
- Our city would become more walk- and bicycle friendly, with better, safer trails to get kids to school.
- Better walking and biking infrastructure would make our communities more attractive places for people to want to live, work, and play.
- Academic achievement would improve because students would arrive at school awake and refreshed, ready to start the day.
- Our kids' health would improve, and so would the health of the parents and staff who walk or bike with them. More exercise impacts childhood obesity, lowers heart disease and childhood diabetes. Plus, more time outside improves mental health, lowers depression and builds self-reliance, self-esteem and navigation skills.
- School attendance would also improve, as walk-to-school programs have also been successfully used to combat truancy.
- And helping kids walk or bike to school dovetails quite nicely with SFCT's programs that are built to provide equitable access to nature for everyone in our community.

Safe Routes to School, Summer 2021 - Fall 2023

Walk & Roll to School	# of events	# of schools	# of students	# of adults	total # of participants
TOTAL	325	12	4,225	2,164	6,392

Young kids need to be educated about bike and pedestrian safety in order to safely walk or bike to school, so funding was also used for educational events at schools. We send our thanks to our PE teachers and others who made time for the SRTS educators to come in to talk to the students!

Bicycle & Pedestrian Education	# of events	# of schools	# of students	# of adults	total # of participants
TOTAL	215	16	4,378	510	4,888

What good is having a bike if it is broken and unusable? Part of the SRTS outreach to kids was to show them how to fix flats and do simple tune ups.



So, Tim Rogers, SFCT's Trails Program Manager, wrote the proposal to access federal funding through the City to create a Santa Fe Safe Routes to School pilot program. Starting in 2021, SFCT convened the Santa Fe Safe Routes to School Coalition, which included the City, Santa Fe Public Schools, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, and other local partners to write an action plan for a sustainable SRTS program in Santa Fe, and to put in place the needed pieces of a program to make it successful. Our goal at the end of the grant in 2023 was to have the Santa Fe Public Schools adopt the program, hire a full-time coordinator, and implement the program throughout our K-8 schools.

And look at what happened over the last two years to put this program into action! Thousands of kids participated in the Walk and Roll to School events. They learned about pedestrian and bike safety through education classes. And they got their dilapidated bikes fixed up by bringing them to Fix-It Fiestas.

Building the momentum to get the Safe Routes to School program up and running would not have been possible without the support of the NM Outdoor Recreation Division's Outdoor Equity Grant and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant from the NM Dept. of Transportation. It also took lots of teachers, principals, PE teachers, City and School Administrators and interested citizens to support our students to walk and ride to school.

SFCT also secured the second round of federal TAP funding that made it possible for Santa Fe Public Schools to adopt and continue the Safe Routes to School Program. A new coordinator, Ryan Harris, has been hired to run the program. Thank you to everyone involved, and keep on walking and rolling with Ryan as he continues to build on SRTS in Santa Fe.



Community Star Party

September 15, 2023

You wouldn't think it would be a challenge to schedule a star party in northern New Mexico. Known globally for its clear dark skies, high elevation, and dry air, the Land of Enchantment holds the textbook combination for premier star watching. And yet, last September as we drew closer to SFCT's second community star party, held at our property in the Galisteo Basin, the forecast for the day of the event called for the kitchen sink – rain, thunder and lightning, and of course, wind. Steeled from postponing our first star party in the spring of 2023 and barely squeezing in the makeup date between weather systems a few weeks later, we were prepared for the worst and ready to postpone, again. Our experienced star party partners, the community-minded Santa Fe Stargazers, even made the suggestion that afternoon to call off setting up the telescopes, convinced that the viewing would be unenjoyable, if not impossible, given the forecast.

As it turned out, some of the astronomers who brought their telescopes were already on their way to the Galisteo Basin and didn't get the message to postpone. So, despite the angry skies surrounding us and wind gusts that packed a punch, we moved ahead, set up telescopes and readied for the low chances of a clear sky. Everyone has heard the saying about weather in New Mexico, "wait five minutes and it will change." On that day



last September, the weather decided not only to cooperate, but provided a show of epic proportions before the main "star" event. While we stayed dry, all around us there were monsoonal downpours, thunder and lightning, as well as breaks in the clouds to the west that allowed the setting sun to shine through in all its colorful splendor. It was not just a star party, but a sky party!

The stars and dark sky above were equally impressive. The late summer sky brought the entire Milky Way galaxy into view, no telescopes needed. It makes you feel small amongst its vastness, but also brings the feelings of immense gratitude to be amongst it, our celestial home. Other highlights of the night included seeing star nebulas, the rings of Saturn, and constellations like Cygnus (the Swan).

Thanks again to the Santa Fe Stargazers for allowing us to peer into the universe through their telescopes and educating us on what we were viewing, to Sanchez Tacos and Beer Creek Brewing for keeping us full and warm, and to Commonweal Conservancy for letting us utilize the much larger Cottonwood trailhead for parking.

Come and join us this fall, Friday, October 4th, for another great night of star viewing, which continues to be an annual and free community event. The forecast is already looking good. Check out our website, sfct.org/events for more information.



Dennis Romero

SFCT Board Vice President

By Ryan Van Bibber

Ride or hike the trails around Santa Fe and you're likely to see Dennis Romero zipping by on his mountain bike. An avid skier and cyclist, Dennis cruises around throughout Northern New Mexico, but among his favorite spots to cycle are the St. John's Arroyo, Aspen Vista to the towers, Galisteo Basin or the Dale Ball Trails, just a short ride from his front door. "Mountain biking is a very different sport. It requires a mental engagement that is really just wonderful to experience every time I'm on a bike, on a trail," says Romero. "If you lose that engagement, down you might go . . . and I've got the scars to prove it."

That idea of engagement has another layer for Romero. During his rides, he was first introduced to the Santa Fe Conservation Trust (SFCT). The organization had been on his radar for several years when he was invited to join. Of course, the trails were just the tip of the iceberg. Romero learned that the trails were just one outgrowth of SFCT's mission to use and preserve the landscape in this part of the state.

Romero currently serves as SFCT's Vice President for the Board of Directors. He also sits on the Executive Committee and the Land Review Committee, which oversees the acquisition of property and easements and has been of particular interest to Romero. That committee brings together landowners and SFCT who together work on "complex, fascinating, visionary transactions" all aimed at preserving the unique natural spaces of Northern New Mexico. "These transactions, each and every one of them, are unique, whether it's down in the Galisteo Basin or over next to the Rio Grande," Romero explains. "There are title issues. There might be boundary issues. Every one of them is just radically different and offers beneficial features that would support a purpose for perhaps taking this on as an easement."

For Romero, helping to navigate SFCT's complex transactions is as exciting as riding over the rocky singletracks of the Sangre de Cristos. "I just enjoy the board's work because we seem to be able to wind our way through complex issues very effectively," he says. "I love what I get out of those interactions, the creativity that landowners bring to the table, that the board then applies its collective abilities to sort out and ultimately end up with a parcel of property that is now preserved either for any of the various objectives that SFCT exists, whether it's for wildlife, scenic, cultural or historic preservation. It's very satisfying to work with private landowners and help to manifest the final product that protects this beautiful area," he said.

The land here has always had an active presence in Romero's life, starting with his family's roots in the San Cristobal Valley north of Taos. That's where, after the Second World War, his father acquired a 300-acre parcel of land near where he had grown up. In the 1990s, his dad had the foresight, Romero explains, to put those acres into a conservation easement that allows for continued agricultural use, which is what the property has been used for historically. It's easily one of the first such easements to appear in Taos County.

"In the middle of this spectacular valley is this spectacular piece of property that is preserved. I'm really proud to be able to say I'm tied to that one," Romero says.



Since returning to New Mexico some three decades ago to practice law in both Santa Fe and Taos, Romero has seen a tremendous amount of growth and change here. He sees a prominent, increased role for SFCT as that growth here continues. "It's one thing to promote, to support growth. It's another related goal to preserve the historical and cultural aspects of this area that are tied to the land," Romero says. "I believe that it's a conducive interplay of two concepts because the quality of life here is remarkably high. And the quality of life that SFCT can help foster, might ultimately just enable very positive growth for this area."

Romero is particularly excited about the important role SFCT can play as a key partner in developing the economic opportunities around recreation by acquiring or protecting properties that can either formally establish an existing trail or allow the creation of new ones. He points to what's happening now in the Galisteo Basin. An expansive property acquired in 2020 by SFCT connects to the rest of the trails at the Galisteo Basin Preserve, allowing for a significant increase in the availability of trails there. For Romero, it's a model that can be promoted and copied elsewhere. It's also an example of how SFCT's work can help facilitate the growth of recreational opportunities and the economic growth potential that brings.

Romero is quick to point out another essential benefit that's easily lost in the big-picture discussion: fun. "What's the basis of good health? Fun. Are you having fun? That gets you halfway to anything." It's clear how Romero's approach to mountain biking—mental engagement and having fun—translates to his work with SFCT as he continues in his second three-year term on the board. "This board and this staff are wonderful," Romero says. "These are really, really gifted people [who] bring a multiplicity of talents to the organization . . . I'm a lawyer, and there are appraisers, realtors, and business people, scientists and other professionals who are all members of this board. And we work with our very capable staff. I really enjoy the opportunity to support them and their work."

Meet SFCT's newest board & staff members

Carmichael Dominguez

Board Member

If you've been around Santa Fe for a while, you know Carmichael Dominguez as a public servant who cares about the community enough to get passionately involved in many aspects of it. In 2002, he was a Santa Fe Public Schools Board of Education member where he championed secondary education reforms and advocated for special needs children. He moved on to the Santa Fe City Council in 2006, representing District 3 where many of the City's youngest, lowest income and majority Hispanic population live. He was, and continues to be, a champion for improving the quality of life for all who live on Santa Fe's south side, an area that borders iconic public lands, including the La Cieneguilla petroglyph site, the Caja del Rio and the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro Historic Trail, areas that reflect the cultural history of northern New Mexico. Carmichael spent many hours of his childhood at the family ranch just west of Hermit's Peak, which was named for an Italian religious recluse who lived on the mountain in the 1860s. Carmichael heard stories about how the man, Giovanni Maria de Agostini, foraged for food and gathered water from a nearby stream, much like his ancestors did in the little village nearby the family ranch. He said the wildlife and vegetation below the peak were a source of life for the village, providing physical, emotional and spiritual nourishment to everyone who lived there. "These lands made us who we are," he said. The stories of the land and all the culture and history associated with it have animated Carmichael to get involved in protecting it. "That's why I devote so much time to educating people about these lands and why it's important to conserve them so that the stories and traditions of our people are also preserved." In addition to his service on the SFCT Board, Carmichael is a member of Earth Keepers 360 and serves on the Hispanic Conservation Leadership Council for HECHO (Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting and the Outdoors.) He's also been involved with the NM Wildlife Federation. In all of this work, Carmichael looks forward to helping educate people about the iconic landscapes of northern New Mexico and the importance of protecting them. "My responsibility," he said, "and the responsibility of my generation is to learn as much as we can about environmental justice, to practice protecting the environment and finally to pass that knowledge and implementation on to future generations."



Antoinette Armijo-Rougemont

Accounting Associate

I am a proud multi-generational Santa Fean, born and raised on beautiful Upper Canyon Road where my brothers and I were fortunate to explore our big back yard and live close to several family members. I worked at the National Park Service beginning in high school for seven years in several positions, including Interpretive Park Ranger at Pecos National Historical Park. I then moved on to work at First District Court, Santa Fe County (Santa Fe County Attorney's Office and the Juvenile Detention Center as Compliance Manager), and the City of Santa Fe (Municipal Court Accountant, Tourism Fiscal Administrator, and BDD Finance Manager), from where I've recently retired. I hold an A.A. in Southwest Studies, a B.S. in Business Administration, and an MBA from the University of Phoenix. I am married and our three daughters are all grown, the youngest is completing her ME degree from NMSU. My husband and I enjoy traveling, camping, spending time with family, our friends, our pets, and watching our grandkids grow. I love the outdoors, and I especially have an affinity for animals and take every opportunity to advocate for them and support many organizations, including PETA, World Wildlife Fund, National Wildlife Federation, rescues and sanctuaries, and local shelters. I like to do artwork such as painting and other crafts. I also serve on the Santa Fe Fiesta Council, and participate in Big Brothers Big Sisters as a big sister. I am happy to be a part of this organization and I fully support its mission of preservation for future generations and our beautiful wildlife. I truly believe that it's our moral obligation to preserve our planet for future generations of all living beings, and it starts with education and igniting a flame in others to have that same passion and sense of responsibility.



SFCT is blessed to have a board full of people willing to share their time, money and expertise to move our work forward.

You can meet all our board members at: sfct.org/about/board-of-directors/



Above: intermission during the show.
Photos courtesy of Tony Bonanno Photography.

The evolution of Banff

Each March, we can't help but feel a warmth in our hearts for the generosity of Kent Little (past owner of Sangre de Cristo Mountain Works and SFCT board member) for handing us the baton to host Santa Fe's Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour.

The 2023 World Tour, screened for two consecutive nights at The Lensic, is our second largest annual fundraising event and provides operating income to further our mission. It has become integral to funding our work. We're talking expansion of protected land, ongoing trail maintenance, preservation of dark night skies, nature field trips that inspire thousands of children, mobilization of hundreds of community members who join on weekly walks throughout the city, land restoration, and engagement with hundreds of volunteers!

Banff's sold-out crowds were able to watch eight different films each night – skiing, rock climbing, kayaking, biking, highlining – yet the film entries at the Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival in Alberta each November, from which the World Tour films are chosen, have been evolving quite a bit since the festival's inception. Here at SFCT, a volunteer committee meets for over a month to conscientiously narrow down the 35 to 40 eligible films to 16, sometimes with the ability to preview and sometimes using only feedback from other World Tour screenings. Here's what we watched in 2023:

ECO-HACK! showed us an innovative, unconventional, and sometimes humorous way to save desert tortoise populations from a creative biologist who was tired of "the same old." THE NINE WHEELS, an audience favorite, was a moving story that explored what it is like to live with a disability yet remain a devoted parent to young upcoming bike pros, and ultimately, what it is like for an entire family to live life one day at a time. NUISANCE BEAR sparked controversy within the crowd of moviegoers. Through a shift in perspective, i.e., from the experience of bears who migrate through Churchill, Manitoba - a famous international destination for photographing polar bears - the film revealed an obstacle course of tourist paparazzi and wildlife officers who bears must navigate during their annual migration. SHERI told the story of Sheri Tingey's 60-year career as a woman who has defied the odds by starting a company at age 50 that has revolutionized the outdoor boating industry. This film highlighted the hurdles she overcame to launch the company, and at this watershed moment of reckoning around equity and

inclusion asked the audience to grapple with important questions about who belongs. WOOD HOOD followed a weekend-long group camping trip with kids from New York City, and as the film weaved between the city and the woods - a place that is unfamiliar and historically inaccessible to many - we witnessed the joy and growth that is possible when kids have an opportunity to find that "quiet place." And FREE TO RUN was filmed when the Taliban took over Afghanistan threatening the basic human rights of women across the country. The film documented how UN human rights attorney and mountain runner, Stephanie Case, fought to find a way forward for the Afghan women of her NGO, Free to Run, in the midst of taking on the longest and hardest ultra-trail race of her life.

Over the Banff World Tour's 30+ years, films with personal storylines, those that chronicle environmental issues, films with a focus on diversity, inclusion, and life challenges are replacing some of the shorter, adrenaline-filled eye candy that defined the World Tour in earlier days. Although a multitude of sports and activities are still included, our heroes and heroines have become more diverse, giving us a deeper experience of how people experience nature around the globe. The stories told by the filmmakers seem limitless. We hope you will join us next March to see the new round of award winning films and audience favorites from the Banff Centre's Mountain Film Festival!

Below: Quinn Simons, SFCT Board Chair, Sarah Noss, Executive Director, and our Banff Centre "Road Warrior."



Our 30th anniversary celebration

What a blast!

Celebrating SFCT's 30th anniversary on Santa Fe Prep's Sun Mountain Field was about as good as it gets. The hot summer day gave way to a cool, cloud covered afternoon and starry evening, and we were in sight of both Sun Mountain, which we protect with a conservation easement and the beautiful foothills, where our work began behind St. John's College. The tent and the grassy field around it welcomed 340 guests (our largest event to date), while Joe West and Friends serenaded the crowd as they enjoyed cocktails before the event got officially underway.

Tumbleroot Brewery and Distillery, one of our longtime partners, served Mojitos, Moscow Mules, Old Fashioned's and Dragonfruit Tonic—a handcrafted mocktail. Second Street Brewery generously continued their annual support of the event with a donation of beer that satisfied all tastes, and Gruet Winery donated a portion of their infamous sparkling, red and white wines to get Stand Up For Nature, our biggest annual fundraiser, off and running in a beautiful and unique outdoor setting. Filling the air with wonderful aromas of brisket, corn bread and all the fixings was the satisfying dinner from Cowgirl being set up for a delicious buffet.

Joe West and Friends brought just the right celebratory and fun flair to the evening, playing good old standards, along with new words to "This Land is Your Land (of Enchantment)", and a trail themed "These (Hiking) Boots Are Made For Walkin'" with two courageous volunteers bringing a go-go girl vibe to the tune. Our musical evening was a way of celebrating our 30th without taking ourselves too seriously and offered a big thank you to all our attendees who helped us raise close to \$100,000 for the health and protection of our local land.

We are especially grateful to those who stood up to talk about what SFCT means to them when Executive Director, Sarah Noss, channeling Phil Donahue, handed them the mike. Quinn Simons, SFCT's Board President, talked about what it was like to try to get into nature after his climbing accident in Nepal left him wheelchair-bound for a spell. That's why he is so enthusiastic about the programs SFCT runs to provide equitable access to nature for everyone. Author Bill deBuys talked about the early days when some conservation easements were created without a local land trust to hold and steward them in perpetuity. SFCT needed to be created, he said, even before the high profile threat of development in the foothills occurred in 1993 spurred us into existence. Frank Katz, former SFCT board member who has a conservation easement on his land on upper Canyon Road, said what was important for him was the fact that SFCT



Above: Joe West and Friends playing a new rendition of "This Land is Your Land [of Enchantment]."

now has funding to support landowners who may not have the cash on hand to protect their lands. Now a wider diversity of landowners can participate in conservation to help us create larger, connected conservation corridors. City Councilor Renee Villarreal mentioned how important our community programs are that get kids into nature. Daphne Miller moved to Santa Fe during the pandemic, and like many who came then, it was hard to meet people. Daphne said that her participation in the Vámonos walks introduced her to nice people and got her more deeply involved in caring about the land of her new home. And finally, Nancy Cook, our longtime board member who had to cycle off the board after a nine-year tenure, said, "It is easy to take for granted what we have in the natural world here. But these past two summers have shown us it is fragile and can be lost. So, it has been the pleasure of my life to help protect what we all enjoy so much, to see more and more people get involved, and to help pass on a healthier world to all who come after us."

We know that the Santa Fe area is home to over 1,500 nonprofit organizations with deserving causes. How gratifying that 46 sponsors and numerous other donors—businesses, foundations, individuals, families, volunteers and SFCT landowners—celebrated with us to help preserve the environment, local trails, and dark night skies, as well as to strengthen SFCT's programs for youth and community. It was a joy to see the familiar faces of those who have joined us in the past, and we were thrilled to welcome 10 new sponsors and quite a few new donors, as well, that night. Auctioneer Bruce Adams helped us reach our paddle raise goal (along with two generous donors who offered to match gifts up to \$30,000 that night), and he went on to offer two live auction items in honor of our 30th: a glamping experience at KitFox, our neighbor in the Galisteo Basin, and a season pool pass for two at the Pecos Trail Inn.

We are grateful to all who joined us on the field in 2023 standing up (and singing) for nature! Come join us on September 7th this year at the Farmers Market Pavilion to hear acclaimed author and environmentalist Bill McKibben. It's going to be epic!



Spotlight: Kelly McDow & Patrick Lane

Celebrating generosity: forming a conservation legacy and finding a love of place

For those who have visited SFCT's property in the Galisteo Basin, recall what you felt upon seeing this special landscape for the first time. Some may recall long ago the Thornton Ranch headquarters' buzz of activity, with buildings, barns, and berms covering the property. With those features permanently removed, most will remember the landscape when it became open space under SFCT's ownership and stewardship. With each season's passing, the ongoing and long-term restoration of this 300-acre property delights us by giving another piece of a much larger puzzle, springing back to life and gaining ecological sustainability.

For SFCT donors Kelly McDow and Patrick Lane, their first exposure to the land brought up memories of Kelly's father and his deep respect for nature and wildlife, one that was passed down to her and shared by Patrick, her husband. After that first visit, wanting to honor the memory of her father and his love affair with the outdoors in a practical and permanent way, she and Patrick expressed their desire to make a gift in his honor. As Kelly and Patrick learned more about SFCT's mission and the tools we use to protect land in perpetuity, the more they liked the idea of providing resources for land restoration that will be protected forever.

"He would have loved the Galisteo Basin," said Kelly as she shared memories of her father, William McDow, while we were eating lunch in the shade of Canyon Road's Teahouse this past spring. "He didn't hunt, but loved to sit in a deer blind and give his full attention to nature, watch her unveil herself over several hours, or even days."

In a heartwarming display of generosity to support the restoration work at the Galisteo Basin property, the couple underwrote a solar-powered well, water tank, spigot, and plumbed wildlife drinker in the heart of the property, in her father's memory. This visionary gift will provide a sustainable water source for wildlife, promoting biodiversity and enhancing the health of the property's ecosystems. The solar-powered well boosts the environmental sustainability of the land, ensuring that water resources are available without compromising the natural landscape.

On a recent trip to Australia, Kelly and Patrick witnessed firsthand both the destruction that wildfires cause, and also the rebirth that can happen. They visited Kangaroo Island, where fires, a few years ago, devastated the island's vegetation and native species, like the lovable Koala. "Kangaroo Island gave us the inspiration and hope that nature can heal itself with the dedication of those who care about and steward the land," Kelly said.

Kelly and Patrick's transformational gift will accelerate the long-term restoration efforts in several key ways. SFCT plans to bring in goat herds for managed grazing so the grasslands being restored over the next several years can have room to grow. The goats need water, so the solar well can now provide it. There will be water to start and grow young shrubs and trees that will increase the varied bird populations at the property, including arid grassland species like thrashers and sparrows. Water will enhance the beauty of this environmentally and culturally significant landscape and create a thriving habitat for a diverse array of flora and fauna.



Kelly and Patrick's journey with SFCT began serendipitously last year. After a dental visit, they noticed the 'SANTA FE CONSERVATION TRUST' office sign above the door across the parking lot. Intrigued, they made an appointment to learn more about SFCT and our mission. This chance encounter sparked a sincere desire to contribute meaningfully to our ongoing conservation efforts. Originally from the Upper Midwest, Kelly and Patrick moved to Santa Fe in 2021 after years of meticulous planning. They were drawn to the area's unique blend of natural beauty, community, and accessibility to nature. "Our first time here we thought we were in a different country with the unique architecture and ability to see for miles!" said Patrick when describing the draw of Santa Fe and northern New Mexico. Kelly, an intellectual property attorney, and Patrick, a commercial litigator, are now retired and have seamlessly transitioned into being dedicated advocates for environmental stewardship on multiple continents.

While we were having lunch, I asked them what philanthropy means to them. Their response—creating opportunity. In practice, that is supporting the dreams of UNM students through an endowed academic scholarship, supporting conservationists in Africa dedicating their lives to the survival of the endangered rhinoceros and mountain gorillas, giving household pets a chance at a better life through support of local animal shelters, and providing the living land an opportunity to restore balance. In addition to their generous gift, the couple also made a planned gift to SFCT. "Now that we are here, we are done competing," shared Patrick as he described their motivation to provide a planned gift. "It's an opportunity for us and for the environment, and we are looking for long-term impact." The couple expressed that they know climate change will outlive them, and they wanted to impact the fight against it in a small way.

Return to your own first memories of the Galisteo Basin and fast forward to 2044. Imagine coming upon the SFCT property --What do you envision? A thriving ecosystem? Trails winding through burgeoning landscapes, offering visitors a serene escape to enjoy nature, clean air, and the tranquil beauty of New Mexico? You can thank Kelly and Patrick for helping make what you envision a reality by blazing a path, forming a conservation legacy and finding a love of place.

Remembering Marc Simmons – 1937-2023

SFCT Landowner, Farrier, Maverick Historian

Marc Simmons died on September 14, 2023. He was 86 and died peacefully in his sleep. We didn't know much about his early life, but we did know, during the time we knew him, that he lived close to the land and very far off the grid. He was born in Dallas in 1937, and, according to his obituary, grew up in a time period that glorified the Old West. Like many of the western heroes of that era, Marc grew up emulating them with his independence and self-sufficiency. In the 50s and 60s, he got to experience the western life he often wrote about. Back then he worked for four summers as a ranch hand in New Mexico, Wyoming and Arizona, and he also worked parttime at horseshoeing.

He lived for decades off of State Road 14 in several structures he constructed to be historical reproductions of a typical western settlement. He lived off grid with only a few modern conveniences: kerosene lamps, a telephone and a manual typewriter. He hauled his water from a nearby well. He deeply loved the 126 acres he pieced together over the years, land rich in geologic wonders, like a petrified wood forest embedded in the sandstone cliffs, remnants of a time when rivers flowed down from the mountain between 145 to 66 million years ago. Located near the ruins of San Marcos Pueblo, which was occupied from AD 1340 until the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, there are petroglyphs and other relics on the land from that time period. Marc called his property "Little Garden of the Gods," and he placed it in a conservation easement with SFCT in 2005. That was when our relationship with him began, and it included yearly visits with him, when he regaled us with tales of the past while we walked the land and he showed us artifacts he'd found since the last time we were there.

"If Marc wanted to communicate with us here at SFCT," said Melissa Houser, SFCT's Land Program Manager, "he would send us a letter he typed on a typewriter stating the date and time of when he would be waiting by the phone for us to call him." Picking up the phone to talk and make an appointment was not his style! "I looked forward to walking the property with Marc and hearing the stories of the land that he protected with SFCT," Melissa said. "One of my favorites was about the large rock outcrop that crosses the land known locally as *Ambush Rock*. Prior to the Highway Department blasting the rock to allow State Road 14 to pass through, it was a favorite hideout of bandits who would lie in wait for wagons heading from Cerrillos to Santa Fe. I will miss those walks with Marc and will always remember his stories," she said.

Marc published over 40 books, including six about the Santa Fe Trail, as well as a history of Albuquerque and a history of Santa Fe. According to his family, he also wrote over 1,000 weekly news articles for New Mexico newspapers, including the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, the *Santa Fe Reporter*, and, for a time, the *Socorro Defensor Chieftain* and *El Paso Times*. Most often, his newspaper columns were called "Trail Dust," and were his *never-ending search for the closest approximation of the truth*. Imagine him pecking out this impressive volume of work on a manual typewriter by the light of a kerosene lamp, and you can imagine how he embodied much of the history he wrote about.



Marc helped designate the Santa Fe Trail, Old Spanish Trail and Camino Real de Tierra Adentro as a National Historic Trails and cofounded the Santa Fe Trail Association. He was also knighted by the King of Spain in 1993 into the Real Orden de Isabel la Católica, for his writings about Spanish Colonial history.

We truly valued our conservation partnership with Marc and will miss him! But one of the blessings of his passing was meeting his nieces, Jan Persons and Judy Burnett, who have worked hard to ensure his conservation wishes for his property will be honored by its next caretaker. SFCT will always treasure our time with Marc, and we look forward to the continued stewardship of Marc's beloved Little Garden of the Gods.

We close this tribute in the same way Marc used to close his letters to us:

See ya'
Marc Simmons
♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Financial Statements

January 1 through December 31, 2023

Financial Position

Assets

Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$340,291
Accounts Receivable	\$144,662
Prepaid Expenses	\$12,913
Deposits	\$2,500
Fixed Assets	\$3,651,663
Operating Reserve	\$1,362,786
Stewardship Reserve	\$1,167,852
Endowment held by SFCT	\$1,107,386
Endowment held by SFCF	\$148,664
Total Assets	\$7,938,717

Liabilities & Net Assets

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$23,299
Payroll Liabilities	\$21,809
Passthrough Payables	\$5,267
Total Liabilities	\$50,375

Net Assets

Unrestricted	\$4,953,660
Board Designated	\$349,396
With Donor Restrictions	\$2,585,287

Total Net Assets \$7,888,342

Total Liabilities & Net Assets \$7,938,717

Activities

Operating Income

Contributions & Grants	\$890,364
Fundraising Events	\$145,610
Program Services	\$233,256

Total Operating Income \$1,269,230

Operating Expenses

Mission Programs	\$866,651
Development	\$92,134
General & Administrative	\$92,134

Total Operating Expenses \$1,050,919

Net Operating Income \$218,311

Non-Operating Income & Expenses

Investment Income	\$353,437
In-Kind Contributions	\$1,200

Total Non-Operating \$354,637

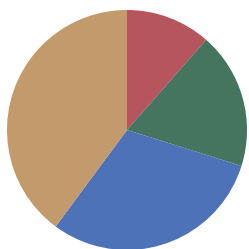
Total Net Income \$572,948

Filed forms 990 can be found on our website at: sfct.org/news/publications
Complete audited financials available upon request.



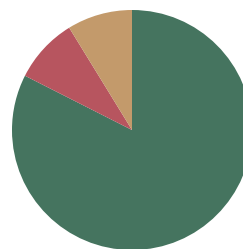
Above: Installing rainwater catchment for the dryland drinker on the Galisteo Property

Income



- Contributions (30%)
- Grants (40%)
- Program Services (18%)
- Events (12%)

Expenses



- Mission (82%)
- General & Admin. (9%)
- Development (9%)



Above: the Galisteo Basin with a view of the Ortiz Mountains, photo by Tony Bonanno

Your donation makes a difference to your quality of life!

The Santa Fe Conservation Trust depends on your generous support to ensure our land, trails and sky are protected for future generations. Providing conservation services in perpetuity means we depend on your support today and in the future. Every gift, no matter the size or type, is appreciated and needed. Please use the envelope provided and send in your donation today. You can also donate online at sfct.org/donate/

Types of Giving

Outright Gifts

Donations can be made in the form of cash, checks, stocks, bonds, mutual fund shares, real estate and personal property. Please contact SFCT at (505) 989-7019 for stock transfer instructions.

Consider Making a Recurring Monthly Gift

A scheduled donation, which can start with as little as \$10 a month, might be easier on your budget. Plus, it gives SFCT a steady, reliable stream of support.

Here's how easy it is to make recurring gifts at sfct.org/donate/:

- Choose the amount that you want to contribute every month.
- Decide if you want to use a credit card, checking account or PayPal account

If your circumstances change, you can choose to increase, decrease, suspend, or stop your monthly gift. Check the box on the envelope, call us at (505) 989-7019, or go online to sign up at sfct.org/donate/.

IRA Distributions

Age may just be a number, but if that number is 72 (or higher!) you can make your required minimum distribution a tax-free gift to SFCT directly from your IRA by designating SFCT as the recipient. This gift will not count as taxable income for you and will make an amazing impact preserving the land, trails, and sky you love and need. Please contact your financial advisor for details!

Matching Gifts

Does your company offer a Matching Gifts Program? If they do, submit their form and double your donation.

Vehicle Donations

Do you have an old vehicle you don't use anymore? Donate it to SFCT! We make it easy. Just go to careasy.org/nonprofit/santafeconservationtrust or give us a call at (505) 989-7019 for more information.

In Kind Gifts

We also accept in-kind donations. Please contact us for a list of needs. We could use a new refrigerator, for example.

Volunteering

Give the precious gift of time. SFCT has a wide variety of volunteer opportunities to support our mission: program, events, trail maintenance, mailings, data entry and other office duties. Please contact us at (505) 989-7019 or info@sfct.org for current opportunities.

Include SFCT in Your Estate Plan

Does your connection to the land sustain, enrich and inspire you? Are you concerned about access to nature for your children and grandchildren? Including SFCT in your will is easy to do and will ensure that the land, trails and skies of northern New Mexico will be protected for future generations. If SFCT is already in your will or estate plan, please let us know! You'll become a member of the Atalaya Legacy Society (pg 28), be invited to an annual lunch for insider updates on our work and, if you wish, be acknowledged in our publications. Explore your planned giving options at sfct.org/planned-giving, contact us at 505-989-7019 or email Sarah Noss at sarah@sfct.org. As we **protect land, for everyone, forever** we depend on, and are grateful for, your support both today and in the future.

Dennis and Jonna Brandon

Engaged donors looking to the future

Thirty five years ago, Jonna Brandon announced to her husband, Dennis, that she “will be living here someday,” but it took both of them until 2022 before they made it here full time. But once you see what they were up to, you’ll understand.

Dennis was booking “probably over 5 million miles of travel for my work,” he said. He worked in 40 states over the course of his career and in many foreign countries, for NBBJ, an American global architecture, planning and design firm. He started as a planner, but he ended up with a 30-year career as Principal who marketed, sold, closed and saw huge projects, like research labs, academic buildings, and hospitals through to completion. “That’s why Jonna and I get along so well,” he said, smiling, as he literally spent years on projects in Vienna, Cairo, Prague, Istanbul, Hong Kong, Singapore, Beirut and across the US.

Jonna maximized her time while he was gone. They first met at NBBJ where Jonna worked in marketing. After they got married they moved to Columbia, SC, where she started learning the wine import and distribution business from Jean-Pierre Chambas. “After working for two or three years with him, I basically got my bachelors in wine,” she said. When Dennis and Jonna moved to Houston, Jonna took advantage of a great metal working program at the University of Houston and learned the art of jewelry making. But upon their return to Columbus, OH, the CFO at NBBJ asked her to come in to work “temporarily” for women on maternity leave, and that turned in to another seven-year stint. Ok, that’s enough NBBJ, Jonna thought, and she started her own custom jewelry business. But she had more to give than the 10 x 10 jewelry studio could produce, so she took her wine knowledge to a big grocery store in Columbus where she ran the wine department and eventually became its wine director, “That was my MA in big business. I really learned the business from them,” Jonna said.

Meanwhile, Dennis was perfecting the design/build approach to urban design, ensuring that architects and contractors work seamlessly together. He is a people person, good at building teams, and he was willing to stay on any jobsite until it was completed to everyone’s satisfaction. He got a little teary-eyed when talking about teamwork and the two projects that stand out in his mind. One was in the historic town of Charleston, SC which needed a new university hospital at the Medical University of South Carolina. It turned out to be the largest building ever constructed in Charleston, and he was there for four years to see it to completion.

The second project that sticks in his mind was in Turkey. In 1999, the country endured a 7.6 earthquake that killed 17,000 people, left over 250,000 homeless and caused over \$6.5 billion in damages. Dennis was dispatched to work with the Minister of Health to figure out how to rebuild hospitals. He worked with a small local firm of four people, brought them to Columbus to learn more about the design/build approach, and today, they are a leading design/build company in Turkey. Dennis helped create a prototype hospital adapted to three locations, and the team in Turkey ended up creating 10 healthcare facilities that helped rebuild the country after the earthquake. *Engineering News-Record*, the Bible of the construction industry worldwide, said that it was the largest finance/design/build series of healthcare buildings globally and voted the effort as the best healthcare project in the world.



Meanwhile, back in Columbus, Jonna bought the oldest continuously operating wine shop in Ohio, along with its building. She ran the Twisted Vine for about 15 years, and after Dennis retired, Jonna sold it to her assistant manager, and right before they moved, she basically gave her studio to a young man just starting his jewelry making career. So now this busy couple is finally here learning to live together. “Help me get him out of the house!” Jonna said, laughing.

Dennis came out for workdays at the Galisteo Property many times last year, helping install erosion structures around the land. They’ve participated in our annual events and have gone on Insider Tours to learn about and explore properties that are not open to the public. Then, they started making generous monthly gifts to SFCT.

In thinking about the future, the couple also revisited their estate plan and included SFCT as its sole beneficiary. “For people like us who move to a new community and aren’t part of a legacy, you want to establish that as part of your life. You want to look forward, not back to where you came from. The more we got to know the staff, your work, and your mission, it made us want to help you move forward.” Dennis mentioned four things about SFCT that they really like. First, “that you have a clear mission, and you live it,” he said. “Second, that you are focused on local engagement that also has an impact on global issues like climate change. Third, that your work creates long term, lasting benefit for the community, and finally, that you give people opportunity for direct engagement.”

We hope that you will join the Brandons in helping to protect the ecosystem of northern New Mexico in whatever way you can. Monthly gifts don’t have to be big to add up, and combined with the monthly gifts of others, the income can be sustaining as SFCT works to protect the land, trails and skies of our area. Remember, too, that making SFCT a beneficiary in your estate plan is a way to improve everyone’s quality of life and protect the iconic landscapes of northern New Mexico for future generations to enjoy.

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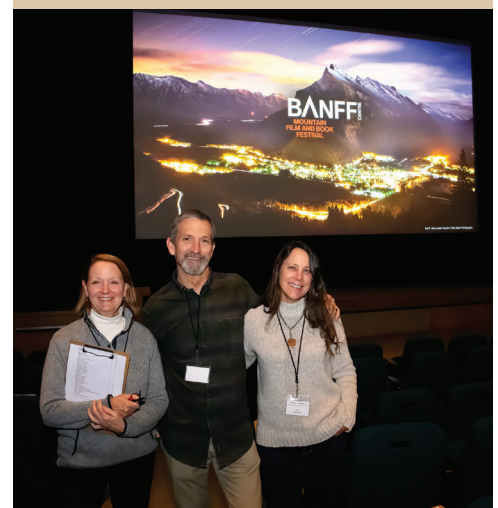
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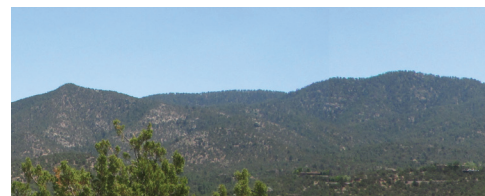
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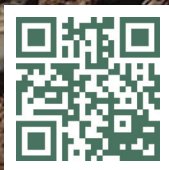


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