

THE OVERLOOK

No. 19

Land Conservation News from the TAOS LAND TRUST

Fall 2008

Taos Land Trust and Conservation Booming in Northern New Mexico

As Taos Land Trust marks its 20-year anniversary, we are busier than ever protecting land throughout northern New Mexico. This year we have already completed more conservation easements covering a larger area than in any previous year since the organization was founded in 1988.

Since our last newsletter in the Fall of 2007, we have completed eight new easements—five of those in September alone—permanently protecting almost 390 acres of beautiful landscapes between Rio Arriba County and Mora County. We have several more in the works to finish in 2008 and have already started working on projects for 2009. It's fast and furious, but very gratifying to be able to help so many people protect so much land. Projects completed this year include:

- The Hummingbird Ranch Community in the Mora Valley placed a conservation easement on 171 acres of their wild mountain land that will never be developed.
- On the other end of our territory, Willie Picaro placed a conservation

easement on his 63 acres of forested mountain land near the village of Coyote west of Abiquiu. Willie's property is near the historic village of Mesa Poleo and adjacent to the Santa Fe National Forest.

- Closer to home, we are very excited about the DiLisio Conservation Easement, which protects 18 acres of very pricey real estate in El Salto. Leonard DiLisio waxed nostalgic about the area: "When I first came to Arroyo Seco I remember the dirt road into this property, the sheer beauty, the peace and tranquility and the unobstructed path up to the waterfall and El Salto Mountain. Now, some 30 years later, the beauty is still there, but it is a little less peaceful and almost impossible to follow the path up to the mountain and waterfall due to new fences, new structures and many more people. By setting aside 18 acres of farmland and forest in a conservation easement I hope to reverse the trend, slow the encroachment on nature and preserve at least some of the natural beauty of this area." With the

see Stronger, page 2

Taos Land Trust Opens New Public Park on Río Hondo

We are very excited to announce the opening of the Taos Land Trust Río Hondo Park in lower Valdez. The 22-acre property, which extends



Río Hondo Park, Valdez

from the Des Montes Rim road down to the river, was a gift to the land trust from former resident Leslie Dugan. In a valley filling up fast with new homes, this is one of the last wild, peaceful and undeveloped stretches of the Río Hondo.

A partnership with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish under its open gate policy will allow public access for fishing, birding, picnicking and enjoying the beautiful riparian habitat. Meanwhile, we just finalized a conservation easement with our sister organization, the Santa Fe Conservation Trust, to insure that the land will never be developed. We are grateful to the Moore Charitable Foundation for their generous assistance with this project.

Stay tuned for our formal grand opening! We hope this little slice of land will provide much joy and inspiration for many generations to come.



Attiyeh Conservation Easement, El Prado (Carolyn Lake photo)

Fostering a legacy of open and productive lands for future generations

Stronger, from page 1

Frank and Barbara Waters property—Taos Land Trust's first conservation easement in 1991—this makes the second project in El Salto to help “reverse the trend.”

- Dr. John (Bud) Wilson and his wife Barbara completed their fourth conservation easement in Lama, north of Taos, which now makes over 500 acres they have permanently protected. “Gotta leave some room for the critters,” explained Bud.
- The Attiyeh Foundation added another eight acres of irrigated pastureland to their stunning 36-acre conservation easement across from the El Prado post office—one of those special places all Taosños know and love.
- Earlier this year, an anonymous conservation easement in Arroyo Seco, just down the road from the Taos Land Trust office, added another 11 acres of prime agricultural land. That landowner has chosen to protect 66 acres in four separate phases. This one is phase two and we are already working on phase three.
- Ted Terry completed an easement of over 16 acres on his Riverbend subdivision along the Rio Pueblo de Taos Gorge, permanently protecting a 1 1/4-mile stretch of the riparian area along the stream and a setback from the rim of the gorge where no one can ever build. “The first time I strolled along the top of the Rio Pueblo Gorge and experienced the wildlife there I knew that it was truly unique and needed to be protected,” said Ted. “I just really feel strongly about protecting whatever we can of the views

“By setting aside 18 acres in a conservation easement I hope to reverse the trend, slow the encroachment on nature and preserve at least some of the natural beauty of this area.”

—Leonard DiLisio

and natural resources around Taos.” Since development is not going to stop anytime soon, this is an example we hope other developers in the community will follow.

- Last October we completed the McClure Conservation Easement, 16 forested acres on the slopes north of the village of Valdez that will remain forever undeveloped and unsubdivided.



Touch-Me-Not Mountain Preserve, Colfax County

What is a Conservation Easement?

Conservation easements allow landowners to decide how their land will be cared for in the future by voluntarily agreeing to retire some or all of their development rights. They still own the land and are not required to provide public access. They can continue farming, ranching or sustainable forestry, can reserve limited home sites for kids and grandkids, can sell it or pass it on to heirs, but the protection stays with the land forever no matter who owns it. Because conservation easements provide real benefit to the public and future generations, landowners qualify for federal and state income tax benefits and can reduce or eliminate inheritance taxes. Contact Taos Land Trust or visit our website for more information.

Longtime resident Annette McClure was enthusiastic about creating this protected easement as part of her legacy as wildlife habitat and a model of good forestry stewardship.

We expect to complete another four conservation projects this year, totaling 900 more acres of forested mountain wildland, ranchland and irrigated farmland, from Taos to Union County.

One of those projects will protect a particular tract of open land and stunning views near Taos that we know is one of the most treasured places in the area. By the end of the year that will make over 24,000 acres that the land trust has permanently protected, including the Taos Valley Overlook and Ute Mountain, purchased and preserved for the public in a partnership with the Trust for Public Land.

All these conservation easements are the result of partnerships with private landowners who have the vision and commitment to permanently protect their land for future generations. We could not do this work without them. On behalf of our children and grandchildren, we all owe these individuals and families a debt of gratitude.

TAOS LAND TRUST Wish List

Film camera—As the rest of the world moves into the digital age, we still need an old-fashioned film camera to document our conservation easements for legally-required photo archives. Please contact us if your old SLR film camera is just collecting dust and we will resurrect it to a long and productive life.

Volunteers—We are always in need of volunteers with a variety of skills and expertise to help with any number of projects, from completing our conservation easements and getting out on the land for baseline documentation or annual monitoring, to the exciting and rewarding work of stuffing envelopes and helping with fundraising activities. Compensation includes the opportunity to work with a fun bunch of people, getting out onto some beautiful landscapes, the gratification of contributing to the public good and an occasional party.

Conservation News, Updates and Services

The New Mexico transferable income tax credit is off to a great start, helping landowners throughout New Mexico get compensated for permanently protecting their land with conservation easements. Unlike most tax incentives, which benefit only those with money, this tax credit is helping landowners at all income levels—especially those at the lower end who need it most. Starting this year landowners can qualify for a state income tax credit worth 50% of the appraised value of a conservation easement up to a maximum of \$250,000. If they cannot use the credit themselves they can sell it through a brokerage system, usually for 80 to 83 percent of its face

Contact Taos Land Trust to learn more.

In another move to provide incentives to conserve land, Congress has extended a temporary **increase in the federal tax deduction for conservation easements through 2009**. This raises the deduction a landowner can take for protecting their land with a conservation easement to 50% of annual income for up to 16 years. Qualifying farmers and ranchers can deduct up to 100% of their income from federal taxes for 16 years! **But it only applies to easements donated before the end of 2009.**



Enjoying the land at Taos Land Trust's 2007 Bioblitz

value. Once the credit is established, landowners have 20 years to use it or sell it. That means **you can get a check for up to about \$200,000 simply for protecting your land!** This may seem too good to be true, but it is a legal and legitimate policy to directly reward landowners for the public service they provide by keeping their land from being developed. They help maintain healthy watersheds and vegetation, wildlife habitat and, of course, beautiful, open, working landscapes.

nuts and bolts and tax benefits of conservation easements, our *De la Tierra a la Cosecha* (From Earth to Harvest) partnership with Taos County Economic Development Corporation and Taos Valley Acequia Association, the Mobile Matanza, acequias, youth in conservation, forestry issues and more. We work closely with the nonprofit Cultural Energy (culturalenergy.org) to produce the program and recently received a small grant to buy our own professional-grade recording

equipment. Listen in on the third Monday in December, March, June and September (next program December 15, 2008), 8:30-9:00 A.M. on KRZA. Or you can download any of the programs from our website. *De la Tierra* is occasionally rebroadcast on KTAO (101.9 FM) as part of their Thursday evening Sustainable Living program. **Let us know if you have any great ideas for a radio program.**

Last September Taos Land Trust and the Frank Waters Foundation co-sponsored **the first annual Taos Bioblitz**—a treasure hunt of sorts to document every living organism we could find over the course of a day on the 15-acre Waters Conservation Easement in El Salto. Bioexperts specializing in everything from birds and bugs to medicinal plants and grasses led small teams across the property, bushwhacking through the woods, crawling through fields and wading through mud and water. The 40 participants counted a total of 218 species including 122 plants (54 with medicinal uses), 42 birds, 50 bugs and a variety of mammals and other critters (including *homo sapiens*). Along with creating a biological record, it was a great opportunity for friends and neighbors to roll up their sleeves, spend a day out in a beautiful place, and think about biodiversity and the health of the land. The day also stimulated some very interesting conversations, ranging from *Curandismo* and local tradition to literature and Hinduism. Stay tuned for our next Bioblitz.

This season **Taos Land Trust started a series of field trips** for our Steward and Patron members to some of our more interesting project sites. Trips included a tour of some

see News, page 4

Taos Land Trust's mission is to conserve land with scenic vistas, agricultural value, wildlife habitat or historic sites through direct preservation, conservation partnerships, education and land use planning for the benefit of the people, families, communities, cultures and natural systems of the Taos area.

Kudos

The conservation work Taos Land Trust has been doing for the last 20 years has recently received a lot of attention and accolades, both locally and nationally.

This year we were thrilled to receive the 2008 KTAO Environmental Achievement Award. Brad

“From farming to cultural history and from scenic vistas to healthy habitat, the land is everything to both residents and visitors, and the Taos Land Trust is protecting and preserving it like no one else.”

—KTAO President Brad Hockmeyer.

Hockmeyer, KTAO owner, president and star DJ, said, “I am honored to present this year’s award to an organization in northern New Mexico whose efforts reward us all. The dedicated staff and their active board see the beauty of the land in northern New Mexico and its inherent value to all we hold dear. From farming to cultural history and from scenic vistas to healthy habitat, the land is everything to both residents and visitors, and the Taos Land Trust is protecting and preserving it like no one else.”

Our innovative *De la Tierra a la Cosecha* (From Earth to Harvest) partnership with the Taos County Economic Development Corporation and Taos Valley Acequia Association has attracted lots of national attention in the last year. Land Trust Alliance, an umbrella organization for about 1,700 land trusts nationwide, has written up our work twice in the last year in its magazine called *Saving Land*. An article called “Cultivating Land and Culture,” profiling our *De la Tierra* partnership, appeared in a special issue on *The Future of Land Conservation in America* last fall. The cover story in the Spring 2008 issue on “Land Trusts and Local Foods: A Natural Partnership” again featured Taos Land Trust. Both articles included beautiful black-and-white images from local photographer Dorie Hagler. You can read them on our website.

Meanwhile, a writer and photographer team spent several days visiting Taos Land Trust and our *De la Tierra* partners, landowners we work with and some of our project sites, for a new book tentatively titled *What Are We For?: Conservation Organizations Talk About Community Engagement and Social Change*.

We are honored and humbled by all the recognition. It helps recharge our overworked staff and keeps us going, one project, one acre at a time.

Board News

We are happy to welcome new board members Diane Enright, John Mockovciak, Jean Trujillo (back after a three-year hiatus) and Julian Varela. It’s always good to have fresh blood and new ideas, and together these four bring a wealth of practical expertise, perspective and commitment to help with our land conservation work.

Farewell and *mil gracias* to board members Maya Cabot-Chacon and Stephen Trujillo, and our long-time *ex-officio* board member Rey Torres. We are a better organization for your involvement. We look forward to continuing our friendship and working together in the years to come.

News, from page 3

innovative restoration work to bring back savannah grasslands on Tony Benson’s Wolf Springs Ranch—the largest conservation easement in Taos County; an off-road safari to the Touch-Me-Not Mountain Preserve above Eagle Nest, which is our largest conservation easement dedicated

exclusively to wildlife habitat; and a tour of petroglyphs on the Morris Conservation Easement near Ojo Caliente and other nearby archaeological sites. Please let us know if you are interested in participating next year.



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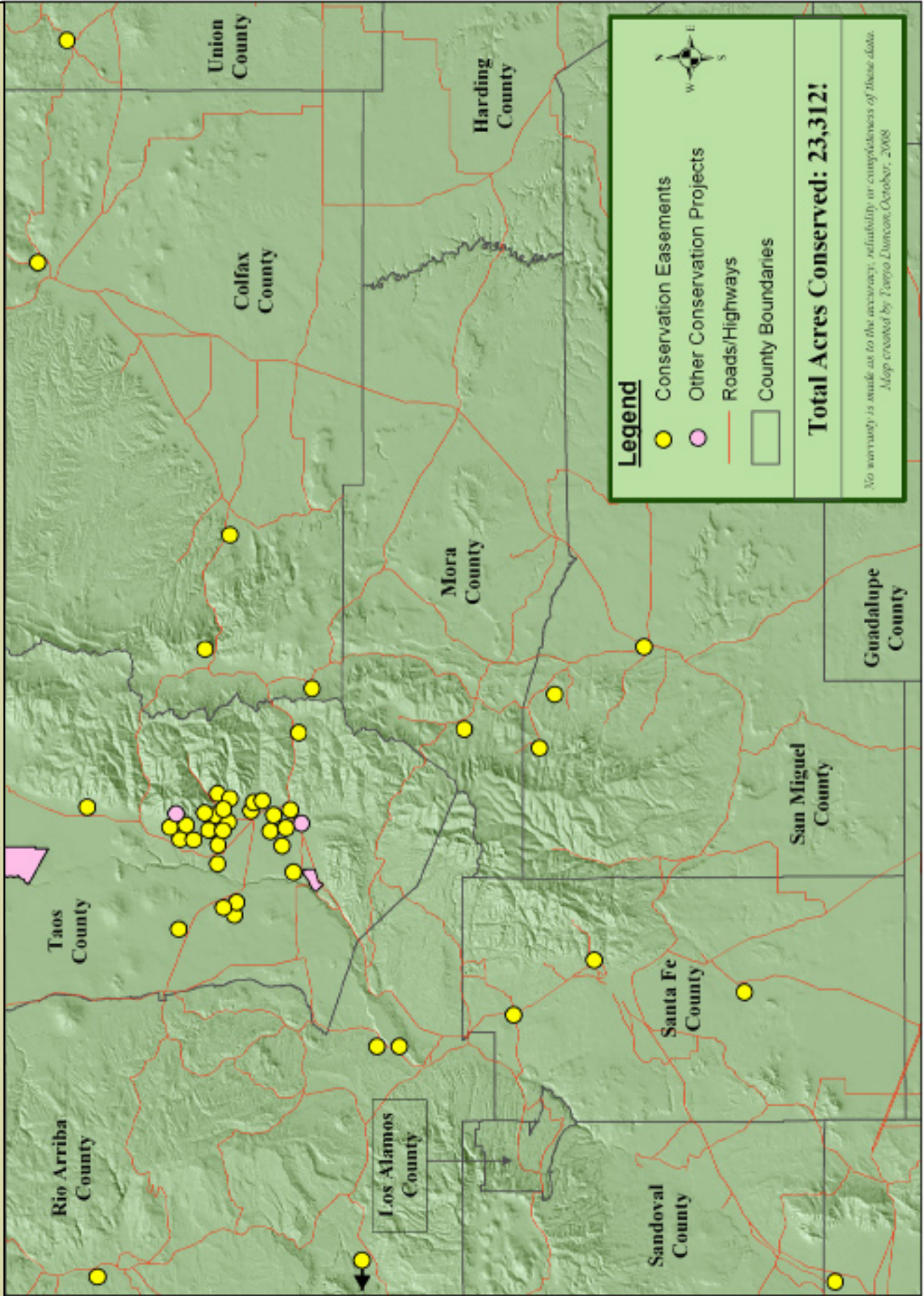
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Contact Taos Land Trust about sponsorship opportunities

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Mail: P.O. Box 376
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Location: 482 A State Hwy. 150
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Member Donations through September 2008

**Donors in Bold = Land Trustees
who have made a 3 year pledge**

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If your name was misspelled or
inadvertently omitted, please accept
our apologies and advise us of our
error. **Thank you.**

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A special thank-you to all our generous art and adventure auction donors and purchasers!

Thanks for invaluable in-kind and volunteer assistance from:

Abominable Snowmansion
Vicky Ashby
Elsbeth Atencio
Serena Brown
Centinel Bank
Cultural Energy
Karen Douglas
Thomas French (for duty above and beyond)
Paul LeBrun
Doug Leslie
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The following foundations have generously supported our work during the past year:

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Explore the world you're helping to protect.

Book a guided trip for your small group to one of the Southwest's special places, led by Taos Land Trust Executive Director Ernie Atencio. Ernie's background as an anthropologist, archeology instructor and park ranger—along with his love of the land—make him the perfect guide for trips to magical destinations like



Pueblo Bonito at Chaco Canyon

"Loon's Echo was absolutely the best, most fabulous trip we've ever taken in our lives—we watched moose, saw beaver, fished. Just beautiful, beautiful. And the accommodations—couldn't ask for anything better. It's hard to describe in words how nice it was. If you're looking for the place to unwind, there's no better, more relaxing spot on the face of the Earth."

— Jack Chapman

ChacoCanyon or other remote sites. Through a special and very generous connection, Taos Land Trust can also arrange private trips to Loon's Echo, one of Montana's most exceptional wilderness resorts, "conveniently located in the middle of nowhere" and one of the most amazing places you'll ever visit. Call Ernie to discuss the possibilities.

Logo Contest

Taos Land Trust is looking for a dazzling new logo as we prepare to retire the beautiful image of Taos Mountain with a menagerie of animals in the foreground that we have used for many years. We are very grateful

to Valerie Graves, the artist who generously created that logo for us in the early 90s. Thank you!

We invite our members and supporters, professional or amateur artists of all ages, to submit your ideas for a new Taos Land Trust logo that we will use for many years to come. Our guidelines are simple: something that is easily reproduced in small format, in black and white or color, that simply and elegantly captures our vision of "creating a legacy of open and productive lands for future generations." Like the landscape of northern New Mexico we all love, our land conservation work ranges from vast scenic lands and wildlife habitat to working farms, ranches and villagescapes.

Please submit your entry by January 31, 2009, to: TLT Logo Contest, PO Box 376, Taos, NM 87571 or info@taoslandtrust.org. Our committee of local artists and TLT board members will select the winner and present a certificate of appreciation, with public acknowledgement, to the winner in February.

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