

Land trust: 65-acre easement complete

By Matthew van Buren

The Taos News

The Taos Land Trust has announced the completion of a new 65-acre conservation easement in Arroyo Seco.

According to a release from the land trust, a donor who wishes to remain anonymous has been working on the conservation project "in multiple phases since 2000."

... the property includes a marshy wetlands area that provides habitat for songbirds and other migratory waterfowl.'

—**Taos Land Trust**

The latest phase, signed Dec. 21, includes 22 acres of farmland across from the Arroyo Seco Post Office along State Road 150.

Conservation easements allow landowners to maintain ownership of parcels of land while giving up development rights, effectively protecting lands in perpetuity, even if ownership changes. Landowners can receive tax breaks for creating such easements.

According to information from the Taos Land Trust, in order to keep the process "slow and thoughtful," and plan into the future, the anonymous landowner created the Arroyo Seco conservation easement in four phases over more than a decade.

"Along with the actively managed irrigated farmland, the property includes a marshy wetlands area that provides habitat for songbirds and other migratory waterfowl," the land trust release states. "At the signing, the landowner teared up, saying that it was a very emotional moment, putting pen to paper to make the final commitment on behalf of the family to permanently retire almost all of the development rights on 65 acres of some of the richest, most valuable and most beautiful land in Taos County."

Following the Dec. 21 signing, according to the trust, the landowner "regaled Land Trust staff with colorful stories about this piece of land and the quirky Seco community from the many decades of living here — a relationship that runs deep and is filled with affection."

"Twenty-two acres of farmland in this rapidly developing community is a big deal, but this is an even bigger deal because this is the final phase of a 65-acre conservation easement stretching all the way from the Hondo-Seco Road to Highway 150," Taos Land Trust Executive Director Ernie Atencio is quoted as saying.

Atencio encourages other landowners who are interested in creating conservation easements to contact the Taos Land Trust and learn more about the process.

The land trust can be reached at (575) 751-3138 or through its website, taoslandtrust.org.