

**GALISTEO WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP
MEETING NOTES FEBRUARY 2, 2007
Meeting Held at the Jemez Room #3, Santa Fe Community College**

Summary of Session

Purpose of the meeting:

1. Partnership update.
2. Seek agreement among GWP partners about the need to develop a plan for private ranch preservation in the northern zone of the Galisteo Watershed, and review consequences of lack of planning for ranch preservation.
3. Identify solutions, implementation strategies, and likely partners to preserve the ranches. This may include strategies to affect local/state/federal government action in support of ranch preservation.

Report from partners:

- Lucy Lippard (Galisteo) reported that the “land grab” issue continues after the initiators of the case(s) filed an appeal of the court’s decision to reject the case(s).
- Sigmund Silber (President of the San Marcos Association) announced the SMA annual meeting on February 15, 2007 at 7:00 p.m.
- Ted Harrison (Commonweal Conservancy) reported on progress of the Galisteo Basin Preserve project: agreement on land deal with the Rudish family, opportunities for a trail system from Galisteo to Community College District, 1,000 acres acquired with funds from the Enterprise Foundation, and planned acquisition of 1,700 acres (all open space) with LANB financing.
- Amy Tremper (Cerro Pelon Ranch) gave an update on (NM Department of Transportation) DOT plans for bridge rehabilitation in Galisteo and handed out public DOT comment forms (due February 16).
- Ondrea Hummel (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) reported on progress of the saltcedar eradication at the Galisteo Reservoir/Dam. A contractor has extracted plants/trees on about 92 acres on the south side of the creek. More work is planned for the spring of 2007. Treatment will be followed by goat grazing and revegetation.
- Susan Rich (NM Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department – Forest and Watershed Health Program) reported on the start up of her program and a statewide map of watershed projects that her department will develop (seeking compatibility of GIS mapping projects).
- Jose Varela Lopez (Chairman of Santa Fe Pojoaque Soil & Water Conservation District) introduced himself and reported on current SWCD activities: restoration work on dams and reservoir, House Bill #2 project, Cuyamunge irrigation efficiency project, La Cieneguilla County Open Space project, and phreatophyte control in La Cienega.
- Andrew Jandacek (County Planner) reported briefly on the Galisteo Village Planning process.

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- Bill Baxter (Charter School 37 and other functions) reported that the NM State Parks acquired more than 50% of a lot in Cerrillos to build a heritage center. There will be a State Parks presence in the Galisteo watershed and State Parks plans to manage the County-owned Cerrillos Hills Historic Park. The acquisition proposal for the 430-acre Mt. Chalchuitl area will soon come before the Board of County Commissioners. Once adopted, this will increase the open space component of the park.

Panel Presentations and Discussion:

Beth Mills (Strategic Planner for Santa Fe County) told the group that the right people were in the room to get something accomplished. She explained that the current situation of planning (“business as usual”) will not achieve the goals of the community and the County. She further noted that there is a need to create support for meeting ranching needs regarding the hydrologic impacts on urban development density on ranches. The process is too long and complex. Ranches are typically being broken up into smaller “ranchettes.” And though this is not a bad thing, it does encourage sprawl which is not ideal. Business as usual in County planning will continue a lack of focus on rural areas. The County’s major focus has been closer to the city of Santa Fe and addresses economic development, housing and infrastructure.

She felt that the County needed to:

- Create support for local food production in order to encourage productive ranching (keeping the land productive)
- Change the development review process. This should include:
 - Changing the hydrologic zoning
 - Tie in with rural planning
 - Clear development projects in a way that respect public expectations about the conservation of cultural/historical and ecological values of the land (help accommodate development projects that meet the greater, shared vision).
 - Help people produce food
- Develop guiding principles for rural areas (specifically the Galisteo Basin)

Warren Thompson (President Rancho Viejo Partners) suggested that looking for common ground would build momentum for working together to address the issue of protecting large sections of lands. He said that he personally supports open space, but felt that conflicts arise when neighbors become invested in the open space and protest if the landowner/developer wants to change the situation. It is unclear how much land should be held for open space and when a developer like himself decides to utilize some of the open space there is chance for conflict with surrounding neighbors.

He suggested that there is need to come up with a better model for the creation of open space and ranch preservation. It should be a private initiative and not go on the backs of the landowners and not via a battle with the County Commission.

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Steve Warshawer (Owner of Beneficial Farm & Ranch) stated that developing core values is important (to be stated and included in a plan). He noted that issues faced by ranchers like himself include:

- Limited access to financing and capital
- Marketing problems (need to grow demand and need for local food)
- Lack of new ranch leadership – developing the next generation (successors)
- Need for restoration of lands to increase agriculture

Strategies to protect or increase agriculture include:

- Protection of development rights
- Purchase and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)
- Property acquisition
- Utilize the Boulder, Colorado model (open space and farms)
- Public policy must be developed to address the connection of food production to protection of agricultural lands: broad buy-in to the concepts
- Protect open space – The County can take the lead on this
- Utilizing Conservation Easements
- Improve the County development structure so that it does not benefit or encourage large development.

Steve asserted that giving up on agriculture in the Galisteo Watershed is not necessary. Steve noted that in order to protect his land, he had purchased surrounding lands as they had become available. However, doing this has been an economic hardship.

Matthew McQueen (Director of Conservation Programs of Santa Fe Conservation Trust) presented various opportunities offered by land trust organizations. He explained how a conservation easement (CE) is a set of voluntary private land use restrictions, which entail a tax-deductible donation of development rights to a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The 2021C exclusion also offers the benefit that 40% in addition to the value of the CE will not be counted toward the estate (as long as the property stays in the family). He also explained specific estate tax considerations and state and federal income tax deductions. He suggested that the partnership should also lobby congress to protect conservation easement deductions (to extend the current law into perpetuity).

At the federal income tax level 100% can be deducted from conservation easements, which applies to 2006 and 2007 tax returns. He noted that conservation easements are one tool to protect lands and encouraged the group to think about additional mechanisms such as Colorado. He noted that New Mexico uses their lottery money for education while Colorado uses theirs for purchase of open space.

Regarding TDRs, he remarked that there is no market for receiving development rights in Santa Fe County. The County may need to create such a market.

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General Discussion:

The group discussed various issues and strategies that need to be addressed:

- We need to come up with a vision (but perhaps not a formal community planning process). Perhaps a regional plan: County level zoning and planning.
- We need to define the urban growth boundary with rules for what happens inside and outside this boundary.
- Coordination between the various agencies such as the BLM, State Engineers Office.
- Develop strategies at a community level
- Identify a project; set an example
- Inventory of “working” ranches
- Information about the Boulder, Colorado model
- We need to support COLTPAC (County to buy up more land).
- Scenario planning: implication of current process and regulations (business as usual) vs. a plan for the future.

After much discussion about various issues and strategies the group decided that:

1. We should describe and disseminate the scenarios of (1) business as usual (the problem of the area) and (2) scenario with a vision.
2. Make the GWP more visible to the public and to the County Commissioners: attend County meetings, speak up (during “Matters of Public Concern,” e.g. about the scenarios, about review process changes), and show the breadth of our partnership (different stakeholder groups).
3. Create working groups for 3 topics:
 - a. Listing recommendations for changes in the Land Use Code and County Review process, especially for the rural areas.
 - b. Developing a specific project. (Warren Thompson and Lucy Lippard)
This could actually come out of the scenarios planning.
 - c. Developing a regional plan (utilizing the community plan development method). This will require coordination with the 23 other neighborhood/road/water associations within the basin.

On behalf of the GWP, Earth Works Institute can assist and lend support to guide the effort. It was further noted that there are additional resources that could be utilized, such as AARP, which has the opportunity to review issues and make recommendations to the Governor.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for May 4. The Steering Committee will meet in-between to refine the strategies and stimulate and coordinate the decisions (action items) listed above.

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