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*Commissioner, District 3*



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*Commissioner, District 4*

**Liz Stefanics**  
*Commissioner, District 5*

**Katherine Miller**  
*County Manager*

DATE: May 12, 2015

TO: Santa Fe Board of County Commissioners

VIA: Katherine Miller, County Manager

FROM: Miguel Chavez, Santa Fe County Commissioner, District 2

RE: Presentation of Certificate of Recognition to Santa Fe Girls' School Project  
P.R.E.S.E.R.V.E Participants (Commissioner Chavez)

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**BACKGROUND :**

Santa Fe Girls' School was founded in 1998 in response to the community's need for a middle school setting where adolescent girls from diverse backgrounds could learn in an emotionally safe and academically rigorous environment. The founding mission of the school is to foster intellectual growth and emotional strength in adolescent girls, preparing them for the demands of high school, college, and young adulthood.

As a part of the curriculum, Santa Fe Girls' School students take part in Project P.R.E.S.E.R.V.E. Through this program, the 6th graders present their geology and botany studies of the region, and the 7th and 8th grade students share information about field research and studies of the ecological health of the Santa Fe River. The students have been gathering scientific data at the School-owned preserve, the 9-acre environmental field lab and Santa Fe River restoration project, for over a decade.

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

Commissioner Chavez seeks to recognize the Project P.R.S.E.R.V.E. participants for their hard work to restore native riparian habitat using low-impact, scale-appropriate, environmentally sensitive solutions within a viable middle school curriculum.

## Santa Fe Girls' School PRESERVE Fact Sheet

- The PRESERVE is the outdoor classroom of the environmental science program at Santa Fe Girls' School. It stands for Protecting the River Environment, Stopping Erosion, and Restoring the Vital Ecology, and was named by the first class of Santa Fe Girls' School students to get involved.
- The overall goal of the outdoor classroom and river restoration program is to restore native riparian habitat using low-impact, scale-appropriate, environmentally sensitive solutions while developing and delivering viable middle school curriculum.
- The land is 8.9 acres, bisected by the Santa Fe River near La Cieneguilla, downstream of the City's wastewater treatment plant.
- Upstream neighbors are the Bureau of Land Management and the County of Santa Fe. Downstream neighbors are private landowners who use the property for agricultural purposes—irrigation farming and livestock.
- Environmental Science Director Will Barnes has been managing the property since 1998; Santa Fe Girls' School has been involved with the property through the PRESERVE since 2004.
- SFGS eighth grade act as Board of Directors, and develops/implements the restoration plans for the course of their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year.
- Both the SFGS seventh and eighth grades visit the PRESERVE once a week throughout the school year to implement restoration plans, learn about riparian ecology, collect and analyze data on streamflow and groundwater quality and flora/fauna. Monitoring occurs during the summer as well. The sixth grade works on soil and geology in preparation for their seventh and eighth grade years at SFGS.
- Santa Fe Girls' School/ PRESERVE curriculum is the only three-year, standards-based, middle school science curriculum focused on the Santa Fe River.
- Collaborators include: Audubon, the New Mexico Recycling Coalition, RiverSource, and the Santa Fe Watershed Association, Bureau of Land Management, the County of Santa Fe, the Center for Intercultural Education, Wildearth Guardians, and Grassworks. Funders include the New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the McCune Charitable Trust, and private donors. Santa Fe Girls' School's science program has been supported in recent years by Los Alamos National Laboratory and PNM.
- Achievements over the years include:
  - Removal of 14,000 Russian olive trees—these non-natives put great demands on the water table.
  - Planting of hundreds of willows and cottonwoods.
  - In December 2009, the eighth grade class testified before New Mexico's Water Quality Control Commission to their discovery of high phosphate levels in the Santa Fe River. Their testimony garnered impressive media coverage, and inclusion in a book called *Going Blue: A Kid's Guide to Saving Our Oceans, Lakes, Rivers, and Wetlands*, written with Philippe Cousteau and EarthEcho International, and published in July 2010.
  - Originally a dry and grassy site to one now inhabited by beavers that created new wetlands.
  - Recorded the presence of the locally rare or uncommon northern leopard frog, marsh wren, Rio Grande sucker fish, southwest willow flycatcher, Harlan's hawk, and clouded crimson moth.
- Current initiatives include developing restoration ecology and outdoor education training programs for teachers throughout Santa Fe based on PRESERVE curriculum. In the 2011-2012 school year, the students worked in collaboration with students from the Santa Fe School for the Arts and Sciences and the New Mexico School for the Performing Arts, and also with experts from Audubon, the Watershed Association, Wildearth Guardians, and River Source
- In May of each year, SFGS delivers its Annual PRESERVE Public Presentation of Data, which is open to the community.
- The PRESERVE is open for tours. Please call Santa Fe Girls' School, 820-3188.

