

Santa Fe County Open Space, Trails and Parks

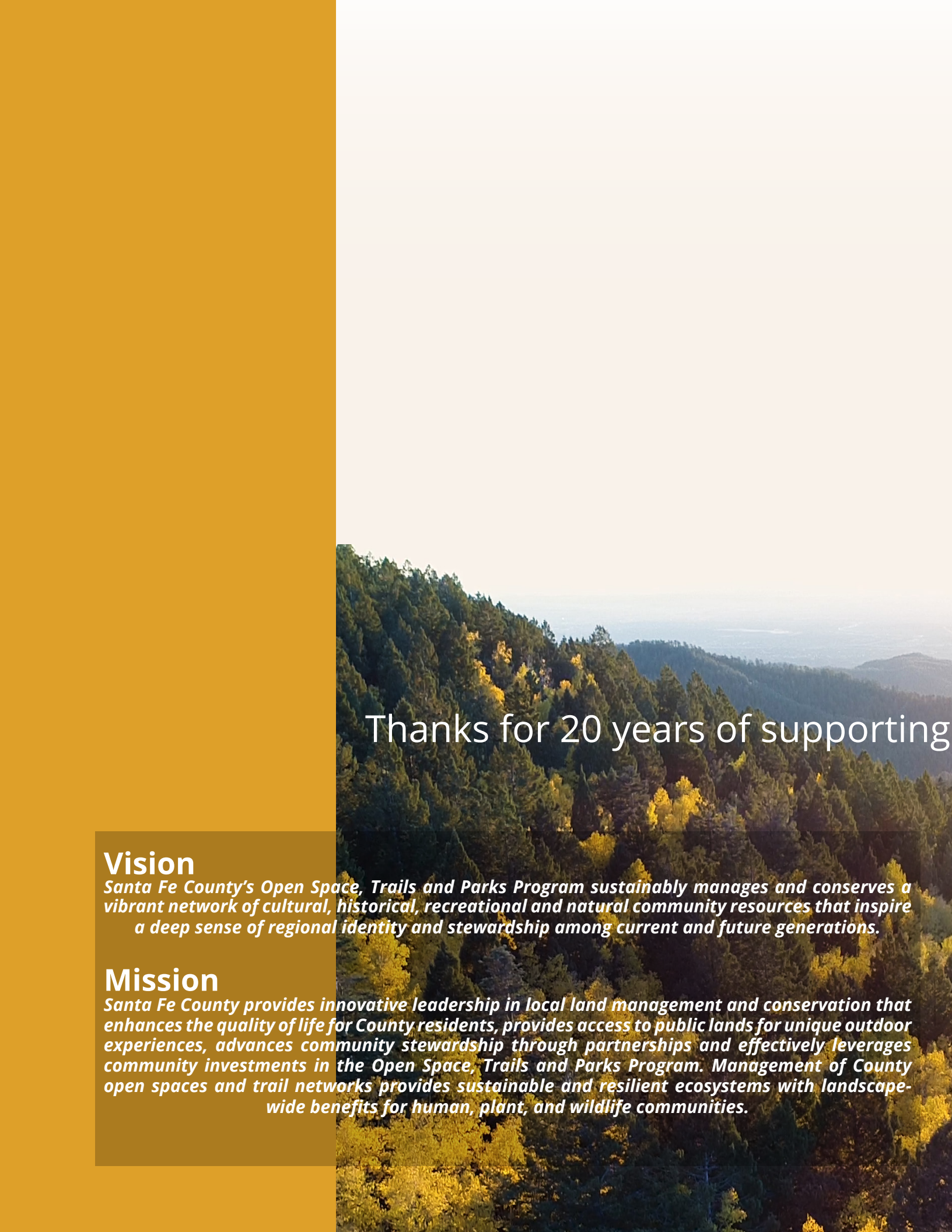
Annual Report

2020



SANTA FE COUNTY





Thanks for 20 years of supporting

Vision

Santa Fe County's Open Space, Trails and Parks Program sustainably manages and conserves a vibrant network of cultural, historical, recreational and natural community resources that inspire a deep sense of regional identity and stewardship among current and future generations.

Mission

Santa Fe County provides innovative leadership in local land management and conservation that enhances the quality of life for County residents, provides access to public lands for unique outdoor experiences, advances community stewardship through partnerships and effectively leverages community investments in the Open Space, Trails and Parks Program. Management of County open spaces and trail networks provides sustainable and resilient ecosystems with landscape-wide benefits for human, plant, and wildlife communities.

At the beginning of 2019, Santa Fe County Board of County Commissioners unanimously adopted the Open Space and Trails Strategic Management Plan which is a guidance document for implementation of Open Space, Trails and Parks (OSTP) programs and projects. The plan also provides clear and transparent information regarding the vision and goals for OSTP, which includes a better framework for communicating annually with the public. The OSTP Strategic Management Plan Year 1 work plan is an ambitious first attempt at outlining the priority projects to be implemented by OSTP staff and partners.

This annual report document is a follow up to the 2019 OSTP Strategic Management Plan. The intention of this annual report is to provide highlights of projects accomplished in accordance with the 2019 work plan and to outline the next year of focus projects for the OSTP program.

We hope that as you read through the following pages of this annual report you can reflect on the significant accomplishments of 2019. 2020 is another big year for OSTP, as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the program. This 20th anniversary provides a huge reason to celebrate-- from the accomplishments of the early volunteers who guided the original property purchases; to the communities who have provided input in our planning phases; to everyone who continues to support the work that OSTP strives to do in 2020-- and beyond. We appreciate your ongoing support.



Santa Fe County Open Space and Trails Program!

2019 ACCOMPLISHMENT SCORE CARD

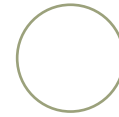
The 2019 Open Space and Trails Strategic Management Plan outlined focus projects for the first five years of implementation. Below is the list of 2019 priority projects, and their status.



Complete



Initiated



Not Yet
Initiated

Resource Management

- Conduct baseline wildlife surveys on each OSTP property
- Complete Ortiz Mountains OS Management Plan
- Continue to implement existing management plans
- Develop emergency response plan for each property, which could include a volunteer bike patrol for monitoring safety of users and facilities
- Work with internal groups to adopt OSTP BMPs, including Wildland Fire
- ◐ Build a database for each property in a centralized location for access by all OSTP staff
- Develop a regular monitoring protocol
- OSTP staff trained in OSTP Best Management Practices
- Determine needed expertise for open space management and grounds keeping, and identify applicable trainings
- Work with Santa Fe County Wildland Program to implement forest thinning on priority properties for ecological and wildlife health
- Work with partners to implement Northern New Mexico Master Naturalist program for volunteer training
- Focus staff expertise on natural resources, trail building, historic and cultural resources, as well as interpretive and educational programming, and stewardship
- Work with partners for avian monitoring and research
- Work with partners for native seed collection and native plant research on OSTP properties
- Work with partners in the Bring Back the Pollinators campaign
- ◐ Develop and implement an invasive species management protocol
- Perform erosion control actions

Educational Programming and Stewardship

- Develop branding, messaging and education material relating to OSTP program generally
- Develop volunteer training program
- OSTP 20 year anniversary celebration
- Stewardship events including habitat restoration projects along the SF River
- ◐ Streamline communications
- Develop an annual report that clearly communicates accomplishments, yearly focus projects and OSTP work plan

Project Development and Implementation

- SF Rail Trail Segment 5
- Pojoaque Valley Recreation Complex Phase 3
- Arroyo Hondo Segment 4
- ◐ Santa Fe River Trail segment 2 design and acquisition
- ◐ Romero Park Phase 2
- ◐ Bennie J. Chavez Community Center Park

Planning and Program Development

- ◐ Develop policies relating to Tribal communications and concerns including trail development and inadvertent discoveries of sacred items
- ◐ Develop an assessment for recreation and park facilities needs in each GMA in the County, and ability to provide related services and infrastructure
- Determine chain of command and decision maker for OSTP
- ◐ Determine appropriate level of maintenance for OSTP properties and facilities
- Revisit LOS in SLDC
- ◐ Develop analysis of long-range regional trail opportunities
- Work with local and regional trail planning collaboratives to prioritize coordinated projects

2020 Work plan and goals

Highlighted projects are priorities in 2020

Resource Management

Work with County emergency services to develop an emergency response plan for each property, which could include a volunteer patrol for monitoring safety of users and facilities

Implement an invasive species management protocol

Conduct surveys on properties for bats

Conduct surveys on properties for frogs

Conduct surveys on properties for nocturnal birds

Conduct surveys on properties for Bendire's Thrasher

- Conduct surveys on properties for Pinyon Jay nesting colonies

Conduct surveys on properties for horned lizards

- Conduct surveys on properties for rare plants

OSTP staff trained in sustainable trail design and construction

Investigate allocating a dedicated Resource Management project budget

Continue to implement existing management plans

- Implement monitoring and research program, including picture post installation, with trained work crews and interns

Install border fencing on OSTP properties as needed

Little Tesuque Creek Open Space Management Plan

Talaya Hill Open Space Management Plan

Educational Programming and Stewardship

Enhance communications with the public to provide regular updates on OSTP projects and programs

- Develop messaging and educational material relating to specific OSTP properties and programs, including Thornton Ranch Open Space

- Continue partnership with Northern New Mexico Master Naturalist Program and develop a formal curriculum booklet

Project Development and Implementation

- Thornton Ranch Open Space
 - Mt. Chalchihuitl Acquisition and Remediation
 - Arroyo Hondo Segment 2
 - Santa Fe River Trail segment 2 design and acquisition
 - Romero Park Phase 2
 - Bennie J. Chavez Community Center Park
 - Lamy Open Space and Park trail analysis
 - San Pedro Open Space
 - Little Tesuque Creek Trail analysis
 - Los Potreros Open Space pasture restoration
 - Talaya Hill Open Space forest restoration
- Ortiz Mountains Open Space forest restoration
 - Madrid Open Space

Planning and Program Development

- Develop policies relating to tribal communications and concerns relating to Thornton Ranch Open Space
 - Develop an assessment for recreation and park facilities needs in each GMA in the County, and ability to provide related services and infrastructure
 - Determine chain of command and decision maker for OSTP
- Lay the groundwork for a potential OSTP Interpretive Rangers program, seek opportunities for partnerships with other ranger programs
- Build a database for each property in a centralized location for access by all OSTP staff
 - Public outreach and partnership building with BLM, NM Game and Fish, and USFS
 - Revisit LOS in SLDC

PROPERTY HIGHLIGHT: LOS POTREROS OPEN SPACE

Following the adoption of the Los Potreros Open Space Management Plan in 2015, Santa Fe County staff began the process of restoring the “Potrero” or pasture using a technique called “Keyline Design”. Keyline Design is a type of dry land farming technique that intends to spread water across the landscape from wetter to drier places by force of gravity. Approximately 900 pounds of seed including annual, biannual and perennial seeds of warm and cool season grasses, grains, wildflowers, and legumes were also used at this time to regenerate the soil. The species were selected based on their specific capacities for regenerating the soil structure, cover, chemistry and microbial life.

This project was an incredible success! In the spring of 2019, approximately 90% of the planted area had plant cover from the seed mix. To follow up on this achievement, a phase II project commenced in the fall of 2019. This second phase was intended to enhance the water conveyance through the ditches through the upper potrero and completing up on a second series of seed planting for additional soil enhancement.



Los Potreros Open Space in Chimayo

PROPERTY HIGHLIGHT: TALAYA HILL OPEN SPACE

The Open Space and Trails Program collaborated with the Santa Fe County Fire Department Wildland Division to balance bird conservation with the reduction of high-severity wildfire risk at the Talaya Hill Open Space. Talaya Hill Open Space is located in a wildland urban interface (WUI) between the outskirts of the City of Santa Fe and the Santa Fe National Forest near the Santa Fe municipal watershed. It has been identified by fire experts as an important property to reduce fire risk for the protection of the Santa Fe municipal watershed and reservoirs. Bird species of high conservation concern also use the property, including the Pinyon Jay and Grace's Warbler.

Balancing these two very important goals, wildlife conservation and watershed protection, was a unique opportunity for collaboration between non-traditional partners. Both entities engaged in developing a plan of action to balance wildlife conservation needs with the need to reduce high-severity wildfire risk and protect the Santa Fe municipal watershed. Continued communication between the Open Space and Trails staff and the Wildland Division keeps this project moving forward.

This project has been highlighted by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative as a model project for wildlife conservation and fire hazard reduction initiatives in the Southwest region.



Talaya Hill Open Space, southeast of
Downtown Santa Fe

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: SANTA FE RAIL TRAIL

Santa Fe County Open Space and Trails Program applied for and received Transportation Alternative Grant Funds for the Santa Fe Rail Trail and the Arroyo Hondo Trail in 2019. This grant amount includes approximately \$500,000 for completion of Santa Fe Rail Trail Segment 6 (from Avenida Eldorado to Spur Ranch Road). This segment is currently under construction with plans to open in 2020.



Santa Fe Rail Trail near Eldorado

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: ARROYO HONDO TRAIL



Arroyo Hondo Trail near Rancho Viejo Fire Station

Approximately \$3.8 million was granted for segments 2, 3 and 4 of the Arroyo Hondo Trail. The first segment under construction starts at the Rancho Viejo Fire Station and connects to La Pradera Trails and to the Diverging Diamond Interchange. The other two segments will connect the Arroyo Hondo Trail from the Santa Fe Community College to the Turquoise Trail.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: POJOAQUE VALLEY RECREATION COMPLEX

Construction of Phase III of the Pojoaque Valley Recreation Complex began in 2019. This phase includes improvements that focus largely on providing additional amenities and storage for league-related activities and transitioning the park to a community park with a more diverse array of park offerings to appeal to a broader section of the community, including playgrounds, picnic shelters (large group shelter, medium group shelter), shaded picnic areas, seating, a perimeter walking path, and an orchard / agricultural demonstration garden.

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT: MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM



Santa Fe County Open Space and Trails Program partnered with Santa Fe Botanical Garden and Randall Davey Audubon to host the Northern New Mexico Master Naturalist Class. This class includes several weeks of in-depth, rigorous training for folks interested in resource management. Graduates of the program volunteer on partner agency projects, including Santa Fe County Open Space.

Santa Fe County Open Space has utilized Master Naturalist Volunteers and graduates to conduct horned lizard surveys, amphibian surveys, and rare cactus surveys. These activities have included more than 200 hours of volunteer time. This program will be expanding in 2020 to include more than 12 additional volunteers.



COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT: SANTA FE WATERSHED SANTA FE RIVER RESTORATION

The Santa Fe Watershed Association partnered with Santa Fe County Open Space and Trails to conduct restoration work along the Santa Fe River.



Image courtesy of Santa Fe Watershed Association

The Santa Fe Watershed Association works really hard to keep the Santa Fe River healthy and clean, organizing several volunteer work days throughout the year. These events are critical in assisting Open Space staff in education, resource management, and maintenance along the Santa Fe River.



Image courtesy of Santa Fe Watershed Association

Volunteers planted 146 trees and have worked to keep them watered and healthy while they establish in the riparian corridor.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Santa Fe County Board of County Commissioners

Henry Roybal – District 1, Chair
Anna Hansen – District 2
Rudy Garcia – District 3
Anna Hamilton – District 4
Ed Moreno – District 5

Katherine Miller, County Manager
Penny Ellis-Green, Growth Management Director
Robert Griego, Planning Manager

County Open Lands, Trails, and Parks Advisory Committee (COLTPAC)

Ruben Cedeno, District 3, Chair
Sandra Madrid Massengill, District 1
Sue Murphy, District 2
Matt Piccarello, District 4
Jan Cohen, District 5
Greg Betts, At-Large
Elise Apple Snider, At-Large
Linda Siegle, At-Large
Jean Pike, At-Large

County Open Space and Trails staff

Maria Lohmann, OSTP Senior Planner
Paul Olafson, Planning Project Manager
Peggy Darr, OSTP Resource Management Specialist
Colleen Baker, OSTP Project Manager
Scott Kaseman, Santa Fe River Project Manager
PJ Montano, Projects and Facilities Division Director
David Padilla, OSTP Maintenance Foreman
Shane Martinez, OSTP Lead Maintenance Technician
Daniel Padilla, OSTP Maintenance Technician
Cedric Griego, OSTP Maintenance Technician
Josue Maldonado, OSTP Maintenance Technician
Reyes Lujan, OSTP Maintenance Technician
Christopher Padilla, OSTP Maintenance Technician
Frankie Baca, OSTP Maintenance Technician
Everett Lovato, OSTP Maintenance Technician

Partners

Santa Fe Watershed Association
Santa Fe Botanical Garden
Randall Davey Audubon
Ecotone Landscape Planning