

PRESS RELEASE

NEW MEXICO LAND CONSERVANCY

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Historic Agricultural Lands Protected in Corrales

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The Village of Corrales, in partnership with the New Mexico Land Conservancy, recently completed the acquisition of one of New Mexico's most historic pieces of agricultural lands, a portion of the Gonzales family lands located within the Village of Corrales in Sandoval County. The deal, which was part of the Village's farmland preservation efforts, closed on September 29th.

"The Gonzales property is the historic centerpiece of the Village of Corrales and as such has a special significance. That this property will remain in agricultural use in perpetuity is very much applauded by the people of Corrales" said Corrales Mayor Phil Gasteyer.

The Gonzales property was historically part of the Town of Alameda Land grant. In 1710, a grant of the Alameda lands was given to Corporal Francisco Montes Vigil, a soldier in the Spanish army. The Alameda Land Grant, which was comprised of over 100, 000 acres, provided clear title of ownership for all property within the Village of Corrales. Vigil was unable to settle on his grant as required by Spanish law so, in 1712, he sold it to Captain Juan Gonzales Bas. Through the years the land was subdivided among family members and many parcels were sold, however, the tract recently purchased by the Village of Corrales is part of a larger parcel of land that had remained in the Gonzales family for centuries and had been continuously farmed since 1712.

Hector Gonzales, one of the two brothers representing the family in this transaction, stated "as the son of Herman Gonzales, proud heirs of Captain Juan Gonzales Bas, I am delighted to convey this property into the hands of the Village of Corrales, the Village of my family's origin. For over 296 years, my family has enjoyed and cared for this land. We now turn the property over to the people of Corrales to enjoy and care for in perpetuity."

The acquisition was a joint effort between the Village of Corrales, through its Farmland Preservation Program, and the New Mexico Land Conservancy, a statewide land trust organization based in Santa Fe. The acquisition of the land was subject to a conservation easement designed to ensure that the land remained permanently protected and preserved for agricultural and open space purposes. Funding for the acquisition of the land was provided by the Village through a local, voter approved general obligation bond passed in 2003 in support of farmland and open space preservation within the Village. Village bond measure funds combined with matching funds from a

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federal grant from the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program were used to purchase the conservation easement, which will be held by the New Mexico Land Conservancy.

The Village of Corrales established the Corrales Farmland Preservation Program in 2000 to protect some of the remaining agricultural land and open space within the Village land from increasing development. The program is implemented by the Corrales Farmland Preservation Committee, which is comprised of seven volunteer citizens and overseen by the Village Planning and Zoning Administrator.

Wayne Kirkby, Chair of the Corrales Farmland Preservation Committee, explained that "the completion of this project marks the successful culmination of discussions with the Gonzales family dating back to at least 2004. This project required the consent of at least nine members of the Gonzales family and their cooperation in promoting the public interest is highly commendable. Through the Farmland Preservation Committee, the Village will consider proposals for farming a portion of the land or developing a Community Supported Agriculture project".

While the Village will own and manage the land, the New Mexico Land Conservancy will hold the conservation easement and be responsible for its long-term monitoring and legal defense. Scott Wilber, Executive Director of the Conservancy, noted that this is the fifth project that they have completed with the Village of Corrales since 2005, totaling 33 acres and preserving nearly one-quarter of the remaining irrigated, agricultural land within the Village limits. "Projects such as these provide multiple benefits to communities, including preserving its traditional setting and character, protecting scenic and open space amenities, and ensuring local food production and security," Wilber added.

Conservation easements are voluntary, legal agreements that permanently restrict the development of the subject lands in order to protect their conservation, agricultural, cultural, scenic and/or recreational values. In addition to their conservation values, conservation easements, whether purchased or donated, benefit landowners by providing them with cash or tax incentives in exchange for giving up the development rights associated with their lands, while still allowing them to retain the ownership and use of their lands for farming, ranching and other compatible uses.

New Mexico Land Conservancy's mission is to preserve New Mexico's land heritage by protecting productive agricultural lands, key wildlife habitat and scenic open space. New Mexico Land Conservancy currently holds conservation easements on over 70,000 acres of land throughout New Mexico. The New Mexico Land Conservancy can be contacted at (505) 986-3801 or visit www.nmlandconservancy.org for further information.

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Note to media: JPG and TIFF format images of the Gonzales agricultural lands are available upon request as are interviews with key partners in the Gonzales conservation easement project. To schedule an interview or to request a selection of images, please contact Mikki Anaya at 505-986-3801 or via email at mikkianaya@nmlandconservancy.org.