

PRESERVING A HISTORIC LANDSCAPE IN NORTHEAST NEW MEXICO

When working on land conservation in New Mexico it's hard to escape the interwoven history of culture, conquests, resources and land. The New Mexico Land Conservancy (NMLC) has recently embarked on an exciting new project in northeastern New Mexico that embodies the full suite of conservation values that we work to protect, ranging from wildlife habitat and scenic open space to productive ranchland and cultural and historic resources.

The approximately 96,000 acre Fort Union Ranch located between Watrous and Wagon Mound in Mora County is a historic cattle ranch that was carved out of the Mora Land Grant following the Civil War and has been owned and managed by the Union Land & Grazing Company (ULGC) since 1885.

NMLC has been working with Joshua Miner, a member of the Board of Trustees for ULGC, on a pilot project that will place three conservation easements over approximately 7,500 acres on the southern portion of the ranch.

"Like other members of our family, I have been involved with conservation efforts in New England for many years" says Miner. "Working through land trusts, we have protected open areas and special resources, like watersheds and valuable forests."

Fort Union remains a working cattle ranch, where hybrid cattle are bred and sold as calves. However, like many ranches, ULGC is looking at other opportunities to provide revenue and sustain the ranch.

"We have sought to diversify our revenue streams through hunting, timber management, fees from communication towers and a family visit program that charges maintenance fees," explains Miner.

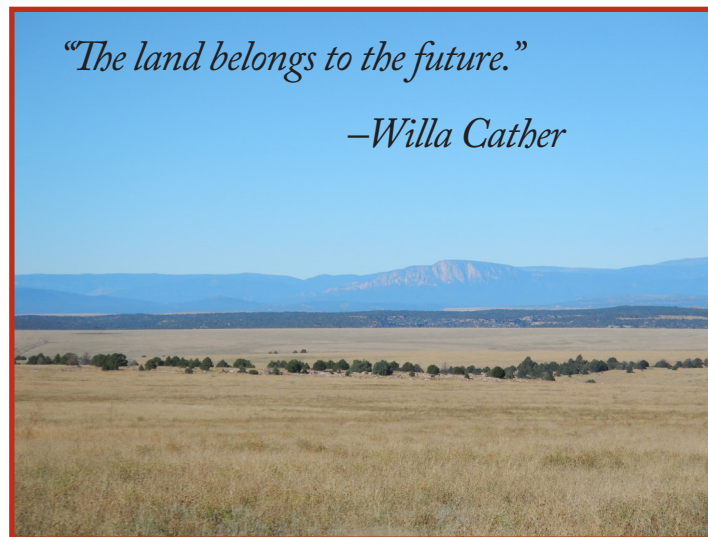
The ranch harbors a wide array of wildlife species, including

pronghorn antelope, elk, mule deer, bobcats, foxes, jackrabbits and a variety of birds. The landscape that the ranch encompasses includes multiple ecosystems within the Mora watershed, from expansive grasslands and piñon-juniper savannas to ponderosa pine and Douglas fir forest at the higher elevations in the Turkey Mountains.

The ranch completely surrounds the Fort Union National Monument, which is located within the very heart of the ranch. Originally

established in 1956 to preserve the remnants of Fort Union, which was abandoned in 1891, the 721 acres comprising the monument has a rich history in military activities, trade and agriculture. Fort Union played an integral role as a juncture point for the various branches of the Santa Fe Trail, and served as a route for commerce as well as a military thoroughfare.

Miner and the Board are very aware of the cultural significance of this site – in fact, the land surrounding the historic site was donated by ULGC to the National Park Service in 1954. He remarks, "Since the ranch surrounds the Fort Union National Monument and the Santa Fe Trail, we have also felt an obligation to protect those historic resources."



View across Fort Union Ranch of Hermit Peak and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

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NEW STAFF

ARIEL PATASHNIK

ARIEL PATASHNIK has become a permanent member of the NMLC team as our new Conservation Specialist! She has been at NMLC since 2012, where she started as an intern before serving two AmeriCorps terms from September 2012 - August 2014. She got her BA in Environmental Studies from Yale College and her Masters of Environmental Management from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. ❖



THANKS, THOMMY!

THOMMY THOMPSON, a native New Mexican, worked as our conservation intern for the season, supporting our annual conservation easement monitoring. He has a background in outdoor education and ecology and is currently working on his graduate degree in geography from UNM, specializing in Geographic Information Systems (GIS). ❖



Staff

Scott Wilber, Executive Director

Beth Mills, Conservation Director

Lisa Adkins, Admin. & Finance Manager

Ariel Patashnik, Conservation Specialist

A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR...

Dear Friends,

The New Mexico Land Conservancy (NMLC) is proud of what we have been able to accomplish over the last twelve years. We turn our mission of helping people conserve the lands they love in to action every year, one protected piece of land at a time. With recently completed projects, we have now protected over 135,000 acres of high-conservation land throughout New Mexico.

Your support for our work not only helps us protect and conserve more land around our beautiful state, but it also generates more opportunities for education, outreach, policy work and organizational development which are all essential elements to achieving our mission and goals.

We chose “Corazon de la Tierra” – Heart of the Land - as the name for our annual celebration of land conservation this year because it exemplifies the vital relationship and connection between people and land. After all, it is our private and public landowners who manage and care for the landscapes we all cherish. Together with community groups, land trusts, other conservation organizations, public agencies, and all the people and partners who care about the land and preserving our unique natural and cultural heritage in New Mexico, we collectively are the “heart of the land.”

Thanks for your support and let's continue to work together for the land and a sustainable future for New Mexico.

Happy Holidays,



From left to right: Scott Wilber (Executive Director, NMLC) and Greg Moore (Owner, Wagon Mound Ranch)

NMLC Board Retreat

This Fall, NMLC organized a retreat for the NMLC Board in Las Vegas, NM. On the first day, Board members identified priorities to be addressed over the next year, including: fundraising and sustainability; Board and leadership development; and outreach, education and public relations. On the second day, the Board got to see part of Ft. Union Ranch, a property that will be undergoing a conservation easement soon. The Board then traveled on to Wagon Mound Ranch, where owner Greg Moore led a tour around the ranch, pointing out conservation practices and how he manages his ranch. The retreat was a huge success and we look forward to engaging and connecting them to the different landscapes we are working in around the state. ❖

"The care of the earth is our most ancient and most worthy and, after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it, and to foster its renewal, is our only legitimate hope."

- Wendell Berry

(*Ft. Union* continued from page 3)

The first steps towards preserving this landmark ranch in perpetuity are being taken by placing part of the property under three conservation easements, each phase totaling approximately 2,500 acres. “We decided to pursue easements for their value in stabilizing land use, and at the same time, providing greater liquidity of the capital that has been tied up in the ranch for generations,” says Miner.

“The family’s goal in the management of the Fort Union Ranch,” explains Miner, “is the long-term stewardship of its productive resources, including rangeland, riparian areas and wildlife habitat.” Conservation easements are an ideal way to reach that goal.



Pronghorn Antelope are abundant at Fort Union Ranch.

“The use of conservation easements can provide a source of capital to finance many of the changes that may be needed, while ensuring that the traditional ranch land use will not be lost,” says Miner.

Miner and his family are proud of their stewardship of Fort Union Ranch, and continue to use a variety of innovative management practices to ensure the conservation of the resources. Like many landowners and ranchers in New Mexico, Miner points to climate change as a concern. “Our greatest challenge in the future will be to find ways of restoring grasslands through periods of drought and heat.”

NMLC is inspired by the enthusiasm displayed by Miner and the ULGC, and is excited to have the opportunity to help protect and conserve part of this historic property for future generations to enjoy. ❖

Open Space Measure Passes in Bernalillo County



As a result of the recent elections, the residents of Bernalillo County voted to expand an existing mill levy for open space preservation, with 72% of voters supporting the measure. Through a collaborative effort between the Trust for Public Land, the Land Trust Alliance, the Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust and NMLC, a successful outreach campaign was organized to support this measure. The measure establishes a 0.20 mill levy for 15 years for the purposes of acquiring, improving, operating, and maintaining natural areas, open spaces, and cultural, historic and nature education sites within the county to protect drinking water sources, wildlife habitat, and agricultural land along the Rio Grande. ❖

CORAZÓN DE LA TIERRA: A CELEBRATION OF LAND CONSERVATION IN NEW MEXICO

Thanks to the support of wonderful donors, organizations and friends of the New Mexico Land Conservancy, our annual celebration of land, Corazón de la Tierra, was a tremendous success. This year's event was held at the Petchesky Conservation Center, with over 150 people in attendance to celebrate NMLC's land conservation successes.

The event was a western-themed celebration that featured whiskey and moonshine tasting from KGB Spirits, an authentic chuck wagon buffet by RDL Chuckwagon, and dancing and music to the acoustic Americana and country-western band, The Riffers. This year's recipient of the 3rd annual Petchesky Conservation Award was Lesli Allison, Executive Director of the Western Landowners Alliance (WLA) and Co-founder of the Chama Peak Land Alliance (CPLA).

Lesli is a rising star and advocate of the private land conservation movement in the west, where she works with landowners to sustain

working landscapes, connect landscapes, protect native species and assure the land is whole, healthy and productive, while remaining a place for families to prosper. Her work at WLA spans several programs, including water resource management and conservation, energy planning, sustainable economies, land use policy and

native species, among others. At CPLA, she worked to develop a public-private partnership to protect and restore the Chama and San Juan watersheds in northern New Mexico and southwestern Colorado through collaborative planning and biomass utilization.

Prior to her work with the WLA and CPLA, Lesli managed 34,000 acres of private land in the southern San Juan Mountains of Colorado, where she implemented conservation management through award-winning programs in

restoration forestry, prescribed fire, grazing, stream restoration, native trout recovery, hunting and wildlife management, and scientific research and monitoring. Lesli grew up in Pecos and Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is a graduate of Columbia University and St. John's College. ❖



From left to right: Cullen Hallmark (NMLC Board Chair); Lesli Allison (Executive Director, Western Landowners Alliance); Dan and Ashlyn Perry (Title Sponsors & Owners of Trout Stalker Ranch); Scott Wilber (Executive Director, NMLC)



(continued on page 6)



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PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Fall is in full swing here at the Petchesky Conservation Center (PCC). Leaves are turning shades of yellow and orange and the views of the Sangre de Cristo, Ortiz and Sandia mountains from our nature trail are stunning. The mornings are crisp and NMLC staff are busy working on projects, monitoring conservation easements and looking towards the future.

NMLC has conserved just over 135,000 acres to date, and we continue to take on new projects that will increase that number and bring us closer to our goal of conserving one million acres by 2037. The following are highlights of some of our projects around the state.

Traveling along I-25 through northeastern New Mexico, you'll pass the small town of Wagon Mound, in Mora County. NMLC worked with landowner Greg Moore for three years to protect his entire 23,000 acres comprising the Wagon Mound Ranch through three conservation easements. The first phase, which covered 7,700 acres, was completed in August 2012. The second phase of 7,100 acres was completed in partnership with the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with funding through their Farm and Ranchland Protection Program in December 2013. The final phase of 8,200 acres was also completed in partnership with NRCS in July 2014.

For Greg, ensuring the protection of his ranch was paramount, and his management strategies reflect his commitment to not only preserving the land, but creating a safe haven for the many species of



Rain is a good thing! Carrizo Creek flowing through Wagon Mound Ranch.

wildlife that call his ranch home. His management practices have enabled him to survive the ongoing drought that has hurt many other ranchers in the region. By focusing on soil first, then grass, then wildlife, and finally cattle, Greg has proven that sound land management yields positive and lasting results.



View from the rim of the Mesa Ranch.

Further north, and about fifteen miles east of Raton, NMLC has also been working with landowner, Jim Keller to protect his 5,000 acre Mesa Ranch through a series of conservation easement phases. At the end of last year, NMLC completed the first phase over approximately 2,000 acres on the north end of the ranch.

The ranch spills over the southern edge of Johnson Mesa and includes Taylor Canyon and the headwaters of Uña de Gato Creek, which attract an abundant array of wildlife including elk, pronghorn antelope, coyote, bear, deer and mountain lions, as well as turkeys and other bird species. The combination of bunchgrass meadow atop Johnson mesa, ponderosa pine – Douglas fir forest on mesa slopes, and piñon-juniper woodland in the valley make Mesa Ranch one of NMLC's most diverse and spectacular conservation easements. NMLC anticipates completing the final two phases over the remaining 3,000 acres of this ranch in 2015 with support from the NRCS Farm and Ranchland Protection Program.

(Completed Projects continued from page 7)

Driving from Santa Fe north to Pecos along I-25, as you go through Apache Canyon you'll pass the Glorieta Pass Battlefield. With support from the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP), the Civil War Trust acquired the property. As part of the ABPP grant, the Civil War Trust approached NMLC about placing a conservation easement over the 16.7 acre site. NMLC anticipates completing the easement before the end of the year and the site will ultimately be managed as part of the Pecos National Historic Park by the National Park Service.



A cross memorializes the soldiers killed at Glorieta Pass Battlefield on March 26, 1862.

The site has a colorful past, where it played a key role in the first day of the Civil War Battle of Glorieta Pass which occurred from March 26-28, 1862. The defeat of the Confederate forces by the Union forces turned back the Confederate westward push for control of the gold and silver mines of Colorado and the seaports of California. In addition, the Santa Fe Trail, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway, Route 66 and Interstate 25 have passed through the property, marking it as a major national and regional transportation corridor.

The next time you are driving north on I-25, look to your right approximately half a mile past the Apache Canyon exit to catch a

glimpse of this historic site. Limited tours of the site will be available through the Pecos National Historic Park.

In southwestern New Mexico, in the rugged foothills of the Mimbres Mountains northeast of San Lorenzo, NMLC has been working with support from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee to complete a conservation easement over the 910-acre Ancheta Springs Ranch. The property is adjacent to the Gila National Forest and includes a two-mile stretch of Ancheta Creek, a tributary of the Mimbres River in the upper part of the watershed. The property provides habitat to a diverse array of wildlife species and can be seen from State Highway 152 driving from San Lorenzo to Emory Pass. The landowners have spent years working to restore the creek channel and riparian habitat associated with this delicate headwater stream, and NMLC is happy to help permanently protect the results of their hard work.

NMLC is pleased to have had the opportunity to work with a variety of landowners and partners on these exciting projects around our unique and beautiful state. ❖



One of the magnificent views at Ancheta Springs Ranch.

NMLC discussing possible easement transfers from the Forest Trust

NMLC is excited to announce that it is working to transfer up to eight conservation easements from the Forest Trust, totaling 8,551 acres. The easements are located in Santa Fe, San Miguel, Rio Arriba and Mora Counties, and have important conservation and wildlife habitat values. Over the next year NMLC will be conducting its due diligence, visiting with landowners and looking at the properties to determine if the transfer will be a good match for both NMLC and the landowners. The transfer of these easements will add to NMLC's growing portfolio of conserved land, and, more importantly, contribute to our mission of *Preserving New Mexico's land heritage by helping people conserve the places they love.* ❖

RIVER RANCH BECOMES NEW MEXICO'S NEWEST STATE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

This summer, through a unique public-private partnership between NMLC and the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMGF), the 1,000 acre River Ranch, located along the lower Mimbres River in southwestern New Mexico, was acquired by NMGF and will be managed for wildlife, and compatible public recreation, and educational purposes. Funding for the acquisi-



The Mimbres River cuts through River Ranch, attracting a variety of birds and other wildlife species.

tion was made possible with a combination of public funds from NMGF's Share with Wildlife Program, the New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, combined with private operating support for NMLC from the Turner Foundation, Element Power and Wells Fargo Bank.

"The acquisition of the River Ranch by Game & Fish is a wonderful gift for New Mexico," said Scott Wilber, NMLC's Executive Director. "As a new state wildlife management area, the river corridor and the surrounding habitat will be protected for the benefit of wildlife and the property will serve as a permanent buffer to prevent the encroachment of development on the nearby City of Rocks State Park."

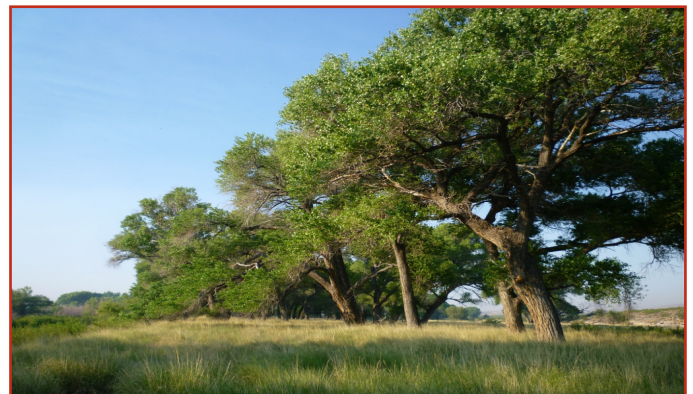
The River Ranch is located approximately 20 miles northeast of Deming and encompasses a two mile stretch of its namesake – the Mimbres River. The mature Cottonwood-Ash riparian gallery forest along the river is an oasis within the surrounding Chihuahuan

Desert that supports a wide variety of wildlife, including many threatened and endangered species of birds.

Conservation of the River Ranch started in 2009 when the landowners, Gene and Elizabeth Simon, decided that the best way to protect their land from subdivision and development was to place the entire ranch under a conservation easement with NMLC and the New Mexico State Forestry Division, which was completed in 2011. Following the death of Gene Simon in 2012, NMLC negotiated an option agreement with Wells Fargo Bank, who has been managing his estate, which enabled NMGF to acquire the property subject to a life estate for Elisabeth Simon that allows her to live out the remainder of her life on the ranch.

While it took nearly five years to complete the entire process, Elisabeth Simon and her family are pleased with the final results. "After living in this valley for so long, Gene and I simply couldn't stand the thought of breaking up the integrity of this beautiful place and allowing the land to be developed after we were gone," said Elisabeth Simon, now 95.

"The River Ranch project represents a big part of the conservation legacy of the landowners, and honors the wishes of the Simons and their family to see the property permanently protected," noted Wilber. "It is really the culmination of Gene Simon's excellent stewardship of the ranch for nearly three and a half decades. We are very grateful to have had the opportunity to help protect this special place." ❖



Majestic Cottonwoods tower over Sacaton grasslands at the ranch.

NMLC NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

Founded in 2002, the New Mexico Land Conservancy (NMLC) is a statewide, non-profit land trust working to protect significant natural habitat, productive agricultural lands, scenic open space, cultural and historic resources, and recreational lands for conservation purposes and public benefit at community, watershed and landscape scales. We work in collaboration with private landowners, community and non-profit organizations, governmental agencies, businesses, and other public and private partners to pursue and achieve our mission.

NMLC's twenty-five-year goal is to protect, directly or in partnership with others, one million acres of high conservation value lands in priority areas around the state by 2037. To date, NMLC has helped permanently protect over 135,000 acres of high conservation value land throughout New Mexico and completed one project in Arizona.

When you donate to NMLC, you are making a powerful gift that lasts a lifetime—preserving New Mexico's vital natural resources, the places you love, and the quality of life you enjoy. In fact, it lasts longer than a lifetime; your gift will continue to benefit future generations.

You can support NMLC in the following ways:

- **Gifts of Cash or Securities.** You can make a tax deductible donation using the enclosed envelope.
- **Pledges.** This is the gift that keeps on giving. You can determine how often you would like to make recurring contributions to NMLC.
- **Planned Giving.** By including NMLC in your will, you will leave a legacy of land conservation for generations to come - as well as receive potential tax benefits.
- **Employer Matching Gifts.** Check with your employer to see if they will match your gift or pledge. This can greatly increase your contribution.
- **Gifts of Real Estate.** Gifts of land and other kinds of real estate enable NMLC to turn these gifts into much-needed capital for protecting high conservation value lands around the state, while providing the donor with significant tax deductions.
- **Wish List.** Consider donating one of the following items to help NMLC protect and conserve land in New Mexico.
 - Prepaid fuel cards
 - Gift certificates for car or truck tires
 - A GPS camera or vehicle system
 - In-kind services such as catering for events, printing/marketing services, or office supplies and equipment

*"Anyone who thinks that they are too small to make a difference
has never tried to fall asleep with a mosquito in the room."*

— Christine Todd Whitman

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**THANKS TO ALL OF OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS, OUR ANNUAL
EVENT, CORAZÓN DE LA TIERRA, WAS A SUCCESS!**

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