

# VISTAS



FALL 2017 | NEWSLETTER

NEW MEXICO  
LAND CONSERVANCY

Conserving Land. Preserving Heritage.

## Land & Watershed Alliances—the New Wisdom of the Southwest

No ranch is an island. Even the biggest ones have neighbors, and together they're part of a larger geographic or watershed area. This is especially true in northeastern New Mexico, where the scenic short-grass prairie landscape spreads out for miles along the front range of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

Water is especially scarce in these parts, making it all the more critical to conserve and protect, not just for ranchers but for a host of interested parties, including hunters and fishermen, wildlife and bird lovers, and those local area residents who directly depend on a healthy watershed for their own drinking water.

This shared interest has spurred diverse groups in the area—and throughout New Mexico and the West—to think outside their own boundaries or concerns to develop alliances that can benefit each participant willing to collaborate with others.

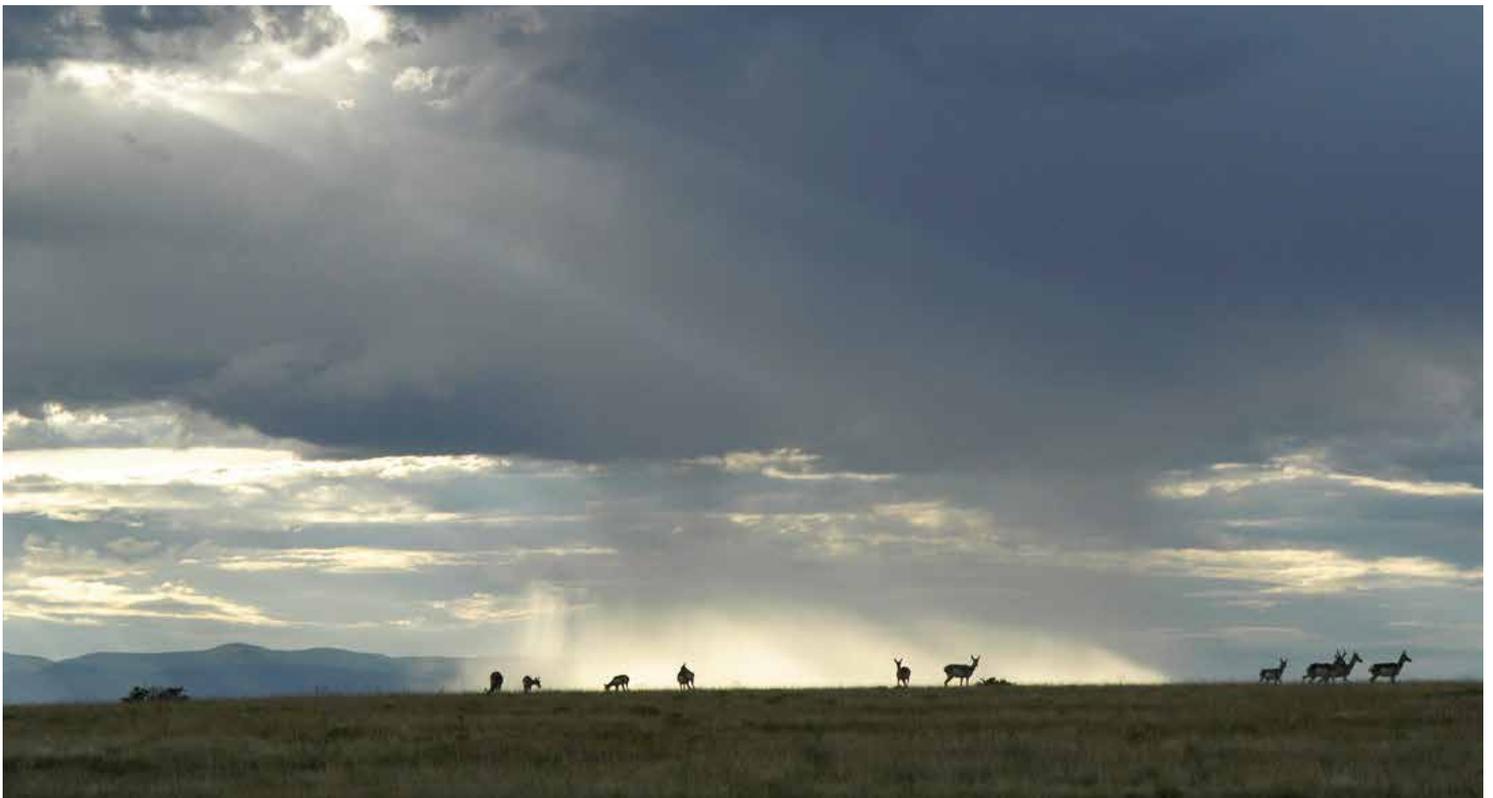
### Resilience in Numbers

One such alliance was initiated in 2011 by the Fort Union Ranch (FUR), located just north of Watrous in the northeastern part of the state. The nearly 100,000-acre historic ranch dates back to 1885, when Civil War general, Benjamin Franklin Butler, acquired the property, which is owned and managed today by his heirs and descendants, as representatives of the Union Land and Grazing Company.

Prolonged drought in the Southwest had dramatically affected the northeastern rangelands and the pressure was on ranchers to find innovative solutions and practices to build resilience and thrive under changing climate conditions.

Recognizing that ecological and economic forces function beyond the boundaries of the individual ranch, FUR reached out to other local landowners and ranch managers in the area with the intention of forming an alliance to improve

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Pronghorn on the Fort Union Ranch near Watrous in northeast New Mexico.

(photo courtesy of High Plains Grasslands Alliance)

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# Message From Our Director

## Dear Friends,

This year, thanks to above average snowpack aided by late-spring, high-country snow storms and followed by a relatively good monsoon season, New Mexico was fortunate to be spared the catastrophic wildfires experienced by Montana, Oregon and most recently California. But we should not be fooled into thinking that, because of this brief reprieve, droughts are over. Nor should we become complacent and lose sight of the fact that climate change is a very real phenomenon and, over the next few decades, we are likely to feel its impacts in ways that will have dramatic effects on our natural environment, agricultural systems and economy.

The fact is New Mexico and the Southwest are getting hotter and drier. Most of the state has already been warming over the last century, to which most of the old-timers can attest. Scientists are now predicting an average increase of two degrees F within just the next 25-50 years. In the coming years, this warming climate is likely to: decrease high-elevation snowpack and consequently the flows of water in the Rio Grande and other rivers, increase the frequency and intensity of wildfire, and convert more mid-elevation forests to scrubland and grasslands to desert.

Warmer climate will result in less snow and more rain. While this doesn't immediately sound like a bad thing, most of the water in the arid West actually originates from snowmelt, which releases water more slowly with less evaporation and allows for more absorption and replenishment of groundwater than the more rapid run-off from rainfall. Diminishing snowpack will affect higher elevation ecosystems, limiting the range at which some sub-alpine species such as spruce-fir can grow, and threatening associated plants and animals that can only move so far up before literally having nowhere else to go. Reduced snowpack also results in less surface water coming off our watersheds for human consumption, agriculture, and wildlife, as well as drier soils, lower water tables and less groundwater recharge.

Higher temperatures and prolonged droughts mean larger and more intense fires. In 2011, the 150,000-acre Las Conchas Fire in the Jemez Mountains set a new record as the largest fire in NM history only to be broken the following year when the Whitewater-Baldy Fire burned almost double this acreage in the Gilas. Many of NM's forests have been ravaged by insects and disease in recent years. The piñon pine, NM's state tree is at particular risk, but also Ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir and aspen communities. Many forest ecologists



Photo by Mildred Ortiz

now believe that, due to the combined effects of insects, disease and fire, NM stands to see many of these mid-elevational forests permanently replaced by shrublands.

In addition to our forest resources, NM's agricultural sector is very much at risk as less water becomes available for irrigating fruits, vegetables, chilis and pecans; and drought-stressed animals produce less milk and gain less weight, and natural forage is reduced as more grasslands are converted to scrubland and desert.

It is for all these reasons, that NMLC is doing what it can to protect, restore and encourage proper management of our regional watersheds. Protected, healthy watersheds from their lower to higher elevations, can help create resilient and viable buffers to climate change in New Mexico and the Southwest. This, in turn, will help ensure an adequate base of conserved land, habitat and water to sustain its people, economies and wildlife into uncertain future.

So, as we approach another winter, even if NM is fortunate to defy what is predicted to be a dry winter due to La Niña, we must not lose sight of the urgent need to protect our watersheds from excessive and incompatible uses that diminish their ability to produce the most-scarce and, therefore, valuable resource in the arid Southwest—water. Defense, proper management and buffering of our public lands combined with conservation, restoration and stewardship of key riparian lands (much of which occur on private land in NM) will be essential to our long-term success.

To learn more about our watershed and landscape-scale conservation efforts, please visit our website at [nmlandconservancy.org](http://nmlandconservancy.org), give us a call or stop by and visit us at the Petchesky Conservation Center in Santa Fe.

Thank you,



Scott Wilber, Executive Director



It is for all these reasons, that NMLC is doing what it can to protect, restore and encourage proper management of our regional watersheds.

## Alliances. . . (continued from pg. 1)

communication and provide a forum for sharing experiences, testing ideas and incorporating science into everyday management. Together with the Piojo and Wind River ranches, they formed the High Plains Grasslands Alliance (HPGA). Since that time, Twin Willows Ranch, Black Willow Ranch, and DeHaven Ranch/Preserve have joined the Alliance as members.

“Probably the biggest issue to ranchers in the northeast is ground water—its importance to sustainability, particularly in drought management,” said Katie Meiklejohn, HPGA’s Coordinator and board member. “The Alliance members bring a level of curiosity and openness and they listen to each other to support innovation and learning that’s practical and applicable across that particular landscape.”

HPGA meets roughly once a quarter, usually bringing in speakers or hosting workshops on relevant topics, such as a recent one-day workshop on the financial elements of drought planning. Meetings are open to any interested party. In addition, HPGA is currently engaged in two collaborative research projects created to address the ongoing issue of long-term water availability and ecological and

economic resilience.

Initiated in 2013, HPGA’s Hydrology Monitoring project basically measures how the draw-down is affecting the agricultural activities on the member ranches, to help land-owners better manage and plan for future water use and development. Alliance partner Ziegler Geological Consulting, LLC, is conducting the groundwater monitoring.

“They can date the age of the water through carbon dating and tritium dating [tritium has a half-life of little more than 8 years,]” Katie explained. “If the water is younger, it’s new recharge water; if it’s older, it’s not. They measure static well levels—in the summertime when draw-down is the highest, and in the winter when it’s probably the lowest.”

The Climate Monitoring project was launched in 2014 to track soil moisture, precipitation, and weather patterns across the member ranches, to inform range management—planning for forage, supply and demand, etc.

*For more information on HPGA or its upcoming events, contact Katie Meiklejohn at [Katie@ranchadvisory.com](mailto:Katie@ranchadvisory.com) or visit [www.highplainsalliance.org](http://www.highplainsalliance.org).*



(Photo courtesy of High Plains Grasslands Alliance)

## From Ranch to Wildlife Refuge in the Watershed

Formerly the Wind River Ranch (a founding member of HPGA), the Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge was established in 2012 and is part of the National Wildlife Refuge system, a national network of protected areas set aside for the benefit of the wildlife, habitat, and people. The ranch had been purchased in 1980 by philanthropists Eugene and Clare Thaw, with the express intent of protecting and restoring the land to stand as a living example of southwestern ecological heritage.

Since 2012, the Denver Zoological Foundation has been partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), New Mexico Highlands University, and the Pueblo of Pojoaque to provide on the ground conservation work, education and outreach opportunities on the refuge. The Pueblo of Pojoaque owns a bison herd onsite, and with Highlands

University serving as main research partner, the Denver Zoo works toward its mission to “secure a better world for animals through human understanding.”

## One Rock at a Time

Imagine a group of 10 to 15 volunteers of diverse ages, spending up to 3 days of their personal time lifting rocks, one at a time, and traipsing through creek mud and wet grasses under the supervision of conservationist Bill Zeedyk, to install what he refers to as “one-rock dams” along Wolf Creek on the Fort Union Ranch. Now that’s community spirit!

Hermit’s Peak Watershed Alliance (HPWA) is a grassroots organization of local residents and concerned citizens whose mission it is to foster land stewardship and protect the Hermit’s Peak area watersheds for the human and natural communities that depend on them. Founder and Executive

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)



TOP: A ‘worm ditch’ draws water away from Wolf Creek to cover more ground.

Ft. Union Ranch Resource Manager, Joshua Miner with dog, Dino.

RIGHT: Restoration includes one-rock dams along Wolf Creek that serve to slow down the water.



## Alliances. . . (continued from pg. 5)

Director, Lea Knutson, a 20-year resident in the area, has helped organize many such “hands on” volunteer restoration projects throughout the region, including the work on FUR. The volunteers have no legal ownership in the ranch; they are motivated by a profound sense of responsibility to contribute to the greater good of their watershed. Lea is also responsible for developing the “Watershed Based Plan for the Rio Mora,” which was accepted formally by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in June 2016. ([www.hermitsspeakwatersheds.org](http://www.hermitsspeakwatersheds.org))

Wolf Creek, a tributary of the Rio Mora, is an intermittent creek, meaning it pools always, but it’s not always running. Despite its intermittent nature, Wolf Creek is a critical water resource for the FUR and to the watershed area in general.

FUR Resource Manager, Joshua Miner, or “Josh Jr.” as he’s referred to on the ranch, is one of only two family members ever to live and work full time on the ranch, and he’s actively involved in the restoration efforts on the property.

“The work is all about raising the water table—slowing the water down and spreading it out, to create pooling,” Joshua explained, referring to the one-rock dams. They also dig what are called worm ditches—deep, narrow trenches that curve off from the creek, and direct water onto the land away from the banks to create low-land pools.

FUR’s managing Board is stewardship and restoration focused, and they continue to investigate advancements in range science and management techniques that contribute to the ranch’s resilience, now and for future generations. To that end, they have recently hired a new ranch manager, James Stuart, a recent graduate of the King Ranch Institute

for Ranch Management at Texas A & M University, to manage the cattle operation.

On a ranch the size of FUR, the scale involved with any restoration effort increases costs significantly. Take roads, for example. “There’s a hundred miles of road on the ranch,” Joshua points out—most of them dirt, “which contribute enormously to the landscape and become a big deterrent to hydrology.” Historically, he explains, ranchers would get out the blade and grade the roads, “but this digs deeper down from the land—sometimes as much as three feet—which creates a trap for water to race through, while drying out the grasses on either side.”

### Easements Help Fund Restoration

In 2014, spearheaded by Board of Trustees members Ned Ames and Joshua Miner, Sr., the Union Land and Grazing Company donated its first 2,500-acre conservation easement on the FUR to the New Mexico Land Conservancy (NMLC), followed by two more successive easement donations—all three of which have since been combined into one 7,320-acre permanently protected parcel referred to as the South-eastern Pastures Conservation Easement.

And the donations keep on coming! NMLC is set to close on another 2,900-acre easement on FUR by the end of this year, referred to as the “South Baldy easement” for its view of South Baldy mountain, which will bring the total acres conserved up to more than 10,000—roughly 10% of the ranch.

Proceeds from the sale of tax credits the ranch has earned from these easement donations are invested back into the ranch operations, which includes ongoing restoration efforts, particularly in riparian areas.



Despite its intermittent nature, Wolf Creek is a critical water resource for the Fort Union Ranch and to the watershed area in general.

(Photo courtesy of High Plains Grasslands Alliance)

## Wetlands, New Mexico-Style

The USFWS recognizes that there is an important matrix of riparian areas and wetlands along the Sangre de Cristo Front Range that are in need of protection and restoration as the short-grass prairie faces the effects of climate change. The agency has already helped protect more than 15,000 acres of riparian and wetlands habitat in the region at the Las Vegas, Rio Mora and Maxwell National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs). The Rio Mora NWR is part of the much larger federally designated Rio Mora Conservation Area encompassing the whole of the 962,000-acre Rio Mora Watershed.

This wetland matrix includes seasonal lakes or *playas* – the shallow, clay-lined water catchment areas that form at the lowest point in a watershed. Playas support life for a complex array of wildlife, migrating birds and waterfowl within the relatively dry landscape of the Southwest. Researchers today are making a strong connection between these playas and aquifer/groundwater recharge. Their clay-soil lining cracks deeply during the hot dry season, allowing rainwater to seep deep into the ground with the next rainfall.

The Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV) is a regional partnership comprised of federal and state wildlife agencies, conservation groups and private industry whose stated mission is to conserve the playas, prairies and landscapes of the western Great Plains — including portions of Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico — through partnerships for the benefit of birds, other wildlife, and people. The PLJV website ([www.pljv.org](http://www.pljv.org)) is rich with information and research related to its mission.

## Collaborating for Grant Funds

This summer, with guidance from the PLJV, NMLC as grantee and its collaborating partners including Fort Union Ranch, Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge, HPWA, Ducks Unlimited, and Rio Grande Return, formed a team to write and submit a grant application to USFWS for funding under its North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Grants program. It's a rigorous application process, and applicants compete for limited funding against wetlands-related organizations throughout the entire country.

Funding is being sought for what the team titled "The NM Front Range Wetland Complex Protection and Restoration Project," which proposes to protect nearly 4,000 acres via a new conservation easement within the FUR to be held by NMLC along the upper portion of Wolf Creek, a tributary of the Rio Mora. This initiative supports the PLJV's goal of improving the playas' functionality through the protection and enhancement of their basins as intact, sediment filtering systems, and is in accordance with two regional watershed plans developed by the USFWS and the HPWA.

The team is hopeful that the grantors will recognize the special importance of, and need for, wetlands funding in one of the least wet areas of the country, where every ounce of water carries greater weight, perhaps, than in other water-rich areas competing for funding.



Wheeler Lake on Fort Union Ranch

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Playas support life for a complex array of wildlife, migrating birds and waterfowl within the relatively dry landscape of the Southwest.

# In Celebration of our 15th Anniversary!



This summer, the New Mexico Land Conservancy celebrated its 15th Anniversary with an evening event at the Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort near Albuquerque. About 150 guests joined us for cocktails on the Cottonwood Pavilion veranda followed by dinner, dessert, then dancing under the stars to the lively music of The Riffers.

NMLC presented this year's Jane Wing Petchesky Conservation Award to Courtney White—former archeologist and environmental activist who dropped out of the “conflict industry” to co-found the Quivira Coalition, dedicated to finding and creating common ground among ranchers, conservationists, public land manager, scientists and others around practices that improve land health.

NMLC thanks the generous sponsors, live and silent auction item donors, volunteers and guests who helped make this year's Corazon de la Tierra event possible!



**2002**  
**Organization**  
 established in Santa Fe with founding board of Anthony Benson, Elizabeth Richardson, and Eric Love.

**2004**  
**»Land Conservation Incentive Act (LCIA)**  
 passed in state legislature creating a \$100,000, non-transferable state tax credit for donations of land and conservation easements (CEs).

**»NMLC** officially begins its works as a land trust by accepting CE transfers from the Taos Land Trust.

**»NMLC** completes its first and still largest CE over the 30,000-acre Montosa Ranch in western NM.

**2007**  
**»HB990** passed in the state legislature expanding the amount of the state tax credit under the LCIA to \$250,000 and making it transferable. Land and CE donors can now use the tax credit to either offset their state tax liability or sell their credits and convert them to cash.

**»NMLC** has permanently protected over 58,000 acres of high conservation value land throughout NM, including the Biorearch Ranch in southwest NM, support for the Corrales Farmland Preservation Program, and facilitation of the Hawk Watch open space acquisition in Tijeras Canyon by the City of Albuquerque.

**2009**  
**»Jane Petchesky** donates her house and 282 acres of land on the south side of Santa Fe to NMLC to create the Petchesky Conservation Center, NMLC's statewide headquarters.

**2010**  
**»Natural Heritage Conservation Act** passed by the state legislature with support from Gov. Bill Richardson establishing a dedicated funding mechanism for land conservation and restoration within the NM Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Dept., including \$5 million in seed funding.



Sayre Gerhart, NMLC Board Chair with Petchesky Conservation Award recipient, Courtney White and his wife Gen White.



Above: Cheryl & Sid Goodloe, Ron Troy, NMLC Southern Project Manager and wife Yvette, with their niece.  
 Right: Landowner Joel Bernstein.



Above: Rep. Matthew McQuinn, City Councilman Joseph M. Young with Dianne MacInnes at the live and silent auctions.



Right: Rebecca and Weldon Teague



Queen, NMLC Executive Director, Scott Wilber, Nestas, and Kimi Green. **Below:** Ken & Sherrill [names obscured], who generously volunteered to help with [name obscured] for the event.



Carol Ward, Megan Baldrige, Judith Suiter (NMLC board) & Roberto Gomez



Kevin & Cheryl Hansen



**Above:** Leslie Allison, Jone & Cullen Hallmark (NMLC Board member), Katie Panek, & Sarah Wentzel-Fisher. **Right:** Kim Barmann, CS Ranch, shared her family's motivations to conserve their land.



Hank Kelly, recent easement donor in Los Ranchos de Albuquerque, shared his recent experience working with NMLC.



Kelly & Carole Ward.

**2011**  
»NMLC accepts transfer of Conservation Easements from the Southern Rockies Agricultural Land Trust.

**2012**  
»NMLC has protected over 115,000 acres of high conservation value land throughout NM, including completion of the Forked Lightning Ranch along the Pecos River north of Santa Fe, the Deer Canyon Preserve project near Mountainair, and several large ranch easements in western NM.

**2014**  
»NMLC facilitates the sale of the River Ranch to NM Game & Fish to establish a new state wildlife management area along the Mimbres River in southwestern NM.

**2015**  
»NMLC receives professional accreditation through the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

**2015**  
»NMLC establishes a southern NM project office in Silver City and also begins to more proactively work around the Chiricahua Mountains in southeast AZ.

**2016**  
»NMLC accepts several CEs in northern NM from the Forest Trust.

**2017**  
»NMLC celebrates its 15th anniversary and the permanent protection of nearly 160,000 acres of high conservation value land throughout NM and southeast AZ, including the completion of several large ranch easements within the Rio Mora watershed along the Sangre de Cristo Front Range in northeastern NM.

# All in the Family

## — Preserving the Legacy of the Bluewater Heritage Ranch

When they came to America in 1861 from a small island in the Baltic Sea, little did Peter Nielson and his wife Marie know, as they traveled West across the plains with a wagon and ox team, that they would begin a ranching legacy that continues today, more than 150 years later.

The Bluewater Heritage Ranch in Cibola County southeast of Grants, NM, runs along the northeastern slopes of the Zuni Mountains. Its grassland savannas transition into higher elevation conifer forests, supporting a rich variety of plants and wildlife, while gracing the landscape with glorious views of Mt. Taylor and the surrounding country to the north.

Numerous cultural resource surveys have unveiled the property's diverse history, as well. Artifacts found on the property can be traced as far back as 5,000 to 10,000 B.C. when nomadic Paleo-Indians inhabited the surrounding land.

The Bluewater Heritage Ranch has been in the Nielson family for at least four generations—and current landowner, Russell Nielson, wanted to preserve that heritage. The ranch has always been a working ranch, as well as a beloved destination for Nielson family gatherings over the years.

Russ has 11 children, 46 grandchildren. As he considered his "retirement" options (as if a rancher ever really retires) and

how best to keep the ranch in the family for future generations, he cited the story of another landowner who, with good intentions, had divided her ranch into equal parcels for her 10 children, which ultimately resulted in its demise as a family ranch.

"Most of the woman's children weren't interested in ranching, and just wanted to sell their shares," Russ recalled. The divided parcels were each too small to effectively serve as working lands, and the few heirs who wanted to continue ranching couldn't afford to buy out the other siblings.

Russ wanted to avoid this scenario. "I wanted to try to make it so that the ranch would stay in the family," Russ explained. "I didn't want to cut it up into small pieces."

Bluewater Heritage Ranch has enjoyed a positive relationship with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for many years, participating in a number of grant programs which have helped fund and provide technical assistance for ongoing ranch improvements and restoration projects.

But Russ still needed to figure out how to preserve the ranch and protect the investments he had made in improving it. Through his research, Russ had learned about conservation easements and then reached out to the New Mexico Land Conservancy (NMLC) for more information. Through NMLC, Russ learned about both the NM state tax credit program for conservation easement donations and the potential for partial funding through the NRCS's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). The NRCS



ACEP is a competitive program and NMLC advised him to start with a donated "pilot" easement and then to use that easement donation to leverage potential, future funding through NRCS.

The Nielson family decided to follow this advice and subsequently donated a conservation easement to NMLC over approximately 2,240 acres on the western portion of the ranch in December 2015. NMLC then applied for NRCS funding through ACEP in 2016 to partially fund a conservation easement over the remaining 5,240 acres of the eastern portion of the ranch, which was successfully completed in October 2017.

The combination of proceeds that the Nielsons received from the sale of the NM tax credits and NRCS funding associated with these two conservation easements enabled the Nielsons to expand the ranch's cattle herd so that one of Russ's sons, Christian, could move his family from Salt Lake City, to live on and work the ranch full-time.

Since his youth, Christian had always demonstrated a deep love for the ranch. He would manage the operations for Russ whenever he could, referring to his time spent on the ranch as a "guilty pleasure," Russ said.

Of Russ's 11 children, "Christian showed the most interest in ranching," Russ said. "The idea developed that Christian would graze his own cattle on the ranch. The grazing plan he developed was calculated to accommodate the additional cows without over-grazing, and would serve as [monetary] compensation," for his efforts.

And so the Nielson legacy continues. Bluewater Heritage Ranch remains whole and in the Nielson family for another generation, and the land now under easement enables the Nielsons to continue ranching and preserve a healthy piece of New Mexico's wide-open space, wildlife habitat and cultural heritage, thanks to Russ Nielson's foresight and commitment to land and natural resource conservation and management.

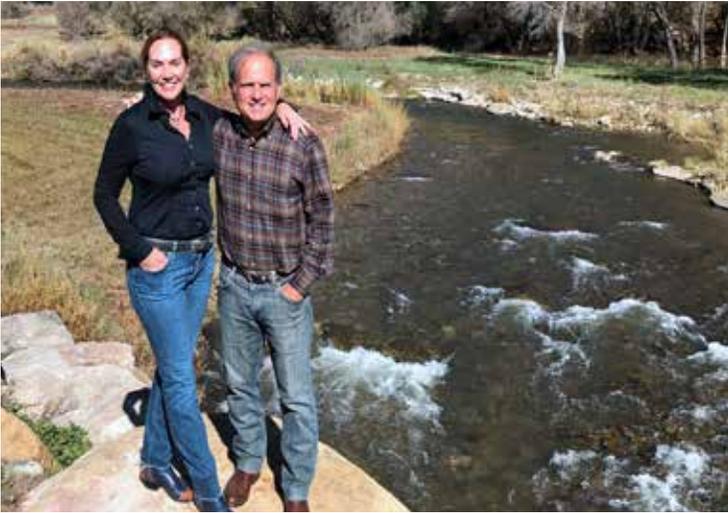


The Nielson extended family at the ranch.



Landowner Russell Nielson surveying his Bluewater Heritage Ranch near Grants, NM.

# A Conservation Easement Runs Through It



When Kimberley and Scott Sheffield bought the Forked Lightning Ranch in Rowe, NM near Santa Fe in October 2015, the property came with nearly four miles of the beautiful Pecos River running through it, along with two large conservation easements which had been granted to the New Mexico Land Conservancy for the previous owner, well known actress Jane Fonda.

Fonda implemented several conservation and restoration practices on the Forked Lightning after purchasing the ranch in 2000, owned previously by Buddy Fogelson and his wife, Greer Garson—another famous actress whose signature pepto-pink stucco for years has covered every building and fence-buttress along the boundaries of the roughly 2,300-acre ranch, making the ranch itself a kind of colorful “celebrity” among folks in and around Santa Fe.

## Quiet Enjoyment

The Sheffields aren’t ranchers by trade and they have no plans at present to run cattle on the ranch, though the conservation easements allow for agricultural production if they choose later. They were building a house in nearby Santa Fe at the time, with no intention of buying a ranch. “We weren’t even looking,” says

Kimberley. But when her husband Scott learned that Forked Lightning was for sale, he began investigating the potential.

Both Sheffields are avid fly fishermen, so seeing the magnificent stretch of river running through the property was probably more than they could resist.

Few roads run through the ranch, and river access can be challenging. “We’re having fun exploring ways to float the river, to find the best fishing spots,” Kimberley says.

## A Conservationist’s Dream

The Forked Lightning is a conservationist’s dream—and a haven for wildlife. The two easements cover 80 percent of the 2,300-acre property. The terrain is a choice mix of high, rocky pine-covered cliffs and lower river valley land. In the past two years, warm-season native grasses have been replanted and both annual and perennial plantings are being established, which help support non-game and game species such as elk, mule deer, turkey, mountain lion and black bear. There is also an active program to control noxious weeds.

Historic sites and artifacts pepper the property, including remains of two stone homesteads, a church and a cemetery, all dating back to the 1800s when early settlers began moving West and establishing homestead communities near rail road tracks like those near the Forked Lightning. “We keep





Nearly four miles of the Pecos River runs through the Forked Lightning Ranch.

finding more sites every time the archeologist comes out," Kimberley reports.

### **Past and Future Preservation**

The Sheffields are committed to the highest standards of stewardship, starting with the hire of ranch manager, Ken Young, who relocated to New Mexico from Texas with his wife Sherrill to oversee the property.

Ken manages the ranch by three tenets: "Make it a safe place—for employees and contractors to work and for people to recreate; use the right tools/materials/processes for everything—no cutting corners; and ensure everything we do enhances the reputation of the ranch in the community."

It's a big job just to manage the river portion of the property. "Improvement and restoration techniques had been used in the past, but a fire and then a big flood in 2013 changed the river, so some of those improvements no longer exist," Ken explains. Willows that had overgrown the riverbanks, are now systematically thinned or removed.

One of first actions Ken took as ranch manager was to bring in an archeologist to find out how to start preserving the historical remains—something previous owners hadn't been concerned with.

The archeologist recommended keeping people at least 45

feet away from the buildings, especially downhill where the historic artifacts tend to migrate over time.

### **Making it their own**

"This first year on the ranch has been a transition year," Kimberley reflects, adding that Scott just retired this past January as CEO of Irving, Texas-based Pioneer Natural Resources, so the couple expects to spend more time now enjoying the ranch with family—their five children and 10 grandchildren, ages 3-15.

The Sheffields have renewed the stucco throughout the ranch with a deeper, cherry-red hue, and they're making some changes to the original ranch house, now an office, and to their residence which Jane Fonda built to reference both the downtown Santa Fe Library building and an old Spanish monastery. "Jane's lifestyle was more formal than ours," says Kimberley, who wants the home to be comfortable and practical for her many young grandkids to run around in.

Other than that, the couple has no major plans to change the property.

"There is a tremendous amount that goes into maintaining and preserving this ranch—now and for the future," ranch manager Ken adds. "Perpetuity is a long time."

# In Memory of Wayne Kirkby—

## *His Commitment to Conservation in Corrales will be Remembered*

Longtime supporter and friend of the New Mexico Land Conservancy, Wayne A. Kirkby, Corrales, NM, passed away on October 7, 2017 at the age of 75. Wayne and his wife Sue Ann, now deceased, retired to Corrales, NM, where Wayne became an avid horse owner and rider. He is well known for his love for daring mountain rides!

Wayne was actively involved in many organizations in Albuquerque and Corrales. He served as VP and President of the New Mexico Ski Club, a board member for Music in Corrales, a volunteer for the Corrales Library, participated in the Bosque Mounted Patrol, and others. Wayne is survived by two cousins and his cherished friend of several years, Katryn Fraher, who has promised to care for his beloved horses, cat, and his devoted Corgi friend, Sunny, until their passing. Katryn said that NMLC was one of Wayne's favorite organizations.

Wayne was introduced to NMLC when he chaired the Corrales Farmland Preservation Committee (CFPC) from 2003-2008. The committee, comprised of concerned local citizens, was established to advise the Village of Corrales on the implementation of its Farmland Preservation Program, which included promoting the program and educating landowners about conservation easements and the associated benefits, identifying and acquiring high priority agricultural lands for protection, and identifying and securing sources of funding for land preservation within the Village of Corrales.

To advance its work, the committee recommended that the Village work with both the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and NMLC. During Wayne's tenure at the CFPC, in partnership with TPL and NMLC, major accomplishments for the Village of Corrales included: 1) passing a \$2.5 million bond measure to preserve agricultural lands and open space within the Village; 2) securing over \$1.6 million in federal funding through the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service's Farm and Ranchland Protection Program; 3) working with TPL and NMLC to permanently protect 33 acres of prime agricultural land and open space within the Village.

Donations can be made in Wayne's name to NMLC at [www.nmlandconservancy.org](http://www.nmlandconservancy.org)



# New Mexico: Our Mission. Your Legacy.

When you include the New Mexico Land Conservancy (NMLC) in your estate plans, you are making a gift for future generations to enjoy the unique and special places we all cherish. A planned gift, like permanently protected land, is a lasting contribution to ensure that NMLC has the resources to conserve and steward these special places. Making a planned gift to our organization may provide you and your family with valuable tax benefits. Gifts to NMLC are not subject to gift or estate taxes.

There are several ways to include NMLC in your estate plans:

**Bequests:** One of the most common and lasting forms of planned giving is a bequest. You can designate a specific dollar amount or percentage of your estate to be donated to NMLC. It's as simple as sharing the following with your attorney or financial planner:



"I bequeath \$\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ % of my estate to the New Mexico Land Conservancy, 5430 S. Richards Ave., Santa Fe, NM 87508."

**Gifts of retirement plans/**

**IRAs:** You can designate NMLC as a beneficiary of all or part of the remainder of your IRA or retirement plan. Distributions of your IRA or retirement plan to your heirs can be subject to income and estate taxes. By designating NMLC as a beneficiary, 100% of the balance can be used by NMLC.

**Gifts of life insurance policies:**

If you have more life insurance coverage than is needed, consider transferring ownership of your policy to the NMLC in order to receive a charitable income tax deduction.

**Gifts of real estate:** Gifts of real estate to NMLC can allow you to

save on taxes and provide you with income. NMLC will accept gifts of real estate for conservation lands intended to be protected and real estate which is intended to be sold by NMLC to support our work.

*Please contact your financial planner to discuss options that meet your financial planning needs and philanthropic vision.*

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