



TAOS LAND TRUST

THE TAOS LAND TRUST AND CONSERVATION

The Taos Land Trust, a nonprofit, nongovernmental, public service conservation organization, was founded in 1988 to help protect the rural, agricultural character and great natural beauty of the Taos area. We now serve all of north central New Mexico. Land trusts are not a new idea: the land trust approach to conservation has been in existence for over a hundred years, and a thousand land trusts are now protecting more than four million acres in the United States.

The Taos Land Trust envisions a north central New Mexico in which the irreplaceable gift of land is honored and protected for this and future generations. Toward this end, our mission is to help preserve land with agricultural value, scenic vistas, significant habitat, or historical sites through direct preservation, conservation partnerships, education and land use planning for the benefit of the families, communities, cultures and natural systems of north central New Mexico. We are a land trust protecting a unique asset of national importance.

Since beginning operations in 1991, the Taos Land Trust has preserved more than 2,400 acres in over 20 conservation easements, has acquired two properties for parks, and has directly influenced the preservation of an additional 18,000 acres. These lands include a long stretch along the main highway north of Taos providing a spectacular view of Taos Mountain; productive agricultural lands; significant wildlife habitat; and visual and ecological buffer lands for the Taos Pueblo's sacred Blue Lake and related wilderness areas. While the Taos Land Trust provides information to landowners, their families and advisors about land preservation techniques, and offers an informed neutral voice on land use planning matters, we do not take advocacy positions on controversial community issues.

TECHNIQUES FOR PROTECTING LAND

There are a number of techniques from which to choose to voluntarily provide permanent protection for the conservation resources of the land. Your choice of which to pursue will depend on the natural characteristics of the land, your family's financial objectives, and personal issues concerning tax and estate planning.

Conservation easement – A voluntary, flexible, negotiated agreement between a landowner and the Land Trust which protects forever natural characteristics of the land by restricting its future development. The landowner retains ownership rights, including the right to use, sell, or will the land. (For more details, see our fact sheet about conservation easements.)

Gifts of land – An alternative for the landowner whose land has significant conservation values and who does not have heirs to protect it or who no longer uses the property or who wishes to reduce income and/or estate taxes.

Donating by will – An arrangement that writes a conservation easement or outright gift of land into the landowner's will. As is the case with easements, the landowner can continue to own and use the property during his/her lifetime.

WHAT SERVICES DOES THE TAOS LAND TRUST PROVIDE?

We listen to your goals for your land and your family and help match them with conservation opportunities.

We often can provide referrals to attorneys, appraisers, accountants, and land planners who are familiar with conservation strategies.

We serve as recipients and stewards of conservation easements and lands.

Because we are a publicly supported charitable organization as defined by the federal tax code, grants of qualified conservation easements to the Taos Land Trust are often tax deductible.

The Taos Land Trust can serve as an invaluable partner in protecting your land by working closely and confidentially with each landowner. The volunteers and staff who run the Taos Land Trust share your concern for the land, and they stand ready to help you.

WHAT IS THE TAOS LAND TRUST'S RESPONSIBILITY?

In accepting a conservation easement to protect the property forever, the Taos Land Trust takes on the permanent responsibility and legal right to enforce the terms of the easement. Landowners who grant easements to the Taos Land Trust are asked to contribute to a stewardship fund dedicated to ensuring that the Land Trust can indeed protect the property in the way the landowner wishes.

HOW IS THE TAOS LAND TRUST FUNDED?

We receive contributions from individuals and businesses, income from bequests and gifts of property, grants from foundations, and we conduct fundraising events.

When you want to discuss your conservation options in more depth, please contact the Taos Land Trust about land protection alternatives. You will, of course, want to consult your own legal and financial advisers as well.

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