



KEEPING COMMUNITIES **CONNECTED TO THE LAND**
2020-21 **TAOS LAND TRUST** ANNUAL REPORT



DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS,

There has been no other year like the past 12 months. Through sickness, sadness, even death our community proved its compassion, kindness and resilience.

What we've learned is that to make things grow, we must water, tend and cultivate at the right time. Our work at the Taos Land Trust proves this time and time again.

This year we protected more land, grew more food, and embarked on beautiful relationships with local schools. Our community's young people are seeding, cultivating and studying the land, showing us that there is so much value in taking time to contemplate how change affects us. They are becoming the leaders we need in the future.

All of this is possible because of your support, and our shared vision to make Taos a place where we can all grow and thrive.

In gratitude,

Sanjay Poovadan

TLT Board President

Kristina Ortez

TLT Executive Director

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Front Page Photos: top two photos, Jim O'Donnell;
bottom two photos, Jackie Sayat.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Conservation Easements are one of the best tools we have to protect private working lands and critical landscapes. Over the last 35 years we have protected more than 25,000 acres of working lands and critical landscapes.

MONITORING SEASON 2021

Each of our conservation easements is monitored by volunteers and staff every year to ensure the property is maintaining its conservation values. In 2021, Taos Land Trust was able to train 10 new volunteers to monitor our 52 conservation easements. Thank you to all who helped!

MAPPING OUR CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

In the Spring of 2021, Taos Land Trust received a grant from the **Land Trust Alliance** to re-map our conservation easement properties in order to bring them up to modern mapping and navigation standards. The grant work will allow us to better steward the easements we hold through the creation of streamlined mapping applications that will also allow more volunteers to go out in the field.

THE CONSERVATION HOMESTEAD

Owned by the **Santa Fe Conservation Trust**, the Conservation Homestead easement is 300 acres of open space in the Galisteo Basin, adjacent to several conserved properties, protecting thousands of acres of critical habitat and offering educational and recreational benefits for local Santa Feans.



CONSERVATION EASEMENTS (CEs)

are voluntary agreements between a landowner and a qualified organization, such as Taos Land Trust, to restrict future development of a property. They are permanent and remain with the land through any changes in ownership.

You can learn more about CE's at:
www.taoslandtrust.org/conservation-easements

EMERGING YOUNG FARMERS AND ECOLOGISTS

LEARNING THROUGH HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES

Since 2018 we have hosted NM Youth Conservation Corps crews in the summer, engaging in hands-on experiential learning at Rio Fernando Park and with community partners. In 2021, three crews joined us during the spring, summer, and fall. They learned sustainable farming techniques, hard science data collection through our long term monitoring program, and how to engage in community efforts. All the while they built their leadership skills to take our community into the future.

GROWING FOOD FOR COMMUNITY TODAY

It takes many hands to grow food for the community. Our student interns grew 2,500 pounds of produce at Vista Grande Gardens at Rio Fernando Park and sent that fresh produce out to families through the Farm to Schools programs, **Shared Table**, **Questa Food Bank** and the farmers markets in Talpa and **Questa**. The crew picked apples at **NMSU Alcalde Agricultural Center** and Cruz Alta orchards, and processed the fruits of their hard labor at the TCEDC commercial kitchen into cider, sauce, and dried apples. In addition, our **Emerging Young Farmers** harvested elderberries for syrup, currants, and honey from the Rio Fernando Park beehive.

LONG TERM ECOLOGICAL MONITORING AT RIO FERNANDO PARK

Long term ecological monitoring at Rio Fernando Park helps us understand how climate change directly affects our landscapes, and how we may best respond. We are training our interns to collect weather data, which will be correlated with groundwater and stream-flow measurement, and connected to measurements of soil health and vegetation abundance and diversity. Rio Fernando Park is our test site, serving as a model for the types of data and the collection techniques that can be replicated at other sites in the region to broaden our understanding of direct effects of climate change.



Right Photo: Jim O'Donnell. Summer 2021 YCC Crew.

RIO FERNANDO PARK AND FARM



NEW INFRASTRUCTURE AT RFP

The greatest infrastructure accomplishment at Rio Fernando Park this year has been the design and construction of a timber frame wash and pack station structure and the outdoor learning center. In the coming months and years we will be able to wash and pack produce grown at Rio Fernando Farms more efficiently and safely outdoors.

The new outdoor learning center consists of picnic tables that our YCC crews constructed and a butterfly shade structure. This area has already been utilized for safe, outdoor education sessions.



ONE BOX AT A TIME

For the past two summers, Taos Land Trust has built and distributed **garden boxes** — complete with soil, irrigation equipment, hoop house coverings, and seed — to families in our community. We offered these garden boxes free of charge to elders, families with children, and other interested community members. In total, this project has reached over 250 individuals in Taos: 80 families, 150+ children, many elders and grandparents, and more than 10 families impacted by incarceration.

Top Photo: TLT Staff. Our new Wash & Pack Station and Outdoor Learning Center.

Above Photo: Jim O'Donnell. Delivering a garden box to a homeowner.

WORKING LANDS IN WORKING HANDS



Our best chance to build resilience in community starts at the ground level, literally. This past year we've worked with Taos area farmers to rebuild soil health as our first line of defense against the impacts of climate change.

HEALTHY SOILS PROGRAMS

Good food begins with healthy soil. When you know what's in your soil, you can make better decisions about what you can grow. In partnership with **Taos Valley Acequia Association**, we completed soil tests and analysis for several landowners in Taos County. This data helps the landowners better understand their garden plans based on real-life soil biology.

NO TILL SEED DRILL

In 2021, our rental no-till seed drill seeded approximately 250 acres of land across Taos County. The no-till techniques appear to be successful wherever irrigation and/or adequate rainfall have been available. The seeder rental often comes with consultation and advice on cover crop recipes.

Find more information on our website:
www.taoslandtrust.org/working-lands-equipment-rental-program

Our Vigil y Romo Healthy Soils project supports soil health on properties along the length of the Vigil y Romo acequia, including Rio Fernando Park. We use our no-till seed drill to seed diverse cover crop and grain mixes, and pair that with our home-grown compost to implement the healthy soils techniques that are so critical to soil resilience. Our student interns worked in the Rio Fernando Park Land Lab to assess soil health through comprehensive soil testing and microscopy techniques.

CORNELIO BASIN RESTORATION PROJECT

We're working in partnership with the Town of Taos to restore a critical part of the Rio Fernando watershed at Cornelio Basin. The 20-acre parcel lies at the end of the Vigil y Romo acequia and shares a border with the southeast corner of Baca Park.

BY THE NUMBERS

140 garden boxes constructed and distributed to families to grow food at home in 2020 and 2021

600 additional acres preserved through conservation easements this year

52 conservation easements (+2 in progress)

90 high school students engaged through VGHS

17 young farmers and ecologists trained through the YCC program

250 acres planted with seeder in 2021

15 volunteers engaged for conservation easement monitoring



2020-21 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

REVENUE AND SUPPORT:

Grants	\$299,381 (50%)
Government Revenue	\$56,700 (9%)
Program Service Fees	\$9,394 (2%)
Direct Public Support	\$119,505 (19%)
Conservation Fees & Tax Credit Sales	\$123,681 (20%)

TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT	\$608,661
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EXPENSES:

Conservation Easements & Stewardship (% and \$)	\$52,237 (10%)
Education	\$88,006 (17%)
Special Programs (Rio Fernando Park, Rio Fernando Collaborative, Working Lands, COVID-Response)	\$202,751 (39%)
Management & General	\$159,143 (31%)
Fundraising	\$14,049 (3%)

TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$516,186
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**Financial information based on draft audited statements.*

Over the last year in response to community needs, the Taos Land Trust shifted priorities to support our community more directly, through agricultural education, farm equipment rental, and the distribution of garden boxes to grow food at home. Your gift to Taos Land Trust supports our land, water, and conservation efforts for today, tomorrow, and the next generation.

Visit our website: www.taoslandtrust.org/donate-form to donate once, monthly, or annually.



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TAOS, NEW MEXICO 87571


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WEB: WWW.TAOSLANDTRUST.ORG  **EMAIL:** INFO@TAOSLANDTRUST.ORG  **PHONE:** 575.751.3138