

# Santa Fe County Open Space, Trails and Parks

## Annual Report

# 2021



**SANTA FE COUNTY**



Santa Fe County Open Space, Trails and Parks Program started out 2020 with a very ambitious work plan which focused on important resource management goals. While 2020 made us all shift, one thing remained clear; 2020 has reaffirmed the importance of outdoor spaces for our community. The 2020-2021 OSTP Annual Report highlights the major accomplishments of 2020 including exciting environmental work and partnerships that have strengthened and solidified even in the uncertainty of 2020.

This second annual report is an important follow up to the 2019 OSTP Strategic Management Plan that provides guidance on implementation of open space and trails goals throughout Santa Fe County. This framework is intended to provide clear and transparent information to all stakeholders on where the focus of our important efforts are directed in 2021.

Please enjoy an overview of the important goals of OSTP moving into 2021 and an overview of a few of the exciting projects OSTP worked on in 2020.

Thanks to all of our Santa Fe County residents who have enjoyed our important open spaces and shared in our collective efforts to protect and conserve these landscapes as we continue to stay safe and healthy in 2021.

Thanks for your ongoing support for Santa Fe County Open Space and Trails Program!

**Vision**

*Santa Fe County's Open Space, Trails and Parks Program sustainably manages and conserves a vibrant network of cultural, historical, recreational and natural community resources that inspire a deep sense of regional identity and stewardship among current and future generations.*

**Mission**

*Santa Fe County provides innovative leadership in local land management and conservation that enhances the quality of life for County residents, provides access to public lands for unique outdoor experiences, advances community stewardship through partnerships and effectively leverages community investments in the Open Space, Trails and Parks Program. Management of County open spaces and trail networks provides sustainable and resilient ecosystems with landscape-wide benefits for human, plant, and wildlife communities.*

# 2021 Work plan and goals

This page outlines the 2021 projects and priorities for OSTP. These priorities are organized by sections consistent with the 2019 OSTP Strategic Plan. Each project has an indicator icon to show progress. Many projects have already been started, and several are upcoming. Highlighted projects are particular priorities in 2021. This is an ambitious list, but OSTP is up for the job!



Complete



Initiated



Not Yet Initiated

## Resource Management

- Conduct surveys on properties for bats and rare plants
- Implement monitoring and research program, including picture post installation, with trained work crews and interns
- Continue to conduct surveys on properties for wildlife and environmental conditions
- Continue to implement existing management plans
- Coordinate with Xerces Society to develop and implement a pollinator management plan
- Little Tesuque Creek Open Space Management Plan
- Talaya Hill Open Space Management Plan
- Finalize and Implement Pinyon Jay management plan
- Install border fencing on OSTP properties as needed
- OSTP staff trained in sustainable trail design and construction
- Investigate allocating a dedicated Resource Management project budget
- Work with County emergency services to develop an emergency response plan for each property, which could include a volunteer patrol for monitoring safety of users and facilities

## Educational Programming and Stewardship

- Continue partnership with Northern New Mexico Master Naturalist Program and develop a formal curriculum booklet
- Enhance communications with the public to provide regular updates on OSTP projects and programs
- Develop messaging and educational material relating to specific OSTP properties and programs

## Project Development and Implementation

- Thornton Ranch Open Space
- Arroyo Hondo Segment 2
- Santa Fe River Trail segment 2 design and acquisition
- Romero Park Phase 2
- Bennie J. Chavez Community Center Park
- Little Tesuque Creek Trail analysis
- Madrid Open Space

## Planning and Program Development

- Build a database for each property in a centralized location for access by all OSTP staff
- Develop policies relating to tribal communications and concerns relating to Thornton Ranch Open Space
- Public outreach and partnership building with BLM, NM Game and Fish, and USFS
- Develop an assessment for recreation and park facilities needs in each GMA in the County, and ability to provide related services and infrastructure
- Lay the groundwork for a potential OSTP Interpretive Rangers program, seek opportunities for partnerships with other ranger programs
- Determine chain of command and decision maker for OSTP
- Revisit LOS in SLDC

# PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: PINON PINE SEED PLANTING



In 2020, OSTP began implementing projects that increase climate resiliency for numerous different habitat types on our properties, especially in relation to keystone species such as the Pinyon Jay, which is one of the primary seed distributors for piñon-juniper ecosystems.

In partnership with our dedicated Master Naturalist stewards, OSTP has planted more than 1000 piñon pine seeds on open space properties (including Thornton Ranch Open Space). Each seed location was determined based upon conditions that may be more hospitable for tree growth, survival, and nut production in a changing climate, such as on north and east-facing slopes shaded from the afternoon sun, or along drainages with additional water availability. Each planting location was documented, and OSTP Master Naturalists will help monitor the success of these seeds into the future.

Many partners have taken note of these efforts, including Audubon Southwest, and now plan to recreate this project in parts of Arizona, and additional locations in New Mexico.

You can see above that all planting was done in small groups and with social distancing guidelines in mind.

# PROPERTY HIGHLIGHT: ORTIZ MOUNTAINS OPEN SPACE

Santa Fe County Board of County Commissioners adopted the Ortiz Mountains Open Space Management Plan in 2019. In 2020, implementation of this plan (and the associated forest health management plan) has gained momentum in partnership with SFC Wildland Fire, Ecotone Landscape Planning and the Forest Stewards Guild.

The Ortiz Mountains Open Space is home to many rapidly declining bird species dependent upon ponderosa pine forest, including the Grace's Warbler. To ensure habitat is improved for these high priority species, bird surveys were conducted pre-management, and will continue for many years post-management. The results from these surveys will allow us to adaptively manage our properties and provide optimum benefits for these species.

The Ortiz Mountains Open Space is a unique landscape in Santa Fe County and this project will enhance the forest and wildlife diversity, in keeping with the vision of the property. This project is intended to enhance climate resiliency of the mountains forests, and enhance habitat for many species of conservation need.

Santa Fe County Wildland Fire Crew have begun the forest treatments and will continue this important work throughout the winter, as well as next fall and winter. Their efforts are consistent with the forest health plan which was developed to balance the need for habitat enhancement and hazard mitigation.



# COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT: MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

The third annual Master Naturalist Course looked a little different this year. The program shifted to a virtual learning format due to the global pandemic. But that allowed almost 40 interested naturalists to sign up and participate in a 12 week course filled with a wide variety of speakers and topics.

This ongoing partnership with Randall Davey Audubon and Santa Fe Botanical Garden was enhanced by the addition of 2 Youth Conservation Corps members who facilitated this group of learners.

Graduates of this program will be conducting valuable services on Santa Fe County Open Spaces including helping to monitor natural resources and on-going studies.



Image courtesy of Dana Ecelberger, Master Naturalist course attendee 2020

# COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT: THE XERCES SOCIETY FOR INVERTEBRATE CONSERVATION

OSTP has worked to strengthen many partnerships with groups who have similar missions. This year, the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation and Santa Fe County have worked together to develop several initiatives to enhance pollinator habitat, provide guidance on landscape management, and provide education to community members in Santa Fe County



This partnership will continue in 2021 in developing Bee City USA certifications with the City of Santa Fe and Randall Davey Audubon, as well as developing a pollinator management plan specific to Santa Fe County Open Space and Trails Properties.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## Santa Fe County Board of County Commissioners

Henry Roybal – District 1, Chair  
Anna Hansen – District 2  
Rudy Garcia – District 3  
Anna Hamilton – District 4  
Hank Hughes – District 5

Katherine Miller, County Manager  
Penny Ellis-Green, Growth Management Director  
Robert Griego, Planning Manager

## County Open Lands, Trails, and Parks Advisory Committee (COLTPAC)

Ruben Cedeno, District 3, Chair  
Sandra Madrid Massengill, District 1  
Sue Murphy, District 2  
Matt Piccarello, District 4  
Jan Cohen, District 5  
Morika Hensley, At-Large  
Elise Apple Snider, At-Large  
Linda Siegle, At-Large  
Jean Pike, At-Large

## County Open Space and Trails staff

Maria Lohmann, OSTP Senior Planner  
Paul Olafson, Planning Project Manager  
Peggy Darr, OSTP Resource Management Specialist  
Carrie Olson, Santa Fe River Project Manager  
PJ Montano, Projects and Facilities Division Director  
David Padilla, Facilities, Operations and Maintenance Manager  
Eppie Tapia, OSTP Maintenance Foreman  
Shane Martinez, OSTP Lead Maintenance Technician  
Cedric Griego, OSTP Maintenance Technician  
Reyes Lujan, OSTP Maintenance Technician  
Christopher Padilla, OSTP Maintenance Technician  
Frankie Baca, OSTP Maintenance Technician  
Everett Lovato, OSTP Maintenance Technician