



SANTA FE CONSERVATION TRUST PROGRAMS

“Land, trails and skies,” is the answer to someone who asks you what SFCT does.

LAND

Land conservation is the core of SFCT’s work. As a land trust, we provide the legal documents and support for landowners to take the development rights off their land, with or without building envelopes. By donating their development rights to SFCT, which will then protect and defend them in perpetuity, the landowner is giving up value in their land, which qualifies them for State and Federal tax deductions. Not only are they voluntarily giving up some value, they are also providing a public benefit by meeting one or more of the IRS-determined conservation values: Those values are: agricultural, scenic, historic, ecological (wildlife habitat), or recreational.

SFCT works with landowners to determine which conservation values they will be protecting. We help the landowner work with the appraisers, title companies, surveyors, geologists, archaeologists and other specialists to create the documentation needed for the conservation easement. We provide the landowner with a legal template that they can use with their attorneys to write up the easement. We file it at the County Clerk’s office to make it official. We create the baseline documentation report that shows the status of the property when it was put into the conservation easement. This baseline is what we use annually when we inspect the property to be sure the conservation values are being upheld. And, we will file the paperwork to apply for the transferrable State tax credit, if the landowner wants to apply for it.

Usually, the landowner who originally put their land into a conservation easement is easy to work with. They are motivated to protect the property. SFCT is now working with second and third generation landowners who have purchased or inherited properties with our conservation easements on them. The farther away from the original grantee, the higher likelihood of the current landowners violating the terms of the easement. As such, SFCT has a robust **stewardship program** which annually visits each of the conservation easements we hold to be sure that the conservation values on each property are being upheld. Stewardship also includes working with landowners to help them understand their easements, solve problems on the land, etc. Sometimes there are violations of the easement, and SFCT has to send out violations letters. If the situation is not corrected, SFCT can initiate legal proceedings to correct the violation. We carry insurance (TerraFirma) to cover the cost of litigation if it occurs. Fortunately, SFCT has never had to litigate a violation.

Right now, the board and staff are working on a **Strategic Conservation Plan**, which will guide our land work for the next ten years (with intermittent updates). While we will always work with landowners who come in the door, the Trust wants to be more strategic about working in areas with a high risk of development and high conservation values. We are interested in working to preserve larger tracts of land that include many landowners so that we can have a larger impact on watersheds, wildlife corridors, the protection of scenic views

and open space, recreational opportunities and the preservation of our cultural resources. To do so, we will be working with some landowners who probably cannot afford the cost of doing easements, so we'll be using the Strategic Conservation Plan not only to guide our conservation work but also to talk with donors and foundations to bring in more funding to underwrite the costs of easements, the bargain sale of development rights, or in some cases, outright purchases of development rights. Up until this time, the Trust has been fortunate to work with landowners who could afford to donate their development rights and pay the upfront costs. Our board wants to work with a wider variety of people to make our work more impactful, so this is the challenge we'll be working on going forward. SFCT believes our Strategic Conservation Plan is going to be an important tool to help us articulate this vision and talk to more people who can help us build up the funds to implement it.

In 2020, the Thaw Charitable Trust donated a 300-acre parcel called the Thornton Homestead to SFCT. This donation fills a "donut hole" in the Galisteo Basin Preserve area that could have been developed. This property is a wonderful opportunity for us to show how landscape scale conservation can work to help wildlife move from lower to higher terrain, to preserve cultural resources in an archaeologically rich area, and to show our other landowners, potentially, how to manage and restore their lands. We can also build trails on the property that will connect to the Galisteo Basin Preserve trails and provide connectivity as trails advocates work to connect to the County Open Space at Thornton Ranch. There is an ad hoc committee working on how best to conserve the property and use it for educational and recreational purposes.

Not only will the Strategic Conservation Plan guide SFCT's work and articulate a clear need for more funding, it will also require that we move ahead in the coming year with hiring a land professional to help both on the monitoring of our existing easements and in implementing the Strategic Conservation Plan. Melissa, our land program manager, monitors almost 100 properties totaling almost 42,000 acres. We definitely will need more help in the stewardship area, as well as in reaching out to other landowners who have properties of significance for preservation. Our staff hasn't grown much over the past 24 years. Tim came on as Trails Manager in 2014 with the land staff staying the same in size, ie, an Executive Director and Land Program/Stewardship manager. So over the past year, we have been reaching out to some of our major donors to ask them for a \$10,000 per year x 3 year pledge to help us hire more staff, get them up and running and increase our income for three years as we build capacity to have a larger staff. Our goal was to find six people who can do the three year x \$10k/yr pledge and we have only one pending one right now, with a few others at lower levels. We will continue to seek three year pledges to help us expand our capacity.

TRAILS

The Santa Fe Conservation Trust in partnership with the Trails Alliance of Santa Fe, the City of Santa Fe and Santa Fe County engage volunteers — individuals, clubs, schools, businesses, and non-profits — as advocates and stewards of the trails that make our community an outstanding place to live and to visit. Our founding director, Dale Ball, created the Dale Ball Trail System and under the guidance of our late founder, Stewart Udall, we began the Santa Fe Rail Trail creation process.

SFCT had a contract with the City of Santa Fe for Tim Rogers, our Trails Manager, to manage the volunteers who maintain all of the City's soft surface trails. The City canceled the contract in 2020 due to their deficit from the pandemic, so now SFCT provides this work on a volunteer basis with underwriting from the Thaw Charitable Trust and other donors to cover Tim's salary. The County oversees the maintenance of the soft surface trails in the County but we would like to offer volunteer assistance on the County trails as well. Tim also does promotional bike and walking cruises/expeditions, works with all trail advocates in Santa Fe to coordinate efforts, and offers his planning background to the City on issues affecting both biking and hiking. He is also involved in working to expand SFCT's trails constituents, through the **Passport to Trails Program** that takes fourth and fifth graders from south side schools on field trips to the trails. Since 2014, over 3,000 kids, teachers and parents have participated. Tim is also participating in our urban walking program called

VAMONOS: Santa Fe Walks, which started in 2018 and is designed to introduce more people to the City's trails, both soft surface and the ADA accessible trails around City parks. In its first year, VAMONOS attracted around 300 walkers. In 2019, more than 500 walkers participated. Both Passport to Trails and Vámonos are inactive at the moment due to the coronavirus.

The following trails are our primary focus:

- The Dale Ball and Santa Fe Foothills Trails
- Arroyo Hondo Open Space
- Galisteo Basin Preserve with partners Commonweal Conservancy
- The La Tierra Trails
- La Piedra Trail
- Atalaya Trail
- The Santa Fe Rail Trail
- Arroyo de los Chamisos Trail

The Santa Fe Conservation Trust was instrumental in the preservation of the Arroyo Hondo Open Space. Located just outside Santa Fe and only a 12-minute drive from the Plaza, 86 acres of natural lands known as the Arroyo Hondo Open Space are forever protected by Santa Fe County in partnership with the Santa Fe Conservation Trust. A mile-long, fairly level loop trail affords spectacular views of Santa Fe, the northern stretch of the Galisteo Basin, Sandia Mountain, and, on a clear day, Mount Taylor—99 miles away.

The Galisteo Basin Preserve open space features 35 miles of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. SFCT was involved in the creation of these trails. These publicly accessible paths invite exploration and celebration of this landscape by Preserve residents and visitors alike.

The Trust is actively working with City, County and other community organizations and individuals to plan and implement a unified, sustainable network of natural-surface trails in and around Santa Fe. The goal of **the “Grand Unified Santa Fe Trail Organization (GUSTO)”** is to develop an interconnected trail system for local residents as well as visitors on foot, bicycle, or horse, so that trail users will be able to travel between trail systems and connect out to these systems from the places where people live, work, and play. In 2019, we plan on soliciting public feedback on the GUSTO proposed trails. From there, we will develop a phased plan for first developing the low hanging fruit trails, working up to those that will require more resources, etc.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

In 2014, SFCT started its **Passport to Trails** program designed to take 4th and 5th graders to the local trail system for field trips. The program focuses on two south side schools: El Camino Real Academy and Nina Otero Community School. The goal of this program is to introduce kids and their families to our trail system, build community on the trails and inspire the next generation of conservationists. Since 2014, SFCT has taken 3,000 participants on field trips. Time can only do so many field trips per year, so while this program is very successful, it cannot grow unless we get more capacity in the Trails office.

VAMONOS: Santa Fe Walks. In 2018, SFCT convened many community partners to start the VAMONOS program, which is an in-town walking program on our City's ADA accessible trails around our parks. The goal of this program is to reach out to people who cannot get into nature as easily: elders, the infirmed, the transportation limited, people who are afraid to walk by themselves, etc. We have partnered with La Familia, Christus St. Vincent, SW Care Center, the City of Santa Fe, AARP, Big Brothers Big Sisters, the NM Department of Health and many others to partner in the creation of the program and leverage promotions. The program runs from May through October annually.

In 2020, SFCT was awarded the **Safe Routes to School** Grant by the City of Santa Fe. This two year grant, which starts in early 2021, is to develop an action plan for the implementation of the program for Santa Fe's K-8 schools and to begin implementing it in pilot schools. Safe Routes to School works with schools to identify safe routes to school that kids can use to walk or bike to school rather than going on the school bus.

SKIES

The night sky has informed and inspired humankind for thousands of years. Around the globe, regardless of national borders, political ties or spiritual beliefs, all of us live with the night. The night sky is one of the great unifiers of the human experience across time and across cultures.

But the invention of the incandescent light bulb changed everything. It's been estimated that artificial lighting has eaten away at so much of the night sky that two-thirds of the US population can no longer see the Milky Way!

When the train to Lamy was operating out of the Railyard, SFCT had some successful star gazing gatherings in the Galisteo Basin. These successful gatherings died out when the train stopped going to Lamy. Today, with limited capacity, SFCT doesn't focus as much on star parties. But its conservation easement templates require that all of our partner landowners to use low impact lighting to preserve our night skies. We also advocate for the preservation of the night sky whenever possible, and we will occasionally work to put together star parties. In 2019, we hope to implement one star party in the Galisteo Basin.