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## **Dovetail is the new name of SFCT's 300-Acre Galisteo Basin Property**

*Native community members played large role in renaming this historic land  
that will connect New Mexicans with nature in perpetuity*

**Santa Fe, New Mexico (July 22, 2025)**—Names matter. A 300-acre property in the Galisteo Basin that was formerly known as the Conservation Homestead will now be known as Dovetail. The land is stewarded by the Santa Fe Conservation Trust (SFCT). It was the former headquarters of the Thornton Ranch, and many people called it the Thornton Homestead. The SFCT purchase of the land was funded in March 2020 by the Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw Charitable Trust, the organization picked up on the name and called it the Conservation Homestead. The new name, Dovetail, was established with the support and guidance of a diverse Community Advisory Group that included Indigenous representatives, as well as board members, staff, neighbors, and community members.

### **Intentional Change**

In a pivotal meeting about three years ago with Chris Chavez, a Kewa Pueblo elder, scholar, cultural preservation officer, and member of the Community Advisory Group, Chris pointed out that the word “homestead” was not welcoming to the Native community because it evoked painful memories of land loss and displacement. If SFCT truly wanted the land to be welcoming to everyone, he suggested that SFCT might want to rename the land.

SFCT's Executive Director Sarah Noss took this statement to heart and began a multi-year journey to develop a Values Statement for the organization that could then be used to guide the Community Advisory Group to establish a new name for the 300-acre Galisteo Basin property.

“We included as many voices as we could in getting a better idea of how people feel about the land and their experience of it,” Noss said. “We had three walk-about on the property for the community followed by a survey, and the responses we received from 70 people helped guide the work of the Advisory Group,” she said. Everyone who participated mentioned how gentle the land is.

### **The History of the Land**

Water emerged as a big theme. The Galisteo Basin itself has long been a place where people gathered because of its water resources. The Pueblo people and the Plains Indians all stayed there in the 1500s when the region was in deep drought. The Spanish pastured and watered their horses there because of the water. In fact, the property itself has a white rock geologic feature called the Galisteo Formation, which is a 3,000-foot deep remnant of a river that flowed off the uplift of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains 45 million years ago.

Water is life, and during archeological surveys of the trails that SFCT installed on the property, a spear point was found dating back to 5,000 BC—even more evidence that both humans and wildlife were supported by the water resources that existed there.

### **A Symbol of Hope, Love, Peace, and New Beginnings**

At both the land explorations and the Advisory Group meetings, one member of the group noticed that when people talked about the land, they held their hands in front of them with their fingers interlaced. That gesture brought the image of “dovetail” into her mind and this was the impetus for the new name.

As the group discussed the name, they realized how significant the dove is to many cultures. It is a symbol of hope, love, peace, and new beginnings. Chris Chavez said that the dove—called rain dove in his culture—is important, as the rain dove led Indigenous people to water, and its song is an incantation for rain. The idea of interlaced fingers that evoke the dovetail is also symbolic of coming together. Even the carpentry method of dovetailing, which makes an object stronger and more enduring, also felt appropriate for the name and the restoration work that SFCT is doing on the land.

“Dovetail reflects the gentle nature of the land. It evokes what we are trying to do there—to create a safe and welcoming place for everyone in the community to connect with nature,” Noss said.

Located at 268 Thornton Ranch Road, in Lamy, New Mexico, Dovetail is approximately 25 minutes south of Santa Fe. Parking is available at the Cottonwood Trailhead, where you can walk the final 1/3 of a mile to Dovetail at the end of Thornton Ranch Road. Dovetail is open to the public from dawn to dusk and features four miles of single-track dirt trails that connect to the Galisteo Basin Preserve trail system. In September, a half-mile accessible loop trail will be constructed providing an easier outdoor experience for the disabled community and those wanting a gentler trail to enjoy.

*The Santa Fe Conservation Trust partners with our community to keep northern New Mexico’s living lands and people flourishing together. We protect culturally and environmentally significant landscapes, ignite people’s passion for nature, and enable the continual regeneration of our healthy place. For more information, visit [sfct.org](https://sfct.org).*

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Hikers enjoying the publicly accessible trails at SFCT's newly named Dovetail, walking amongst the Galisteo Formation sandstone found on the property.



Looking upon the north hills at SFCT's newly named Dovetail, a 300-acre property open to the public.