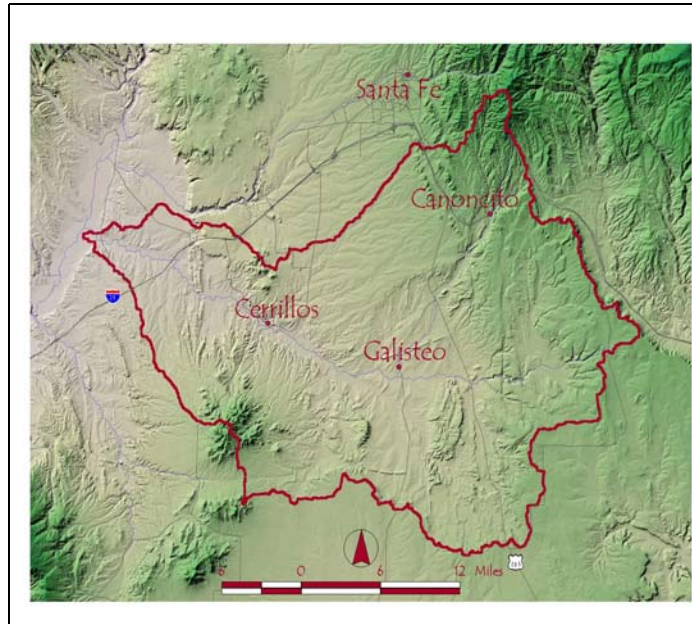




CONFLUENCE DRAFT, VERSION 2, SEPTEMBER 2004

The Galisteo Watershed: A Confluence of Initiatives



Overview

The Galisteo Watershed sweeps downward from Thompson Peak to the Rio Grande, creating a large basin spanning three counties and encompassing 730 square miles. Activities in and around the Galisteo basin continuously affect the watershed. Competition for limited resources is exacerbated by these ongoing initiatives and expanding (sub) urban development, producing approximately 500 homes a year.

The watershed is a fragile environment. Throughout its history it has been able to sustain, and alternately fail to sustain, its inhabitants. This historical perspective is critical to planning for the social, economic, and ecological future of the watershed.

People who live in the Galisteo watershed want to protect the natural beauty of the land – open spaces, vistas, night skies, wildlife, and solitude. They treasure the creeks that run through the sparsely populated landscape. They want to maintain small scale communities with a culturally diverse group of independent, environmentally conscious neighbors, many of whom live connected to the land. They value the unique historic and cultural heritage of the watershed.



Thor Sigstedt & Patrick McGinn: Confluence of Initiatives meeting, 06-19-04.

Why A Watershed Focus?

The importance of a “watershed focus” rests in the clear understanding, protection and management of the natural resources unique to the Galisteo basin. The following ideas support this vision:

- John Wesley Powell argued that water is the key to development in the West. Therefore, land management should be organized around watersheds.
- Planning based on the watershed makes the most environmental and geographical sense.
- Watershed planning does not mean to plan only for the creek and the riparian area; it includes using the creek as the organizing feature to plan for all the elements that affect the health of the Basin.
- This region-wide focus aims to link the environment, communities, agencies and individuals—working together on planning initiatives and other restorative activities throughout the Galisteo Watershed.

Challenges

The challenge for the people living in the watershed is how to live in balance with a fragile, impermanent environment. People are concerned that a new era is about to begin in the basin. The watershed is at the brink of significant changes; existing and proposed new development pose challenges for people in the basin. Should history repeat itself? Should people living in the basin wait and watch or should there be a concerted, collective effort to plan for their shared future? If they decide to plan together, what methods should be used? What should guide how people in the watershed plan for the future? Residents, landowners, and other stakeholders came together in February and June of 2004 to address these questions.

Organizational Structure

The people, who came together in February and June 2004, realized that there is no existing organizational structure to help plan for the future. They decided it is necessary to create an organization that will coordinate different development and conservation activities, educate stakeholders about the area (including the proposed activities and their consequences), and generate studies to collect needed information.

The organization would initiate and coordinate the following responsibilities:

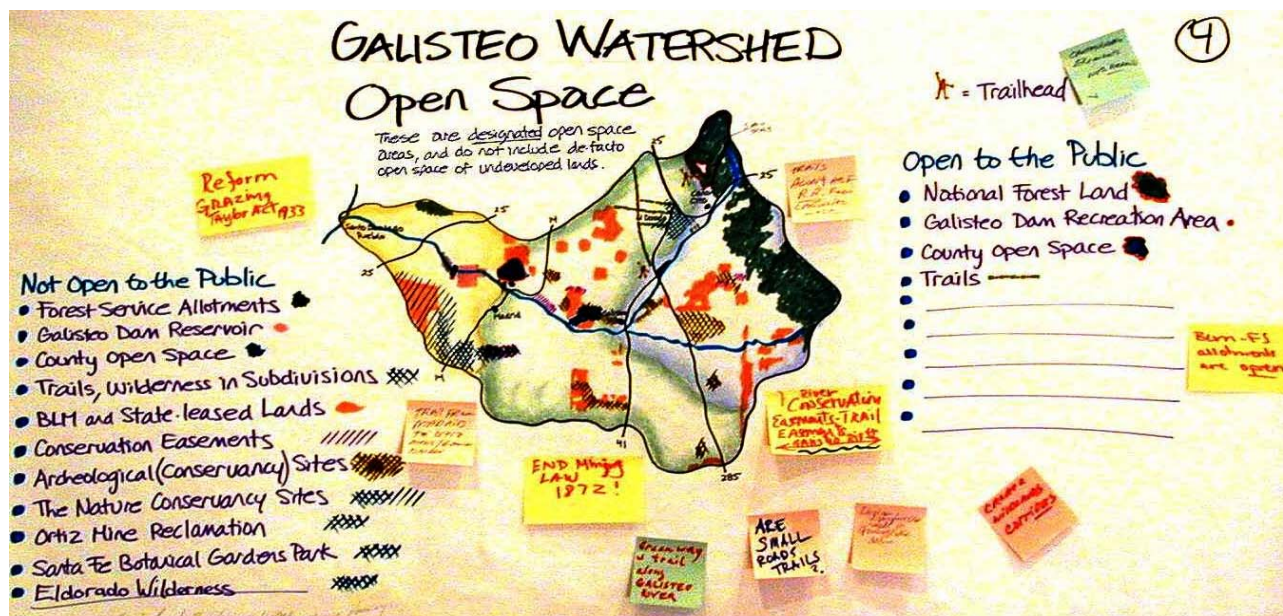
- Community building and education
- Preservation and restoration of natural resources and other landscape values
- Protection and enhancement of archaeological and cultural resources
- Smart growth initiatives
- Management of water resources

In addition, the organization could encourage and support local economic development, including sustainable agriculture and ranching.

The organization can take shape through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between County, State and Federal government bodies. The MOU may also be a Public-Private Partnership between government bodies and private organizations and individuals. Over time the MOU could evolve to be a federally designated special planning area, such as a National Heritage Area. A widely representative "commission" should lead the organization.

Regardless the form or designation of the organization, real progress will require the following criteria:

- Authority to act on behalf of the full watershed
- Sufficient resources (including staff) to collect the data and undertake the technical work necessary to plan credibly
- Represent and be accountable to various communities in the Basin.



Concrete Projects

The Commission will be responsible for several proposed and current projects. The objective of the organization is to provide structure to these initiatives which benefit the entire basin. Examples of such projects include:

- An **archaeological preservation program** based on the Federal Galisteo Basin Archaeological Sites Protection Act which protects 23 major archaeological sites in the area. The planning is coordinated by the BLM. Citizen input would be very desirable.
- A **wetland restoration, creation and protection program** in collaboration with NMED, landowners and Santo Domingo Pueblo, coordinated by EWI and NMED.
- An **environmentally sound urban development and open space project** at the Thornton Ranch, conceived and managed by Commonwealth Conservancy, in cooperation with other public open space managers in the basin and coordinated with the rail transportation initiatives currently under consideration by the state of New Mexico.
- The San Marcos District Community Plan, working towards the goal to **preserve the rural lifestyle of residents** in the western portion of the basin.
- An inventory of **large ranches** to discuss ways to manage a transition to smaller holdings in the least destructive and most constructive way.
- Santo Domingo Pueblo is conducting a **bosque restoration project** to reduce invasive species and fire hazard.
- Santa Fe Conservation Trust is working on a 5-year strategy to secure **50,000 acres of conservation easements** in the Galisteo watershed. In 2004-2005, the Trust plans to **map all existing and potential open space areas and conservation easement sites** in the watershed.
- The Nature Conservancy's **conservation area**, Ball Ranch tract NW of the Ortiz Mountains. A collaborative between TNC, Santo Domingo, BLM, and private landowners.
- The County Open Space properties and management plans for **preserving public open space and providing managed access to archaeological resources**.
- The Forest Service plan for **forest and fire management** in the upper watershed.
- Possible legislation authorizing the State Engineer to declare residential Critical Management Areas (CMA). Potential community role in assessing the positive and negative impacts of such a designation on water availability, economic development, and property values, **defining of the location, size, and shape of the CMA within the Galisteo Basin** to make it maximally effective and equitable.

Next Steps

Participants in the February 28 and June 19 meetings will continue the dialogue concerning issues in the watershed and the structure of the Commission. As requested, Earth Works Institute (EWI) will continue to coordinate the watershed planning conversations and activities in the interim. An organizing meeting will be held on Thursday September 23 from 5:00-7:00 p.m. at the National Park Service building at 1100 Old Santa Fe Trail. This will be a public meeting, and all interested parties are invited to attend. The steering committee will prepare a draft MOU for discussion. The agenda for this steering committee meeting includes the following inquires:



Confluence of Initiatives meeting 06-19-04

- Is a MOU the right vehicle to begin a watershed planning initiative?
- What is the purpose of the MOU, who are the right parties to participate in the MOU, and is this the right approach to creating the MOU?
- What kind of commission does the MOU establish and is there a place for any sub-commissions in coordinating different initiatives?
- What are the immediate funding needs to start an organization? What financial assistance from government agencies is available for staffing and administrative needs



Earth Works Institute bosque restoration workshop

Please Join Us

Watershed based planning is a unique process that makes the most environmental and geographical sense. The goal is to focus on the whole region - how the environment, communities, agencies and individuals are all interconnected - and how the planning initiatives and other activities currently happening in the Galisteo Watershed can work together.



Galisteo Creek Restoration in Canoncito

How can you participate?

- Attend the steering committee meeting on September 23, 2004, from 5-7 p.m. at the National Park Service building located at 1100 Old Santa Fe Trail, to lay the foundations for a public-private organizational structure for the watershed
- React to this Draft Initiative Statement. Provide feed back for improvements and new ideas
- Share this Draft Initiative Statement with your family, neighbors and friends
- Let us know how we can expand our efforts to reach more people who should know about our efforts
- Participate in ongoing projects and new initiatives and ongoing projects

The Complete Meeting Summary

A full report of the meeting is available on the Santa Fe County website:

www.santacounty.org as a PDF file. Look for the *Galisteo Watershed Collaborative Planning* link under **Hot links**. You can request either a paper or digital copy from Beth Mills, County Planner, 505-995-2727. The report contains:

- Full meeting summary
- Galisteo Watershed Activity Map
- Meeting Participant List

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Who is Organizing This Effort?

Please feel free to contact the organizations listed below regarding their involvement in the Galisteo Watershed Initiative.



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