



Bernalillo County Open Space News

Bernalillo County Open Space strives to be a dynamic network of properties with important natural or cultural resources managed to benefit people, plants, and wildlife by protecting and enhancing viewsheds, water resources, wildlife habitat, cultural/historic sites, and prime agricultural lands; and providing resource-based recreation and environmental education.

Letter from the Parks and Recreation Director by Ed Chismar, Director of Parks and Recreation

In Bernalillo County, economic development organizations have sought to expand the economic base by attracting new businesses, and expanding and retaining existing companies. Typically, there is emphasis on incentive packages, training support, tax abatements, and infrastructure improvements. Quietly, quality of life plays a role in economic development. Let me tell you how.



Quality of life is usually not a “must have” but rather a “would like” decision element. What if there were no parks, pools, playgrounds, sport facilities, trails or Open Space? What type of CEO would consider locating their company, employees and their families to an area with poor quality of life?

Bernalillo County Open Space is an important element that contributes to overall quality of life in our community. The hard work of Colleen Langan-McRoberts and the Open Space Maintenance crew has garnered recognition by local, state and national organizations. If you have

attended one of 38 Open Space programs, I am confident you experienced a worthwhile and meaningful activity that contributed to your quality of life. If you’ve visited an Open Space on your own, only you can describe the value of the experience.

In summary, know that we believe Open Space and quality of life are important elements in the pursuit of increasing economic development, while simultaneously meeting citizen satisfaction. After all, what if?

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Bernalillo County Open Space
111 Union Square Street SE, Suite 200
Albuquerque, NM 87102
505-314-0398
www.bernco.gov/openspace

Annual Food Festival and Field Day

Bernalillo County Open Space, Mid Region Council of Governments and numerous partners hit another one out of the park this year with the Annual Food Festival and Field Day. "Food and Field Day was great, many diverse booths. Great kid section, wonderful food," stated one participant, while another attendee called it a WOW event! The festival keeps growing in numbers with thousands of participants making their way to the Gutierrez-Hubbell House History and Cultural Center that was transformed for the one-day event with a plethora of activity including live music, free workshops, kids area, chef demonstrations and a number of food vendors. This year's theme, "Returning to the Land and Planting the Future," highlighted a number of old-school traditions such as canning and seed saving, while putting the spotlight on youth as the next generation of farmers. The festival incorporated young farmers, from elementary, middle and high school, to college age and young adult farmers looking for internship opportunities, land and resources. The Rio Grande Farmers' Coalition (a division of the National Young Farmers Coalition) partnered to facilitate a farm resources tent to share information, and the Rio Grande Seed Collective facilitated a seed give away. This event brought together a community of food-growing, loving, producing and eating people who all got down and dirty celebrating local food.



Food Forward

Promoting local food is not only a practical endeavor in our community, but it is also an economic and social pursuit. According to the U.S. Consumer Expenditure Survey, roughly 80% of the \$960 million dollars of food consumed (including fruits and vegetables) in the greater Albuquerque metropolitan area is coming from outside New Mexico. When we support local food, we support our local economy. For example, when a consumer spends \$100 at a local business, \$77 is reinvested in the local community compared to when a consumer spends \$100 at a national chain, only

\$13 is reinvested. Despite these incentives to grow more at home, farmers are hard pressed to meet the demand of the market while making a living. This past year, the county has been looking forward to see how it can support farmers by offering the tools they need to increase production so farmers can provide healthy local food to the community.

Bernalillo County, through the Open Space properties in the South Valley, has been involved in supporting and promoting local agriculture for a number of years. This year, the county stepped up this effort by hiring a consultant to look at our current food system and develop a community plan to promote a locally-based food and farming system that advances the county's economic and social well-being through evidence-based strategies and policies. This process has begun with meetings and one-on-one interviews with local farmers, value-added food producers, food distributors and others connected to local food. A number of themes came up during these meetings, including protecting more land for agriculture use, providing easier processes to bring food to the markets, developing a food cooperative and centralizing information to make it easier for farmers and small businesses. This process continues to unfold with a hopeful look to moving food forward here in Bernalillo County.



Backyard Farming Series

This past year, Bernalillo County Open Space offered 11 workshops covering topics from edible landscapes and soil science to seed saving and food preservation methods.

This series continues to be popular, bringing together hundreds of people from all over the county who

want to transform their yards or small farms into a thriving oasis of food, medicine and wildlife habitat. "The people involved were experts/very experienced in the field. There was lecture, Power Point, hands-on and other variety of activities to convey information," expressed one participant.



The series concluded with a conservation forum where a panel of four speakers talked about how they view their landscape as an ecosystem and try to work in harmony with nature to produce a well-balanced environment with multiple benefits including fresh vegetables, herbs and fruits. Many of the presentations and handouts from the series can be accessed on the following blog:

<http://osbackyardfarming.wordpress.com>. In 2014, Bernalillo County Open Space will continue to offer this series incorporating a program that comes out of the U.S. Botanical Garden, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and another notable organization called Landscape For Life.

Bear Blitz

Bernalillo County Open Space, working with a number of partners, recently formed the Sandia Mountain Bear Collaborative (SMBC) to gain a better understanding of the black bear population and behaviors in the mountains, as well as to educate the public about these amazing animals and how to coexist with them. The SMBC decided to organize a pilot Bear Blitz with select volunteers who collected bear scat (droppings) that was then analyzed for its DNA at the University of New Mexico Biology Department to identify individual bears. The pilot enabled the SMBC to fine tune the volunteer training and collection protocols in preparation for having a large-scale public event in 2014. Eventually, with enough information from DNA analysis, the SMBC hopes to better understand the number of bears, their corridors and range within the Mountains. This is especially useful information since the bear population is dealing with increased pressures from human encroachment, urban interface and drought conditions. Ultimately, the information can help managers better manage the land for the bear populations, including at Ojito de San Antonio and Carlito Springs Open Space that are havens for bears and other wildlife.

The Sandia Mountain Bear Collaborative includes the following partners: Bernalillo County Open Space, Sandia Mountain Natural History Center, UNM Biology Department, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Pueblo of Sandia, Pathways: Wildlife Corridors of New Mexico, Cibola National Forest, City of Albuquerque Open Space and Master Naturalists

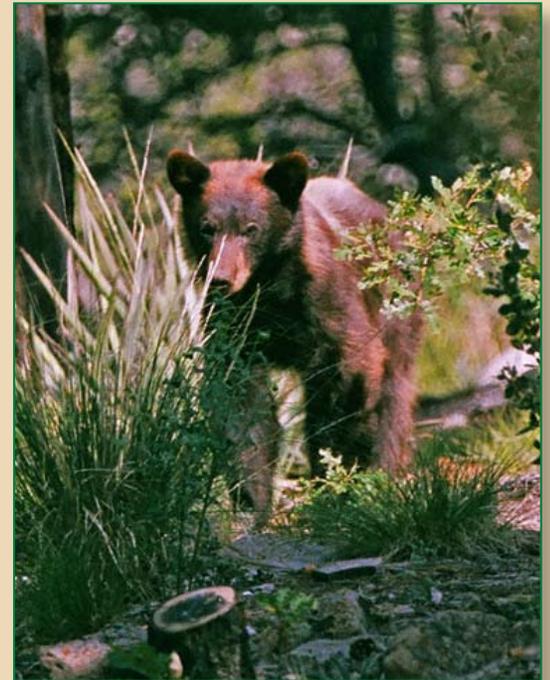


Photo compliments of Bill Pentler

Interpretive Series



The East Mountain Interpretive Series involved five wonderful workshops with over 100 attendees and covered the following topics: Geology of the Sandia Mountains, Trail Cooking, Archaeology 101, Forest Ecology, and Heirloom Apple Orchards in New Mexico. During

the Archaeology 101 workshop, Chuck Hannaford and Mary Weahkee from the New Mexico Office of Archaeological Studies covered a comprehensive overview of the history of the area and then provided hands-on demonstrations of how artifacts were once constructed

and used, displaying the creativity and wisdom of people who lived in New Mexico long ago. Participant Cynthia Blake's note of appreciation expressed the overall sentiments of the workshop, "I wanted to thank you and to say how much I enjoyed the archaeology class this Saturday, hopefully this class and/or others like it, will become a weekly, monthly or yearly session. The two archaeologists from Santa Fe were very informative. Please express my thanks to them and to the head of the Bernalillo County's Open Space Department for presenting it."

The last event in the mountains led by tree expert Gordon Tooley presented a lively and informative discussion on heirloom apple orchards. After the presentation, participants ventured down to the orchard at the Carlito Springs Open Space that provides valuable food for wildlife. The group discussed ways to rehabilitate old orchards and care for fruit trees. Volunteers, many who attended the event, will be helping to do just that in 2014: tend to the heritage orchard and gardens at Carlito Springs, an oasis in the East Mountains.

Wildlife Catchments

Bernalillo County Open Space working with the U.S Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program received funding through a cooperative agreement to install two water catchments for wildlife at Sabino Canyon Open Space. The benefits of such catchments in times of drought can be lifesaving for animals in search of water roaming the East Mountains. The first catchment will be installed by Open Space Land Management staff with guidance from USFWS experts. For the second catchment, Bernalillo County and the Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District will offer a public training on how to construct the catchments. Participants who attend the training will get hands-on experience, as well as qualify to apply for funding to install a wildlife catchment on their own property. Stay tuned for more details coming in 2014.



BernCo Bernie and GeoCaching in the East Mountains

Bernalillo County's seal includes sheep that represent the eight land grants that once encompassed the county. Sheep are an idyllic symbol going back to when the Spaniards first introduced Churro sheep to New Mexico that became staple source of income, food and clothing for both native peoples and newcomers. Churro sheep continue to play an important role in many native communities, especially for woven blankets. This proud animal, the symbol of Bernalillo County, has taken on a new modern twist with BernCo Bernie.



Bernie, our loveable mascot, was creatively introduced to the public through a scavenger hunt—a challenge to find the eight sheep spread throughout the county, most of them on Open Space properties. Through this fun activity, many people reported on their surprise to find such

wonderful Open Space properties in their own backyards. To further entice people to venture outdoors, the county, with help from Master Naturalist volunteer Emily Campbell, held a geocaching event at the Vista Grande Community Center. The event included basics with geocaching 101 workshops, and more advanced 201 classes where people learned how to set up their own cache. Boy Scouts also conducted a cache-in-cache-out activity at the properties they visited: finding the county's caches and

cleaning up any trash at the sites. The public will be seeing a lot more of Bernie in 2014, and another geocaching event is on the horizon. To learn more about BernCo Bernie, visit www.berncobernie.com.

AIA Albuquerque 2013 Design Award

Architect Sam Sterling won the AIA Albuquerque 2013 Design Award for the Bachechi Environmental Education (EE) Building. Bernalillo County contracted with Sam Sterling Architecture in 2010 to design a community building that supports environmental education. Innovation and sustainability were the chief considerations for the award, and both are featured in the EE Building's 2,000 gallon water catchments system, solar voltaic panels and other green design elements. Today, the building is used by numerous groups for meetings, trainings and retreats. The county also hosts school field trips and started a number of other programs geared for youth. Additionally, the EE Building is home to the Master Naturalist Program and Naturalist Series.



Naturalist Series

When participants were asked how they rate Open Space programs they have attended, 98% said they were satisfied to very satisfied and others commented by stating, "Excellent programs, this and other years—thanks and please keep going," and, "Excellent use of public time, space, resources." This includes our Naturalist Series where we held 15 free workshops in 2013 at Bachechi Open Space. While many of the topics are geared for the adult learner such as the Natural and Human History of the Middle Rio Grande that was led by Dr. Matt Schmader, we also covered a number of topics this year for families including Hippy Hoppity Herps and Creepy Crawlies led by Michael Sanchez with the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science. Additionally, we featured an art in nature theme that focused on the four elements of nature: wind, fire, earth and water. Participants celebrated earth by making labyrinths throughout the property, and they learned about the beauty of fire through a demonstration by Dr. Kurt Anschuetz, who created micaceous pottery in an open fire. One participant summarized the feeling of many of these events by stating, "Bernco open spaces are great backdrop—mood settlers for meditative—soul nurturing events." In 2014, Bernalillo County Open Space will continue to offer this series as well as work with Cottonwood Gulch to provide more family programs.



Families Exploring the Wonders of Nature

New Mexico has the great honor of hosting an international exhibit in 2014 focused on youth and their place in the community called the Wonder of Learning that will be presented at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science. Bernalillo County Open Space has been working with the exhibit organizer in New Mexico, the Wonder of Learning Collaborative (WOLC), to develop opportunities for children and families to further explore nature. For example, working with WOLC, Master Naturalist volunteers and Cottonwood Gulch staff, the county held a workshop for families where parents discovered tools for further engaging their children in the outdoors and the art of asking questions. The workshop was open to the public, and attracted a diverse audience with children from ages 2-14 including many Spanish speakers and children with special needs. While the parents were being inspired indoors with WOLC representatives, their children were outdoors engaged in creating art from nature such as tree people, boats to float down the acequias, and fairy houses. Everyone came together at the end of the workshop to explore the outdoors using Nature Packs. Many families ventured to the Rio Grande Bosque searching for animal tracks, identifying plants and birds, and discovering small insects along the way. These families and additional schools were invited back to Bachechi Open Space later in

November to participate in the Families Exploring the Wonder of Nature Art Show. The show focused on the four elements of nature: wind, fire, earth, and water. The only stipulation was to incorporate natural materials based on one or all of the elements. A number of schools brought extravagant and



thought-provocative art work. During the art show, participants were asked to help install an art piece outside the EE building where Bernalillo County Open Space and Master Naturalists are currently designing a sensory garden for families. Inside a circle of rock pillars lays a nest that artist and Planning Manager John Barney, constructed. After the participants painted colored rocks that represented eggs, they placed their contributions in the nest. Bernalillo County hopes to further cultivate families exploring nature at Bachechi Open Space in 2014, and will be offering family programming that is tied to the Wonder of Learning exhibit.



Master Naturalist volunteers lead a one day Junior Naturalist Camp for Community Center youth.



The Bernalillo County Master Naturalist Program has blossomed into a meaningful program that transforms many lives and is the keystone for managing the natural resources on Open Space lands, as well as developing outdoor recreation and educational opportunities for the public. The program received a number of accolades in 2013 due to its growing success. At the beginning of the year, Bernalillo County Open Space received the Environmental Stewardship Award from the New Mexico Recreation and Parks Association. This award was handed out at the statewide conference that was jointly



organized and hosted by the City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County Parks and Recreation Departments. Later in the fall, Bernalillo County Open Space received the national Program of the Year award from the Alliance for Natural Resource Outreach and Service Programs. These two awards speak to the importance of this high quality program, and the county thanks

all the volunteers and Master Naturalist Advisory Committee for their commitment. For those interested in applying to the 2014 training, Bernalillo County will be accepting applications in March that can be downloaded from www.bernco.gov/openspace, on the bottom of the Master Naturalist page.

Here's how volunteers responded when asked what key concepts they received from the Master Naturalist training:

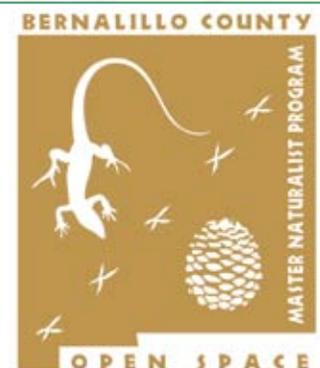
"Probably the most key for me would be that there is so much to learn about our natural world we cannot be 'masters' of any of it! I also appreciate that as Master Naturalists, it is important for us to be observant and ask questions about why certain things are the way they are. Being aware of improving those observation skills has been quite important for me as well. Along those same lines, allowing ourselves to be enthusiastic about what we are observing is also key."

"...citizen science is important and worthwhile. The mammal specimens at UNM lab were awesome. Something that I have noticed is that most experts are mostly experts in their area only...I think Master Naturalists will be good at bringing all concepts together so that society can make better decisions about natural resources."

"Ecological interconnectedness. Importance of land ethic. Importance of ecological history and seeing the world through the lens as well as other historical perspectives. Trying to develop more keen observations through drawing, journaling and general observations."

Master Naturalist Program Mission Statement

The Bernalillo County Open Space Master Naturalist Program aims to instill the pursuit of life-long learning and promote environmental stewardship. Participants are actively engaged through education and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources on Open Space properties.



Gutierrez-Hubbell House History and Culture Center

Bernalillo County Open Space hired Sightworks in 2011 to develop an Exhibit Master Plan for the Gutierrez-Hubbell House History and Cultural Center. The intention of the plan was to align the physical features of the house and land, develop interpretive information, create educational program for schools, and identify revenue-generation potential of the property to help with long-term management. The planning wrapped up in 2012, and the county and Sightworks began implementing the plan, including the construction of a new plaza.



The plaza suggests how the property functioned in the mid-1800s where goods were driven into an enclosed compound for trade. A low seating area extending north of the main building is an imprint of an entire wing of the building that eroded over time. The new ramada provides a functional space for events and a physical reference where horse stalls may have once stood. The story of this historic site is better felt with these new additions and is accompanied by a kiosk that displays the property layout and general history for visitors to read. The exhibit master plan will wrap up in 2014 and include new exhibits inside the house and interpretive signs both inside and outdoors.

Durand and Soaring the South Valley

In 2012, Bernalillo County completed a site plan for the northern section of the Durand Open Space and implemented that plan in 2013. Major features included improvements to the parking area with both horse trailer and designated vehicle parking spaces. In the northwest section for the property, a community gathering space was developed with additional tables, benches, shade structure and wooden sculptures. A small bioswale, for runoff and native vegetation were also included. Prescription trails were continued around the south field so that the entire of perimeter of Durand Open Space supports walkers, bicyclists and equestrians.

This newly constructed area was appreciated by all who attended Soaring the South Valley: Celebrating Birds and Planes, which is a fitting theme for Durand Open Space. Durand has a long and fascinating history with planes from when it was known as the pea patch and home to Westair Inc., a small airplane maintenance, repair and restoration business. The business eventually moved to the Albuquerque Airport due to power lines installed just north of the property. However, residents remember the small planes that flew in and out of the pea patch, and some even worked for the Durand family to restore old planes.



Today, the property serves as important habitat for other airborne creatures, birds. A variety of birds enjoy the open agriculture fields and edges along the field as well as the bosque that can be accessed from Durand Open Space. Soaring the South Valley captured both bird and plane lovers and merged them seamlessly together for a wonderful event. Sixteen partnering groups volunteered to offer model plane demonstrations, bird banding, guided bird walks, live birds of prey, kids' activities and more. The event culminated with the Cavalcade of Wings flying jets over the property in formation.

As part of this event, the county worked with the New Mexico Ornithological Society and Central New Mexico Audubon Society to develop a South Valley Bird Guide that was given out for free to participants as well as distributed at local schools. One side of the guide opens up to a poster depicting the Rio Grande and common birds in the South Valley while the other side gives general descriptions of these birds along with birding tips. The South Valley Bird Guide comes in English and Spanish and will be available at the next Soaring the South Valley event in 2014.



Ojito de San Antonio Open Space

In 2013 and early 2014, Bernalillo County Open Space, in partnership with Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District and the New Mexico State Forestry Division, completed a fuel reduction and forest thinning project at Ojito de San Antonio Open Space. The purpose of this fuel reduction was to improve wildlife habitat and understory vegetation and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire to the property and its surrounding neighbors.

Sedillo Ridge Open Space

In 2013, Bernalillo County, the Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District and the New Mexico State Forestry Division began planning a forest thinning project for the 495-acre Sedillo Ridge Open Space. The purpose of this project is not only to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire to the densely overgrown piñon-juniper forest at this property, but also to improve forest and watershed health and wildlife habitat. In 2014, contractors will begin treating the first 96-acres. Thinning of all acreage is likely to be completed in two to three years. No prescribed burning will occur with this project and private wood cutting permits will not be issued to private individuals. On the heels of the forest thinning project, Bernalillo County will construct a trailhead and trail system that provides public access to Sedillo Ridge.



Carlito Springs Open Space

Bernalillo County Open Space recently completed design on spring box and natural surface trail projects at the Carlito Springs Open Space. In the spring of 2014, the springhead of Carlito Springs will be protected from contamination by an aesthetically designed and landscaped catchment structure so that future improvements can restore potable water to the historic house and cabins. A new trailhead and trail will also be constructed this coming spring that allows hiker access to this currently-closed Open Space.

UNM North Golf Course, An Urban Open Space



Bernalillo County continues work with the University of New Mexico on the newest addition to the county's Open Space program – the North Golf Course. In 2012, the county secured a long-term conservation easement on the course in exchange for contributing \$1.5 million toward improvement of the irrigation and community trail systems around the course. The Golf Course has functioned as de facto urban open space for wildlife, adjacent neighborhoods and the university community for decades since construction was completed on what was the last WPA project in New Mexico. The current improvements will curb water usage on the course significantly and formalize the informal trail system for the community with a soft surface trail, benches, interpretive signage and landscaping. The county is working with the State and the University to secure additional funding for subsequent phases which will restore drainage swales and barren areas between the fairways into native mesa grassland that once dominated this landscape, and the install the infrastructure necessary to re-use water from University chiller facility for irrigation of the Golf Course. Additional plans include developing the Lobo gardens, a sustainable urban farm for the university community located at the southwest corner of the Golf Course.

Valle de Oro



Last year, Bernalillo County helped secure an additional \$1.1 million for the Valle de Oro National Urban Wildlife Refuge through the State of New Mexico's capital outlay funding. This makes a total of \$6.1 million that the county has contributed toward making the largest intact piece of working agricultural land formerly known as Price's Dairy into permanently protected land under the management of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Currently, the county is collaborating in the initial framework plan for the refuge with AMAFCA and the USFWS, and will work with the service, UNM School of Architecture and Planning, Ducks Unlimited, the National Parks Service, the Friends of Valle de Oro and other stakeholders to develop master plans for the visitor center and the wetlands that will be the basis for the Wildlife Management Units on the refuge. Starting next month, the county is also undertaking the 2nd Street Corridor Plan to develop plans for trail connections, street

improvements and land use policies such as an agricultural lands conservation overlay to support the development of the refuge and its mission. News of developments in these various planning processes are available on the refuge's Facebook Page and at monthly open houses at the refuge on the third Saturday of every month.

Bernalillo County Open Space in 2014 will continue to expand the program with bigger emphasis on family activities, free public events, citizen science projects and resource-based recreation opportunities. Visit the Open Space website at www.bernco.gov/openspace to see a complete listing of events as well as information about each of the Open Space properties.

Bernalillo County Open Space welcomes to the Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Manager John Barney, Resource Specialist Lisa Powell and Senior Project Manager Denis Durand. Mr. Barney and Ms. Powell are instrumental in continuing to grow the Open Space program and further develop and manage the Open Space properties.



Bernalillo County's Open Space Coordinator, Colleen Langan-McRoberts, is the 2013 recipient of the Robert Becker award for Excellence in Environmental Education from the Environmental Education Association of New Mexico. This prestigious award speaks to the dedicated work that Ms. McRoberts has been able to accomplish with the help of many volunteers and partners.

Land Management Hard at Work

Land Management staff are on the front lines of Open Space, making sure the properties are well maintained and have healthy ecosystems. Bernalillo County thanks these hardworking staff for their commitment to customer service and keeping Open Space beautiful.



Land Management staff Ed Martinez, Steve Baca and Juan Payan help students plant trees at Sanchez Farm during the Cesar Chavez Day of Service.

Volunteer Appreciation

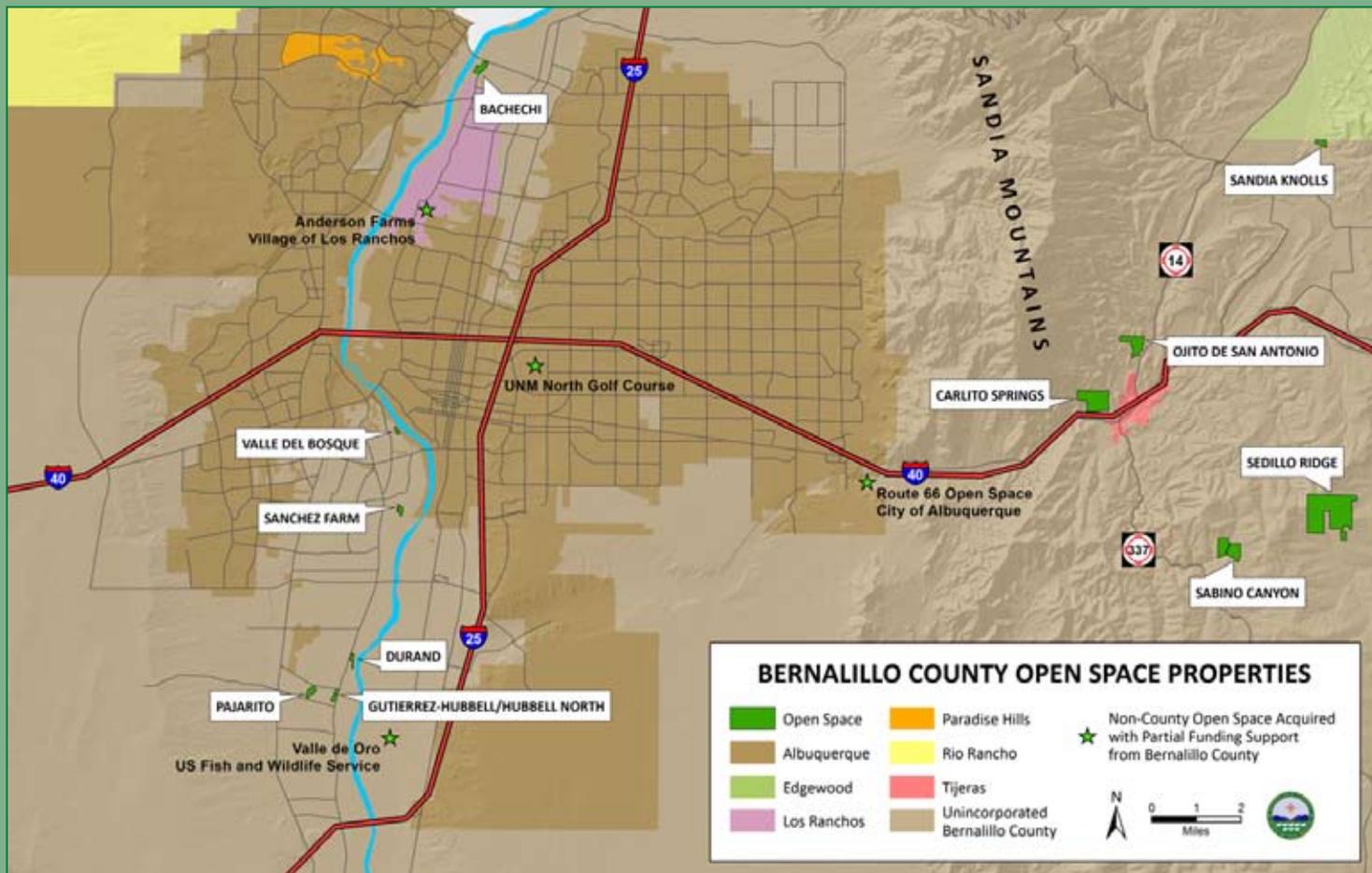
Bernalillo County Open Space is fortunate to work with many amazing partners and volunteers and would not be able to accomplish as much without their dedication. Bernalillo County recognizes Master Naturalists Leah Henzler and Emily Campbell for going above and beyond what is required for their service projects.

Mrs. Henzler helped to organize the "Soaring the South Valley Bird and Plane Festival." Mrs. Henzler is a long-term birder and solicited a number of partners from the birding community to participate in the event and help develop the South Valley Bird Guide.



Emily Campbell was instrumental in organizing the Bernalillo County's geocaching event. She identified and assessed existing geocaches, drafted guidelines for managing geocaches and placed geocaches on Open Space properties.

Open Space Properties Map



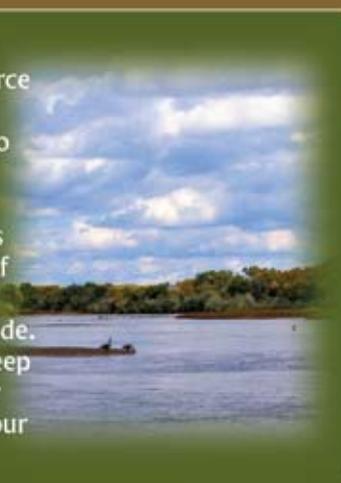
A Word from Land Management

If there are any concerns that may be a maintenance issue at any Open Space property, please contact us at 505-224-2119. Each call will be evaluated and put into our workorder system. If you experience a public safety concern, call the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office at 505-798-7000. For emergencies, call 911.



Dog waste is the second largest source of fecal coliform pollution in the Rio Grande.

Today, many of us get a percentage of our drinking water from the Rio Grande. Do your part to keep our water clean by picking up after your dogs.



Please Pick Up After Your Dog!



BERNALILLO COUNTY COMMISSION

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www.bernco.gov/openspace