
CHAMA PEAK LAND ALLIANCE



2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

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MISSION

The Chama Peak Land Alliance (CPLA) is a diverse group of conservation-minded landowners committed to practicing and promoting responsible land, water and wildlife stewardship in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico for the benefit of our diverse cultural heritage and for generations to come.

VISION

We envision the watersheds of the San Juan and Rio Chama as an interconnected system that thrives on cooperative management between private landowners, states, tribes and federal agencies. It is a “wild and working” watershed where agricultural operations are in harmony with wildlife, clean water, and resilient forests. And it is a watershed where the local rural economy is strong and provides a positive feedback loop into the community and land that supports it.

WAYS TO SUPPORT

Visit www.chamapeak.org to sign up for our monthly newsletter and discover other ways to be involved with our mission.

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Greetings!

Thank you for checking out our Chama Peak Land Alliance 2022 Year in Review. We wanted to highlight some of the projects that we have been working on in our various program areas. We had a couple of close calls in 2022 with wildfire ignitions that were able to be contained before growing very large. Both the Midnight Fire in New Mexico and the Plumtaw Fire near Pagosa Springs both looked like they were going to be big problematic fires. Fortunately, past forest treatments allowed for containment opportunities in both of these wildfires. Unfortunately, other watersheds in New Mexico did not fare so well.

Hearing about the watershed and community impacts of the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak Fire has been difficult as local communities struggle to deal with post-fire impacts to water resources. In light of the 2022 wildfire season, we are strengthening our commitment to trying to protect our own watersheds which are so crucial to local and downstream water users. We have been busy partnering with other like-minded organizations who are working on cross-boundary watershed protection efforts. In 2022 we applied for several large grants with the understanding that forestry projects need to increase more than an order of magnitude to make our watersheds more resilient and better prepared for eventual wildfire. While CPLA and other partners continue to implement small-scale treatments, we need to see much more investments going into watershed protection. In late summer of 2022 we released a Call to Action: Invest in crucial watersheds before a severe wildfire document that continues to help raise awareness of these issues. We have also been working in the San Juan-Chama Watershed Partnership to produce a Focal Area Atlas that helps folks assess wildfire/post-flooding risks and treatment opportunities in our region.

While the risk of severe wildfire is ever-present, we have been working on many other important issues, including the Firewood for Seniors program, a series of drought adaptation workshops, working in a coalition to save the EPLUS program from being dismantled, starting a weekly radio show, and more.

But what really makes CPLA tick is what our partnering landowners are doing on the ground. Private landowners are doing amazing things for the benefit of land, water, and wildlife. These efforts are incredibly important but rarely are they recognized or acknowledged. Big thanks to folks working hard day after day, keeping our landscapes intact and contributing so much to our local economies and communities!

I look forward to seeing you in 2023!

Sincerely,

Caleb Stotts

Executive Director

Chama Peak Land Alliance



FOREST + WATERSHED HEALTH

Watershed-based partnerships (with support from 2-3-2 Cohesive Strategy grant)

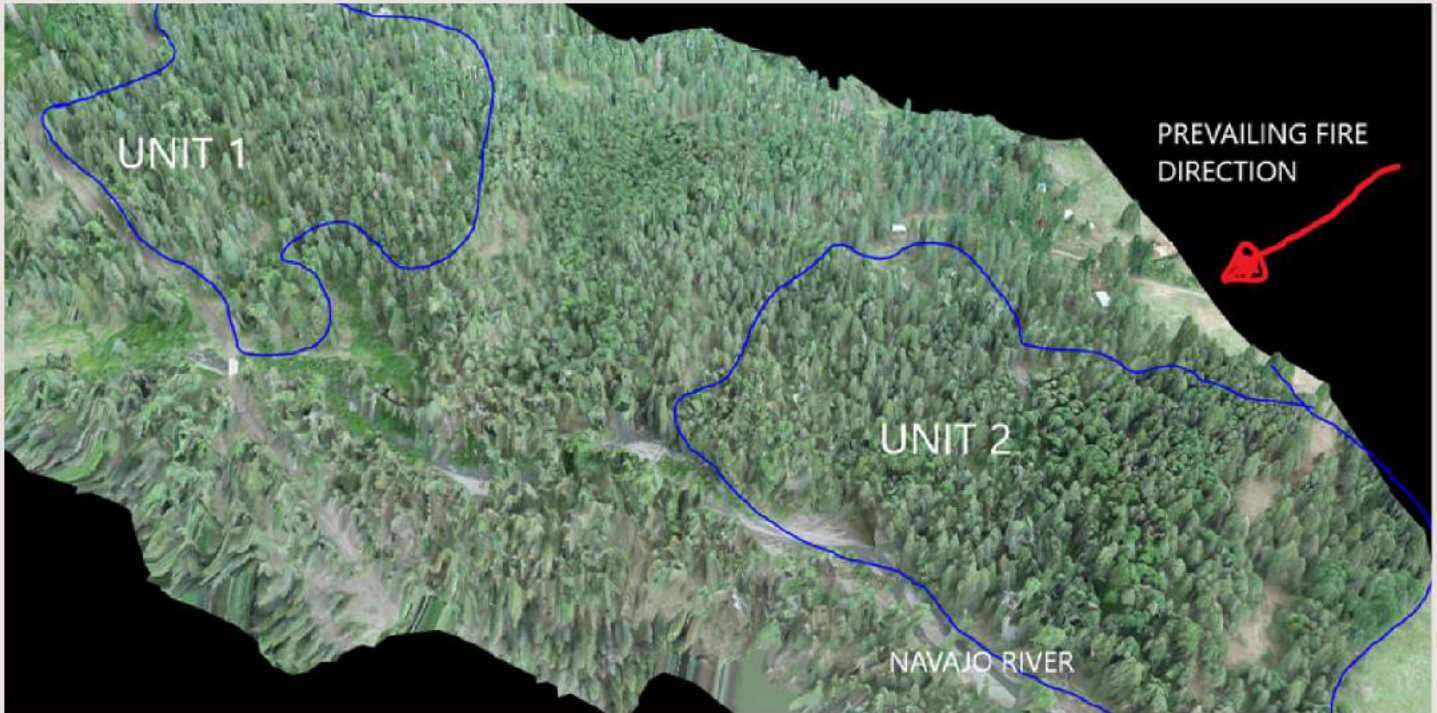
Water is the lifeblood of the Southwest, but watersheds in this region are at risk of catastrophic wildfire. Watersheds in the CPLA region supply approximately 75% of Albuquerque’s drinking water and 50% of Santa Fe’s drinking water. These watersheds also deliver priceless water to 10 tribes and pueblos, rural communities, and many acequia systems and agricultural producers. A huge priority of CPLA is to protect the quantity and quality of water flowing from these watersheds, and we serve as the fiscal sponsor for the San Juan Chama Watershed Partnership. We also participate in the San Juan Headwaters Partnership and the 2-3-2 Cohesive Strategy Partnership. These partnerships all attract a diverse group of stakeholders and land managers, and are valuable for getting folks together to develop strategies towards common goals of watershed protection, habitat conservation, rural economic growth, and restoring forest health in an era of climate change. A US Forest Service initiative known as the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, recently ranked the Rio Chama project area second highest in the nation due to the importance of these watersheds, risk of severe wildfire, and diversity of stakeholders striving for the same goals.



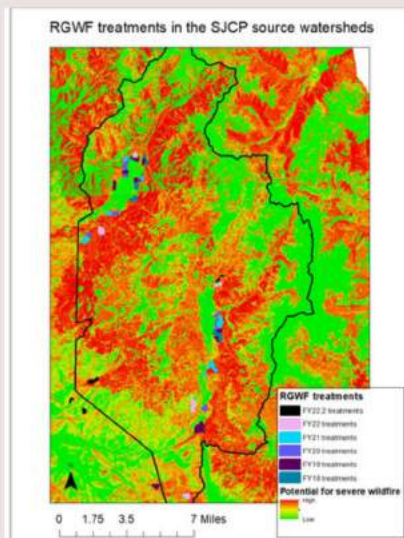
2-3-2 Watershed Partnership group photo on a Banded Peak Ranch tour in August 2022

Rio Grande Water Fund (with support from The Nature Conservancy)

We are continuing a \$1 million investment from downstream water users to protect watersheds from catastrophic wildfire. In 2022 the Rio Grande Water Fund and private landowner cost-share funded 172 acres of treatments in the San Juan-Chama Project Source Watersheds in collaboration with TNC and the Rio Grande Water Fund. Our work was recently highlighted in a “virtual field trip” for the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute. The video provides excellent background information, perspectives from various partners, and a drone-based aerial tour of treatments that we put together. You can view the video by searching for San Juan Chama Watershed Partnership on Youtube.



Forest conditions before 2022 treatments in the Navajo River Headwaters. Drone-based technology helps us understand what our forest treatments look like before and after treatments.



RGWF has funded over a 1000 acres of treatments in the last 5 years.

Caleb Stotts and forestry operator Cody Shahan walk through a RGWF funded mastication treatment in a pine-oak forest of the San Juan Chama Project headwaters.



Before and after a 90 acre mastication treatment next to the Little Navajo River above a SJCP diversion. This treatment was cost-shared by Rio Grande Water Fund and a conservation-minded landowner.



CPLA and Mountain Studies Institute (MSI) staff watch Nick Dolecek (Dolecek Enterprises, Inc.) land a small drone that we have been using to assess the impacts of our forest treatments.

Focal Area Atlas

(with support from BoR Watersmart grant and Network for Landscape Conservation)

Our goals for the SJCWP Focal Area Atlas are as follows:

1. Use both local and scientific knowledge to help identify watershed protection issues and needs in the SJCWP landscape.
2. Describe watershed areas, land jurisdictions, relevant planning and implementation efforts, and important values at risk within mid-scale watershed areas.
3. Use spatial products from the New Mexico Forest Action Plan to show threat of severe wildfire and threat of postfire erosion for mid-scale watershed areas in the SJCWP region.
4. Show potential treatment locations for dry and mesic forest types that are accessible to forestry machinery.
5. In 2022 NMFD submitted these Focal Area boundaries to the NM Shared Stewardship Portal. The Atlas is designed to help provide context for these areas and to aid in land management planning.
6. Make this information available so that partners can more easily list relevant planning and implementation efforts for an area while applying for new grant funding

Call To Action: Invest in critical watersheds BEFORE severe wildfire, rather than after

In 2022 we saw a devastating wildfire season with the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon Fire. This wildfire heightened our sense of urgency to better protect our watersheds in the San Juan-Chama region. Using new spatial data to analyze threats of wildfire, we came out with a call to action to treat thousands of acres in our region. The price tag would not be cheap but as we have seen time and time again, big investments in wildfire mitigation are much cheaper than fire suppression and post-fire recovery costs. In our region, much like in the watersheds in the Las Vegas and Mora region, it's more than just protecting watershed health and water supply functions – it's about protecting communities and ways of life. SFS lands in the Rio Chama region.



The Midnight Fire near El Rito was burning at the same time as the Hermits Peak Fire. Fortunately, previous fuel treatments (Rx fire and managed wildfire) created opportunities for firefighters to contain the Midnight Fire at less than 5,000 acres.

WILDLIFE + FISHERIES



Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout Phase 2: Project Implementation Guide on private lands (with support from New Mexico Habitat Conservation Initiative)

Building off of the Return of the Native: Rio Grande cutthroat and private lands stewardship report, this effort will focus on creating 'shovel-ready' projects in specific areas where RGCT conservation strategies may be most impactful. Our goal is to work with landowners, agency, and NGO partners to develop Project Implementation Guides designed to set the stage to apply for implementation funding to better protect high quality existing populations of Rio Grande Cutthroat.

Migratory Wildlife Corridors

The CPLA region is home to very important wildlife migration corridors due to limited development and intact landscapes. CPLA promotes conservation easements as a tool to help keep landscapes intact.

We also promote wildlife conflict resolution strategies. Many small landowners have been experiencing significant depredation from elk and we seek to promote solutions that conserve habitat and wildlife populations while at the same time keeping farmers and ranchers on the landscape during a time when so many pressures make it is increasingly difficult to make a living in agriculture.



EDUCATION + ECONOMY

CPLA Scholarship Program (with support from 2-6-2 Ranch)

The Alliance offers scholarships to graduating high school seniors at Escalante and Pagosa Springs High Schools to support advanced studies at any university or technical college. Read about the 2022 scholarship recipients on our website at <https://chamapeak.org/education-and-economy>

Rio Chama Congreso


As the fiscal sponsor of the San Juan-Chama Watershed Partnership, we are delighted to announce that the seventh annual Rio Chama Congreso was a success. Our theme in 2022 was Snow in a Changing Landscape, highlights from the Congreso can be viewed on sanjuanchama.org. We are looking forward to our 2023 Rio Chama Congreso theme – Water After Wildfire. We will hear stories about the impacts to water resources after the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon Fire and hear lessons learned from Santa Clara Pueblo after a decade of post-fire recovery. We will learn about wildfire risk models for the San Juan-Chama region, and learn about collaborative efforts to prevent catastrophic wildfire and post-fire impacts in our region. Join us on Feb 24 and 25 at Ghost Ranch in Abiquiu, and sign up on our mailing list at chamapeak.org to stay in the loop on this event.



Follow CPLA on Facebook/social media

CPLA has maintained an active social media presence through Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Keeping followers up to date on anything from educational opportunities to conservation news, the combined social media presence has daily activity and annual posts/impressions and reach of several thousand.

 @chamapeaklandalliance

 www.facebook.com/chamapeak



VISTA (Volunteer In Service To America) Position

The continued work with the AmeriCorps VISTA program provided CPLA, US Bureau of Reclamation, and SJCWP with a lot of great media and design support. In 2022-23, we worked with Brittany Ference of Song Dog Media who has been immersed in the Chama Valley since 2018. We are lucky enough to have her continue her support through 2023. Brittany, thank you for serving the conservation front with us!

Highlights from Brittany's time with SJCWP and CPLA so far:

Photography + Videography

- Stewardship Stories- an ongoing series highlighting the stewardship in our region
- 2nd Camera on the film EPLUS works for Rural New Mexico
- documenting other public meetings and work projects

Design, Marketing + Outreach

- supporting CPLA and SJCWP with any and all marketing needs
- Focal Area Atlas Design
- CPLA Accomplishment Report Design
- monthly newspaper articles in the Chama Valley Times highlighting the different conservation organizations in the Chama Valley

Rio Chama Congreso Planning Committee Lead

- responsible for leading the weekly meetings to support organizing the event

Forestry Support

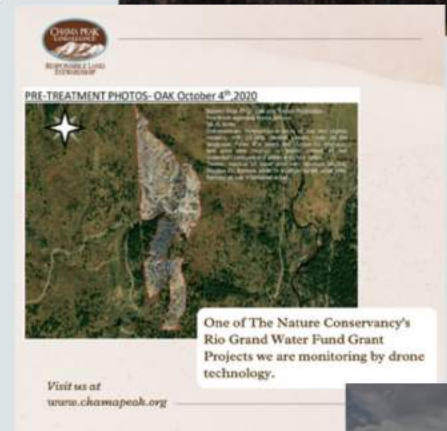
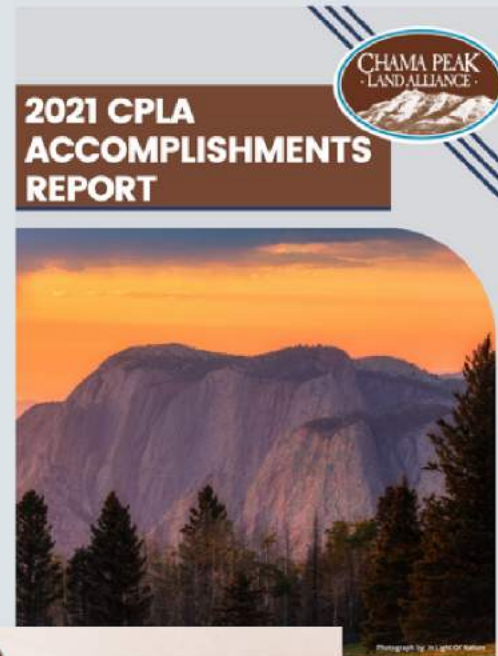
- boots on the ground
- checking in on forestry projects + fire mitigation

Board Meeting Support

Local Representative of CPLA+ SJCWP

Fundraiser organizer

Upkeeping SJCWP's social media + website





“The Fish and the Flame” video (with support from New Mexico Habitat Conservation Initiative grant)
 In 2022 our film The Fish and the Flame was ranked as the top film of all films submitted to the American Fisheries Society 2022 Aquatic Film and Photo Festival! Often the good stewardship work of land managers in the region and the importance of private lands conservation goes unnoticed in the public eye.. We wanted to produce a film that highlighted private lands conservation, and this story through the lens of the critically imperiled San Juan cutthroat trout. There are just a few streams left in the world supporting this trout subspecies, and most of those are on undisturbed private lands. Partnerships between private land managers and state wildlife officials are working hard

to protect these populations and these partnerships provided a framework for state wildlife officials rescuing and relocating fish onto private land that were threatened by an active wildfire situation. The Fish and the Flame has done amazingly well in environmental film festivals, earning at least 8 awards so far!

Community Service and Outreach

Participation and local outreach at meetings and events has helped continue to keep CPLA working in service of our great communities.

Attendance at events such as Chama Days, Chama Farmers Market, Rio Arriba County Fair, Rotary Club meetings, meetings with partners, and events for local concerns offer CPLA an opportunity to keep involved in local activities and provide partnering opportunities.



Executive Director, Caleb bucking up logs for the Firewood for Seniors project.

Program Manager, Sage Faulkner, outreach and cold watermelon during Chama Days!

Program Manager, Sage Faulkner, cooking fajitas during the Chama Farmers Market Festival in conjunction with the annual Chama Art Festival.

Radio Show

Through the PRIME funding, CPLA began hosting a local radio show with KXJR 96.1 FM radio in Chama, NM on Wednesdays at 11 am. The show consists of a market report and event announcements along with guests from throughout the area on agricultural and landowner topics. Thirty-four radio shows were offered in 2022, with some recorded and available to listen at any time through the radio station iCloud hosting site. Only shows with guests are recorded and stored.



The Farm & Ranch Show with Sage Faulkner on 96.1 FM, interviews local rodeo youth, Jacob Martinez and Bayler Faulkner, Escalante Rodeo Club and Logan Tafoya and parents, Richard and Deana Tafoya, are interviewed about 4H activities for area youth.

Firewood for Seniors

Special thanks to the following for partnering with us in 2022 to help provide byproducts of watershed restoration to folks in need of firewood:

Upper Chama SWCD

La Merced De Los Pueblos De Tierra Amarilla/ Agapito Candelaria and Jose B. Archuleta
Rancho del Oso Pardo

262 Ranch

Shane Whitmore

Chris Tafoya

Padilla Logging Restoration, LLC

Luis & Becky Martinez

Rangers 4H club

LDS Missionaries

Aaron Varn, Aaron's Handyman Service

Suzie & Gary Buxton

181 half-cord loads (85 cord approximately) for 150 seniors (some seniors were given more than one load based on severe health issues) Ten individuals had wood delivered as they were home-bound. The program was housed in the Upper Chama Soil & Water Conservation facility in Tierra Amarilla. Six days throughout summer and fall were coordinated with volunteers to load wood. Elderly came from Lumberton clear to Abiquiu, with most from Chama and Tierra Amarilla.





CLIMATE + WATER


Drought Workshops

Partnership with a Foundation for a Better Tomorrow led to two workshops. Held in October and November, with a third program in spring of 2023. Participants reviewed available programs for conservation and efficiency from NRCS, along with an informative presentation on the role of healthy soils in mitigating climate and drought issues. Dr. Johnson provided resources for his Bio-Reactor, a fungal healthy way to make compost and improve soil health for better moisture retention. Dr. Connie Maxwell, NMSU Water Resource Research Institute, presented on current work in the area on watershed restoration needs and opportunities and Andrew Erdmann, with the NM Interstate Stream Commission updated the attendees on the fifty -year outlook for water and the plan accompanying the outlook report. NM Acequia Association staff Chavela Trujillo and Serafina Lombardi presented recent work and resources available for irrigation and acequias.

Join us November 10 at the CPLA
Drought Workshop in Cebolla
Connie Maxwell, NMWRRI


Connie Maxwell is an ecological planner that works with communities on local and regional levels. Early in her last six years with the NM WRRI, she spearheaded the Water and Community Collaboration Lab (WCC-Lab), which fosters links between the best science, communities, stakeholders and students to inform decision-making and education on water and the environment and support transformations towards resilience. Most recently, she has been working with regions around New Mexico on long-term planning frameworks, including with the New Mexico Acequia Association and their key partners on a Building Agricultural and Water Resilience Initiative. Maxwell holds a doctorate from NMSU in the Water Science and Management, a Master's degree from UNM in Community and Regional Planning with a concentration in Natural Resources, and a bachelor's of arts in English and Architecture from Columbia University. Maxwell co-founded the non-profit, the Alamosa Land Institute (ALI), in 2010 to engage in ecological planning and restoration with farmers and ranchers, and has been collaboratively introducing and testing innovative land management practices.

New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute: The overall mission of the NM WRRI is to develop and disseminate knowledge that will assist the state and nation in solving water problems.



RESPONSIBLE LAND STEWARDSHIP

RSVP: Sage@chamapeak.org
or 505-490-2822



Dr. Maxwell speaks to workshop participants about local riparian projects in Cebolla and northern NM.

Both workshops were concluded with a question and answer session moderated by Manny Trujillo (workshop one) and Donald Martinez, Jr (workshop two). As a result of these workshops, Sage has been invited to participate in the regional water and ag resiliency coalition, to continue looking at building capacity, research and collaboration on this issue. Also, as a result of this workshop, we became aware that there is no plan from ISSC to host regional water plan development, and Dr. Maxwell, NMSU WRRRI, and Sage are looking at ways to develop local input and development.

David Griego, NRCS, conservation program resources

Dr. David Johnson & Hui-Chun Johnson, NMSU, Soils and Microbiology, Regenerative Agriculture

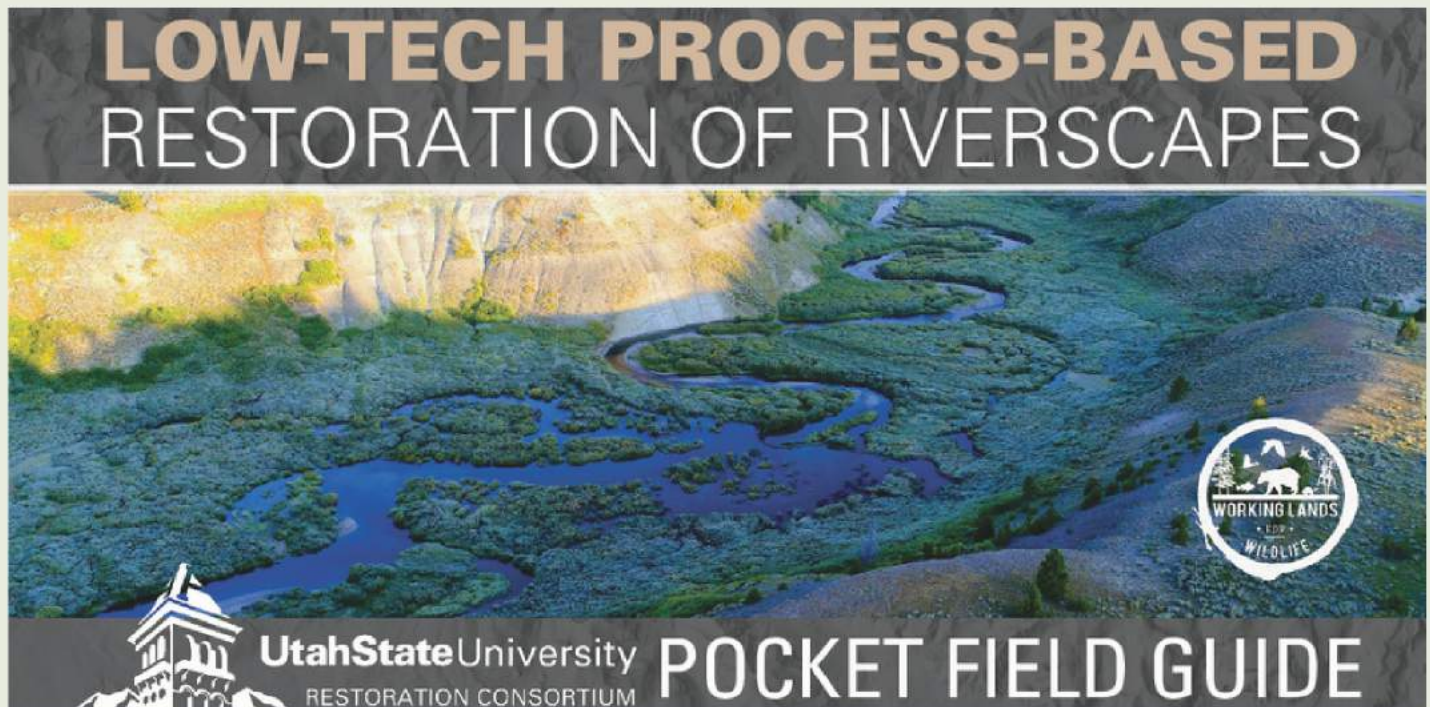
Connie Maxwell, NMSU Water Resource Research Institute

Chavela Trujillo and Serafina Lombardi, NM Acequia Association

Panel: Moderator, Donald Martinez, Jr, NMSU Cooperative Extension Services and Manny Trujillo, local historian and farmer

Stream and Riparian Restoration

The CPLA region is home to incredibly important riparian ecosystems that provide crucial habitat for diverse species and supply water for downstream users. We are working with numerous partners to promote riparian restoration in the region, with our primary goals being: protect quantity and quality of water, slow down the movement of water where appropriate, raise the water table of riparian and wetland systems, and create stream habitat complexity. We are working with partners to promote the use of low-tech, process-based restoration techniques.



Utah State University recently published a handy pocket field guide to help practitioners plan for stream and riparian restoration projects.

PUBLIC POLICY FOR CONSERVATION

Ensuring a Voice for Private Lands Conservation

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Save EPLUS Coalition

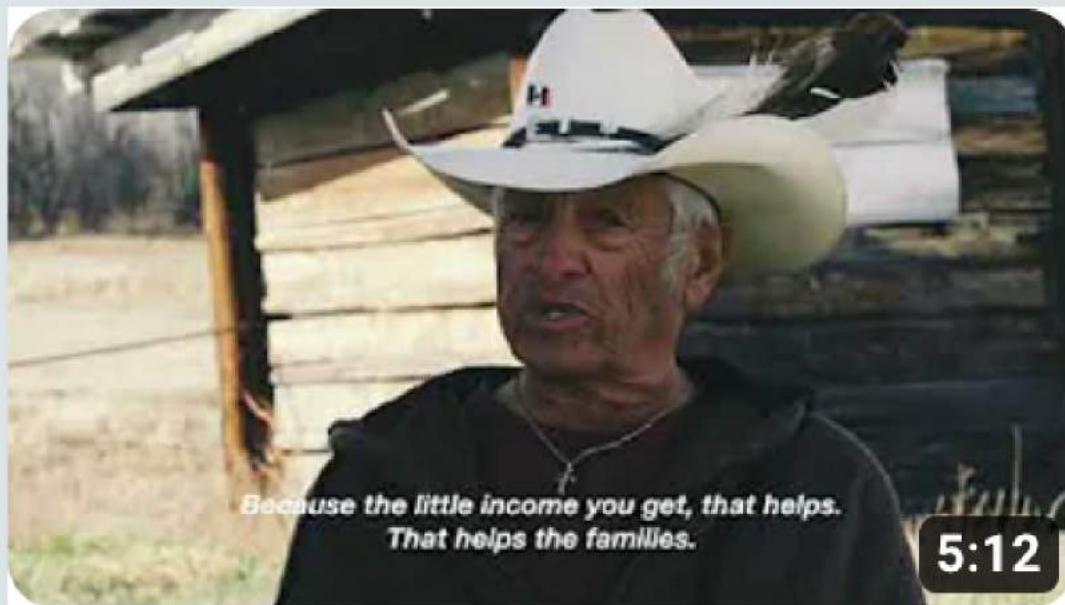
In New Mexico, there is a continued effort by certain sportsmen's groups to eliminate the EPLUS program.

In New Mexico, about 50% of the total elk habitat is on private lands. New Mexico's EPLUS (Elk Private Land Use System) is a state program that was designed to help reimburse landowners for elk damages to private property and to promote habitat improvements and conservation on private lands. In addition to these benefits to rural New Mexico communities, EPLUS provides incredibly important economic stimulus to low income communities and culturally important hunting opportunities for rural New Mexico residents. The economy around Chama benefits greatly from this program and stands a lot to lose. We are working with a coalition of partners to defend the EPLUS program as we work to promote policies that incentivize conservation efforts on private lands and helps fill so many freezers for local families.

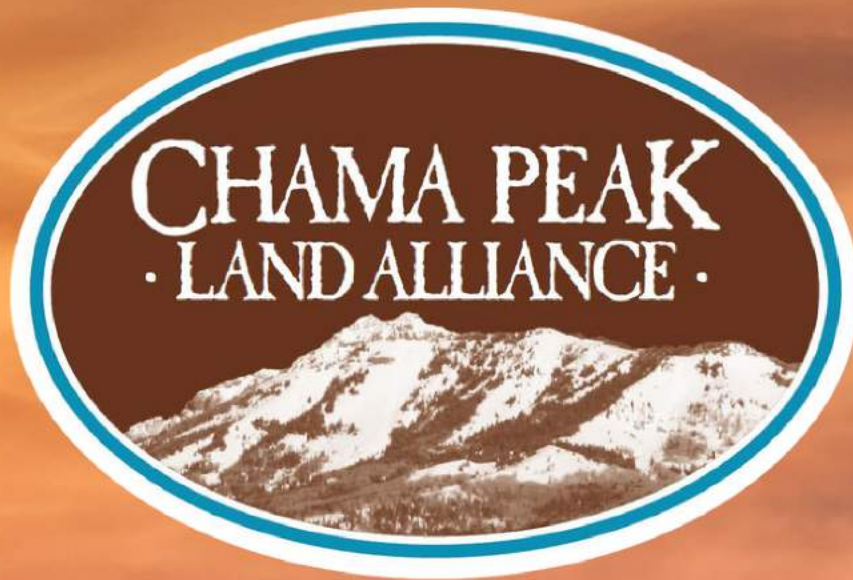
While many of the calls to reform EPLUS originate from urban offices in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, we felt the need to show how EPLUS benefits rural communities in New Mexico. We worked with a filmmaker to produce a short film called “EPLUS works for rural New Mexico”. This film is available to view on the CPLA Youtube channel. EPLUS is crucial for providing hunting opportunities for rural residents and it helps keep many businesses afloat in the Chama region. While repealing EPLUS policies could result in marginally higher odds for people to draw trophy bull tags in the public tag draw, we should not sacrifice a public policy tool that so many rural New Mexican communities rely on.



CPLA produced videos to help raise up local voices in support of EPLUS.



[Watch our video on Youtube: EPLUS works for Rural New Mexico.](#)



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Report Designed By:

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