

Rio Fernando de Taos Revitalization Collaborative  
Project Narrative  
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation - Cooperative Watershed Mgmt. Program – Phase 1

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INTRODUCTION

The Rio Fernando de Taos (RFdT) Revitalization Collaborative, established in 2017, is a dynamic collective of individuals, elected officials, organizations, and government entities working to revitalize the Rio Fernando watershed and connecting people to the river and land they love.

The objectives of the Collaborative are to improve the quality and quantity of the water in the river, restore ecological function of the watershed, revitalize RFdT acequia systems and infrastructure while preserving culture and tradition, increase agriculture production in the RFdT corridor, and to improve open space and trails for river access.

Projects by Collaborative members range from wetland creation in the headwaters, grazing management plans in riparian corridors, invasive species mapping and removal, monitoring of water quantity and quality, streambank restoration, the revitalization of acequia ditches,

conservation easements, and youth education programs focused on watershed restoration and acequia maintenance.

The Rio Fernando is a tributary of the Rio Grande and is in the 13020101 watershed per the U.S. Geological Survey.

The three priorities for this planning project are to build community awareness for green infrastructure solutions, to determine how to bring the river above ground, and to further understand the issues and restoration options for the urban section of the Rio Fernando.

## SECTION A: WATERSHED GROUP DIVERSITY AND GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

### Watershed Group Diversity

#### *Current Membership:*

The RFdT Collaborative is made up of 8 core entities: Taos Valley Acequia Association, Taos Land Trust, Town of Taos, Taos County, Amigos Bravos, the Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, and the US Forest Service (Carson National Forest). The Collaborative works on a consensus model of decision making and there is a Governance Committee, made up of representatives from at least three of the entities, that oversees fiscal management, conflict resolution and general operations to ensure compliance with the Collaborative's Operations Manual.

Member organizations commit to attend bi-monthly meetings and serve as strategic advisors and task leads on Collaborative projects. The shared expertise and resources of members are key for the success of Collaborative projects and pursuing new funding opportunities. Member organizations also lead community outreach through their respective networks and focus areas within the watershed, sharing opportunities and ways to get involved with wider Collaborative projects. As these are additional commitments for budget constrained organizations, the Collaborative aims to provide compensation for their time to alleviate the burden and support staffs. Please see the attached letters of support for confirmation of these partners and their support of this project.

#### *Affected Stakeholders:*

Communities served by the Collaborative include: acequia parciantes along the Rio Fernando, grazing permittees in the upper watershed, water users along the Rio Fernando, farmers, the general public who access existing trails and parks, the portion of the public who historically lacked access to trails and parks, Town and County residents and constituents, trout fishermen, hunters and anglers, home and landowners along the Rio Fernando, students of all ages who are engaged with our educational programming, and Taos schools. The diversity of our Collaborative membership represents these communities. Furthermore, our meetings are open to the public and routinely feature presentations on their concerns or ideas pertaining to the river and its watershed.

The Collaborative also engages allies through robust stakeholder outreach, community meetings, and issue specific educational events aimed at cross education within the community. Finally, member organizations and Collaborative leadership routinely engage with other watershed groups locally and regionally in the Southwest to partner when possible and share lessons learned.

*Increasing Stakeholder Diversity:* While the current group is productive and represents the major stakeholders in the watershed, WaterSMART funds will be used to further RFdT Collaborative diversity. It is important to reach out to other organizations that have not had the interest or ability to join in the past so that the full diversity of the watershed is represented. We will specifically reach out to grazing permittees, Taos Pueblo, the Taos Chamber of Commerce, UNM Taos, acequia parciales, and disadvantaged landowners.

Engaging these new members will involve specific outreach and relationship building to identify their goals and interests for the watershed. It will require personal meetings, invitations to Collaborative meetings, follow up activities to answer questions, watershed tours, and then on-going efforts to make sure their concerns and needs are met as part of the Collaborative.

### Geographic Scope

The Rio Fernando de Taos (RFdT) watershed is a sub-watershed of the Upper Rio Grande Watershed, Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 13020101, located within Taos County of north-central New Mexico. The RFdT watershed area covers approximately 71.7 square miles, ranging in elevation from just below 11,000 feet at the headwaters in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to about 7,100 feet at its confluence with the Rio Pueblo de Taos (RPdT) in the agricultural community of Ranchitos, proximate to the Town of Taos (ToT). The mainstem of the river is approximately 21 miles in length and is comprised of two sub-watersheds, which break the watershed into an Upper and Lower portion.

While the RFdT Collaborative participates in restoration throughout the watershed, this planning project focuses on the urban (Lower) section of the river as it leaves the canyon and intersects with existing acequia and municipal infrastructure, including Highway 64. The project area was also prioritized as it features a segment where the water goes underground, leaving the riverbed dry and eliminating all ecological function.

The project area crosses the jurisdictions of the Forest Service, Taos County, Town of Taos, Taos Land Trust, acequia ditches, and private properties. As such, the RFdT Collaborative is well-positioned to lead the project as key stakeholders are already members. Furthermore, a critical aspect of the intended planning process will be community education events to solicit feedback and desired outcomes from the adjacent landowners and community members at-large.

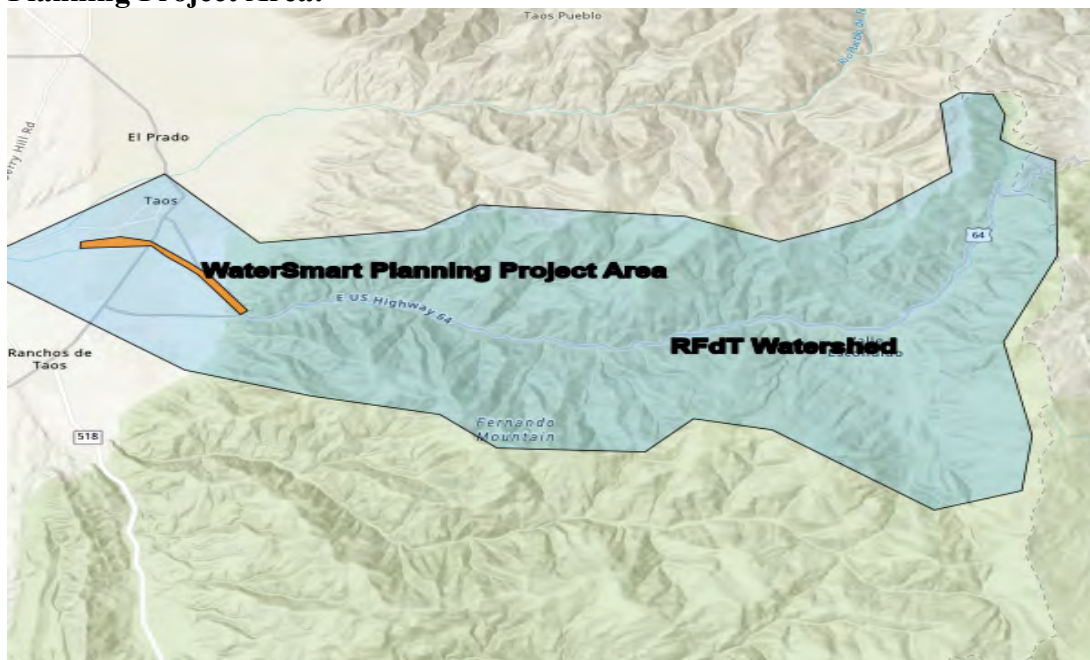
Due to the large number of diverse stakeholders and the severity of the issues present, the necessary restoration will require extensive planning and partnership building. It is for this reason the Collaborative has chosen to be area specific within the watershed for this funding opportunity.

## Maps of Project Area

### Full Rio Fernando de Taos Watershed:



### Planning Project Area:

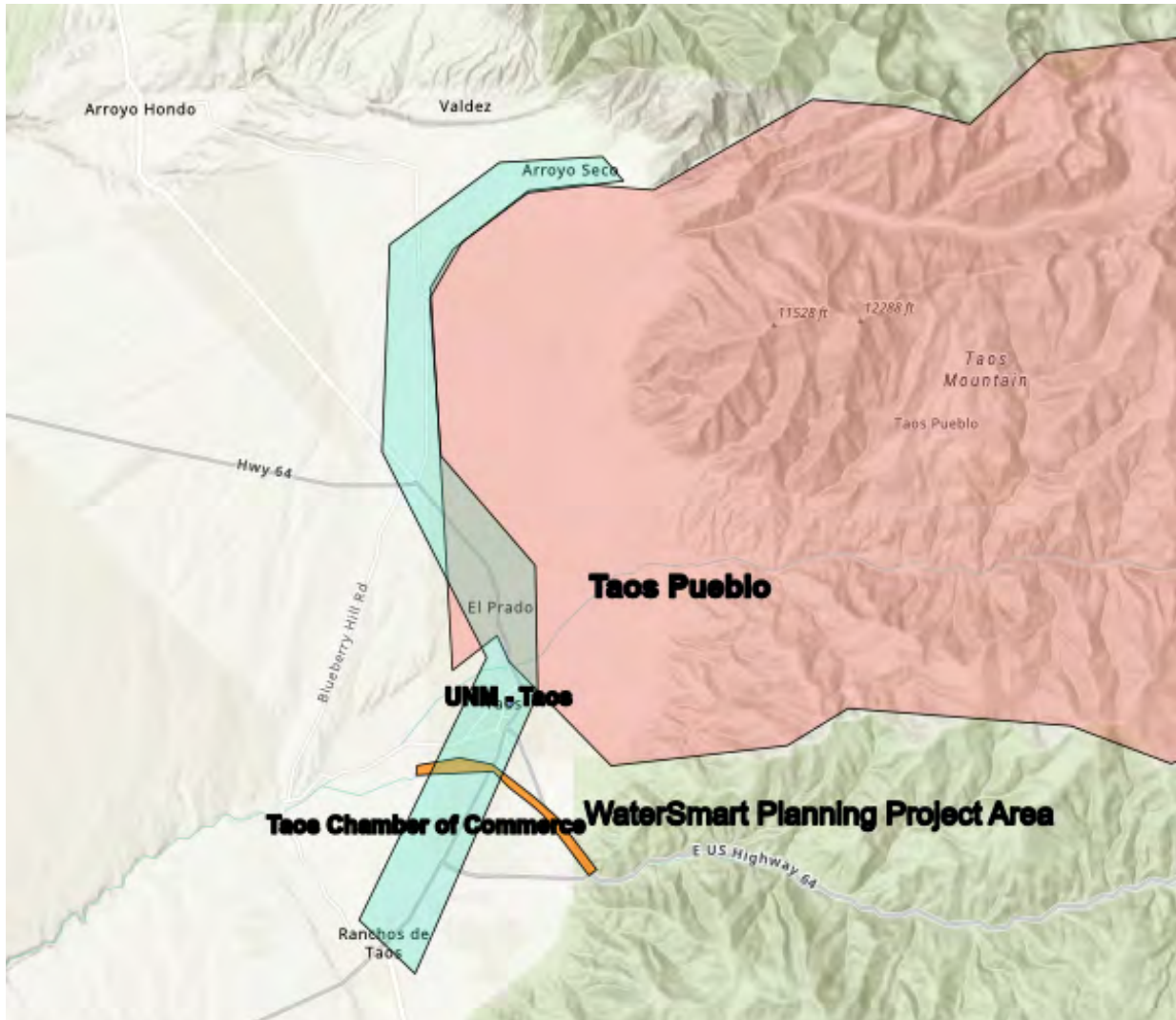


## Boundaries of Stakeholder Groups



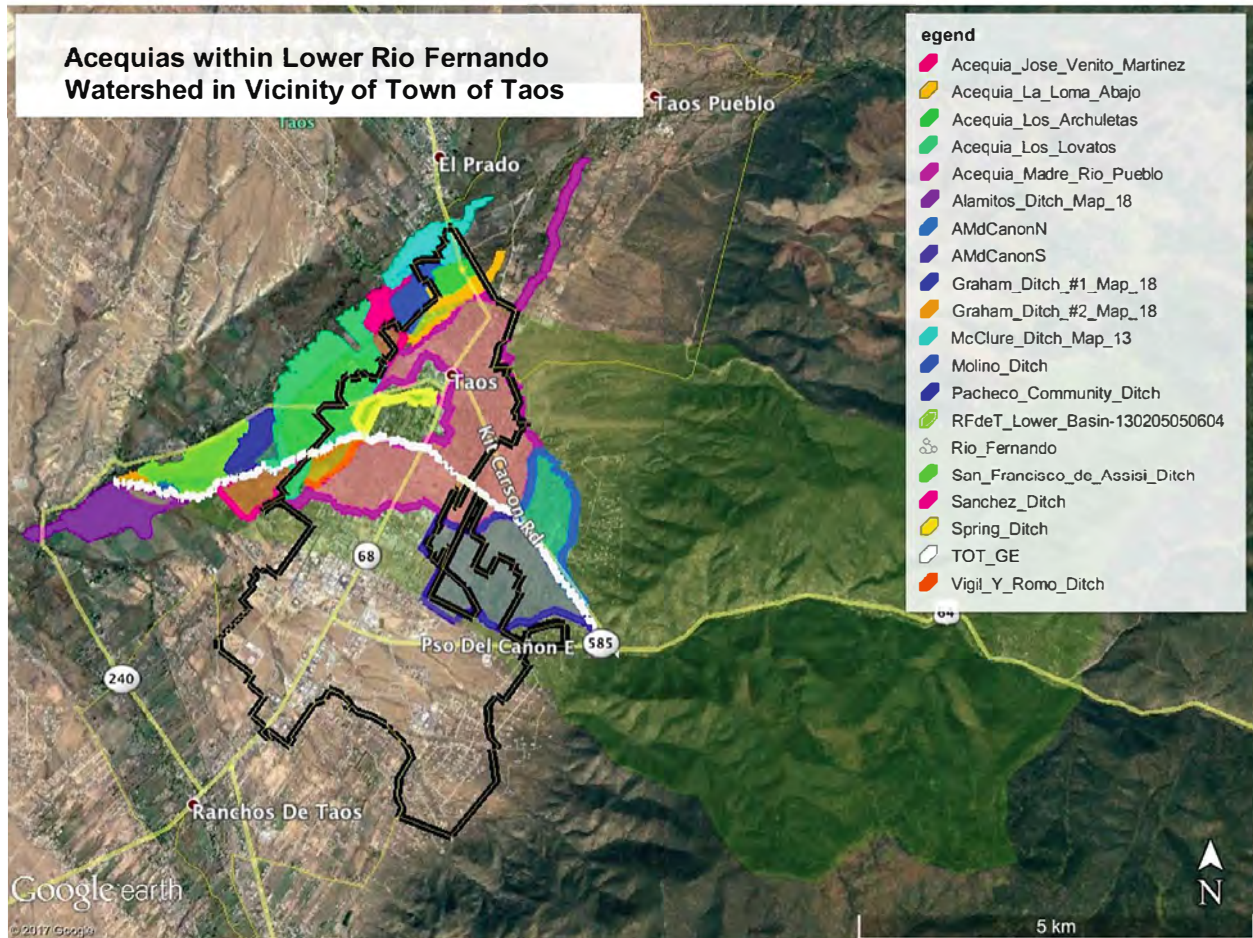
*Please note: Taos Valley Acequia Association, Amigos Bravos, Trout Unlimited, & The Nature Conservancy are all watershed wide organizations and have jurisdiction to work in all sections of the project area.*

## Boundaries of Intended Stakeholder Groups for Outreach



*Please note: Taos Valley Watershed Coalition and Taos Valley Weed Management Cooperative are watershed wide organizations and have jurisdiction to work in all sections of the project area.*

## Acequias within the Rio Fernando Watershed



## SECTION B. ADDRESSING CRITICAL WATERSHED NEEDS

### Critical Watershed Needs/Issues

The Rio Fernando is vital to the health of the Taos Community and environment. Six acequia ditches rely on water to supply their parciantes, and the river serves as a migration corridor for species that travel from the valley into the Sangre de Cristo mountains. As Northern New Mexico continues to experience long periods of drought, restoration of the Rio Fernando will become even more important to the annual supply of water for the community and the aquatic ecosystems. There are estimated to be 200 species of wildlife that use the pinyon-juniper habitat in this area of Taos County ([www.bisonnm.org](http://www.bisonnm.org)). One species of conservation concern that is often seen by the community in the project area is the Lewis's Woodpecker. Furthermore, the loss of continual flow has eliminated the habitat for native trout, including the Rio Grande Cutthroat.

Critical issues arise because the river runs parallel and intersects with existing acequia and municipal infrastructure, including Highway 64. The resulting channelization has caused

significant cutbanks and erosion concerns as snowmelt rushes through the system, increasing the risk of flooding events and eliminating any potential aquifer recharge gained through its old floodplain access. As the town of Taos has grown, road development and increase in pedestrian and vehicle traffic have further contributed to the river's erosion and threaten public safety on adjacent roadways in the project area. The presence of these hard surfaces near the river has also increased runoff and pollutant pathways that threaten water quality in the river.

Additionally, the loss of continual flow when the river moves underground negatively impacts the aquatic and terrestrial species relying on this ecosystem and prohibits three acequia ditches from receiving their allocated supply for irrigation. This has exacerbated water sharing agreements between the acequia ditches which were already tense due to drought conditions. The loss of ecological function also prevents the growth of native species and encourages further encroachment by invasive species.

The channelization of the river reduces the flow quantity and duration during summer months after water rushes through during the spring snowmelt. This causes a rise in water temperature and encourages bacteria growth which have a tremendous impact on the aquatic species and in turn the terrestrial species. The most current TMDL report for the Upper Rio Grande basin, which includes the Rio Fernando de Taos, identified *E. coli* exceedances as the main cause of impairment and that its affecting the river's "primary contact" designated use (NMED 2012). The 2019 Watershed Based Plan focusing on the *E. coli* impairment confirmed that sources of *E. coli* pollution in the Rio Fernando include: contaminated stormwater runoff, humans, cattle, birds, dogs, and beavers. There were many samples taken following rain events that confirm runoff as a major source of *E. coli* pollution. Results indicated that source mitigation is most necessary in the upper and lower reaches of the river with a focus on human, dogs, and cattle sources. The 2019 Watershed Based Plan identified the project proposed here as a key area to addressing the *E. coli* TMDL. Restoring flow, decreasing incision, improving septic tanks, and installing GI/LID solutions to this project area is estimated to result in a 5% decrease in *E. coli* to the river per day. The Collaborative will continue to engage in our on-going annual water quality measurements to monitor changing levels and any improvements made by this project.

## Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs or Issues

### **Task A: Water Group Development**

The RFdT Collaborative is continuously trying to strengthen the group and add expertise to the talent pool. As part of this planning process, we aim to increase the permanent organizations, recruit industry and professional stakeholders, and continue to grow engagement with community members. Permanent organizations are expected to attend bi-monthly meetings and participate in project deliverables. Stakeholders are expected to participate at what level they can and support the Collaborative goals in the community. We would like to incorporate 1-3 community members as permanent members but also understand most people have full time jobs and that one of our jobs as a Collaborative is to reach out to the community, incorporate their thoughts, and keep them informed. Further developing our group is important to ensure that this project has full community support, wide-ranging input, and to ensure that the group can maintain our momentum and grow its impact following this project.



## Permanent Organizations

Currently the Collaborative has 8 permanent members, and we are seeking to add at least two-five more in the next year. Fire management in forest restoration is a subject of high importance and a critical aspect of the projects with the Forest Service. The Taos Valley Watershed Association, the leading group in the area focused on fire mitigation, is a regular participant already and we are hopeful to secure their commitment. The Taos Valley Weed Management Cooperative, which branched off during the first year of the RFdT Collaborative development to focus on invasive species is a second partner organization that routinely participates and could play a larger role in the invasive species mapping and removal programs. In addition, the Collaborative has targeted Taos Pueblo, UNM-Taos, Taos Chamber of Commerce, acequia parciales, and disadvantaged landowners as key potential partners that would strengthen our diversity and impact in the community.

## Industry & Professional Stakeholders

Industry professionals are one key demographic missing from the current Collaboration roster. While there are several businesses and design firms that are frequent contractor partners, the Collaborative readily acknowledges that their insights and experience would be extremely helpful in our larger restoration strategy discussions and planning. For this specific project, we aim to hire [BioHabitats](#) to help with the green infrastructure and hydrology analysis, but the Collaborative seeks to recruit other restoration firms as regular participants, such as Keystone Ecology and Ecotone Landscape Planning. As these firms are not expected to participate fully, the more stakeholders we can engage will help ensure this demographic is represented through a collective voice when individual partners are unable to participate.

Additionally, the Collaborative aims to bolster our connections with other green industries in the area such as reuse and recycling focused groups. There is a significant gap in municipal programming in these areas and several private organizations have sprung up to fill the need. While not focused directly on improving the watershed, their ability to manage waste and improve soils through composting benefits watershed projects and the creativity demonstrated to launch these efforts will certainly add value to Collaborative discussions.

## Community Members

Community members are a vital component to the success of this project and the continued work of the Collaborative. Their input is an important aspect to securing County and Town elected official support on restoration plans and they are a key component to fundraising and communication efforts. The Collaborative will engage with our audience and recruit new voices through two education sessions, four project meetings, and community forums focused on green infrastructure as well as two river clean-up events. Building allies with our community members is especially important as Taos County is home to many vacation homes and absentee landowners. These allies can help reach and engage their neighbors who are not largely present but could still participate and support the project.

## **Task B: Watershed Restoration Planning**

### *Planned Activities*

The three priorities for this planning project are to build community awareness for green infrastructure solutions, to determine how to bring the river above ground, and to further understand the issues and restoration options for the urban section of the Rio Fernando. See Section C for full details on project activities.

In order to build community awareness, the Collaborative will host two education workshops to introduce green infrastructure and the impacts it can create for our environment and infrastructure. These workshops will be utilized to conduct a survey to solicit the community's vision for a revitalized Rio Fernando in the project area and the results will be leveraged to guide the design team's efforts. The survey will be designed by the Collaborative and then dispersed to the community and stakeholders in the project area. This will take intense outreach due to second homeowners, and individual follow-ups to ensure we receive as many responses as possible. The Collaborative will use its own and members' distribution channels, door-to-door efforts, social media, radio, and newspaper advertisements to announce the workshops and build participation.

In parallel, the Collaborative will hire BioHabitats to conduct a full green infrastructure and LID analysis of the area and generate a report of options and critical sites. BioHabitats, or a Geology/Hydrology firm if needed, will also be tasked with a hydrology assessment to identify why the river moves underground on Los Pandos road and what restoration options are available to daylight the stream and restore ecological function. We will provide a public forum with the Collaborative and the consulting firm every 6 months (four total) to provide the community with opportunities to ask questions and influence the planning process.

The final consultant reports will then be taken back to the community participants and elected officials for discussion and prioritization of solutions available. A comprehensive report detailing the entire planning process, including the consultant reports and the community input, will be created and made available through the Collaborative's distribution channels.

In the final year of this project, we will begin pursuing funding to implement the plans created. We will also continue Collaborative meetings and community engagement following this funding period.

### *Identifying Critical Issues & Needs*

The Taos Community has identified this segment of the Rio Fernando, and Los Pandos Road in particular, as a critical area in need of restoration. The impact of the current projects being conducted in the headwaters and in the canyon are minimized by the degradation in this area. As hopefully more water flows through the system, it will exacerbate erosion concerns and create issues for municipal and acequia infrastructure. Furthermore, ecological function for the river is severely restricted by the loss of consistent stream flow. As the end goal is to have a perennial stream with native trout populations, this urban segment of the river must be understood and addressed.

The Collaborative will leverage 14 years of water quality monitoring (this monitoring continues each year as well), site surveys, community input, and the analysis completed by BioHabitats to identify the critical sites in our target area. Additionally, the Collaborative will use our annual water quality data points and surveys to update our priorities as needed based on changes in water quality, erosion, and roadway conditions.

### *Opportunities to Resolve Conflicts & Prioritization Analysis*

The Collaborative understands the number and diversity of stakeholders in the project area will lead to disagreements over the best restoration options and where priority should be placed. The intent of introducing green infrastructure strategies and building community support early in the process is to increase the opportunities for the stakeholders to meet and identify shared goals. Extensive outreach will be conducted initially and throughout the planning process to ensure as many opinions as possible are presented for review. Through discussion and shared learning, the Collaborative aims to eliminate misgivings between stakeholders and to build a restoration team where the community can play an integral part.

The project team will also emphasize the scientific data gained through the monitoring and survey efforts as well as the reports commissioned to create an unbiased opinion for priority sites. Analysis of the river's hydrology will be especially vital for building consensus on the causes and restoration options for daylighting the river. Finally, the Collaborative's goal to establish a plan routed in science for community review is to build community support and avoid the misgivings of an outside firm creating a plan with the intent to also complete construction.

Finally, there is currently a long-standing water-sharing disagreement between two groups of local acequias. The misunderstanding encompasses several things but is associated with the lack of hydrological function in the project area and the resulting water loss that occurs when flow is not captured and used above the site. This conflict is outside the project scope, but the Collaborative hopes successful planning and design will provide a new opportunity for the two parties to resolve their dispute.

### *Building on Previous Efforts*

The RFdT Collaborative spent its first year contributing a Microbial Source Tracking Study to a Watershed Based Plan that was approved by the EPA in 2019. The plan highlights critical challenges in the watershed and directly acknowledges the need for GI/LID projects in the target area, specifically improved drainage and riparian protection that mitigates stormwater flows and erosion concerns. This larger plan has enabled the group to collectively organize efforts and track progress against an established baseline, but the scale of the plan has restricted the detail necessary to solve challenges like daylighting the stream and restoring ecological function. This project will enable the community to do the necessary analysis in order to understand the issues present so that proper options can be considered for restoration.

Taos community members have a strong history of supporting the Collaborative and its members. They are a dynamic force that has volunteered to help build wetland restoration projects as well as remove trash from the river during clean-up events (2,000 lbs. in one Saturday in October '21). The Collaborative will continue to build this community support and their

understanding of the state of our watershed. As more constituents come to learn about the challenges and opportunities facing our river, Taos can continue to prioritize its restoration in public and private budgets.

**Task C: Watershed Management Project Design**

The tasks described in Task A and B all work towards project design for the Rio Fernando watershed. The project will complete a GI/LID assessment and a hydrology assessment in order to determine what is needed to restore this dry section of the river back to life and protect the streambanks from erosion and pollution. These site-specific assessments are vital to establishing designs for restoring the river. The project will also work with the community and elected officials directly to determine what they want to see done with the river to restore it. These assessment reports and community engagements will develop an on-the-ground project design that will be ready to implement and have community support.

The project timeline and milestones for the project are described below. The RFdT Collaborative reviewed this proposal and submitted their letters of support. Further details of the project and timely decisions will be worked out within the RFdT watershed group at regularly scheduled meetings.

The RFdT Collaborative will work directly with Reclamations environmental and cultural staff, local flood plain manager, Army Core of Engineers, and New Mexico Environment Department to determine any site-specific environmental compliance and permitting that may be necessary for the project to be implemented. As this is a planning project, no permitting for on the ground work will be needed.

**SECTION C: PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS**

**Project Implementation:**

Task	Milestone	Timeline (Expected Grant Period 1/31/23- 1/31/25)	Cost
Community Development and Education Sessions	Develop materials, outreach to community stakeholders, print and media advertisements, and plan education sessions	February - April 2023	\$28,000
	Conduct initial survey to solicit community needs and wants for the project area	February – May 2023	
	Host meetings with County and Town staff to identify goals and build support	February – May 2023	

	Host two education sessions focused on green infrastructure and community vision	May – October 2023	
	Plan and host four community meetings to discuss the project and prioritization of solutions	February 2023 - December 2024	
	Two river clean-up and community building events	October 2023 & October 2024	
Commission GI & LID analysis and design/report	Hire BioHabitats or similar firm to analyze current state of river, focusing on Green Infrastructure and Community Access solutions.	April – October 2023	\$30,000
	Report detailing GI & LID options for streambank restoration and infrastructure improvements	January 2024	
Commission Hydrology Report	Hire BioHabitats or similar firm to conduct a hydrology analysis of the river and water table to understand why the water moves underground	April – October 2023	\$50,000
	Report detailing options to restore waterway to surface level	January 2024	
Prepare Project Summary	Create summary report detailing the community support from the planning process and restoration options found by consultants	January – April 2024	\$17,500
	Design, Print, & Distribute Report to the Community	May 2024	
	Host final meeting, plan next steps for restoration, and seek funding opportunities.	June – December 2024	
Support for the RFdT Collaborative	Pay for a facilitator to organize monthly meetings	February 2023 - December 2024	\$53,250
	Group support for 5 or more groups to participate in the Collaborative (\$5,000 or less per group for two years of time)	February 2023 - December 2024	
	New member and stakeholder outreach, individual meetings, and follow-up questions	February 2023 & October 2024	
	Fiscal Sponsorship Fee of 10% (\$18,000) as agreed upon by the RFdT Collab (Indirect costs)		

Total			\$178,750
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### Building on Federal, State, & Regional Plans

The RFdT Collaborative seeks to incorporate best practices in the area and will utilize several key priorities from published plans focused on New Mexico. For example, State of New Mexico - Region 7 Taos updated the regional water plan in 2016. In the plan, they reiterated some of the original priorities established in 2008 but highlighted several new priorities which included: enhanced recharge and groundwater investigation, the need for data collection & monitoring, and preservation and capacity-building for acequias. This project will impact all three of these key priorities and the Collaborative will work with the organizing body to incorporate their lessons learned and the potential use of this project as a case study.

The State of New Mexico issued a state-wide water plan in 2018 that breakdowns a wide variety of tasks and goals. In the section focused on water supply and demand, one of the key priorities called for is the development of advanced hydrological modeling to manage surface and groundwater. In watershed management policy, the plan highlights the need to support community watershed organizations and the development of stormwater management plans, particularly in urban areas. This section also calls for increased native vegetation and habitat along riparian corridors to improve habitat and stabilize riverbanks with vegetation. For drought strategies, the plan calls for the protection of sensitive species and habitat by assessing threats to the water supply, endangered species, and economy and create and implement mitigation strategies. Finally, in the water planning section, the State of New Mexico calls for public outreach regarding water planning issues and to support youth education.

While the water landscape in New Mexico can be challenging to compare at the federal level, one topic of high importance to the Collaborative is climate resilient communities and infrastructure. In 2017, FEMA released a report titled “Mitigation Support for Planning and Implementation of Climate Resilient Infrastructure” which listed a number of projects completed nationally and choose four for additional study. All four of these projects chosen incorporated strategies that are relevant for New Mexico, namely Aquifer Storage and Recovery; Floodwater Diversion and Storage; Floodplain and Stream Restoration; and Low Impact Development (LID)/Green Infrastructure (GI). This project will directly focus on the last two priorities and will significantly increase the Collaborative’s understanding of the aquifer and groundwater table beneath the project.

Finally, the completed Watershed Based Plan for *E. coli* on the Rio Fernando is discussed in Section B. This plan in combination with the RFdT Collaborative’s Work Plan highlight the critical need to address stormwater flows and erosion concerns on streambanks that are adjacent to municipal infrastructure. These plans also call for increased collaboration with the Town of Taos and Taos County planning and transportation departments to identify solutions along Los Pandos Road in the project area. This planning exercise will catalyze these efforts, start the necessary dialogue with stakeholders, and complete the hydrological and GI/LID analysis required to identify the proper restoration options.

## SECTION D: PRESIDENTIAL AND DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR PRIORITIES

### Climate Change

The impacts of climate change specific to rivers in the Southwest include: more severe drought conditions and associated wildfires, interspersed with more extreme precipitation events. In addition, climate change is predicted to result in less availability of water and have impacts to water quality in the long-term. Drier conditions also lead to the growth of invasive species that outcompete native vegetation and further degrade riparian zones. These conditions reduce natural water storage and cause the limited water to rush out of the watershed earlier in the year before it can be put to beneficial use. The lack of water combined with the loss of acequia function leads to excessive groundwater pumping for irrigation demand, placing even further stress on depleted aquifers.

This project aims to support the sustainability of our watershed and its resiliency as climate change and drought stressors continue to increase. By returning flow in the targeted section of river, it will revitalize the ecosystems and riverbed directly downstream. The removal of invasive species and replanting with natives will also help reduce the water demand and support the sustainable growth of the riparian zone. Finally, the return of hydrological function and the stream's path above ground will enable the three acequias downstream to receive their allocated supply and reduce groundwater pumping for irrigation. All impacts will result in protecting the stream and habitat during low-flow periods and help the community sustainably use the water in the watershed.

### Disadvantaged or Underserved Communities

Taos is a rural (15 people per square mile) and minority-majority community, with more than 64% of the population identifying as Hispanic/Latinx or Naïve American (Census estimates, 2020) An alarming 18.9% of the Taos County population is in poverty and median household income is only \$38,328.00, compared to the National average of \$67,521.00.

While incomes are depressed for all populations in Taos County, there are notable disparities between racial and ethnic groups. Our Native American/American Indian households have a median income 21% below that of our Anglo households and 6% below that of our Hispanic households. Our Hispanic Households have a median income 15% below that of our Anglo households. These numbers are less pronounced than we see nationally or statewide, but the less extreme disparities are not because our minority populations are doing better in Taos County than in other places, but because our White, not Hispanic or Anglo population is doing worse.

According to the most recent estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau there are a total of 20,296 housing units in Taos County. The housing stock is dominated by detached single units (69%). When over a quarter of all housing structures in the United States consist of five or more units,

not even 10% of housing in Taos County is made up of structures with five or more units. Affordable housing in the County is dominated by mobile homes which make up 17% of all housing in the County –compared to just 6.4% nationally.

The median income for renters in Taos County is \$21,611 while the median monthly rent is \$762 – meaning that 58% of all renters in Taos suffer housing stress as defined by the Federal government. The median household income of owner-occupied housing units in Taos County is \$41,694. A total of 43% of homeowners in the County with a mortgage suffer housing stress (compared to 33.6% statewide and 34.2% nationwide), and 16.5% of homeowners without a mortgage suffer housing stress (compared to 11.5% of those statewide and 15% nationwide). The greater level of housing stress among homeowners with a mortgage in comparison to those at larger geographies can be explained by a housing market out of step with the local economy and reliant on retirees and second home buyers from outside the local economy.

In addition to the economic stress described above, the underserved population is severely impacted by the decline of irrigated agriculture in the RFdT Corridor. This decline is contributing to the “invisibility” of acequia systems in the face of new types of land use and development. Residential and commercial development in the lower RFdT watershed has resulted in blockage or reduction of acequia easements and building over infrastructure such as desagues, and the construction of buildings on once irrigated land. In the process, much of the irrigated agricultural land has become unusable. The extent of these issues in the RFdT Corridor will continue to be assessed by the Collaborative; however, community and cultural connections with irrigated agriculture, as an economic activity and as part of the valley’s rural appeal, are strong in Taos.

This project aims to serve this community by working with them to understand the issues facing our river and collectively design the solution. With an end goal to improve water quality and quantity in the Rio Fernando, it will build resiliency for our stressed watershed and protect the quality of the water being used by the community. The revitalization of the acequias will also provide cultural economic opportunities and protect the vitality of our region’s heritage.

As the watershed continues to experience drought conditions followed by extreme precipitation events, the installation of GI/LID features will stabilize the streambanks and protect against erosion. These installations will also infiltrate and treat polluted stormwater and protect the municipal and acequia infrastructure that is built alongside. This will prevent disaster costs and other potential liabilities for private residences as well as public entities.

The restoration of the Rio Fernando will not only safeguard the people of Taos from water pollution, degradation, and flooding, but it will enhance their quality of life through increased recreational opportunities, healthier crops, more opportunities for economic development, and full expression of cultural and ceremonial practices.

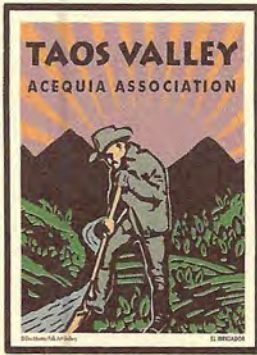
### Tribal Benefits

The Taos Pueblo borders the Rio Fernando watershed and along the Rio Pueblo which the Rio Fernando drains into. Increasing water quality and water quantity in the Rio Fernando will



directly benefit their land and the Rio Pueblo Watershed. The Taos Pueblo is also actively engaged with the restoration of Pueblo Ridge, a project with the Forest Service that drains into the Rio Fernando Watershed, and presents an additional opportunity to align the Collaborative with the Pueblo's restoration activities. Funding from this project will also be used to support member organizations and the Pueblo in building a relationship and encouraging their future participation in the Collaborative.

The proposed project supports the Taos Pueblo's goals of protecting our waterways and ensuring cultural economic opportunities. Furthermore, the education sessions and public forums will be open to Pueblo residents and the Collaborative will look to their feedback to ensure our program supports their larger restoration strategy and overall community engagement.



# Taos Valley Acequia Association

Taos County Juan I. Gonzales Agricultural Center

202 Chamisa Road, Suite D

Taos, NM 87571

Phone (575) 758-9461

taosacequias@gmail.com

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LEROY GRAHAM  
ANDY MARTINEZ

### RIO PUEBLO

BEN CARDENAS  
JESSE HARRISON  
MARK SCHUETZ

March 20, 2022

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225  
By e-mail: aomorgan@usbr.gov  
By phone: 303-445-2906

*Subject: Letter of Commitment for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1*

### **Re: Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project**

Dear Ms. Morgan,

The Taos Valley Acequia Association is pleased to support this collaborative effort to complete engineering and community input for restoration options in an urban section of the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Fernando runs through the town of Taos, playing an integral part in the health of the town and surrounding wildlife. Unfortunately, the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed is currently impaired for both water quality and ecosystem function. The section to be worked on during this project is heavily incised, full of trash, and dangerous for walking along.

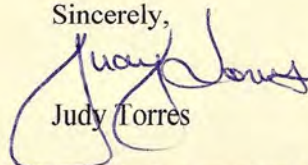
Taos Valley Acequia Association supports this project because our acequias rely on clean water from the Rio Fernando to irrigate gardens, orchards and pasture lands. It is imperative that the quality of water is clean for the food grown and eaten by our parcientes on the Rio Fernando.

The work outlined in the proposal will be a vital first step in restoring a section of the river that is heavily impacted by the community and provide resiliency to this section as more folks move into Taos and as climate change creates more demand for the water from this river.

Add any involvement you will have – attend collaborative meetings, participate in execution of the grant, participate in river clean ups, participate in community outreach efforts, etc.

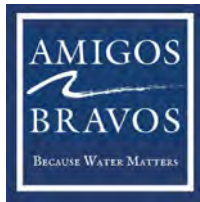
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (575) 758-9461 or taosacequias@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Judy Torres

*The Taos Valley Acequia Association ensures the long-term sustainability of traditional agricultural communities of the Taos Valley by protecting water rights and preserving and strengthening the acequia system.*



WATER IS LIFE.  
It's Our Duty to Protect It.

March 28, 2022  
Bureau of Reclamation, Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225  
By e-mail: [aomorgan@usbr.gov](mailto:aomorgan@usbr.gov)  
By phone: 303-445-2906

*Subject: Letter of Commitment for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1*  
***Re: Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project***

Dear Ms. Morgan,

Amigos Bravos is excited to support the Rio Fernando de Taos Revitalization Collaborative's project to complete long-needed engineering and community input for restoration options along the Rio Fernando in Taos, New Mexico. Amigos Bravos' mission is to protect and restore water quality in NM. We have been involved in restoring and monitoring the Rio Fernando de Taos for over 20 years. Recent projects have included large-scale restoration of the La Jara wetlands in the headwaters, completing a Watershed Based Plan for *E. coli* in the river, and helping to form the Rio Fernando de Taos Revitalization Collaborative in 2017.

Amigos Bravos will act as fiscal sponsor for this grant. We have played this role several times for the Collaborative in the past, the large one was an EPA grant for \$120,000, which ended in 2020. We will manage the budget and reimbursements for the project, participate in all Collaborative meetings and Governance Committee meetings, manage consultants, organize public meetings, organize and garner public participation in the river clean ups, and participate however else is needed to complete the project as outlined.

This project builds on decades of work to bring the community together and garner the funds necessary for large scale revitalization of the Rio Fernando as it runs through the heart of Taos. We envision a vibrant river accessible to all and functioning as a healthy ecosystem instead of a dry streambed. This project is the first step towards accomplishing this vision.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 518-275-7681 or [sromeling@amigosbrvos.org](mailto:sromeling@amigosbrvos.org)

Sincerely,

*Shannon Romeling*

---

Amigos Bravos | PO Box 238 | 114 Des Georges Place | Taos, NM 87571 | 575.758.3874



[amigosbravos.org](http://amigosbravos.org)



[facebook.com/amigosbravos](https://facebook.com/amigosbravos)



[Twitter.com/amigosbravos1](https://Twitter.com/amigosbravos1)



[instagram.com/amigosbravos](https://instagram.com/amigosbravos)



# Taos County Administration

105 Albright Street, Suite G, Taos, New Mexico 87571  
Telephone: (575) 737-6300 Facsimile: (575) 737-6314 [www.taoscounty.org](http://www.taoscounty.org)

March 20, 2022  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225  
By e-mail: [aomorgan@usbr.gov](mailto:aomorgan@usbr.gov)  
By phone: 303-445-2906

Jim Fambro  
District 1

Mark Gallegos  
District 2

Darlene Vigil  
District 3

AnJanette Brush  
District 4

Candyce O'Donnell  
District 5

Brent Jaramillo  
County Manager

Subject: Letter of Commitment for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1

Re: Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project

Dear Ms. Morgan,

Taos County is pleased to support this collaborative effort to complete engineering and community input for restoration options in an urban section of the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Fernando runs through the town of Taos, playing an integral part in the health of the town and surrounding wildlife. Unfortunately, the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed is currently impaired for both water quality and ecosystem function. The section to be worked on during this project is heavily incised, full of trash, and dangerous for walking along.

Taos County recognizes that improved education about impacts to our waters and coordination among local agencies with shared responsibilities for watershed management, clean water programs, water supplies, development of local resources, and protection of our natural resources are necessary to support the mission of Integrated, Healthy and Balanced Watersheds throughout our beautiful valley.

The work outlined in the proposal will be a vital first step in restoring a section of the river that is heavily impacted by the community and provide resiliency to this section as more folks move into Taos and as climate change creates more demand for the water from this river.

Based on my interactions with the Amigos Bravos, I support their BOR WaterSMART application. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss my experience with Amigos Bravos in greater detail.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (575) 737-6305

Sincerely,

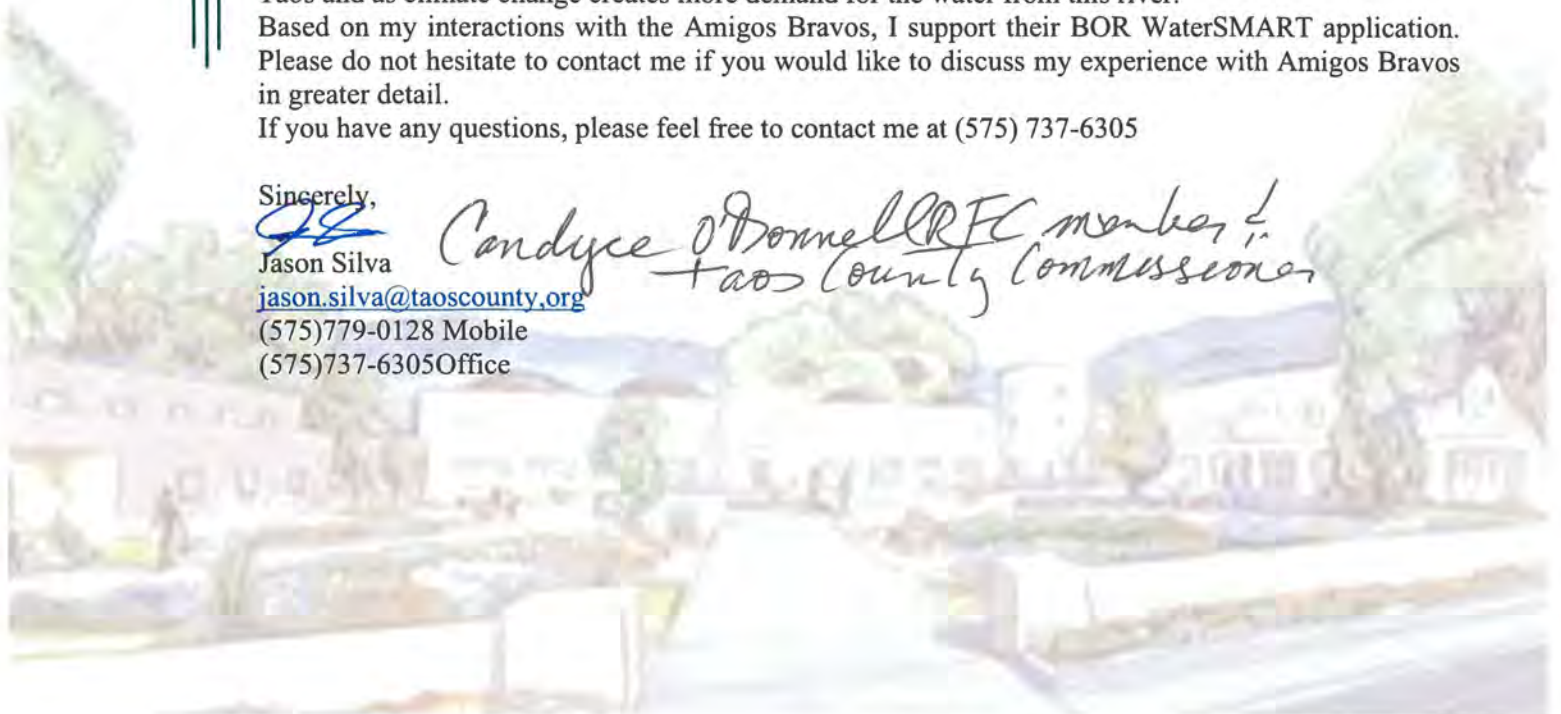
  
Jason Silva

[jason.silva@taoscounty.org](mailto:jason.silva@taoscounty.org)

(575)779-0128 Mobile

(575)737-6305 Office

*Candyce O'Donnell RFC member &  
Taos County Commissioner*



March 27, 2022  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Subject: Letter of Commitment for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase  
1

***Re: Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project***

Dear Ms. Morgan,

The Acequia Madre del Sur se Cañon Del Rio Don Fernando is pleased to support this collaborative effort to complete engineering and community input for restoration options in an urban section of the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Fernando runs through the town of Taos, playing an integral part in the health of the town and surrounding wildlife. Unfortunately, the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed is currently impaired for both water quality and ecosystem function. The section to be worked on during this project is heavily incised, full of trash, and dangerous for walking along.

As Mayordomo for Acequia Madre Del Sur, This Acequia runs through the community of Canon and provides safe clean water to our Parciantes (Irrigators), who depend on it to irrigate our fields, orchards and gardens. Projects such as this are vital for the protection of our Watershed. We must ensure that it is protected and maintained in a healthy state. We depend on the Don Fernando for sustainment of our Aquifer which provides safe drinking water to 200 members of our Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association. There is nothing more important than the health of our watershed and river.

The work outlined in the proposal will be a vital first step in restoring a section of the river that is heavily impacted by the community and provide resiliency to this section as more folks move into Taos and as climate change creates more demand for the water from this river.

I am a member of the Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative, Taos Valley Acequia Association. Our Parciantes are aware of the impact, climate change and human encroachment is having on our community. We plan to participate on river clean ups and to continue supporting the work the Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative is doing to improve the Quality of life for the community of Taos. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me

Sincerely,  
Vicente Fernández  
Mayordomo, Acequia Madre del Sur de Canon Del Rio Don Fernando  
1140A Witt Road, Taos, NM 87571

*vincentefernandez@gmail.com*  
*575-779-8569*

March 20, 2022  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225  
By e-mail: [aomorgan@usbr.gov](mailto:aomorgan@usbr.gov)  
By phone: 303-445-2906

*Subject: Letter of Commitment for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I*  
***Re: Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project***

Dear Ms. Morgan,

The Town of Taos is pleased to support this collaborative effort to complete engineering and community input for restoration options in an urban section of the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Fernando runs through the town of Taos, playing an integral part in the health of the town and surrounding wildlife. Unfortunately, the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed is currently impaired for both water quality and ecosystem function. The section to be worked on during this project is heavily incised, full of trash, and dangerous for walking along.

The Town of Taos part in the collaborative is to support restoration of the Rio Fernando. The improvement of acequias and water quality will be beneficial to the citizens of the Town of Taos. The restoration of the river is vital so the river can be utilized by future generations of citizens and support continued efforts of collaborative to continue this monumental effort.

The work outlined in the proposal will be a vital first step in restoring a section of the river that is heavily impacted by the community and provide resiliency to this section as more folks move into Taos and as climate change creates more demand for the water from this river.

As a member organization of the collaborative, the Town of Taos will support this project by attending collaborative meetings, reviewing contractor reports, working with other collaborative members to identify and leverage funding sources, garnering community support for projects, and working collaboratively to implement this entire project.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [nsanchez@taosgov.com](mailto:nsanchez@taosgov.com)

Sincerely,

*Nathan J. Sanchez*, Electronic Signature

Nathan Sanchez, Director

Town of Taos Planning, Community & Economic Development Department

March 17, 2022  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225  
By e-mail: aomorgan@usbr.gov  
By phone: 303-445-2906

*Subject: Letter of Commitment for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase*

***Re: Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project***

Dear Ms. Morgan,

The Vigil y Romo Acequia Association is pleased to support this collaborative effort to complete engineering and community input for restoration options in an urban section of the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Fernando runs through the town of Taos, playing an integral part in the health of the town and surrounding wildlife. Unfortunately, the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed is currently impaired for both water quality and ecosystem function. The section to be worked on during this project is heavily incised, full of trash, and dangerous for walking along.

As the Vigil y Romo Acequia diverts off of the Rio Fernando the completed engineering and community input will guide us in our attempt to mitigate river impediments and increase water quantity and quality which will enhance our ability to irrigate agricultural lands and public open space cover crops within the Town of Taos.

The Vigil y Romo Acequia Association will assist in this effort as directed by the program's administrator, help with community outreach and assist with riverbank cleanliness and structural integrity.

The work outlined in the proposal will be a vital first step in restoring a section of the river that is heavily impacted by the community and provide resiliency to this section as more folks move into Taos and as climate change creates more demand for the water from this river.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 575-758-9585.

Sincerely,

George "Fritz" Hahn  
Treasurer & Mayordom of the Vigil y Romo Acequia Association  
C/O Fritz Hahn  
PO Bx 402  
Ranchos de Taos, NM 87557  
Georgehahn2001@yahoo.com



March 20, 2022  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225  
By e-mail: aomorgan@usbr.gov  
By phone: 303-445-2906

*Subject: Letter of Commitment for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I*

***Re: Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project***

Dear Ms. Morgan,

The Taos County Cooperative Weed Management Area (TCCWMA), an organization dedicated to mitigation and education concerning invasive weeds, is pleased to support this collaborative effort to complete engineering and community input for restoration options in an urban section of the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Fernando runs through the town of Taos, playing an integral part in the health of the town and surrounding wildlife. Unfortunately, the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed is currently impaired for both water quality and ecosystem function. The section to be worked on during this project is heavily incised, full of trash, and dangerous for walking along.

The Rio Fernando project described here is an area heavily infested with invasive weeds, so the TCCWMA is invested in the success of this project. As members of the Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative, the TCCWMA would look forward to participating toward the project's success by offering our expertise in invasive weed mitigation in the project area and replacing them with native species.

The work outlined in the proposal will be a vital first step in restoring a section of the river that is heavily impacted by the community and provide resiliency to this section as more folks move into Taos and as climate change creates more demand for the water from this river.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (928) 451-6942.

Sincerely,

*Robert Pokorney, Chairman  
Taos County Cooperative Weed Management Area (TCCWMA)  
220 Chamisa Rd. Taos NM 87571  
Taosweeds@gmail.com  
(928) 451-6942*



March 20, 2022  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225  
By e-mail: [aomorgan@usbr.gov](mailto:aomorgan@usbr.gov)  
By phone: 303-445-2906

*Subject: Letter of Commitment for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1*

***Re: Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project***

Dear Ms. Morgan,

The Taos Land Trust is pleased to support this collaborative effort to complete engineering and community input for restoration options in an urban section of the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Fernando runs through the town of Taos, playing an integral part in the health of the town and surrounding wildlife. Unfortunately, the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed is currently impaired for both water quality and ecosystem function. The section to be worked on during this project is heavily incised, full of trash, and dangerous for walking along.

The Taos Land Trust is engaged with restoration efforts along the entire Rio Fernando but most directly at our own Rio Fernando Park, located in the Town of Taos. Through our efforts at the park, we have become well acquainted with the public nature of these activities. In gaining both support and participation, we have found that community involvement is imperative for a successful restoration project. We support this project because it fulfills our own goals towards furthering a healthier connection between community and landscapes while improving ecosystem function.

The work outlined in the proposal will be a vital first step in restoring a section of the river that is heavily impacted by the community and provide resiliency to this section as more folks move into Taos and as climate change creates more demand for the water from this river.

As an active member of Rio Fernando Collaborative, we will continue to attend collaborative meetings, participate in the execution of the grant, conduct community outreach efforts, provide technical services, and organize and participate in river clean up efforts.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ben" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Wright".

Ben Wright  
Taos Land Trust LAnd Projects Director  
PO Box 234  
Taos, NM 87571  
[ben@taoslandtrust.org](mailto:ben@taoslandtrust.org)  
575-770-8454



1613 Paseo de Peralta, Suite 200  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
(505) 988-3867  
nature.org/newmexico

March 23, 2022  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225  
By e-mail: aomorgan@usbr.gov  
By phone: 303-445-2906

*Subject: Letter of Commitment for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1*

***Re: Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project***

Dear Ms. Morgan,

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is pleased to support this collaborative effort to complete engineering and community input for restoration options in an urban section of the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Fernando is a central watershed in the Taos Valley and a clear priority for restoration and outreach. The river runs through the town of Taos, playing an integral part in the health of the town and surrounding wildlife. Unfortunately, the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed is currently impaired for both water quality and ecosystem function. The section to be worked on during this project is heavily incised, full of trash, and dangerous for walking along.

Since 2017, The Nature Conservancy has provided over \$100,000 of support to the Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative (RFdT). As a lead organization in the Rio Grande Water Fund, a private-public partnership effort to generate sustainable funding over the next 20 years to increase the pace and scale of forest and watershed restoration, including the most high-risk areas in the Rio Grande watershed, a key to our collective success, including over 100 signatories, is partnering with engaged collaboratives like RFdT to build broad community support and investment in this important work.

The work outlined in the proposal will be a vital first step in restoring a section of the river that is heavily impacted by the community and in providing resiliency to this section and the community as more folks move into Taos and as climate change creates more demand for the water from this river.

As a member organization of the RFdT, The Nature Conservancy will support this project by attending collaborative meetings, providing technical and logistical assistance as needed and engaging with collaborative members to leverage funding sources, including participating in outreach efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melissa McLamb".

Melissa McLamb  
Senior Conservation Coordinator  
[Melissa.mclamb@tnc.org](mailto:Melissa.mclamb@tnc.org)



**Garrett Hanks**

*Northern New Mexico Project Manager*

March 20, 2022

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

*Subject: Letter of Commitment for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I*

***Re: Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project***

Dear Ms. Morgan,

Trout Unlimited (TU) is pleased to support this collaborative effort to complete engineering and community input for restoration options in an urban section of the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Fernando runs through the town of Taos, playing an integral part in the health of the town and surrounding wildlife. Unfortunately, the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed is currently impaired for both water quality and ecosystem function. The section to be worked on during this project is heavily incised, full of trash, and dangerous for walking along.

TU is a watershed-based organization focusing on fish, communities, and river health. All these facets are components to the overall work in the Rio Fernando watershed, and this project, specifically the engineering need, is an important piece to a larger effort.

The work outlined in the proposal will be a vital first step in restoring a section of the river that is heavily impacted by the community and provide resiliency to this section as population increased in Taos and as climate change creates more demand for the water from this river.

In support, TU will attend Rio Fernande collaborative meetings, coordinate in execution of the grant, offer volunteer support to river clean ups, and work towards the collaborative's mutually held goals of watershed wide improvements.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact using the information below.

Sincerely,

Garrett Hanks

[ghanks@tu.org](mailto:ghanks@tu.org)

970-590-9367

Project Manager – Western Water and Habitat Program

Trout Unlimited

91 Hondo Seco Road

Arroyo Hondo, NM 87513



March 20, 2022

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225  
By e-mail: aomorgan@usbr.gov  
By phone: 303-445-2906

*Subject: Letter of Commitment for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1*

***Re: Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project***

Dear Ms. Morgan,

The Taos Valley Watershed Coalition is pleased to support this collaborative effort to complete engineering and community input for restoration options in an urban section of the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Fernando runs through the town of Taos, playing an integral part in the health of the town and surrounding wildlife. Unfortunately, the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed is currently impaired for both water quality and ecosystem function. The section to be worked on during this project is heavily incised, full of trash, and dangerous for walking along.

For the Taos Valley Watershed Coalition, the health of the Rio Fernando is of paramount importance to our community and to our collaborative Landscape Restoration Strategy. The Rio Fernando watershed is currently the focus of several forest restoration projects related to restoring ecosystem function and improving forest resilience. This work extends across this entire watershed and onto the broader landscape. The work outlined in the proposal will be a vital first step in restoring a section of the river that is heavily impacted by the community and provide resiliency to this section as more folks move into Taos and as climate change creates more demand for the water from this river.

As coordinator of the Taos Valley Watershed Coalition, I commit to assisting with community outreach, education and implementation work within the proposed project area that amplify the work proposed in this WaterSMART application.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me using the information included below.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Logan", is positioned below the word "Sincerely".

*J.R. Logan*  
*Coordinator, Taos Valley Watershed Coalition*  
*(575) 779-5467*  
[johnrogerlogan@gmail.com](mailto:johnrogerlogan@gmail.com)  
[www.taoswildfireplaza.org](http://www.taoswildfireplaza.org)

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225  
By e-mail: [aomorgan@usbr.gov](mailto:aomorgan@usbr.gov)  
By phone: 303-445-2906

March 28, 2022

*Subject: Letter of Support for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I*  
**Re: Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project**

Dear Ms. Morgan,

The Carson National Forest is pleased to support this collaborative effort to complete engineering and community input for restoration options in an urban section of the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Fernando runs through the town of Taos, playing an integral part in the health of the town and surrounding wildlife. Unfortunately, the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed is currently impaired for both water quality and ecosystem function.

The Carson National Forest strongly supports the application of Amigos Bravos to the WaterSMART proposal 2022. We believe Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project will provide a valuable benefit to our community by addressing erosion and clean up.

Amigos Bravos empowers individuals and communities to protect and restore the waters in their own backyards through broad-based engagement of affected communities. Amigos Bravos works with a very wide range of stakeholders doing water-related work— local communities, farmers, ranchers, acequia associations, Pueblos, sportsmen, environmental groups, government agencies, technical and legal experts, and other professionals. We intend to partner with Amigos Bravos on this project by our continued engagement in the Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative focused on improving watershed conditions across all jurisdictions.

The work outlined in the proposal will be a vital first step in restoring a section of the river that is heavily impacted by the community. The proposal will also improve resiliency to this section of the watershed as the demands for water increase (from our community growth and climate change).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 1-575-587-2255.

Sincerely,

Michael Luján  
DISTRICT RANGER



## Chupadero Archeological Resources

Encouraging public participation in archeological research



1416 Conejo Road  
El Prado, New Mexico 87529-7405  
Phone (575) 758-3192  
Cell (702) 250-6512  
Email [markscotthenderson@gmail.com](mailto:markscotthenderson@gmail.com)



27 March 2022

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
Attn: Ms. Avra Morgan  
Mail Code: 86-63000  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225  
By e-mail: [aomorgan@usbr.gov](mailto:aomorgan@usbr.gov)  
By phone: 303-445-2906

*Subject: Letter of Commitment for Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1*

***Re: Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative Revitalization Project***

Dear Ms. Morgan,

Chupadero Archeological Resources is pleased to support this collaborative effort to complete engineering and community input for restoration options in an urban section of the Rio Fernando de Taos. The Rio Fernando runs through the town of Taos, playing an integral part in the health of the residents of the town, vegetation and wildlife. Unfortunately, the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed is currently impaired for both water quality and ecosystem function. The section to be focused on for this project is heavily incised with unstable cutbanks, has encroachment of artificial fill, trash and debris, narrowing the channel and is dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists and automobiles using the road from which toxic chemicals runoff into the river channel.

The irrigable lands in the Rio Fernando de Taos watershed are what made the rural agrarian settlements of Cañon and Taos on the Don Fernando de Taos Land Grant possible in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century. With the expansion of residential and commercial uses of the irrigable lands in the watershed, the health of the river channel has degraded creating unsightly and non-functioning hydrological and ecological conditions. This project would assist in providing a plan specifying actions costs and benefits for rehabilitating the disrupted ecological conditions with soil and water conservation measures and promoting stakeholder participation in implementation of actions prescribed by the plan.

The work outlined in the proposal will be a vital step by developing a plan with community support in rehabilitating a section of the river that is vital to the watershed. As climate change and urbanization creates more stress on the diminishing surface water supply this project has a potential to develop better conservation and management practices to stabilize and perhaps even reverse degradation of ecological function and surface water irrigation practices.

As owner and sole proprietor of Chupadero Archeological Resources I have participated in the Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative since its establishment with an interest in providing



documentary historical and archeological evidence of past use and human ecology of the Rio Fernando watershed. I intend to remain engaged in these activities through the life of this project as changing circumstances allow.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at by phone, email or mail with the information in the letterhead.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Mark Scott Henderson*

Mark Henderson, Owner  
*Chupadero Archeological Resources, LLC*

Cc: Shannon Romeling, Amigos Bravos