

# RIO GRANDE AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST

PO Box 40043, Albuquerque, NM 87196

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Cecilia Rosacker, Polvadera

## EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Zoey Fink, Albuquerque

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**President** - Michael Donovan, Socorro

**Vice President** - Sarah Wentzel-Fisher, ABQ

**Secretary** - John Utton, Santa Fe

**Treasurer** - John Leeper, Socorro

## MEMBERS

Elan Silverblatt-Buser, Corrales

Angela Bordegaray, Santa Fe

Allison Mazan, Socorro

## ADVISORS AND CONSULTANTS

Sandra Postel, Los Lunas

Gina Dello Russo, Socorro

Alan Hamilton, Albuquerque

Matthew McQueen, Santa Fe

<http://www.rgalt.org>



Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
Albuquerque NM  
Permit No 1322

## SIGN ON TO PROTECT OUR BIRDS

Visit our website to learn more about the online petition to urge SunZia Energy to bury their proposed transmission lines beneath the Rio Grande:

[www.rgalt.org/protect-our-migratory-birds](http://www.rgalt.org/protect-our-migratory-birds)

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR



**Thursday May 9th 4-8pm**  
Fundraiser + Workshop  
High & Dry Brewing, Albuquerque

**Thursday August 8th 4-8pm**  
Fundraiser + Workshop  
2nd Street Brewing, Santa Fe

**Monday December 9th 8am-2pm**  
Forage Growers Workshop  
Valencia County Extension, Los Lunas

*Info soon to come about our Annual Harvest  
Fundraiser November 2019!*

JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST ONLINE: [WWW.RGALT.ORG/CONTACT-US/](http://WWW.RGALT.ORG/CONTACT-US/)

# Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust

VOLUME 18, ISSUE 1

SPRING, 2019

## HOW ONE DOCTOR IS CULTIVATING CONSERVATION



We are pleased to announce the closing of our 4th conservation easement on La Joya Farm. We now protect a total of 250 acres. The property is a haven for Southwestern Willow Flycatchers, waterfowl, migrating water birds, mule deer, and a resident elk herd. As a kid, Hank Taliaferro's father took him quail and dove hunting on the farms near Annapolis, Maryland. Along the way, he learned the call of every obscure songbird. It was his first step towards growing into a passionate birder and conservationist. A medical residency landed Taliaferro and his family in Albuquerque, and that's when he started taking his kids dove hunting on farmland

south of the city. But they eventually had to quit because developers subdivided the land he had permission to hunt. For Taliaferro, that experience drove home how little bird habitat remains along the Middle Rio Grande. At least 90 percent of the region's wetlands have disappeared in the last century. The remaining islands of habitat are crucial for overwintering and migratory birds traveling the Central Flyway through New Mexico.

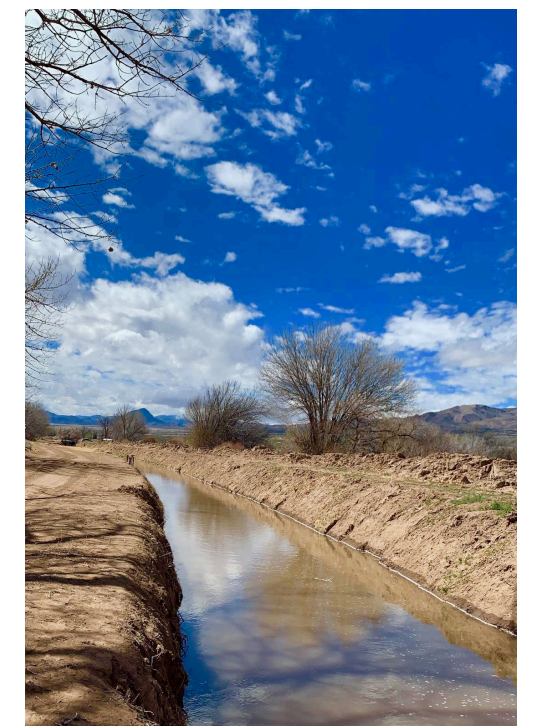
"Maybe instead of development there's a way of creating something, and actually preserving something," Hank recalls thinking. Taliaferro began wondering if he and his wife could do their part to keep the migratory corridor intact by buying a farm and also managing it for birds and other wildlife. Taliaferro's ultimate goal is to create a large wildlife conservation area along the Rio Grande, piecing together as much property as funding will allow. We have a 5th conservation easement on the way.

*Abridged article by Sarah Keller, Intermountain West Joint Ventures, [www.iwvjv.org](http://www.iwvjv.org)*

## EXCITING NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH MRGCD

We are thrilled to announce our official partnership with the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD). Conservation work is heartfelt; it takes a community of passionate people from diverse backgrounds working together to protect the land, water, and natural habitat we all cherish. With this new partnership, RGALT will work closely with MRGCD to help inform landowners and other stakeholders about conservation easements and other conservation opportunities through our partners such as NRCS, Bernalillo County, Save Our Bosque Task Force (SOBTF), NM Audubon, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and others. These outreach efforts will also prepare our community for new programs available in the 2020 Farm Bill, bringing federal dollars into our state to build upon and expand existing conservation efforts.

As RGALT moves into its 22nd year, we are pleased to have solidified this important partnership with the MRGCD, and to continue developing partnerships with other stakeholders in our community that have taken years of relationship building. We hope that you will join us in 2019 for workshops in Sandoval, Bernalillo, Valencia and Socorro counties. Visit our website and join our email list to stay up to date with events and volunteer opportunities! [www.rgalt.org](http://www.rgalt.org)





# CONSERVATION HEROS

## BILL AND BETTY HUME



After over a decade of service, esteemed board member Bill Hume has stepped down from the Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust board. We would like to thank Bill and his wife Betty for the years of support and guidance they have offered. Bill joined our board after his service as Director of Policy and Issues under the Richardson administration. Bill grew up in Socorro and served as an editor of the Albuquerque Journal prior to retiring after 36 years. He brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the board, and is a true conservation hero! His quick wit, incredible generosity, and steadfast dedication

to protecting New Mexico's working lands and water makes him an irreplaceable member of our team and one whom we will miss deeply. We are so thankful for the time and energy that he dedicated to RGALT, and we will continue to look to him and Betty for advice and guidance for many years to come. Thank you, Bill!

## WELCOME SANDRA POSTEL!

Join us in welcoming Sandra Postel to the RGALT Advisory Board! Sandra is director of the Global Water Policy Project and author of *Replenish: The Virtuous Cycle of Water and Prosperity*. From 2009-2015, she served as Freshwater Fellow of the National Geographic Society, where she co-created *Change the Course*, the water stewardship initiative awarded the 2017 US Water Prize for restoring billions of gallons of water to depleted rivers and wetlands.

Sandra works to bridge science, policy and practice to build a more water-secure world for people and nature. She has authored four books and numerous articles for scholarly and popular publications. Previously, she taught at Mt. Holyoke College and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. From 1988-1994, she served as vice president for research at the Worldwatch Institute. Sandra has been named a Pew Scholar in Conservation and the Environment and one of the Scientific American 50, an award recognizing contributions to science and technology. We are thrilled that she will be offering her guidance and expertise to RGALT as we move into many exciting new partnerships and projects in the coming year. Welcome, Sandra!



**ACTION ALERT:** If you own property in the Rio Grande valley, mark your calendar to vote in the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District elections on June 4th 2019.

Having the voice of farmers on this board is critical! Visit [www.mrgcd.org](http://www.mrgcd.org) to learn about the candidates.

# SUNZIA THREATENS CEs

On January 29th, Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust and our bird conservation partners, led a tour for representatives from the Sunzia Corporation, Pattern Energy, Audubon, and Senators Heinrich's and Udall's offices. Since the inception of Sunzia's Southwest Transmission Project a decade ago, conservation groups and local citizens have been requesting that Sunzia take their proposed 2-500KV transmission lines under the Rio Grande, rather than overhead across the critical middle Rio Grande migratory bird path. We hoped taking them on a tour to see our conservation work and experience the awe of the birds firsthand would demonstrate to them the importance of eliminating the threat posed by 500KV lines crossing the Rio Grande in this sensitive migratory bird corridor.



The tour took place in the Socorro reach of the middle Rio Grande, a critical migratory path and the winterfeeding ground for Rocky Mountain Sandhill cranes and hundreds of other migratory bird species. We were greeted by 10,000 cranes at Bernardo Game Refuge, 10,000 more cranes at Bosque del Apache NWR, and tens of thousands of other migratory birds that winter in the middle Rio Grande. Refuge managers explained the importance of the narrow, bottle-necked middle Rio Grande migratory corridor to the Central Flyway. It is perhaps one of the most critical corridors in the nation, an international migration path from Canada to Mexico.

"I am not going to be here in 50 years", said Gary Crane, Sunzia representative. This poignant statement made during the tour is exactly the issue of concern. Sunzia's proposed 500KV transmission lines will be in place for

50 years. They will be disrupting this sensitive migratory corridor used by Sandhill cranes for millions of years. The lines will fragment a fragile migratory bird corridor, impacting decades of conservation work and threatening future conservation efforts.

"Growing cranes" is not an easy task. These majestic birds have a lifespan of 35 years. They are socially monogamous, mating for life with both parents caring for the young. They don't begin breeding until 2 to 8 years old, the upper years are the most viable production years. On average, cranes successfully raise one offspring to a stage of independence every three years. Given this slow growth rate, conservation and management of crane populations is challenging.

RGALT and our conservation partners are not opposed to renewable energy. We are simply requesting that Sunzia's renewable energy transmission lines be implemented to minimize ecosystem impacts. Energy sprawl will significantly impact land use and natural resource conservation in the coming decades. Doing it right from the onset is critical.

We are speaking out on behalf of the birds. We are their voice.



To join our efforts, sign on to the online petition demanding SunZia Energy to bury their proposed transmission lines beneath the Rio Grande:

[www.rgalt.org/protect-our-migratory-birds/](http://www.rgalt.org/protect-our-migratory-birds/)



# 2018 AT A GLANCE

## GOAL 1: ESTABLISHING CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

- Muncy Ranch (530 acres)- Socorro County: This CE project funded through our USFWS- North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Phase 2 grant for protecting the Rio Grande migratory bird corridor was completed in June 2018.
- La Joya Farm (91 acres), Socorro County: This CE project funded through our USFWS-NAWCA-Phase 2 grant will be completed in April 2019.
- NM-DOT (34 acres), Valencia County. CE is in process, and will protect Rio Grande wetlands.
- Bouker CE – Initiated our first partnership with Bernalillo County to protect 2 acres of irrigated farmland in the heart of Albuquerque.

## GOAL 2: STEWARDING CONSERVED LANDS

- Monitoring and reporting completed on all CE's.
- Successfully connected partner organizations with our CE landowners to enhance the conservation values on their land, including partnering with SOBTF, Socorro SWCD and USFWS Partners for Wildlife Project on La Joya Farms, and Socorro County Fuel Reduction program to remove invasive species such as tamarisk on private lands.
- Worked diligently on external conservation threats, such as SunZia's proposed transmission lines crossing over the Rio Grande at Escondida, NM.

## GOAL 3: PARTNERSHIPS

- Groundwork laid to create formal partnership with Bernalillo County.
- MRGCD partnership formalized.
- Partnered with Ciudad SWCD to produce CE Guidebook and conduct 2 CE outreach workshops.
- Continued to foster strong relationships with members of Socorro Conservation Synergy group.

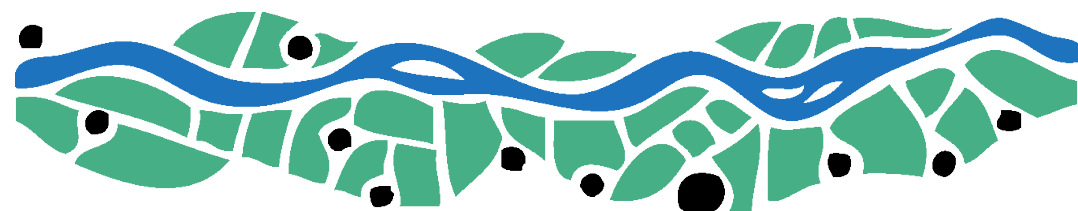
- Groundwork laid to expand outreach in Valencia.
- Continued to foster strong relationship with SOBTF to inform landowners about conservation programs.
- Establishing new partnership with Agricultura Network to conduct outreach to farmers
- Built new partnerships around SunZia to protect MRG and migratory birds.
- Strengthened partnership with IWJV resulting in the MRG designated as Water 4- Initiative.
- Partnered with NRCS on conservation easement workshops.
- Strengthened our partnership with MRCOG collaborating on outreach communication to landowners in Bernalillo County.

## GOAL 4: SHARE AND CONNECT OUR MISSION

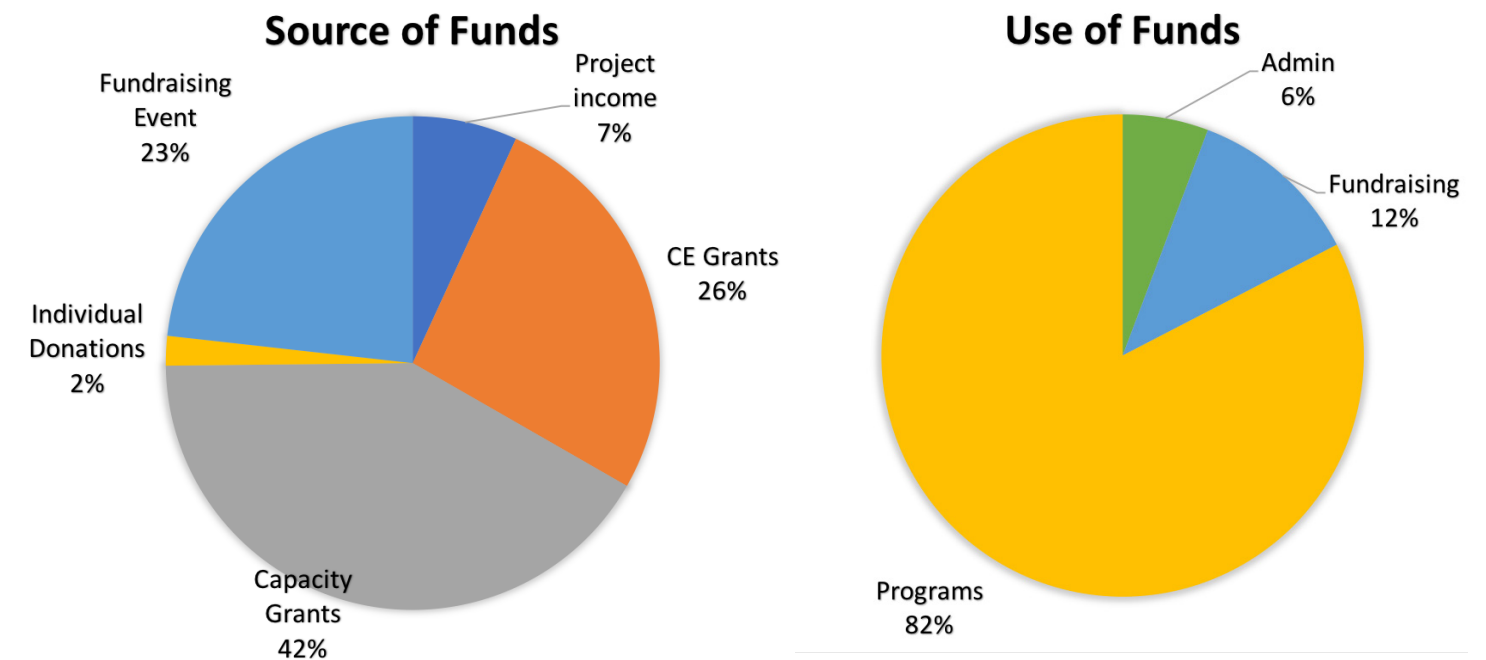
- Conducted eight workshops and tours throughout the year, with Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District, Intermountain West Joint Ventures Group, CrossWatershed, Socorro Synergy Group, and USFWS Bosque del Apache's Festival of the Cranes, La Joya Farms Conservation Easement Tour.
- Annual Harvest Dinner Event held on our premiere conservation project.
- Maintained strong communications through our newsletter, social media, website and email list.

## GOAL 5: SUSTAIN AND GROW THE ORGANIZATION

- Developed a 5-year Strategic Plan.
- Hired an Executive Assistant.
- Four new board members joined the board.
- Developed a Funding Plan.



# FISCAL SUMMARY



## THANKS TO OUR 2018 SUPPORTERS!

### \$1- \$149

Bethany Wells  
Robert Hodnett  
Judith Davenport  
Jolene + Wayne Maes  
Mary Feldblum  
Kay and Paul Krehbiel  
Elizabeth Chestnut  
Harvey White  
Stephen Walker  
William Wiese  
Laurie Parkhill  
Virginia Smith  
Betsey VanLeit  
Zoey Fink  
Michael Donovan  
Ronna Kalish  
Deb Caldwell  
Beth Crowder  
Matthew McQueen  
Dave Parnall  
Heidi Cooper  
James Banon Schneebeck  
Jason Fink + Tracy Clark  
Margie Root  
Chris Meyers  
Alan Smith  
Cecilia Rosacker  
Gina Dello Russo

### \$150 - \$299

Alan + Sue Conklin  
Philip Davis  
Lisa Cummings  
Julie Cason  
Donna Voelker  
Lisa Peters  
Catherine Rosacker- Sharp  
Yvonne Hughes  
Suzanne Feld  
Carol Pittman  
Johnny Pack  
William and Betty Hume  
John Leeper  
Sarah Noss  
Rita + Buddy Rosacker  
Angela Bordegaray  
Doris Rhodes  
Patrick Mockler-Wood  
Irena Ehrenfeucht  
Devendra Contractor  
Leif Youngberg  
Stewart Butzier  
Javier Gonzales  
Mary + Jim Ruff  
Joanna + Earl Debrine  
Sarah Wentzell-Fisher  
Karla + Moises Thornton  
Chuck Muncy  
Cyndi Dever

### \$300 - \$999

Tax Credit Alliance  
Save Our Bosque Task Force  
First State Bank  
Representative Gail Armstrong  
William C. Hume  
Intermountain West Joint Venture  
Glen Duggins

### \$1000 - \$2000

Bill Holmes  
Adelante Consulting

### \$2000 or More

Commissioner O'Malley  
Bernalillo County  
Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District

**SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL THE LOCAL FARMS AND BUSINESSES WHO DONATED TO OUR ANNUAL HARVEST DINNER FUNDRAISER!**