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## Decisions of the Technical Advisory Group

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The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of Candelaria Nature Preserve defined a vision for the group - to engage in a planning process that would result in improved ecosystem health and increased biodiversity of Candelaria Nature Preserve, ensure compliance with Land and Water Conservation Fund guidelines by providing opportunities for wildlife oriented recreation, and fulfill the requirements of City Council resolutions R-16-147 and R-17-159. The TAG looks forward to the day when the City of Albuquerque proudly advertises that the City has a wildlife preserve within the City limits. This sets our city apart from other large cities and demonstrates to all that Albuquerque values the natural environment and its wildlife.

Our decisions have been based on what would be best for wildlife. We support limited public physical access and enhanced visual access, transition to a mosaic of native habitat, and maintaining the area west of the Duranes lateral as a wildlife preserve. We encourage developing the Tree Farm (off Rio Grande Blvd.) to be the place where more intense activities might take place.

### **South Candelaria tract**

The TAG team supports limited access to this area, providing guided walks only. This has been an area that has had very little use over the years and while not pristine, it does have qualities of protection for wildlife that should be preserved and enhanced. We plan some habitat improvement, especially in the elm forest area in the northeast corner. Neighbors adjacent to the property have had access. Dogs and cats running loose have probably negatively impacted wildlife and we decided the area should be protected for wildlife. On the other hand, neighbors have helped take care of the property - by observation and physical labor.

If this area provided unlimited access to the public, it would no longer be the pocket of protection for wildlife that it is. Annually, thousands of people use the access trail from Candelaria and upwards of 250,000 people use the Nature Center. Even a small percentage of this population would destroy the wildlife qualities of this area. We plan a short trail, but with unlimited access there would be nothing limiting people to the trail. We advocate keeping this as a wildlife area, not a place with a steady stream of human activity.

### **Native Habitat in the fields**

The TAG voted to support converting the fields to native habitat with a transition period to accomplish that. After talking with people at Valle de Oro and Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area, and with Dan Collins, Migratory Bird Coordinator, USF&WS, as well as others, we determined a native mosaic of habitats will support many species of resident and migratory birds, as well as numerous other

families of wildlife. Salt grass, a native plant, will be present in salt grass fields and salt shrub areas and will provide food for cranes.

Other factors we took into consideration were that farming is disruptive to wildlife and destroys ground nests of birds and other animals. It is costly and has created problems over the many years of farming on the property - irrigation systems have not been kept up (the current farmer has done a great job of repair), pesticides have been used, crops have not been managed for the most benefits to wildlife, financial accountability has been lacking. Farming, even wildlife crops, requires more ongoing use of synthetic chemicals, although transitioning to native habitat may require more chemical usage up front.

We have considered that it could be healthier for cranes to have a little more space. When a field is cut, yes, hundreds of cranes come, eat the harvest, then go someplace else. For the small area we are talking about, not growing crops for cranes will not negatively impact the population in the middle Rio Grande valley. Will people still be able to observe cranes here? Yes, emphatically; adaptive management will ensure that. Please remember there were very few cranes here three years ago and that is where this current process started.

### **Woodward House**

The TAG supports keeping minimal activity at the Woodward House, using it as a base for Citizen Science and allowing Tree New Mexico to continue activity there for the time being. As stated above, we support all fields of the Preserve being native habitat/mosaic. Although the field to the south of the Woodward House represents a small portion of the Preserve, it represents beginning encroachment on the Preserve for purposes other than habitat for wildlife.

### **Tree Farm**

This is the area next to Rio Grande Boulevard and we would like to see this developed into an inviting place to introduce appreciation of this wildlife preserve in the middle of Albuquerque. Plant production can take place here, heritage farming and native seed collection, interpretive signage, parking.

The management plan is still a draft at this point. There are many aspects that need to be finalized. We appreciate you taking the time to learn about Candelaria Nature Preserve and provide input. Feel free to ask questions.