

CABQ OPEN SPACE DIVISION



SUMMARY REPORT 2019



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HONORING OUR PAST, BUILDING OUR FUTURE

was the theme in 2019 as the Open Space Division celebrated its 35th anniversary. The incredible legacy of the Open Space Division (OSD) was presented with passionate stories of those who played a crucial role in establishing the OSD and Major Public Open Space (MPOS) at events and through historical installments written by Rex Funk and Matt Schmader, two previous superintendents. To view the installments, visit <https://www.cabq.gov/parksandrecreation/open-space/about-open-space/open-space-history>. Division staff also engaged a new generation of youth through family and school programs as well as youth conservation employment in Open Space.

The City's Open Space program is touted as the best in the nation, and the Division plans to continue to lead that precedent by engaging all sectors of the community while serving as a fundamental part of the City's economic attraction and promoting health and wellbeing to residents through natural resource protection and outdoor recreation.

VISITOR SERVICES AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Visitor Service staff ramped up their efforts this year leading numerous public trail building, clean-up, and tree planting events. It takes hard work year-round from staff and volunteers to support a wide variety of recreation activities and maintain healthy ecosystems. Involving the public in these meaningful hands-on stewardship activities also fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of local public lands.



CLEAN-UP

Community members roll up their sleeves every year by participating in events to clean up Open Space properties, removing an incredible amount of trash that would otherwise pollute our land and water and impact wildlife. This year's clean-ups resulted in the following:

9 ANNUAL VOLUNTEER EVENTS RESULTED IN THE FOLLOWING BEING REMOVED FROM OPEN SPACE

| | |
|---------------|--|
| • Dog Poop | 198 lbs. |
| • Trash | 2 full dump trailers and 4 full truckloads |
| • Large Items | 3 shopping carts, 1 bathtub, 23 tires, 3 mattresses, rusty car parts, wire fence and more. |
| • Recycling | Glass- 12 five-gallon buckets, Aluminum- 4.5 bags, Mixed- 19 bags |
| • Weird Items | Doll head, golf balls, manikins, snow globes, action figures, videos, terrarium and more! |



OPEN SPACE TRAILS

Volunteers helped close off 8 roads and 2,978 ft. social trails while maintaining 6064 ft. of existing trail and establishing 1.9 miles of new sustainable trails in the foothills and east mountain properties. In total, the Open Space Division manages 157 miles of multi-use trails throughout the Major Public Open Space that provide opportunities for experienced mountain bikers and equestrians to the casual hiker and bird watcher. Additionally, the Open Space Division installed 9 trail counters in the foothills to better identify trail use and needs with support from REI and the Open Space Alliance.

TREE PLANTINGS

The Rio Grande Bosque is much loved by citizens who know and value this living corridor that runs through the heart of the city and provides vital water resources, wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities. Thirty-seven different community groups, mostly school groups, planted 1,120 trees and shrubs in the bosque. This is part of an ongoing effort to regenerate the riparian forest with Rio Grande Cottonwood trees, Coyote willows and other native species as current vegetation continues to be stressed by climate change that is exasperating drought and fires, lowering the water table, escalating invasive plant growth and other related issues. Albuquerque Fire Rescue and the Open Space Division also received a grant for \$1,000,000 from the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management for wildland fire prevention efforts in 400 acres of the bosque.

VISITORS & VOLUNTEERS

- The Open Space Division had 261,627, a record number of people, visiting Open Space facilities, and 28,653 rented Elena Gallegos and Carolino Canyon picnic areas.
- 481 dedicated volunteers through the TrailWatch, FireWatch, OSVC Volunteer Stewards contributed 15,434 hours. Additionally, the Open Space Division engaged another 6,000 volunteers during events throughout the year. OSD also offered 4 TrailWatch and 1 FireWatch trainings.

EVENTS

Local musicians and performers lit up Elena Gallegos with 14 concerts through the Summer Series with nearly 400 participants. Staff and experts in geology and other topics led 13 hikes and educational talks for over 200 participants. This included a few hikes and events solely dedicated to the 35th anniversary, uncovering the roots and success of the Open Space program.

OPEN SPACE VISITOR CENTER: CONNECTING PEOPLE TO PLACE

The Open Space Visitor Center (OSVC) has exhibits interpreting the natural and cultural resources that the Open Space Division protects. It also features an art gallery, interpretive demonstration gardens, and agricultural fields that draw a variety of wildlife and stunning views of the Sandia Mountains. Each year a wide range of engaging and thought-provoking activities are presented to the public. This year, 19,435 people visited the OSVC.

The Open Space Visitor Center held a total of 88 events, an average of 8 a month, that included 12 Gallery exhibits and 14 large-scale events attracting 4,511 people. This includes old and new events such as the International Mud Day and annual Crane Celebration. Additional workshops include the Permaculture Workshop Series, Beekeeping Certification and Composting Workshop Series.

Also hosted at the OSVC were the Summer Explorer Camp, Family Nature Clubs, school fieldtrips and monthly Bosque Wild Guided Hikes.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

- The Open Space Division directly served 2095 students through camps, fieldtrips, events and the RiverXchange program run by Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District.
- The Open Space Division also works with a number of youth crews including the following:
- Rocky Mountain Youth Corps helped improve the trail network at the Gutierrez-Milne property enjoyed by equestrians, mountain bikers and hikers.
- Ancestral Lands Youth Corps worked at the Candelaria Nature Preserve on a wildlife monitoring project with the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program and removed brush piles as part of a fuel wood mitigation project.
- Youth Conservation Corps spent a day at the Open Space Visitor Center helping with the Common Edge Permaculture Fields and learning about the Piedras Marcadas Pueblo.
- The Bosque Youth Crew worked over the summer to remove invasive plants, re-establish trails and clear brush after major flooding.

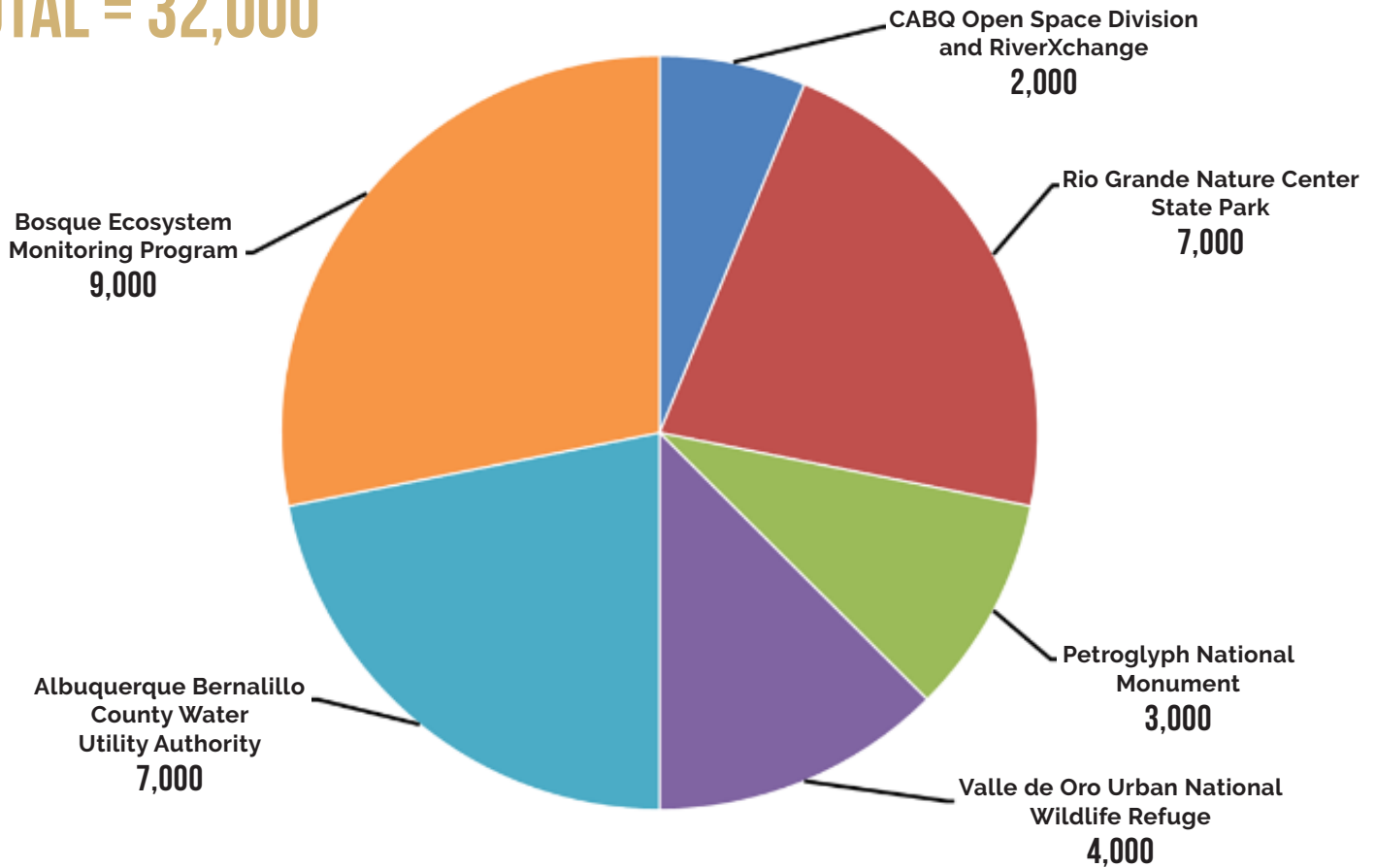
The Open Space Division works closely with a number of local groups, including the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program and Petroglyph National Park Service staff, who provide high quality environmental education to youth throughout Albuquerque. Partner agencies also utilize the Major Public Open Space as their outdoor classroom. Collectively, 32,000 youth are getting outside experiencing and learning about their local environment in the MPOS.

(See pie chart on next page)



YOUTH OUTREACH IN MAJOR PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

TOTAL = 32,000



FAMILY NATURE CLUBS AND POP-UP EVENTS

In 2019, the Open Space Division partnered with Family & Community Services to kick-off the Family Nature Club initiative, a national program inspired by the Children and Nature Network (CNN). We held one community dialogue with Environmental Education and Early Childhood educators throughout the City led by the CNN representative and engaged City Department Directors in the conversation of how to work across sectors to get youth and their families outdoors. We also organized a Family Nature Club Kick-off with local families and Community Center Managers. Following these events, the Open Space Division started up monthly Family Nature Club walks and pop-up events, including in the International District at the CiClovía Street event. This program is intended to provide families the tools and resources to make nature exploration an integral

part of their lives. Albuquerque is one of 18 Cities Connecting Children to Nature! Learn more at <https://www.childrenandnature.org/initiatives/cities/about/>.

PLANNING AND LAND ACQUISITIONS

- Tijeras Arroyo Biological Zone (BioZone) has been identified by the city as a vital aquifer recharge and important riparian area that provides essential habitat and a corridor for wildlife. The Tijeras Arroyo also portrays a unique and living history that has played a critical role in Albuquerque’s development as a city. That is why the BioZone that spans west of Juan Tabo up to Carnuel is on the priority list for protection. The City has successfully acquired a number of properties in the BioZone, including 32.97 acres this year east of Route 66 Open Space and two additional parcels purchased in 2018 totaling 37.5 acres.

The City will start fencing and rehabilitating the area by closing off unsustainable social trails that cause erosion and vegetative damage, removing invasive plants and planting native trees and shrubs.



Council in 2020 for their review and approval. More information can be found at <https://www.cabq.gov/candelaria-nature-preserve>.

Other accomplishment from the planning staff include reviewing a number of development plans adjacent to MPOS, and working with the Bureau of Land Management to review all of the City's Recreation and Public Purposes lands (R&PP) that include 8,401 acres of MPOS. After a thorough review, it was determined the City is in compliance with all of our R&PP management plans and will continue to implement improvements at these properties, including constructing additional ranges at the Shooting Range State Park.

- Open Space staff developed a Bear Canyon Visitor Use Plan to improve the trails and overall visitor experience in the Bear Canyon area of the Sandia Foothills. The draft plan looked at rerouting trails, closing social trails, and identifying locations for wayfinding and interpretive signs. The draft plan received numerous public comments, predominantly from neighboring residents. Consequently, the OSD staff are reviewing the comments and will be presenting a revised plan in 2020.



- After a challenging three years to pursue community consensus on how the Candelaria Nature Preserve should be managed, a Resource Management Plan (RMP) was completed and approved by the Technical Advisory Group and Open Space Advisory Board who oversaw the project. The plan is to transform the farm fields to a restored dynamic patchwork of mosaic habitat to better serve wildlife over a twenty-year period. Improved public access will also be achieved through installing wildlife blinds and interpretive signs along the perimeter and offering scheduled visitor tours. The RMP will go before City

SHOOTING RANGE GRASSLAND PRESERVE

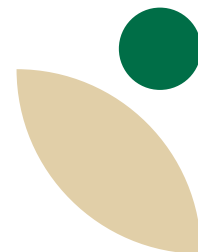
The City of Albuquerque Shooting Range Park offers year-round recreational shooting for everyone from beginner to advanced/expert shooters. Programs and events offered at the Range include: public shooting on the Public Rifle/Pistol Range and Trap and Skeet Ranges, youth archery, High Desert Sportsmen Skeet Club, Sandia Gun Club High Power and PPC matches, New Mexico Military Surplus rifle matches, Rio Grande Practical Pistol Shooters Pistol matches, Albuquerque Long Range Rifle Club, and Rio Grande Renegades (SASS, Cowboys). The Range also supports training and practice for various local, state and federal law enforcement and corrections agencies.



MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

The Open Space Division includes a hardworking crew dedicated to maintenance and operations in the Bosque and other Major Public Open Space. In addition to ensuring the properties are well maintained, they manage over 50 trailheads including trash receptacles and mutt mitt stations, clean up transient camps, and maintain fence lines and trails including parts of the Paseo del Bosque trail. The crews also work alongside inmate crews and youth conservation crews who provide a tremendous help managing the daily operations of Open Space properties. Some of the larger projects they accomplished this year include the following:

- Constructed a new culvert and improvements to the parking lot at Los Poblanos Open Space.
- Constructed new pergolas at Boca Negra and Montessa Park.
- Fabricated and installed 40 mile markers along the Rio Grande. Staff used repurposed jetty jacks as the frames of the signs.
- Fuel wood reduction projects and invasive plant removal in the Bosque.
- Removed a hazardous building at the Horseman's Complex.
- Asphalt repair at Boca Negra and Mesa Point.
- Replaced decking on 3 bridges and repairs to the Tingley boardwalk overlook.
- Repaired sinks, urinals, flooring and roofing at Boca Negra and Elena Gallegos.
- Ditch and culvert improvements at Open Space Farms.
- And much more!



The Open Space Alliance supports the Division's work by engaging the public in volunteer and educational events, promoting the MPOS, and bringing in member dues that help fund the OSD's public programs, including some listed in this 2019 summary report. To learn more, visit <http://openspacealliance.org/>.

For more information about the Open Space Division, volunteer and education opportunities, property information and maps, rules and regulations, trail etiquette and more, visit www.cabq.gov/openspace.

