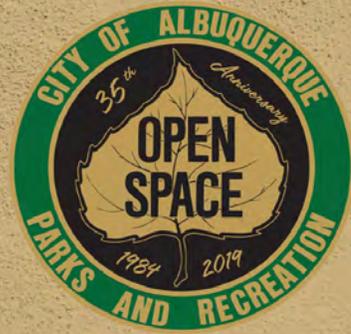
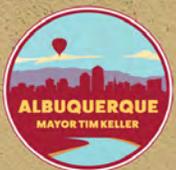


OPEN SPACE



A Blank Spot on the Map

Albuquerque's Open Space Story

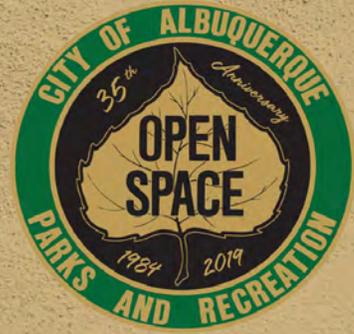


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This publication is a collaboration between the Open Space Division and New Mexico Humanities Council.



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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Aldo Leopold, a pioneer in wildlife management, ecology, forestry, and wildland preservation. During his 5-year residency in Albuquerque (1914-1919) working for the U S Forest Service, Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, and New Mexico Game Protection Association, he advocated for cleanup and preservation of the Rio Grande and a park near what is now the Albuquerque zoo. More importantly, his words, work, and advocacy of a new land ethic have inspired many to preserve Open Space and pass the torch to future generations. We have used quotes from his works throughout this book. His landmark book *A Sand County Almanac* distilled his thoughts and experiences over a long career in conservation and land management.



Aldo Leopold (1887 – 1948), founder of modern conservation biology and the American wilderness movement (photo courtesy of the Leopold Foundation)

-- FOREWORD --

A BLANK SPOT ON THE MAP: ALBUQUERQUE'S OPEN SPACE STORY

The idea for this book came about independently, from our shared and common experiences. Both of us had spent many years engaged in what we felt was among the noblest of cases. It wasn't always easy, often times taxing, sometimes punctuated with losses, but always rewarding. We both had been advocates, and then managers in the cause to save land and waters—to help assemble the pieces of Albuquerque's Open Space program.

We were far from the first in this endeavor. The community had long loved this place and acknowledged its attraction to the naturally beautiful assets of its surroundings. Although the names of most early Open Space heroes are fading or have been forgotten, one person who exemplified that dream went on to become internationally famous. Aldo Leopold, during his short residence in Albuquerque, had left a profound mark locally and ultimately in the national effort to preserve wild lands.

"I've been thinking about writing an Open Space history," Rex said once after he had moved back to the Albuquerque area.

"Really? So have I," Matt replied. "That first short history I wrote didn't get into the details it could have."

Rex did not miss a beat. "Then we should do this together."

There was already a working title: *A Blank Spot on the Map*, which was based on a favorite Aldo Leopold quote: "I am glad I shall never be young without wild country to be young in. Of what avail are forty freedoms without a blank spot on the map?" Here, of course, Leopold was referring to the undeveloped natural lands that are the essential definition of what came to known as Open Space.

The structure of the book came naturally, too. It would be part memoir and part homage to all of the unsung local heroes, supplemented by archival information and illustrations from the files of the Open Space Division and other sources. Above all it was intended as a retrospective filled with lessons from the past to better inform the community of today and our future citizens. Rex had deep and intimate knowledge of the earlier part of the story; he and Matt overlapped for a vital period working for the city of Albuquerque, and then Matt's later experiences would bring it up to the present. Each chapter would be introduced by a relevant Aldo Leopold quote and capped off with a lessons-learned ending recapping the significance of the recounted events. The chapters chronicle the story of the Open Space saga as it unfolded, with a particular emphasis on the many people who unselfishly and tirelessly raised the tide along the way. It would be impossible, due to space limitations alone, to credit everyone involved, and any omissions, oversights or inaccuracies are the responsibility of the authors. History has a way of happening before our eyes, and just as easily of fading from our view. That is, unless it is captured in the moment by those who lived through it.

Albuquerque's Open Space is an essential part of the infrastructure of the community. It is as important as streets, pipes, utilities, schools, parks and community centers. Open Space is unique in the benefits it provides us. Among these are access to the healing power of nature which gives us perspective and a renewed sense of awe and provides relief from the pressures of urban life. Open space provides miles of trails for outdoor exercise much needed by all. Open Space also defines the city's edges: the boundary where the city stops, and nature begins. Often this prevents development of steep slopes, floodways, important natural and cultural areas which would be expensive to service and damaging to the environment. Neighborhoods adjacent to open space are greatly enhanced in value and quality of life. Since these lands are open to all, however, these benefits are widely distributed. Just as important is the preservation of the city's views: views of the Volcanoes and escarpment, bosque, and Sandia Foothills have all been saved by open space acquisition. Finally, Open Space conserves areas of great natural, archaeological and cultural value. In short, Open Space is a jewel and cornerstone of the City's quality of life which benefits all of us. Like all infrastructure, the Open Space system should grow as the city grows. These lands deserve protection and wise management just as we strive to maintain the rest of our community structure.

We hope that this historical account will help inspire others to continue protecting Albuquerque's hard-won legacy of open space. Our primary inspiration, however, will always be the incredible natural setting of the City. The purpose of this project was ultimately to be a gift to the Open Space Division and to the community who has always supported it. Generous funding came from the City of Albuquerque and the New Mexico Humanities Council to produce the electronic version of this book. It is available on the Open Space website but the intent will be to hopefully produce hard-copy versions for more to learn and enjoy. Our "blank spots," Albuquerque's Open Space, are the result of the efforts of hundreds of advocates, planners, elected officials, land managers, volunteers, and the citizens of Albuquerque who, like Aldo Leopold, were inspired by the City's natural setting and set about to preserve some of it. This was done at a great cost of toil and treasure, and the process is not finished. Preservation, however, is only the first step. Caring for this legacy will be the task of future generations. It will require love of the land, wise use, and restraint. Freedom and responsibility are inseparable.

Acknowledgements

We owe our deep thanks to superintendent Colleen Langan-McRoberts and the staff of the Open Space Division, and to current Parks and Recreation Department Director Dave Simon. Past department directors Orlie Sedillo, Jay Hart, Barbara Baca were friends and colleagues all along the way. At Open Space our past colleagues included Steve Thomas and Tim Purtell. Important community members we consulted included Paul Lusk, Diane Souder, Janet Saiers, Ellie Mitchell, Harvey Frauenglass, Victor Marshall, Pat Bryan, Nick Estes, Mark Money, Bob White, Nadyne Bicknell, Rosemary Thompson Glenn, Roland Penttila, and Rich Adam of the Albuquerque

Academy. Brandon Johnson of the New Mexico Humanities Council provided guidance and valuable support throughout the project.

About the Authors

Rex Funk arrived in Albuquerque in 1969 to teach science courses at West Mesa High School. He quickly became an open space advocate working with the Bosque Society to establish a nature center and preserve along the Rio Grande in Albuquerque. He went on to serve on several boards and task forces including chairing the Open Space Task Force. He was a leader in the effort to save the Elena Gallegos lands and establish the Open Space Trust Fund in 1982. He was hired that year as the City's first Open Space Planner, and later became the first Superintendent of the Open Space Division of the City Parks and Recreation Department. He retired from the City in 1994.

Matt Schmader is an archaeologist, historian, lecturer and author. He has spent over 40 years conducting research in central New Mexico, working on sites from every major cultural time period. He retired from work at the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division after more than 25 years, managing a system of nearly 30,000 acres. His duties included Assistant Superintendent (1995-2005) and Superintendent (2005-2016), and he was also the only official City Archaeologist (2007-2016). He is now adjunct professor of archaeology at the Department of Anthropology, University of New Mexico.

Physical Setting and Cultural Context of Albuquerque's Open Space

"To those devoid of imagination, a blank place on the map is a useless waste; to others, the most valuable part." - Aldo Leopold



*West face of the Sandias looking up Pino Canyon.
Photo: Rex Funk*

Albuquerque is blessed with an extraordinary physical setting. Viewed from above, the major landforms that make the city recognizable can be seen in their vastness and beauty: it is how you know you can only be in Albuquerque. It is these features that Open Space advocates realized early on-- from the 1950s at least—and which have been the subject of many conservation efforts. Success in the preservation movements laid the foundation for one of the country's true open space gems, a proud legacy that is still growing and whose story we hope to unfold in the following chapters.

Like No Other Place: Albuquerque's Physical Surroundings

The steep granite face of the Sandia Mountains rises nearly a mile above the foothills to form the eastern backdrop of the city. The Sandias are not especially old in geologic time but hurtled to



View west of the northern volcanoes (Butte, Bond, and Black). Photo: Bill Pentler

the sky within the past ten million years, exposing truly ancient rock nearly 11,000 feet above sea level. The limestone layers along the crest are over 300 million years old, while the exposed granite core of the mountains exceeds a billion years in age. The Sandias are part of an extensive uplift through central New Mexico that includes the Manzanos to the south, but are not technically part of the Rocky Mountain range. There is no consensus as to why the mountains are called Sandia, meaning "watermelon" in Spanish. Some say that the common pink glow that lights up the granite at sunset gave the mountains their name; others attribute it to the presence of wild melons

first described by Spanish explorers. For the Southern Tiwa pueblos who are ancestral to the area, the Sandias are known variously as the turtle mountain, or sometimes as Bien Shur, the "big mountain."

To the west, a much younger geologic horizon is framed by the aligned cones of five small volcanoes. Formed by a fissure that poured out extensive sheets of molten basalt, the cinder cones went dormant about 150,000 years ago. The fissures are part of a much broader volcanic field of geologically young and active features that extend throughout much of central New Mexico. In fact, scientists who study volcanoes often state that New Mexico has more volcanic areas than Hawai'i! The West Mesa lava flows covered more than 25 square miles, flowing gradually eastward down former arroyo courses in at least six different mappable units. The ancestral Rio Grande once flowed over the top of the lava and created steep cliffs before the river became entrenched. These cliffs are locally known as the “volcanic escarpment” and are an eroded feature that extends for 17 miles and can be seen from virtually any place in the city.

Through the center of these city edges runs one of the longest rivers in all of North America-- the Rio Grande. Known by other names during the past centuries, including Rio de Nuestra Senora and Rio Bravo del Norte, the Rio Grande has also been called the “Nile of the Southwest” because it is the most important source of permanently flowing water in the high desert environs of central New Mexico. It is home to the largest continuous cottonwood forest (or “bosque” in Spanish) in North America. The ancestral river flowed much higher above its current base level when the lava flows first formed, but faulting that caused the Sandia uplift and the volcanic fissures also resulted in a down-dropping of the valley. In fact, the Rio Grande flows through one of just a handful of true rift valleys found in the world. The sinking rift valley has filled with thousands of feet of alluvial sediment over the millennia, deeply burying the same sediments that are visible on the crest of the Sandias—a vertical displacement of geologic layers several miles thick.



View across the Rio Grande from the west bank near Paseo del Norte. Photo: Matt Schmader

Cultural Context and Legacy

This amazing physical setting is perhaps only matched by an equally remarkable cultural setting. People have lived in and around Albuquerque for well over 12,000 years, since the time of the last continental ice ages when glaciers topped the Sandias. In that era, abundant rainfall created shallow lakes or playas on the West Mesa, an important water source for now-extinct exotic animals such as giant ground sloth, camels, mastodons, ancient horses, and enormous bison. As these creatures gathered at watering places, they were hunted by the earliest bands of people called Paleo-

Indians by archaeologists. Since the West Mesa lava flows are much older than the peopling of North America, and so little soil has built up on the mesa top, this old ground surface shows evidence of material from every cultural time period dating back to the PaleoIndian. A 10,000 year-old spear point might be found not far from a 1800s sheep herder camp.

As the ice ages ended and massive climate change occurred, the entire southwest transformed into the deserts we see today. People had to adapt to these changes as well, hunting smaller game in ever-decreasing territories and following the ripening of wild plants and grasses. This period was called the Archaic, a very long and stable adaptation that lasted for an astonishing 7,000 years with little change. The oldest petroglyphs, or images pecked into stone, are found on the West Mesa escarpment and are estimated to date about 1000 BCE. As Archaic populations increased or as territories decreased, droughts and scarcity of wild food eventually meant hunting and gathering groups needed a different way to feed themselves. The first horticulture in the Rio Grande valley was born out of this necessity, sporadically at first but finally taking hold by 400 or 500 CE. Some of the earliest corn known in the area was found in Boca Negra cave, a lava tube in the northern Albuquerque volcanoes.



*Hand petroglyphs at Piedras Marcadas Canyon.
Photo: Matt Schmader*

Small villages with dwellings dug halfway into the ground, known as Pithouses, began to appear along the banks of the Rio Grande by the 600s but the biggest change occurred by the late 1200s when devastating droughts took hold all across the southwest. Mass movements of peoples meant that areas like the Rio Grande valley, with its precious reliable water, saw rapid growth by 1300 CE. Along the river, large new villages made from adobe were built by the direct ancestors of today's Pueblo people. Population levels may have reached 10,000 to 20,000 and with them came new forms of social structure, belief systems, and religion. These cultural changes are clearly reflected in the sacred rock images seen all along the volcanic escarpment in Petroglyph National Monument. Over 20,000 petroglyphs are found in specially selected locations used by the most sanctioned individuals of ancestral pueblo society such as priests and medicine men. One of the great virtues of open space is that not only are the sites where people lived and worshipped in the past are protected, but so are entire sacred cultural landscapes and contexts of those sites.

These cultural landscapes contain the continuity and change, the mixing of peoples and beliefs, and evidence of the most momentous events in our local history. And they are preserved to their greatest extent because open space landscapes are large enough to contain them. From the beginning of written documents, with first European contacts by Francisco Vazquez de Coronado in 1540 to the early Spanish colonies, from the settlement of Albuquerque and surrounding lands in ranchos, traditional communities, and land grants, to statehood and World War II, many features of this timeline can be found in open space. We hope to tell the tale of these places, how they came to be saved, the local heroes and advocates who played a part in the open space story, and how the legacy continues in the upcoming chapters of A Blank Spot on the Map.

What I Learned:

“What is special about Albuquerque can be found in its Open Space legacy.” It is perhaps all too easy for people who live in a place to take the depth and nuances that make it unique for granted. But when you see the wonder expressed by a visitor to Albuquerque and look closely at what we have that makes us special, there is much to be grateful for. The beauty of our surroundings, the majestic views, clear skies, and wide open spaces make us who we are. And they entice people to come, and sometimes never leave. That is also the case for our multi-cultural heritage, for people have been drawn to this area since the beginning of human time. We are made all the more rich by the intersection of culture and physiography, more fortunate by the actions of many advocates who worked tirelessly and succeeded in preserving much of what makes Albuquerque special.

Further Reading

Albuquerque’s Environmental Story (1996) edited by Hy and Joan Rosner. City of Albuquerque, <https://albuqhistsoc.org/albuquerques-environmental-story>.

Albuquerque’s Parks and Open Space (2011) by Matt Schmader. Images of America series, Arcadia Press, Charleston SC.

Early Roots and Historic Foundations of Albuquerque's Open Space Program

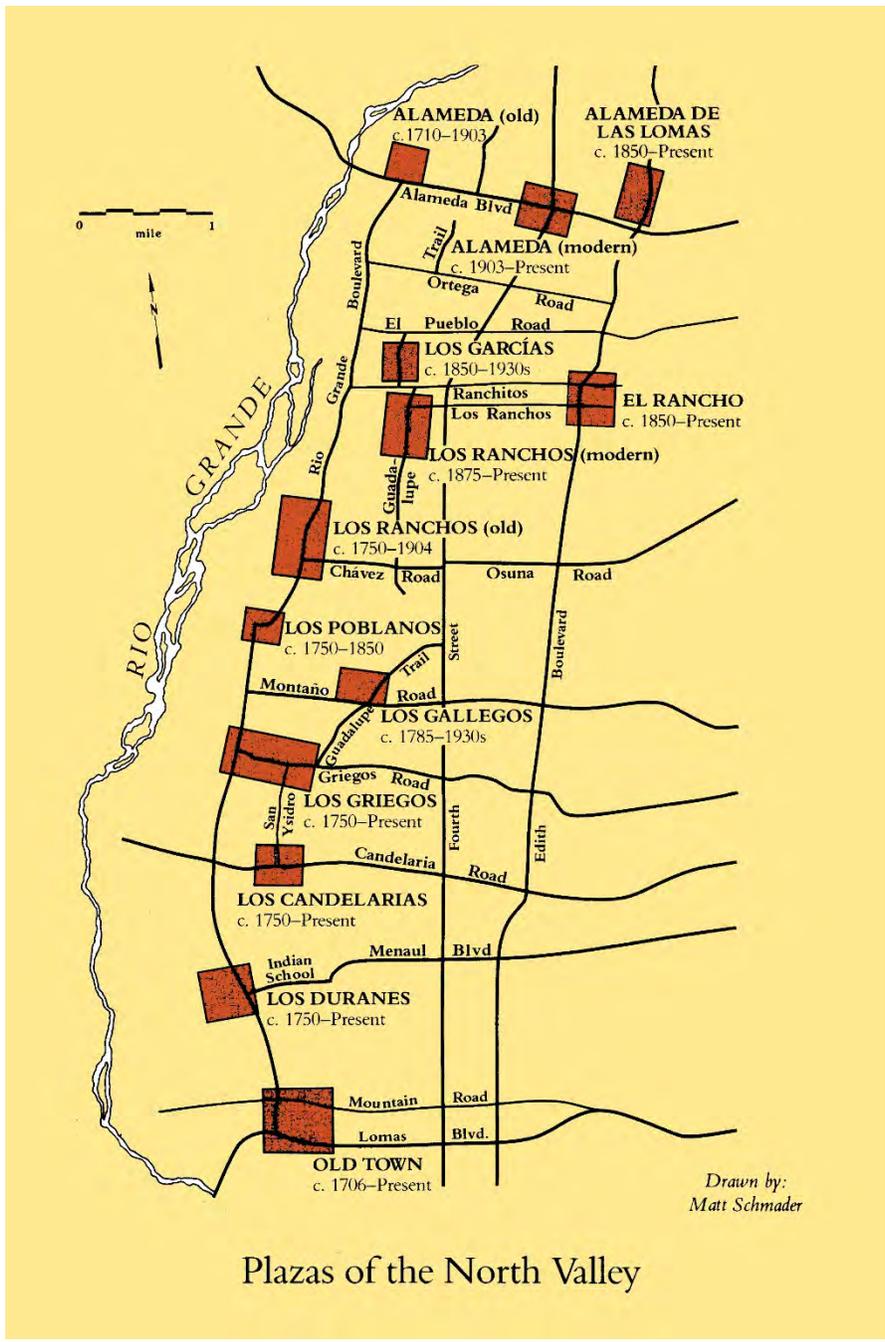
by Matt Schmader

"The average Albuquerquean man, woman or child, is in need of a place within walking distance of the city where he can enjoy a breath of fresh air and a sight of a few trees, a few birds, and a little water". – Aldo Leopold, 1917

Building on Albuquerque's physical and cultural settings, several other factors have combined to set the stage for the unique qualities of the Open Space system as it developed over the decades. Our background starts with puebloan and indigenous land ethics, which did not have a concept of land "ownership." All lands were intended to be used equally and sustainably and could not conceivably be owned. Later, land grants, the notion of a "commons," and urban planning all combined in ways distinctive to our city. Layered onto that base were the lives and actions of some remarkable people who saw beyond present expedencies to a clear vision for our future, with outcomes that shaped our community for generations.

Land Grants and the Idea of the Commons

The 1600s were tumultuous and troublous times throughout New Mexico. The first attempt at a true colony, started by Juan de Oñate north of Santa Fe in 1598, did not last even a dozen years due to droughts, mismanagement, and discontent. The colonial governor Pedro de Peralta was ordered to establish a royal *villa* as a new capital for the colony, which he did at Santa Fe de San Francisco de Asis in 1610. Missionization by the Franciscans throughout the mid-1600s resulted in much displacement of native population and related strife. Unrelenting droughts, constant intercultural fighting, and severe population losses finally culminated in the Pueblo Revolts of 1680-1696. The first years following the Revolt saw regained possession of lands and revitalized religion by indigenous groups, a status quo that could not be sustained. The Spanish crown succeeded in retaking the Nuevo Mexico territory and employed different mechanisms to maintain control. Among the most important of these means were land grants. At first, the focus was in granting lands to veterans of the military reconquest of the colony (for example, the original grant to Capitan Diego de Montoya in 1694 north of Albuquerque, which later became the Elena Gallegos grant).



The royal villa of San Felipe Neri de Albuquerque was established in 1706 at what is now Old Town. More land grants followed, with emphasis on resettling areas surrounding the villa. Other lands were assembled into *rancherías*, hence the name “Los Ranchos” north of Albuquerque. No fewer than seven land grants still have remnants in the Albuquerque area: Elena Gallegos, Alameda, Atrisco, Pajarito, Los Padillas, San Pedro, and San Miguel de Carnue. Portions of all these grants are still preserved in some part of the Open Space system. Two Pueblo grants border the city—Sandia to the north and Isleta to the south. Numerous traditional communities, often associated with family names, formed around plazas and ranchos up and down the North and South Valleys (such as Los Poblanos, Los Montoyas, Los Griegos, Los Candelarias, Los Duranes).

All community land grants share a basic ingredient, which is the notion of a commons. Grants were carefully laid out to have access to waters for domestic use and irrigation, to farmlands, to grazing lands, to timberlands, and to hunting areas. Members of the grant were able to use and share these vital resources for the sustenance of the community. Thus the grant commons were needed for the lives of its people, and resources were shared by all but owned by no individuals in particular. Centuries-old institutions of the commons, ingrained in community land grants, are part of New Mexico’s deeper history and help form the basis of what we appreciate in our Open Space lands today. That is, they are lands shared for the benefit of all and not appropriated by

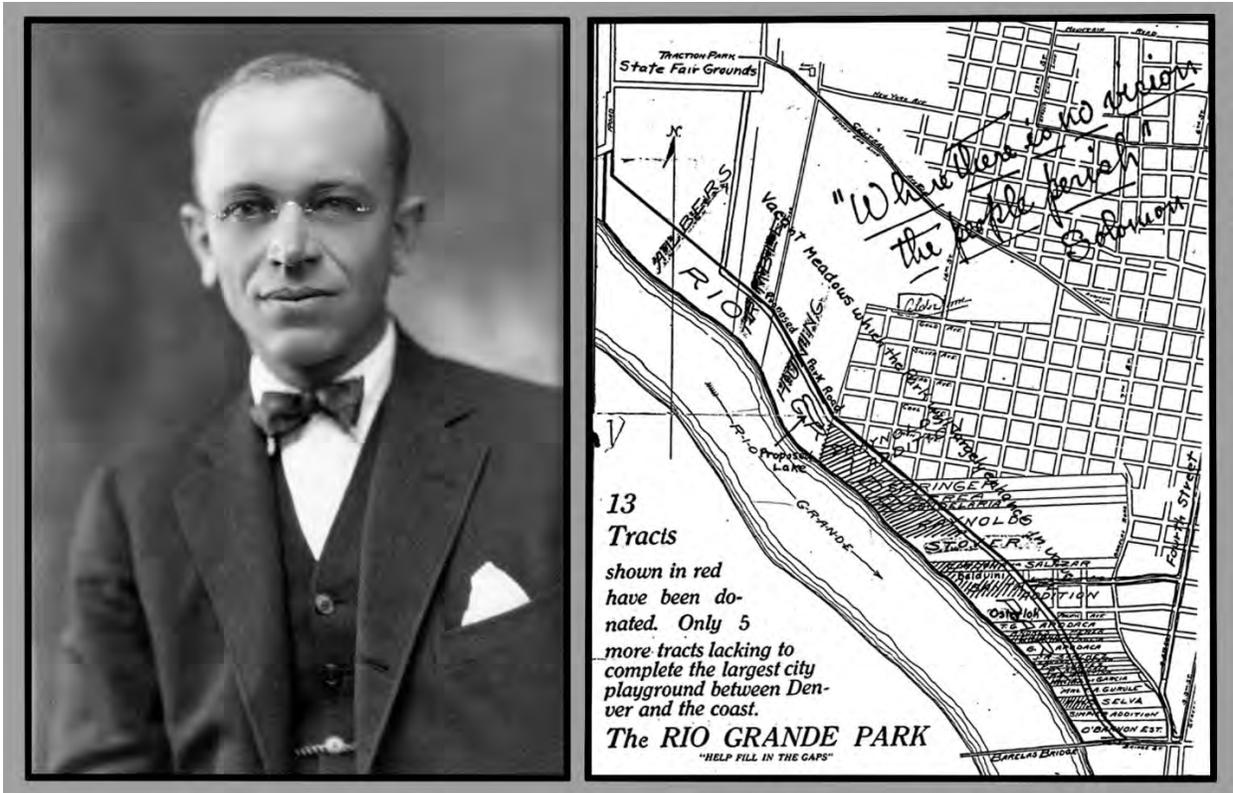
any individual, members of a particular socioeconomic status, or narrowly-defined special interest group.

Urban planning also adds to this idea of the commons. The growth of European urban areas led to elements such as central gathering places like plazas, public parks, linear connections, trailways, and common spaces. These urban planning concepts made their way to the American colonies in planned cities like Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington DC. In the western United States, urban centers developed later but had more abundant land resources with which to provide common areas. As a result, open space design was more readily incorporated on a large scale in the west and cities willing to embrace that concept now show the outcome (such as Denver, Boulder, Portland, San Francisco, and Phoenix). Albuquerque was fortunate to have been one of the cities where open space elements were introduced early in its urban growth. Three individuals exemplify this vision by their drive, ability, and resolve to shape the future of our city.

Three Visionaries – 1. Aldo Leopold

Aldo Leopold was arguably one of the most progressive thinkers ever in the field of conservation biology. His writings on land ethics, game management, and the wilderness movement are only equaled by his meticulous attention to data collection, observation, explanation, and keen awareness of the many parts that combine to make a whole ecosystem. His writings are so beautiful that they are admired and oft-quoted many decades later. His nearly legendary status as a world leader in his field, well before conservation biology emerged as a science, is rooted in his formative years and partly because he died at the relatively young age of 61. Aldo Leopold was born on January 11, 1887 in the small city of Burlington, Iowa. Burlington is located on the west bank of the Mississippi and his grandfather was responsible for building a lake at the town's park, a fact that will be revisited later.

Albuquerque is fortunate to have played a role in Aldo Leopold's early professional career. He started out as a young forester at the Carson National Forest in northern New Mexico in 1911 and married Estella Bergere in 1912. They moved to Albuquerque and raised their young family in a house at 14th Street and Gold, west of the country club area. From 1917 to 1919 Leopold served as secretary of the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, a position that enabled him to promote several ideas—the most important of which was the idea of a park along the banks of the Rio Grande. A speech given to the Game Protection Association on January 11, 1917 (his 30th birthday) was also attended by Dennis Chavez, the future beloved New Mexico senator. In that speech Leopold said, "Make a city park from Barelás to Old Town. Not a park out of cut lawns and flower beds, but a park of natural trees, grass and water—a place where the average citizen can take his Sunday walk, or go fishing, or take his family for a picnic."



Aldo Leopold circa 1910, at the beginning of his time in New Mexico. Right, Leopold's map boosting the idea of a Rio Grande Park 65 years ahead of its time. Note the "proposed lake" along the east bank of the river, in the left-center of the map.

Even at this early stage, Aldo Leopold had already set a goal to create something wonderful for the residents of Albuquerque. He kept at it tirelessly for two years and nearly achieved his goal. A map he made declared "only five more tracts lacking to complete the largest city playground" between Denver and Los Angeles. The map also had a proposed park road paralleling the river and a "proposed lake" at the west end of Iron Street next to the Rio Grande (a throwback to his grandfather's lake in Burlington's riverside park). The last five tracts, though, were owned by wealthy landholders who refused to donate any land for the project. The park idea stalled as it neared possible completion. He was, as it turns out, 65 years ahead of his time but his vision would ultimately come to pass. Eventually the land he did obtain was used as the site of the young Albuquerque zoo. But Aldo Leopold had other places to go.

By 1920 he had moved on to regional offices at the Forest Service and promptly proposed a much grander scheme, that of setting aside hundreds of thousands of acres in the Gila forest. From this idea came the first wilderness area in United States history, cementing Leopold's legacy as the father of the wilderness movement in America.

2. Clyde Tingley

Clyde Tingley and Carrie Wooster never intended to make Albuquerque their home. On their way from Ohio to Arizona in 1910 to treat Carrie's tuberculosis, she suffered a health emergency and the couple was forced to stop in Albuquerque. Having received excellent care, they made the decision to go no further. A decision that would have major impact on their new-found home.

Clyde Tingley promptly involved himself in local politics, getting elected as city alderman in 1916, and starting a political career that would span over the next 40 years. Elected to the city commission in 1922, he went on to serve two terms as governor of New Mexico from 1934 to 1938 before returning to the city commission. He was the chairman of the commission, the unofficial mayor, from 1940 until 1953. Clyde Tingley died on Christmas eve 1960 at the age of 79.

Carrie Tingley built upon her personal health experiences and worked to ensure children and people of need had access to the best care available. Her work, together with Clyde's influence, succeeded in creating Carrie Tingley Hospital, its associated children's hospital, and a financial support foundation that thrives today.



Clyde Tingley circa 1925, soon after becoming city commissioner. Tingley's direct plea to the newly-formed Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District led to the dredging of a lake along the river, as Aldo Leopold had first suggested. Right, cranes excavating Conservancy Beach in the summer of 1931.

Among Clyde Tingley's lasting contributions was his role in building on Aldo Leopold's river park concept. Although no documentation of the two directly working together has yet to be found, they certainly moved in the same circles of influence. Leopold was secretary of the Chamber of Commerce and constantly gave speeches about his park idea, between 1917 and 1918, when Tingley was first elected alderman.

After Leopold moved to Wisconsin and as Clyde Tingley neared the end of his several terms on city commission, in the late 1920s, Tingley got involved in a major project. He endorsed the idea of excavating an old city landfill along the east bank of river to create a lake, and taking the dredging to make a park road. He persuaded the chief engineer of the newly-formed Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, Fred Burkholder, to volunteer the men and machinery to do the excavation in the summer of 1931. The project put many out-of-work men on the job in the early years of the Great Depression, and the lake was finished in time for a Christmas ribbon-cutting in 1931.

Originally called Conservancy Beach, the role of the flamboyant Tingley -- who often held boat races and beauty pageants at the lake -- ensured it would always be known as "Tingley Beach" (along with the park road being called "Tingley Drive"). Tingley Beach proved to be the city's most popular recreation gathering spot until polio scares closed it as a public swimming pool in the early 1950s.

3. Bob Burgan

As Albuquerque experienced post-World War II growth in the 1940's, a number of new larger parks and community centers were created. Many of these improvements were also developed under Tingley's leadership and the federal funds he was able to secure. By the late 1940s there were enough parks, community centers, and swimming pools to warrant establishing a new Parks and Recreation Department. Irene Teakell became the first Parks director, in 1948, and was later followed by a young and capable Midwesterner named Bob Burgan. Burgan assumed the position in 1954 at the age of just 36.

Albuquerque did not have a mayoral form of governance in the 1950s; rather, it had a city manager and elected a chairman of its commission. The city manager at the time was Ed Engel, and he worked closely with Bob Burgan on a concept to plan well ahead of the city's future growth. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was actively disposing of what it considered to be "surplus" federal lands throughout the west. Land was made available to local governments through a program called the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP), which had been on the books since the mid-1920s.

With the BLM more actively disposing of surplus lands, Engel and Burgan decided to apply for tracts in and around the greater metropolitan area. Their idea was simple: Albuquerque would one day be a huge metropolis and large tracts of land in outlying areas would offer relief from

the city and opportunities to experience the great outdoors. The application process was relatively easy and inexpensive as well—typical costs to a local government ran about \$2.50 an acre to obtain what seemed to be a perpetual lease or patent. All that was needed was a little cash and a plan to show why the land would continue to serve a public purpose. Engel and Burgan were so enthusiastic about this new initiative that they petitioned Congress to have a provision changed—a 640 acre per year limit—just so Albuquerque could apply for more land.



Bob Burgan, second director of the Parks and Recreation Department from 1954 until 1979. Photo taken September 2007 the day before he moved from Albuquerque to Utah. Right, Golden Open Space, one of the Recreation and Public Purposes Act properties Burgan helped to secure in the late 1960s.

At the time, Albuquerque did not even have a definition for what would be called “Open Space.” Large tracts of natural land intended to be used for low-impact recreation, such as hiking or biking, were called regional parks at the time. By whatever name, though, starting in the early 1960s and running through the 1970s, Burgan in particular was able to apply for and receive dozens of land patents from the BLM. His vision for these regional parks eventually formed the solid basis for our Open Space system today. By the late 1970s, over 8,500 acres of R&PP lands had been acquired under patent from the Federal government. These places include the Open Space Shooting Range and Grasslands Preserve, La Boca Negra Park, Four Hills Park, Carolino Canyon, Gutierrez Canyon, San Antonito, and even Golden and Placitas open space preserves in Sandoval County.

The question sometimes comes up as to why a city like Albuquerque would own and manage lands in another county. The answer lies in Engel and Burgan’s vision to create a greater commons for all citizens of the metropolitan area, with no limits being drawn artificially at a city boundary. When asked why Albuquerque should be the entity to take on this project, Burgan succinctly responded, “Nobody else can do the job.” His words are still true today, 50 years later.

Bob Burgan served an almost unbelievable term of office at the helm of the Parks and Recreation Department. He was director for a full quarter century, from 1954 until 1979, before handing over the reins to Orlando “Orlie” Sedillo. His focus was by no means limited to the nascent open space idea, although he is arguably the real father of the Open Space program. He helped to develop many parks and golf courses. An avid golfer, his obituary stated his “proudest accomplishments were the Los Altos, Arroyo del Oso, Puerto del Sol and Ladera golf courses, director of the Albuquerque Zoo and many tennis complexes, community centers, swimming pools, ball fields and parks.” Bob Burgan died in 2014, two days short of his 96th birthday, an unsung and not well-known but true father of the open space concept.

What we Learned:

“We Stood on the Shoulders of Giants”

All movements of any consequence do not happen without the vision of forward-thinking leaders, energetic actors, and concerted effort. Selflessness and community-minded spirit are hallmarks of causes with lasting benefit for the people. Albuquerque was shaped by its cultural background, which grew out of indigenous shared land tenure systems, later land grants, and cultural diversity. Three true giants—Aldo Leopold, Clyde Tingley, and Bob Burgan—shaped the future of our city for generations to come. Their actions would not be the end, but rather just set the stage for many other environmental heroes and unselfish individuals to step forward and create the Open Space saga. These combined actions make us who we are today.

Further Reading

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Birth of a New Paradigm

By Rex Funk

“The fallacy the economic determinists have tied around our collective neck, and which we now need to cast off, is the belief that economics determines all land use”. -Aldo Leopold

1969 was, in many ways, the beginning of the open space movement in Albuquerque. The progress that followed in the next decade, complemented by the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan for Major Open Space, was largely the result of the efforts of four citizen advocacy groups. These groups would later unite under the banner of the Open Space Task Force to advise the City in its early efforts to preserve open space.

Setting the Goals

In 1968, City Councilor Pete Dominici formed the City/County Goals committee. The group was composed of community leaders who listened to public testimony about what the future of the City and County should be and distilled these concerns into long-range goals. Paul Lusk, a City Planner and staff person for the Goals Committee, said they held a conference at D.H. Lawrence Ranch near Taos to work on goals. The results of their work were published and adopted in 1969, and included a revolutionary new goal for Open Space: *“The goal is to preserve the unique, natural features of the metropolitan area by achieving a pattern of development and open spaces – respecting the river land, mesa, mountains, volcanoes, and arroyos.”* What followed was the formation of four separate citizen advocacy groups, each advocating for preservation of different elements of the natural setting: Save Our Sandias, Save the Arroyos, Save the Volcanoes, and the Bosque del Rio Grande Nature Preserve Society. Each of these groups had no more than a handful of active members, but they acted with great effect as champions and advocates for preserving their respective natural features.

The Advocates



Mary Olin Harrell

Save Our Sandias had its roots in the early 1970s when the Cibola National Forest, Sandia Ranger District proposed a trade of lands in Juan Tabo Canyon for lands in Embudo Canyon. This was a controversial proposal and was opposed at public meetings by several wilderness advocates and local residents. A leading voice in the opposition was Phillip B. Tollefsrud. Others were Mary Olin Harrell, Corry McDonald, Jay Sorenson, Milo Conrad, Victor Marshall, and Jack and LaDonna Kutz. The land swap was scuttled but Save Our Sandias was born and went on to lobby City,



Phil Tollefsrud



Cliff Anderson

State, and Federal Governments to save lands along the foothills and all the way up to the crest of the mountain. Later, the group was joined by Vi Miller, Cliff Anderson and Jean House. They lobbied the New Mexico Congressional Delegation throughout the 1970s to save the Elena Gallegos grant, and their efforts ultimately contributed to the successful acquisition of that property (See Chapter 7).



Jean House

Save the Arroyos was led by Dr. Jim Lewis, a mathematics professor at UNM. He was a fixture at numerous meetings and was an advocate for natural treatment of arroyos. He was a soft-spoken and colorful character who usually rode his bike to work and to meetings. Some of his ideas were eventually incorporated in AMAFCA projects, and hundreds of acres in the Tijeras Arroyo have been preserved. Jim was also an advocate of bike trails along the arroyos, and many of our most important trails are a result of his advocacy.



Jim Lewis



Ruth Eisenberg

Save the Volcanoes was started by Ruth Eisenberg; also known as the “Volcano Lady”. Other active members were Eleanor “Ellie” Mitchell, Cliff Anderson, H. Barker Bill Weismantel, George Pearl, Bill Snead and Chris Rasmussen. According to Ellie Mitchell, the group held “Walk and Talks” on the escarpment and volcanoes



Eleanor “Ellie” Mitchell

featuring local experts on geology and biology and hosted a chamber orchestra performance near Vulcan volcano. These events attracted hundreds of participants and helped elevate the importance of the volcanoes and escarpment. The tireless advocacy of this group led to the City acquiring all four major cinder cones on the West Mesa as well as thousands of acres of surrounding land. Had they not done so the land might have been developed into thousands of 5 acre “Ranchettes.” They also advocated for protection and fencing of this land, and an amphitheater. In the 1980s they successfully lobbied the City to acquire Piedras Marcadas Canyon; one of the largest concentration of petroglyphs along the volcanic escarpment. Together, these lands became the nucleus of Petroglyph National Monument (see Chapter 10).



Carolyn Jones & Harvey Frauenglass

The Bosque Society was the group that Rex Funk helped found in 1970. Funk had accepted a Science teaching position at West Mesa HS in 1969 and was interested in starting a nature center. He learned of a Cattail marsh 2 miles north of our school in an old oxbow of the Rio Grande. It was fed by the outfall of the Corrales Drain, so it

had a permanent water supply even when the River was dry. Funk visited it and found a high-quality 37-acre marsh teeming with wildlife.



Rex Funk giving a presentation

He heard of some people who were organizing to promote a nature preserve on the Rio Grande, and went to the first meeting at Saint Michaels and All Angels Church on Montano Road. Joining Funk was Alan Templeton, a fellow biology teacher. The de-facto leader of the group was Harvey Frauenglass, a North Valley resident and technical writer for Sandia Corporation. Also present were Chan Graham, an architect; Carolyn Jones, another North Valley Resident; and Steve Wilkes, an elementary school teacher. Later Blair Darnell,



Blair Darnell

Dick Kirschner and Jay

Thorndyke joined the group. Everyone agreed to name the *Bosque del Rio Grande Nature Preserve Society* (later the *Bosque Society*) and discussed priorities. Public education was our first focus, and Harvey and a colleague, Ken Artz, produced a slide show which the group presented to hundreds of groups and public officials. They also organized tours, field, and very popular rafting trips to the Bosque. The group called themselves the "Nature Preserve Navy" and our flagship was a 6-person yellow raft dubbed the "HMS Frauenglass".



Allen Templeton (left) on raft trip.

Throughout the 1970s the group took scores of trips down the river during the spring runoff. They hosted planners, public officials, community organizers, the press, and other influential people as well as the general public. Allen Templeton and Rex Funk taught a summer field biology course focused on the Oxbow Marsh that offered college credit from the University of Albuquerque. Homer Milford, a Biology professor at U of A, was the program's sponsor. Little did Templeton and Funk know that the Oxbow would be the scene of one of the most important



Steve Wilkes

battles in the history of the open space movement.(See chapter 4) The Bosque Society worked with the City of Albuquerque to get a National Endowment for the Humanities grant and helped produce the *City Edges Study* focusing on preserving the river, Bosque, and establishing the Rio Grande Nature Center.(See Chapter 5)

The Open Space Task Force

The City of Albuquerque received Land and Water Conservation Fund money from the Federal Government in the mid-1970s. This was matched with City bond issue funding, and the Planning Department wanted public input about priorities for acquisition of open space proposed in the Comprehensive Plan. Both the City and advocates wanted to avoid squabbling about priorities, so they agreed to form a “Citizen Open Space Task Force” to come up with a priority list based on objective criteria and consensus. The members of the task force were representatives of the four regional open space advocacy groups mentioned above and whoever else showed an interest. An early proponent and the first Chairman of the group was Phil Tollefsrud, a physicist at Sandia Corporation and wilderness advocate. His steady leadership, knowledge, diplomacy, and enthusiasm were essential in securing agreement of the parties on acquisition priorities. Phil was also a dynamic public speaker and credibly represented the Task Force at Planning Commission and City Council meetings. Working with the City, the Task Force advised on thousands of acres of Open Space acquisitions. (See Chapter 5)



Phil Tollefsrud

What qualities did these early open space pioneers have in common? First, they were united in being inspired by the land. They felt privileged to live in a City that had not yet overrun its natural setting. Many, like Rex Funk, had experienced urban sprawl and destruction of open space elsewhere, but some were natives who loved the land and wanted to protect it. They were dedicated and selflessly gave their time and energy to the effort to preserve open space. Some lived near open space while others did not and came from a variety of backgrounds, experiences and skill sets. Engineers, teachers, professors, lawyers, artists, housewives, businessmen, architects, planners, and scientists all belonged to open space groups. They were effective because they were pragmatic. They focused on what would bring success. Finally, they were able to work together and with a variety of advocates, City staffers, journalists, politicians, and the public to get the message across and get action on their proposals. Speaking for many of us, Ellie Mitchell remembers the feeling of fun and accomplishment she had over several decades of involvement with open space. These and other groups greatly influenced the first Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan approved in 1975 and did much to implement it. (See chapter 5)

What I Learned:

“Don’t fight City Hall, convince them to do what you want”. I attribute this lesson to many activists with whom he worked and campaigns with which I was involved. Resistance has its place but changing the plan and getting it implemented; being proactive rather than reactive is the ultimate solution to permanently saving open space. Public support and advocacy are the engines that drive this change. The City County Goals Program, Comprehensive Plan, Rio Grande Valley State Park Plan and others all came out of this advocacy and became blueprints from which we built the open space system. Being **for** an alternative is more productive in the long run than being **against** the status quo. To lose a battle once is to lose that open space forever.

The Battle for the Oxbow Marsh 1976

By Rex Funk

“Education, I fear, is learning to see one thing by going blind to another. One thing most of us have gone blind to is the quality of marshes”. -Aldo Leopold

By 1970, the Country was just awakening to the plight of wetlands. Earth Day and the environmental movement resulted in several laws and regulations aimed at protecting wetlands; chief among them provisions of the Clean Water Act. The battle to protect the last marsh in Bernalillo County was a head-on confrontation between advocates of drainage and water salvage and those of habitat preservation. It was marked by public outcry, symbolic acts, threats, and (in the end) a compromise solution. In many ways it set the stage for broader protection of the Rio Grande River and Bosque.

Trouble in the Oxbow

Early in the 1970s Rex Funk got a call from Ed Swenson, a Biologist for the U.S. Soil Conservation Service in Albuquerque. Swenson said he had received word that the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation had cut off water to the Oxbow Marsh and re-routed it to the river Channel. Funk and Swenson visited the area and verified the diversion and the fact that the Oxbow was dry. Swenson arranged a meeting between officials of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, and members of the Bosque Society. The Bureau and Conservancy people explained that they wanted to reclaim or salvage the flow of water into the Oxbow from the Corrales Drain, and eventually planned to extend the drain across the Oxbow and connect with the Atrisco Drain just south of the I-40 bridge, thus eliminating the marsh. They were drying the Oxbow out so they could move in equipment to excavate the drain extension. Bosque Society stressed the natural value of the last cattail marsh in the county and maintained that the water flowing into the Oxbow marsh ultimately drained into the river. They maintained that the marsh was a “non-beneficial use” of water, and their water salvage plan called for draining it. After some discussion involving Section 401K of the Clean Water Act (which they had not complied with) and a few other environmental laws and policies, it was decided that the Bosque Society would be allowed to put a 14” culvert in the earthen diversion dam to temporarily water the Oxbow Marsh. The drain extension project was put on hold for the time being.



Ed Swenson (2nd from right) and Bosque Society volunteers re-water the Oxbow in 1972

A group of volunteers, advised by Ed Swenson, installed the pipe shortly after this meeting and the Bosque Society celebrated bringing life back to the Oxbow. The following summer, Allen Templeton and Rex Funk led a group of field Biology students in conducting a field study of the Oxbow. We were able to give these high school students college credit for the class with help from Homer Milford, a Biology Professor at the University of Albuquerque. The University was located on a bluff overlooking the Oxbow, and the class made use of their lab facilities.

Desperate Measures

All was well until the spring of 1976, when the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy once again cut off the flow to the Oxbow. They stated that they were going ahead with the drain extension and again diverted water to the river north of the marsh to drain it. The Bosque Society immediately mobilized and decided to get as much publicity focused on the plight of the marsh as possible. Unfortunately, graphic images of the destruction were all too apparent. TV and newspaper photographers presented dramatic shots



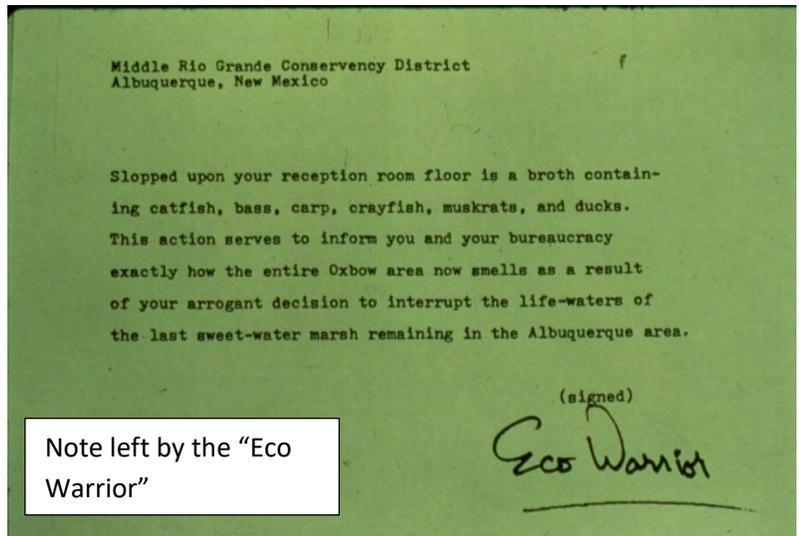
Ed Swenson (2nd from right) and Bosque Society volunteers installing pipe to re-water the Oxbow in 1972

of the carnage, and Funk and others were interviewed about the impacts. The Bosque Society then decided to make a symbolic gesture. They reasoned that if water could be made to flow out of the Oxbow, it could be made to flow back in too. Arrangement was made to borrow a pump from the Bernalillo County Fire Department, along with some old fire hose and a siphon pickup. The Bosque Society installed the pump on the River not far

from the new outfall of the Corrales Drain, and began pumping on a 24-hour schedule. They brought gas to the pump at regular intervals and filled the small tank to keep it operating. When that pump finally burned up (it was not meant for continuous use) they borrowed another pump from the County Public Works Department. This one was good for the long run. The publicity surrounding the pumping went viral. TV and print media loved the David and Goliath angle in the story, and soon public empathy for the marsh grew.

One day when Funk was servicing the pump, he noticed a small station wagon with numerous environmental stickers and an upper Midwest license plate parked at the Oxbow trailhead. Needing all the allies the Bosque Society could get, Funk wrote a short note and placed it on the windshield. He wasn't to meet the owner of the car until a later public meeting. Little did he know that what he was doing would rapidly accelerate the events of the "Oxbow Incident" and enrich its folklore. Shortly after, Funk got a call from Steve Reynolds, the long-time and legendary New Mexico State Engineer. Depending on your point of view, Reynolds was either the stalwart protector of the State's water rights,

or chief advocate of the wholesale destruction of the State's last riparian ecosystems. Funk and Reynolds had originally met when Funk was lobbying the State Legislature for a nature center. He got right to the point. After verifying that Funk was pumping water from the Rio Grande into the Oxbow, Reynolds informed Funk that he was diverting water from the Rio Grande for a "non-beneficial" use. Funk told Reynolds he was putting the water back where it had gone originally, and that he considered marshes exceedingly beneficial. Reynolds said "You're a teacher, aren't you?" (as if he didn't know). Funk replied "yes". He said: "I don't think your students would want to see you in jail, would they?" They spoke a while, and Funk agreed to stop pumping. What he didn't tell Reynolds was that he had friends in the Sierra Club, who would continue the project.



Before the conversation ended, Reynolds asked Funk if he had a beard. Funk replied with a yes. Reynolds said someone with a beard had dumped a load of dead fish and animals on the Conservancy District office floor and left a note signed by the "Eco Warrior". Funk let him know that it wasn't him, because that was not the way he operated. Reynolds didn't seem convinced.

Next, the Bosque Society learned through Ed Swenson that the Conservancy District had again done the diversion without first acquiring a 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Section 404 required such a permit from the Corps of Engineers when more than a cubic yard of fill is discharged into a navigable stream or its tributaries. There was a process for acquiring the permit which required public input.

Synthesis: The Solution

The District Engineer for the Albuquerque office of the Corps of Engineers was Col. Richard E. Leonard.



Col. Richard E. Leonard

Besides being an intelligent and competent engineer, Col. Leonard was an excellent mediator who knew the politics and issues involved. He called a meeting of the principles, including Sy Nanninga, General Manager of the Conservancy District, Albuquerque Mayor Harry Kinney, Me, Nick Nicholas of the Sierra Club, and Bureau of Reclamation officials. The meeting was in Col. Leonard's office where he expressed a desire to work out a compromise to avoid more conflict and unfavorable publicity. The discussion soon centered on the quantity of water the Conservancy District hoped to salvage by extending the drain and drying up the Oxbow. The MRGCD maintained they

could salvage about 5,000-acre feet per year. Rex Funk had done some flow volume calculations at the Corrales Drain above the Oxbow and the outfall of the Oxbow into the Rio Grande and knew that this was the entire annual flow of the drain into the marsh. He asked if they assumed that the water from the Drain flowed into a deep hole in the Oxbow and never came out. He then pointed out that the water did return to the river below the Oxbow and the flow volume entering the River was only slightly less after going through the Oxbow. Furthermore, the Atrisco Drain, 2 miles downstream, used a diversion to intercept some of the same water. After discussion and some calculations, it was agreed that the Oxbow marsh accounted for approximately 124 acre/feet per year in evaporation/transpiration losses. Mayor Kinney (himself a former engineer for Sandia Corporation) offered to make that amount up from the City's San Juan Chama Diversion allotment (then totaling over 40,000 acre/ft. per year). After that, there wasn't much contention. The Conservancy District, realizing the uphill battle it faced in obtaining a 404 permit, agreed to restore the full flow to the Oxbow and abandon the drain extension. The City agreed to provide the salvage loss, and the environmentalists agreed to back off the negative publicity.

The deal was codified later at a Conservancy Board meeting and in the audience was a young man Funk had not seen before. He spoke in support of saving the Oxbow, and after the meeting introduced himself to Funk as Cosmos. He had a beard. In conversation, Funk determined that Cosmos was the owner of the station wagon with the eco stickers he had seen at the Oxbow trailhead. Cosmos later admitted to being the "Eco Warrior", and had probably been collecting his "broth" when Funk had seen his car. Apparently, he traveled from state to state spreading his own brand of "joy". Later, Funk was told that the incident at the Conservancy offices profoundly affected, and saddened General Manager Sy Nanninga, but really got his attention. Nanninga felt badly for the agency's employees who were present during the dumping, and for the black eye they all received because of the Oxbow incident. The Bosque Society regretted the Eco Warrior incident but were pleased with the outcome, in which they had a pivotal part.

The Significance

Much of this took place while the Country was celebrating the Nation's 200th birthday. It proved to Funk that a small group of determined people can still stand up for what they believe, take risks, and make a difference. He also saw that each environmentalist played a vital part in the final decision. Pumping water back into the Oxbow was largely a symbolic act. The damage had been done, and it would take years to restore the



The Oxbow Marsh in 2015. The last in Bernalillo County

ecosystem. However, it had the intended effect of focusing media attention on the problem and ultimately swaying public opinion. Environmentalists had never before had such a broad audience for their message of preserving the natural character of the Rio Grande. The Oxbow Incident was a divide between public perception of the river as merely a project for water salvage, conveyance, and flood control, and embracing it as a natural system, important in its own right. The compromise that was struck showed that these two opposing views need not be mutually exclusive. Only in this way could such a solution be reached. Today, the Oxbow provides habitat for the endangered Silvery Minnow, Southwest Willow Flycatcher, Meadow Jumping Mouse, and other endangered and threatened species.

Seven years later in 1983, as an open space planner for the City of Albuquerque, Funk helped negotiate, write, and lobby for the Rio Grande Valley State Park Act (See chapter 7). He believes the Oxbow Incident had a galvanizing effect on public opinion, helping to make the State Park possible.

What I learned:

“Do you want to be right, or do you want to be effective.” Any cause draws black and white thinkers, and environmental activism is no exception. Such enthusiasm is the energy that drives change, but more often the solution involves realistic compromise. Purists often criticize anything less than a total win, but real life and public policy are rarely optimal. I learned that a balance of pragmatism and idealism gets better and more permanent results. It also earns the respect of leaders and a seat at the table. Better to be seen as part of the solution rather than part of the problem. I have witnessed purists marginalized, burn out, and become cynical when they don't get perfect results.

Early Accomplishments & Acquisitions 1973-82

By Rex Funk and Matt Schmader

"We shall never achieve harmony with land, any more than we shall achieve absolute justice or liberty for people. In these higher aspirations the important thing is not to achieve, but to strive." -Aldo Leopold

In the mid 1970s and early 1980s the City was making great strides in advancing the Open Space agenda. With the support and pressure of four advocacy groups and their combined contributions through the Open Space Task Force, the City was able to protect sensitive areas and acquire open space land with General Obligation bonds and matching federal funding pursuant to the new Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan. Public recognition and approval of the program were growing. While the City still had limited ability to manage its newly acquired open space lands, their acquisition affirmed a commitment to the major open space system which was only to grow. Several supportive ordinances, studies, and plans were published which further advanced the open space movement.

The Comprehensive Plan

In the 1970s, the federal government encouraged cities to prepare comprehensive plans by offering planning grants for that purpose. The late Paul Lusk, a professor of planning at the University of New Mexico, was designated lead planner for the "Comp Plan." His team included Jim Gill, Simon Shima, Mary Ortega (research), Rex King (maps and graphics) and Rosemary Thompson Glenn. Paul had studied under Kevin Lynch, who was a student of Ian McHarg, author



of Design with Nature. This iconic book advocated protecting sensitive natural lands from urban development. McHarg had applied Aldo Leopold's land ethic to urban planning with detailed examples, standards and techniques including overlays to identify patterns and areas to be protected. One of the three booklets comprising the first Comp Plan dealt exclusively with open space. The plan followed the 1968 City/County Goals Program agenda for open space and detailed the preservation of key landforms

and features of the natural environment. Small-scale maps specifically laid out the lands proposed for protection as Major Public Open Space. These lands included steep slopes, floodplains, fragile areas, scenic landmarks, important natural areas, cultural and archaeological sites, links between open space, and lands and features that defined the City's edge. Rosemary Thompson Glenn wrote much of the open space section including the description of uses and purposes of open space. The plan also defined Major Public Open Space and distinguished it from City parks, golf courses, and other developed urban spaces. Some protection strategies were also discussed. Paul Lusk related that Ian McHarg later visited Albuquerque and was "delighted" with the Comprehensive Plan. This plan became the blueprint for acquisition and protection of

land for the City's Open Space System. The Comp Plan was approved and adopted by both the City and Bernalillo County in 1975. Paul Lusk passed away shortly after being interviewed for this writing. The visionary plan he and his team created led to the present-day protection of nearly 30,000 acres of Major Open Space and helped set Albuquerque apart as one of the country's a premier open space cities.

Citizen Advocacy

During the early 1970s, open space advocacy groups were busy pressing their individual agendas to promote protection of open space. Save the Volcanoes was successfully lobbying the City to purchase lands surrounding the Volcanoes. The City entered into a contract to purchase several thousand acres from the Bond family in the early '70s including the four major volcanoes and surrounding lands. The Property Management Division structured the contract as a rolling option and paid for most of it with general obligation bonds. As one parcel was purchased, the City got an option on the next one. This allowed the City to stretch the acquisition over several bond cycles. Fortunately, all the bonds passed due to solid public support for open space acquisition. The work of the four open space advocacy groups did much to promote public support in these elections. From 1968, when the 1,527 acre La Boca Negra Park was acquired as a Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) purchase until 1980, the City acquired a total of 9,205 acres of open space around the volcanoes and escarpment. These lands became part of Volcano Park, which later became the nucleus of Petroglyph National Monument.



Save Our Sandias was working with the City to prevent ill-advised development in the Sandia foothills and gain federal protection of the Elena Gallegos grant. One landowner, oil company owner Calvin Horn, famously bulldozed a road to his foothill property in an attempt to get the City to allow development. The scar left on the mountain triggered public outrage, and in May of 1973, the City Commission passed the Sandia Foothills Master Plan which included a 10% slope "demarcation line" along the foothills.

This plan was also prepared by Paul Lusk's planning team. At the same time, the City Commission passed a policy statement which declared that the City would refuse to extend water and sewer services to lands above the demarcation line, and that it intended to buy those lands. There were several reasons for the City's policy including avoiding costly service extensions, difficulty of getting emergency equipment up steep streets in winter, watershed and runoff considerations, and the visual impact of development to the foothills. In 1974 the City changed to a Mayor-and-

Council form of government. Alan Reed relates that when he was elected City Councilor in 1975, there was much resistance from the development community and landowners toward the demarcation line and to limiting development on steep slopes. Alan was one of three UNM professors elected to the City Council, the others being Jack Colbert and Marion Cottrell. They, along with Councilors Pat Baca and Joe Abeyta, held firm on the 10% slope policy even though Calvin Horn was a UNM Regent, and ultimately was their boss. They were able to get public support by explaining the cost to the City of extending services to those lands. These courageous City Councilors faced down developers and planted a flag for open space in the foothills at significant personal and professional risk. Had this not happened, there would have been unsightly development climbing the steep slopes of the Sandia foothills. Much progress was made in the 1970s thanks to this open space-friendly City Council. The City was able to purchase over a thousand acres of foothills open space under the 10% slope policy, including the Horn property. In 1979 at Marion Cottrell's urging, 146 acres were acquired in his district east of the Four Hills subdivision using a federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant. Save Our Sandias was also lobbying the Federal government to acquire the Elena Gallegos grant and the Rounds Estate in the Sandia foothills.

Save the Arroyos was pushing for bike paths along the arroyos and was successful in getting the Albuquerque Metropolitan Flood Control Authority (AMAFCA) to allow key bikeways along the Hahn Arroyo and North Diversion Channel connecting the northeast heights with UNM. Other arroyo bikeways would follow, and a Bikeways Committee was formed to advise the City on creating bike lanes and trails. Newly hired planner Rosemary Thompson was assigned to bikeways and was successful in getting AMAFCA's cooperation thanks to the support of its Executive Engineer Richard Leonard. As a result, Albuquerque is one of the most bicycle-friendly cities in the country. In 1978 an open space dedication from adjacent subdivisions was assembled by The Albuquerque Conservation Association, adding nearly 80 acres in the Bear Arroyo east of Tramway Blvd. The floodplain of the arroyo is maintained in a natural state and connects to the Sandia Foothills open space.

All during this time, the Bosque Society focused its efforts on the City Edges Study and to creating a Nature Center along the river (this accomplishment is detailed in Chapter 7).

Park Development, Acquisition and Early Management



As development on the west side began in earnest with the early growth of Taylor Ranch, subdivisions were platted and laid out above and below the volcanic escarpment. D.W. Falls was a prevalent early west side developer in the late 1960s. When the City enacted a park dedication ordinance in the early 1970s, it required that future parkland be set aside as part of newly proposed neighborhoods. Falls was interested in meeting his park dedication with land that wasn't especially buildable, yet to his credit he also recognized the potential values of protecting some of the petroglyph areas on the cliff slopes of his property. Falls dedicated 75.3 acres in Boca Negra Canyon to the city for a future park as part of the early Taylor Ranch neighborhoods. The City soon secured development funds from the state and

within just two years Indian Petroglyph State Park was built on the land dedicated by D.W. Falls (see Chapter 9).

Another development proposal on top of the mesa was on land owned by developer Guy Marsh. Marsh started putting his property through the platting process but soon the difficulties of extending roads and utilities on top of the lava flow became more obvious. The Planning Department and others were equally concerned that building in the area was not advisable. Marsh was eventually convinced to sell his 230-acre tract, which included a major promontory that came to be known as “the Marsh peninsula.” Today, the National Park Service’s visitor center for Petroglyph National Monument is just south of and below Marsh’s peninsula.

The 1970s were a period of major land purchases funded in part by the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a federal source intended to bolster local preservation funding efforts. LWCF funds were sought by the City to match its hoped-for large-scale acquisitions of the west mesa and land near Four Hills. One of the most important of the LWCF-assisted purchases happened at Candelaria Farms. This 176-acre tract had been in the public eye since the early 1970s after efforts failed to secure a site for a Rio Grande Nature Center on the west bluff of the river, as recommended by the 1968 Rio Grande Valley Park Plan. Advocates turned their attentions to the area directly east and across the river, where Candelaria Road dead-ended at the bosque. Hugh Woodward, a former U.S. Attorney and Lieutenant Governor, owned the entire tract north of Candelaria and had dedicated the property to the Sandia Foundation.

When the City and advocates expressed interest in the property, serious negotiations happened quickly, and several funding sources were secured. A final sale price of \$1.7 million was met by City funds in excess of \$1 million and the remaining \$600,000 was split between federal (LWCF) and state sources. The Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS) arranged for a “Special Contingency Grant” apart from its regular LWCF urban grant program to partially fund the purchase. Pleas Glenn of HCRS was instrumental in securing this grant. Pleas would later be appointed as director of the Parks and Recreation Department during Mayor Jim Baca’s term (1998-2001). The intended purpose of the acquisition was to protect the farmlands and build a nature center with state funds, but all of the land would be city-owned. The vast majority of the property was to be managed for wildlife habitat and related agriculture practices. Parks director Bob Burgan and City councilor Marion Cottrell, along with Mayor Harry Kinney, all played a role in acquiring the first farmlands in the Open Space system.

The fast-moving events and acquisitions of the decade spanning the years 1973 to 1982, during which the City acquired 8,328 acres of its open space system, are summarized in the table below.

OPEN SPACE LANDS Acquired or Managed, 1973-1982

DATE ACQUIRED	PROPERTY NAME	ACRE-AGE	FUNDING SOURCE	GEOGRAPHIC AREA
5/7-1973	Sandia Foothills	490.1	City G.O. Bonds	Sandia Foothills
1973	Indian Petroglyph State Park	75.3	Dedication	West Side
1974	Glenwood Hills	70.0	City G.O. Bonds	Sandia Foothills
9-1976	Volcanoes	1,320.0	City G.O. Bonds	West Side
4-1977	Marsh Peninsula	230.0	City G.O. Bonds	West Side
4,7-1977	Sandia Foothills	120.0	City G.O. Bonds	Sandia Foothills
1977	Candelaria Farms	176.0	Land & Water Conservation Fund (L&WCF)	Bosque/East Side
4-1978	Embudo Dam	49.0	Drainage R.o.W.	Sandia Foothills
6-1978	Volcano Park	2,120.0	City G.O. Bonds	West Side
7-1978	Bear Canyon	79.5	Dedication	Sandia Foothills
8-1978	Glenwood Hills	74.8	City G.O. Bonds	Sandia Foothills
1978	Volcano Park	760.0	City G.O. Bonds	West Side
4-1979	Manzano-Four Hills	146.0	L&WCF	Sandia Foothills
1979	West Mesa O.S.	3,247.5	L&WCF	West Side
1980	Rinconada Canyon (Katherine Nicole)	36.5	Dedication	West Side
3,4-1981	Sandia Foothills	39.0	City G.O. Bonds	Sandia Foothills
1981	Volcano Cliffs Park	61.4	Park Dedication	West Side
1982	Rebonito	139.9	City G.O. Bonds	Sandia Foothills

The master plan for Shooting Range State Park, originally proposed in the Rio Grande Valley State Park Plan, was completed in 1977. The Park was opened in 1983. It was built on the south edge of a 4,600 acre parcel acquired by the City from 1964 to 1968 under the Bureau of Land Management's R&PP program. The bulk of the land to the north of the shooting range serves the dual functions of "downrange safety zone" (to accommodate occasional stray flying bullets) and desert grassland and wildlife preserve. The preserve will one day be the last habitat for a herd of pronghorn antelope which currently roams mesa lands that are in the path of development. These grasslands have been protected from grazing for over 60 years and provide a baseline to compare the health of grasslands throughout the region. Shooting Range State Park is managed by the Open Space Division and is actively used by the public and law enforcement agencies.



In the late 1970s, a small section was established in the City Parks and Recreation Department to manage the Regional Parks that were acquired under the R&PP act. The R&PP act required that some recreational developments and management take place according to approved plans. Jack Smith was the supervisor and soon hired Jay Hart, who had a forestry background. Later, Jay was among the first employees of the Open Space Division and went on to become its Superintendent and ultimately, the City Parks and Recreation director. The group did protective fencing of La Boca Negra and other regional parks, and built and operated some facilities such as Carolino Canyon Picnic Area. Later, the Regional Park lands were incorporated into the open space system.

Visibility for Open Space

The open space movement was gaining recognition and public support thanks to favorable press from V.B. Price, editorial writer for the Albuquerque Tribune. He was an advocate of quality of life issues and was quick to laud accomplishments and milestones of the open space program. These editorials and articles helped greatly to promote passage of bond issues and City Council actions. Another cheering section was The Albuquerque Conservation Association (TACA) which sponsored annual awards for architectural, civic, and environmental milestones. Open space was recognized with several awards over the years which increased the visibility of the program. A very significant development was the publication of “Albuquerque’s Environmental Story” a guidebook for teachers. Matt and Rex both contributed to this work, as did many specialists throughout the city. The book included sections on the geological, archaeological, cultural, and historical background of the area as well as descriptions of neighborhoods and prominent features of the city. Lesson plans, resources and activities were also included. The book was a project loving produced by Hy and Joan Rosner, environmental educators who had moved to Albuquerque from New York City. They were also instrumental in starting a statewide environmental education association which held conferences and exchanged ideas. The Rosners were recognized for their work in the Senior Citizens’ Hall of Fame in the Albuquerque Convention Center.

When Phil Tollefsrud died in 1976, H Barker became chair of the Open Space Task Force. When H. was appointed to the Environmental Planning Commission in the early ‘80s, Rex took over as OSTF chair. Unfortunately, Land and Water Conservation funds for local municipalities dried up during the Reagan Administration, and the City had to look for other funding for open space acquisition. Although bond issues for Open Space acquisition typically passed by over a 60 percent plurality, they alone didn’t produce sufficient revenue for all priority land acquisition. They were also subject to competing needs such as streets, parks, and utilities, as well as political priorities. Loss of LWCF monies slowed the acquisition of open space and placed emphasis back on local protection strategies. During this time, the Open Space Task Force produced master plans for the Sandia Foothills and Volcano Park open space.

Protecting the Land



The City's Open Space system was growing rapidly, but there were problems. These were sensitive lands that required protection and management, but off-road vehicle damage, dumping, fires, shooting, and other resource impacts were occurring at an alarming rate. An open space ordinance was adopted in 1980 prohibiting many of these activities. Unfortunately, no reliable source of funding for management and enforcement had been identified despite calls from open space advocates. As a result, the ordinance remained largely unenforced, and lands unprotected. Clearly, we needed a comprehensive management program before lands became severely damaged.

Rex Funk reflects on this era:

In the late '70s I began coursework toward a Master of Arts in public administration at UNM. My thesis was how to create an open space program in Albuquerque and the chair of my thesis committee was Dr. Alan Reed, a Public Administration Professor and former City Councilor. I researched programs throughout the country, and learned much about funding, governance, organization, protection, and maintenance of open space. There were several success stories, including Boulder, Colorado which had a dedicated gross receipts tax, Maricopa County, Arizona, and programs in the California Bay Area with special purpose districts supported by mill levies. I started corresponding with principals of these programs, visited many of them, and formed relationships that lasted throughout my career with Open Space. At the time, I was teaching science full time at Manzano High School and chairing the Rio Grande Nature Center Advisory Board and Open Space Task Force. In 1982, my pursuit of the MA degree was interrupted when I went to work for the City. By that time, I was essentially living my thesis. I regret that I was not able to complete the MA program, but I learned a great deal from the nearly 30 hours of coursework and thesis research which helped significantly in my career. In many ways, the decade of the 1970s was a crash course in local government, politics & public administration for me.

What I learned (Rex Funk):

“God gives you the people and you have to work with them”. One day I was complaining about elected officials who were opposed or indifferent to what we were trying to do when Harvey Frauenglass, my cohort in the Bosque Society gave me that reminder. Over the years I took Harvey’s words to heart and tried to treat both adversaries and supporters as human beings, sought to understand their motivations rather than judge them, and tried not to write anyone off. I was not always successful. One thing that always amazed me was when elected officials started saying the same things about open space that we were saying 10 or 15 years before. There are many ways to work around obstinance of elected officials, but changing public opinion is, in my mind, the most effective. The public will elect leaders who reflect their views. When people vote with their feet and bond issues and gross receipts tax initiatives pass by over 60%, politicians take notice.

Saving the Elena Gallegos Grant 1982: A Crisis Becomes an Opportunity

by Rex Funk

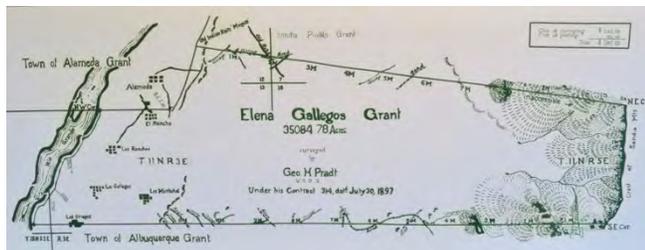
“That the situation is hopeless should not prevent us from doing our best”

-Aldo Leopold

The campaign to save what was left of the Elena Gallegos land grant began in the 1970s, involved all levels of government, and was nearly lost. The end result not only preserved a large portion of Albuquerque’s Sandia Mountain backdrop but marked a great leap forward for the Open Space program.

A Land Grant with a Complex History

The Elena Gallegos Grant was originally awarded to Diego Montoya in 1694. It later passed to his niece Elena Gallegos, one of the first woman heirs to a land grant. The grant was a 35,000-acre swath which originally ran from the Rio Grande to the crest of the Sandia Mountains encompassing Bear, Pino and Domingo Baca Canyons. Over the years, the lower westerly portions of the grant were divided among heirs, and much of it was developed into what is now Albuquerque and Los Ranchos. By the 1920s, much of the land had been lost due to unpaid back-taxes. Later, a large 18,000 acre tract of the Grant was sold to Albert G. Simms in 1936 for a little over \$2 per acre. Simms was once a New Mexico Congressman, whose family was instrumental in the formation of the Albuquerque Academy (Boys Academy at the time) and owner of Los Poblanos Farms. When he died in 1964, he bequeathed 13,000 acres of the former land grant to the Academy. A significant part of this land comprised about one fourth of the City’s Sandia Mountain backdrop. The Academy Board stated the intention to “maximize its trust,” and hired a Colorado firm to prepare a development plan for the remaining land east of Tramway Rd. which was completed in 1977. It proposed 4,251 dwelling units, a golf course and country club, schools, a civic center, and regional parks, centered in floodplains. The Academy was also in talks with a California firm to buy and develop the land.



Rising Concern and Federal Involvement

Citizens, environmentalists, and public officials began to explore ways to preserve the land, which was surrounded on 3 sides by Cibola National Forest. The City was opposed to development of



the steep slopes, watersheds and scenic vistas and had called for their preservation in the 1975 Comprehensive Plan. Throughout the 1970s, local activists from Save Our Sandias lobbied the New Mexico Congressional Delegation to put pressure on the Federal Government to acquire the land. Jay Sorenson and Victor Marshall gave several presentations to the Academy Board, elected officials and civic groups to raise awareness of the importance of saving our mountain backdrop. Save Our Sandias members Phil Tollefsrud, Mary Olin Harrel and Milo Conrad wrote scores

of letters to public officials and others. Corry McDonald and Jack and La Donna Kutz were also active in this campaign. Senators Pete Dominici, Joseph Montoya and Congressman Manuel Lujan led the Federal effort. At one time McDonald Douglas Corporation offered to buy the land and trade it to the Government for a plant site in Oklahoma, but the deal fell through. Former City Councillor Alan Reed worked with Congressman Harold Runnels to include much of the Elena land in the Sandia Mountain Wilderness boundary. In 1977 Mayor Harry Kinney and Jay Sorensen flew to Washington DC to testify in support of Senator Dominici's bill to authorize acquisition of the land. Unfortunately, there was no appropriation attached to the authorization. With no funding in sight, Federal agencies, responding to Congressional pressure, assembled a package of Federal surplus lands (mostly BLM) near cities in New Mexico. These lands were in the path of urban growth (sometimes in the city limits), and Federal agencies were ready to trade them for more desirable land elsewhere. In the early 1980s the US Forest Service approached the Albuquerque Academy Board with a package of 17,000 acres of these lands in exchange for about 8,000 acres of the former Elena Gallegos Grant. The Academy Board turned down the offer, stating that they wanted either cash or lands that could be sold immediately for cash.

He Knew a Guy who Knew a Guy

Pat Brian tells a wonderful story about his negotiations with the Academy board. He was finding it impossible to make headway on the option due to the opposition of the Academy's lawyers and pro-development board members. They would routinely bat the City's proposals down, and it seemed that they favored developing the land to enhance the academy's trust over public purchase. Pat remembered his old law school chum Albert, who happened to have the last name Simms (III). He was the nephew of Dr. Albert G. Simms II, who was the nephew of Albert G. Simms the first. A.G. Simms II was on the Academy Board and held great sway over the affairs and fortunes of the Academy due to his family's endowment of the Elena Gallegos lands to the school. Pat says he and young Albert III got a supply of beer and pizza and met Uncle (Dr.) Albert at his home at Los Poblanos Farms. Over a weekend, they persuaded the good doctor to intervene in the negotiations and tell the Academy in no uncertain terms that they would conclude the option with the City to buy the land. After that, the City was able to secure the 2-year option by pledging a downtown parking structure as payment. When Mayor Rusk left office, he asked Pat to stay on as City Attorney with Mayor Kinney and conclude the Elena Gallegos acquisition. Pat considers the acquisition to be the highlight of his 10-year career with the City, but says it was extremely complex and drawn out. The option document was detailed, and included provisions for wilderness, National Forest, a 640-acre City park, and a private environmental education site for the Academy in Bear Canyon.

The City Weighs In

After lengthy negotiations with the Academy by City Attorney Pat Brian at the behest of Mayor David Rusk, the City negotiated a 2-year option in 1980 to acquire about 8,000 acres (See sidebar). Officials in the Carter Administration offered assurances that the Federal Government would act to acquire the land before the option ran out. With the election of President Reagan and appointment of Interior Secretary James Watt, however, the political climate changed, and Federal funding was no longer available for public land acquisition.

As the expiration date for the option approached in late 1981, City officials and open space and conservation groups frantically searched for means to beat the deadline and acquire the land before it was lost to development and the City lost the parking garage. It was determined that the City had an un-used 1/4 c gross receipts (sales) tax which could be enacted by the City Council and ratified by the Mayor. Such a tax could bring in more than the Academy's asking price for the Elena Gallegos land (\$24,500,000) in 3 years. Jay Sorenson proposed use of the tax to save the land, but it was doubtful that the City would buy the land on behalf of the Federal government without being compensated. For some years, former City Councilor Allen Reed and others had been advocating a permanent open space fund for land acquisition and management. Up to then, there had been no revenue source to create such fund. The Open Space Task Force began discussing ways to get the City involved in saving the land. I entered the campaign late as Chairman of the Task Force and put the pieces together to form a plan aimed at meeting the needs of all parties, saving the land, and moving the open space program ahead at the same time.

The Plan

The City would pass the 1/4c Gross Receipts tax for a 3-year term which would raise an estimated \$26 million. The revenue would be used to purchase 7,600 acres of the Elena Gallegos land from the Albuquerque Academy. The City would then trade approximately 7,000 acres of the land to the US Forest Service (keeping 640 acres for a City Open Space Park) in exchange for the 17,000 acres of Federal Surplus Lands once offered to the Albuquerque Academy. Those lands would become the corpus of an Open Space Trust Fund (Open Space Trust Lands) and would be sold to benefit the Fund. The Open Space Fund would also receive any excess revenues from the 3-year Gross Receipts Tax over and above the cost of buying the land. The principle of the fund would remain intact, but interest earnings could be used for acquisition and management of Open Space.

BEFORE

CITY

Option to Acquire land
1/4c Tax (potential)
Open Space Fund (idea)

ACADEMY

7,600 ac. Elena Gallegos Land

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

17,000 ac. Federal Surplus Land

AFTER

CITY

Federal Surplus Land \$24.5 mil. From 1/4c
Open Space Fund
640 ac. OS Park

ACADEMY

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
7,000 ac. Elena Gallegos Land
For USFS Wilderness

The Campaign: "It's Your Mountain"

About two months before the Academy's February 15, 1982 option deadline, I approached Jay Sorenson with the plan. Sorenson was a Political Science Professor at the University of New Mexico, an advocate for wilderness and Open Space, and had many political connections. He was intrigued by the plan and set up a meeting with Mayor Harry Kinney that same week. Sorenson and Rex Funk laid out the plan to Mayor Kinney, who seemed interested, but non-committal. They stated our intention to mount a public campaign urging the City Council to pass the 1/4 c tax to implement the plan. Mayor Kinney said he would not oppose the effort and wished us well. Sorenson and Funk assembled a broad coalition of



Open Space advocates, environmental groups, neighborhood associations, and civic groups and began the campaign. Sorenson's Wife, Mary Lou, suggested a bumper sticker: "IT'S YOUR MOUNTAIN, SAVE THE ELENA GALLEGOS", and thousands were printed and distributed.

Over the next month the group got regular media coverage as the effort snowballed and more and more support emerged. They initiated a petition effort which resulted in over 17,000

signatures of citizens in favor of the 1/4 c. tax to save the land. 90% of those approached signed the petition. A speaker corps was organized to give presentations to civic groups, neighborhood organizations, and anyone who would listen. The group approached individual City Councilors and worked toward lining up a majority for the plan. Councilor Bob White went as far as writing and introducing a tax bill when Mayor Kinney failed to introduce an administrative bill for the tax. Support for the quarter cent tax bill began flowing in and as the phones were ringing off the hook. According to Councilor Nadyne Bicknell, there was little public opposition, and that made it easier for Council to support the plan. Key early supporters were Councilors Bob White, who sponsored the legislation, Pat Baca, and Vince Griego. The Academy agreed to a one-month extension of the option pending the Council vote on March 15, 1982. After supportive testimony from a diverse list of civic groups and citizens, the Council adopted the plan by a 7 to 2 vote. In addition to the initial sponsors, Councilors Nadyne Bicknell, Tom Hoover, Mel Aragon, and Ken Schultz voted for the measure. Open space advocates were delirious.

There was a behind the scenes movement at the City. Orlando Sedillo, City Parks and Recreation Director, recalled a meeting of department heads during the public campaign at which Mayor Kinney expressed his hopes that the 1/4 c. plan would pass. Following passage, the City's Legal and Property Management Departments were energized to execute the plan. Pat Brian became personally involved, and the department negotiated the deal with the Academy and Forest Service. The Academy drove a hard bargain, getting 20% of future sales of the Open Space Trust Lands (former Federal trade lands). They also retained a 160-acre parcel (called "The Bite") east of the original proposed line for development as a consideration for extending the option. Finally, they required that the City Open Space Park be named "Albert G. Simms Park". At the urging of the NM Congressional Delegation, the Forest Service and other Federal agencies fast-tracked the archaeological surveys, title searches, and environmental studies required to transfer the Federal surplus lands to the City.

The Significance

In the short span of a few months, 7,600 acres had been saved for Open Space and National Forest Wilderness, a permanent Open Space Fund (which totaled \$11.6 million in 2019) was created, the Albuquerque Academy maximized its endowment, and the citizens of Albuquerque accomplished one of the most important acts in the City's history: saving 1/4 of our Sandia mountain backdrop. The action to save the Elena Gallegos Grant and create the Open Space Fund was also a watershed event in the City's Open Space Program. It was a catalyst enabling the establishment of Rio Grande Valley State park a year later (see Chapter 7) and the formation of the Open Space Division within the Parks and Recreation Department two years later (see Chapter 8). It also set a precedent for two more 1/4c. taxes which helped fund further open space acquisitions (see Chapters 9 and 11). Victor Marshall told Rex Funk he ran for, and was elected as a State Senator as a result of his positive experiences in this campaign. Both Nadyne Bicknell and Bob White said they consider this acquisition the highlight of their City Council careers.

Funk received much credit and some local and national awards for my part in the Elena Gallegos acquisition, and he was hired by the City as an Open Space Planner later that year. Funk always felt, however, that more credit belonged to those who had worked for several years to put the pieces of the plan in place (Federal authorization, trade lands, City support, negotiations with the Academy, open space fund concept, etc.). Without their persistence, there would not have been a solution, and no “Blank Spot on the Map”. Public officials at the City and Federal level also took great political and financial risks, and the public support for saving the Elena Gallegos was truly inspiring. As advocates the group, again, stood on the shoulders of giants.

In 1985 the Elena Gallegos Picnic Area was opened and became a trailhead and hub to numerous popular routes into the Sandia Mountain foothills and Wilderness. The Albuquerque Kiwanis Club, led by its President City Councilor Pete Dinelli, contributed support and sweat-equity for a reservation picnic area, amphitheater and nature trail which included a wildlife blind overlooking a pond. The Elena Gallegos is a flagship of the Open Space Program, and remains wildly popular among hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, picnickers, and sight seers. Today it receives close to 200,000 visitors per year.



In 1984 a 1% for Art sculpture by artist Billie Walters was dedicated at the Elena Gallegos Picnic Area. It memorializes Phillip B. Tollefsrud, a wilderness advocate and the first chairman of the Open Space Task Force. It was Phil’s dream to save the Elena Gallegos. Unfortunately, he died in 1976 at the age of 38 and was unable to see the dream realized. What Phil called “The most magnificent backdrop a city ever had” had finally been preserved.

What I Learned:

“Chance favors the prepared”. When money or public support aren’t available, hold the vision, plan, study, teach, lobby, change opinions, raise awareness, organize, network and be proactive. Be ready to turn crises into opportunities and build on successes. The Elena Gallegos acquisition and creation of the Open Space Fund is one of the best examples of this. Charles Darwin thought that evolution happened slowly and steadily over time. With more data and a more complete fossil record to analyze, evolutionary biologist Jay Gould later proposed a theory he called “Punctuated Equilibrium”. He documented long periods where species changed little, punctuated by periods of rapid change and evolution. These he said, correlated with stresses in the environment (crises like climate change, natural disasters, etc.) forcing species to adapt or die off and advancing evolutionary change. Looking back, one can see periods of intense change and evolution in the history of Open Space interspersed with equilibrium. Being prepared for the “punctuations” and being creative in our response has often made the difference in our progress.

Rio Grande Valley State Park: Protecting the River and Bosque

by Rex Funk

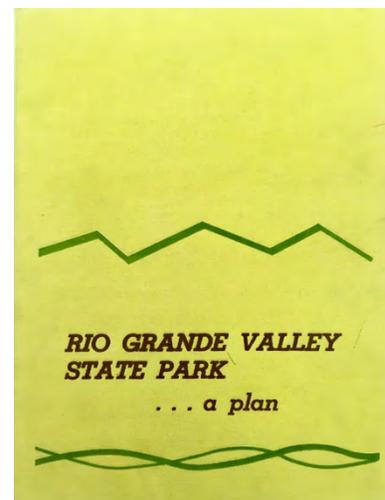
“Every citizen should remember that this Park will be one of Albuquerque’s greatest assets”. -Aldo Leopold 1917

These words are taken from a speech Aldo Leopold gave at the New Mexico game Protection Association dinner in 1917. He was speaking about a small riverside park he was trying to establish near what became Tingley Lagoon. He might have been amazed that 65 years later the City managed to save a 4,000-acre park in the floodplain of the Rio Grande in the heart of Albuquerque that is nearly 25-miles long. As we saw in chapter 2, however, the river had been straightened, confined, and the vegetation along it threatened with removal by a water salvage project which would have profoundly changed its natural character. Here is the story of how the park finally came to be.

No one would deny that flood control, irrigation, and drainage projects along the Rio Grande River have resulted in great public benefit. The problem was that little thought was given to preserving the natural character and wildlife habitat of the river and bosque along the way. What mitigation was provided included waterfowl habitat at Bernardo, La Joya and Bosque del Apache refuges which were many miles away from Albuquerque. The Rio Grande Valley State Park Plan, funded by the NM State Legislature and published in 1969, proposed preserving the bosque and building recreational facilities in the valley including a nature center and access to the bosque for recreational use. A year later, the Bosque Society was formed and began advocating a nature preserve along the river in Bernalillo County and a nature center adjacent to it. This movement occupied a great deal of my time and energy and that of many others in the 1970s. Public consciousness was raised through these efforts and by publicity surrounding the battle for the Oxbow Marsh in 1976 (see Ch. 4). The City and the Bosque Society applied for a grant from the National Association for the Humanities in 1974 to assess the public will and feasibility of protecting the river and bosque. The “City Edges Study”, published in 1975, contained a public opinion survey which confirmed strong public support for nature preservation and recreation along the river.

The Nature Center

The State Park Plan originally proposed building a nature center overlooking the Oxbow; the last Cattail marsh in Bernalillo County. The Bosque Society and other advocates backed a bill in the State Legislature to build the center in 1974. They arrived to testify for the bill only to be confronted by opposition from local landowners, and the effort was effectively stopped. Legislators told the advocates to go back and get our act together. A few years later, it was decided to move the Center across the river to Candelaria Farms, one of the last agricultural parcels in the North



Valley. The City purchased 177 acres there in 1977 using Land and Water Conservation Fund money. The Bosque Society went back to the State Legislature in the late 1970s for funding to build the nature center and this time they were successful in obtaining an initial appropriation which was later extended to finish the project. The New Mexico State Parks Department was the lead agency, and Dave Johnson, one of their planners, managed the project. A citizen advisory board was appointed, and Rex Funk was asked to chair it. Joining Funk was Carol Kinney (the Mayor's Wife), Homer Milford (a Biology Professor, at the University of Albuquerque), and neighborhood representatives. The advisory board chose Antoine (Tony) Predock, a prominent local architect with a formidable national reputation, to develop plans. Windows and displays focused the visitor's attention on the pond, bosque, and adjacent wildlife cropping area. Displays highlighted the importance of the River and water in the cultural and natural environments of the valley. Wildlife viewing areas were provided, as well as a room dedicated to environmental education, and interpretive trails. Very little of the surrounding cottonwood bosque was disturbed, and an earthen bank hid the main building and the City contracted with a sharecropper to grow wildlife crops on part of the remaining agricultural land. Rio Grande Nature Center State Park opened in 1982 and has introduced thousands of visitors to the River and bosque each year.

A Park Whose Time Had Come

The River and bosque were controlled by the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD), which owned or claimed most of the land between the levees, and a long list of State and Federal agencies whose acronyms read like a bowl of alphabet soup. At the time, the MRGCD Board was resistant to allowing public access for recreation and was concerned that attempts to preserve the River and bosque would interfere with the District's mandates for irrigation, flood control, and drainage. The City and local advocates had little influence on the Board, most of whose members were farmers from rural districts outside Bernalillo County. To make the State Park happen the advocates needed a powerful ally.

When Rex Funk was hired by the City as an open space planner in 1982, a permanent fund for Open Space had just been established (see Ch. 6). This gave the city a source of funding for protecting new open space lands. In 1983, Funk approached his supervisor, City Parks and Recreation Director Orlando (Orlie) Sedillo, with a proposal to establish Rio Grande Valley State Park. Funk had seen the will of the State Legislature to implement the 1969 State Park plan by



funding the Nature Center, and believed Open Space could persuade them to protect the River and bosque in Bernalillo County as the plan also proposed. The MRGCD was chartered by the State as a special purpose district, and the Legislature held great authority and influence over its fortunes. This was the powerful ally Open Space needed to overcome MRGCD resistance. There was also a disparity among ratepayers of the Conservancy District, some of whom

had irrigation rights and others who didn't. Both paid Conservancy taxes, but irrigators got more and paid less: a sore point with some ratepayers. The State Park would provide nearby recreation and access to the bosque for those without irrigation and would be a great benefit to them. Finally, Funk reasoned, the City could assume management of the State Park with no cost to the State Legislature or the MRGCD. Director Sedillo thought it was worth a try and forwarded the proposal to Mayor Kinney who gave us the green light to approach the State Legislature.

On to the Legislature

Our Recreation Superintendent, Kiki Saavedra, was also a State Legislator and recommended Rep. Ed Sandoval, from the North Valley, to carry the bill. Rex Funk spent a few months coordinating with stakeholders, including the MRGCD, Federal and State agencies, advocates and citizens, and the Villages of Los Ranchos and Corrales. Corrales decided not to be part of the State Park and elected to manage their own Bosque program. In order to make the State Park happen, Funk had to accept some real-world caveats. It was acknowledged that the flood control, irrigation, and drainage functions of the MRGCD and other agencies involved public safety and had primacy over recreation, even though the two realms were to co-exist. The City and regional transportation officials also insisted that existing bridges and two proposed bridge corridors at Montano Rd. and Paseo del Norte be exempted from the Park. This was a great blow to North Valley bridge opponents, many of whom had supported saving the River and Bosque as a strategy to block bridges they felt would impact their community. Funk empathized with their position but felt that protecting the Rio Grande River and bosque was far more important than fighting a protracted battle against bridges without the Park. There are many tradeoffs in open space preservation, and this was one of them. As a City employee, Funk was no longer an independent advocate and had new constraints. Not all of his former fellow open space advocates understood the position he was in.

Having coordinated with stakeholders, I wrote a draft bill and prepared a boundary map which was given to the Legislative Council Service to finalize. The bill was introduced in the Legislature, assigned to committees, and I spent a month commuting to Santa Fe to testify and coordinate, often with little prior notice. Rep. Sandoval championed the bill and guided it through the whole

process. We brought in several advocates and citizens to support the bill and laid out the City's commitment to manage the Park. The MRGCD Board, which originally had endorsed the bill and the Park, had second thoughts and showed up to oppose it. This turned out to be too little and too late, as the State Legislature passed the bill and Governor Toney Anaya signed it. During the dedication ceremony at Central Ave. and the River, Mayor Kinney expressed his delight with the new State Park which would protect the River and Bosque and provide recreation opportunities for City residents. The Mayor's house was on a bluff



RGVSP Dedication in 1983. Harry Kinney, Rex Funk, Orlie Sedillo

overlooking the River, so he got a daily reminder of one of the most important accomplishments of his administration.

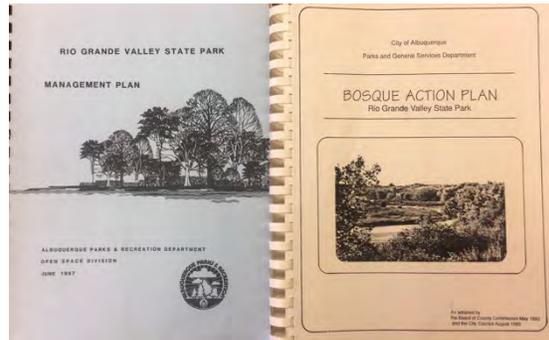
The Work Begins: Managing the State Park

Management challenges for the new State Park were similar to those for other Open Space properties. Vehicular access led to a string of abuses including shooting, wood cutting, fires, trash dumping, and even septic truck dumping. There were also transient camps, sometimes inhabited by dangerous and unstable individuals, which posed a fire danger and discouraged recreational use. We realized that we needed to block vehicle access first to get control of the area. Jay Hart and Tony Baron came up with a design for pipe gates that could be built inexpensively in-house and installed at key choke points along the levees. Fortunately, we didn't have to do much fencing, as the drains served as moats. We got some initial push-back from MRGCD ditch riders who now had to unlock gates to patrol the area, but they got on board when they saw reduced vandalism and dumping. Some of the gates were damaged by forced access, but we promptly replaced them, and people eventually got the message that we were serious.

The city received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) in 1983 for the purpose of cleanup and access control to allow recreational access and block illegal vehicle access to the new Rio Grande Valley State Park. Barbara Baca, coordinated this grant and helped organize a massive cleanup, removing hundreds of tons of trash from the Bosque with help and donations from government agencies, civic groups, private companies and the public. We developed parking and access points at some of the major bridges and horse walkovers to filter-out vehicles. We followed this with signage to inform visitors of the rules and purpose of the park. The change in rules and use patterns required public education through publicity as well as enforcement. When the Open Space Division was created in 1984, we started a conservation officer program with fully sworn law enforcement officers patrolling the bosque and other open space areas on foot, on horseback and in vehicles. Slowly, the officers got control of the area through contacting people, writing citations, evicting transients, and making arrests when necessary. We worked with local homeless shelters to relocate transients and removed camps and associated trash.

Planning and Restoration

In the years following the opening of Rio Grande Valley State park, a Management Plan, a Joint Powers Agreement and a Bosque Action Plan were prepared. Barbara Baca, our Open Space Planner, oversaw the planning process which involved a great deal of public input as well as coordination with many agencies, consultants, and organizations. The Rio Grande Valley State Park Management Plan was adopted by the Albuquerque City Council, the Bernalillo County Commission and NM State Parks. A Wildland Fire Management Plan was also developed working with USFS professionals, Albuquerque Fire Department and Bernalillo County Fire Department. A biological monitoring program was started to establish a baseline and determine the ongoing health of the bosque. UNM Biology Professor Cliff Crawford led this effort and his students collected important data that informed management. Management goals were established, and facilities such as trails, access points, parking areas and other developments were planned. The Rio Grande Valley State Park Management Plan, Bosque Action Plan and Water Based Recreation Study were all approved by the NM State Parks Division of the Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department, MRCGD, City Council and County Commission.



The monitoring program confirmed that the bosque was in peril. Native Cottonwoods and other bosque vegetation require overbank flooding to reproduce; their seeds taking root in damp soil.

Barbara Baca reflects on RGVSP and her career in with the Open Space Division. She was recently elected to the “at-large” position on the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District Board, where she continues to advocate for the river and bosque.

Saving the Bosque:

I started my professional career with the Open Space Division in 1983 right out of graduate school. I “grew up” professionally with the Open Space Division working directly on the Bosque cleanup and developing the Management Plan for the Rio Grande Valley State Park. The grass roots effort in Albuquerque which lead to the creation of the RGVSP and the Open Space Division is truly a success story of public engagement and environmental protection. The community of people who dedicated their time and energy to Saving the Bosque should be congratulated and recognized for this success story. We must continue to work collaboratively to protect the amazing natural environment of the Rio Grande Bosque and the wildlife and endangered species that exist within it. In this time of climate change, our Bosque sequesters carbon dioxide and cools our city. Saving the Bosque is equally essential now as it was 37 years ago. We must remain vigilant.

Most of the trees along the river were established during floods in the 1940s and 50s, and flood control dams built since then prevented the kinds of river flows required for them to be replaced. The bosque was literally dying of old age. There was also competition from exotic trees such as salt cedar, Russian olive, Siberian elm and paradise tree, many of which can survive in lowered water tables where cottonwoods and willows can't. Tony Baron and Jay Hart consulted with the US Fish and Wildlife Service which had developed a successful pole planting program at Bosque del Apache NWR. The process involves monitoring the ground water table over some years to assure that the young trees will have a constant source of water. A hole is then augered to the appropriate depth and a freshly cut young tree or "pole" is inserted in the hole in contact with ground water and covered with soil. We identified a source of cottonwood and willow poles in the low-flow channel of the River which the Bureau of Reclamation intended to remove to keep the channel clear. This was another example of the inter-agency cooperation necessary for management of the State Park. Tony Barron led our efforts and ultimately supervised the planting of an estimated thirty thousand trees in the Bosque. We acquired special equipment to auger the holes and involved community organizations in planting the trees. Many of the plantings had a 90% survival rate. In 1995 the Open Space Division received an "Urban River Restoration Award" from the organization American Rivers for its work in cleaning and restoring the Bosque. During recent years, the Corps of Engineers has facilitated overbank flooding through releases from dams upstream aimed at aiding cottonwood reproduction. This practice also benefits the endangered Silvery Minnow. Later, a thinning project to reduce fire danger concentrated on removing exotic species; a problem that still exists and requires constant effort.

The Park Today

Visit Rio Grande Valley State Park today and you will see a vibrant green ribbon running through the heart of the City. Multi-use trails along the River and bosque are in constant use by walkers, joggers, bicyclists, commuters, horseback riders, wheelchairs, and families with children. Improved habitat has attracted waterfowl, songbirds, bald eagles, and other animals. Rio Grande Nature Center State Park and the Open Space Visitor Center host visitors from all over the world while adults and school children learn about the River and Bosque. The park has also attracted the interest of government agencies and private organizations, who are helping to preserve and enhance the bosque. The MRGCD now works well with the Open Space Division and all other agencies with authority in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. Indeed, the mission of the MRGCD now includes not only flood control and



irrigation, but environmental protection, education and recreation. The responsible water management provided by the MRGCD cannot be understated in this time of climate change. It is important to know that the creation of the RGVSP was one of the initial steps that required these agencies to collaborate and work toward keeping our valley green. The Corps of Engineers is busy with a Bosque restoration project to enhance some of the natural habitat that was impacted by the public works projects it helped carry out in the 20th century (see Ch. 2). Some of the unsightly old Kellner jetties are also being removed. Who would have thought such a turn-around and paradigm shift could have been possible? The US Fish and Wildlife Service has opened Valle del Oro urban wildlife refuge with 570 acres in the South Valley. Bernalillo County has established an open space program and manages several properties along the River including the Bachechi Open Space and Environmental Education facility. The Bosque School near Coors and Montano builds much of its curriculum around studies in the adjacent bosque. I was especially gratified when the City Open Space Division established an interpretive trail dedicated to Aldo Leopold, who first proposed and worked for a park along the Rio Grande. RGVSP is unquestionably “one of Albuquerque’s greatest assets”.

What I Learned:

“Does a City save Open Space or does Open Space save the City?” Open Space defines the City’s edge, provides healthy recreation, gives us an escape from urban stress, teaches us restraint, brings us closer to nature, reminds us of our past, helps protect us from floods and unwise development, and preserves our beautiful natural setting. In many ways, Open Space is Albuquerque’s best idea and a lasting source of civic pride. So the answer is, of course: both.

Establishing the Open Space Division

By Rex Funk and Matt Schmader

“The job of recreational engineering is not one of building roads into lovely country, but of building receptivity into the, as yet, unlovely mind.” - Aldo Leopold

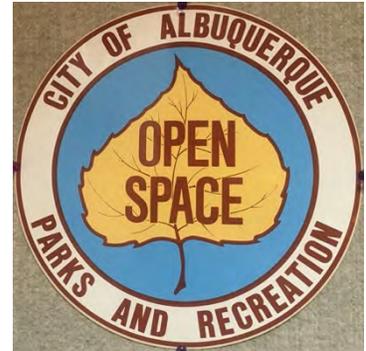
A New Division

Early in 1984, two years after Rex Funk was hired by the City of Albuquerque, Orlie Sedillo called Funk into his office and told him he was going to establish a Division of Open Space in the Parks and Recreation Department and wanted Funk to be the first Superintendent. Funk initially hesitated because his hands were full as the Open Space Planner but Sedillo said to him, “You’re the guy- there’s no one else, we’ll hire another planner”.



Rex (left) and Jay Hart at 35th anniversary of OSD

Funk accepted the position and began a 10-year career as the leader of the Open Space Division.



There was a provisional budget, and Funk’s first act was to hire Jay Hart as his assistant. Hart had unique familiarity with many of the lands in the open space system, having been in management in the Regional Parks section of Golf Management under Jack Smith. He had also been helping with securing and cleanup of Rio Grande Valley State Park. Hart proved to be an excellent manager. He was a good collaborator and had a dedication and loyalty to the mission of the open space program. His experience and networking ability helped immensely, as did his ability to prepare and track budgets and supervise personnel.

Much of the day-to-day operation of the Division was in Hart’s hands.

The second employee was Barbara Baca, who became the Open Space Planner. Baca had a BA degree in Recreation from UNM and an MA from the University of Colorado. She was quick to



Barbara Baca

learn the environmental considerations inherent in managing open space and mastered the complexities of the job. Among her strengths were networking and relating to a wide variety of stakeholders as well as good organization and writing skills. She monitored the development process and oversaw the preparation of numerous plans. Open Space’s third employee was Tony Baron, who was a construction and maintenance foreman with Parks and Recreation. Baron became the operations supervisor and brought a wealth of experience and personality to the job.



Tony Baron

Funk often described Baron as a world-class scrounger, and he arranged for many hours of help, heavy equipment, materials and expertise from several agencies and organizations which got our fledgling program off to a great start.

Open Space Division initially set up shop in Building A of the Pino Yards, sharing space with Park Management. They acquired a surplus office trailer from Sandia Corporation salvage, and a fleet of aging hand-me-down vehicles and equipment including an auction-bought Champion road grader which often broke down. Over the years they were able to replace and add new vehicles and equipment as our budget grew.

They also managed special facilities like Shooting Range State Park, opened in 1983. Randy Foster, the first shooting range manager, established procedures and got the program off to a good start with public and law enforcement ranges and added to the facilities over the years. Other facilities Open Space managed were Indian Petroglyph Park, Carolino Canyon Picnic Area, the model airplane field at La Boca Negra Park, and the Elena Gallegos Picnic Area.

Conservation Officers

Open Space administration knew they needed the ability to enforce the Open Space Ordinance passed by City Council in 1980. In discussions with Orlie Sedillo it was determined that the first job of people in the field should be public education. They were convinced, however, that they also needed the authority to issue citations, make arrests and even use force to protect lives and property if necessary. This meant that they would have to carry weapons and thus be sworn officers. Open Space knew this would give the City Police Department some pause, but they felt



Jay Hart (left) and Lane Danielzook

that a dedicated and specially trained unit was needed to patrol and protect over 25,000 acres of open space, and so Sedillo received the approval of the Mayor to create the unit. Funk suggested to Sedillo that they call these people rangers, but he said that term had a negative connotation dating back to New Mexico's experience with the Texas Rangers and so they finally settled on Conservation Officers -- a title also used by the State Game and Fish Department.

Lane Danielzook became the first Open Space Chief Conservation Officer, followed by Steve Thomas and Mike Smith. They worked to adopt uniforms, badges, patches and sent the newly hired officers to the State Police Academy for 9 weeks of training. Soon officers began patrolling on horseback, by vehicle, and on foot. They focused on problem areas like the Rio Grande State Park where patterns of dumping, vehicle intrusion, shooting and transient camps were common. Another priority was patrolling the newly fenced areas in the Sandia Foothills and West Mesa. The officers were often our first line of contact with the public and they sought to bolster their interpretive and educational skills so they could better explain the purpose of the program. The

officers sought to educate users about alternatives for off-road vehicles (ORVs) and shooting on Open Space land and redirect these activities to legal facilities. They gave out free passes to the shooting range and directions to the Montessa Park ORV area.



Steve Thomas (left) and Mike Smith

Steve Thomas spent 22 ½ years as a law enforcement officer in the Open Space Division, much of it as its supervisor. He recalls the early officers were required to furnish their own horses and patrol alone in remote areas. He quickly adopted the strategy of taking the least enforcement action required to gain compliance, preferring diplomacy over force. During this time there were serious crimes to investigate including homicide, auto theft, assault and arson.

Thomas later became active in the Park Law Enforcement Association (PLEA) and was elected to the board of this national organization representing officers from local, state, and national park programs. In 2000, Open Space hosted a national conference of PLEA with 85 attendees which Thomas and his staff planned. During his tenure with Open Space there were no lawsuits for excessive force and no officer discharged a firearm in performance of their duty. Thomas believes most people were glad to see the officers, and with all its ups and downs it was the best job he ever had.

The Open Space Division established cooperative relations with many other agencies at all levels of government. The Forest Service's Sandia Ranger District was experiencing heavy vehicle intrusions in the wilderness at Embudo Canyon which bordered Sandia Foothills Open Space. Through fencing, signage and concentrated patrol they were able to stop vehicle access and the dumping and shooting that often went with it. We then built a parking lot and trail access for hikers, mountain bikers and pedestrians. The Elena Gallegos lands also act as a buffer and trailhead for several wilderness trails. Open Space also partnered with the Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority which provided a grant to support a volunteer erosion control and watershed restoration project in the Foothills, reducing siltation of their channels and dams downstream. The little Division became a poster child for intergovernmental relations.

Building and Protecting

The operations section under Tony Baron put up miles of protective fencing, gates, and other barriers to control vehicle access. Signage aimed at informing the public about use of open space was developed and created access and parking facilities. Baron's crews were also completing construction on the Elena Gallegos Picnic Area, which opened in 1985, and supporting massive cleanups of the Bosque and Sandia Foothills. Early staff included Lloyd Lovato, Tim Purtel, Rick Gallegos, Julian Sanchez, Joe Trujillo, and Joe Chandler.



Tim Purteil worked for the City of Albuquerque for over 28 years, most of it in Open Space operations and became a true “jack of all trades”. He was working for the Regional Parks section under Jay Hart and Jack Smith in the early 80s putting up signage and fencing. Purteil recalled having a few rickety two-wheel drive vehicles, some fence pliers and a fence stretcher for tools. One day on the way back from maintaining fences on what was to become the shooting range property, he and his co-worker, Rick Gallegos,

came upon some teenagers who were 4-wheeling illegally in Volcano Park with their daddy’s SUV. The teens had broken a radiator hose, had a dead battery, and were out of gas. Purteil fixed the hose with a piece of PVC pipe, filled the radiator with the crew’s drinking water, and gave them some gas they carried for their chainsaw. Lacking jumper cables, Purteil used some fence wire to successfully jump-start the teenager’s vehicle. He made them promise never to off-road there again and they left, relieved and grateful. This kind of ingenuity and diplomacy was a part of the program in the early days.

In 1984, Purteil lead a crew which fenced the City’s Elena Gallegos land. They were not allowed to use vehicles on the perimeter of this 640-acre parcel, so they carried their metal T-posts and post drivers in on foot. They wheel-barrowed wire, water and ready-mix in for setting corner posts. This was rough and rocky land, and Purteil recalls building fence after a heavy snowfall. He also worked on the picnic shelters, restrooms and routed trail signs. He says Joe Trujillo and Julian Sanchez did the stone masonry on the picnic structures and “Joe T” was a genius at construction. Members of a youth summer program were sent out to collect rocks along the arroyos for use on the uprights and walls of the structures. He lists this picnic area as one of his favorite accomplishments, and over 20 years after it was built, he replaced the sagging roofs on the structures before his retirement. Purteil is a native of Albuquerque, having attended school at St. Pius and Sandia High Schools but never even knew about the Sandia Foothills and other open space growing up. He still visits the picnic area and was proud to be involved in the Open Space Division.

Planning

Barbara Baca began work on management and facility plans for Rio Grande Valley State Park (RGVSP). She coordinated with public interest and neighborhood groups, advisory boards, other agencies and State Parks Department planners. She was later joined by Nano Takuma, an assistant planner. They produced the RGVSP Management Plan, Bosque Action Plan and the Water Based Recreation Study and collaborated with the Planning Department on the Northwest Mesa Escarpment Plan. Barbara also monitored area plans and the development process and commented on proposed development which potentially impacted Open Space. This involved delicate negotiations and creative compromises. After 7 years with Open Space, Barbara went

on to work for the National Park Service on their Rivers and Trails program in Washington, DC, and was later appointed Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Director. She now holds a seat on the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District Board.

A Turn-around at State Parks

Planners at the NM State Parks Department were resistant to some elements of the City's management plan for RGVSP. Open Space felt they were holding them to a higher standard than other state parks, and that they viewed the Park as more of a wilderness preserve than a part of an urban open space system. They had delayed State approval of the management plan pending results of a lengthy biological monitoring program. Orlie Sedillo was part of the City's initial decision to pursue creation and assume management of RGVSP and was City Parks and Recreation Director as the Park was formed and the plan was written. He recognized the need for a balance between recreational use and preservation as reflected in the City's management plan. A few years after he left the City, he was appointed State Parks and Recreation Director. Sedillo recounts that one of his first acts was to ask for the State's copy of the RGVSP Management Plan. When he received it, he promptly signed off on it with instructions to convey a signed copy to City Open Space. In government, fortunes and policies can change quickly. This time we were on the right side of change.

Volunteers



VFO's Roger Moore at a Sandia Foothills Cleanup

Early in our work establishing the division we were approached by Roger Moore, New Mexico coordinator for a new volunteer organization sponsored by the Appalachian Trail Club called Volunteers for the Outdoors. Over the next several years, VFO volunteers participated in cleanups, trail building and maintenance, building erosion control structures and other facilities on Open Space lands. When Roger left, Karen Baker became coordinator. The success of this program was followed by volunteer trail watch and

interpretive programs and, eventually, the Open Space Alliance. Early involvement of volunteers has had a great impact on public acceptance and support for the Open Space program and multiplied the efforts of the small staff. The trail watch volunteers were able to pinpoint problem areas which became a focus for conservation officers.

In the late 1980s, City Councilor Pete Dinelli proposed a Kiwanis volunteer project for Open Space and the decision was made to create a reservation picnic area at the Elena Gallegos. Dinelli was the current president of the Kiwanis club, and his enthusiastic support brought funding and

“sweat equity” which resulted in the construction of a large shelter, amphitheater and fire ring, parking area, ADA trails, and an observation blind overlooking a pond near the picnic area. The facility was opened in 1989, is booked solid during the operating season, and is among the most popular outdoor venues in town.

Rex Funk remembers: A Parting of the Ways

When Orli Sedillo left, Mike Walker became Parks and Recreation Director. During this time, I sensed a growing turf battle in the department and some resentment toward the open space program. Some on the recreation side of the department felt that facilities such as the shooting range should be managed by the recreation division rather than by open space. They also advocated much more active uses of open space such as raft races and other mass recreation events. We were sometimes seen as elitists for resisting such activities, but we were concerned about their impacts on the land and the precedents they would set. The recreation people had the ear of the new Director and this all culminated in an internal plan to break up the Open Space Division and parcel out its functions to the rest of the department. I got word through the grapevine and after verifying this with sources in the department I decided to take action to try to prevent the break-up of the Division. I had great respect for my colleagues in Parks and Recreation and the mission they performed. They had no more idea of how to run an open space program, however, than we had of managing golf courses, swimming pools, or athletic leagues. I took my concerns to Dan Weaks, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer under Mayor Ken Schutz. I explained that we had a successful and popular program and were making progress in achieving the City’s goals for open space. Breaking the division up would, in my opinion, be a big mistake. Dan conferred with the Mayor and they decided to move our program under the Mayor’s office as the “Office of Open Space”. Later, under Mayor Saavedra, we were moved to the new Land Resources and Regulation Department under Terry Neighbert. Finally, in the early 1990s we were moved back to Parks and Recreation under Jay Czar, who was understanding and supportive of our mission. A few months after our move to the Mayor’s office, I ran into Mike Walker in the elevator at City Hall. He said he had been very hurt by my actions and the removing of the Open Space Division from P & R. I told him I had to do what I thought was best for the program and felt no personal animosity toward him. This was a stressful and chaotic time for me as well. I took no pleasure in short-circuiting the chain of command. No one really wins in these turf battles.

A Permanent Home

In 1990 Jay Hart and Tony Baron got word that the US Forest Service Tree Nursery facility at Montessa Park was going to be abandoned by the Forest Service. The facility had been built on City land near the Tijeras Arroyo and south of the Albuquerque International Airport. Unfortunately, it was built on unstable soils which would often subside when they got too wet. The Forest Service spent a great deal of time and money stabilizing the buildings at the nursery, but finally elected to abandon it and move the operation to a more favorable climate for growing tree seedlings. There were several large warehouse and shop buildings and a large office complex. Open Space acted quickly and convinced the City administration and Forest Service to let us take over the facility as the headquarters for the Open Space program. They moved from the Pino Yards north of town to the south side of town. The facility is remote (at the end of a 5-mile road east of Rio Bravo Blvd.) but a huge improvement over the cramped facilities at the Pino yards. They finally had the office, storage and shop space to house general operations. It was a huge boost to the division's morale and a great step forward for the program. The Forest Service continued to house their seasonal firefighting operations in one of the buildings.



Open Space Offices at Montessa Park

The National Open Space Conference

After attending an open space conference in Boulder, Colorado, the Division undertook the effort to sponsor the first National Open Space Conference "Open Space Connections" in 1989. Over 350 people attended and 58 speakers presented 17 workshop sessions and 3 field workshop tours. All aspects of open space planning, acquisition and management were discussed and the closing speech was delivered by former Interior Secretary Stewart Udall. Proceedings were prepared, and a national professional organization was formed to promote open space



Stewart Udall's closing speech

nationwide. The City's Open Space Program was showcased, and valuable connections were made with open space professionals.

Diane Souder of the National Park Service and Rex Funk were co-chairs of the conference. Souder had a long history with our program working for the Heritage Conservation and Recreation service administering Land and Water Conservation grants and as the first Superintendent of Petroglyph National Monument. She and a group of over 20 volunteers did most of the planning and

coordination for the conference.

Visitor Services

Matt Schmader was brought on as Visitor Services Supervisor in 1991. He was An Archaeologist with whom Open Space had contracted for surveys in the past and was a dedicated open space advocate of many years and a past Chairman of the Open Space Task Force. Schmader brought valuable experience in cultural resource preservation and organized the visitor services section, establishing an interpretive program and a volunteer trail watch group. He also coordinated with the National Park Service in planning and managing Petroglyph National Monument (see Ch. 10). Schmader stayed with the Division and served as Assistant Superintendent for 10 years and then Superintendent after Jay Hart left, a position which he held for 11 more years before retiring at the end of 2016.



Matt Schmader at Petroglyph Park

Changing of the Guard

After 12 years as a City employee, Rex Funk retired in September of 1994 and handed the reins to Jay Hart, his Assistant Superintendent. Jay remained Superintendent for 10 years and then was appointed Director of the City Parks and Recreation Department, a position he held for 5 more years. The Division started in 1984 with three employees and an annual budget of \$150,000. When Funk left, there were 52 full and part-time employees and a budget of \$1.2 million. He felt that the staff was committed to the Open Space program and goals and the Division was in good hands. Funk exclaimed that his position at Open Space was the best job he had ever had and the best work he has ever done.

What I Learned: Both Matt and Rex started their journey with Open Space as advocates and ended as managers. We quickly learned that there were new constituencies to balance including elected officials, the City bureaucracy, other agencies, and the general public. We now had the power and means to create and manage an open space program, but with that power came responsibilities, and conflicts were inevitable. We were competing for funding with other City agencies, and the public support of our program helped a great deal in this regard. We often found that it was easier to secure one-time funding to acquire open space than it was to get ongoing funding to manage and protect it. These were life-long struggles fueled by deeply held commitments that came with challenges and sacrifice, but with the ultimate reward of seeing an idea grow from a seedling to a strong and venerable tree.

The Quarter-Cent Quality of Life Tax

By Matt Schmader and Rex Funk

“That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics.” — Aldo Leopold

A Fresh Tax Initiative

Following the political and strategic successes of the Elena Gallegos campaign, an awareness began to take shape not only of the importance of Open Space but also its community-wide appeal. By the late 1980s, Albuquerque’s growth left it with a wide variety of social and structural needs. More places on the west side and the Sandia foothills came under threat by the path of progress, and initial talks started with an idea for another Open Space tax. This time around however, it was clear that Open Space’s popularity could play a different role in forging a broader coalition of needs, projects, and advocates. The idea that took shape eventually was called the “Quality of Life” tax, a more or less omnibus proposal assembled by City Councilors Pete Dinelli (sponsor), Tom Hoover, Pat Baca, Vince Griego, and Nadyne Bicknell in 1987. The Quality of Life tax would be put out for public vote and was designed to have something in it for much of the city: open space land, development of the aquarium and botanical gardens, a balloon museum, a children’s science museum (now called the Explora), new roads, needed storm drainage, and even more police officers.



City councilor Pat Baca, a long-time open space supporter.

Ultimately this “Christmas tree” package was passed by the voters with broad support (over 60%) and another round of open space acquisition took place. The Quality of Life tax would fund purchases of an additional 900 acres of critically needed land from 1988 to 1998. One of the most significant additions was Piedras Marcadas pueblo. Then known as the Zuris-Mann site after the names of the landowners from the 1950s until the 1980s, this immense ancestral village had escaped major impacts of development and of archaeological research due to its private land status. But the preservation community became truly alarmed as proposals emerged to build an apartment complex over the ancient pueblo in the early 1980s.

Archaeologists and other activists testified against the development proposal at Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) hearings. When the apartment proposal was turned down by the EPC, the landowners were deeply upset. “I suppose you’re proud of yourselves,” one owner told the crowd gathered after the hearing. “Well we can’t do anything with our land now. If that place is so darned important, why don’t you buy it?” He had shown us the way forward and the Quality

of Life funds provided the financial backing. After several years of appraisals, negotiations, and complicated contracts, the site was purchased in June 1988. It was soon renamed Piedras Marcadas pueblo to recognize its geographic proximity and connection to the canyon of the same name just a mile away -- the spot where thousands of petroglyphs were left by the site's residents. The last intact major ancestral village of the southern Tiwa province, occupied for centuries from 1300 CE until the early 1600s, and scene of the first contact in the middle Rio Grande between the Pueblos and outsiders (Europeans and their Mexican allies) in 1540, was finally protected.

Nearby lands in Piedras Marcadas Canyon at the north end of Taylor Ranch were also slated for developments. Planned subdivisions, trash dumping, off-roading, theft of basalt boulders for landscaping, and shooting all besieged the compact but petroglyph-rich area south of Paradise Hills. By the late 1980s, the City's Planning Department passed an ambitious set of guidelines in the Northwest Mesa Escarpment Plan to curb much of the negative impact (see Chapter 10). This was intended as a stopgap action while a new national



Aerial View of Piedras Marcadas Canyon



View north towards the volcanoes from Piedras Marcadas Canyon.

monument was under consideration for the whole escarpment and west mesa. The Escarpment Plan was innovative but lacked enough teeth to prevent the biggest developments from moving ahead. Only the power of money, again from the Quality of Life tax, was the way to stem the tide. The tax made significant inroads into protecting endangered land on the west mesa. About 270 acres of land was bought in the Piedras Marcadas Canyon before Petroglyph National Monument was established in June 1990, and another 260 acres was added to the new Monument from 1990 until 1996. A small but culturally important detached part of the lava flows east of Golf Course Road was found to be full of basalt grinding stones and more than 100 petroglyphs. Named Los Metates for that reason, the 17-acre parcel was

saved from planned incorporation into a business park by the new funding source.

A Grand but Audacious Idea

Matt Schmader recalls that one day in 1994, he got a phone call from Coda Roberson, a homebuilder and developer who built several subdivisions on the west side including Santa Fe Village in Taylor Ranch. Roberson had watched the purchase of the Piedras Marcadas pueblo site from his neighbors to the north with keen interest. Roberson and Schmader met at the spacious 26-acre Roberson Ranch, located between Coors Blvd and the Rio Grande. Standing in a five-acre field just south of the pueblo site, Roberson motioned at the ground. “Boy,” he asked in a thick Oklahoma drawl, “do you reckon any of those ruins are buried over here? I’m going to need to decide if I should develop this land and wouldn’t want to dig anything up if I can help it.” Schmader thought for a bit and replied, “Coda, there’s only one way to find out—have some test trenches dug.” Roberson and Schmader were as different as they could be in some ways, but had worked together on purchases of escarpment land at Santa Fe Village, so they had a built-in trust and a mutual respect.



Lower 18.5-acre farm fields of the former Roberson Ranch (now Open Space Visitor Center).

Backhoe trenches were dug under the direction of local archaeologist Mike Marshall and he confirmed that there were indeed parts of ancient walls, rooms and floors, and trash pits from the pueblo extending well south onto the five-acre field. Roberson came back with an idea. “I suppose I’d rather sell this to the City than anything else, if you think it would work out,” he told me after getting the testing results. The land was bought and not long afterwards, Roberson set up another meeting. Looking out over the 18.5 acres of pasture east of his house, Roberson confided to me, “Well, I’ve been thinking about a nice subdivision down here, maybe 25 or 30 homes. But you know, if the City wanted it too then our view would always be open.” Purchase of the second parcel followed and in short order, 23.5 acres of prime vanishing farmland on the west side of the river had been added to the Open Space system. The selling price was just \$40,000 an acre—a terrific bargain for land that is now worth six or seven times that value today.

The City had always intended to build a small museum facility next to the Piedras Marcadas pueblo and had bought an auxiliary two-acre tract on Coors Blvd, west of the site, for just that purpose. Another fateful conversation took place when Matt Schmader met with Elmer Sproul, a developer and close friend of the Roberson’s, who was trying to get designs approved for a business park along Coors across from the pueblo site. Referring to a possible future small museum, Schmader observed that if one was ever built he would want it to look just like the Roberson’s rambling hacienda-style adobe house. Elmer shot back a look, raising his thick bushy eyebrows and with a twinkle in his eyes said, “You know, I bet if you asked Coda and Reba, they might just sell you their place.” Incredulous at the thought, Schmader replied, “no, I could never

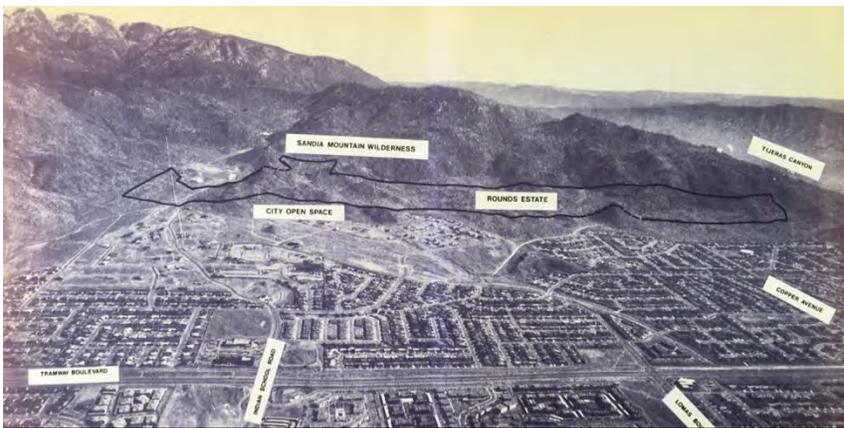
ask them to consider such a thing.” A couple of weeks later Elmer called Schmader and chuckled into the phone, “I asked them if they would sell! Coda is seriously thinking about it... Reba isn’t so sure yet, though.” Elmer had planted quite a seed.

Coda and Reba Roberson built their home in 1979, when very few people lived in the Taylor Ranch area. The couples who had homes in the area were all pioneers of a sort who knew each other well: Nina and Joel Taylor (eponymous founders of Taylor Ranch), Suzy and Rufus Poole (whose mansion was perched above the San Antonio Oxbow), Mary and Bill Mann, and Pat and Stan Zuris. Mann and Zuris were sellers of the pueblo site and the Roberson’s immediate neighbors to the north. Roberson was a World War II veteran and former Japanese prisoner-of-war who knew more than a little about home-building. He installed quality products into their adobe-walled house, including Italian floor tile, copper counter tops, high ceilings, and even gold-plated faucets. The rambling house was nearly 5,000 square feet with just one bedroom and few but otherwise spacious rooms. The great dining hall was known to hold up to 50 people for holiday dinners. A two-room guesthouse sat next to a pool, and a caretaker’s house, along with vintage apple trees and lush grass lawns, completed the compound. Little wonder that Reba Roberson had more than a few second thoughts about selling it all. The compound was becoming too much to take care of and the idea of building a brand-new smaller house on land right next door, owned free and clear, and of paying off a lot of real estate debt changed their minds. By the end of 1995, serious negotiations were underway between the Roberson and Loren Hines, the City’s property manager. The pieces were in place for an exciting project: a home for a new flagship facility, the Open Space Visitor Center. The rest of the Visitor Center story will be told in a later chapter of this Open Space history series (see Chapter 12).

More Successes

Not all of the Quality of Life acquisitions occurred on the west side, however. A major property in the Sandia foothills known as the Rounds Estate was also in peril of development as the 1980s drew to a close. This 324-acre parcel, with its stunning views and mountain terrain was located between Sandia Foothills Open Space and the Cibola National Forest. A proposal was crafted whereby the City would put up \$4.2 million from the Quality of Life tax to match the Federal

Government contribution toward acquisition. Cliff Anderson of the Open Space Advisory Board and Rex Funk were sent to Washington to lobby Congress for the Federal funding. Advisory Board members Jean House and Ellie Mitchell put together stunning portfolios of photos of the area which were distributed to key



Aerial view of the Rounds Estate in the 1980s

members of Congress. Funk recalls, “We were novices at Congressional lobbying, and Congressman Lujan gave us desk, phone, phone numbers of committee members, and pointed us in right direction.” Cliff remembered that the Forest Service couldn’t talk to us because of anti-land acquisition climate from the Reagan Administration, but secretly would welcome funding. Cliff says the reason we got the \$4.2 million was that Congressman Lujan was retiring and it was customary for the Ways and Means Committee to give a parting “gift” to a retiring Congressman. Lujan elected to make the Rounds Estate his gift, cashed in his chip, and in 1988 the Rounds Estate was saved. The acquisition was also supported by Senators Pete Domenici, Jeff Bingaman, and Congressmen Bill Richardson and Joe Skeen. By offering a match as an incentive, the City was successful in securing 14% of the Forest Service’s total national land acquisition budget that year - a rare coup.

The Open Space Advisory Board

The Open Space Task Force was the volunteer group that advised the City on open space land purchases beginning in 1976 (see Chapter 3). It was an informal group made up of advocates and had no set membership requirements. After the Elena Gallegos quarter-cent tax, however, the City felt the need to create a more formal appointed advisory board. An ordinance establishing the Open Space Advisory Board (OSAB) was passed; the board was appointed on April 8, 1983 and met for the first time the next month. The new Board had five members selected by the Mayor and approved by the City Council for staggered 3-year terms. Board members were to have expertise in open space, ecology, the real estate market, urban and regional planning and/or related law. The first members of the Board were Cliff Anderson (chairman), Ron Brown (vice-chair), Aubrey Cookman, Victor Marshall, and Mela Koeber.

The board met monthly and established a priority list for open space acquisition. They also reviewed management and facility plans prepared by the Open Space Division and commented on development plans that could affect open space lands. They regularly toured proposed and existing open space properties and were briefed on issues by Open Space Division and Planning Department staff. They also monitored the Open Space Permanent Fund and its asset or trade lands, which were set up by the Elena Gallegos purchase in 1984. One of their products was an Open Space Register which established a formal process and criteria whereby lands could be nominated for inclusion on the acquisition priority list. Ellie Mitchell, then of the Task Force, championed this effort. The board was concerned that political pressure could be applied to purchase lands of low priority or with little major open space value. An example might be isolated vacant land surrounded by development that a neighborhood wanted to protect but that had limited unique natural value or connection to major open space areas.

The board was approached with just such proposals periodically. These criteria extended the definition of major open space by enumerating the attributes of lands to be considered. Qualities such as linkage to other open space, presence of endangered species, natural uniqueness, recreational access, contribution to urban design, cultural and historical significance, and archaeological value were scored to determine inclusion of a property on the priority list and what level of priority was assigned to it. Anyone could nominate lands to be included on the

priority list by filling out a form and submitting it to the Board. The OSAB also presented an annual report to the Mayor, Environmental Planning Commission, and City Council. The Open Space Task Force continued to operate and advised the OSAB on many issues.

The definition of Major Open Space was an ongoing issue, and the subject of much discussion in concurrent Comprehensive Plan revisions. The work of the OSAB did much to clarify this issue and head off ill-advised acquisitions and developments. Had they not done so, political pressure might have resulted in urbanized park elements such as golf courses, ball fields, and/or neighborhood parks being included in the open space system.

The Open Space Trust Fund

The Open Space Trust Fund continued to grow as Elena Gallegos trade lands were sold. Because the City had put up \$26 million to purchase the Sandia Mountain Wilderness, the United States government traded back 17,000 acres of land for the City to sell, with proceeds going into the permanent fund. The fund started with a corpus of \$1.2 million in 1984, coming from a surplus out of the original quarter-cent funding needed to purchase the Elena Gallegos property. The Real Property Division sold numerous parcels in the 1980s and by 1990 the fund had grown to \$11 million as a result of land sales. The fund grew steadily and by 2003 had exceeded \$23 million, nearly its intended target. The emergency use of the permanent fund to acquire threatened bosque land in 2004-2005 siphoned off nearly \$10 million from the fund, a promised loan that was never replenished (see Chapter 11).

By City ordinance, the first \$500 thousand annual interest was to be used for management and improvement of existing open space. The next \$200 thousand was earmarked for payback of the parking garage traded to acquire the option on the Elena Gallegos lands. Interest income above \$700 thousand could be used to acquire open space, but the fund was not able to make a major impact toward purchases of new land. The numbers never really added up for management, because operating costs could not be completely offset by interest earnings alone. In general, investments were conservative and yields not as high as expected. This simple fact meant that Open Space Division would always need a “subsidy” from the City’s operating fund, and that interest would only provide a portion of management costs.

Land Acquisition

The Real Property Division became great partners with Open Space. Land acquisition from the quarter-cent Quality of Life Tax was accomplished by the real property manager, Mark Money and by his successor, former Open Space planner Loren Hines. Mark recalls tremendous development pressure and hundreds of landowners competing for good position on the priority list. At times it resembled a feeding frenzy. At one point, Mark was offered air transportation and tickets to the Indianapolis 500 race in exchange for expediting acquisition of a property. Developers would sometimes seek to have their property zoned for higher density to drive up the value of the land. The Northwest Mesa Escarpment Plan, adopted in 1987, established

setbacks and zoning controls, but it was only a stop-gap measure. As usual, purchase was necessary to ultimately protect the land (see Chapter 10).

Managing the Elena Gallegos trade lands was also the Property Division's job, with advertising and some salaries coming from permanent fund interest earnings. Every year, Real Property would issue statewide land sales advertisements to market the trade lands. Some of the best pieces, such as those in Placitas and Farmington, sold quickly while other parcels that the federal government gave to the City were not as desirable. Even now, hundreds of acres of trade lands remain on the books as the last remnants of Elena Gallegos exchange.

What We Learned:

The appeal of Open Space could be a driving force by itself. As the Open Space program grew and drew more public support, advocates and elected officials saw the wisdom in pairing it with other urban needs in crafting tax initiatives. This popularity was enhanced by having strong advocates on the City Council. Strategic thinking and partnering with the federal government continued to be an effective way to leverage acquisition funding. Definition and setting priorities were crucial strategies to prevent misuse of resources and open space lands for inappropriate purposes. The Open Space Advisory Board established a foundation for more informed selection of priorities and acquisition. The Open Space Fund was growing, but increasing development pressure made it necessary to seek other sources of funding for acquisition. Relying on planning and zoning alone to protect open space is, at best, a short-term solution. With the growth of a program, inevitable growing pains come as well.

A Park is Born: Creating Petroglyph National Monument

By Matt Schmader

"Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher 'standard of living' is worth its cost in things natural, wild and free." –Aldo Leopold

Beginnings

In a time with no time, in a world before this world, rocks were still soft and all things were still being made. Animals were not complete and humans not fully formed. The living creatures made their way from one underworld to another, emerging from the darkness below and into the world we now inhabit. Yet other realms exist above, and spirits can travel both beneath and upwards. As they ascend or descend, souls carry with them messages and prayers that ensure positive forces of nature will continue to nourish and heal, that the breath of life shall be carried on clouds and condense as rain, that the mountains will be dwelling places where ancestors may see all is well. It is no wonder, but a great wonder indeed, that offerings of health and wisdom, of hope and continuance, of knowledge and eternity, are left as markings on rocks infused with power and energy. Some of us call these marks petroglyphs.

The first time Matt Schmader saw a petroglyph was in the very early 1980s. He was taken on a hike to the Piedras Marcadas area of the west mesa by Kit Sargent, a well-known local archaeologist. Schmader was helping her excavate an ancient pueblo site under her North Valley house at the time. What Sargent lacked in physical stature-- for she was a tiny sprite-- she more than made up with her energy, forthright nature, and care for the environment. They were approached by a man and his son who asked us if we were looking for "those spaceman drawings." Sargent and Schmader just waved and kept walking.

In 1983 Matt Schmader was finishing his bachelor's degree in Anthropology at UNM and took a course that spring semester called Cultural Resource Management, taught by the late Dr. Joe Winter. Dr. Winter held the field sessions of his class out in Piedras Marcadas Canyon too, not far from my first encounters with Kit Sargent. About half-way through the course Dr. Winter invited a guest speaker to talk about local preservation issues. She was Ellie Mitchell, who like Kit Sargent, was a member of the Open Space Task Force. Mitchell was also tiny and filled with boundless energy. She told us about threats to land and how some places needed to be saved when they are endangered. At the end of the talk, Schmader innocently asked Mitchell how to get involved. She quite simply said, "Why don't you volunteer?"

Those four simple words embarked Schmader, quite literally, onto a decades-long journey with which he is still engaged. He sometimes wonders how different life might have been if not for that invited speaker. He supposes he may have found his way to open space by another path, but when the way is shown to you the choice isn't hard to make. Dr. Joe Winter's class showed undergraduates that the area was rich in petroglyphs but was in a lot of danger. There was

trash dumping, gun shot damage, and boulders were being hauled off by heavy equipment to be used as landscaping material. The whole area was unfenced and much of the land was private.

Of course, Albuquerque is no stranger to petroglyphs, their study, or saving them. Perhaps no other major city in the world, with the exception of Sydney, has as close a tie to its ancient indigenous images. City residents had been visiting the west mesa since the late 1800s. As early as the 1960s, Colonel Jim Bain of the Albuquerque Archaeological Society had been working to record some of the area's petroglyphs. Ruth Armstrong recorded two sites in Piedras Marcadas Canyon in 1968, the same area that Dr. Winter returned to 15 years later. Colonel Bain also worked with the well-known UNM professor Frank Hibben to document sites in the new suburb of Taylor Ranch. One of the early developers in the vicinity, D.W. Falls, had gotten approval to build a subdivision but a new parks ordinance required that he set aside park land to go with it. Falls chose a 70-acre parcel of steep cliffs, fortuitously unbuildable but known to have rock images, and gave it to the city. This place would become Indian Petroglyph State Park.

By the early 1970s the city of Albuquerque had gotten Land and Water Conservation funds (LWCF, see chapter 5 for other land acquisitions under the program) to develop the new park. The firm of Chambers and Campbell was chosen and their lead planner was Jerry Widdison. Jerry was an innovative park designer and had played a key role in the Rio Grande Valley Park study of 1968 (see chapter 2). He brought forth some new concepts to the park, including winding trails with view spots that kept visitors from crawling all over the rocks to see petroglyphs. Importantly, some sections of the trail were kept at low gradient to ensure that people of all abilities could enjoy the setting. This was an early innovation in outdoor accessibility at a time when little was being done nationally. By 1973, Indian Petroglyph State Park had been designed and built, opening to the public one of the first municipal parks in the country dedicated to the interpretation and protection of petroglyphs.

West Mesa Survey

A classmate from Dr. Winter's class, John Hays, and Matt Schmader decided to apply for a small grant on behalf of the City of Albuquerque from the State Historic Preservation Division. They asked for a \$5,000 planning assistance grant at the end of 1984 to conduct a basic archaeological inventory of the area. Hays and Schmader knew that less than half of the West Mesa's 17-mile long escarpment had been surveyed by archaeologists, and so there was a great need to fill out the whole picture. They proposed to do a complete survey of the entire 17 miles and to photograph all of the petroglyphs they found. The state liked the proposal and awarded the Open Space Division the grant. Open Space contracted with Hays and Schmader to carry out the survey, with Barbara Baca was they project manager.

By early summer of 1985, we had gotten the go-ahead from the state to conduct our proposed survey. Before we started, hundreds of private owners had to be notified by mail that surveyors would cross their land. John Hays and Matt Schmader got armloads of aerial photos and

topographic maps, designed recording forms, and assembled crews. They kicked the project off at the beginning of July and were energetic but not terribly well prepared. The mid-summer heat on the dark rocks was unbearable at times. The searing mid-day light made it hard to see the pecked images. Some of the biggest rattlesnakes Schmader had ever seen were out in various areas. And the terrain was unforgiving. But the sheer thrill of discovery, of finding things never before reported, and the realization that this was going to be a special project kept them going.

Hays and Schmader made two tactical errors from the very start. The first mistake was that they began where no work had ever been done before. They reasoned that surveys had been done in the central and northern parts of the escarpment, so to fill in the biggest gaps they would start at the far south end (north of I-40's "Nine-Mile Hill"). This area is now called Mesa Prieta (meaning "dark mesa") and has some of the steepest cliffs in the vicinity. The smarter way to go about it would have been to work from the known to the unknown and from the easier terrain to the harder, but they did it backwards. The second mistake was to promise too much. We had proposed to photograph every petroglyph image we saw. We started according to plan but not for long, as they soon realized they could never "photograph them all." After the first week they had barely covered any ground and would never have enough time or money to do a 100% survey of the while 17 miles. After an urgent meeting with the state, it was agreed that Hays and Schmader would map boundaries of major petroglyph concentrations onto air photos and to do running tallies for categories of images (geometric designs, animal forms, faces, humans, and so on). Representative photos would be taken as needed but the process was greatly streamlined.

The two wound our way from south to north, and from the unknown back into areas that had some prior studies. Their work would be a comprehensive sample of the whole area and get a better sense of what was there. Along the way they recorded archaeological sites found on or next to the escarpment, which became an entirely different dimension of the unfolding picture. They were able to verify that the oldest petroglyphs dated to the late Archaic period, roughly 3000 years ago, as did some scattered remnants of campsites. Everywhere they found scatters of chipped stone from hunters making tools. They found very important (and often quite subtle) evidence that pueblo people had engaged in sophisticated methods of controlling water and building up soil in dryland garden plots: there were stacks of stone along the top edge of the escarpment that slowed down water flow, and little rock walls or checkdams that held back soil and moisture in terraces at the base of the cliffs. Some large natural terraces halfway up the escarpment face were modified into garden areas where, presumably, corn and other crops along with useful native medicinal and food plants could thrive. We found hundreds of grinding spots on boulders, which we thought had been used to grind seed (but which we later learned were deeply important in the making of healing medicines used in prayer). They likened the volcanic escarpment to a huge "black sponge" that soaked up runoff and held more heat due to the dark rocks, creating a virtual island with a longer growing season and more favorable habitats for plants and animals alike.

The cliffs held other clues about our past and cultural changes. The pueblos' religious symbolism was inevitably tested and counteracted by symbols from a new faith, namely from Christian colonizers. In many places the sign of the cross was placed along side or on top of former native images, quite graphically announcing the conflict in values and belief that would become part of our state's legacy. But with those oppositions also seemed to come a degree of accommodation and tolerance needed for these cultures to blend in the way that now makes New Mexico a unique place. Christian symbolism was primarily carried into the area by sheep herders, who drove flocks from such places as Atrisco and Alameda onto the mesa tops for access to grasslands and grazing range. Stacks of stone walls-- remnants of makeshift sheep corrals--were found in key locations and likely dated to the expanding colonial economies of the 1800s. A final, fascinating overlay was found in modern inscriptions, historic trash dumps, and even a World War I target range.

By the time Hays and Schmader were done in late summer of 1985, they had covered the full 17-mile length of the west mesa escarpment. They had tallied 10,500 petroglyphs—far more than expected—and estimated that they missed about one-third of them (meaning the actual number was 15,000 or more). The majority dated to the late Ancestral Pueblo period, about 1300 CE until the arrival of the first Europeans in 1540 CE. The two had recorded 54 associated native American and historic sites demonstrating long-term land use patterns that crossed over periods of great cultural change. At the end of the project, their faithful crew returned to the original starting point at Mesa Prieta. There, overlooking tall cliffs in the evening light, they pondered the next steps. Maybe, since Indian Petroglyph was already a state park, could there be a park expansion? As a starting point, they wrote a nomination for the whole area to be considered a district for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. That nomination was accepted by the State Historic Preservation Division in February 1986. By then the whole political landscape had already changed.

A Monumental Effort

The survey generated a fair bit of interest and local media coverage. Matt Schmader was interviewed several times by television stations and newspaper reporters. Part of the city's publicity campaign included several guided hikes to the lesser known areas such as Mesa Prieta.



On the first of these hikes, a tall man with a beard and deep voice, a straw hat, two cameras, and many questions showed up. He was Ike Eastvold, who recently moved from Riverside California where he had been a teacher and preservation advocate. Eastvold started asking about what protection measures were being taken, who owned the land, why damage wasn't being prevented, and so on. Not satisfied with the status quo. Eastvold decided to shake things

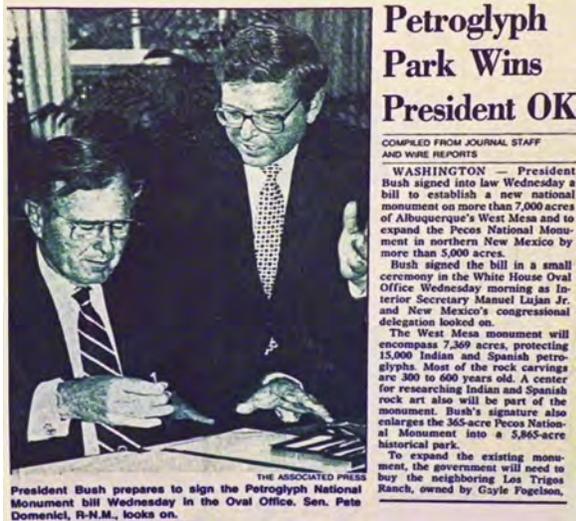
up and created a nonprofit advocacy group called Friends of the Albuquerque Petroglyphs (FOTAP). With this group behind him, Eastvold started organizing, getting more allies, making

calls, printing lots of flyers, and attending many city council meetings. No expansion of the state park or listing on the National Register was going to suffice so long as swathes of land remained in private hands and vandalism continued unabated. The national monument idea was on its way.

Even as momentum grew for a new and greatly expanded protection of the vulnerable west mesa, the wheels of progress ground on and impacts continued. Several instances of damage from utility lines and home construction offered a renewed catalyst. Knowing that any official designations could take quite a while, the City's Planning Department stepped in with a bold move to get a plan written. Planners like Cynthia Bruce, Anne McLaughlin, Paula Donahue, and Jon Messier assembled the workings of a major planning document. Barbara Baca, as Open Space's lead planner, and with her deep knowledge of the area, was an absolutely essential member of that team. In a very short time, the Northwest Mesa Escarpment Plan was written and approved by city council in 1987 despite strenuous objection from landowners and developers. The plan created no-build setbacks from the top and bottom of the escarpment, height limits to protect viewsheds, color restrictions to make buildings blend in, lighting and landscaping regulations, and other design standards for everything from walls to roads. The critical escarpment face was identified as a protection zone and the whole plan, revolutionary in content and concept, bought crucial time and gave the area a fighting chance while a possible monument was being studied.

Congress held field hearings in Albuquerque in the late 1980s and took testimony from citizens across the state. Ike Eastvold assembled a strong coalition of preservation and civic groups who were active in testifying but his ability to get native communities to express concern and support was unprecedented and an ultimate key to success. Along the way, we began to hear some of the most preposterous things: that it was all just a bunch of old graffiti, that boy scouts had made most of the petroglyphs, that these were left by aliens (yes, again!), that their importance was being greatly exaggerated, that too much area was contemplated for protection, and that all progress on the burgeoning west side-- where the path of logical growth and the future of the city's economy was-- would be strangled. Native communities told, some for the first time, of always revering the area, of using it as a healing place, that their forefathers had stories about these places, and that they still visited sacred spots. The derision with which they were sometimes met was overcome by the depth and sincerity of their messages. And other traditional communities such as the Atrisco land grant, whose shepherds used the mesa for grazing lands, also expressed support through their connection to the land.

One of the most important considerations for the new monument was the critical fact that Albuquerque already owned over 4,200 acres of Open Space within the proposed 7,200-acre park unit. All the years of protecting the volcanoes and the mesa top, of preserving and studying petroglyphs, and of putting protections in place had finally paid off. On June 26, 1990, after congress introduced legislation sponsored by New Mexico congressman Bill Richardson in the house and by Senator Pete Domenici, Petroglyph National Monument was established as the nation's 355th unit of the National Park Service. Pete Domenici and Bill Richardson looked on as President George H.W. Bush signed the authorization bill. The legislation was almost



unique in the history of the Park Service, as it created an equal co-management authority for the monument between the City of Albuquerque and the federal government. Open Space would be the lead city agency charged with carrying out the management duties to be shared with the Park Service. The urgency to save the area had produced a monument in less than five years, and the City came out as an equal partner. The work was about to ramp up.

Early Days

In July 1990, the Park Service set up shop in a small office on the third floor of City Hall. Its first employee and first park superintendent was a veteran of the Service who had spent years in numerous programs but importantly was an Albuquerque resident. Diane Souder knew the Open Space program well and had helped co-organize the national Open Space conference with Rex Funk just the year before. With her knowledge of local management and politics, her city connections along with her can-do approach, Diane was the ideal first monument manager. She worked closely, along with Rex Funk and other city council staff, to begin some of the actions congress called for. Matt Schmader was lucky enough to be hired on as Open Space's principal liaison to the Monument in 1991. The most important ongoing activity was land acquisition, which was taken on by Mark Money of the city's Real Property Division (and later succeeded by former Open Space planner Loren Hines). Money and Hines both drew the ire of many landowners who were quite upset at having to sell their long-term real estate investments. One prominent owner went so far as to have a petroglyph removed from his land and unceremoniously hauled to the front steps of city hall. But slowly, as funding came in and lots were bought, and as day-to-day operations started, most but not all of the resistance calmed down. The Park Service had its side of hiring and property acquisition (led by Bob Mueller) too. Soon they had bought the former Dr. Sophie Aberle property on Unser Blvd and had a visitor center. Their interpretive rangers would be stationed right alongside city Open Space park attendants at former Indian Petroglyph State Park, which was renamed Boca Negra.



Deeper Meanings

One crucial result of a deeper focus on the west mesa, and creation of Petroglyph Monument, was a better appreciation of native and indigenous world view. The area no longer seemed to be a static place, frozen in time but with a dazzling array of clues to the past. Instead,

connections between sites and among those sites, the petroglyphs, and the surrounding landscape began to emerge. It became clearer that ancestral pueblo peoples lived in villages along the Rio Grande but actively used the west mesa in a wide variety of spiritual and economic ways. Thus, these were not mere collections of sites, they were entire landscapes of belief that were still very much alive; where seemingly blank places carried as much importance as filled areas, where trails of spirits led from river to volcanoes to mountains and beyond. It became equally clear that context was everything—where rocks were found, where an image was placed, which direction it faced, what mountains or pathways for water were around, which other images were nearby, and which plants grew there.

The whole place resonated with the acts and prayers of ancestors and with the ongoing ways their descendants interact with it up to the present. It took much courage on the part of the Native American community to entrust some of these concepts with dominant-society land managers. More than once, Matt Schmader took small groups out to look at petroglyph sites or other special places and the response was amazement, excitement, and much discussion in native language. Some people were deeply moved while others turned back or had to perform purifications later because of what they saw; the underlying powers sometimes proved to be too much. They respected that if a person had something to say, it was in confidence. It was not up to the land managers to be advertisers or promoters, although commercialization of images took place too often. The use of petroglyphs as commodities on everything from t-shirts to post cards and coffee mugs was offensive. Displaying many images that had raw power or that were not intended for public view was not acceptable. Instead, it was their responsibility to be real and sincere partners and guardians. Western society likes fast and easy answers, but those do not exist in this context. Early on, Schmader was concerned about how to convey respect and explanations, so one time he asked if his basic approach was appropriate. “Don’t worry to much about what you say, because it’s not going to be completely right anyway,” came the response back from an elder I held in the highest regard. From then on, Schmader understood not to try and “explain everything” all at once but rather to wrap protective arms and caring intention around that place. They had been given a moral and sacred duty unlike anything we expected.

What I Learned:

You Never Know When a Little Spark Might Light a Big Fire.

When I first started learning about petroglyphs, I was quite naïve about the depth of understanding and responsibility that came with their study. And I found out that no such pursuit of knowledge is ever truly over. Like a kind of intellectual quicksand, the more you struggle to emerge, the deeper in you go. From a chance encounter with an Open Space Task Force Volunteer, I had been given a powerful possibility. A challenge to become a volunteer led to a lifetime of work in preservation, in helping save places, and in trying to light the same kind of interest in other people. And it led to a lifetime of finding like-minded friends and colleagues with immense talents and similar passions. From a little spark, a big fire.