

My Turn

Town of Taos recommits to revitalizing historic Acequia Madre del Rio Pueblo de Taos

Fritz Hahn

The Taos News, 3/30/2017

The Town of Taos is a parciante on the Acequia Madre del Rio Pueblo de Taos. Under the direction of Mayor Dan Barrone, the Town has recommitted its support for our acequia and endeavors to assist our acequia's Commissioners in the repair and revitalization of our ancient, beloved acequia. Wholeheartedly supported by the Town Council, this initiative has been expertly guided by Manager Rick Bellis along with the technical expertise of Mark Henderson and Public Works Director Francisco "French" Espinoza.

– In 2015 collaborating with the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, the Town was able to repair and bring water into the Kit Carson Park lateral ditch. It was the first time in a number of years that the park had been irrigated.

– In 2016 the Town participated in a Youth Conservation Corps acequia-mapping project conducted by the Taos Soil & Water Conservation District offering dual Taos High School/ University of New Mexico credit with pay. This unique class was designed and monitored by Mr. Peter Vigil and Ms. Tanya Duncan and taught by Miguel Santistevan, David Gilroy and Enrique Gonzales.

– In 2017 under the guidance of the Acequia Madre's Commissioners, Mr. Charles Chacon, Jim Schlaurbaum, Nick Romero, Mayordomo Bobby Jaramillo, the parciantes, the Town and the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District, engineering has begun to design repairs to revitalize the La Loma lateral of the Acequia Madre from the Kachina Lodge through the *desague* at the Lovatos ditch at Ranchitos Road. Reconstruction will begin shortly with the goal of bringing water to Parr Field by the start of the Fall semester at Enos Garcia, so that students will have the opportunity to bring the water down to their garden. It is hoped that total restoration of the La Loma lateral will be completed by the Fall of 2018. – As the New Mexico Department of Transportation is scheduled to redesign and repair Paseo del Pueblo Norte in the summer of 2018, the Town is exploring the possibility of rehabilitating the Paseo Lateral of the Acequia Madre in conjunction with these road repairs.

– Hoping to apply for another Youth Conservation Corps grant for the summer of 2018, the Town along with the Taos Land Trust and the possible involvement of the Taos Valley Acequia Association, under the guidance of Chairman and Mayordomo Cipriano Medina, plans to participate in the reconstruction and revitalization of the Vigil y Romo Lateral off the Acequia Madre. It is expected that this YCC grant will be a THS/UNM dually credited paid work and learning experience.

– Currently, acequia revitalization requires a community wide, collaborative, holistic approach to the Rio Fernando Watershed. As a result, the Town of Taos with Louis Fineberg, Senior

Planner John Miller as well as the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District, the Taos Land Trust, Amigos Bravos, acequia commissioners and mayordomos and the anticipated participation of the Taos Valley Acequia Association, have formed the Rio Fernando Watershed Working Group – designed to enable coordinated revitalization efforts and strengthen our presentation and grant application process to funding resources.

Ensuring the protection of our rich, cultural acequia heritage requires institutional change. To enable that, a number of ordinances are currently progressing through the Town's Planning & Zoning Department. Additionally, the Town hopes to reinforce intergenerational acequia knowledge by involving our youth wherever possible.

The Town is committed to revitalizing our acequia commons, helping to stabilize our aquifers, and solidifying future generations' sustainability.

Hahn is a town councilor.