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**COMMONWEAL CONSERVANCY DONATES 250-ACRE
CONSERVATION EASEMENT TO THE SANTA FE CONSERVATION TRUST**
Galisteo Basin Preserve easement advances a regional conservation vision

Santa Fe, NM, September 1, 2011—Commonweal Conservancy committed 250 acres along the northern rim of the Galisteo Basin to permanent open-space protection today through the donation of a conservation easement to the Santa Fe Conservation Trust. During the past three years, Commonweal has overlaid nearly 3,000 acres within the nationally acclaimed Galisteo Basin Preserve with conservation easements. In collaboration with the Santa Fe Conservation Trust, Commonweal’s easement donations will ensure that the scenic, cultural, recreational, agricultural, and wildlife habitat resources within central Santa Fe County’s iconic Galisteo Basin will be forever protected.

“This easement donation advances a community-inspired vision for interconnected open space and wildlife corridors in the Galisteo Basin – one that will help protect cultural resources, agricultural land, and trails throughout the watershed,” said Ted Harrison, president and founder of Commonweal Conservancy, the Santa Fe-based nonprofit organization spearheading the 13,522-acre Galisteo Basin Preserve. “It forges a critical link among conservation lands within the Preserve, adjoining private ranches, and a broad array of county, state, and federal land holdings throughout the Galisteo Basin.”

Today’s \$470,000 easement gift deepens Commonweal’s philanthropic commitment to the Galisteo Basin. Since its founding in 2003, Commonweal has contributed more than \$3.6 million in land value donations to the Santa Fe Conservation Trust and Santa Fe County. The nonprofit organization has also secured gifts of land and conservation easements from property owners within the Basin valued at nearly \$5 million. With support from the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, Commonweal expects to overlay an adjoining 280-acre property, known as Galisteo Springs, with a conservation easement later this month.

Most of the Preserve’s conservation easements are held and managed by the Santa Fe Conservation Trust (SFCT). The local land trust maintains easements throughout northern New Mexico. With a small staff in Santa Fe, SFCT monitors the conservation values of their easements’ diverse cultural, environmental, and recreational resources.

“We appreciate Commonweal’s dedication to land conservation, especially in these difficult economic times; and we are excited to be a part of the growing recreational trail network that is open to the public at the Galisteo Basin Preserve,” said Charlie O’Leary, SFCT executive director.

“The conservation vision of the Galisteo Basin Preserve has been achieved in collaboration with a broad array of nonprofit conservation organizations, private individuals, and funding partners, such as Los Alamos National Bank,” Harrison said. Through a carefully orchestrated program of conservation easement donations and thoughtfully planned limited development, the Galisteo Basin Preserve is designed to permanently protect more than 13,000 acres of open space, migratory wildlife habitat, native vegetation, and cultural resources in the Galisteo Basin.

The conservation easement over these 250 acres of short-grass prairie, savannah grasslands, piñon-juniper woodlands, and arroyo riparian areas will permit Earth Works Institute, Great Plains Restoration Council, and SFCT to pursue land restoration and sustainable ranching initiatives within the Preserve in the years ahead.

While prohibiting subdivision and construction on the property, the easement allows for a publicly-accessible trail network that will eventually link to more than 50 miles of hiking and biking paths and horseback riding corridors within the Preserve. To date, Commonweal has developed more than 18 miles of trails within the Preserve for public use.

About the Galisteo Basin Preserve

The Galisteo Basin Preserve is a land conservation and community-development initiative in Santa Fe County that is designed to protect and restore more than 13,000 acres of open space and promote thoughtful, stewardship-oriented community development. Publicly accessible trails, active land-restoration projects, and green home construction in five conservation neighborhoods currently animate the Preserve. For more information, visit www.galisteobasinpreserve.com.

About Commonweal Conservancy

Commonweal Conservancy is a nonprofit, conservation-based, community-development organization dedicated to forging deep and sustaining relationships among people, land, and the built environment. Commonweal acquires properties of unique cultural and ecological significance and engages in collaborative land planning that inspires the creation of whole communities.

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