



PRESS RELEASE

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**COMMONWEAL CONSERVANCY DONATES \$1.2 MILLION
CONSERVATION EASEMENT TO SANTA FE CONSERVATION TRUST**

*320-acre Galisteo Basin Preserve easement is among the first to apply for
a transferable tax credit through New Mexico's expanded program*

Santa Fe, NM, September 23, 2008 — Santa Fe-based Commonweal Conservancy has donated a 320-acre conservation easement valued at \$1,225,000 to the Santa Fe Conservation Trust. The donation, presented on September 19, is among the highest valued conservation easements received by the Trust in its 15-year history and is the first of a series of easement donations the non-profit Commonweal will make to protect the Galisteo Basin Preserve.

“This gift is a critical first step in the permanent protection of the Galisteo Basin Preserve’s extraordinary scenic, wildlife habitat and cultural resources,” said Ted Harrison, president and founder of Commonweal Conservancy. “The Trust’s celebrated professional accomplishments and loving stewardship of the Galisteo Basin makes the organization a well-deserving beneficiary of this donation.”

The conservation easement overlays a 320-acre portion of the Galisteo Basin Preserve’s northern rim in central Santa Fe County. The property’s savannah grasslands, pinon-juniper woodlands, and arroyo-riparian plants provide critical habitat for antelope, deer, bear, coyote, and bobcat, among many other animal and plant species. The conservation easement will permanently protect the property’s native vegetation and fragile soils, as well as its scenic, wildlife, cultural, and recreational values against future development.

“The Trust’s board is thrilled to receive this easement and to participate in this national model for conservation-based community development,” said Terry Smith, chairman of the Santa Fe Conservation Trust, a private non-profit organization dedicated to protecting

New Mexico's open space and wildlife habitat. "The land encompassed in this easement is ecologically delicate, culturally significant, and unspeakably beautiful. Commonweal Conservancy's vision gives me hope that caring communities can accommodate growth without destroying the landscapes that make them special."

Since its inception in 1993, the Trust has protected more than 30,000 acres in Santa Fe and adjoining counties. Commonweal plans to donate a series of easements that will add to the Trust's portfolio of conservation lands and permanently protect approximately 12,000 acres of open space in the Galisteo Basin Preserve.

The Galisteo Basin Preserve is intended to conserve and restore thousands of acres of open space while concurrently supporting the development of an environmentally responsible mixed-use/mixed-income community. Conservation easements overlaying more than 90 percent of the Preserve will help ensure that open space, vegetation, wildlife, and cultural resources within this part of the fragile Galisteo Basin Watershed will be protected from poorly planned, habitat-fragmenting residential development.

Commonweal hopes its conservation easement donation will be matched by many others throughout the state. New Mexico's incentives for land conservation were boosted starting in 2008, thanks to legislation sponsored by Representative Peter Wirth (D - Santa Fe - 47) that raised the value of conservation easement tax credits and made them transferable. New Mexico's conservation easement tax program is among the most progressive and economically valuable in the country.

Commonweal Conservancy is among the first candidates for a conservation easement tax credit under the state's expanded program. "By this donation, the state will be able to secure \$1.2 million worth of land conservation benefit from a \$250,000 tax credit," Harrison said. "The leverage the state will achieve from this gift is extraordinary. By making the easement donation at this time, we hope that it will inspire a growing number of conservation gifts in the Galisteo Basin and throughout the state in the years ahead."

Representative Wirth said he is pleased that the timing of this donation was prompted by his work: "I commend Commonweal Conservancy for its donation of this important property in the Galisteo Basin Preserve, which will forever be open space thanks to this conservation easement."

About Commonweal Conservancy

Commonweal Conservancy is a nonprofit conservation-based community-development organization committed to integrating the goals and purposes of environmental protection and community building. The group assembles properties that protect precious open space and provide for other public needs, such as affordable housing, schools, and economic development. For more information about Commonweal, please visit www.commonwealconservancy.org.

The Galisteo Basin Preserve is the flagship initiative of Commonweal Conservancy. For more information about the Preserve, please visit www.galisteobasinpreserve.com

About the Santa Fe Conservation Trust

The Santa Fe Conservation Trust is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to preserving the spirit of place in New Mexico by protecting open spaces and critical wildlife habitat, by creating trails, and by protecting the traditional landscapes of the state's diverse cultures. For more information about the Santa Fe Conservation Trust, please visit www.sfct.org.

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ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION:

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