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**600 ACRES DONATED TO THE GALISTEO BASIN PRESERVE**

*Commonweal Conservancy gives conservation easement  
overlying the donation to the Santa Fe Conservation Trust*

**Santa Fe, NM, November 24, 2009**—Commonweal Conservancy has reason to give thanks a couple days early this year: 600 acres of open space was donated Monday to the Santa Fe-based nonprofit organization spearheading the creation of the 13,522-acre Galisteo Basin Preserve.

A 600-acre parcel located within the central region of the Preserve was presented to Commonweal by the Thornton family, which has owned and stewarded the property for more than 60 years. The land donation, valued at \$1.86 million, was entrusted to Commonweal to advance the organization's landscape-scale conservation vision for the Preserve. To ensure the property's permanent protection, Commonweal overlaid it with a conservation easement and immediately donated the easement to the Santa Fe Conservation Trust (SFCT).

"The Thornton's donation exemplifies the importance of sustaining philanthropic partnerships," said Ted Harrison, president of Commonweal Conservancy. "This 600-acre gift ensures that the heart of the Galisteo Basin Preserve will be permanently protected. It is a gift that will be forever celebrated by residents and visitors to this remarkable region."

The Thornton family has been pursuing a phased land sale of their ranch to Commonweal since 2003, and Monday's 600-acre donation brings the acreage acquired by the organization to 9,135 acres, or nearly 70 percent of the total Preserve. The majority of the Preserve will be conserved as open space, including 50 miles of public hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. Conservation easements protecting the private and public open space will accommodate trail use and facilitate wildlife protection and grasslands restoration. The SFCT will hold conservation easements over the Preserve's larger open spaces to ensure their permanent protection.

"This gift honors the people and land of the Galisteo Basin. My colleagues and I are proud partners with Commonweal Conservancy. Together we are conserving this

remarkable landscape for wildlife, watershed health, and trails access,” said Rici Peterson, executive director of the Santa Fe Conservation Trust.

The New Mexico conservation-easement tax-credit program, sponsored by Senator Peter Wirth and administered by the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, will add important financial value to the family’s gift. It has helped make possible the Galisteo Basin Preserve’s ambitious vision for large-scale and interconnected conservation lands.

In an effort to create a community of land stewards for the Preserve, Commonweal has set aside about 4 percent of the land area for environmentally sensitive development. This community-building effort includes the Village at the Galisteo Basin Preserve, a clustered, mixed-use, mixed-income, 965-home development located in the Preserve’s northeast corner, near US Highway 285. The Santa Fe Board of County Commissioners approved the Village master plan in 2007; they will vote whether to approve the Phase I preliminary plat on January 12, 2010.

Commonweal’s funding partners for the conservation and development activity within the Preserve include Los Alamos National Bank, the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority, and Enterprise Community Partners. In addition to SFCT, Commonweal’s nonprofit conservation and restoration partners include Earth Works Institute, the Quivira Coalition, and Wild Earth Guardians; Santa Fe County’s Open Space & Trails Program has also been instrumental in bringing forward the Preserve’s open-space program.

#### **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. For more information, visit [www.galisteobasinpreserve.com](http://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. We acquire properties of unique cultural and ecological significance and engage in collaborative land planning that inspires the creation of whole communities. For more information about Commonweal, please visit [www.commonwealconservancy.org](http://www.commonwealconservancy.org).

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