



PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE MAY 25, 2022

**COMMONWEAL CONSERVANCY ANNOUNCES CLOSURE OF
THE TRAILS AND OPEN SPACES OF THE GALISTEO BASIN PRESERVE**

SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO – In order to minimize the risk of human-caused wildfires, Commonweal Conservancy, a Santa Fe-based conservation organization, will close public access to the open spaces, trails and access roads of the Galisteo Basin Preserve (GBP) effective 5 am on Thursday, May 26, 2022. The trails and open spaces of the GBP, 14 miles south of Santa Fe, will remain closed until the organization determines public access can be safely and responsibly accommodated later this summer or fall.

Commonweal Conservancy's board and staff believe that restricting access to the GBP will allow the organization to minimize the pressure on the property's 41-mile trail network and natural lands when many other local trails and open spaces have been closed to public use. Closure will also help protect against the risk of accidental fire, injury and damage to the GBP's ecological and privately held property resources during a time of extreme drought and devastating wildfire activity.

Ted Harrison, president of the Santa Fe-based land conservation organization, acknowledged that the wildfire risks that have forced the closure of the Santa Fe, Cibola and Carson national forests – along with open spaces managed by Santa Fe County – are severely restricting hiking and riding opportunities for local outdoor enthusiasts.

"This a difficult decision for an organization that holds public access and outdoor recreation as primary purposes of its conservation mission," Harrison said. "In the face of unprecedented wildfire threats to the ecological resources of the GBP, however, Commonweal Conservancy's commitment to the protection of the preserve's diverse wildlife, grasslands, forested areas, and cultural and historic resources must take precedence."

During the closure, Commonweal staff will work with volunteers to complete a variety of stewardship initiatives. These will include improvements to the GBP's wayfinding infrastructure,

trailhead parking, and habitat resources. Carefully supervised, these stewardship efforts are expected to bring new value and improved resiliency to the recreational and ecological resources of the GBP.

Commonweal has not set a target re-opening date for the GBP. Instead, the organization will rely on the assessment and recommendations of its resource protection advisors to ensure that the fragile grasslands and interspersed forest of the preserve can be safely accessed by recreationalists.

"With the gift of a glorious rain and snowstorm in the mountains earlier this week," Harrison said, "my colleagues and I hope that dire forecasts for an unusually hot and dry summer will be proven wrong. If we're blessed with significant moisture in the Galisteo area in June and July, Commonweal may be able to move quickly to re-open the GBP's trails and open spaces." Harrison continued, "In the meantime, we'll be working hard to complete a number of important stewardship projects to restore wildlife habitat and improve the recreational experience for hikers, cyclists and equestrians as they return to a landscape we have all come to love and cherish."

Background: Commonweal Conservancy is a Santa Fe-based conservation organization dedicated to forging deep and sustaining connections among people, land, and the built environment. Founded in 2003, Commonweal has worked tirelessly to ensure the permanent protection and public recreational opportunities within an approximately 10,000-acre property known as the Galisteo Basin Preserve. With support from hundreds of dedicated volunteers, donors and property owners, Commonweal has created the largest nonprofit owned and managed, publicly accessible trails and open space network in the American Southwest.

Commonweal was founded by Ted Harrison. Harrison serves as president of the Conservancy and its for-profit subsidiary, Commonweal Communities. Commonweal's work is governed by its board of directors. Harrison and two part-time staff support the nonprofit's stewardship and management responsibilities.

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