

La Voz

Presented by



El Valle de Atrisco, NM

Fall 2021

December 22, 2021

211 10th ST SW Albuquerque, NM 87102

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A LETTER FROM **JORGE GARCIA**

Dear Community:

One more year has gone by. I take this moment to acknowledge those who have lost family members during these very difficult times. From the pandemic to climate change to high inflation, our world continues to be challenged with imperatives beyond our control.

As this year dwindles, we cannot but to be hopeful that 2022 will be a good year. As for this year, we are grateful for all the support that we received from our community. We completed the first phase of the Hidden Gems project, and we are looking forward to the starting of the second phase, for which we will be reaching out to our artistic community. We have a good group of intelligent fellows in our *Cultivando Nuestro Futuro* leadership program. Our fellows will be getting mentored by members of our board, who will be teaching and sharing their knowledge about the legislature so our fellows can learn to analyze and review bills that could potentially impact our community.

We are looking forward to the challenges that this new year will bring. In an effort to protect and preserve our water in the Middle Rio Grande, we are committed to continue opposing the Santolina development. We will continue to organize programming that support the need to learn about acequia culture, traditions, and legal systems available to support and maintain pre-1907 water rights in our community. We strongly believe that it is pre-1907 water rights what will keep the valley green, and it is the protection of water rights what would continue to make small farming possible.

If we don't use our water, we will lose it. For this new year, we will continue to promote and develop special programming to preserve and protect water rights through the use of acequias. As part of this process, we are committed to the idea of *community based restorative justice*, and as part of this paradigm; our focus will continue to be about empowerment and understanding of the water as a natural and economic asset that it is in the best interest of our community to maintain for the future.

We thank our community for all the support we continue to receive and we look forward to a new year full of positive prospects for all the projects, ideas, and partners who are collaborating not only to keep the valley green, but also to make sure that our community keeps and maintains its history, traditions, and customs as a way to maintain what makes our community unique. Thank you everyone and we hope that the new year will bring peace and prosperity to all of our partners, friends, and family members.

Thank you for your support

Jorge Garcia
CESOSS Director

A CESOSS COMIC

PEPITO EL PREGUNTON



Art by Tatyana Trujillo.



AN OPINION EDITORIAL ON **SANTOLINA DEVELOPMENT**

This is why Irrigators in the South Valley oppose the Bernalillo County Commissions' support for Santolina on the Southwest Mesa.

By Santiago Maestas, SVRAA President

We ended the 2021 irrigation season without any water since August, except for the pueblos, who have prime and paramount water rights and endangered species, which leased water from the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Authority to kept the Rio Grande from going completely dry.

Next year does not hold much promise of improvement for farmers and irrigators due to climate changes, and 96,000-acre feet of water that New Mexico owns to the Interstate Compact. One expert believes that under these conditions, New Mexico will have to fallow thousands of acres of farmland for 3 years to repay this debt. Farming in the Middle Rio Grande is now also an endangered species.

In March 2022, the County Planning Commission will consider amending the Santolina plan allowing the developer to apply for special use permits to develop a proposed tire dump and solar generation facilities, without any water concessions and sewage services from the Water Authority required by the current plan.

The planned Santolina Development is currently stalled. The Water Authority 's available supply is already legally committed and the sewage system has reached full capacity. However, their plans for the Bosque water and sewage reclamation plant would free up to 6 million gallons of potable water for phase 1 of the Santolina plan and 18 million gallons a day at full build out.

The water that Santolina will need will most likely come from the Atrisco wells in the South Valley. Building a massive development, such as Santolina, will further deplete surface water from the South Valley's Acequias and the Rio Grande. In spite of its commitment to maintaining agriculture and the valley green, supporting the Santolina development will stress our water supply and it will make our valley less green.

IS SANTOLINA VIABLE NOW

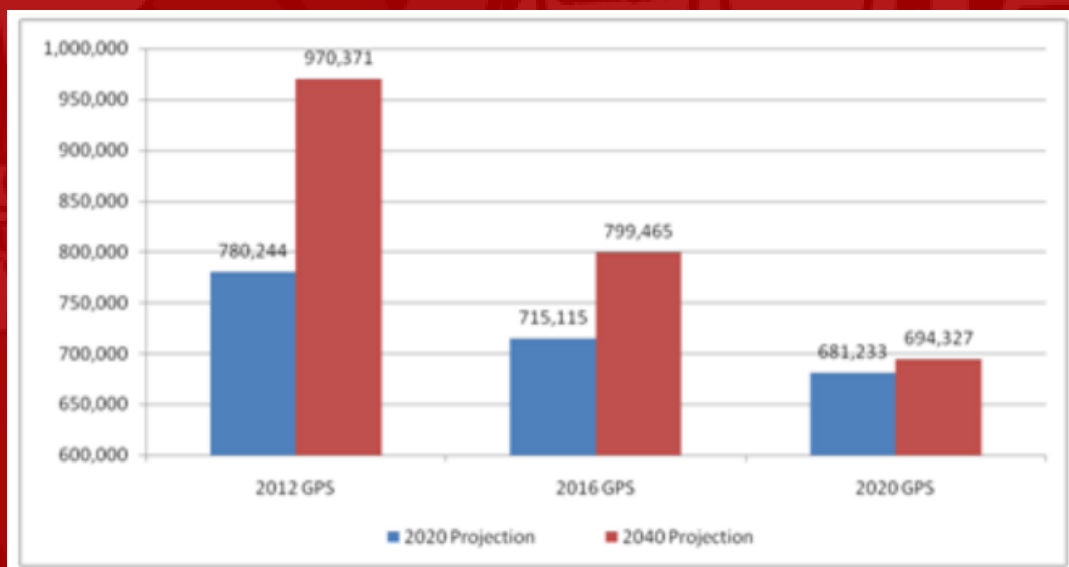
IF IT EVER WAS?

By Elaine Hebard, Community Member

This past year, Western Albuquerque Land Holdings (WALH) submitted various amended plans to the County with regards to Santolina. One would be to modify the Level A Master Plan to be able to permit almost anything as an "interim" use. Another would allow a "specialty solid waste facility," to be located directly across from the Metropolitan Detention Center -- as an interim use. Need I say that solid waste facilities are anything but interim?

These stratagems are necessary because no one is moving to Santolina. Clearly, the population growth anticipated 10 years ago has not occurred. MRCOG used the projections issued by UNM's Geospatial and Population Studies (GPS) in 2012 for the 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). WALH used those projections in its 2013 economic modeling to show that Santolina would not be an expense to any of the local governments -- a required criterion.

In 2016, GPS issued new population projections, which were substantially lower from 2012. In 2020, GPS calculated the projections once again, and once again, the projected population was much lower.



<https://gps.unm.edu/pru/projections>

IS SANTOLINA VIABLE NOW

IF IT EVER WAS? CONT.

In 2012, the population in 2020 was projected to be 100,000 people more than 2020's GPS projected. Please note that the US Census reports the actual 2020 in Bernalillo County was lower still -- 676,444, for a growth in the last decade of 2.1%.

The 2012 projections add another 190,000 people between 2020 and 2040. That was reduced to 84,000 in 2016 and then to 13,000 in 2020; reducing expected growth by 276,000 people. The 2020 growth estimate is less than 7% of the 2012 projected growth between 2020 and 2040. Less growth translates into diminished demand.

WALH expects the population in 2035 in Santolina will be 34,132 from the current 0. GPS projects only an additional 13,000 people in the entire County between 2020 and 2040. Santolina would have to capture all of the projected population growth for the County plus more than 21,000 residents currently residing elsewhere in the County would have to move to Santolina in order to achieve the expected growth. That would have enormous negative impacts to the County and City, in violation of the criteria for master planned communities.

As Dr. Miller from GPS wrote to the Bernalillo County Commissioners in August:

"Although the 2012 and 2016 projections produced by our office used the best information available at the time, neither provide a realistic picture of New Mexico's growth given the current trends. ... At any given time, only our most recent projections should be used to inform policy decisions. Our most recent projections were produced in 2020 and are informed by the most recent data on demographic trends in New Mexico."

Is Santolina viable now -- if it ever was? Given the dramatic drop in population between projected and actually experienced --not to mention the lack of water and impacts from climate change--, there must be a reality check. The City, County and State all have interests at stake and must review the situation to ensure that Santolina does not violate the no-net expense mandate. Rather than relying on the 2013 analysis with its seriously overstated population projections, an updated economic model with current data must be utilized.

WATER RIGHTS 101

AN INTERVIEW WITH SANTIAGO MAESTAS

What is an Acequia?

S: Acequia is the community irrigation ditch that requires collaboration from all the irrigators. The acequia organizational structure is based upon customs and traditions rooted in acequia culture. The organization involves three commissioners, who are elected by the Irrigators, and a Mayordomo in charge of the maintenance and operation of the Acequia.

What is an Acequia Water Right?

S: There is not enough rainfall to sustain any crops. It (rainfall) barely sustains water life in the community. So, water has to be diverted from rivers and streams to lands that can be reached with the use of irrigation ditches. That is how life has been sustained in this environment, first by the Pueblos, who have primordial Water Rights, then by the former Spanish colonists and currently property owners that built the Acequias to divert water from the river. The water from that river that is allocated for irrigation through the acequia system is known as a water right(s). These water rights were established before the territorial legislature in 1907, and adopted under the current water laws, which are still based on acequia customs and traditions.

Is that the reason why they call it Pre-1907 Water Right?

S: Right, so all the Acequias in the Middle Rio Grande valley, and there are 68 of them, have pre-1907 Water Rights.

If the case is the Acequias and water into the valley are important for agriculture, but if there is not a lot of agriculture now that it used to be, why do Acequias and Acequia-Water-Rights remain important to the people who live in the South Valley?

S: Well, as one of my neighbors pointed it out, it is a traditional way of life that we have

WATER RIGHTS 101

AN INTERVIEW WITH SANTIAGO MAESTAS CONT.

consciously chosen. People choose to live in the South Valley. Some of our youth choose to not live in the South Valley for the opposite reasons. They want to live the modern urban lifestyle. Whereas, living in the South Valley is a traditional lifestyle, which is based upon the Acequias, really. That is what provides our backyard farms because land have been so subdivided, you cannot make commercial living off of it any longer. But people still have horses, they still have cattle, they still grow feed for the animals. And some just grow grass for the landscape, but it is all right because that is what makes the valley green.

Just to conclude, what would be your advice for those who do not know much about Water Rights, but might be entitled to reclaim, preserve the water that is associated to their land?

S: My advice is claiming Water is only one part of the formula. And not everyone has Pre-1907 Water Rights. Those who sold their Pre-1907 Water Rights do not have water rights. For those who still have water rights, you can put this source for beneficial use, whether is to grow a backyard garden, or feed for animals, as well as wildlife. The larger parts of the Valley are getting divided more and more. And in other to maintain the wildlife in our community, we have to maintain the water within the valley. you are not from the South Valley if you have not heard sandhill-cranes fight bite in the morning, and the geese. You are not from the South Valley if you have not heard the water running through the Acequias in your backyard. Those things make our community valuable; these things are the hidden gems in our community.



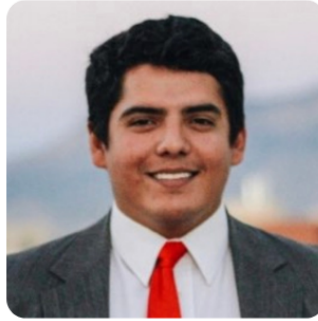
About Santiago

Santiago Maestas co-founded CESOSS with Jorge Garcia to focus on projects that support the social, cultural, political and economic development of the South Valley of Albuquerque. Santiago retired in 2001 after 25 yrs. of public service to the citizens of the State of New Mexico. Read Santiago's full bio at <https://www.cesoss.org/team..>

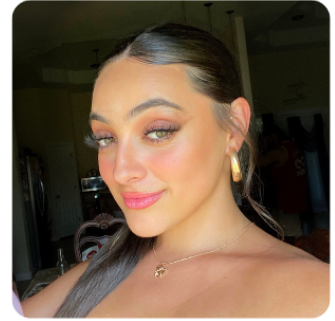
CULTIVADO NUESTRO FUTURO
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
MEET OUR INTERNS



**PAULA
NORIEGA**



**DAVID
TERRAZAS**



**BRIANA
FLORES**



**PATRICK
GALLEGOS**



**MARISOL
CHAVEZ**



**EVAN
SMITH**

Learn more at www.cesos.org

LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

The Leadership Institute is an **community-based education program** of CESOSS. The purpose of this institute is to take a proactive role in the development of new generations of leaders in our communities to advocate for the **preservation of acequias**. Interns discuss and analyze the issues that impact the Valle de Atrisco (South Valley) and the larger Middle Rio Grande region. The institute curriculum is **focused on legislation** and local policy development.

CESOSS is firmly grounded in the Valle de Atrisco and Middle Rio Grande communities and we strongly believe in the interconnectedness of **land, water, and tradition**. It is our goal to help our interns understand **alternative forms of leadership** and activism. We want the next generation of leaders to break from typical Western notions of what it means to be a leader.

The CESOSS Leadership Institute is free to all interns. Donations of all sizes pay for program expenses, so we can continue to educate young leaders at no cost.

YOU CAN SUPPORT OUR INTERNS BY DONATING TODAY!

DONATE NOW!

Learn more at www.cesososs.org

SOUTH VALLEY HIDDEN GEMS

263 SURVEYS COLLECTED

36

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

9

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

9

COMMUNITY EVENTS

5

LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Center for Social Sustainable Systems (CESOSS) would like to **thank you** for your help to share the South Valley Hidden Gems Survey. Our organization is based in the South Valley and dedicated to protecting local acequia systems, empowering young leaders, and educating people about the intersections of **land, water, and tradition**.

South Valley Hidden Gems is a **community-based program** managed by CESOSS, to identify and **empower individuals** that uplift our community. The people we intend to empower often go unrecognized for their **positive impact** and are the hidden gems of the South Valley.

The program is directly **advised by community elders** and the 271 survey responses collected from community residents to ensure that all program operations are guided by community members. A survey analysis report will be published and Phase 2 of this project will launch in Spring 2022.

Learn more at www.cesos.org/svhg.

NEW MEXICO TIMEKEEPERS CE AKATL ACADEMY

New Mexico Timekeepers is a collaborative and community-based initiative sponsored by the Center for Social Sustainable Systems (CESOSS), operated by Earth Timekeepers, and culturally advised by the Red Wolf Clan. The purpose of the initiative is to **empower communities** in the recovery of traditional practices and advocate for equity through **restorative justice** practices in New Mexico.

The New Mexico Timekeepers Initiative is composed of several programs, including the Ce Akatl Academy. The purpose of the academy is to **empower the next generation** of community leaders to integrate **tradition, equity, and sustainability** in their aspiring academic, professional, and personal endeavors. Students of the academy will engage with a **culturally-centered curriculum**.

Modules of the Ce Akatl Academy Curriculum:

Module 1

Ceremony & Restorative Justice

Module 2

Biodiversity, Medicine, & Sustainability

Module 3

Acequias, Water, & Sustainability

Module 4

Leadership & Peacemaking

Learn more at www.cesoss.org/timekeepers