



WNRC Meeting – Taos, NM

September 12, 2025

Cecilia Rosacker, Executive Director





## RGALT's Mission

We protect land and water for people and wildlife in New Mexico.

RGALT is a 501(c)3 Land Trust Alliance accredited land trust that has been protecting farmland, water, and wildlife habitat since 1997.



*Cranes at RGALT's CE adjacent to USFWS Valle de Oro NWR  
Photo by Christi Bode*

RGALT was founded when farmers and conservationists gathered at my kitchen table, exploring ways to protect farmland and prevent water rights from being transferred out of our communities.

These unlikely partners understood that the loss of farmland and water rights impacts not only agriculture, but also the Rio Grande ecosystem, wildlife corridors, and rural economies tied to the land.



Development adjacent to RGALT CE in Tome, NM

Over the last 20 years , 11 million acres of US farmland has been converted to development. It is projected that we will lose an additional 18.4 million acres by 2040. This is land that will never return to farmland.

American Farmland Trust ranks NM as one of highest in the nation in farmland loss and one of the lowest in policies to protect farmland and natural habitat.

## RGALT STRIVES TO ENSURE EQUITABLE CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Serving land-rich cash-poor landowners requires conservation funding.



### Funding Sources Are Limited

- Only a few federal conservation easement programs exist, and they have been largely inaccessible and require a non-federal match.
- NM has less than a handful of state and local conservation funding programs, and they are underfunded. They support 1-3 projects a year.
- Navigating agency programs can take 3-5 years to implement a project.

## TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE!!!

- Land and water are being transferred to development and industrial use at a record pace.
- Farmers are aging out, and in the next 5 years the US will experience the largest transfer of land assets.
- We are facing unprecedented drought conditions. This has landowners looking for ways to keep their farm operation viable.
- **Conservation Easement Are The Only Way To Protect Water Rights**

This Socorro County trailer park was formerly a farm. It was purchased by a developer who sold the water rights to Santa Fe.



Landowners want to protect their land and water and ensure it is there for future generations. It is the legacy they want to leave behind.

We have a waiting list of landowners who would like to protect their land, but the funding isn't there.

**We need to update LCIA caps to help them.**

# UPDATE THE LAND CONSERVATION INCENTIVES ACT

Help Us Serve New Mexico Landowners & Our Communities



## Secure Our Land & Water for Future Generations

- The proposed LCIA reform is a means for us to meet the needs of landowners who want to protect their land and water for future generations.
- Updating the cap will result in the most cost and time efficient means to greatly increase the pace of conservation.
- LCIA helps leverage agency programs.





## LCIA HELPS LEVERAGE FEDERAL CONSERVATION DOLLARS

RGALT protected 6,210 acres of critical habitat and working lands in Socorro County with LCIA funding (landowners donated CE value) *Photo by Vladimir Chaloupka*

RGALT and 50 partners, including non-profits, Native American tribes, private individuals, and government agencies collaborated to secure three \$1M NAWCA Standard grants, matched by more than \$7.5M in partner funding. Over \$3.5M of the matching funds came from landowners' donated value of a CE. Combined, the funds were used to protect, restore, and enhance nearly 14,000 acres of migratory bird habitat and protect farmland - a testament to the value of the public-private partnerships in the MRG.

# QUESTIONS ?

**A Sandhill Crane doesn't know the difference between a public refuge, tribal land, or a private farm; it follows the food.**

*Christ Bode Image: Rio Grande at Bernardo looking south towards Socorro*