

Land Grant Spotlight:

Arroyo Hondo Arriba Community Land Grant

The Arroyo Hondo Grant was a community land grant made by the Governor Albert Máynez on April 2, 1815. For unknown reasons the upper village chose to separate from its original mother grant; therefore on May 27th, 1823 Don Vicente Trujillo, Alcalde of the Pueblo of San Gerónimo de Taos, per mandate of Governor Don Juan Antonio Viscarra, gave title and possession to 18 settlers of the upper village who chose the name San Antonio to distinguish themselves from the original Arroyo Hondo village.

A number of name changes have occurred over generations resulting in the formal name of Arroyo Hondo Arriba Community Land Grant. Its board consists of six members elected each year. Its original size, which was approximately 2 square miles, has been reduced to one third of this over time. Some lands were transferred to private ownership in the 1930's depression era and others were lost through quiet title lawsuits in recent generations.

The land grant is just 8 miles west of the Taos Ski Valley (TSV) which has caused countless economic, tax, legal and developmental gentrification struggles to maintain ownership over the past several decades. Examples are land loss to luxury housing development on lost *merced* land, the 1970's Condo Wars and now current TSV devastation of the Rio Hondo head waters and their sewage treatment needs for projected limitless development. The historical documents of the land grant, such as the 1914 land grant meeting minutes asserting separation from the previous mother grant and a final degree of ownership from a 1980's lawsuit, have been preserved despite the arson of 3 local businesses that housed documents in the 1960's and through research in the archives of the Taos Assessor and other county government departments.

Recent projects focused on the restoration of our *morada* within our land grant boundaries and collaborating with local villages of San Cristóbal, Gallina Canyon and Valdez to receive US Forest Service funds to harvest 300 acres of wood over 3-year thinning project. This Cerro Negro Project adopted governance structures from the local acequia and *merced* organizational and cultural-historical procedures, forming a six-member commission and appointing a *mayordomo* to oversee the work. Currently, Arroyo Hondo Arriba is one of several *mercedes* which are considered "Partition Land Grants," ineligible for New Mexico political subdivision status and are therefore denied access to state capital funds which could help regain ancestral lands crucial for our sustainable community's existence.

As with many *mercedes* across our state, being comprised of a few dozen members to address necessary quiet titles, title insurance and address frequent "modern development" tourism pressures are infinitely arduous, reflecting our states complex historical past while providing a crucial example for preserving our local *Indo-Hispano/Mestizo/Genizaro* cultural livelihood for future generations.

If you would like more information on this land grant-*merced* and all the amazing work they are doing for their community, you can contact them at: drsarguello@q.com, manito2@yahoo.com, or mavillarreal@hotmail.com.



