

La Joya Farms Conservation Easements

Owners: Hank and Kelly Taliaferro

La Joya Farms is a 1400-acre working farm managed with wildlife in mind. The property contains flood-irrigated farmland, Chihuahuan Desert uplands, unique Rio Grande riparian habitat where over 250 bird species have been recorded, and numerous cultural sites. The landowners would like to protect more of their property with conservation easements, provided there is an option that makes financial sense.

Conservation Efforts

5 conservation easements held by RGALT collectively protect 84 acres of Rio Grande riparian habitat, 54 acres of Chihuahuan desert upland habitat, and 195 acres of irrigated farmland including water rights.

- 102 acres - 2 donated conservation easements (conveyed by Bravo Farms, 2008 and 2009)
- 231 acres - 3 donated conservation easements with transaction costs covered by USFWS-NAWCA Standard grant funding. The donated easements and riparian wetlands were key in securing three \$1M NAWCA grants to protect, restore and enhance 14,000 acres of public, tribal, and private land.

Restoration Efforts

The landowners have restored approximately 100 acres of riparian habitat by mechanical removal of invasive saltcedar and Russian olive trees, supplemented with native plant restoration. They also cleared an additional 100 acres of saltcedar that had invaded formerly farmed fields, returning the land to productive cropland. These restoration efforts were entirely funded by the landowners. Their efforts created new jobs for local workers and kept farm staff employed during the off-season.

Diversifying Operations

Due to the uncertainties caused by long-term drought, the landowners have diversified their farm revenue sources instead of relying strictly on crop production. The farm offers guided hunting and lodging. Kelly and Hank, a lifelong birder, aim to open parts of the farm to the public for ecotourism such as wildlife viewing, birdwatching, and camping.



Overbank flooding on part of the property protected by a conservation easement, and an aerial view of the farmland.



DIRECTIONS TO THE FARM

La Joya Valley Lodge
213 NM-304
La Joya, NM 87028

Directions from Socorro:

- Take I-25 north to US-60 (exit 175 towards Bernardo/Mountainair)
- Stay on US-60 heading east for approximately 3 miles
- Turn right (south) onto NM-304 towards La Joya
- In approximately 4.5 miles, turn right onto Bravo Farms Road. The lodge and parking area will be on your right.

The route is paved except for approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ mile when you turn onto Bravo Farms Road.