

Las Placitas Association Workshop Notes

January 15, 2005

Summary, Overview, Highlights and Next Steps.....	1
Notes From Five Breakout Sessions	2
Session 1: Visions for the Watershed - Reid Bandeen Facilitator	2
Session 2: Visions for the Watershed - Jen Nelson Facilitator.....	4
Session 3: Visions for the Watershed - Julie McCollough Facilitator.....	6
Session 4: Visions for the Watershed - Shannon Mann Facilitator	7
Session 5: Visions for the Watershed - Kate Nelson Facilitator	8

Summary, Overview, Highlights and Next Steps

Plenary Session: Ric Richardson and Kate Hildebrand – Facilitators

Crosscutting Themes, Insights and Next Steps from the Workshop

In the final session of the workshop, the participants met in small groups to address Collaborative Restoration Needs as well as discuss Resources for Collaborative Restoration. Based on the previous discussions during the day about the Special Qualities and Places, Good and Bad Events, and the “Utopian Vision,” the participants discussed the key restoration needs that are important to address. Working in small groups, the participants also discussed resources that could be used to address the watershed restoration needs. After discussing how it might be possible to get started on a restoration project, each small group made a presentation in the plenary session.

At the conclusion of the small group presentations, the whole group discussed ideas that seemed to cut across all of the group reports. The dialogue focused on identifying key ideas and noting important themes. In picking out the “big ideas,” the group discussed points where it is possible for the LPA to move forward with practical and worthwhile projects. In addition to recognizing the overriding importance of continuing the community dialogue about the watershed, The Crosscutting Themes included the following:

There is a need for community-wide education about the importance of the Las Huertas watershed. Several discussion groups suggested creating a brochure that addresses the history of the watershed, its current configurations, historic and current uses, and the need to engage in restoration projects.

It is important to start restoration projects at the top of the watershed, and the outcome should be to increase the flow rate of water in the Las Huertas Creek. Initial restoration activities could include studying the impact of Sandia Peak Ski Area on water quality and looking at the Ellis Ranch and nitrate contamination.

It is important to have community involvement and use community resources in pursuing watershed restoration projects.

Another theme was to protect and enhance the Acequias in all future planning and watershed restoration actions. Several of the groups noted that fire is a danger, and there is broad consensus it is crucial to engage in fuels reduction programs for fire protection.

Key Insights from the plenary discussion were as follows:

The Las Placitas Association (LPA) has not yet decided which projects it will pursue. The organization is committed to having an open process guided by good public input.

The LPA can help with follow-up on many of the ideas that the small groups discussed. The participants are also willing to help the LPA and continue to participate in the planning process.

The discussion groups said that engaging in public education, working with the ski resort, and undertaking water quality initiatives are worth working on. In addition, it appears that the LPA may be able to work the nitrate issue into the work plan.

The Next Steps are as follows:

A summary of the workshop and some of the maps will be sent to the *Sign Post*.

The participants agreed to work jointly and collaborate as the LPA moves forward with its planning. There was consensus that the planning process should be inclusive and start with “We” rather than “Us.”

The attendees at the workshop agreed to remain involved in LPA activities and act as advisees in the process as the water restoration planning proceeds.

The LPA will write a summary of the workshop process and outcomes, which will be distributed to all of the people attending the meeting.

Notes From Five Breakout Sessions

Session I: Visions for the Watershed - Reid Bandeen Facilitator

1. What are the Special Places and Qualities in the Watershed?

- My grandfather's cabin
- Acequias
- Man Cave
- Wildlife: Birds, bears, fish and deer
- Fall colors
- Scenery
- Meadows along the Canyon
- Vistas - wide open spaces
- Fish and Fishing
- Non-paved road all the way up the canyon
- Picnicking
- Tunnel Spring
- The Village
- Old Fish Hatchery
- Scenic Drive up the Canyon
- Excellent Birdwatching
- San Jose de Las Huertas
- Hiking

2. What are some of the Good and Bad "Happenings" occurring in the Watershed

Good	Bad
Las Huertas Acequias and resultant groundwater recharge	Inaccurate archaeology at Sandia Man Cave
1880's Homestead	Mining development and attempted water grab
Successful prevention of attempt to develop mining in the area	Human-induced erosion (along main Creek channel and feeder arroyos)
People are talking about the watershed	Lack of culvert maintenance along the road
Upper Tewapa - some bosque recovery	Too much sediment from Road runoff

Islands are forming in the Creek	Too much fuel load in the forest
Bosque, riparian recovery around the Open Space	Inadequate enforcement of terrain management rules
Lack of livestock grazing in the upper Watershed	Overall lack of regulation and controls on residential development
Acequia reservoirs as potential fire control reservoirs	Lack of return flow channels on some acequias
Road (access and controlled parking)	Gravel Mining
	Irrigation reservoirs in need of repair
	High levels of recreational use in Canyon
	Road (intensive use, high numbers)
	Unregulated development in Indian Flats area
	Loss of Toad habitat

3. If resources were completely unconstrained, in a Utopian world, what would the Watershed look like?

- Irrigation ditches paved in gold
- Acequias preserved forever
- Healthy vegetation cover all over - extensive greenery
- Water in the Creek all the time
- Sustainable ecosystem protected from catastrophic wildfire
- Ecological impact of road minimized as much as possible
- Fish in the Creek (high numbers and great diversity)
- More abundant wildlife
- Preserved historical sites
- Sandia Man is found
- Canyon controlled access for maximum ecological and environmental benefit (Sabino Canyon Model)
- 100% fool-proof fire control - Fire management plan in place
- Fires are allowed to resume their natural role in the ecosystem
- Youth involved in watershed education and management
- Wildlife re-introduction programs flourishing
- Condors
- Lynx
- Spadefoot Toads
- Rio Grande Cutthroat trout

4. What are some actions that could be taken toward realizing, or at least moving closer to, the utopian vision of #3? What are the resources available for accomplishing these actions? (Shaded cells show top 3 preferred actions)

Actions	Resources
Preservation of Acequia history via a written document	Oral histories, acequia documents, Grant to fund the effort (McCune or such), acequia association involvement
Specific action to prevent catastrophic wildfire: Work with Forest Service and congressional representatives to re-classify the watershed as a wildland/urban interface to gain upgraded funding level for watershed, and advance a real management plan that includes management for fire prevention	Government support: (congressmen, senators)
Culvert maintenance and sediment control along road (water bars,	<input type="checkbox"/> Forest Service

armor aprons, sediment traps)	<input type="checkbox"/> Highway Department
	<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Labor
Educational programs on acequias, and Las Huertas Canyon cultural resources	
Driving tour of canyon featuring cultural resources	
Literature (pamphlets) on local cultural resources	
Pursue controlled access of Canyon for enhanced ecological benefit	
Selected restoration measures for improved water quality	
Dust control on road	
Volunteer work days on selected projects	
Evaluate stream and watershed for selected species re-introduction	
Induced meandering (below acequia diversions)	

Session 2: Visions for the Watershed - Jen Nelson Facilitator

1. What are the Special Places and Qualities in the Watershed?

- Beauty
- Trees
- Historic
- Community
- Historic
- Agricultural
- Legal
- Hike
- Horseback riding
- Hunting
- 214 surface water right holders
- minerals
- mines – barite
- amethyst
- archeology
- wild horses
- bobcats
- foxes
- wilderness
- fishing
- Placitas is in between places that will not allow development (pueblos)

2. What are some of the Good and Bad "Happenings" occurring in the Watershed

Good	Bad
Water in stream	Man made wells
State highway department accountable – fixing and repairing	Groundwater pumping for Sandia ski resort

Community organization promoting education	Ellis ranch water waste
Bosque school	Erosion
Kids	Road issues
Acequia rights - working towards education	Trash
Conservation programs	Development/houses plats not properly graded
Developers in community doing good – 40% open space (Diamondback)	Mobile homes – bridge through creek
	Fire suppression, overgrowth, not able to hike, unhealthy
	Drought
	Acequia rights – still not known
	Diverting water
	County politics

3. If resources were completely unconstrained, in a Utopian world, what would the Watershed look like?

- Remove overgrowth of vegetation
- Through education about water rights
- Slow water flow during storms
- Stop vehicles in stream – auto and ATV
- Conservation education
- Culverts – position improvement intakes to pond, not runoff
- Meandering – conditional
- Harvest water
- Retention highway improvements porous pavement
- Retention walls
- Streambed clear of trash and debris
- Stop Sandia groundwater pumping – out of watershed
- Change to no septic tanks
- Meandering in intermittent portion of stream

4. What are some actions that could be taken toward realizing, or at least moving closer to, the utopian vision of #3? What are the resources available for accomplishing these actions? (Shaded cells show top 3 preferred actions)

Actions	Resources
Meet with Highway Department	Educational brochures
Stream bed cleanup	LHWP, USFS, state, NMHD/DOT
Forest thinning	Peggy Johnson, hydrologists, lawyers
Groundwater pumping	Homeowners associations
Identify specific issues	LPA
Education – workshops, trainings, brochure, new residents	Friends of Placitas
Address acequia concerns	Churches
Education – cooperation	Schools
Analyze Cooper Ellis water use	Science/researcher/students from UNM
On the ground	Science and research from NMED, EMNRD

Septic tank issues'	SEO/ISC
Pubic TV announcements	Existing studies
Non-partisan articles in Signpost	Prisoner labor
	Eagle scouts
Making brochures was a popular idea. Ideas to have more than one brochure. One for new residents to educate them on water use/supply in area, another to educate newcomers and existing people on history of area.	Land grants
	Bernalillo County / City of Albuquerque Television (GOV TV)
	Placitas bulletin – web
	Signpost

Session 3: Visions for the Watershed - Julie McCollough Facilitator

1. What are the Special Places and Qualities in the Watershed?

- Rural quality
- Green open spaces/Green belt
- Agriculture/Acequias (No Wetlands)
- Running through open spaces
- Springs are special and need protecting
- Acequia culture
- Municipal Recreational Use
- Plant diversity, Geological diversity, Cultural Diversity
- Good water quality
- Support Diverse group of people successfully
- History/Ancestors lived here
- Traditional values

2. What are some of the Good and Bad "Happenings" occurring in the Watershed

Good	Bad
Culture	
Acequias	
Night skies/Placitas is beautiful from all vantage points	
Community awareness	
Need for zoning has been recognized	
Community pride	
Long history	

3. If resources were completely unconstrained, in a Utopian world, what would the Watershed look like?

- Creek restoration/ habitat improvement to enhance diversity
- Maintaining/Enhancing green belt

- Developers maintain open spaces
- No more development
- Recognition of prior rights/collaboration
- Communication with local acequia members
- Community awareness
- Respect for historical acequia and rights - PROTECT
- Sandoval County Support (funding/zoning)
- Interaction with tribal groups and surrounding neighbors
- Zoning restrictions
- Intelligent/Environmentally Friendly development
- Developers/Real Estate Professionals let buyers know about the acequia on their property
- Establish Adopt-a-Creek/Open Space Groups
- Community orientation packages (so people know what they're getting into - no surprises)

4. What are some actions that could be taken toward realizing, or at least moving closer to, the utopian vision of #3? What are the resources available for accomplishing these actions? (Shaded cells show top 3 preferred actions)

Actions	Resources
Study starts at ski area, measure salt contamination, and moves to Ellis Ranch and on to picnic area (water waste and dam), characterize inputs to watershed.	Grant funds and volunteers Forest Service and other agencies
Unify organizations within Placitas to represent all of Placitas - One Common Voice Watershed information shared, both oral and written	Many groups unify for once common voice; bring heads of all Placitas organizations together to identify common goal/goals/issues Create Informational brochure
Zoning Restrictions	Sandoval County gets involved with Association leaders
Increase Open Space	Dialogue with developers, County, etc.
Clean up Creek Bed	Volunteer workforce - clean-up work day with oral history; Community bonding organized by Placitas Committee
Identify, design, and maintain community roads to avoid "spider webs. Discuss possible emergency egress (Transportation Plan)	Placitas committee works with Sandoval County Planners; Address all environmental impacts

Session 4: Visions for the Watershed - Shannon Mann Facilitator

1. What are the Special Places and Qualities in the Watershed?
 - Old potato farm operated by a group member's grandfather – now found alongside the road through Las Huertas Canyon
 - Established acequia systems
 - Petroglyph ridge just NE of the village
 - Placitas Open Space
 - Rosa Castilla and Tunnel Springs
 - Overall rural character of the landscape ...

2. What are some of the Good and Bad "Happenings" occurring in the Watershed

Good	Bad
Beginnings of a sense of larger community among all the various smaller communities	Overdeveloped condition of the area, poorly designed roads
Beginnings of education of the community about issues affecting it	Dust from exposed soil
Beginnings of water savings in the community	Silting from road and home construction and all terrain vehicle abuses
Strong historic base of the existing acequia systems	Unobjective information (misrepresentation) being presented by special interest groups
	Inability to self govern
	Taxation without representation because Placitas is not incorporated

3. If resources were completely unconstrained, in a Utopian world, what would the Watershed look like?

- The elimination of water rights transfers into Placitas
- Better water quality for certain areas of the watershed – along with water quality testing BEFORE purchasing of a home
- Water in ditches all summer
- Water in creek all year long
- Community trail along the creek
- Accountability of managing government agencies within the watershed
- Expanded and more functional community center w/ expanded libraries
- Raised bridges over arroyos and creek
- Ditch and well water rights protected
- Water quality protection more than it is today
- Limited community growth

Session 5: Visions for the Watershed - Kate Nelson Facilitator

1. What are the Special Places and Qualities in the Watershed?

- The Del Agua Trail area, a place where water comes off the mountain that WASN'T talked about in the morning lectures. Rich with petroglyphs, an old Pueblo site, varieties of trees, wildflowers. Great place to hike
- It's private. We don't need all this development because there's not enough water.
- A creek runs through my property.
- The ditch: We love that (an acequia member). Being part of a cycle, connected to people over 200 years, using the same tools, hand-digging the same ditch every spring. 18 families belong to the acequia. The connection to them and to the culture is more important than the water.
- The three points where hippies had their farms.
- San Jose archaeological site
- The area hasn't changed for centuries
- There's a feeling of open-ness.
- It's quiet. You can hear a jet flying tens of thousands of feet overhead.
- There's good air.

- You can ride a horse right off the driveway and there's water for the horse. Other people trailer horses for miles and miles to get to such a place.
- It's kind of like living in a national park.
- From the headwaters down, it all belongs together.
- There's a sense of history all along it.
- It's a real place with real people living lives of self-sufficiency.

2. What are some of the Good and Bad "Happenings" occurring in the Watershed

Good	Bad
The county is getting its act together on planning with new planning director, more professional approach	The ski area's snow-making: 1. affects downstream water; 2. uses salt, a contaminant (might not be true, another participant says later, privately, citing the potential of salt melting the very snow that's being created -- and that the water used for snow-making is from snow run-off; they're not pumping, he believes).
Governor is talking about stricter regs on well development.	How much water is Cooper-Ellis taking out? They have a big plume of water flying into the air off a pond just for show.
There's no practical way to drive through Placitas; it's not a bypass of Albuquerque	Nitrates on Peggy Johnson map; what's causing those?
The canyon could be a jewel	Diamond Tail: there are too many wells.
There's no large-scale development along Las Huertas Creek (disputed by one participant, who cited Cedar Creek)	Fewer restrictions on non-developer development than developer development. The former are sinking lots of wells into the aquifer, placing lots of septics on the land.
A first: All three acequia associations in one room	Destruction of archaeological history. Cedar Creek destroyed about 15 sites
It's snowing! (for now	Road up the canyon brings in 4WDs, etc.
Acequias are recharging the aquifer	Road surface in canyon has become too hard.
People are sitting and talking, here, today	Sandia Man Cave is gross -- trash, itinerant bathroom, etc.
	No markers or means of telling residents about the history/culture of specific places when they're near them
	High-density growth of the forest affects water, increases fire danger
	We're getting less cooperation from National Forest Service than under a previous director, who helped with clean-ups, etc.
	Warnings against trucks driving up the canyon in winter aren't strong enough; there's always one that turns over -- who knows what the next one will be carrying?
	The forest is too dense.

3. If resources were completely unconstrained, in a Utopian world, what would the Watershed look like?
- Close the road
 - If not close it entirely, make it one-way, terrain-specific, like the road at Tamaya, to force people to go slow
 - If not that, close it from the picnic ground to Cooper-Ellis and make the Cooper-Ellis people get to it from the top.
 - If not that, then close it for all but the summer months, giving the creek and the land time to rest and restore.
 - Thin and maintain the forest. Figure out ways we can utilize youth to help; use the small trees removed to create wiers (sp? weirs?) to slow creek flow.
 - New uses of the creek should have no impact on old uses.
 - Stricter water rights transfers should be enforced, requiring that a percentage of each transfer be retired to account for over-allocated water in the state.
 - We should mitigate scoured beds with some of Rich Schrader's suggestions.
 - We should regulate run-off storm water in construction regs
 - **We should create a public park around the San Jose site and Sun Farm**
 - **Give new residents free advice on how to live sensitively here.**
 - **Establish road-drainage standards**
 - **Require owner-occupied construction only. (Scoffed at by most participants)**
 - **Build more bike paths within Placitas and between Placitas and Bernalillo.**
 - **Thin forests of small-diameter trees.**
 - **What would help acequias?**
 1. **Mitigate fire danger in forest.**
 2. **Control vandalism of ditch, mainly along the National Forest stretch.**
 3. **Protect the water-table level w/ reducing the scoured beds, etc.; restoring the sponge.**
 4. **Cut down water use by the ranch and ski area.**
 5. **Plant species of wildflowers, etc., along the bank to reduce erosion.**
 6. **Firm up acequia association bylaws to fit state law, giving the associations first right of refusal to water transfers.**
 7. **Encourage acequia water-banking, different from general water-banking**

4. What are some actions that could be taken toward realizing, or at least moving closer to, the utopian vision of #3? What are the resources available for accomplishing these actions? (Shaded cells show top 3 preferred actions)

Actions	Resources
Get people involved in mitigating scoured beds	
Negotiate with National Forest Service on thinning. Establish thinning weekends?	Southwest Forest Workers Co-op NFS State Forestry Division LPA Acequias Village water system Community water systems Homeowners Associations Elementary schools (get kids involved in labor) Fire Brigade Grant organizations Land grant

Talk to NFS bout possibility of closing the road	
Identify the polluting sources of nitrates	NM Environment Dept. (Peggy) Reid State Engineer LPA Is there a private way to test? If so, what are funding sources? Grants?
Prepare an introductory brochure for newcomers: Build a table of contents, for starters	Library -- here and in Bernalillo Acequias, for local history Land grant, for local history Graphic designer (good to involve from beginning) Ric could brainstorm today's group for ideas "Green" builders who've done it the "right" way Homeowners associations on problems they've encountered and ways to avoid Hold a brainstorming meeting at the community center so public can offer views Bill Sapien. Has knowledge of where problems have cropped up and how to work with county
Develop a curriculum for schools, esp. the elementary school	
Draft a proposed set of regulations for development	
Identify invasive species (Bruce knows a USDA expert who could give a good community talk)	
Clear riparian areas of invasive plants.	
Help acequias with thinning invasive plants	
Build a tradition of forest thinning in the spring	
Schedule a community tour of the entire watershed	