

this time that Charles Wright, founder and owner of the Albuquerque Trading Post, purchased the property. Mr. Wright ran a small farm and ranching operation. He built a home on the property and he experimented with orchard and grape plantings. Remnants of the old home, which burned to the ground during the 1970's, can be found at the south end of the orchard. He also diverted the stream and built a holding pond for the community downstream. America's entry into World War II later led to a widespread dispersion of the Tijeras Canyon population. [Cordell 1980.]

Demographic changes in the canyon population occurred, however, even before the onset of World War II. The area's favorable semi-arid climate led to the establishment of several Tuberculosis recuperation centers both in Albuquerque and in the Tijeras Canyon hillsides above land grant villages. U.S. Highway 66 was rebuilt after World War II and the remaining land grant area of the *Cañon de Carnue* became surrounded by bedroom community developments. The construction of Interstate Highway 40 during the 1960s created *an even more massive trend toward population growth, changes in land use, and disruption of the land grant villages. Highway 19 and State Highway 14 now literally bisected several of the communities, undermining the integrity of kin, neighbor, social, religious, and economic unity* (Cordell 1980)." The County purchased the property in 1999 to maintain the property's integrity.

IV. LAND USE

A. Onsite Activities

No improvements have been made at Ojito other than the installation of signs to indicate property ownership. There have been no coordinated activities at Ojito since the County purchased it. The County relies on local residents to report suspicious and illegal activity.

B. Structures

The remains of onsite structures help convey the story of Ojito's past. The old house foundation remains a predominant, built feature on the property. The foundation will require significant repairs to be useable; however, it does present limited opportunities for adaptive re-use. The *acequia* waterfall basin is adjacent to the house foundation and the pipe flume that conveys water from one watercourse to the other are examples of structural features that

remain onsite in addition to the watercourses described in the Hydrology and Water Quality section of this document.

C. Resource-based Recreation

Primary recreational opportunities will be picnicking, hiking, and enjoying views of the Sandia Mountains. With 56 bird species documented onsite to date—including raptors and songbirds—wildlife viewing has excellent potential at Ojito. The possibility of visitors encountering bear, mountain lions, and an occasional rattlesnake is real and must be considered when visiting the property.

Trails wind through the site to the Sandia Mountain Wilderness beyond Ojito boundaries. These informal trails are a result of use by local residents over the years. These trails have not been formally mapped or listed by the USFS. They do, however, connect to existing USFS trails that continue into the designated wilderness area.

A vehicular access road runs through the middle of the property, following the *natural* watercourse until it reaches the orchard. This road is used very infrequently, mostly when conducting maintenance on the ditch or the orchard. The remnants of an old wagon trail can be found on the property and older residents remember taking this path to gather firewood years ago.

D. Education and Interpretation

Talking Talons' Leadership Center, with support from the Youth Conservation Corps, conducted assessments of all nine East Mountain Open Space sites (City and County) to identify resource based education and interpretation opportunities specific to each site's conditions. The following are their suggestions for Ojito:

i. Social Studies Enhancement for Area Schools

Educational field trips to the site could help students gain an enhanced appreciation of the unique local history. More importantly, if community members are involved with the students by facilitating student discussions and leading history lessons, their participation could garner respect for contributions made to the community by previous generations. Ojito could also serve as an appropriate location for an elective field studies course.

ii. Acequia Culture

A possible component of a school enrichment program or field studies course may include *acequia* culture classes and water quality monitoring programs. Students would learn

how to test water for turbidity and monitor for pollutants and at the same time gain a better understanding of grass roots organizations and the benefits to be gained from community involvement.

a. Long Term Bird Studies

Because of its species diversity and water resources, Ojito could become the birding *hot spot* of the East Mountains. Fostering public participation and volunteerism by conducting a long-term bird study (yet to be established) through bird counts and wildlife photography and habitat restoration could benefit the local community through education, entertainment, and natural resource protection opportunities.

b. Literary Animals Trail

A literary animals trail could be developed as a loop trail that highlights orchards, bear habitat, and other natural resource features on the site. Create quiet sitting areas with rustic benches where visitors can contemplate quotations and concepts from writers like Aldo Leopold who have used their art for the betterment of land, animals, habitat, and the larger environment. Chosen authors should represent multiple cultures—both near and far.

E. Access and Parking

To access the site from I-40, proceed north on North 14 to San Antonio Drive and turn left. Access to the site is just west of the San Antonio church. Currently, there is no formal parking area established and parking is very limited. Vehicles typically park along the road or across from the church in an area cleared for special events. Establishing a more formal parking area is a necessary step in opening the property to public use. Bernalillo County would like to work with its neighbor—the *San Antonio de Padua* parish—to establish joint use of their parking lot in consideration for hosting periodic parish events at Ojito.

F. Fencing & Signage

The Acequia Association and Bernalillo County installed signs at Ojito. Some perimeter fencing was installed and enhancements are needed.

G. Adjacent Land Use

Ojito is surrounded by single-family residential development to the east, west, and south. The northwest corner of the property abuts the Sandia Mountain Wilderness. This portion of the Cibola National Forest was designated a wilderness area in 1978. Predominant uses are hiking and nature observation. The historic *San Antonio de Padua* Roman Catholic Church is a neighbor of note at the southeast corner of the property.

V. COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The Steering Committee played an important role in planning efforts by participating in dialogue about management goals for Ojito. All of their responses to key questions regarding current and future management at Ojito are listed below.

What do you think are the most important **values** at Ojito?

- Delicate riparian environment
- Known archeological sites (Indian and Hispanic)
- Excellent water quality and quantity
- Abundance of water for wildlife
- Plant diversity/biodiversity of species
- Good trail network
- Orchard
- Wildlife and habitat preservation
- *Important Bird Area* designation

What are the **issues** and **concerns** that need to be addressed?

- Potential site damage if access not controlled
- Secluded location presents opportunities for misuse
- Fire risk
- Non-native species
- Appropriate orchard management
- Access road maintenance (level depends on public use)
- Poison Ivy/Sumac
- Potential conflicts between bears and public
- Seasonal closure may be necessary
- Not an appropriate area for biking

What **opportunities** are there at the site?

- Environmental educational and conservation
- Preserve for wildlife
- Adaptive re-use of structure as information kiosk