



Santa Fe
WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION
25 Years of Stewardship

Currents

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Summer 2022

From the (Outgoing) Executive Director: Thank You

In the ninth year of my time as executive director of the Santa Fe Watershed Association, it is time to pass the torch to a new generation. On July 15th, I stepped away from the leadership role and transitioned to a new opportunity, still staying in Santa Fe and New Mexico.

When I first started at the Santa Fe Watershed Association in January 2014, my goal was to make sure that our Rio de Santa Fe and watershed always had “a seat at the table.” By whatever means necessary, we needed to articulate the purpose of a functioning watershed at all levels. I went to community meetings at the libraries, school meetings, City Committee and Governing Body meetings, State of New Mexico Roundhouse committee meetings, and more.

At first, people asked me who I was and why was I there. Then community members introduced me to other folks and, most recently, the mayor introduced me to a new City staff member. In recent months, I have gotten to introduce our SFWA staff to all of the governing entities and the community. So we did it: the Santa Fe Watershed Association is a familiar voice around the watershed for the watershed.



Reese Baker of The RainCatcher, Inc. describes features of the new Brother's Lane rain garden at the Land and Water Summit in March 2022. SFWA facilitated this project with a River Stewards grant from the New Mexico Environment Department, in collaboration with the City of Santa Fe.

We didn't shout or raise our voices. We didn't try to drown out those who disagreed with us. We mostly listened, just as we have been listening to the waters and winds of the watershed for twenty-five years. When asked, we gave our opinions and suggestions. When not asked, we gave our opinions and suggestions.

This has been the greatest success of the past nine years for the Santa Fe River and its watershed – helping people understand what our watershed is all about, and helping residents show up and speak up. What an incredible opportunity has been presented to us, and I think we have served the watershed well.

And we have done more than attend meetings. Some of our accomplishments, working in collaboration with all those other parties, include:

- We have negotiated multi-year agreements with the City of Santa Fe, creating continuity for our programs.
- We have increased our donor base, adding stability to our operations.
- We have forged new partnerships with Santa Fe County, the State of New Mexico, and the Bureau of Reclamation.
- We have demonstrated to other stakeholders that, without them, we cannot and will not move forward.

The “we” of the Santa Fe Watershed Association are all of the volunteers and associates who have stepped forward. Thank you to all of you: Christine Otto, Kristina Fisher, Francois-Marie Patorni, Jerry Jacobi, Janet McVickar, Giacomo Zafarano, Rebecca Sobel, Dave Kite, John Utton, Jesse Roach, Michelle Henrie, Kevin Flores, Stephen Wiman, Tony Ricketts, Steven Hamp, Richard Eeds, Esha Chiocchio, Eileen Everett, Marty Peale, Raquel Baca-Tompson, Keely

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Andy Otto, SFWA Executive Director (2014-2022)

From the (New) Executive Director: Grounded In Gratitude

After twenty five years of visioning, working, advocating, educating, and simply caring, the Santa Fe Watershed Association is entrusting me with the task of carrying forward its legacy as the incoming executive director. When Paige Grant started SFWA in 1997, it could have been me she was thinking of as one of the many “future generations” who might benefit from her passion and foresight. I was a small child at that time, nourished unknowingly by the waters of the Santa Fe River, the aquifers that fed my family’s well, the soil, the plants, the community. My memories of the river itself are few since we lived on the edge of the water-

shed, but, along with many folks, mostly involved mockery about how dry, tiny, and filthy it was. Conversely, the eroded banks and sparse vegetation of the arroyo behind my house seemed to me a pristine wonderland of peace, safety, and joy that raised me like a parent. It was a thrill to watch the arroyo fill and rage in a storm “like a real river.” It was fun to watch the seasons change it, to excitedly spot a fence lizard, a coyote, or a cicada. I had no understanding at that time of the connectedness of these channels; physically, culturally, metaphorically. I had no idea how deeply my own story was woven, and was being woven, into the story of this beloved and beleaguered watershed.



*Morika Vorenberg Hensley,
SFWA Executive Director*

*“My inspiration and motivation
for moving into a leadership role
at SFWA
are grounded in gratitude.”*

When I began working for SFWA in 2019 after spending years mostly in Taos, Atlanta, and India, it was inspiring to return home and see so clearly how much healthier and more beautiful the river looked. It was exciting to walk along the River Trail, to see clear water flowing through town. Through SFWA I began to learn the full story, and to finally have the tools I had unknowingly craved to take pride in this small but sacred stream – to revere it and to finally see it as the generous and beautiful force it is and always has been. And to understand that so much of that goodness and beauty is the result of community members who never gave up on it or on each other.

My inspiration and motivation for moving into a leadership role at SFWA are grounded in gratitude. My gratitude and reverence are boundless for this land and water that sustains and nourishes us; and for the Tewa and Keres people, their relatives and ancestors, who have stewarded this place beyond memory and will continue to always. Gratitude, too, for the Acequia communities who have worked in relationship with this place for centuries and remain vital stewards. Gratitude for our entire community, nested like watersheds in concentric circles of care. Gratitude for the SFWA staff and board for their support in this learning process, for my parents, partner, and human and beyond-human teachers. And deep gratitude for Andy Otto for being such a steadfast and encouraging mentor since he hired me in 2019. His confidence in me, his grace and generosity in sharing his knowledge, connections, and experience, has helped me be able to have confidence in my own ability to take the baton and move forward successfully. The foresight and planning of
(continued on page 7)

THE MISSION of the Santa Fe Watershed Association is to protect and restore the health and vibrancy of the Santa Fe River and its watershed for the benefit of people and the environment. We achieve this through education, restoration, stewardship and advocacy. From the river’s headwaters to the Rio Grande, we honor the connection of people and the watershed.

From Our Founder: Watershed Moments

In my early twenties, I read Peter Warshall in *CoEvolution Quarterly* on “thinking like a watershed.” That did it! Watershed thinking tied together the miracle of the hydrologic cycle, the science of tracking water through the landscape and its ecosystems, and our responsibility as humans to share the wealth – and the scarcity – of the watersheds that we inhabit with our fellow beings.

“We wanted people to get to know their little ephemeral ‘rito’ and care about restoring it as the green heart of Santa Fe.”

I got a Master’s degree in Watershed Management and went off to save the world. Sidetracked into fifteen years of hydrology-for-hire, in 1995 I stumbled onto a conference on community-based watershed actions that reignited my passion for working on the landscape as a whole. Fired up with the possibility of establishing a watershed association that would reintroduce Santa Fe to its river (at the time, the river was treated as a joke); promote water conservation, wildlife protection, and forest management; support local agriculture; and preserve open space, I shopped the idea around to the City and the mainstream environmental organizations in town. A friend at The Forest Trust asked me, “What’s stopping you?”, and I thought, What, indeed?

The first SFWA brochure was printed on brown paper with woodcuts depicting a bicyclist, an acequia gate and a water strider. To think like our watershed was to treat the landscape that fed the Santa Fe River so that it carried a trickle between pools inhabited by aquatic insects. We weren’t asking for artificial flows and stocked fish! We wanted to harvest storm-flows to recharge the aquifers that fed the stream. We wanted to manage the forest in the municipal watershed to reduce fire danger and increase ecological diversity. We wanted people to get to know their little ephemeral “rito” and care about restoring it as the green heart of Santa Fe.

An early achievement of the Santa Fe Watershed Association was to persuade the County to acquire the blasted, gravel-mined river channel below San Ysidro Crossing as open space. That accomplished, we met regularly with members of the Agua Fria community to introduce the concept of induced meandering to reduce the erosive power of rare river flows, rather than lining the channel with concrete. We won an EPA Wetlands grant to restore the reach. One success led to another, and neighborhoods that have sprung up in that area since the late 1990s now celebrate their connection to that riparian ribbon with its recovering bosque of native vegetation and its occasional flows.

River advocates in Santa Fe have been known to use the adage, “It’s not a river without water.” As the Santa Fe Watershed Association enters its second quarter-century (!), the continuing challenge will be to encourage the community to love the river for what it is – an ephemeral stream, dammed in its upper reaches to send water to our showers and washing machines. We need to accept the limits of the landscape we love, in the long drought that we humans have brought upon ourselves. We need to embrace our responsibility to live within our hydrologic means, using water minimally and mindfully, so there can always be magic pools in a streambed where water striders dance.

— Paige Grant
SFWA Founder



SFWA Timeline & Accomplishments

- 1995** Santa Fe River Corridor Master Plan approved
- 1997** SFWA founded as Neighborhood River Watch
- 2002** Adopt-the-River started
- 2007** American Rivers “Endangered” designation
- 2008** City residents approve El Parque del Río bond
- 2009** Canyon Preserve restoration
- 2010** Municipal Watershed Plan
- 2011** Buckman Direct Diversion comes online
Santa Fe Traditional Communities Collaborative founded
- 2012** Santa Fe City Council passes the Living River Ordinance
Adopt-an-Arroyo established
My Water, My Watershed established
First rain garden installed at LaFarge Library
- 2015** SFWA receives Piñon Award
- 2016** US Environmental Protection Agency identifies Santa Fe River as impaired
- 2021** Santa Fe CommuniTree Network established

From the President: Connecting the River and Community

The past few months have been unsettling, given the severe-to-exceptional drought and the extraordinary wildfire season in New Mexico. Lower water in our watershed reservoirs and smaller river flows are worrisome. At the Santa Fe Watershed Association, it brings into focus that our work and mission are vital and as important as ever.



*Steven Hamp,
SFWA Board President*

We are celebrating our 25th anniversary this year. There have been some outstanding accomplishments during this time for the Santa Fe Watershed Association. They are impressive, but we must look forward to the future recognizing that there are still challenges ahead.

One of the important things we do is to protect and restore the health and vibrancy of the Santa Fe River and its watershed. Many of our programs are in place to help make our river system a better place every day – our volunteer stewards support efforts to keep 30 stretches of the river healthy by cleaning up trash and thinning non-native vegetation, and our rain garden bio-retention basins stabilize the river channel by reducing stormwater flow rates.

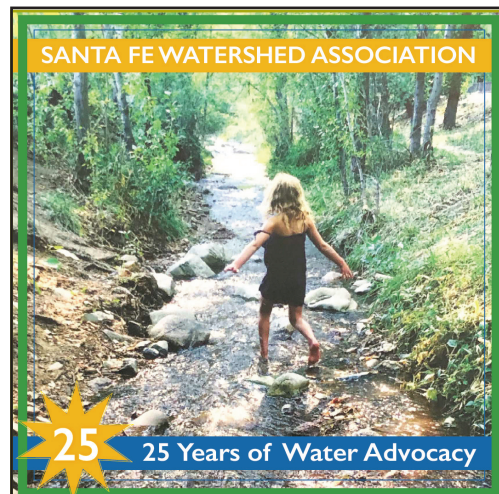
A second important thing that we do is education outreach. This starts with our My Water, My Watershed education initiative for fifth-grade students enrolled in the Santa Fe Public School system to study and explore the watershed. We also provide educational opportunities for all ages through

our upper watershed hikes and the New Mexico Climate Masters program. We are continually expanding our efforts with new initiatives like our Communitree Network aimed at sustaining and growing vegetative cover and urban tree canopy throughout the Santa Fe River watershed. As a network we collaborate with other local environmental and volunteer groups to achieve results.

Connecting the river and community is our motivation. Together we can protect and conserve the Santa Fe River and watershed for the benefit of everyone.

As always, thank you for joining with us and helping make a difference.

— Steven Hamp



A river can flow with water and still be invisible and neglected if it doesn't live inside us. Just as the land we inhabit shapes our narratives about who we are, our stories inevitably shape the land.

— A. Kyce Bello, "Preface"
in *The Return of the River*

From the Staff: Administration On Behalf of the Community

Happy 25th Anniversary to SFWA! Wow, it is hard to believe that I have been with the organization for sixteen of those twenty-five years. When I first started working for SFWA in 2006, I knew I had landed in the right place. After working for big corporations, I was ready to bring my skills to a smaller, local organization that had more of a "community support" feeling.

During my first few years at SFWA, I had the opportunity to go out and meet with volunteers along the Santa Fe River to plant willows and collect trash. Additionally, I got to experience going into the upper watershed with elementary school students during our My Water, My Watershed outdoor educational field trips. (Both of my kids got to experience a field trip with me!) How lucky can a person be?!

The past years have been an extraordinary learning experience for me both professionally and personally. I have worked with the most inspiring people who care so much for our community and environment. I appreciate everything that SFWA has taught me... so much that I may stay another sixteen years!

— Raquel Baca-Tompson,
Administrative Director



From the Staff: Education for All Ages

As the newest member of the Santa Fe Watershed Association staff, I am still learning the ebb and flow of the seasons for our educational outreach. I came on in August of 2021 just as the school year was getting underway. Last fall was particularly busy, as we did not know if the 5th grade My Water, My Watershed field trips into the Upper Municipal Watershed were going to take place – and then quickly needed to get them up and running as soon as we had the go ahead. It was exciting to jump into a program that is so meaningful and connected to the community. It was even more exciting to be building relationships within the Santa Fe Public Schools and with community partners to make the program more robust and aligned to student 5th-grade learning. I am a strong advocate for doing what we can to support teachers, and any time I can offer them programming and curriculum that make their job easier, I feel I am accomplishing something important. The Fall 2021 and then the Spring 2022 field trips were a success, and July will bring the teacher

workshop to introduce the updated curriculum and provide materials for teachers.

As soon as things slowed down in the Fall with My Water, My Watershed, it was time to turn attention to adult learning and start planning the Spring 2022 New Mexico Climate Masters course. Fortunately for me, there were wonderful and experienced people who had come before me. Co-leading the class with Esha Chiocchio was so much



*Julie Hasty,
Director of Education*

fun, and I am quite sure I learned as much or more than participants did. There are so many people in Santa Fe doing hard work to help educate the community and mitigate the impacts of climate change that this an easy class to facilitate. We had a great group of participants from a broad range of ages and backgrounds, who listened to each other, respected other opinions and views, and showed such dedication. I am already looking forward to next spring!

That brings me to summer, and now that the rains have come and the forests have reopened, we will be planning public hikes into the Upper Municipal Watershed in the late Summer and Fall. Partnering with the US Forest Service and the City of Santa Fe, the hikes give people a glimpse into an area that is normally closed to the public. Now more than ever, I think this is an important component in educating Santa Feans on the need to protect our watershed.

Before I know it, the start of another school year will be here, and it will be time to get 5th graders back into the upper watershed. This school year we will also be introducing a curriculum unit for 6th-grade arroyo education called Mi Arroyo, Mi Tierra, another pathway to connect students to their environment and water.

Whatever the next year brings, I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to be a part of the Santa Fe Watershed Association and the important work that we do.

— Julie Hasty, Director of Education

The Agua Fria Village residents and Agua Fria Village Association (AFVA) have been supporters of the Santa Fe Watershed Association (SFWA) since its inception, although I admit we were a little reluctant at first – “Ah, it's just a bunch of hippies that won't stand the test of time,” and “The River is dead, it is just a bunch of sand and gravel pits” ... were probably the refrain of many of our members. But this relationship has greatly expanded and done so many sustainable projects.

Back in the late 1990s, Paige Grant and Judy Kowalski pressured Santa Fe County to purchase the Richard Cook and Roybal sand and gravel pits, and restore them into the Santa Fe River Park at San Ysidro Crossing. This was our first glimpse of what was possible!

Then working together with us, the Santa Fe River Commission and David Coss and other City Officials, the Living River Ordinance was established. The Ordinance provides for water for the San Isidro Day and Santa Fe River Blessing which was established by Nicoe Lichen in 1999.

SFWA assisted former AFVA Secretary Tamara Lichtenstein in her nomination of the Santa Fe River as the 2007 Top Ten Most Endangered Rivers in the USA.

In the present, AFVA and SFWA are members of the Santa Fe River Traditional Communities Collaborative.

For the future, I envision even greater collaboration, especially, in regard to Climate Change information, Adopt-an-Arroyo and SFWA education programs.

— William H. Mee, President
Agua Fria Village Association

Who can step out of his life and feel
the Milky Way flow out of his hands?

— Arthur Sze, "The Unnamable River"
in The Return of the River

From the (Outgoing) Executive Director *(cont. from page 1)*

Jackson Kennemore, Gabrielle Beans, Lynette Guevara, Loretta Valencia, Elisabeth Loya, Lorrie Bonds Lopez, Charlie Gonzales, Tom Noble, Lindsay Archuleta, Colleen Baker, Elizabeth Lee, Fred Schott, Peter Ives, Pilar Law, John Alejandro, Aaron Kauffman, Stacy Timmons, Rich Schrader, Julia Abbiss, David Groenfeldt, Felicity Broennen, Reese Baker, Paige Grant, Neil Williams, Sam Gerberding, Janie Miller, Matt McQueen, Lisa Randall, Doug Pushard, Amara “May”, Julie Hasty, and Mori Hensley.

The Santa Fe Watershed Association is a vital organization in our community, and I congratulate them on 25 years of dedicated work. Their commitment to cleaning, restoring, protecting, and preserving our living river is unsurpassed. I am particularly thankful for the work they do educating our youth and the community about the benefits of a healthy watershed.

Shout out to the service of long-time executive director, Andy Otto, and best wishes in his retirement.

I extend appreciation to all involved and look forward to their work in the next 25 years as we address the challenges of climate change. Important work we appreciate!

— Carol Romero-Wirth
City Councilor, District 2

And here’s a Big Shout Out to the six hundred plus volunteers who go out into the watershed every week to pick up trash; thin, and water the brush and trees; and keep an eye on what is happening! We call them Stewards, but they are so much more....

Our Santa Fe River Watershed Association needs and deserves a new leadership style and energy. Now is the time to bring in Mori Hensley as our new executive director to initiate new protocols and policies that will counter the changing face of the challenges that threaten the natural functioning of our watershed. The time for change is now.

Thank you all for an incredible nine years of learning and caring for our Home Watershed, the Santa Fe River Watershed.

In this day and age, it’s so easy to get overwhelmed by climate change, plastic pollution and more.

One of the best antidotes, for me, is to get out, pick up some trash, pull some weeds, or help out with the watering of the new plantings along our River. I hope to inspire as many people as possible to join me in being a good guardian of our beautiful Planet Earth!

— Lisa Farrand
River Steward

From the Staff: Stewardship & Community Outreach

As the Santa Fe Watershed Association celebrates 25 years of work in this community, I am honored to be even a small part of its ongoing legacy. Growing up in Santa Fe, our river is woven into myriad childhood memories and will always hold a special place in my heart. Especially in years of scarcity, the sound of flowing water evokes excitement, and cool water running over feet feels like a special and indulgent luxury. We don’t often appreciate things that are in abundance as much as things that aren’t.

In collaboration with all of our amazing community partners who care so much about the health and vibrancy of

the Santa Fe River Watershed, SFWA continues to cultivate a sense of stewardship and care via our Adopt programs and other initiatives. As we continue to grow and build upon the strong foundation of the past quarter-century, it will be exciting to witness our human and non-human connections continue to build, and to see younger generations forging lasting memories of their own.

Thank you all for being part of the SFWA family and for your continued care and support.

— Amara “May”,
Director of Stewardship
and Community Outreach



Thinking like a watershed is possibly the clearest way to understand homeland.

— Jack Loeffler
“Celebrating the Santa Fe River Watershed”
in The Return of the River

From the (New) Executive Director

(cont. from page 2)

his transition away from the ED role has been an inspiration. I'm excited to continue Andy's vision and dedication, and to keep working and growing together with all of you.

As we celebrate SFWA's 25th anniversary, as well as the 20th anniversary of Adopt-the-River and the 10th anniversary of the Living River Ordinance, we are reminded of the power of care and determination – lessons learned and yet to be learned that this river, this watershed, has to teach us.

And even with so many victories and accomplishments there is more pain than ever – more work to do than ever. We watched in horror this spring as our neighboring watersheds burned with the fury of centuries of history, with the force of the entire earth's changing climate and weather patterns. We continue to grieve the losses of our friends, neighbors, relatives, and refuges as we try to help them rebuild, to heal, to somehow find a way to survive. We stare, petrified, at the mountains knowing that it is almost inevitable that a similar fire will soon touch our homes and watershed as well.

*"This is a time of contradiction
and connectedness."*

We are crushed by the weight of many forces that seem far outside our watershed, but that we experience locally nonetheless. Our hearts break as we see our human rights destroyed before our eyes, as we witness senseless violence against people and countries and forests and landscapes and oceans all over the world, as we try to imagine moving with and beyond the catastrophic COVID-19 pandemic only to realize that more are probably on the way. We grieve the loss of a beloved piñon tree in our yard or along our favorite trail, the loss of elders in our community who took with them untapped stories and wisdom. We worry about water even as we worship it.

This is the time we live in, the time we are sharing. It is a time of contradiction and connectedness. While I can't say that I know exactly what to do or that I feel totally ready, I know that I am doing my very best to embrace the gratitude and inspiration that I feel in so many moments alongside the terror, rage, and utter confusion, as I humbly assume the new position of executive director of the Santa Fe Watershed Association. As my heart is breaking, may it break open new possibilities and deeper connections. It is my hope that we, as an organization, can continue to hold these contradictory but connected experiences as well. My hope is to honor and carry forward the legacy of these past 25 years, and prepare for the next 25 and beyond with love and liberation in my heart.

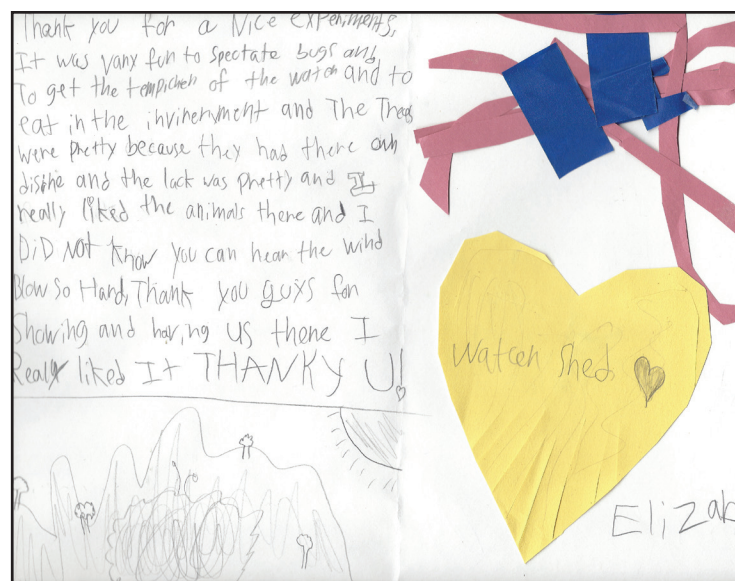
Thank you for giving me hope.

— Morika Vorenberg Hensley,
SFWA Executive Director



Everyone loves this field trip because it gets us outside in a beautiful space, it keeps the kids engaged in the curriculum and activities, and it helps us understand our own environment.

— Teacher from Carlos Gilbert Elementary School,
referring to My Water, My Watershed





Santa Fe WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

25 Years of Stewardship



*Tickets for Wild & Scenic
are available online NOW!*

Events – Mark Your Calendars Now!

Summer 2022, Dates TBD — 25th Anniversary Hikes
September 16, 2022 — Wild and Scenic Film Festival.
 (In-person at Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary.)
October 29, 2022 — The Hunt for Red Rocktober
 Community Clean Up
December 2022 — Winter Watershed Benefit

*Please see our website for updates.
www.santafewatershed.org*

Santa Fe Watershed Association

1413 Second Street, #3 Santa Fe, NM 87505
 505/820-1696 • info@santafewatershed.org
www.santafewatershed.org

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 A benefit for Santa Fe Watershed Association
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