

Doug Evans
Manager, Groundwork Trust USA
National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program
15 State St., Boston, MA 02109

May 26, 2006.

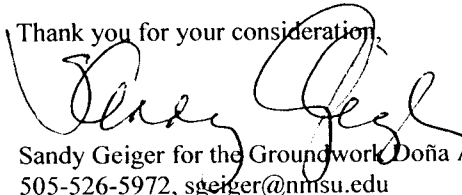
Dear Mr. Evans,

RE: Groundwork Doña Ana County

Please find enclosed our proposal for a Groundwork Doña Ana County. Since this proposal has been initiated by the all volunteer Open Space and Trail Network of Doña Ana County and not a governmental entity, this cover letter is written on behalf of the Groundwork Doña Ana County Core Steering Committee. You will find related resolutions and letters of support from Doña Ana County, City of Las Cruces, City of Sunland Park and Town of Mesilla in Section 6 of this proposal.

We are very excited about the prospects of being selected as a Groundwork Trust. We have been very impressed with and grateful for the degree of commitment of all those participating in the proposal at this time.

Thank you for your consideration.



Sandy Geiger for the Groundwork Doña Ana County Core Steering Committee.
505-526-5972, sgeiger@nmsu.edu

**PROPOSAL FOR GROUNDWORK USA PILOT FUNDING
AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
MAY 26, 2006.**

Section 1: OVERVIEW

Doña Ana County has a population of 174,682 and comprises 3,815 square miles (U.S. Census). It is located in Region 6 of the Environmental Protection Agency. It is the second most populated county in New Mexico and shares its southern border with El Paso County, Texas, and the State of Chihuahua, Mexico. Sixty-three percent of the population is Hispanic. The geography is predominantly Chihuahuan Desert, southern Rocky Mountains and the Rio Grande Valley. The river valley has sustained various communities of people from prehistoric times to the present through agriculture and ranching. The major metropolitan area of Las Cruces is centrally located within the County and numerous historic villages dot the riverside to the north and south of the City. Las Cruces is presently experiencing tremendous growth due to a sunny climate, beautiful scenery and an economy based on jobs provided by education and technology, agriculture, military and aerospace and the growing retirement community.

Similarly, Doña Ana County's growth rate is between 4 – 6 % which translates to a population of 300,000 within the next twenty years. The immediate future promises a greater demand for residential, commercial, and industrial development due to the population pressures that will accompany the development of the Space Port to the north and the addition of Ports of Entry at the Mexico-New Mexico border. Currently new major housing development and road construction is concentrated on the mesa east of Las Cruces with an expanding industrial park and airport west of Las Cruces. A large development of 100,000 or more is planned west of the city of Sunland Park in the southern part of the County. Unfortunately, there is also increasing development pressure on the unincorporated, agricultural river valley where over half of the County's population lives. There are 37 colonias in the county. These areas have limited to no infrastructure such as roads, water, and sewer, or services such as phone or trash collection. They suffer from a variety of environmental problems including flooding and water pollution, trash accumulation and problems associated with living next to industry or agriculture. The development explosion attracts a migrant labor force which, in turn, places an additional burden on many communities in the county. These neighborhoods will be visited to determine community concerns and potential solutions.

However, throughout the county there are also natural and agricultural open space and trails such as mountains and escarpment, arroyos and dams, farmland and irrigation canals. These areas are in varying states ranging from pristine to brownfield, all of which could serve to provide numerous social, environmental and economic benefits if protected or restored. Smart growth is about making choices that promote sustainability and quality of life by planning for the future and protecting our environment. Therefore, the needs that a Groundwork Doña Ana County (GWDAC) would help address include, but are not limited to:

- The preservation of the Rio Grande and adjacent farmland and irrigation canals for environmental and agricultural purposes and at the same time to provide trails
- The preservation/restoration of arroyos and their natural drainage system, to provide movement corridors for native plants and animals as well as people, and to organize stewardship programs to protect the areas and coordinate the regular removal of trash
- The preservation/restoration of significant historic and cultural elements such as the historic adobe structures found in communities throughout the Rio Grande Valley

- The identification and possible organization of community-based groups throughout the rural and colonia neighborhoods to identify and address problems
- The identification and reclamation of vacant lots and abandoned sites to provide opportunities for special uses such as dog parks, archery ranges, and community gardens
- The preservation of representative land forms and environmentally sensitive areas, such as mountains and escarpment which serve to provide scenic vistas, wildlife habitat, and filter our water and air.

It is the GWDAC Steering Committee's thought that in its initial stages the Trust would focus on existing local partnerships such as:

- The Citizen's Task Force for Open Space Preservation and the Open Space and Trail Network of Doña Ana County. In 2005, an extensive preservation plan entitled "A Vision: Open Space and Trail System for Doña Ana County New Mexico" was authored by the Citizen's Task Force for Open Space Preservation in Doña Ana County in cooperation with the Open Space and Trail Network and National Park Service's Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program (Appendix 2). The Vision has been endorsed by the governing bodies of the City of Las Cruces, Doña Ana County, the Extra Territorial Zone and the Town of Mesilla and is a comprehensive compilation of all related plans and efforts up to 2005.
- The City of Las Cruces Community Development Department and the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro Trail Association (CARTA). The City conducted significant community outreach efforts to author the Rio Grande Riparian Ecological Corridor Plan proposing trails, restoration of historical sites and wetlands along the river. CARTA is an international organization that helps promote and develop a trail along the historic El Camino Real from Santa Fe to Mexico City.
- The Adobe Conservation Task Force. The *tical* or lime plaster adobe restoration workshops held periodically in the Town of Mesilla partner with youth from San Andres High School and the Doña Ana County Juvenile Detention Center serve to preserve the historical neighborhoods of Mesilla (see Appendix).
- Doña Ana County (many departments). The County was able to assist the community of Anthony in the reclamation of a major arroyo that had been used as a dump site. The anticipated second phase will include park development adjacent to the arroyo (see Appendix).

As we mention these examples of partners and their plans and projects, we realize fully that a feasibility study and neighborhood outreach efforts may uncover a variety of projects that fit the GWDAC public benefit profile and we welcome that prospect as well.

Section 2: ROLE OF THE GROUNDWORK TRUST DONA ANA COUNTY

Doña Ana County presently does not have an authority, an organization, that is charged with long-term coordination and management of preservation and restoration projects and it is this role that we, the members of the GWDAC Steering Committee, think a GWDAC could fulfill. The community of Doña Ana County has indicated a need for this kind of organization in addition to local government that would facilitate the planning, resource coordination and fund raising to implement projects. This Groundwork Doña Ana County Initiative has the potential to be both proactive by establishing needed "green" infrastructure and its protection prior to more urban expansion and the potential creation of more brownfields, and reactive by correcting problems related to brownfield pollution and contamination. While several local governments and other non-profit organizations are currently doing some of the work which we see the GWDAC doing,

there is no oversight organization that coordinates resources and orchestrates collaboration among public, private and community partners. Using the expertise of Groundwork staff, the GWDAC will be able to explore partnership development, planning and fundraising among other things.

During our local presentations of the proposal for a GWDAC, many attractive aspects were revealed. As a non-profit environmental business, GWDAC has the potential to:

- Facilitate the implementation of all open space, trail, park, and community garden plans in the county by coordinating many efforts and entities.
- Stimulate economic and environmental rejuvenation by coordinating projects on both public and private property for public benefit.
- Engage the local community, including youth, by organizing neighborhoods as partners in planning and development and as stewards for protection and maintenance of project sites.
- Establish links between communities and projects and Service Learning Programs at New Mexico State University and the public school system, teaching skills related to project development.
- Establish links between communities and the NMSU Extension Offices to utilize expertise in restoration and reclamation projects.
- Assist the City of Las Cruces, County, Town of Mesilla, Sunland Park, Hatch and unincorporated communities with a wide range of projects that would improve their environment, quality of life and economy, increasing the capacity of communities and neighborhoods with limited means to improve their environment.
- Educate and engage both public and private sectors in fundraising through press releases. The local press is very receptive to publishing feature stories, editorials, and letters to the editor about brownfields and related contamination risks (see Appendix).
- Engage many City of Las Cruces and County departments and non-profit organizations throughout the county to lend a helping hand on reclamation and restoration projects associated with the dumping of contaminants and trash in the Rio Grande, the arroyos, and the irrigation canals.
- Engage local interest groups that have formed for a particular community reasons such as the process of developing comprehensive or neighborhood plans to assist in the clean-up and reuse of brownfields for public benefit.
- Partner with the Doña Ana County Health and Social Service and Colonia Development offices to facilitate the identification of and address existing and potential environmental illness problems throughout the county.
- Partner with Groundwork El Paso to gain expertise on brownfield redevelopment projects.

Section 3: LEVEL OF COMMUNITY INTEREST AND SUPPORT

We have a respectable three-year plus history of community interest and support via the volunteer Open Space and Trail Network with its email list serve of over 80 persons. The public is invited to attend our monthly meetings. The Groundwork Core Steering Committee (see Appendix) has combined the Network's Planning Committee with the initial Groundwork Subcommittee inviting additional volunteers from the Network. The following is a list of the participants of the Network and their broad community representation.

Bureau of Land Management (Las Cruces Field Office)	State Land Office (Las Cruces District)
Doña Ana County (Community Development Department, Strategic Planning Committee, Parks)	Natural Resources Conservation Service (Las Cruces Field Office) – La Union Soil and Water Conservation District
City of Las Cruces (Community Development Department, Parks)	Las Cruces Metropolitan Planning Organization
Town of Mesilla	New Mexico State University (Real Estate)
League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces	Citizen’s Task Force for Open Space Preservation
Elephant Butte Irrigation District	Las Cruces Homes Builders Association
Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park	Lower Rio Grande Back Country Horsemen
Mesilla Valley Track Club	The Nature Conservancy of New Mexico
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance	Southwest Environmental Center
World Wildlife Fund Chihuahuan Desert Program	Zia Carriage Drivers

Additional members of the Groundwork Core Steering Committee will be identified through ongoing outreach and contacts with other community organizations, churches and the public schools during the feasibility study and strategic planning stage.

We will identify additional resources and funding for the feasibility study and strategic planning process by approaching the Las Cruces and Hispano Chambers of Commerce, the local development community including the Las Cruces Homebuilders and Association of Realtors and related contractors, and other professional groups associated directly with certain types of projects. Both private and philanthropic participation is anticipated when projects involve youth.

Assigned staff is in the process of considering the required local match commitment of local governments. Doña Ana County officials have indicated their support for the establishment of a Groundwork Trust including their role as fiscal agent and the provision of matching funds of \$12,500 for fiscal year 2006-07. The City of Las Cruces officials have indicated their support and the provision of matching funds of \$12,500 for fiscal year 2005-06. The Town of Mesilla officials have indicated their support and the provision of matching funds of \$2000 and Sunland Park officials have indicated their support and the provision of matching funds of \$3000, both for fiscal year 2006-07.

Section 4: COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

Doña Ana County is a member of the Rio Grande Council of Governments (RGCOG) which has received EPA Brownfields Program Funding in the past. Barbara Kauffman is the Director of Environmental Services Special Projects (915-533-0998). Both the Las Cruces Old Landfill at Lohmann and Roadrunner and Brickland Refinery (McNutt Refinery) in Sunland Park are potential brownfield sites. The Rio Grande Ecological Corridor Project was funded through an EPA Sustainable Development Challenge Grant to the City of Las Cruces. This effort successfully produced a comprehensive conservation and trail plan for the river while conducting many community outreach meetings. There is a Groundwater Plume EPA Superfund Site at Griggs and Walnut Streets, Las Cruces. The Organ Mountain retired silver mine lead contamination EPA Superfund Site exists near the neighborhood of Butterfield Park, east of Las Cruces. The NASA Site Groundwater Contamination Plume cleanup and plume-front treatment

are ongoing on 6 square miles of the mesa east of Las Cruces, north of Highway 70 with EPA cooperation.

The Open Space and Trail Network of Doña Ana County received National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation technical assistance for the creation of the Vision for an Open Space and Trail Plan 2003-2006. Paul Cusumano has served as a valuable resource to the Steering Committee facilitating the Network meetings and open space and trail planning. He has been a liaison between El Paso County, Texas, and Network efforts. Brochures and posters were designed and funded through NPS. The Rio Grande Ecological Riparian Corridor Project Comprehensive Plan was also supported by NPS.

New Mexico State University has numerous programs and resources that the GWDAC can potentially draw upon including its Service Learning Program, the Waste Management Education and Research Consortium (WERC), the Water Resource Research Institute (WRRRI), and NMSU Extension Offices throughout the State. There are many organizations within the County that have experience working with communities to improve their health, safety and welfare that we will be contacting during the feasibility study and strategic planning stages, such as United Way, the Colonia Development Council, Doña Ana County's Health and Human Services Department, the Service Learning Programs at NMSU and the public schools and the Las Cruces Community Foundation.

The City of El Paso has many resources also, including Grassroots El Paso, the Office of Neighborhood Coordination, Paso del Norte Community Resource Center and Groundwork El Paso. Groundwork El Paso is off to an excellent start with a Steering Committee of over 40 members and Executive Director Steven Silver. Groundwork El Paso has 18 months of experience with derelict land transformation and brownfield reclamation which will provide us with valuable information during the feasibility study. We believe there will be many opportunities for collaboration and regional planning and perhaps the future development of a Groundwork Rio Grande.

Section 5: KEY PARTNERS

The lead agency that began the process of establishing the Groundwork Initiative is the Open Space and Trail Network of Doña Ana County (Network). The Network is a volunteer group of representatives from the community, the private sector, non-profit organizations and governmental agencies and has established a Groundwork Core Steering Committee. During the Phase One Feasibility Study and Strategic Plan, the Core Steering Committee's role will be to coordinate all aspects of the project including convening meetings with the Doña Ana County Commission, City of Las Cruces Council, Town of Mesilla Board of Trustees, Sunland Park Board of Trustees and making other community presentations and reporting to granting agencies. The contact person is: Susan Krueger, Deputy Town Clerk Town of Mesilla, P.O. Box , Mesilla, NM 88046 (505-524-3262, ext. 113).

Alan Ragins, Community Planner, National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance office in Santa Fe, New Mexico, will be the lead staff person working with the Groundwork Core Steering Committee. His role will be to inform the Steering Committee about the Groundwork process, provide guidance to meet NPS requirements and Groundwork goals, offer community participation and outreach assistance, and offer technical assistance related to trail and park projects (505-988-6091).

Adele Cardenas, Rio Grande River Navigator, EPA of Dallas, Texas, will be the lead staff person working with the Groundwork Core Steering Committee. Her role will be to act as a liaison between the Steering Committee, NPS and EPA resources, programs and opportunities and offer guidance about applications (214-665-7210).

Section 6: LETTERS OF SUPPORT

1. Resolution No. 05-107 from the Doña Ana County Board of Commissioners supporting Phase 1 of the establishment of a Groundwork Trust in Doña Ana County and its role as fiscal agent during this phase, November 8, 2005.
2. Manager Brian Haines, Doña Ana County
3. Senior Planner Luis Marmolejo, Doña Ana County (explanation of County match)
4. Resolution No. 06-320 from the City of Las Cruces City Council supporting establishment of a Groundwork Trust in Doña Ana County and commitment of matching funds for fiscal year 2005-06, May 15, 2006.
5. Manager Terrence Moore, City of Las Cruces
6. Mayor Ruben Segura, City of Sunland Park
7. Mayor Michael Cadena, Town of Mesilla
8. Assistant District Manager Tim Sanders, Bureau of Land Management, Las Cruces Field Office.
9. District Conservationist Mary Sanchez, Natural Resources Conservation Service
10. Officer Tom Murphy, Metropolitan Planning Organization
11. President Connie Lee, Greater Las Cruces League of Women Voters
12. Event Director Donald Shepan, Mesilla Valley Track Club
13. Director Jennifer Montoya, World Wildlife Fund Chihuahuan Desert Program
14. Co-Chairman Robert Pennington, Alliance for Responsible Growth Neighborhood Coalition
15. Regina Jenkins and others, Southwest Mesa Park Trails
16. Marlene Eichner and others, Southwest Mesa Park Trails
17. President Julie Basile, Lower Rio Grande Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen
18. Pat Buls, Lower Rio Grande Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen
19. Carol Edmonds, Lower Rio Grande Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen
20. Realtor Dianna Stark,, Lower Rio Grande Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen
21. Attorney Karen Wooten, Miller Stratvert Professional Association

Section 7: APPENDICES

1. List of Groundwork Doña Ana County Core Steering Committee Members and affiliation
2. City of Las Cruces: Examples of Derelict Lots
3. Brochure "Open Space and Trail Opportunities in Doña Ana County, New Mexico."
4. Overview: "A Vision: Open Space and Trail System for Doña Ana County New Mexico" (also www.zianet.com/openspace choose "Vision for county-wide Open Space & Trail System")
5. Brochure "The Rio Grande Riparian Ecological Corridor Project"
6. Doña Ana County Proposal: Debris Clean-up of Anthony Arroyo
7. Letter describing San Andres High School Service Learning Students Program
8. Las Cruces Sun News article on colonias, Oct. 16, 2005.