



ISSUE #110

DECEMBER 2007

*** MERRY CHRISTMAS **** HAPPY

HOLIDAYS *** FELIZ AÑO NUEVO ***

OIL AND WATER DON'T MIX

"The most powerful industry in the world is lobbying your County officials right now!" – Drilling Santa Fe handout.

The dread gas and oil drilling is creeping closer to the village. Two pieces of property along the railroad tracks abutting those of Wendy Chase and Bobbie Hilliard are owned by the state and Tecton has acquired leases on them. A small arroyo leads from there into the Arroyo de los Angeles and then into the Rio Galisteo, which could certainly threaten our common water sources. Efforts are still being made to straighten out the ramifications and where these leases fit into the published Tecton plans. We'd better begin strategizing now.

Gas and oil development in the Galisteo Basin is *the* big story these days. It's being covered pretty well by the local media and there is so much information out there that *El Puente* can only try to summarize the latest developments. It seems smartest to focus on water. **But first, the news:**

The BCC has voted unanimously to enact an emergency 3-month moratorium on applications to drill. Tecton has questioned their authority to do so. Rep. Peter Wirth has asked State Energy and Minerals to impose a 6-month moratorium on drilling permits in the Galisteo Basin. The public is demanding that the County continue to accept public comments after the holidays. To construct a truly considered and effective ordinance in this complex situation, they must *slow down and do it right*.

Two huge forums (each at least 700 people) were held at Eldorado Elementary School on Nov. 15th and at the Santa Fe High Gymnasium on Dec. 6th. Speakers included Joanna Prukop, Cabinet Secretary for State Energy and Minerals, and Mark Fesmire, embattled director of the OCD (Oil Conservation Division), who is perceived by the industry as being on our side, so they are after his head.

State Rep. Peter Wirth explained that the State Surface Owners Protection Act took 3 years to pass in 2007 and we are only the 10th state to have this legislation. It tries to level the playing field, requiring notice to owners of drill sites and roads as well as surface reclamation, compensation for loss of income, land value, access, improvements. But it does not apply to neighbors and is not "mandatory on both sides." If no agreement is reached, the oil/gas company can post a bond and forge ahead. (Cont.p.2)



Nuestra Señora de los Remedios, Christmas Eve, 2006. (photo: Bill Mitchell).



Some of the Galisteo protesters (L. Lippard, A. Cárdenas, A. Tremper, W. Chase) braving the rain at anti-drilling march, Santa Fe Plaza, Dec. 8th (photo: Harmony Hammond).



Brian Egolf (who is running for Wirth's seat) said the Galisteo Basin was 100% dependent on ground water and requires a much stricter approach than other places. Exploratory vertical and horizontal hydrological fractures -- "fracking," which forces water and chemicals at high pressure into the earth to break through rock -- threaten to penetrate the aquifer from below before the actual drilling begins. (See Egolf's *New Mexican* commentary, Dec.9.)

County Attorney Steve Ross was in the hot seat, attempting to defend the ordinance draft. (To read the 44-page document and see his answers to the most-asked questions, go to www.santafecounty.org.) The Dec. 6th meeting was run by Rhonda King with Mike Anaya, who remarked that having been born and raised in Galisteo, he'd be out here with us, except that he's a Commissioner and has to listen to both sides.

Santa Fe Mayor David Coss announced that he supports us and so does the City Council, but "it's hard to regulate oil and gas" in New Mexico. "This is not Lea, Eddy, or San Juan County. We need to set a different standard, as we did with the living wage."

The State's mining act dates to 1935, with modifications made in the 1960s adding protection for human health, water, and environment. Companies buy up leases, then apply to drill. The BLM approves or denies the application, then it goes to the State. Prukop made it clear that the State "cannot ban or curtail oil and gas" if industry meets requirements. The State can stipulate that roads and pipelines follow a single path. Fesmire said that the County has more jurisdiction than we think, but it doesn't have OCD expertise and can only regulate in areas not specifically designated to other jurisdictional powers.

Speakers from the public -- often extremely eloquent and well informed -- lined up behind the mikes and could have gone on forever both nights. Many of their fears were focused on "fracking." Despite Tecton's Bill Dirks' unreal assertion that "induced fracs" are 100% foolproof, they are hard to monitor and the EPA doesn't address this unpredictability. Ground level can sink after fracking. Nicolas Frost listed all the toxic chemicals, some known carcinogens, used in the process, and asked, "Why is it permissible to inject hazardous waste into the ground where we get our water?"

Alex Valenzuela told of his mother's benzene poisoning when wells near the Lindrith oil fields were contaminated (and he warned against the invasion of Meth heads and "trailer trash" that comes with oil fields). Former industry employee Betsy Brandt said that 16 wells fracked in the Galisteo Basin in 1980s were unproductive. Just over the western border of Cerro Pelon Ranch, Black Ferrell #1, the only longtime working well, which will probably be grandfathered in, is not producing. In the past, 44 wells were drilled in and around the Basin and only 405 barrels were produced. It's "lousy play." (At the same time, rumor has it that the Rio Grande rift could be as oil rich as the Suez...)

Jan Willem Jansens of Earth Works cited a weakness in the County ordinance draft that endangers riparian areas and wetlands, noting that 4 of 8 New Mexico eco-regions come together here in the Galisteo Basin and they are still working on remediation from damage done a century ago.

A major objection to the draft ordinance was that the 200' setback from existing water wells is down from 500 feet in

the original ordinance, which also put no dollar limit on bond requirements, where the new one allows for only \$5,000 to 50,000 and relies on insurance policies of up to \$10 million. Another issue is water rights, which companies should be required to secure before drilling

While we would all prefer a 5-mile setback from residential institutions or recreational use, apparently the half mile proposed is an improvement on most laws. Yet even this may be rendered useless by special variance provisions. It took a young student to remind us to think long term. "How do you clean up an aquifer?" he asked.

Sound bytes from the forums: Given global warming, the BCC should block any new carbon emissions. Oil extraction is outdated. Look for other options, i.e. alternative, renewable energies. "The parking lot is full of SUVs; Practice what you preach!" We should be able to buy back the mineral rights under our lands (except the State doesn't make any money if we do). Drillers should pay half our property taxes; "Split Estate is taxation without representation." "Jail'em if they contaminate the aquifer. Make 'em not want to be here. Don't be Santa Fe Stupid!" "We want to know you're more concerned with our community than with being sued."

The next forum is tentatively set for Jan. 7th. On the current timeline, the BCC will vote on the ordinance on Jan. 29th. As of now, public comments end Dec. 21st.

ROAD COMMITTEE/Commonweal

The Galisteo Road Committee and colleagues all along CR 42 are fighting back against the County's decision to ignore context-sensitive design when they pave, despite the immense amount of work done and all the rhetoric about working together. Letters have been sent to protest the complete disregard for community input, with hopes of re-opening negotiations.

A small volunteer committee has begun to meet with Ted Harrison of Commonweal to discuss implementation of the conditions imposed by Galisteo on the Galisteo Basin Preserve's Master Plan. Harrison agreed to a North/South line of test wells that would be used to monitor any possible drawdown between the development and our village.

PEDACITOS/BITS AND PIECES

Nacha Mendez can be heard this December at Bert's Taqueria on Wednesdays, El Meson on Thursdays, El Farol on Sundays, and on New Years Eve at the Galisteo Inn. Nacha just returned from Greece, where she was invited to sing in *tavernas* in the city of Napflio. She will return in April and September to sing in Athens and elsewhere, launching her European career!

Richard Griscom will sing with the Men's Camerata at the Loretto Chapel on Jan. 12 (8PM) and Jan. 13 (6PM) **Janice Felty** will solo there in a Christmas concert on Dec 23rd.

In August, a devastating fire at **Jim Sloan's** and **Donna Mitchell's** ranch in Cedarvale destroyed Jim's new studio, years of artwork, and much of his construction equipment. Reeling from this blow, the artist/earthmover resurrected some burned pieces of his art and incorporated them into a striking new collage series, shown at Catherine Ferguson's in early November, in honor of the Galisteo Volunteer Fire Department.

The Galisteo Community Association published full page ads in *The New Mexican* and the *Santa Fe Reporter* against drilling in the Basin, funded by an anonymous donor.

Judy Tuwalitstiwa's handsome new book *Mapping Water* has been published by Radius, and was launched in November. Zane Fischer praised the way it "exposes her sense of process and offers insight into the artist's mind." (*The Reporter* 12/11)

"Ten Years of Restoration in the Galisteo Watershed" by Jan-Willem Jansens of Earth Works Institute appeared in the *Rio Grande Sierran* (Nov.-Dec.). "After ten years," he writes, "I have come to understand that restoring the land is not enough: we need to invest in people and build capacity in communities and counties -- one county, one watershed at a time."

Chris Griscom's fourteenth book, *The Evolution of God*, (hardback, 336 pages), in which she "gives the reader a new and inspiring perception of the Divine Source—taking us from God wars to World Peace," is now available at bookstores and will "be published in countries around the world."

Craig Moya demonstrated straw appliqué techniques at the Winter Spanish Market on Dec. 1st.

Bruce Nauman's *Square Depression*, a public artwork at the Center for Natural Sciences in Munster, Germany, was on the cover of the September issue of *Artforum* magazine.

Victor Balas is suing his builder, architect, and landscape architect for degradation on one of the houses he built in his development, **Hacienda Tranquilas**, north of Galisteo. (This from a Galisteño who was in jury selection; he reports that one juror said "well, he shouldn't have built it anyway...")

We forgot to mention that **the Galisteo Studio Tour**, a great success as usual, was written up by Craig Smith in *Pasatiempo* (Oct. 19), with reproductions of work by **Jean Moya, Lorraine Weiss** and **Frank Lux**. The food stops got good coverage too. **Catherine Ferguson's** view of the village from above was featured on the poster.

The Galisteo Inn is for sale again, but it is not yet clear if that means it will close or simply continue under new management.

Patrick McFarlin's and **Susan Rothenberg's** painting palettes were featured as part of a quiz in November's *The Magazine*.

Mystery in Ranchitos! A few people received bouquets of flowers in their newspaper boxes last month. The delivery man takes no credit. Is there a guerrilla florist out there?

Did anyone notice that there were **two November issues of El Puente?** (The October issue was mislabeled. Sorry!)

CHEEP THRILLS

Jan Saunders

The truth is that writing about birds, I often feel like a celebrity gossip columnist scripting a cover story for *The National Enquirer*. You know the gig, writing about who's hot and who's not, and who's been seen where with whom while wearing what. Thankfully, there are enough of you gossip-mongering avian celebrity junkies out there with *enquiring* minds who can't wait to gobble up little tidbits about the secret lives of birds.

Have you noticed how birders boast to friends, neighbors, and even strangers who couldn't possibly care less, with lead

lines like, "You'll never guess who spent the afternoon at my house today," as they namedrop a barely nodding acquaintance with a real stunner of a bird like a Western Tanager or a Blue Grosbeak. We are so gripped by our obsession that we keep diaries, like Grandma's Brag Book, filled with lists of our most recent sightings. So now birding is a competitive sport akin to counting coup?

We birders are shamelessly like the paparazzi as we poke our high-powered binoculars into birds' private lives. We spy voyeuristically on sparrows and hawks alike as they grab a quick bite, bathe with abandon, or sun themselves in a quiet corner of our patio. A photograph of birds courting and (heaven forbid!), mating, can garner a hefty check from *National Geographic*.

We wax euphoric as a male Oriole flashes his haute couture colors in an attempt to show females he won the genetic lottery. Let a really big box office favorite like the Bohemian Waxwing drop into our neighborhood, and birders flock to the site like crazed rock star groupies. You'd think they'd seen N'Sync and Bon Jovi at the same table in Santa Café. Are we not too far removed from those celebrity wannabes who obsessively read *People Magazine*? Are we all living vicariously through the iridescent high-flying lives of the jet setters of the bird world?

With anticipation we set our stage with wild birdseed, black oil sunflower seeds, fresh water, sugar water, and dripping water. We buy field guides and read books written by birding gurus. We plan trips to coincide with migration patterns. Some of us admit to scrambling for hours along stream banks in the rain for a glimpse of the Water Ouzel. Long afternoons spent scanning the trees overhead end mercifully in a visit to the acupuncturist: the only remedy for the excruciating pain associated with "warbler neck."

But, if at the end of the day, we can once, just once, come upon an American Redstart flashing implausibly brilliant red-orange wing patches at his intended, we hit the jackpot and the payoff is pure bliss. That's a day when I decide, undeniably, that birds are the only bone fide celebrities.

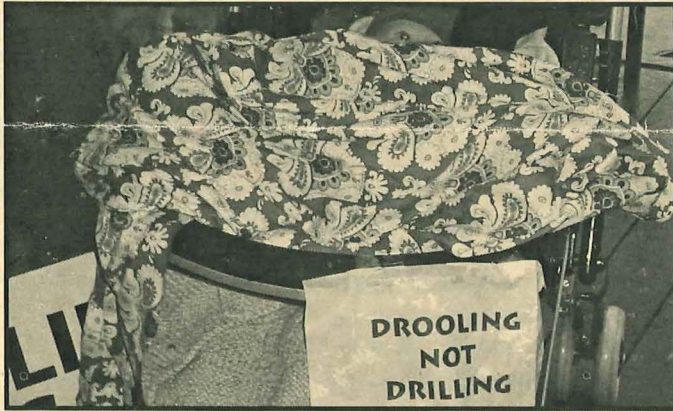
"LA TIENDA" TO BECOME A "STORE"

Tim Wilms of Talus Winds Ranch on Anaya Ranch Road, who has bought the Tienda Anaya, says he has a ways to go before it becomes the Galisteo Village Store (tentative name), but it's happening. He has to put the site plan together, drill a well and install a septic system, as well as water catchment, before he can restore the buildings to become "a little coffee shop and grocery store." Wilms says he might add on to the house as a residence for the storekeeper. He is also in the process of applying for State and National Historic Register status.

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+++ EL PUENTE DE GALISTEO+++

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