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For Immediate Release

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The Nature Conservancy in New Mexico

Taos Ski Valley Foundation Provides Renewed Support for the Rio Grande Water Fund
\$250,000 Will Improve Forests, Secure Water, Support Recreation

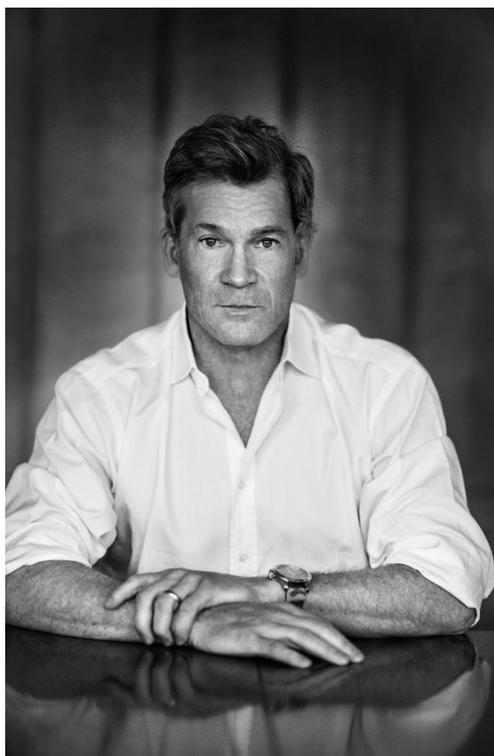


Taos, NM | March 22, 2017 Thanks to [The Taos Ski Valley Foundation](#)'s initial donation to The Nature Conservancy for the Rio Grande Water Fund program last year, land managers – for the first time ever – have gained invaluable knowledge about fire history in the Taos area. A recent tree-ring study confirms there were repeated, low intensity fires dating back to the 1300s. On average, fires burned in Taos-area forests every 11 to 43 years. This Taos Ski Valley Foundation-funded research will inform on-the-ground forest thinning projects. The new \$250,000 grant will boost the momentum of the Water Fund – a solution that can bring clean water to the Land of Enchantment for generations to come.

Water is essential for life and our livelihoods. Nowhere is that more true than in New Mexico. However, the harsh reality is more frequent and severe wildfires with subsequent flooding degrade our rivers, streams and other critical water sources. Without action, New Mexico's future water supply is at risk.

The Nature Conservancy-led [Rio Grande Water Fund](#) leverages public and private donations to increase the scale and scope of thinning overgrown trees from Taos to Albuquerque, safeguarding water for 1 million people in New Mexico.

“The Rio Grande Water Fund is an ambitious and essential effort to address overgrown forests and fire suppression in Northern New Mexico,” says [Louis Bacon](#), conservation philanthropist, owner of Taos Ski Valley and Founder of The Taos Ski Valley Foundation. “This remarkable project will improve forest health, bolster local economies and improve New Mexico’s water supply.”



Louis Bacon

Forest restoration – removing trees and burning dry vegetation on-the-ground that serve as fuel – makes them safer and healthier. “In our first two years, we’ve tripled the annual average of trees thinned,” explains Laura McCarthy, The Nature Conservancy’s New Mexico associate director. “This is an incredible collaborative effort that benefits both people and nature.”



Laura McCarthy

The Taos Ski Valley Foundation, the New Mexico affiliate of Louis Bacon’s Moore Charitable Foundation, supports conservation nonprofits that focus on protecting threatened landscapes, habitats, wildlife, and waterways. Renewed support from the Foundation will be used to reduce the risk of catastrophic fires and secure drinking water in the Rio Grande watershed. The funds will also support projects and policy to develop large-scale uses for the wood being pulled from the forests. Another key component is conducting prescribed burns while training local fire workers.

“Building new relationships and training fire workers to conduct forest thinning in their own communities is a sustainable plan that creates jobs and enables more locals to be a part of the solution,” says Terry Sullivan, The Nature Conservancy’s New Mexico director.

Almost 60 diverse partners are now collaborating on the project. The Nature Conservancy has received additional funding for the Rio Grande Water Fund from several groups including the McCune Charitable Foundation, General Mills Foundation, and the New Mexico Coalition for Conservation Districts.

McCarthy – who is spearheading the Water Fund effort – is giving a presentation about the Rio Grande Water Fund on Saturday, March 25 at 4:00 PM at the Taos Ski Valley Welcome Center.

About the Nature Conservancy New Mexico

The Nature Conservancy has been working in New Mexico for almost four decades. During this time, they have permanently protected 1.5 million acres, secured voluntary land conservation easements on more than half a million acres, and improved land and water management on an additional 18 million acres.

About the Taos Ski Valley Foundation

The Taos Ski Valley Foundation, the New Mexico affiliate of Louis Bacon’s Moore Charitable Foundation, supports conservation nonprofits that focus on protecting threatened landscapes, habitats, wildlife, and waterways. The Taos Ski Valley Foundation also supports educational and community programs in the region.

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