

AMIGOS BRAVOS -- *Because Water Matters*
Protecting and Restoring New Mexico's Waters Since 1988

Strategic Plan
2014-2018

AMIGOS BRAVOS MISSION

- **To protect and restore the waters of New Mexico**

PREAMBLE

The 2014-18 Strategic Plan aims to build on Amigos Bravos' 26-year history of successes, and its current knowledge, skills, capacity, and unique advocacy niche.

- The mission and practice of Amigos Bravos is to ensure that environmental protection is linked to social justice principles, in every aspect of our work.
- We are a results-based organization with credibility, proven staying power, and diligent focus on protecting and restoring all of New Mexico's waters.
- We are recognized for being an inclusive, culturally competent advocacy organization and for building strategic alliances with a broad and diverse range of allies.
- We are recognized experts in water quality and the implementation of the Clean Water Act.
- We are recognized for holding polluters accountable and bringing strong science to regulatory decision-making.
- We are sought out for providing assistance to groups and individuals wishing to protect waters in their communities.
- Our work is informed by a strategic plan that is developed in collaboration with our allies to respond to the needs of affected communities.

The development of the new Strategic Plan is taking place within a unique environmental, political, and economic context.

- The effects of Global Warming and drought driven by Climate Change cannot be ignored – “drought” has become the new norm and extreme storm events have become regular occurrences.
- Uses of New Mexico's water resources are at unsustainable levels – water rights are over-appropriated, reservoirs are at an all-time low, river flows are reduced, and aquifers are being depleted.
- The Clean Water Act is in disarray, having been eroded by the Supreme Court to the point where most of New Mexico is susceptible to unregulated discharges into surface waters.

- A deeply divided U.S. Congress is unable to further environmental protections, while continuing to underfund and shackle the Environmental Protection Agency. The current political crisis has resulted in a reduction of funding to address Clean Water Act enforcement, hazardous waste cleanup, ecological restoration, and environmental justice issues.
- Most immediately challenging for our work is the fact that New Mexico's environmental safety net is being unraveled under the current Martinez Administration's anti-regulatory policies. The agencies and commissions that regulate and enforce environmental laws are openly anti-environmental protection and readily capitulate to industry wishes.
- The reduction in the federal government, together with an anti-environmental state government, has placed the burden on civic organizations like Amigos Bravos to provide essential services – especially for the protection of New Mexico's waters.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Amigos Bravos Strategic Plan is a living document that undergoes refinement as circumstances change and opportunities present themselves. The Strategic Plan is conceived as a pool flexible enough to hold the needs of evolving and emerging issues.

In preparing this strategic plan, Amigos Bravos held a three-day strategic planning retreat at the Ghost Ranch Conference Center in May 2013. Facilitated by Martha Quintana, past president and long time Board member of Amigos Bravos, 33 participants from diverse backgrounds and communities reviewed Amigos Bravos' ongoing work and identified opportunities and priorities for the next five years.

The Advisory Council provided numerous recommendations for how Amigos Bravos can continue to build on past successes and current commitments, with the understanding that the work of the next five years will be foreshadowed by climate change and the Martinez Administration's push for rollbacks of environmental policy. The overarching recommendation was for Amigos Bravos to continue doing the work we are already doing, but begin to calculate the water-energy nexus in relation to each of our projects, and include information about what we find in our literature, public announcements, and in our decision-making processes, with the concerted aim to reduce impacts from climate change.

Top recommendations include:

- Develop a set of New Mexico Water/Energy Principals that provide the criteria through which to analyze impacts on water resources from current and future industrial, municipal, and governmental operations.
- Produce educational and advocacy recommendations to address the water/energy nexus, which is defined as the relationship between the amount of water used in energy production and the amount of energy used in that production to process and transport water. These recommendations will provide the basis for future

- work to develop water conservation policies and to educate the public on best management practices for household water use.
- Increase use of the arts and social media to build on our capacity to engage the public in both behavioral and policy change, especially in relationship to reducing contamination and the water use footprint.
 - Continue to work collaboratively in coalitions and provide technical assistance and Clean Water Act trainings to individuals and communities who wish to protect and restore waters in their own backyards.
 - Continue our work to restore the upper watersheds, with the aim to raise the water table and decrease siltation.
 - Continue our work to reduce polluted runoff by developing policies and incentives that promote Low Impact Development (LID) and Green Infrastructure (GI) stormwater controls

PROGRAM AREAS

Amigos Bravos projects are organized under three program areas: *Hold Polluters Accountable*, *Restore Watershed Health*, and *Build Water Stewardship and Ethics for the Future*. Following is an outline of work covered under each of the three program areas.

Holding Polluters Accountable

- Stopping current water pollution
- Protecting surface and ground waters
- Ensuring clean up of hazardous waste
- Influencing the regulatory and permitting decision-making process and agency enforcement actions
- Defending environmental laws and regulations

Restoring Watershed Health

- Responding and adapting to climate change and drought
- Protecting and restoring water quality, water quantity, native species, and wildlife habitat
- Restoring upper watersheds and the natural hydrograph
- Protecting sacred and Outstanding National Resource Waters
- Restoring impacted surface and ground waters
- Influencing land and water management policy
- Advocating for strong environmental laws and regulations
- Advocating for Low Impact Development and Green Infrastructure stormwater controls, including adoption of buffers around water sources

Building Leadership and Capacity for the Future

- Engaging and empowering youth
- Building a strong, educated, and active membership

- Helping individuals, organizations and communities build their knowledge and capacity to protect and restore their waters
- Educating the public through traditional and web-based media.
- Influencing attitudes, habits, and policy in relation to water use and value
- Developing revenue streams for our work

STRATEGIES

We will accomplish our work by using three strategies, concurrently:

- Provide opportunities for Civic Education, Engagement, and Action
- Address sources of pollution through Policy Development and Implementation
- Build Community Capacity and Leadership to protect and restore waters

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Amigos Bravos recognizes that to further our mission and to be a catalyst for progressive change, we must educate, inspire, and engage the public in the political process. Our strategy is to provide the media and the public with the most current information available, while engaging the public in opportunities to value place, connect to a vision for the future, and take part in effective civic action.

POLICY STRATEGIES

Amigos Bravos recognizes that misguided or poorly enforced policies are what make water pollution possible. Amigos Bravos is dedicated to developing pro-active policy that promotes the public interest and to fighting policies that pollute waters and create disproportionate impacts on communities of color. Our policy initiatives are aimed at building a better future while holding present-day polluters and governmental decision-makers accountable.

COMMUNITY CAPACITY STRATEGIES

Since our inception, Amigos Bravos has recognized the need to build an organization and a water protection movement with credibility and staying power. Amigos Bravos also recognizes that we cannot and do not want to do all the work of protecting New Mexico's rivers and streams by ourselves. Amigos Bravos has always been a community-based organization that partners with individuals and organizations. We are dedicated to working with – and providing technical and organizational development assistance to – impacted communities.

Criteria for Prioritizing Our Work

- Clear (measurable) objectives that serve our mission
 - Capacity to take the lead and have an impact
- Definitive opportunities for success within one year
 - Strategic and reliable partners and allies
 - Financial Support

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES 2014-2018

GOAL 1: *HOLDING POLLUTERS ACCOUNTABLE*

Since 1988, Holding Polluters Accountable has been a core component of our work. It is through this work that we have accomplished our most notable successes. It has led us to develop strong alliances and coalitions, build our technical capacity, and engage the public in campaigns such as the Superfund clean up of the Red River from impacts of the Chevron/Molycorp mine, permanent Congressional protection for the Valle Vidal from oil and gas development, and forcing cleanup of the stormwater that runs off of Los Alamos National Laboratory into the Rio Grande. While each initiative deals with a unique set of issues and circumstances, we select campaigns that respond to environmental justice concerns and build on our prior successes. *Holding Polluters Accountable* provides an important venue for involving the public in the political and regulatory process.

In support of this strategic plan's renewed focus on providing a civic response to long-term drought and climate change, the *Holding Polluters Accountable* program will advocate to shift energy production priorities to energy sources that conserve water quantity and quality, while through Goal #2, the *Protecting Watershed Health* program, we will propose water management strategies that use less energy.

Water/Energy Nexus

It has been well documented that energy production and use is *the* major contributor to greenhouse gas production and associated climate change.¹ What is not as well known is that energy production uses vast quantities of water. The US Geological Survey reports that 53% of fresh surface water withdrawals went towards producing electricity². In addition, traditional thermoelectric energy production such as nuclear, coal, and natural gas discharge contaminants into both surface and groundwater, impacting ecosystems and communities that depend on these systems for drinking, recreation, and agriculture. Another component of the relationship between water and energy is the large amount of energy we use to move, treat, and heat water, which accounts for approximately 13% of total US energy consumption.³ Over the next five years Amigos Bravos will incorporate an energy/water nexus focus into our work in the following ways.

- We will develop a set of New Mexico Water/Energy Principals that will become the lens through which we will analyze state and federal policy priorities, regulatory proposals, and new municipal and industrial developments.

¹ According to the Environmental Protection Agency, "Energy Supply" accounts for 26% of 2004 global greenhouse gas emissions (<http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/ghgemissions/global.html> with references to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC (2007) and the [Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#))

² USGS, Estimated Water Use in the United States, 2005 (pg. 38)

³ River Network, "The Carbon Footprint of Water," 2009.
<http://www.rivernet.org/sites/default/files/The%20Carbon%20Footprint%20of%20Water-River%20Network-2009.pdf>

- We will research and publish a report on New Mexico energy production detailing which energy sources have the biggest impact on New Mexico's water resources.
- We will apply the Water/Energy Principals and findings of the research report when making policy recommendations and commenting on and participating in decision-making processes.
- We will develop a set of energy production recommendations based on water impacts.

Extractive Industries

Many extractive industries, such as mining, oil, and gas development, have substantial impacts on water quality and quantity in New Mexico. Over the next 5 years Amigos Bravos will continue to focus on identifying these impacts, communicating these impacts to the public, and advocating for cleaner alternatives. Important in this work is the need to communicate the relationship between water and energy production. In line with our new water/energy focus we will incorporate our water energy nexus principals and recommendations outlined above in our work to hold extractive industries accountable.

- Uranium Mining - Uranium was discovered in the Mt. Taylor area in 1968 and more than 8 million pounds of uranium was produced from the Mt. Taylor Mine before it stopped production in 1989. With passage of the NM Mining Act, the mine owner began a series of 5-year Standby permits, which allowed it to avoid clean-up activities required if the mine closed. When the latest Standby process started in late 2010 under the Richardson administration, NMED would only sign off on a limited 2-year permit because of the need to carry out abatement activities for uranium and other groundwater contamination from a discharge lagoon and waste rock pile.⁴ However, under the Martinez administration, officials signed off on a full 5-year permit and would not allow Amigos Bravos and allied organizations to present testimony on the known contamination. The owner has requested to move back to Active status for a limited time, which will allow it to continue to neglect the clean-up of groundwater contaminated from legacy waste. Amigos Bravos and its partners will fight this request and push for immediate clean-up of the site.
- Oil and Gas Development – As oil and gas development continues to grow across the west, including New Mexico, so do potential negative impacts to critical water resources. Surface water is vulnerable to impacts from well-pad construction runoff and groundwater is vulnerable to contamination by “fracking” chemicals. If water resources are not protected, New Mexico's watershed will suffer critical consequences, causing irretrievable damage. Amigos Bravos will use our experience from the successful campaign to protect the Valle Vidal and our knowledge about state and federal water quality regulations to provide an imposing voice to campaigns and regulatory decisions associated with oil and gas development and related water quality impacts.

⁴ New Mexico Environmental Law Center:
http://nmenvirolaw.org/site/cases/mount_taylor_standby_permit,
http://nmenvirolaw.org/images/pdf/Ex_A.pdf,

- Coal Mining /Power Plants – Coal mining pollutes aquifers and surface waters. In addition, the burning of coal to generate energy uses massive amounts of water and releases toxins, such as mercury, that make their way into our watersheds and are consumed by wildlife. Amigos Bravos will join with others in advocating for an accelerated transition from dirty coal to the responsible use of clean energy. During the transition period we will advocate for protective permits and an environmental review to protect water resources.

Molycorp/Chevron Mine

For 25 years Amigos Bravos has advocated for cleanup of the Red River from the impacts of the Molycorp/Chevron Mine. These efforts have led to many successes and improved water quality in the Red River. The work continues. Over the next 5 years Amigos Bravos plans to focus our work, in relation to the Red River, in the following areas:

- Participate in the Technical Working Group by staff and consultants to advocate for stringent cleanup and restoration plans under the CERCLA process.
- Monitor and participate in the NPDES permitting process to advocate for closure of the tailings facility west of Questa, removal of the tailings pipeline along the Red River, transition to disposal of dry tailings into the open pit, and an end to illegal discharges from the current tailings facility into the Red River.
- Monitor and participate in the multiple groundwater discharge permit renewals.
- Analyze water/energy nexus in relation to the Molycorp/Chevron mine.

Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL)

Amigos Bravos has been calling for cleanup of water contamination at LANL since 2003. Through our Clean Water Act (CWA) lawsuit, Amigos Bravos and our partners with Communities for Clean Water have successfully advocated for a protective Individual Stormwater Permit (ISP) that will facilitate the cleanup of over 400 highly contaminated areas at LANL. In addition, we negotiated a settlement that resulted in funding for experts and access to technical meetings and sites. Over the next 5 years we will continue to build on this success by:

- Utilizing resources, technical expertise, and access gained under the CWA lawsuit to push for comprehensive cleanup and implementation of the ISP.
- Participating in the ISP renewal process.
- Advocating for broad scale incorporation of Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development concepts and practices at LANL to slow down and stop contaminated runoff from polluting the Rio Grande and Rio Grande tributaries.
- Petitioning EPA to issue a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) stormwater permit to control all stormwater discharges in Los Alamos County.
- Monitoring and responding to ground water pollution concerns, including impacts from the radioactive liquid waste facility at Technical Area 50, chromium and percolate pollution plumes, four state-issued ground water permits, and the adequacy of existing monitoring wells to protect drinking water.

- Responding to water quality threats from Los Alamos to the Buckman diversion and Santa Fe's drinking water.

Water Quality Control Commission

Many of the state level decisions that impact water quality and human health are made by the Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC), a fourteen member commission representing nine state constituent agencies, a representative for the municipalities and county governments, and 4 appointed members at large. Members are appointed by the Governor without regard to appropriate qualifications and experience. The Commission has become highly politicized, resulting in large swings from one election cycle to the next in policy and enforcement by the environment department and other constituent agencies that WQCC directs. Both ends of the political spectrum have identified this as problematic and thus Amigos Bravos has identified that the time is ripe for changing how commission members are appointed. Over the next 5 years Amigos Bravos will work to change the WQCC appointment process to ensure fair, informed, and consistent application of state water protection regulations by:

- Working with other organizations and industry representatives to identify common ground on commission member qualifications and appointment processes.
- Proposing and lobbying for legislation to implement our proposed qualification requirements and appointment process.

GOAL 2: PROTECTING AND RESTORING WATERSHED HEALTH

Protecting and Restoring Watershed Health encompasses everything from water quality monitoring and on-the-ground restoration to water policy issues at the state, regional, and national level. To bolster all of our watershed health activities we will promote ways to adapt to – and mitigate the effects of – climate change. We intend to work collaboratively with strategic partners to ensure the application of effective protection and restoration mandates, such as the Clean Water Act, to restore critical watershed functions – especially in upper watersheds – and to minimize polluted stormwater runoff in developed rural, urban and industrial settings. Our work will be undertaken through four initiatives:

Enhance Watershed Resiliency in the Face of Climate Change

Changing climate colors the condition of New Mexico's waters. With declining surface water supplies and warmer and drier climate, cities, irrigators, and domestic well users are relying more on pumping groundwater. This has led to increased depletions of river water in the Rio Grande and Colorado River basins where demand exceeds supply. Restoring watershed health is a critical and necessary component of assuring more reliable flows, not only for rivers themselves, but also for cities and irrigators.

Headwaters receive the snowfall and rain that drive our streams and rivers and provide surface flows and groundwater recharge. However, many headwater basins have been degraded from grazing, off-road vehicle use, and increasing climate impacts. When

headwaters lose wet meadows and wetlands, when stream banks are eroded and begin to downcut, when native willow and other riparian vegetation disappears, then the headwater areas no longer function as the storage and slow-release mechanism that will be desperately needed under predicted climate change conditions. Instead, they disgorge their water too quickly and the streams lose their necessary connection to the riparian environment. The remaining water slows and warms, becoming inhospitable to aquatic life.

On-the-ground restoration efforts will provide opportunities for people to connect to our work in ways that increase awareness and understanding and lead that to civic action and pride in relation to place.

- Taos Basin: Since 2007, Amigos Bravos, in Partnership with *Sentinels of Taos*, has collected water quality samples multiple times each year from the three major tributaries to the Rio Grande in the Taos Valley. We will continue to build on this historic dataset and will work to implement the recommendations from our revised Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS) for the Rio Pueblo de Taos. Our goal is to reduce elevated water temperatures by providing riparian shade, creating buffers along streams and wetlands to decrease erosion and siltation, reducing contamination from *E.coli*, and addressing impacts from off-road-vehicle recreation. In addition, we will seek funding to develop a WRAS for the Rio Fernando, and will work with the Carson National Forest and Taos County to reduce impacts from grazing and off-road vehicle use in the upper Rio Fernando watershed.
- Red River: We will continue to expand previous work to address the impacts from legacy mining and off-road vehicle use in the upper Red River watershed.
- Gila River: We will work with strategic partners in the Gila basin to move forward on watershed restoration in the upper Gila. We will support alternative approaches to water management on the Gila, with the aim of countering pressures to divert water.

Native Aquatic and Riparian Species

Climate change, dams, toxic releases, and invasive species are the biggest threats to native aquatic and riparian plants and animals.

Climate Change and drought are increasing water temperatures while reducing river flows thus forcing native aquatic species to migrate upstream beyond historical ranges. Dams prevent upstream and downstream migration of fish and result in isolated unsustainable populations. Toxic release in the Red River and downstream from Los Alamos National Laboratory are a threat to river otters and other species susceptible to bioaccumulation. Moreover, introduced species such as the rainbow trout and salt cedar crowd out native species.

Over the next five years across all project areas, Amigos Bravos will look for opportunities to enhance aquatic habitat for the Rio Grande cutthroat trout, the Rio Grande silvery minnow, the southwestern willow flycatcher, river otters, and the cottonwood *Bosque*. In addition, we will promote river otter teaching curriculum in grades 5-7, while offering monitoring opportunities to document the health and number

of river otters along the Rio Grande, and working with schools to engage youth in efforts to reintroduce otters into the upper Gila.

Urban Watersheds

Urban rivers contribute significantly to the well-being of urban dwellers by offering unique opportunities to connect with nature on a daily basis. At the same time, urbanized areas have a significant and growing impact on water quality and consumption. Amigos Bravos will collaborate with community groups, conservation organizations, green builders, and wildlife, recreation and health agencies to protect and enhance riparian habitat, clean up toxic waste, reduce water consumption, increase aquifer recharge, and control polluted stormwater runoff.

- Water Conservation: With climate change in mind, Amigos Bravos will work to ensure that aggressive water conservation measures – including significant water reuse and stormwater retention programs – are enacted to ensure that conserved water goes towards sustaining our rivers and groundwater resources, rather than toward the fueling of new growth.
- Urban riparian areas and wildlife corridors in Albuquerque: Amigos Bravos will work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque Open Space, and strategic partners in the South Valley of Albuquerque to protect and restore the Valle del Oro Wildlife Refuge, as well as to enhance wildlife habitat and community access opportunities along the Rio Grande.
- Middle Rio Grande Flows: Amigos Bravos will work with strategic partners to ensure minimum impact to the Rio Grande from the San Juan/Chama water diversion project. We will work with the multi-agency “Urban Waters” program to develop a sound water management strategy for the Middle Rio Grande that secures stable flows for the river and reconnects the river to the Bosque.

Protection of Water Quality and Water Quantity

Strong environmental laws and regulations are key to addressing environmental justice issues and protecting and restoring New Mexico’s waters. The Clean Water Act (CWA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the New Mexico Mining Act, and the New Mexico Water Quality Act are the basis for most of our work. These environmental laws are increasingly under attack by industrial interests – mining, oil and gas, construction, and dairy industries, to mention a few – in the State legislature, the U.S. Congress, and in state and federal courts. Furthermore, existing law does not address many of the environmental ills that befall rural communities and people of color living in urban settings. To counter these trends, Amigos Bravos will protect water quality through policy development, implementation, and enforcement in the following areas:

- *Triennial Review of Surface Water Quality Standards*: To improve the State’s water quality standards we will continue to participate in the Triennial Review. Specific objectives will include addressing the cumulative effects of man-made causes of global warming and climate change, the control of pharmaceuticals and personal care products, the adoption of protective standards for perchlorate and

- tritium, elimination of the toxic mixing zone provision in discharge permits, increasing Outstanding National Resource Waters protections, and strengthening anti-degradation provisions.
- o *Rule Making and Regulatory Oversight*: Amigos Bravos will participate in federal and state water-quality-related regulatory proceedings, with the aim of providing the most protective safeguards possible for ground and surface waters, and in their relationship to the health of the communities that use those waters for drinking and growing food as well as for spiritual, cultural, recreational, economic well being. We will apply the Amigos Bravos water-energy nexus principles, when appropriate.
 - o *Water Impact Assessment and Water-Energy Nexus Criteria*: Amigos Bravos will advocate for and use two policy development tools -- the “Water Impact Assessment” and the “Water-Energy Nexus Criteria” -- to be applied in decision-making for legislative proposals, rule making proceedings, and major proposed developments. The Water Impact Assessment was developed to help planners determine the long-term water inputs and outputs of a given development proposal. The Water-Energy Criteria will help identify proposals that have detrimental impacts on water availability and/or climate change.

Mitigating Stormwater Impacts

Stormwater runoff is one of the greatest sources of water pollution in New Mexico⁵. With Climate Change and an increase in high-intensity storms, polluted runoff – whether from gravel roads in the upper watersheds, mining operations, or municipal parking lots – is increasingly adding siltation and toxic chemicals to our rivers. At the same time, stormwater provides the greatest potential for recharging depleted aquifers, enhancing wildlife habitat, and offsetting water shortages. Amigos Bravos will promote best stormwater management practices to control runoff and enhance the state’s water resources.

- Reducing Erosion: Land use and land management plans that result in the loss of wetlands, natural floodplains, riparian habitat, and healthy soils can turn a normal thunderstorm into a high-intensity flow event that results in down-cutting arroyos – even in wet meadows – lowering the water table and discharging enormous quantities of sediments. With each large storm event, the impacts increase. To combat this trend, Amigos Bravos will continue to advocate for Best Management Practices (BMPs) that will reduce runoff velocity and create sediment traps. BMPs include creating buffers around wetlands, springs, rivers and streams, reducing roads and activities that harden soils in the upper watersheds, restoring upland watersheds to raise the water table, and restoring riparian habitat to trap sediments and treat pollutants.
- Urban Runoff: Amigos Bravos will monitor implementation of the new pilot Watershed-Based Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit for Sandoval, Bernalillo, and Valencia counties. In addition, we will petition EPA for MS4 coverage for Los Alamos County.

⁵ For example, stormwater is the main source of contamination from Los Alamos National Laboratory getting into the Rio Grande and the primary source of the known impairments in the Middle Rio Grande through the Albuquerque metropolitan area, including dissolved oxygen, PCBs in the water and in fish tissue, radionuclides, and *E.coli*

- Green Infrastructure & Low-Impact Development (GI/LID): Amigos Bravos will build on prior success in the use of GI/LID practices for improving water quality, reducing man-made contributing factors to climate change, while enhancing wildlife habitat and inducing more groundwater recharge. Amigos Bravos will work with local governments to implement GI/LID strategies in land use plans and we will seek funding to undertake model green technologies to reduce and treat stormwater runoff along the Rio Grande in the greater Albuquerque metropolitan area. We will also continue to develop and support policy incentives aimed at providing buffers for rivers, streams and wetlands.

GOAL 3: BUILDING LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY FOR THE FUTURE

Civic Stewardship is key to accomplishing the mission of Amigos Bravos. By building the membership within the organization, we build political power, strengthen our voice for advocacy, and generate the resources that allow us to implement our work.

Recognizing the need to build stewardship for rivers, streams, springs, wetlands and drinking water within each watershed and community, we work to build the capacity of the movement as a whole – not just the organization. Through educational outreach, hands-on trainings, technical assistance, and coalition-building, we empower individuals and communities to protect and restore the waters in their own backyards and we build leadership for future campaigns. Through our Art and Activism initiative we will continue to address root causes for environmental degradation by altering perspectives. We alter perspectives through education, conversation, humor, and surprise.

Leadership Development

Recognizing that the environmental movement requires new leaders willing and able to further the work, we will continue to build leadership over the next five years by recruiting public participation in all of our projects and employing a variety of approaches to doing so:

- Amigos Bravos Board of Directors Recruitment:
We will recruit and add new talented board members to continue the implementation of the Five Year Strategic Planning Objectives.
- Youth Engagement:
Youth Council: Amigos Bravos and its partners will establish an initiative to develop and enhance environmental leadership among youth ages 13-30, who live downstream and downwind from Los Alamos National Laboratory. Members of the Youth Council will, as a result of a twelve month training process, have the knowledge, skills, and peer support necessary to become authentically involved in regulatory processes and public participation opportunities at the Lab. Teaching and inspiring youth to action will bring a previously under-represented constituency to the decision-making table and will foster participation by this generation in environmental issues of the future.

Mentoring: Amigos Bravos will continue to offer mentoring opportunities to youth seeking to further their skills and knowledge about conservation and environmental justice advocacy. We will also continue to work with University of New Mexico and Southern Methodist University's Fort Bergwin campus to offer intern opportunities.

Hands-On Activities: Amigos Bravos will actively recruit youth participation in hands-on activities, such as the annual Taos County River and Land Clean-up. (The TCRLC focuses on the upper Rio Grande watershed and related hiking trails.) We will also solicit and organize volunteer office support, from the Environmental Club and Honors Society at the local high schools and from Rocky Mountain Youth Corp, for our four major annual mailings.

Education: Amigos Bravos staff will provide presentations to schools regarding any of our activities, with special emphasis on the river otter life cycle and reintroduction, when requested.

Advocacy: Through our *Arts and Activism* program Amigos Bravos will offer venues for youth voices to connect and creatively advocate for their communities through visual arts, poetry, music, dance and theater (see Art & Activism).

- Coalition Building: To build an effective leadership that can counter the highly complex political and economic pressures facing our communities, all major initiatives – whether defensive or pro-active – call for the development of working alliances with a broad spectrum of interests. Each initiative requires a unique set of partners and allies, starting with individuals and groups from the impacted communities. Over the next five years, Amigos Bravos will continue its successful history of building leadership within diverse partnerships, alliances, networks and coalitions. (see the appendix for a chart of our partners and collaborators)
- Technical Assistance: Through the Amigos Bravos Clean Water Circuit Rider program, we will continue to respond, over the next five years, to requests for assistance from individuals and organizations working in areas that enhance the goals of our mission. We will develop leadership and offer assistance through one-on-one consultation and/or by providing information and training in the areas of Clean Water Act implementation, regulatory intervention, water quality monitoring, organizational development, and strategic planning. Additionally, we will continue to provide a web page with congressional and appropriate agency information.
 - Community Water Quality Monitoring: Collecting and analyzing water quality data is one of the most important tools available to build stewardship and affect policy in impacted communities. Amigos Bravos has developed the knowledge, quality control protocols, and equipment necessary to carry out effective community water quality monitoring programs that can provide data that is accepted and adopted by EPA and NMED. Over the next five years, we will continue to provide assistance to youth and community groups wanting to establish their own monitoring programs. At the same time, we will train youth to participate in Amigos Bravos' on-going monitoring efforts in the Taos Valley and Albuquerque.

- Volunteer Opportunities: Recognizing that leadership in advocacy begins at the volunteer and internship level, Amigos Bravos will continue to offer a variety of opportunities to participate. Opportunities will include water quality monitoring along the Rio Fernando, Rio Rancho, and Rio Hondo, the Annual Taos County Watershed and Land Clean-up, project-specific research, lobbying, and implementation of the Annual Raffle for the Rio, as well administrative assistance in relation to our four annual mailings.

Art & Activism

Through its Arts & Activism initiative, Amigos Bravos is creating opportunities to positively influence human relationships to water. Artists hold the potential to bring creative energy to issues and redefine public space in ways that stymie the scientist and change the matter of fact. Artists are able to expose pertinent questions and bring light to issues without necessarily implying judgment or shame, thus bringing together wide and diverse interest and attention.

- Art Lab
The intention of the Art Lab is to address root causes of chronic environmental degradation. The Art Lab is both a site and an electronic communications hub for action. Over the next five years, Amigos Bravos will continue to sponsor projects that use art and education to inspire people who are already eager to find constructive channels for acting on behalf of local wild and semi-wild places, as well as the population that is alienated, disempowered, or simply unaware of the damaging affects of degradation. The project is providing a deep synergistic link between education, the arts, and ecosystem restoration – an approach that holds enormous potential for positive change. During the next five years, Amigos Bravos will secure funding for a studio site where Art Lab artists can meet, prepare materials, discuss projects, and hold workshops.
- “Water Matters” Lecture Series & Spoken Word Events
The Amigos Bravos Monthly “Water Matters” Lecture Series was begun in 2012 and will continue to feature some of the most knowledgeable and dynamic speakers in the region, including writers, scientists, poets, environmental activists, and scholars. The lectures are free to our members and the public, and are hosted on the third Tuesday of every month at 5:30pm, in Santa Fe. Examples of other spoken word events that Amigos Bravos will continue to sponsor, periodically, include, *Poets Read and Write for the Rio!*, a workshop and performance series in Taos.

Media & Public Education:

A well-informed and empowered public is critical for *Building Leadership and Capacity for the Future*. Over the next five years Amigos Bravos will work to incorporate traditional and social media outreach into all of its programs and activities.

- Drought / Climate Change Message Development: Experts tell us that Amigos Bravos should base its planning on the expectation that water supplies from existing sources in New Mexico will be reduced by approximately 25% by 2050.

It is crucial that New Mexicans begin to adjust to the availability of progressively less water by tailoring their water usage. It is also crucial that the public and congressional representatives become aware of the water/energy nexus, so that they support policies that restrict water use for energy production. A well-educated public can demand, from policy makers, alternative methods for energy production that require significantly less water than current usage.

Over the next five years, Amigos Bravos will develop messaging that serves to inform our members and the public about the realities of drought and climate change, while offering practical solutions and consistently proactive opportunities for public engagement. We will establish a Working Group of volunteer scientists, activists, and artists to create a messaging campaign that targets communities along the Rio Grande, with a focus on Albuquerque and other municipalities.

As part of our message development we will deploy the water/energy nexus criteria we have developed, under our goals for *Holding Polluters Accountable*, to policy makers, the public, and our membership. Having analyzed the water/energy nexus in relation to each of our projects, we will include that information in all posts to our membership and the public regarding our projects to hold polluters accountable.

- Social Media: Amigos Bravos will keep up with advances in the use of social media advocacy tools. We will maintain a strong *Facebook* presence and will work on developing a *YouTube* Channel on which to post training videos. In addition, we will look for volunteers and resources to make our Website more interactive, including hosting a *Blog*.

Membership

Building a large, educated, and active membership is key to the success of Amigos Bravos. Our goal over the life of this strategic plan is to increase our membership to over 3,000 individuals, families and businesses.

- Recruitment: We will recruit new members via our web site, social media, crowd funding sites, direct mail membership drives, tabling, civic and volunteer activities, the annual Raffle for the Rio, and word of mouth.
- Information and Education: In order to keep our membership informed and educated regarding critical issues, we will maintain a highly dynamic and up-to-date web page, and will develop a web-based information bank on climate change, the energy/water nexus, and water conservation. We will continue publishing our annual report, our web-based monthly *E-Currents*, periodic e-mail *Action Alerts*, daily *Facebook* postings, and the Amigos Bravos *YouTube* channel.
- Engagement: The key to educating, empowering, and retaining our membership is to provide opportunities for civic engagement. We will do this through the aforementioned *E-Currents* and *Action Alerts*, a broad range of volunteer activities, as listed under “Leadership Development,” as well as through house parties, petitions,

media (including paid advertising, Letters to the Editor, Op-Eds, and Radio Talk), regulatory interventions, and other opportunities that provide community guidance for our work.