

Janae' Reneaud Field: New tool helps ecology efforts

By [Janae' Reneaud Field](#) / Guest columnist

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During the summer of 2012, the Frontera Land Alliance received technical assistance from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program.

In support of community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation, a national network of conservation and recreation planning professionals partnered with community groups, state and local governments in designing trails and parks and helping to protect special places.

Shortly after the award, Frontera helped to form The Franklin and Organ Mountains Conservation Cooperative (FOMCC).

Today, FOMCC is championing a community effort to develop a conservation inventory tool that will strengthen and provide scientific data to assist in managing Plan El Paso, the Northwest Master Plan, the El Paso Sustainability Plan, the El Paso Open Space Plan, Doña Ana County Comprehensive Plan and other regional efforts that identify preserving large, connected natural areas.

This tool will not revamp, replicate or replace existing plans, but will provide GIS data to assist in making sound decisions.

The tool will take a close look at our plant life, wildlife, soil, geology, arroyos, ranches, farms, etc. and rank undeveloped lands from high to least importance in conservation value. The land conservation inventory tool is supported by the partnership and collaboration of federal, state and local agencies, local businesses including developers, Realtors and non-profits in New Mexico and Texas.

The FOMCC will work with people and organizations that have diverse interests yet share a common place and purpose. The FOMCC will provide an interactive GIS-based map of lands ranked by their importance for further development and conservation.

Over the years we have seen the Southwest region work to offer a better quality of life through collaboration and partnerships with developers, citizens and environmentalists as referenced in the white paper found at http://fronteralandalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/White_Paper_March_2014.pdf or at www.facebook.com/franklinorganmountains.

These entities and organizations have laid the foundation for growth and preservation. Still, the region is facing some tough issues. For instance, there are just 1.38 acres of park space for every 1,000 persons in El Paso. We continue to experience flood damage that may result from the filling or alteration of arroyos. There is a loss of wildlife every time we level terrain.

Responding to these and other challenges requires concerted action and collaboration from all stakeholders. Unless we work together as one region across political boundaries, we may be overwhelmed by the dramatic shifts in demographics and changes in our environment.

Therefore we must create a framework which will give us and our organizations greater freedom to protect and improve the green spaces which are critical to our needs. This framework must be based on firm science. Whether we live in the city or in rural or wilderness areas, we rely on the natural systems that support us. The health of natural environments affects our health and happiness and gives us a sense of place, pride and identity.

If you are interested in learning more contact Frontera at 915-351-8352 or email janae@FronteraLandAlliance.org. Janae' Reneaud Field is executive director of the Frontera Land Alliance.