

**PLAN
SUMMARY**

Updated April 2018

Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge

ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN

2017-2020



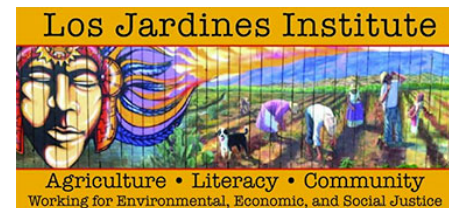


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 570-acre Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), designated in 2012, is the first urban wildlife refuge in the Southwest Region for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the first new refuge to be developed from the ground up under the new USFWS Urban Wildlife Conservation Program. It is located on a former dairy farm in Albuquerque's South Valley in a heavily industrial community, populated by a majority of people of color. The community has been a key incubator for the nation's Environmental Justice Movement since the 1980s. The Refuge resulted from the desire and efforts of the community and partnerships that formed around remediating and monitoring the impacts of industrial development and intensive agriculture in the neighborhood.

The Valle de Oro Environmental and Economic Justice Strategic Plan (EEJSP) outlines a strategic path forward for the Refuge to integrate environmental and economic justice into its daily practice as the land is restored for wildlife and developed as an educational and recreational resource for the community.

The plan illustrates a collaborative, intentionally inclusive process, bringing community members and organizations together with government agencies to develop the first Environmental and Economic Justice Strategic Plan for a public land site which matches Refuge and Federal goals with the needs and aspirations of the community. The plan development process involved research of the Environmental Justice Movement as well as prior health and environmental studies, outreach, and neighborhood survey canvassing and analysis.

Our hope is that the process can be a model for other public land sites and government agencies for the development of environmental and economic justice strategic plans. This model will help others serve their public missions and the communities in which they are located to build an invested body of partners, collaborators and future conservation stewards around mutual goals.



Photo by Catherine Leight

Valle de Oro NWR is the first green space developed in the Mountain View Neighborhood, which serves as the host community for the Refuge, and is generally characterized as an impoverished neighborhood where industrial businesses are scattered among homes, a school and a community center. The Mountain View Neighborhood has traditionally battled against many environmental injustices in addition to the lack of green space and healthy outdoor recreation opportunities.

STRATEGIC INTENT

By implementing this plan, the partners wish to expand on and formalize the Refuge's goal to adhere to environmental justice principles and to ingrain environmental and economic justice practices in the activities and programs of the Refuge as it is developed and restored. Partners in this project include Valle de Oro NWR, Los Jardines Institute, and Friends of Valle de Oro NWR – defined as the Leadership Team – as well as the Core Planning Team listed on page 21. This plan addresses the continuing need to support the under-served community that surrounds the Refuge and engage neighbors in early and meaningful participation in order to develop a wildlife refuge that is valued and supported by its users and that supports its community's needs in return; ultimately supporting the Refuge's mission to foster future conservation stewards by engaging audiences who do not traditionally visit wildlife refuges or engage in outdoor recreation, environmental education and conservation efforts.

By strategically embarking on efforts to support environmental and economic justice work in its local community, Valle de Oro NWR is uniquely positioned to not only model strong economic and environmental justice efforts locally, but also for public land sites across the nation and to influence federal policy related to public land and environmental justice efforts.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

THE REFUGE

Valle de Oro NWR was established in 2013 and is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southwest Region's first Urban Wildlife Refuge. As an Urban Wildlife Refuge, it serves as an urban oasis for both wildlife and people on a 570-acre former dairy farm a few miles south of Albuquerque, the largest metropolitan area in New Mexico.

LOS JARDINES INSTITUTE

Los Jardines Institute was founded in 2008 and is located in the South Valley of Albuquerque. The Institute works on issues of environmental, economic and social justice through intergenerational programming and multi-media work.

The Institute works to create and strengthen community organizations and leaders in order to grow the movement for improved outcomes in the South Valley and other poor and communities of color.

THE FRIENDS

The Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge (Friends) was formed by members of the Mountain View Neighborhood in 2012, before the Refuge was established, and was instrumental in the acquisition of Refuge lands. As the non-profit support group for the Refuge, the Friends support the realization of the overall vision to restore native wildlife habitat, conduct education and outreach, and develop the Refuge as a community resource.

THE COMMUNITY

Mountain View and the surrounding neighborhoods in the South Valley form a close-knit historically agricultural community. After World War II the area became a common location for industrial activity. The community has fought to ensure remediation of the resulting environmental justice issues for decades. Throughout this document we use the term "community" to refer to the host communities of Mountain View Neighborhood, the South Valley, and the Pueblo of Isleta, which are primarily impacted by activities at the Refuge.

THE FEDERAL COMPONENT

As a National Wildlife Refuge, Valle de Oro NWR is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) which is under the purview of the Department of the Interior (DOI). The U.S. Department of the Interior is a multifaceted organization, and one of its responsibilities is the stewardship of 20% of the nation's lands, including national wildlife refuges, national parks and other public lands. The Valle de Oro NWR EEJSP is a step down plan of the U.S. Department of the Interior Environmental Justice Strategic Plan (2016), which was developed as a result of Executive Order 12898.



Photo by Bill Rager

STRATEGIC PROCESS

The process guiding the creation of this plan was divided into two phases.

PHASE I

Phase one of the project specifically emphasized early and meaningful community involvement. It involved identifying community needs, challenges and desires and creating, as early as possible, a strong community-based and driven program that would match the environmental justice goals of the Refuge. This phase included community-based research methods including surveys, targeted outreach, canvassing and events that were spearheaded by a team of key partners, community members and area institutions.

PHASE II

The second phase in the planning process involved the creation of the plan content as well as continued community engagement. Additionally, phase two provided increased focus on alignment of community concerns and needs with the U.S. Department of the Interior Environmental Justice Strategic Plan (2016) and policies and guidance regarding management of Refuge System lands and the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program.

Together these phases resulted in the creation of six strategic goals.

GOAL 1:

Ensure Valle de Oro NWR staff and partners are knowledgeable about the history of environmental and economic justice including the Principles of Environmental Justice, the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing, Governor Richardson’s Executive Order 2005-056 and President Clinton’s Executive Order 12898. Based on this knowledge, staff and partners are able to identify and amend programs, policies and activities under their purview that may have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on people of color, low income or Native/Indigenous Nations.

A. The Refuge should incorporate in its design plans for a Refuge Visitor Center a resource center that will serve as a demonstration site for collaborative projects that incorporate the spirit of President Clinton’s and New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson’s executive orders, the Principles of Environmental Justice and the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing.

1. As the building plans for the Refuge evolve, a resource center should be incorporated for DOI, USFWS, Valle de Oro NWR, and Environmental Justice materials.
2. The Environmental and Economic Justice Strategic Plan (EEJSP) team should gather seminal documents and texts of the Environmental Justice Movement and create an EJ document file.



3. The Refuge should display the executive orders on EJ, the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing and the Principles of Environmental Justice.
4. The Refuge should incorporate EJ information and concepts into interpretive exhibits within the Visitor Center where appropriate.
5. The EJ resource center should be available and accessible to staff, partners and visitors/community members.

B. The Refuge should develop an environmental justice curriculum for training staff and partners which include EJ conceptualizations of environmentalism and the seminal documents of the EJ Movement, and should be made available to DOI, USFWS, the Refuge, county, city, state agencies and others.

1. The Refuge should identify and create a list of EJ trainers and presenters to be updated annually.
2. The Refuge should develop and conduct an EJ training module for its immediate staff, youth interns and long-term volunteers. The training modules should be made available to other agencies.



GOAL 2:

Ensure people of color, low-income and Native/Indigenous Nations are provided with early and ongoing opportunities to engage in meaningful involvement in Refuge decision-making processes.

A. The Refuge should continue to ensure that the foundational principle of environmental justice – early and meaningful participation by those impacted – is adhered to in all Refuge programs and projects.

1. The Refuge should continue to ensure that outreach for its community activities are directed first to the Mountain View community, and expand out to the greater Albuquerque population.
2. The Refuge should continue to ensure that all members of the community are partners and given the opportunity to be involved in all appropriate decision-making processes associated with the development of the Refuge.
3. When making determinations, the Refuge should provide information to the community to be clear and transparent about the reasoning behind decisions.

B. The Refuge should continue to develop diverse multicultural and intergenerational collaborations representative of the community make-up of the Mountain View Neighborhood, South Valley, Native/Indigenous Nations, and those that have historically advocated for environmental and economic justice.

1. The Refuge should continue to strengthen and develop diverse partnerships for advice, outreach and to bring new audiences to the Refuge.
2. The Refuge should continue to support the annual Environmental Justice Community Day at the Refuge to facilitate community connections and provide open discussion about EJ issues.

3. The Refuge should continue to partner and exchange information with individuals and grassroots organizations that have, and continue to do, organizing in the community.

C. Community outreach efforts, materials and public presentations should be planned, budgeted and focused first on the Mountain View and South Valley neighborhoods, then expand to the city of Albuquerque, and then finally to the state of New Mexico and the nation.

1. Door-to-door flyer distribution and post office mailers should be budgeted for and utilized as effective ways to inform the immediate Mountain View and South Valley community and solicit participation.
2. Youth Conservation Corps and other youth programs at the Refuge should assist with door-to-door information distribution when appropriate.

D. The Refuge should continue its ongoing partnerships with the Mountain View Elementary School, the Mountain View Community Center and Mountain View Neighborhood Association. The collaboration with these organizations is particularly important because of their primary roles and presence in the community.

1. The Refuge should continue to utilize newsletters, marquees and information boards at these locations to promote Refuge activities and opportunities.
2. The Refuge should offer announcements on their programming and activities to these organizations for inclusion in their newsletters, meetings and other activities.
3. The Refuge should continue its presence at these organizations' events and activities.





GOAL 2 CONTINUED

- 4. The Refuge should rent, or look into purchasing, an interchangeable outdoor messaging sign for announcements to be placed at prominent locations in the community. This sign may also feature events hosted by these partner organizations.
- E. Outreach to different and alternative media in Albuquerque including the bilingual and cultural media in the area should be part of outreach efforts.
 - 1. In addition to traditional media, the Refuge should include outreach to Spanish language radio stations such as KANW FM, the APS radio station, and community cultural and news programs on KUNM FM.
 - 2. The Refuge should include outreach to Spanish language television stations.
 - 3. The Refuge should include outreach in local community, Spanish language, and Pueblo publications and newsletters.
- F. The Refuge should encourage involvement and recruitment of individuals from Mountain View Neighborhood, the South Valley, the metropolitan area, and New Mexico for opportunities and employment at the Refuge.
 - 1. The Refuge should develop a list of South Valley and Pueblo of Isleta schools, community centers, youth groups and organizations where Refuge opportunities can be publicized.
 - 2. The Refuge should partner to support and host career and employment fairs targeted to Mountain View and South Valley neighborhoods as well as the Pueblo of Isleta.
 - 3. The Refuge should participate in local school career days.

GOAL 3:

- The Refuge should, on its own or in collaboration with partners, identify and support efforts to address environmental and economic impacts that may result in disproportionately high and adverse human health, economic or environmental effects on people of color, and low income communities with a primary focus on the Mountain View Community and the Pueblo of Isleta.
- A. In collaboration with partners, the Refuge should support community efforts to stay abreast of and share information on the status of contamination, remediation processes and new polluting sources that may come into the community and/or impact the Mountain View Neighborhood or the Pueblo of Isleta.
 - 1. Refuge representatives should continue to attend meetings and public hearings regarding on-going issues and potential permitting of new industry and development that could negatively impact the Refuge and the community.
 - 2. The Refuge should share information gathered about environmental justice issues in the community and sources with the community as requested and appropriate.
 - B. In collaboration with partners, the Refuge should support community efforts to study and monitor health, pollution remediation and encourage the study of cumulative and disparate impact of pollution on the health, safety and well-being of the community and the plants and wildlife of the Refuge.
 - 1. The Refuge, in collaboration with partners, should assist in identifying other initiatives that have had success in addressing issues of cumulative and disparate impact.
 - 2. The Refuge should continue to host and support relevant research related to the Refuge and the community by University of New Mexico (UNM) and other educational institutions.



GOAL 3 CONTINUED

C. In collaboration with partners, the Refuge should monitor, report and elicit input about potential negative effects of the Refuge growth and development on the Mountain View community and the Pueblo of Isleta.

1. The Refuge should actively monitor the impact of Refuge activities on the community, in particular those that create economic burdens, and work on solutions to assist with these additional burdens.
2. The Refuge should attend meetings and communicate with local organizations, schools, neighborhood associations and other groups to address and mitigate developments and activities that may have a negative impact.
3. The Refuge should host meetings and programs to elicit and address community concerns about Refuge development and work on solutions.
4. The Refuge should work with partners to identify local residents that may assist and support the dissemination of information to the community and the Pueblo of Isleta.

GOAL 4:

Use existing funding, training and educational opportunities, and develop new opportunities as needed, to aid and strengthen people of color, low-income communities and Native/Indigenous Nations in their efforts to build and sustain environmentally and economically sound communities, with a primary focus on the Mountain View community and the Pueblo of Isleta.

A. The Refuge should continue to offer and expand the already exceptional educational programming offered.

1. The Refuge, with partners, should identify and raise funds to hire staff to accomplish environmental justice goals and integrate these goals into Refuge programs.

B. The Refuge should continue its collaboration with the Mountain View Elementary School (MVES) and assist in developing an EJ curriculum for the school.

1. The Refuge, with MVES and partners, should develop a budget and identify resources for the elementary EJ curriculum.
2. The Refuge, with partners, should develop an EJ curriculum for MVES that may also be shared with other schools online.
3. The Refuge should continue programs at MVES and Mountain View Community Center that develop good land and wildlife stewards.

C. The Refuge should develop, in conjunction with local partners, a variety of bilingual and educational environmental justice materials related to the National Wildlife Refuge System, climate justice, storm water management, resource management and environmental policy.



GOAL 4 CONTINUED

1. The Refuge, with partners, should develop bilingual brochures and other materials that incorporate environmental and economic justice.
2. Public presentations, tours, workshops, multi-media presentations and other educational programming should also integrate environmental justice.

D. The Refuge should identify resources and budget for translation and interpretation of Refuge materials, public presentations and training, including audio translation equipment.

1. All Refuge outreach and educational materials should be published in English, Spanish and Native/Indigenous languages when appropriate.
2. The Refuge should integrate into their budget funding for interpretation and translation.
3. The Refuge should identify volunteer and paid experts to support this effort, drawing from community expertise whenever possible.
4. The Refuge, with partners, should research the purchase or rental of translation audio equipment.
5. Translation services should be offered at public presentations with attendance of over 50 people when appropriate.

E. Refuge, community and/or economic development measures that have an impact on the community should be inclusive of the community and constructed so as not to create additional economic or environmental burdens. Additionally, when appropriate, the Refuge may advocate with partners to build in economic support for community needs and access.

1. A work group inclusive of community members and organizations should be created that addresses these needs and develops a strategy to address impacts and solutions.
2. Community development measures that result in gentrification (displacement and hardship) should be addressed by the work group with novel alternatives and agency support to preserve community history, culture and the authenticity of the community.

F. The Refuge should work to expand resources to the interior of the community when appropriate and advocate with community partners for community needs articulated during surveys, canvassing and public meetings that are not within the jurisdiction of the Refuge to directly implement.

1. The Refuge should assist in addressing the articulated wishes of the community to identify additional open space for sports and recreational fields.
2. The Refuge should assist in addressing the articulated wishes of the community for expanded public transportation options within the Mountain View Neighborhood.
3. The Refuge should assist in addressing the articulated wishes of the community for lighting and sidewalks in the residential areas of the Mountain View Neighborhood.

G. The Refuge should continue to share its youth conservation corps with different community organizations and projects and add an environmental justice component to the youth corps training.

1. The Refuge should ensure that all youth corps working on Refuge projects be trained regarding EJ.





GOAL 4 CONTINUED

2. The Refuge should continue to share its youth corps interns for community projects such the Mountain View Community Garden, the Los Jardines Institute farm project, the Mountain View Community Center Nature Explore Classroom, First Choice garden project, Bernalillo County projects, etc.

H. The Refuge should continue to engage youth in the Mountain View community, the South Valley, surrounding Native/Indigenous communities, the Albuquerque metropolitan area and the state with recreation, education, volunteer programs and employment opportunities to develop conservation stewards.

1. The Refuge should develop a diverse list of young people through educational programs, educational institutions, and conservation corps groups for employment and career development opportunities at the Refuge with a primary focus on local community.

I. The Refuge should continue to host diverse perspectives on environmentalism, conservation, preservation and recreation.

- 1. The Refuge should continue to host the annual Environmental Justice Community Day, which has brought a new and local sector of the population to the Refuge.
- 2. The Refuge should support and host other EJ programming and activities.
- 3. The Refuge should work with partners to identify local residents that may support the educational, historical and cultural programs of the Refuge and outreach in general.

GOAL 5:

The Refuge should integrate its environmental and economic justice strategies with the DOI’s environmental justice strategies and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. The Environmental and Economic Justice Strategic Plan should include diversity and inclusion goals and the Safe Place Policy of the Refuge.

A. The Refuge should take measures to ensure against discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, differently abled, cultural beliefs, sexual orientation and gender.

- 1. The Refuge, and partners co-located at the Refuge, should support diversity through training for its staff, interns, and volunteers.
- 2. The Refuge, and partners co-located at the Refuge, should create, practice and promote a culture of safe place.
- 3. The Refuge should make sure that programming opportunities and employment are made available and accessible to all populations.

B. The Refuge should work to provide reasonable accessibility to the Refuge and its programs.

- 1. The Refuge should continue to provide and increase transportation accessibility to the Refuge.
- 2. Educational and programming activities should be hosted in spaces that are accessible.
- 3. The Refuge should provide reasonable accommodations to employees and visitors to facilitate accessibility and inclusion.





GOAL 6:

The Refuge should adhere to the Standards of Excellence for Urban Wildlife Refuges and commit to being a model for urban refuges nation-wide, inter-agency collaboration, and community involvement in order to strengthen its impact and uplift the Refuge and its community partners.

A. The Refuge should continue to reach out to Native/Indigenous Nations in a government-to-government capacity.

1. The Refuge should continue to maintain contact as appropriate with the Pueblo of Isleta and other local Pueblos and Native/Indigenous Nations.
2. The Refuge should distribute materials about Refuge resources, opportunities and activities to local Pueblos and Native/Indigenous Nations.
3. The Refuge should share information on environmental and conservation issues as appropriate with the Pueblo of Isleta and other local Pueblos and Native/Indigenous Nations.

B. The Refuge, with its partners, should continue to develop inter-agency collaborations recommended in President Clinton's Executive Order 12898 and Governor Richardson's Executive Order 2005-056.

1. The Refuge should continue collaborations within the DOI and USFWS, with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other relevant federal agencies, with county, city, state government agencies, other organizations such as the Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority (AMAFCA), elected officials and community representatives.

C. Inter-agency collaborations should assist in directing funding and resources to the community and the Refuge.

1. The Refuge should partner with other government agencies to seek and apply for grants to meet the goals of the EEJSP.
2. The Refuge should attend, participate and share community needs at inter-agency meetings and bring back appropriate information and resource opportunities to the community.
3. The Refuge should support facilitation of inter-agency planning and articulation of emergency response, evacuation plans and drills.

D. The Refuge should continue to model and share inter-agency efforts for incorporating environmental and economic justice in a collaborative approach that makes it a model for the development of other refuges and public lands.

1. The Refuge and partners should publish the Valle de Oro NWR Environmental and Economic Justice Strategic Plan online.
2. The Refuge and partners should continue to present on, and advocate for, the community-based research and the collaborative process that produced this plan.



TIMELINE

- May 2017 – November 2017:** Refuge and Leadership Team develop an action plan that includes completion dates and lead organizations for each action item.
- May 2017 – September 2020:** Refuge and partners carry out action steps in the EEJSP according to action plan.
- October 2018 – January 2019:** Refuge and Leadership Team develop an interim Implementation Success Report and make document available to the community by January 1, 2019.
- October 2019 – September 2020:** Refuge and partners conduct a strategic plan review and update and make document available to the community by September 30, 2020.

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE INDIVIDUALS THAT SERVED AS MEMBERS OF THE CORE PLANNING TEAM FOR THIS PLAN

Richard Moore, Los Jardines Institute	Teri Jillson, Friends of Valle de Oro NWR	Lynn Mazur, Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority	Aryn LaBrake, Friends of Valle de Oro NWR
Sofia Martinez, Los Jardines Institute	Jennifer Owen-White, Valle de Oro NWR	Sara Carillo, Mountain View Elementary	John Barney, Bernalillo County Parks and Recreation
Cassandra Reid, Apprenticeships for Leaders in Mosaic Arts	Lauro Silva, Mountain View Neighborhood Association	Juan Lopez, Mountain View Neighborhood Association	Kristen Owenreay, Valle de Oro NWR Volunteer



Photo courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Back cover photo by Abby Boling

The complete Valle de Oro Environmental & Economic Justice Plan is available at:
www.friendsofvalledeoro.org



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