

Pueblo of Pojoaque reclaims 139 acres with La Mesita purchase

Reclaiming the past

John Knoll | For The New Mexican

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With the recent purchase of La Mesita Ranch in Pojoaque Valley, the Pueblo of Pojoaque is reclaiming 139 acres of former tribal land and taking another step toward self-sufficiency, according to tribal Gov. George Rivera.

“Our interest in the land is because it was originally aboriginal property, because of its location and because of the quality of the ranch’s infrastructure,” Rivera said. He said the ranch has 150 acre-feet of water rights and more than 45 acres of agricultural land.

As Rivera stood on a deck, looking out to the snow-covered Jemez Mountains, he pointed out the ranch’s swimming pool, tennis court, and four casitas adjacent to the main residence. He said the ranch will help fulfill the dream of Jake Villarreal, a former governor, who had a vision of making the pueblo self-sufficient.

“By purchasing the ranch, we’re moving towards self-sufficiency and enhancing the cultural and aesthetic component of the pueblo,” Rivera said. “This could be the pueblo’s future food source.”

A vineyard, orchards and food-processing businesses are some of our options, Rivera said.

“Growing food commercially and for the pueblo is an important issue for the pueblo’s future,” Rivera said. “My dream is to look out to the fields and see them full of crops.”

The pueblo also is looking into leasing part of the ranch and its buildings for movie production, Rivera said.

Although the pueblo declined to say how much it paid for La Mesita, the last advertised asking price on the Internet was \$10 million. The sale closed in November.

In the late 1800s, the Pueblo of Pojoaque sold the land to D.C. Collier, a San Diego land developer, and Frank Owen. They named the acreage the Pojoaquito Ranch.

After that, ownership passed through a series of owners, including the industrialist Clarence Mott Woolley, who hired famed architect John Gaw Meem to design a four-bedroom hacienda, the hacienda was renovated in 1993.

The ranch is also home to an archaeological site dating to the 1300s.

Dating back to the early 1900s and Woolley’s ownership, when a polo field was built, the ranch has been known for its focus on horse-related activities.

The equestrian facilities include two 10-stall barns, an 80-foot by 200-foot, air-conditioned riding arena and a swimming pool — for horses only — where horses can train without taxing their bodies.

The arena’s floor is a mixture of ground up Nike tennis shoes and dirt, giving the horses “Nike air footing,” said Tim Vigil, the pueblo’s special-projects manager.