



SPRING/SUMMER 2022

# LA CIÉNEGA

Cuenca Los Ojos Newsletter



***Protecting, restoring, and rewilding the biodiversity of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.  
We bring back water, soil, and life.***

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Welcome to Cuenca Los Ojos' spring/summer newsletter! *Cuenca Los Ojos* (CLO) is Spanish for "watershed of the springs," and *ciénega* translates to wetlands.

***"Our work to protect, restore, and  
rewild the arid border grasslands  
is just beginning."***

***Valer Clark, CLO Founder***



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## FROM THE FOUNDER'S DESK

Written the week before the outbreak of war in Ukraine, my thoughts expressed in this letter take on a more urgent dimension. Man is not only destroying the earth, but he now has all the machinery and weapons and is now with the same destructive energy, turning on himself. Do you remember the first days of the virus pandemic when the world froze with fear? No one went out. No cars were on the road. No planes flew. The air was sparkling clear and silent. It was like breathing in a different medium. The animals came out of the woods. A mama bear brought her cubs to the beach to play at the edge of the water. A deer pranced in the waves, delighted to have the beach to herself. These were moments of magic as the earth was responding to man's absence. Could it always be like that?

Children are coming out asking for a changed world. Their voices are heard but not adequately heeded. Leaders of nations and businessmen around the world understandably are afraid to do what they know they must do for it is impossible to foresee the consequences of all decisions. A little example, which is clear, (but does not begin to reflect the importance or the seriousness of world decisions the leaders are making) is the example of the automobile replacing the horse.

People had no idea that car emissions would pollute the air in cities. They thought that cars would take care of the problem of manure in city streets. What the leaders do know is that they must change the goals of financial institutions and political policies for future societies from focusing on man alone to focusing on the needs of all species on earth. Our recent history has left us few options. We are on the brink of losing species and our health for survival on earth. What will happen if we change our goals? Will we lose businesses such as we know them now? Perhaps. perhaps, our economics, our control of money, and no one can survive without money. Really? Maybe it is just what the earth needs a shakeup.

In recent history, between two world wars, the United States suffered a great economic depression and after the second war the focus was on building the economy and buying prosperity. Money paid for the technology that made machines to level mountain tops, drag the bottom of the oceans, rip into soils, mine minerals, and extract fossil fuels. We are just beginning to understand the price we must pay for ruining the earth and its natural resources. Machines not only destroyed land, but they also replaced jobs of the workers and today we continue to replace jobs for people with machines and robots. The government must tax the employed to pay the unemployed. So, the decisions in the past, made with the best intentions, have had disastrous consequences for us today. Leaders do not want to make similar mistakes. Changing the focus from economic productivity to a goal focused on healing the environment will be difficult but is possible.

I would like for you to imagine another world where use of fossil fuels is limited. Planes will fly only to cross oceans and be limited to people on a world important mission and for delivery of essential health supplies. Domestic travel will be on trains and electric vehicles. It is an extreme, but we will need to shift our paradigm to solve these challenges.

Europe has a euro rail that uses little energy and Japan has a fast electric train. The U.S. is behind with an antiquated train system that serves only a small part of the country. Cutting down on use of fossil fuels will begin to restore the environment, hot spots will cool, and ocean and sky temperatures will begin to change. We will use less energy to cool and heat our homes.

Children are not asking for a future of luxuries, but for a cleaner healthier world. Cuenca Los Ojos along with many organizations and hundreds of people around the world are working to answer the children. I will end by saying that a hundred years ago technology decisions unintentionally changed the course of our environmental health. Today technology and nature-based solutions employed by Cuenca Los Ojos and others have the potential to intentionally improve our global health.

*Valer*



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREETING

Hello CLO friends. As the monsoon season begins, we are reminded of the critical role water plays in all of our restoration efforts. From grasslands, to wildlife, to water supplies, our success is dependent on healing systems that support climate resiliency and help continue the monsoon cycle we depend on.

While we acknowledge and understand many of the reasons of how our society has reached these challenging crossroads, we should also be able to leverage reliable and tested ideas to help us solve our current problems. Collectively, it will be very challenging to rewind the technological clock in such a way that all environmental wrongs are righted; perhaps, however, we can reset it.

I am reminded of a book by Thomas L. Friedman called *Thank You for Being Late*, wherein he describes this age of humanity as one where the rate of changing conditions in technology, globalization, and climate change are occurring simultaneously and at an exponentially faster rate than humanity can adapt. Friedman refers to this as the Age of Acceleration, which has manifested itself through what appears as chaos in our society and global systems. Despite the chaos, we must all have hope and pull together to persevere in the face of these dynamic conditions.

With that in mind, CLO continues to focus on on-the-ground restoration to aid nature's ability to heal itself. So far this year, we have started a strategic planning process to prioritize our restoration work, participated in education and outreach opportunities to increase our skills, share our knowledge, and collaborate with partners, and engaged in effective policy-level dialogue to find solutions to the environmental challenges of our time. Now more than ever, all of us must work together to affect positive and lasting change for our health and that of our planet's. I thank you for your support and look forward to continuing our great work with all of you.

In Cadence,

Jeremiah H. Leibowitz  
Executive Director



## CLO STAFF

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**Mauro García Valdez**  
Restoration Technician

**Elizabeth Valdovinos**  
Administrative Coordinator



## CLO GOES TO SCHOOL

Some of the CLO staff in Mexico participated in the Ranching for Profit course held in the city of Chihuahua on January 16–21, 2022. CLO staff members Nancy Hernández Rodríguez, José Manuel Pérez, Gerardo Lagarda Lagarda and Fernando Sobrazo Robles were in attendance, along with 50 participants in this excellent strategic planning course. They acquired the tools to improve and preserve the operation of CLO properties in perpetuity.



For more information please visit  
@ranching4profitmx on Instagram

## TRINCHERAS WORKSHOP



Thank you to Wildlands Network and the Biophilia Foundation for supporting this valuable workshop.

CLO was busy constructing trincheras! CLO staff shared their restoration techniques during a trinchera workshop from February 23–27, 2022. The workshops took place at CLO, Rancho El Aribabi, Cocospera River, and Monte Mojino.

Trincheras are loose rock erosion control structures designed with the contour of the land and stream beds to preserve seasonal rainfall. Their goal is not to stop the water but rather to slow it down. This simple technology increases sedimentation and soil moisture, and are ideal in desert areas, such as CLO conserved lands. These erosion control structures date back centuries in ancient Mexico, and CLO is working with its partners to make the old new again.



## RUTA DEL JEFE

CLO was excited to present at and participate in a gravel bike adventure event called Ruta del Jefe on March 4-6, 2022, in the Sky Islands region of the Sonoran Desert in Southern Arizona. The event is named for El Jefe (Spanish for "The Boss"), an adult male jaguar seen in Arizona from 2011-2015.

Ruta del Jefe was a fundraising event organized by Sarah Swallow to benefit the following indigenous, conservation, and humanitarian aid organizations: Indivisible Tohono, No More Deaths, Cuenca Los Ojos, Save the Scenic Santa Ritas, Arizona Trail Association, and Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch of the National Audubon Society. Donations were equally distributed among these organizations.

CLO's executive director, Jeremiah Leibowitz, CLO board member, Rodrigo Sierra, and University of Arizona PhD student, Ganesh Marin, all participated in the event with Jeremiah completing the 55-mile loop through the San Rafael Valley and Rodrigo and Ganesh completing the 70-mile loop through the Santa Rita Mountains.

Participating in this event provided CLO with ideas on how we can bring people to CLO and help them experience the land while also supporting organizations working in the borderlands. This fall, CLO will partner with Ruta del Jefe's organizer, Sarah Swallow, to evaluate CLO's roads, trails, and infrastructure to support an adventure event in 2023.

***"The event seeks to educate cyclists on what makes the Sky Island region unique, its environmental threats, why it's worth protecting, and the humanitarian crisis occurring within it."***

- Ruta del Jefe website

For more information please visit [www.rutadeljefe.com](http://www.rutadeljefe.com), and follow @rutadeljefe @sarahjswallow on Instagram




## STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

Meet Nancy Hernández Rodríguez,  
Manager of Rancho El Uno.

"I am an Engineer in Ecology and graduated from the Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua. I began my work on grasslands during my second semester of my degree in 2002, with my undergraduate thesis on prairie dogs. Since then, I have traveled to Janos at least three times a year. Also during this time I witnessed the acquisition of Rancho El Uno, the arrival of the bison, the first bison being born on the ranch, and met the people who work there and their neighbors. While working on my master's degree and studying the ecology of the burrowing owl, I lived on the ranch for four months, between 2009-2010. That is why working here feels like being at home."



***"Working here feels like  
being at home"***



In partnership with Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza, A.C., Cuenca Los Ojos manages Rancho El Uno. We look forward to the continued restoration of the Chihuahuan grasslands and working with our partners at Rancho El Uno located in the Grassland Biosphere Reserve in Janos, Chihuahua.

Please follow @ranchoeluno





## TRIBUTES AND RECOGNITION

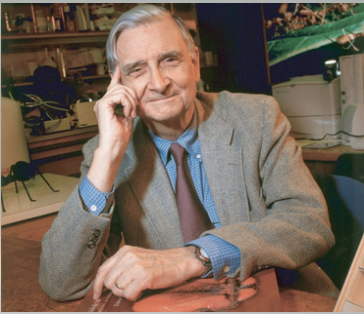


Photo from fortheland.org  
Photo credit: Jim Harrison

CLO would like to wish a solemn farewell to the great Edward O. Wilson (1929–2021). The leading environmentalist of our time, E.O. Wilson recognized the ecological significance of the borderlands region, calling it a biodiversity hotspot in need of protection. CLO is forever grateful to E.O. Wilson for advocating for our region and for making biology relevant to non-biologists. He had a gift for sharing with people from all walks of life the joys of this planet's creatures and how we all fit together. When asked to give advice about how to deal with ants in one's kitchen, the Ant Man famously replied: "Tread carefully." CLO would like to invite us all to honor Dr. Wilson and commit to "treading carefully" on this planet and treating each other with respect and kindness.



CLO would like to salute and honor William R. Radke on his retirement from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"Bill, you will certainly be missed by CLO and by me personally. Your insight and informed advice helped us so much in our work restoring riparian habitat along the US/Mexican border. What the U.S. Fish and Wildlife has done in the U.S. with our precipitation in Mexico will improve the passage of endangered desert fish well into the future. Simply said, Thank You. You are an example of an inspired government servant." – Valer Clark



We want to thank and recognize Ofelia "Dalia" Migdalia Campos Escarcega, who has been working at Rancho El Uno for 17 years. Dalia was born in Ciudad Madera, Chihuahua. She arrived at the ranch in 2004 with her husband, José Luis García Loya, and her son, Jovanny García Campos, to take care of the general maintenance of the property. That included hosting all of the guests and visitors who have stayed at the ranch for different events. Dalia's hospitality has always left a great impression for those who come to the ranch, and her experience and knowledge is critical to its operation.



After 19 years of working with CLO, our colleague Roy Elías Gastelum has retired. Roy served as CLO's head of maintenance, was an excellent heavy equipment operator, and a great welder and electrician. He also had experience in the construction of soil and water retention structures such as gabions and trincheras and had the great gift of sharing his knowledge with others. On behalf of everyone at CLO, we want to thank Roy for his support, service, and dedication, as well as for the knowledge he shared with all of us.

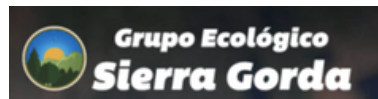
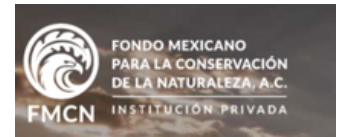


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*Thank You!*

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