

Inspiring an ethic of caring for our planet by cultivating diverse voices through the spoken and written word.

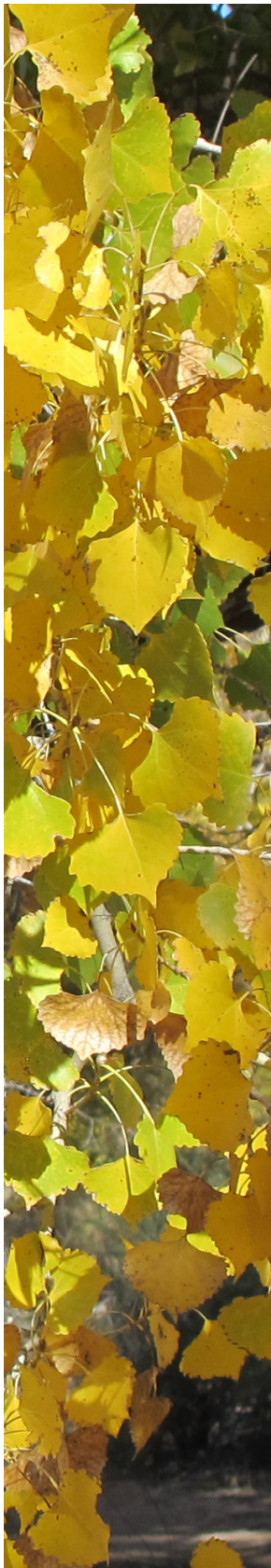
A Poetry of Hope

BY ANTHONY ANELLA, Founder and Board President

Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It's not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out. It is this hope, above all, that gives us strength to live and to continually try new things, even in conditions that seem as hopeless as ours do, here and now. In the face of this absurdity, life is too precious a thing to permit its devaluation by living pointlessly, empty, without meaning, without love, and, finally, without hope. —VÁCLAV HAVEL

2022 marks the tenth anniversary of the Aldo & Estella Leopold Residency! We are planning to celebrate this important milestone in two ways. One is to ask residents from the first decade of the program to write letters to the residents of the next decade. How has Aldo Leopold's writing influenced each resident's work? What contribution did the Aldo & Estella Leopold Residency make to their career? As one of the twenty residents who have lived at Mi Casita during the first ten years of the program, how will the environmental concerns that preoccupied them when they were in residence differ from the environmental concerns of future residents? Answers to these questions—as well as each resident's own stories about their connections to Nature—will create a varied but coherent collection of essays to be featured in a book, *Letters from Mi Casita*.

The second way we are planning to celebrate is by convening a gathering of residents in Taos, New Mexico, during the summer of 2022. The purpose of this gathering is to strengthen the relationship the residents have with the Leopold Writing Program, and also—most importantly—the relationship they have with each other. We are building a national network of influential environmental writers who can make a real difference in helping society make the cultural shifts necessary not just to survive the reality of a changing climate, but also to begin to heal the land. Both the anniversary publication and the gathering of residents will provide opportunities for past residents to inspire future residents and general readers.



The need for writers telling stories to guide our actions in caring for the Earth is especially critical at this moment in human history. Such writers remind us, as Václav Havel does, that “life is too precious a thing to permit its devaluation by living pointlessly, emptily, without meaning, without love, and finally, without hope.” We can’t heal the land without changing the stories we tell about the relationship between humans and Nature. Should social status be measured by consumption or by conservation? Will progress be defined by growth for growth’s sake or by living within our means both economically and ecologically? Will we, as Aldo Leopold posed the question, continue to view the land “as a commodity belonging to us” or “as a community to which we belong?”

What better way to mobilize society to act on the environmental challenges facing us than to nurture the voices of future generations of writers whose lives will be most affected by those challenges? Restoring the health of our planet must be an intergenerational effort. Sustaining that effort with stories across generations is the essential mission of the Leopold Writing Program. 🌱

ALDO & ESTELLA LEOPOLD RESIDENCY



An inspiring retreat for college students, graduate students, post-graduate students, and other emerging and mid-career professional writers from around the country and abroad interested in exploring connections in our communities and cultures, and in our lives and landscapes. Two residents each spend one month at Mi Casita, Aldo and Estella Leopold’s first home in Tres

Piedras in northern New Mexico, and receive a \$750 stipend to help defray travel and living expenses.

Jeff Pappas, LWP Board Member and State Historic Preservation Officer, led the 2021 candidate search with committee members Gretchen Brock, Steve Fox, and Sharon Hausam. We are pleased to publish essays in this issue of the two Residents who completed their summer retreats, in which they reflect on their experience at Mi Casita, and how it relates to their scholarly pursuits.

Eve Bratman, Ph.D. JUNE 2021 RESIDENT

Professor of Environmental Studies at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Her book-in-progress, tentatively entitled *Pollen Nation*, uses bees as the keyhole issue through which readers can glimpse the challenges of pollinator protection and biodiversity conservation.

Sarah Dimick, Ph.D. JULY 2021 RESIDENT

Assistant Professor of English at Harvard University working in the environmental humanities. Her research and teaching, based in global Anglophone literatures of the 20th and 21st centuries, focus on literary portrayals of climate change and environmental justice.

PAST RESIDENTS

Emily Wortman-Wunder (2020)

Priyanka Kumar (2020)

Laura Paskus (2019)

Matt Barnes (2018)

Matt Jones (2018)

Laura Pritchett (2018)

Andrea Clearfield (2017)

Ben Goldfarb (2017)

Maya Kapoor (2017)

Ariana Kramer (2017)

Priscilla Solis Ybarra (2016)

Andrew Gulliford (2016)

Tovar Cerulli (2015)

Gavin Van Horn (2015)

Bonnie Harper-Lore (2014)

Leeanna Torres (2014)

Paul Bogard (2013)

John Hausdoerffer (2013)

Courtney White (2012)

For profiles of past residents, visit the **RESIDENCY** page at LeopoldWritingProgram.org.

Applications
are now being
accepted for the
2022 Residency.
The deadline for
submission is
February 25, 2022.



Charismatic Mini-Fauna and Climate Arrhythmias

A Summer at Mi Casita

BY JEFF PAPPAS, Board Member

During the summer of 2021, the Leopold Writing Program was fortunate to host two outstanding scholars and Leopold aficionados at Mi Casita, Drs. Eve Bratman and Sarah Dimick of Franklin and Marshall College and Harvard University respectively. This historic cabin, located in the beautiful Carson National Forest outside Taos, New Mexico, is owned and operated by the U.S. Forest Service. But perhaps more importantly, this is where Aldo and Estella Leopold lived and worked during Aldo's early days as a Forest Service employee.

Since 2012, the Leopold Writing Program, in partnership with the Forest Service, has hosted 21 scholars in residence at Mi Casita. Collectively, they're an impressive group and indicative of the profound impact the entire Leopold family has had on environmental thinking. For Eve, her residency proposal and forthcoming book, *Pollen Nation*, drew "upon Leopold's ethics to defend and embrace wildness," as she explored "myopic policy strategies and ethical frameworks that currently strive to address global biodiversity losses." As you might guess, the chief protagonist in the story is the ever-delightful honeybee, or as she playfully puts it, "the fascinating, fuzzy, honey-producing, lovable and charismatic mini-fauna." If anyone ought to know about bees, it's Eve. Beyond her evident academic ambitions, she is also an experienced beekeeper and an active pollinator protector. Eve used her time at Mi Casita to prepare her manuscript for publication in 2023.

Sarah Dimick too is a strong proponent of Leopold's work. In her residency proposal, Dr. Dimick focused on an unexplored, and perhaps unexpected, aspect of Leopold's poetic intellect, and that is the burgeoning field of phenology. In *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold defines phenology as "dateable events in that cycle of beginnings and ceasings which we call a year." Sarah's research intends to draw from past literary figures, such as Henry David Thoreau and others, including Leopold, who patiently and painstakingly observed this so-called "biotic clock." The thesis of her forthcoming book *Climate Arrhythmias* is to show how this "crucial indicator of ecological well-being" can be reconceived to help create a new land ethic for the 21st century. Sarah capped her summer residency with a wonderful lecture at the Harwood Museum in Taos, New Mexico.

The Leopold Writing Program is grateful to Eve and Sarah for their commitment to the important work that needs to be done to solve some of our most pressing environmental problems. It is truly rewarding to see a new generation of writers and scholars reflect so intently on Leopold's astonishing legacy. 🍃

Minding the Buzz

BY EVE BRATMAN, PhD



Mornings at the Leopold cabin, I meditated. Up on the rocky outcropping behind the house, I breathed, facing East. I tried to clear my mind from flitting brain clutter and sleepy residues. Basking in morning light, I sat with my back straight and eyes at a restful gaze across the plateau and somewhere in the distant mountains. The sage- and pine-scented air was an aromatherapy on its own. The setting offered a welcome respite from the city life to which I am accustomed. Yet finding a mental stillness amidst my solitary retreat often eluded me, even on the ancient rock outcroppings of Tres Piedras. More often than not, bird life and pollinating insects drew me out of the quietude I sought and enticed me into refocusing on something moving quickly across the landscape.

At first, this frustrated me. After all, this seemed a perfect setting for quiet morning contemplative practice. I felt like a "bad" meditator, as though despite years of experience, I was still somehow doing it wrong. My curiosity to see what was buzzing around me regularly got the best of me. I couldn't help but appreciate the gracefulness of the birds in morning flights and noticed my brain's inclination to get to know their patterns. I allowed my eyes to focus on them, losing my meditative concentration. After a few frustrating days of this experience, I changed my approach. Instead of resisting the experience of being in nature as I meditated, I tried cultivating a perceptive openness. I practiced noting and accepting my curiosities as they arose. I began thinking of these morning contemplative experiences as less about finding a mental stillness and more about developing greater awareness, both internal to myself and externally.

My sensory awareness grew, even over the course of just the month of June. One day about two weeks into my residency at the Leopold cabin, I came down from the rocks following the same general path as had become my custom. I found a rusty old tin can, complete with its shorn-off lid nearby. The landscape of Tres Piedras is beautiful, for certain, and it is also not infrequently littered with detritus, organic and otherwise. Somehow this can must've been there all along, but I only noticed it after two dozen walks following the same general path.

Coming down from the rocks another bright Saturday morning, I found something profound. Tucked well under the shelter of a rocky ledge was a weather-worn, slightly tattered Catholic mass prayer-book and a colorful chunky wooden rosary. I looked for signs of an owner, a name, a date. All the chipmunks or field mice had spared of the upper right corner of the book were the letters "o" and "i" in neat pencil cursive, with the number "68" below it. 1968, perhaps? That was a pretty intense summer, not unlike this one for its level of social upheaval. I caught myself musing about whether a nice Jewish woman like me finding a Catholic prayerbook in the middle of the desert plateau should be considered a divine message. Unlikely, I assessed. The God of the Bible deals in burning bushes and metaphor, right? I sat back down and flipped to the passage that was bookmarked by a frail green cloth page marker.

The page offered the gospel of Luke, 21, 25:33:

"There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations bewildered by the roaring of sea and waves; men fainting for fear and for expectation of the things that are coming on the world; for the powers of heaven will be shaken."

The gospel tells a story of redemption on its way, amidst a scary time. It goes on, describing "a fig tree,

and all the trees, coming into blossom." Perched on a cloud, Jesus reminds the trembling masses that summer is near. But he tells the people that they aren't saved yet. "Amen I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all things have been accomplished." This isn't the end of times. In fact, the divine message is essentially: get back to work.

That's the passage for this age of climate change, I reflected. The one in which wildfires and superstorms

beat upon our doors, alongside a global pandemic that makes us especially inclined to be shut in and shut down. We have work to do, in this generation, now.

There are nascent fruits already setting on the apricot tree behind the Leopold cabin. Summer is nigh; it's June, after all. My work, here, now, is concerned with the question of how we can end some of the antagonism in our relationship with the world around

us: what Rachel Carson dubbed a "war against nature" back in 1963. Carson also made a poignant observation on a more esoteric level: "We still haven't become mature enough to think of ourselves as only a tiny part of a vast and incredible universe," she said. We have been waging that warfare since the modern era really took off in all its tin can-littered glory.

The biggest bug in the whole system of modernity is the war we have waged against nature and carried out upon landscapes. Perhaps bugs, in a literal sense, can help us find our way out of the mess, or at least into the work of engaging in ecological *rapprochement*. They're certainly indicators of the mess: entomologists are writing about an insect apocalypse in their peer-reviewed journals, and pollinator populations from bumblebees to monarch butterflies are imperiled.

Aldo Leopold spent many a pre-dawn morning sitting attentively, listening to the world around him. Coffee in hand, he listened to the birds. First the field sparrows start their songs. They arouse the robin, who awakens the oriole, with an indigo bunting later joining



the chorus. Leopold took scientific notes and measurements of the song timing in relation to daylight intensity, publishing his research in an ornithological journal. He also explained and understood the songs from a relational perspective, writing about them in *A Sand County Almanac*. His aim was not just to understand the birds' biology, but to describe the conversations they might be having with each other and Leopold himself about their territory.

Writing from the picnic table behind the Leopold cabin, I noticed the solitary bees that made little burrows in the wood piers supporting the porch. By my count, those logs are a hotel for at least five different species of bees. Yet you'd barely notice their comings and goings if you weren't paying attention. Bees are doing the bulk of the pollination work in the world; you can think about them as the hardest-working farmworkers on the planet, or as the most underpaid (plant-focused) sex-workers in the world. Bees are also laudable mediators, offering both symbolism and practical assets (think: honey, wax, propolis) that have captured the human imagination for millennia, since the earliest cave paintings up to Beyoncé. They need

plant life, and plants need them; they're the ultimate examples of mutualistic relationships. Pollinators, by their very design, traverse boundaries. They offer us a prism for understanding the interconnectedness of life and the fraught politics involved in protecting it. It's a tall order to achieve that protection, for sure. But it's happening, all over the planet. The Whanganui River in New Zealand has recently gained legal personhood. In India, the Ganges River was granted human rights. In Toledo, Ohio, just last year citizens voted overwhelmingly to give similar legal rights to Lake Erie.

If only we'd open ourselves up a little more to try and listen to the life buzzing around us, we might be better able to appreciate the significance of these political shifts, beyond their symbolic value. The work is not done, nor will it likely be finished in my lifetime. But taking it on is our responsibility, nonetheless. Such work begins with noticing. From there, cultivating a sense of wonder, appreciation, and hospitality is a no-brainer. I suspect that such is the path to establishing a *rapprochement* in our war with nature. Perhaps, we can even begin to open a dialogue about our common ground. 🍄

Patterns of Environmentalism

BY SARAH DIMICK, PhD



I spent the month of July writing on the front porch of the Leopolds' casita in Tres Piedras, New Mexico, and nearly every afternoon I noticed rain clouds gathering on the horizon before they broke around 3 or 4 pm. Ricardo de León, one of the forest rangers at the Tres Piedras station, explained that July is monsoon season in northern New Mexico—afternoon rains are an expected part of mid-summer, a weather pattern that recurs with a degree of regularity. The thunder and darkening skies became a part of my writing residency—I found them calming.

In my own research, which focuses on literature and phenology, or the study of recurrent environmental events driven by seasonal and climatic patterns, there are frequent references to a paper in *Ecological Monographs* titled “A Phenological Record for Sauk and Dane Counties, Wisconsin, 1935-1945.” It's a stunning log of 328 environmental events—including the arrivals of the bronze grackles, the emergence of pollen on the cottonwoods, and the fall of acorns. These days, as climate change alters phenological

patterns, scientists frequently refer to this phenological study as a benchmark measurement from the mid-twentieth century.

This landmark paper is often attributed solely to Aldo Leopold, but the truth is that it was co-authored. When she is mentioned at all, Leopold's co-author, Sara Elizabeth Jones, is sometimes referred to as his advisee and sometimes referred to as a botany student. She was neither. Jones completed a PhD in Zoology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and while she did take Leopold's course in Wildlife Ecology during her time there, her work was advised by Arthur Hasler. She spent two years observing plant phenology in the University of Wisconsin Arboretum before she moved to Durham to teach zoology at Duke University. Jones and Leopold completed their phenology paper, which draws on Jones's data, during her years at Duke, and they corresponded regularly about trends in their findings and edits to the manuscript. Leopold may be a more celebrated figure in environmental history, but this groundbreaking phenology study was co-authored and Jones deserves to be credited every time it is mentioned. Her data and her thoughts continue to shape our understanding of Wisconsin's phenology in the mid-twentieth century.

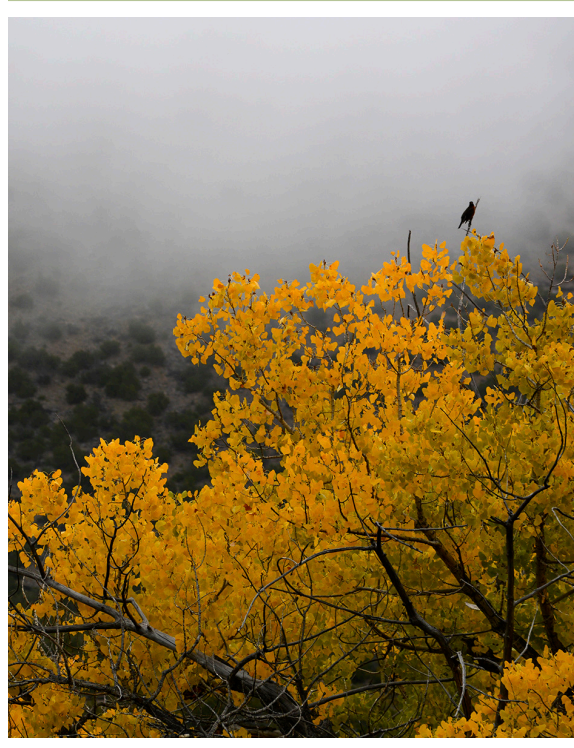
When I teach this work, students often ask about what Sara Elizabeth Jones did after her co-authored paper came out in 1947. Thanks to the assistance of Jones's daughter, Barbara Frey, I located her obituary, and I want to share her story here as a way to spotlight her life not simply as an addendum to Aldo Leopold's but as a remarkable story in its own right.

While Leopold, who passed away in 1948, is associated with conservation efforts in Wisconsin, Jones's life became entangled in ongoing struggles for environmental justice in the Midwest. She moved to Bloomington, Indiana, in 1950 and campaigned against the Marble Hill Nuclear Power Plant—in fact, one of her protests at the site led to her arrest. By 1976, she had become concerned about the heavy concentrations of PCBs in Bloomington, a result of the Westinghouse Electric Corporation's production of capacitors and the EPA's

lack of adequate action. This work led to a lawsuit in 2000, with Jones serving as the key plaintiff in a case centered on three PCB Superfund sites in Bloomington. Throughout her environmental activism, she remained fascinated by plants and cultivated a locally famous garden of abundant daffodil varieties.

In other words, Jones's life extended into the next chapter of environmental work in the Midwest, a period focused on toxicity and corporate responsibility. Her life and actions serve as a beautiful example of how carefully cultivated attention

can produce environmental appreciation while also galvanizing environmental activism. My hope is that as phenology draws increasing attention in the next few decades, largely due to climate change, Jones's legacy will not be obscured by Leopold's. Her contributions to the 1947 study—and her extended environmental commitments—are equally fascinating. We all benefit from expanding stories, from giving authors and researchers their due, and recognizing the collaborative nature of the great majority of scientific work. 🌱





ALDO LEOPOLD WRITING CONTEST

Each year, the Leopold Writing Contest invites New Mexico students in grades 6-12 to submit essays in response to a carefully-crafted and thought-provoking prompt inspired by the writings of Leopold. Encouraged by their teachers, students delve into his philosophies of land stewardship, especially as set forth in *A Sand County Almanac*, and explore the relevance of Leopold's classic and timeless observations to issues that they experience personally, locally, and globally.

Judges choose First Place essayists in each of three categories (grades 6-7, 8-9, and 10-12), as well as Honorable Mentions as merited. Each student winner receives a cash award and certificate. As determined by the judges, an additional award may be presented for Overall Best Essay.

The Writing Contest is an effective and inclusive way to engage the next generation of citizen leaders in an urgent conversation about how to address the changing realities brought about by climate disruption, biodiversity loss, growing demand for fresh water, and other pressing global conservation issues. Since its beginning in 2009, over 2,000 students from schools in rural and urban communities around New Mexico have taken part in the annual contest.

2022 WRITING CONTEST ESSAY TOPIC

"Land, then, is not merely soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals... When a change occurs in one part of the circuit, many other parts must adjust themselves to it."

—ALDO LEOPOLD, "The Land Ethic," *A Sand County Almanac*

We are seeing climate changes disrupt the natural balance of this "circuit of soils, plants, and animals." Unpredictable variations in temperature and rainfall in the Southwest are creating soil erosion, water scarcity, habitat loss, and more.

ESSAY PROMPT

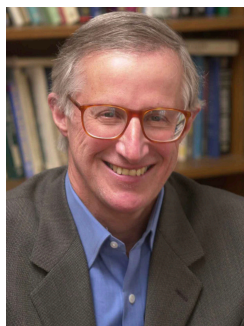
"What actions have you taken to help 'tend the land' (such as protecting soil, plants, animals, wildlife habitat, water sources, etc.), or what are your ideas for how you and other young people can help counteract the impacts of climate disruption on the different elements of your local environment?"

We invite you to share this opportunity with New Mexico students in grades 6-12. Visit leopoldwritingprogram.org/writing-contest for more details, entry form, and contest flyer. The deadline for submission of essays is February 15, 2022.

The award-winning student essays will be featured in the Spring 2022 issue of *El Piñón*.

Annual Leopold Lecture

THIS LECTURE FEATURES a distinguished environmental thinker who inspires and challenges audiences to explore today's critical environmental issues. To complete the intergenerational nature of the Leopold Writing Program, the lecturer presents the awards to the 6th-12th grade winners of the Writing Contest.



William D. Nordhaus, an Albuquerque native and the 2018 Nobel Laureate in Economics for his work creating a quantitative model that describes the global interplay between the economy and climate, was scheduled to lecture in April 2020. Because of the pandemic the lecture has been postponed. Dr. Nordhaus has agreed to present his lecture, "Skiing and Fishing on a Hot Planet," as soon as it is safe to do so.

PAST LECTURERS

Barry Lopez, the author of *Arctic Dreams*, a National Book Award winner.

David Parsons, a career wildlife biologist who led the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Mexican Gray Wolf Recovery Program from 1990 to 1999.

David E. Stuart, an internationally recognized anthropologist whose most cited books are *Prehistoric New Mexico* and *Anasazi America*.

WELCOME New Board and Advisory Council Members!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



V.B. Price has been writing in New Mexico for the last

60 years. He's an editor and a poet. His weekly column, started in 1971, is now on-line at Mercury Messenger (mercmessenger.com). He was awarded this year, along with Art Goodtimes, the New Mexico Literary Arts Gratitude Award "for contributions to the life of the poetry community in New Mexico and the Southwest." His website is vbprice.com.

ADVISORY COUNCIL



Bruce T. Milne, PhD, is a landscape ecologist and Professor Emeritus of Biology, University of New Mexico (1986-2020). His research focuses on the origins of landscape complexity

and scaling ubiquitous in stream networks, vegetation, species habitat, human group sizes and global ecological footprints. In 2006, the International Association for Landscape Ecology recognized him as Distinguished Landscape Ecologist. He has led Food-PrintNM, a community of professionals dedicated to developing strategies for a localized food system, and a USDA-funded summer foodshed field school. Currently, he serves on the board of the Rio Grande Community Farm with interests in the intersection of regenerative agriculture, wildlife habitat, and community engagement for under-served groups and beginning farmers.

2022 Events Calendar



FEBRUARY 15

Writing Contest essay submittal deadline

FEBRUARY 25

Residency application deadline

MARCH 24

Writing Contest winners announcement

MARCH 25

Residency selection announcement

TBD

Annual Leopold Lecture and
Writing Contest Awards Ceremony

MAY-OCTOBER

Residency season

WE THANK OUR PARTNERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT

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Your Financial Support Matters

The Leopold Writing Program cultivates environmental leaders and promotes the land ethic through its writing programs, educational initiatives, and public lectures. To continue to accomplish our goals, we need your support.

Please mail your contribution or donate online at leopoldwritingprogram.org

Gift options include cash, bequests or memorial gifts, stocks, bonds, real property, and annuities. To discuss giving opportunities, contact Anthony Anella at 505-265-8713.

Yes, I want to support the Leopold Writing Program!

Enclosed is my gift of ☐ \$20 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$500 Other _____

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