New Mexico Acequia Association

Our mission is to protect water and our acequias, grow healthy food for our families and communities, and to honor our cultural heritage.
Acequia History

1600 - 1800s
Establishment of land grants and acequias

1848
Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo between US and Mexico

1851
Territorial water code codifies ancient acequia practices

1898
Within 50 years, most of communal lands lost.

1907
NM Water Code: prior appropriation doctrine

1980s
Acequias organize to defend water rights in adjudication defense and to protest water transfers

1990s
Statewide acequia and land grant organizations formed

2000s
Historic policy reform strengthening local governance.
County | Number of Acequias
---|---
Bernalillo | 16
Catron | 7
Cibola | 11
Colfax | 1
Eddy | 1
Grant | 19
Guadalupe | 10
Hidalgo | 2
Lincoln | 27
McKinley | 1
Mora | 52
Otero | 5
Rio Arriba | 175
San Juan | 39
San Miguel | 49
Sandoval | 36
Santa Fe | 72
Sierra | 3
Socorro | 2
Taos | 107
Torrance | 4
Acequias and Urban – Rural Sustainability

- Water Justice – Commodification and Contamination
- Local and Regional Food Systems
- Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services
- Self-Determination, Agency, Leadership, Imagination
Water in New Mexico – the Basics

• Water rights are fully appropriated.
• New uses have to acquire water rights through water transfers.
• The law requires consideration of impacts on existing water rights.

Entities are seeking water rights.

• San Augustine Plains – Speculation
• Campbell Ranch – Court Ruling on Impacts of Deep Wells
• Intrepid – Complaint filed in District Court for violation of the Pecos River Settlement
• Copper Flats – Inflated decades-old mining claim
Acequias are protecting water as a community resource.

Using bylaws to regulate water transfers.

Filing protests to water transfer applications.
Acequia Agriculture Matters

Acequia agriculture makes a significant contribution New Mexico’s economy. Counties with highest number of acequias make up about 40% of the total farms in the state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New Mexico</th>
<th>Acequia Counties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Farms</td>
<td>11,430</td>
<td>4,856</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irrigated Acres</td>
<td>680,318</td>
<td>185,985</td>
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* Source: USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture. Counties are Rio Arriba, Taos, Mora, Lincoln, San Miguel, San Juan, Cibola, Grant, Sandoval. Note that county-level data also includes other agriculture.

- If 15% of food was purchased locally, it would inject $60 million into regional economy.
- 70% of hemp producers in Colorado are small scale farmers.

Value Chain – Challenges for Small Farmers and Ranchers

- Farm/Ranch Production
- Processing
- Marketing and Distribution

- Land and Water Equipment
- Training
- Cold Storage
- GAAP
- FSMA
- Aggregation Facilities
- Value-Added Production
- Community Kitchens
- NMED food safety
- USDA Meat Inspections
- Business Plans
- Transportation
- Cooperative marketing and distribution
Los Sembradores Farmer Training Project:
• Apprenticeships
• Full Growing Season of Training
• Community Building
• Farm Planning

Sembrando Semillas
• Youth interns
• Intergenerational projects involving families
• Food traditions and gardens
Acequia Hydrological/Ecological Benefits

FIGURE 5: Hydrologic flow paths in an acequia-irrigated alluvial floodplain.

VEGETATION
- Riparian
- Row and field crops
- Orchards

HYDROLOGIC FLOW PATHS
- 1. Main irrigation ditch surface flow
- 2. Lateral side ditch surface flow
- 3. Seepage from ditch
- 4. Percolation from crop irrigation
- 5. Evapotranspiration from crops
- 6. Shallow groundwater flow
- 7. Evapotranspiration from riparian vegetation
- 8. River flow

Free water surface
Acequias are using more resilient designs
Acequias are working together to continue generations of tradition...
Building a grassroots voice for acequias to impact policy

....through leadership development and participation.
Acequias: Co-Existing with Urban Areas

Contributions of Acequias
• Centuries of water sharing customs and adaptability
• Vital for regional food security
• Beneficial to aquifer recharge
• Essential partners and stakeholders in water management

Challenges from Urbanization
• Acequias/rural areas are vulnerable to water market forces
• Depletion of surface water from groundwater pumping
• Reduced stream flows, more variability, climate change
• Water quality challenges
• Land Use policies and farmland protection

Policy Implications Regarding Acequias
• Renew and reinvent inter-acequia water sharing
• State and federal water management should complement local water management by acequias
• Protect rural areas from water transfers
• Cross-sector infrastructure and restoration investments
• Greater emphasis and incentives to conserve water
• Investing in local and regional food systems
Que Vivan Las Acequias!
New Mexico Acequia Association