

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

A MEMORIAL

SUPPORTING LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT BY ACEQUIAS IN NEW MEXICO
AND COMMEMORATING THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
NEW MEXICO ACEQUIA ASSOCIATION.

WHEREAS, acequias and community ditches in New Mexico
have created a cultural landscape and way of life centered
around local agriculture, water governance and customs of
sharing scarce water; and

WHEREAS, acequias are a centuries-old form of water
governance in New Mexico, are recognized as political
subdivisions of the state and are responsible for the
management of many of the surface water rights on their
respective rivers and streams; and

WHEREAS, in many rural, unincorporated communities,
acequias are an important, and in some instances the only,
form of local government; and

WHEREAS, acequias contribute to the well-being and
livelihood of tens of thousands of families who irrigate from
an estimated eight hundred acequias; and

WHEREAS, according to hydrological research, acequias
enhance the natural process of aquifer recharge by slowing
and spreading mountain runoff through an intricate network of
waterways that support river flows and riparian habitats; and

WHEREAS, while acequias have a positive effect on the

1 hydrology of lower reaches of watersheds, they depend on
2 healthy forests in the upper watersheds to generate clean
3 water for rivers and streams; and

4 WHEREAS, acequias and community ditches face many
5 challenges related to long-term water scarcity and drought,
6 demands to transfer water rights out of agriculture to other
7 uses, adjudication of water rights and the need for
8 investment in irrigation infrastructure; and

9 WHEREAS, acequias and community ditches came together in
10 the past four decades to form several regional associations
11 and, twenty-five years ago, established a statewide
12 membership organization, the New Mexico acequia association,
13 NMAA, to protect and defend acequias and to work toward a
14 common vision for the future; and

15 WHEREAS, some of the policy accomplishments of acequia
16 leaders over the past few decades include the creation of the
17 acequia and community ditch fund, the acequia construction
18 program and cost-share funding at the interstate stream
19 commission and the creation of the governor-appointed acequia
20 commission; and

21 WHEREAS, acequia leadership through the NMAA also
22 contributed to the passage of new laws strengthening acequia
23 governance, including acequia authority to regulate water
24 transfers and to administer acequia water banking as well as
25 laws strengthening acequia enforcement powers regarding

1 easements and illegal uses of water; and

2 WHEREAS, the NMAA and its partners have contributed to
3 efforts to support children, youths and young adults to
4 become stewards of acequia knowledge and practice through
5 community education projects and have started a process to
6 develop curricula with acequia-related themes for public
7 schools that are aligned with educational requirements; and

8 WHEREAS, acequia leadership has called upon the state
9 engineer, who administers water rights in New Mexico, to
10 affirm its historic role in local water management and to
11 work collaboratively to allocate water as fairly and
12 equitably as possible; and

13 WHEREAS, as water scarcity has intensified with
14 long-term drought, acequias have developed seasonal
15 water-sharing agreements with the support of the state
16 engineer in certain areas, but much work remains in other
17 areas to involve local acequia officials in water management
18 decisions; and

19 WHEREAS, as demands increase for water rights, acequias
20 and community ditches will be under greater pressure with
21 regard to transfers of water rights out of agriculture to
22 other uses and will have the authority to regulate such
23 transfers in consideration of whether such transfers are
24 detrimental to the acequia or its members; and

25 WHEREAS, because of their unique role in water

1 allocation and in making decisions about water transfers,
2 acequias are important policymakers at the local level and
3 vital partners to the state in water administration by the
4 state engineer and regional water planning by the interstate
5 stream commission; and

6 WHEREAS, acequias throughout the state are working in
7 close collaboration with the interstate stream commission,
8 the natural resource conservation service and local soil and
9 water conservation districts to restore, rehabilitate and
10 upgrade historic irrigation works to support the continued
11 growth of the agricultural economy to meet the demand for
12 locally grown food;

13 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE
14 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that acequias and community ditches be
15 recognized for their unique contributions to the culture,
16 history, hydrology, ecology and agricultural economy of the
17 state of New Mexico; and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Mexico acequia
19 association be congratulated on its twenty-fifth anniversary
20 and its ongoing work to strengthen local acequias, protect
21 acequia-based water rights, support acequia-grown foods,
22 support the engagement of youth through educational projects
23 and curricula and encouragement of new generations of
24 leadership in acequias and community ditches; and

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the senate recognize the

1 ongoing work by the state engineer to work with acequias in
2 certain areas of New Mexico and urges the state engineer to
3 expand efforts to collaborate with local acequia elected
4 officials and support their unique role in local water
5 governance and management; and

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the interstate stream
7 commission and the state engineer be requested to continue to
8 work with leadership from the New Mexico acequia association
9 to expand investment in acequia irrigation infrastructure and
10 to facilitate the involvement of acequias in regional water
11 planning; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
13 transmitted to the office of the state engineer, the
14 interstate stream commission, the New Mexico acequia
15 association, the acequia commission and the governor. _____

16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25