



NEW MEXICO LEGISLATURE

# LAND GRANT COMMITTEE

2025 INTERIM FINAL REPORT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SERVICE  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTERIM SUMMARY

WORK PLAN AND MEETING SCHEDULE

AGENDAS AND MINUTES

ENDORSED LEGISLATION



## INTERIM SUMMARY



## **Land Grant Committee 2025 Interim Summary**

The Land Grant Committee held five meetings during the 2025 interim. The committee met twice at the State Capitol in Santa Fe and held meetings in Las Vegas, Tierra Amarilla and Manzano.

During the 2025 interim, the committee received updates from multiple land grants-mercedes, the Land Grant Council, the University of New Mexico, the New Mexico Acequia Association, the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty Division of the State Department of Justice, the New Mexico Finance Authority, the Department of Finance and Administration and federal agencies. Topics addressed by the committee included land grant governance, acequia programs, rural health care, infrastructure of land grants-mercedes and acequias, post-wildfire recovery, new technologies for rural communities, outdoor recreation, disaster prevention and relief and forestry resources.

The committee toured several historic land grants-mercedes, including the Los Vigiles Land Grant-Merced, the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced and the Manzano Land Grant-Merced.

The committee also discussed and endorsed three pieces of legislation at the conclusion of its interim work. If approved by the legislature and enacted into law, the first committee-endorsed bill would create the Land Grant-Merced and Acequia Infrastructure Trust Fund, the Land Grant-Merced Infrastructure Project Fund and the Acequia Infrastructure Project Fund to assist land grants-mercedes and acequias with funding infrastructure projects. The second bill would make changes to the existing Land Grant-Merced Assistance Fund that would alter the distribution thresholds and amounts from the fund, and the third bill would increase the amount of the annual transfer from the New Mexico Irrigation Works Construction Fund to the Acequia and Community Ditch Infrastructure Fund.





## WORK PLAN AND MEETING SCHEDULE



**2025 APPROVED  
WORK PLAN AND MEETING SCHEDULE  
for the  
LAND GRANT COMMITTEE**

**Members**

Rep. Linda Serrato, Chair  
Sen. Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair  
Sen. Angel M. Charley  
Sen. David. M. Gallegos  
Rep. Miguel P. García  
Rep. Susan K. Herrera  
Rep. Stefani Lord

Sen. Antonio Maestas  
Rep. Matthew McQueen  
Rep. Angelita Mejia  
Sen. Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics  
Sen. Anthony L. Thornton  
Rep. E. Diane Torres-Velásquez

**Advisory Members**

Rep. Catherine J. Cullen  
Rep. Anita Gonzales  
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson  
Sen. Linda M. López

Rep. Jimmy G. Mason  
Rep. Rod Montoya  
Sen. Micaelita Debbie O'Malley  
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez

**Work Plan**

The Land Grant Committee was created by the New Mexico Legislative Council on April 28, 2025. The committee will focus on the following topics, as time permits:

**A. Infrastructure, disaster relief, land and management issues, including:**

1. financing options for the acquisition of historical lands at land grants;
2. a review of current and potential funding options from state and federal entities for land grants and acequias and potential for new funding and building capacity;
3. discussion of entities that can be used to secure capital and provide economic growth for land grant members;
4. the parameters and ramifications of the Bernalillo County property tax case regarding land grants-mercedes and other tax issues impacting land grants-mercedes;
5. issues concerning land transfers from, and management agreements with, state agencies;
6. state and federal land stewardship and firewood leñero programs offered by state and federal land management agencies that are open to land grant and acequia communities;
7. an examination of services and infrastructure needs, including legislation introduced during the 2025 legislative session, including House Bill (HB) 330, HB 21 and Senate Bill 208;

8. a review of analyses of prior relevant legislation from the Legislative Finance Committee;
9. a discussion of a potential New Mexico Finance Authority revolving loan fund for land acquisitions;
10. a status report on the transfer of the Laguna del Campo fish pond to the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced;
11. a status report of post-flooding conditions along the Rio Chama;
12. an exploration of essential services available to land grants, including health care, senior and children's programs and other services; and
13. an examination of new technologies, including artificial intelligence, and their impacts on land grants, acequias and rural communities;

**B. Governance of land grants-mercedes and acequias and water rights, including:**

1. governance of land grant-merced common waters and the implications of the January 2023 attorney general opinion regarding due process for water transfers and the impacts of ground and surface water transfers on small agricultural communities;
2. a status update from the administratively created Acequia Bureau within the Interstate Stream Commission;
3. the status of post-fire recovery efforts at land grants-mercedes and acequias;
4. the potential to build land grant-merced input into federal and state land management agency fire prevention planning;
5. a status update from the Higher Education Department and the University of New Mexico School of Law regarding the Community Governance Attorney Program and continuing legal education and other programs being developed regarding land grants-mercedes and acequia law;
6. the administration and adequacy of the Land Grant-Merced Assistance Fund and the challenges that various land grants-mercedes have encountered in connection with that fund;
7. status reports from the Acequia Commission and the New Mexico Acequia Association;
8. a status report from the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty Division of the State Department of Justice;

9. an examination of various land grants-mercedes that are seeking to be subject to the requirements and authorities of Chapter 49, Article 1 NMSA 1978;
10. a status update on capital outlay and a report on the capital outlay process;
11. an examination of potential updates to Chapter 49, Articles 1 and 4 NMSA 1978;
12. a report on pending federal land grant legislation;
13. issues involving regional water planning;
14. issues involving state audits;
15. technical assistance for acequias;
16. updates from the Office of the State Engineer regarding disputes impacting land grants-mercedes and acequias;
17. updates from the Federal Funding Stabilization Subcommittee; and
18. updates from the rural and frontier equity ombuds of the Local Government Division of the Department of Finance and Administration;

**C. Reports from individual land grants-mercedes, the Acequia Commission and other related entities, including:**

1. reports from various land grants-mercedes;
2. reports from the Land Grant Council and updates from the New Mexico Land Grant Consejo and the University of New Mexico Land Grant Studies program, including:
  - a. a status update on the Land Grant Council's efforts on land grant-merced property surveys; and
  - b. the development of land grant youth programs; and
3. status reports from the Acequia Commission and the New Mexico Acequia Association;

**D. Review of issues involving the Bureau of Land Management and land grant heirs;**

**E. Discussion of key historic factors and events concerning common lands, including review of *United States v. Sandoval* (1897) and other historic transfers of land grants; and**

**F. Invitation of the New Mexico congressional delegation to discuss relevant issues.**

**Land Grant Committee  
2025 Approved Meeting Schedule**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
May 30	Santa Fe
July 14-15	Las Vegas
August 14-15	Tierra Amarilla
September 8-9	East Mountains (Manzano or Chilili)
October 7	Santa Fe





# AGENDAS AND MINUTES



Revised: May 27, 2025

**TENTATIVE AGENDA  
for the  
FIRST MEETING  
of the  
LAND GRANT COMMITTEE**

**May 30, 2025  
State Capitol, Room 307  
Santa Fe**

**Friday, May 30**

- 10:00 a.m.        **Call to Order and Introductions**  
—Representative Linda Serrato, Chair  
—Senator Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair
- 10:15 a.m.        (1)    **Introduction of Land Grant Issues**  
—Arturo Archuleta, Program Manager, Land Grant Council/Land Grant  
      Studies Program, University of New Mexico
- 10:45 a.m.        (2)    **Introduction of Acequia Issues**  
—Paula Garcia, Executive Director, New Mexico Acequia Association
- 11:15 a.m.        (3)    **Review of Relevant Legislation from the 2025 Legislative Session**  
—Ian Keller, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
- 11:30 a.m.        (4)    **2025 Proposed Work Plan and Meeting Schedule Discussion**  
—Ian Keller, Staff Attorney, LCS
- 12:30 p.m.        **Public Comment\***
- 1:00 p.m.         **Adjourn**

\*Members of the public may make virtual public comments during the public comment period of the meeting by following the instructions under the "Virtual Public Comment" section of the Land Grant Committee [web page](#).



**MINUTES  
of the  
FIRST MEETING  
of the  
LAND GRANT COMMITTEE**

**May 30, 2025  
State Capitol Room 307  
Santa Fe**

The first meeting of the Land Grant Committee was called to order by Representative Linda Serrato, chair, on May 30, 2025 at 10:07 a.m. in Room 307 of the State Capitol in Santa Fe.

**Present**

Rep. Linda Serrato, Chair  
Sen. Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair  
Sen. Angel M. Charley  
Sen. David M. Gallegos  
Rep. Miguel P. García  
Rep. Stefani Lord  
Sen. Antonio Maestas  
Rep. Matthew McQueen  
Rep. Angelita Mejia  
Sen. Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics  
Rep. E. Diane Torres-Velásquez

**Absent**

Rep. Susan K. Herrera  
Sen. Anthony L. Thornton

**Advisory Members**

Rep. Catherine J. Cullen  
Rep. Anita Gonzales  
Sen. Linda M. López  
Rep. Rod Montoya

Rep. D. Wonda Johnson  
Rep. Jimmy G. Mason  
Sen. Micaelita Debbie O'Malley  
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez

**Staff**

Ian Keller, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council Service (LCS)  
Mark Edwards, Bill Drafter, LCS  
Nicole Waguespack, Researcher, LCS

**Guests**

The guest list is in the meeting file.

**Handouts**

Handouts are in the meeting file and posted on the legislature's website.

## **References to Webcast**

The time reference noted next to each agenda item in this document is cross-referenced to the webcast of the committee meeting, which can be found at [www.nmlegis.gov](http://www.nmlegis.gov), under the "Webcast" tab. The presentations made and committee discussions for agenda items can be found on the recorded webcast for this meeting.

## **Friday, May 30**

### **Welcome and Introductions (10:07 a.m.)**

Representative Serrato welcomed everyone and asked committee members and staff to introduce themselves.

### **In Memoriam (10:19 a.m.)**

With a moment of silence, the committee recognized the passing of Joseph W. Padilla, former president and secretary of Los Vigiles Land Grant-Merced, and former Representative Eliseo Lee Alcon.

### **Introduction of Land Grant Issues (10:24 a.m.)**

Arturo Archuleta, program manager, Land Grant Council/Land Grant Studies Program, University of New Mexico, gave a presentation outlining the main issues that land grants in New Mexico face. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=5/30/2025&ItemNumber=1>.

### **Introduction of Acequia Issues (11:12 a.m.)**

Paula Garcia, executive director, New Mexico Acequia Association, gave a presentation outlining the main issues that acequias in New Mexico face. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=5/30/2025&ItemNumber=2>.

### **Review of Relevant Legislation from the 2025 Legislative Session (11:42 a.m.)**

Mr. Keller provided an overview of legislation from the 2025 legislative session relevant to land grants and acequias. Specifically, Mr. Keller discussed House Bill 21 (2025), Senate Bill 208 (2025) and House Bill 330 (2025), none of which were signed into law.

### **2025 Proposed Work Plan and Meeting Schedule Discussion (11:50 a.m.)**

Mr. Keller presented the proposed work plan and additional topics proposed by committee members to be added to the work plan. The committee adopted the work plan with the proposed topics incorporated into the plan.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.





Revised: July 9, 2025

**TENTATIVE AGENDA  
for the  
SECOND MEETING  
of the  
LAND GRANT COMMITTEE**

**July 14-15, 2025  
New Mexico Highlands University  
Student Union Ballroom  
800 National Avenue  
Las Vegas**

**Monday, July 14**

- 10:00 a.m.        **Call to Order and Introductions**  
—Representative Linda Serrato, Chair  
—Senator Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair
- 10:15 a.m.        (1) **Welcome and New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU) Update**  
—Dann Brown, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs,  
      NMHU
- 10:45 a.m.        (2) **Statutory Overview of Land Grants-Mercedes**  
—Mark Edwards, Bill Drafter, Legislative Council Service
- 11:00 a.m.        (3) **Updates from the Lower Gallinas Land Grant-Merced**  
—Antonio "Tony" Benavidez, President, Lower Gallinas Land Grant-  
      Merced  
—Margaret Lucero, Treasurer, Lower Gallinas Land Grant-Merced  
—Robert "Bobby" Padilla, Secretary, Lower Gallinas Land Grant-Merced  
—Anita Baca, Board Member, Lower Gallinas Land Grant-Merced
- 11:30 a.m.        (4) **Updates from the San Miguel del Bado Land Grant-Merced**  
—Claresse Romero, President, San Miguel del Bado Land Grant-Merced  
—Louis Gallegos, Secretary, San Miguel del Bado Land Grant-Merced
- 12:00 noon        **Lunch**
- 1:00 p.m.        (5) **Status Updates from the Land Grant Council and Land Grant-Merced  
      Institute**  
—Arturo Archuleta, Program Manager, Land Grant Council and Land  
      Grant-Merced Institute, University of New Mexico

- 2:00 p.m. (6) [Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty Division of the State Department of Justice](#)  
—Enrique Romero, Assistant Attorney General and Director, Guadalupe  
Hidalgo Treaty Division, State Department of Justice
- 3:00 p.m. (7) [Technical Assistance for Acequias](#)  
—Paula Garcia, Executive Director, New Mexico Acequia Association  
—Jonathan Martinez, Chief, Acequia Bureau, Interstate Stream  
Commission  
—Manuel Luna, Coordinator, Small Local Public Body Assistance  
Program, Office of the State Auditor  
—Pamela Garcia, Director, Constituent Services, Office of United States  
Senator Ben Ray Luján
- 4:00 p.m. (8) [Community Governance Attorney Program](#)  
—Adrian Oglesby, Director, Utton Transboundary Resources Center,  
University of New Mexico

5:00 p.m. **Recess**

**Tuesday, July 15**

- 10:00 a.m. (9) [Post-Fire Recovery Efforts at Land Grants and Acequias](#)  
—Eddie Quintana, President, Los Vigiles Land Grant-Merced  
—Juan Sanchez, President, Chilili Land Grant-Merced  
—Paula Garcia, Executive Director, New Mexico Acequia Association  
—Debbie Hughes, Executive Director, New Mexico Association of  
Conservation Districts  
—Jeremy Klass, Ph.D., Chief, Recovery and Mitigation Bureau, Homeland  
Security and Emergency Management Department  
—TBD, Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Claims Office, Federal Emergency  
Management Agency (invited)  
—Gerald Romero, Manager, Tierra y Montes Soil and Water Conservation  
District
- 11:30 a.m. **Public Comment\***
- 12:00 noon **Lunch**
- 1:30 p.m. **Tour of Los Vigiles Land Grant-Merced\*\***
- 4:30 p.m. **Adjourn**

\*Members of the public may make virtual public comments during the public comment period of the meeting by following the instructions under the "Additional Information" section of the Land Grant Committee [web page](#).

\*\*This is an invitation-only tour for committee members and staff.

**MINUTES  
of the  
SECOND MEETING  
of the  
LAND GRANT COMMITTEE**

**July 14-15, 2025  
New Mexico Highlands University  
Student Union Ballroom  
800 National Avenue  
Las Vegas**

The second meeting of the Land Grant Committee was called to order by Representative Linda Serrato, chair, on July 14, 2025 at 10:16 a.m. in the Student Union Ballroom at New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU) in Las Vegas.

**Present**

Rep. Linda Serrato, Chair  
Sen. Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair  
Rep. Miguel P. García  
Rep. Stefani Lord (7/14)  
Sen. Antonio Maestas (7/14)  
Rep. Matthew McQueen (7/15)  
Rep. Angelita Mejia  
Sen. Elizaberth "Liz" Stefanics (7/14)  
Sen. Anthony L. Thornton  
Rep. E. Diane Torres-Velásquez

**Absent**

Sen. Angel M. Charley  
Sen. David M. Gallegos  
Rep. Susan K. Herrera

**Advisory Members**

Rep. Anita Gonzales  
Sen. Linda M. López (7/14)

Rep. Catherine J. Cullen  
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson  
Rep. Jimmy G. Mason  
Rep. Rod Montoya  
Sen. Micaelita Debbie O'Malley  
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez

(Attendance dates are noted for those members not present for the entire meeting.)

**Staff**

Ian Keller, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council Service (LCS)  
Mark Edwards, Bill Drafter, LCS  
Lisa Morrison, Staff Attorney, LCS

**Guests**

The guest list is in the meeting file.

## **Handouts**

Copies of handouts are in the meeting file and are posted on the legislature's website.

## **References to Webcast**

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## **Monday, July 14**

### **Welcome and Introductions (10:16 a.m.)**

Representative Serrato welcomed everyone and asked committee members and staff to introduce themselves.

### **Approval of Minutes (10:28 a.m.)**

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the May 30, 2025 meeting were approved without changes.

### **Welcome and NMHU Update (10:29 a.m.)**

Dann Brown, Ph.D., provost and vice president for academic affairs, NMHU, welcomed the committee and provided a status update regarding the university and its programs.

### **Statutory Overview of Land Grants-Mercedes (10:49 a.m.)**

Mr. Edwards presented an outline of how laws governing land grant-merced communities are set out in New Mexico statutes and interim committee documents. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=7/14/2025&ItemNumber=2>.

### **Updates from the Lower Gallinas Land Grant-Merced (11:05 a.m.)**

Antonio "Tony" Benavidez, president, Lower Gallinas Land Grant-Merced, presented a status update regarding the land grant-merced.

### **Updates from the San Miguel del Bado Land Grant-Merced (11:43 a.m.)**

Clarsse Romero, president, San Miguel del Bado Land Grant-Merced, and Louis Gallegos, secretary, San Miguel del Bado Land Grant-Merced, presented an update regarding the land grant-merced. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=7/14/2025&ItemNumber=4>.

### **Status Updates from the Land Grant Council and Land Grant-Merced Institute (1:07 p.m.)**

Arturo Archuleta, program manager, Land Grant Council and Land Grant-Merced Institute, University of New Mexico (UNM), provided a status update on the services and programs provided by the Land Grant Council and the Land Grant-Merced Institute at UNM. He requested that the committee send a letter to the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) asking that the council and the institute be invited to present their budget requests to the LFC. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=7/14/2025&ItemNumber=5>.

### **Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty Division of the State Department of Justice (2:00 p.m.)**

Enrique Romero, assistant attorney general and director, Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty Division, State Department of Justice, gave an update on the activities of the division. He said that the division had held meetings with the seven land grants that were affected by the 1897 United States Supreme Court decision in *United States v. Sandoval* regarding the ownership of the common lands of the land grants. He said that pursuant to those meetings, the State Department of Justice would only be pursuing further investigations into the case on behalf of five of the grants. He suggested that in the future, instead of referring to the affected grants as the "Sandoval Seven", they should be referred to as the "Sandoval Five".

### **Technical Assistance for Acequias (2:51 p.m.)**

Paula Garcia, executive director, New Mexico Acequia Association, and Jonathan Martinez, chief, Acequia Bureau, Interstate Stream Commission, presented on various types of assistance provided to acequias by the association and the state. Pamela Garcia, director, Constituent Services, Office of United States Senator Ben Ray Luján, and Manuel Luna, coordinator, Small Local Public Body Assistance Program, Office of the State Auditor, presented on various types of federal assistance and the services provided to acequias. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=7/14/2025&ItemNumber=7>.

### **Community Governance Attorney Program (4:03 p.m.)**

Adrian Oglesby, director, Utton Transboundary Resources Center, UNM, and Nicolas Estrada, third-year law student and student attorney, Community Governance Attorney Program, UNM, presented on the status of the Community Governance Attorney Program. Mr. Oglesby thanked the legislature for amending the authorizing statute for the program in a way that allows for a greater number of entities to be the employers for community governance attorneys but noted that current funding levels will need to be doubled if the program is to reach the level anticipated in statute of two new attorneys joining the program each year. He said the current level only allows for one new attorney each year and indicated that that level may be in jeopardy due to inflation if funding does not increase.

**Public Comment (4:32 p.m.)**

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

**Recess**

The meeting recessed at 4:38 p.m.

**Tuesday, July 15****Reconvene**

The meeting reconvened at 10:05 a.m.

**Post-Fire Recovery at Land Grants and Acequias (10:05 a.m.)**

Eddie Quintana, president, Los Vigiles Land Grant-Merced; Juan Sanchez, president, Chilili Land Grant-Merced; Paula Garcia; Jeremy Klass, Ph.D., chief, Recovery and Mitigation Bureau, Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department; and Gerald Romero, manager, Tierra y Montes Soil and Water Conservation District, presented on progress being made by land grants and acequias to recover from fires in northern and central New Mexico. They also talked about the process for applying for federal and state aid and lessons learned in the aftermath of the Dog Head fire in Cibola National Forest and the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon fire in the Santa Fe National Forest. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=7/14/2025&ItemNumber=9>.

**Tour of Los Vigiles Land Grant-Merced (12:25 p.m.)**

Members of the committee and staff toured the Los Vigiles Land Grant-Merced.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 3:33 p.m.

Revised: August 12, 2025

**TENTATIVE AGENDA  
for the  
THIRD MEETING  
of the  
LAND GRANT COMMITTEE**

**August 14-15, 2025  
32 New Mexico Highway 531  
Tierra Amarilla**

**Thursday, August 14**

- 9:00 a.m.           **Call to Order and Introductions**  
—Representative Linda Serrato, Chair  
—Senator Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair
- 9:15 a.m.       (1)   **Welcome to the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced and Update**  
—Steve Polaco, President, Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced
- 10:00 a.m.       (2)   **Update from the San Joaquin del Rio de Chama Land Grant-Merced**  
—Leonard Martinez, President, San Joaquin del Rio de Chama Land Grant-Merced  
—Monica Rodriguez, Secretary, San Joaquin del Rio de Chama Land Grant-Merced  
—Gerald Chacon, Secretary of Land and Water, San Joaquin del Rio de Chama Land Grant-Merced
- 10:45 a.m.       (3)   **Rural Health Care Facilities**  
—James Kiser, Chief Executive Officer, Holy Cross Medical Center  
—Trinidad de Jesus Arguello, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., P.M.H.N.-R.N.-B.C., F.C.B.H.T., Board Member, Holy Cross Medical Center; Founder and Administrator, Compostela Community and Family Cultural Institute  
—Len Horan, Executive Director, La Clinica del Pueblo de Rio Arriba  
—Matthew Probst, P.A.-C., Director of Rural Community Engagement, Office for Community Health, University of New Mexico
- 12:15 p.m.       **Lunch**
- 12:45 p.m.       (4)   **Rural Health Outcomes**  
—Alex Castillo Smith, Deputy Secretary, Health Care Authority  
—Trinidad de Jesus Arguello, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., P.M.H.N.-R.N.-B.C., F.C.B.H.T., Board Member, Holy Cross Medical Center; Founder and Administrator, Compostela Community and Family Cultural Institute  
—Monique Garcia, M.B.A., L.C.S.W., Las Clinicas del Norte

- 2:15 p.m. (5) **Update from the Abiquiu Land Grant-Merced**  
—Victoria Garcia, President, Abiquiu Land Grant-Merced
- 3:00 p.m. (6) **Use of New Technologies to Assist Rural Communities**  
—Manuel Luna, Coordinator, Small Local Public Body Assistance Program, Office of the State Auditor  
—Jeremy Klass, Chief, Recovery and Mitigation Bureau, Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department
- 4:00 p.m. (7) **New Technologies for Rural Communities**  
—Enrico Pontelli, Ph.D., Dean of Arts and Sciences, New Mexico State University (NMSU)  
—Lara Prihodko, Ph.D., Associate Professor, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, NMSU  
—Marcus Krohn, Ph.D., Manager, Unit System/Tech Support, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, NMSU  
—Craig Gifford, Ph.D., Extension Beef Cattle Specialist, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, NMSU  
—Santiago Utsumi, Ph.D., Associate Professor, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, NMSU

5:00 p.m. **Public Comment\***

5:15 p.m. **Recess**

### **Friday, August 15**

9:00 a.m. **Tour of the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced\*\***

12:00 noon **Adjourn**

\*Members of the public may make virtual public comments during the public comment period of the meeting by following the instructions under the "Additional Information" section of the Land Grant Committee [web page](#).

\*\*This is an invitation-only tour for committee members and staff.



**MINUTES  
of the  
THIRD MEETING  
of the  
LAND GRANT COMMITTEE**

**August 14-15, 2025  
32 New Mexico Highway 531  
Tierra Amarilla**

The third meeting of the Land Grant Committee was called to order by Representative Linda Serrato, chair, on August 14, 2025 at 9:29 a.m. in the Community Building at the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced.

**Present**

Rep. Linda Serrato, Chair  
Rep. Miguel P. García  
Rep. Susan K. Herrera  
Rep. Stefani Lord (8/14)  
Rep. Matthew McQueen (8/14)  
Sen. Anthony L. Thornton (8/14)

**Absent**

Sen. Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair  
Sen. Angel M. Charley  
Sen. David M. Gallegos  
Sen. Antonio Maestas  
Rep. Angelita Mejia  
Sen. Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics  
Rep. E. Diane Torres-Velásquez

**Advisory Members**

Rep. Catherine J. Cullen  
Rep. Rod Montoya

Rep. Anita Gonzales  
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson  
Sen. Linda M. López  
Rep. Jimmy G. Mason  
Sen. Micaelita Debbie O'Malley  
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez

(Attendance dates are noted for those members not present for the entire meeting.)

**Staff**

Ian Keller, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council Service (LCS)  
Mark Edwards, Bill Drafter, LCS  
Lisa Morrison, Staff Attorney, LCS

**Guests**

The guest list is in the meeting file.

**Handouts**

Handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file and posted on the legislature's website.

## **References to Webcast**

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## **Thursday, August 14**

### **Welcome and Introductions (9:29 a.m.)**

Representative Serrato welcomed everyone and asked committee members and staff to introduce themselves.

### **Welcome to the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced and Update (9:40 a.m.)**

Steve Polaco, president, Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced, and Melvin Apodaca, board member, Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced, provided a history of the land grant-merced and talked about current projects, including one in coordination with the San Joaquin del Rio de Chama and Juan Bautista Baldes land grants-mercedes and the Department of Game and Fish on the recent Laguna del Campo acquisition and the community center building in Tierra Amarilla.

### **Update from the San Joaquin del Rio de Chama Land Grant-Merced (10:33 a.m.)**

Leonard Martinez, president, San Joaquin del Rio de Chama Land Grant-Merced; Gerald Chacon, secretary of land and water, San Joaquin del Rio de Chama Land Grant-Merced; and Monica Rodriguez, secretary, San Joaquin del Rio de Chama Land Grant-Merced, provided a history of the land grant-merced, highlighted projects, including the Canon de Chama irrigation project and a Youth Conservation Corps project, and discussed the impacts to the land grant-merced from the Laguna Fire. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=2>.

### **Rural Health Care Facilities (11:40 a.m.)**

James Kiser, chief executive officer, Holy Cross Medical Center; Len Horan, executive director, La Clinica del Pueblo de Rio Arriba; and Matthew Probst, P.A.-C., director of rural community engagement, Office for Community Health, University of New Mexico, highlighted that the Holy Cross Medical Center cares for all patients regardless of the patients' ability to pay but operates at a loss and expressed concerns about future Medicaid cuts across the country. They talked about how rural communities need cardiac services, how many people in impoverished communities do not seek care and how they are succeeding with a mobile unit and physical therapy services. They also mentioned that physicians are from the local community, that the success of an organization is with its providers and the people and that they advocate bringing health care to communities. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=3>.

### **Rural Health Outcomes (1:10 p.m.)**

Alex Castillo Smith, deputy secretary, Health Care Authority (HCA), and Trinidad de Jesus Arguello, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., P.M.H.N.-R.N.-B.C., F.C.B.H.T., board member, Holy Cross Medical Center, and founder and administrator, Compostela Community and Family Cultural Institute, indicated that the HCA ensures that accessible, high-quality health care and safety net services are available and that childhood poverty is declining due to investments made by the authority. They highlighted that stagnant wages are a consistent factor of generational poverty, that recent federal changes will create more stress on the vulnerable and that New Mexico has the highest rate in the country of job losses caused by Medicaid and federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program funding cuts from the 2025 federal budget reconciliation bill. They also expressed support for community health workers who are from the community and can communicate community concerns to health care providers. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=4>.

### **Update from the Abiquiu Land Grant-Merced (2:20 p.m.)**

Victoria Garcia, president, Abiquiu Land Grant-Merced, highlighted how the land grant-merced used capital outlay funding for building renovations and the purchase of property on which the land grant-merced has plans for an ice cream store, a playground, a hair salon and a potential recreational vehicle campsite. She also discussed a potential geothermal project.

### **Use of New Technologies to Assist Rural Communities (3:14 p.m.)**

Manuel Luna, coordinator, Small Local Public Body Assistance Program, Office of the State Auditor, and Jeremy Klass, chief, Recovery and Mitigation Bureau, Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department, presented on the need for land grants to take advantage of new technologies, such as satellite capabilities. They discussed that the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department assists communities with disasters and helps identify projects for Federal Emergency Management Agency funding. They also mentioned that they can work with quasi-state entities on state reimbursement programs and are trying to work with local partners to capture needs, including insurance needs. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=6>.

### **New Technologies for Rural Communities (3:42 p.m.)**

Enrico Pontelli, Ph.D., dean of arts and sciences, New Mexico State University (NMSU); Lara Prihodko, Ph.D., associate professor, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, NMSU; and Marcus Krohn, Ph.D., manager, Unit System/Tech Support, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, NMSU, highlighted that artificial intelligence (AI) follows the steps that a human would take to solve problems and stated that if NMSU does not prepare students for AI, the university is not doing its job. They stated that NMSU will be offering a Bachelor of Science in AI and the institution is receiving national

attention. They discussed applying AI to agriculture by expanding research areas and NMSU coursework at the master's degree level and the university's work on precision ranching, machine learning, large language models and virtual reality. They provided an update on the university's extension data repository and how AI pulls information from extension data found in the NMSU network. They also talked about an AI-enhanced 4-H curriculum for youth aged 8 through 18 years in rural New Mexico, how the curriculum introduces youth to careers in AI to ensure its ethical use and how AI data is validated with extension sources. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=7>.

**Public Comment (4:37 p.m.)**

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

**Recess**

The meeting recessed at 4:45 p.m.

**Friday, August 15**

**Tour of the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced (9:00 a.m.)**

Members of the committee and staff toured the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant-Merced.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:37 p.m.

Revised: September 5, 2025

**TENTATIVE AGENDA  
for the  
FOURTH MEETING  
of the  
LAND GRANT COMMITTEE**

**September 8-9, 2025  
4 Community Center Road  
Manzano Land Grant-Merced  
Torreon**

**Monday, September 8**

- 9:30 a.m.           **Call to Order and Introductions**  
—Representative Linda Serrato, Chair  
—Senator Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair
- 9:45 a.m.       (1)   **Welcome to the Manzano Land Grant-Merced and Update**  
—Lenora Romero, President, Manzano Land Grant-Merced  
—Jacob Quintana, Treasurer, Manzano Land Grant-Merced
- 10:30 a.m.       (2)   **New Mexico Finance Authority**  
—Donnie Quintana, Project Oversight Manager, New Mexico Finance  
  Authority  
—Ron Cruz, Managing Director of Lending, New Mexico Finance  
  Authority
- 11:30 a.m.       (3)   **Update from the Chilili Land Grant-Merced**  
—Erwin Lesperance, Vice President, Board of Trustees, Chilili Land  
  Grant-Merced
- 12:15 p.m.       **Lunch**
- 12:45 p.m.       (4)   **Department of Finance and Administration**  
—Jason Quintana, Rural and Frontier Equity Ombud, Department of  
  Finance and Administration  
—Wesley Billingsley, Director, Infrastructure Planning and Development  
  Division, Department of Finance and Administration
- 1:30 p.m.       (5)   **Update from the San Antonio de las Huertas Land Grant-Merced**  
—Kendra Lucero-Matteucci, President, San Antonio de las Huertas Land  
  Grant-Merced
- 2:15 p.m.       (6)   **Update from the Town of Tome Land Grant-Merced**  
—Andrea Padilla, President, Town of Tome Land Grant-Merced

3:00 p.m. (7) **Update from the Santa Cruz de la Canada Land Grant-Merced**  
—Don Bustos, President, Board of Trustees, Santa Cruz de la Canada Land  
Grant-Merced  
—TBD

3:45 p.m. (8) **United States Bureau of Land Management**  
—Tokey Boswell, Deputy State Director, Resources, Planning and Lands,  
New Mexico State Office, United States Bureau of Land Management

4:45 p.m. **Public Comment\***

5:00 p.m. **Recess**

**Tuesday, September 9**

9:00 a.m. **Tour of the Manzano Land Grant-Merced\*\***

12:00 noon **Adjourn**

\*Members of the public may make virtual public comments during the public comment period of the meeting by following the instructions under the "Additional Information" section of the Land Grant Committee [web page](#).

\*\*This is an invitation-only tour for committee members and staff.

**MINUTES  
of the  
FOURTH MEETING  
of the  
LAND GRANT COMMITTEE**

**September 8-9, 2025  
4 Community Center Road  
Manzano Land Grant-Merced  
Torreon**

The fourth meeting of the Land Grant Committee was called to order by Representative Linda Serrato, chair, on September 8, 2025 at 9:36 a.m. at the Manzano Land Grant-Merced Community Center in Torreon.

**Present**

Rep. Linda Serrato, Chair  
Sen. Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair  
Sen. David M. Gallegos (9/8)  
Rep. Miguel P. García  
Rep. Stefani Lord (9/8)  
Rep. Matthew McQueen (9/8)  
Rep. Angelita Mejia  
Sen. Anthony L. Thornton  
Rep. E. Diane Torres-Velásquez (9/8)

**Absent**

Sen. Angel M. Charley  
Rep. Susan K. Herrera  
Sen. Antonio Maestas  
Sen. Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics

**Advisory Members**

Sen. Linda M. López (9/8)  
Sen. Micaelita Debbie O'Malley (9/8)  
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez (9/8)

Rep. Catherine J. Cullen  
Rep. Anita Gonzales  
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson  
Rep. Jimmy G. Mason  
Rep. Rod Montoya

(Attendance dates are noted for those members not present for the entire meeting.)

**Staff**

Ian Keller, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council Service (LCS)  
Mark Edwards, Bill Drafter, LCS  
Nicole Waguespack, Researcher, LCS

**Minutes Approval**

The minutes for this meeting have not been approved by the committee.

**Guests**

The guest list is in the meeting file.

## **Handouts**

Handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file and posted on the legislature's website.

## **References to Webcast**

The time reference noted next to each agenda item in this document is cross-referenced to the webcast of the committee meeting, which can be found at [www.nmlegis.gov](http://www.nmlegis.gov), under the "Webcast" tab. The presentations made and committee discussions for agenda items can be found on the recorded webcast for this meeting.

## **Monday, September 8**

### **Welcome and Introductions (9:36 a.m.)**

Representative Serrato welcomed everyone, and members of the committee introduced themselves.

### **Welcome to the Manzano Land Grant-Merced and Update (9:46 a.m.)**

Lenora Romero, president, Manzano Land Grant-Merced; Jacob Quintana, treasurer, Manzano Land Grant-Merced; and Jason Quintana, former president, Manzano Land Grant-Merced, reviewed ongoing efforts to maintain the land grant-merced's acequias and promote community awareness and involvement in the land grant-merced. Regarding Manzano Lake, the presenters discussed the challenges of keeping the lake stocked with trout and the removal of trash.

### **Motion to Draft Letter (10:17 a.m.)**

A motion to draft a letter to the Department of Game and Fish (DGF) to support the stocking of Lake Manzano was proposed by Representative García. Senator Sanchez suggested that the letter also include the State Parks Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD). On a motion made by Representative Serrato and seconded by Representative Lord, the committee voted to have a letter of support drafted to the DGF and the EMNRD to help facilitate fish restocking and maintenance at Lake Manzano.

### **Approval of Minutes (10:41 a.m.)**

Upon a motion made by Senator Jaramillo and seconded by Senator Sanchez, the committee approved the minutes of the August 14-15, 2025 meeting.

### **New Mexico Finance Authority (NMFA) (10:42 a.m.)**

Donnie Quintana, project oversight manager, NMFA, and Ron Cruz, managing director of lending, NMFA, provided an overview of lending options for land grants-mercedes through NMFA funds. The advantages of the Public Project Revolving Fund, such as not having origination fees and having funds for disadvantaged communities, were highlighted. The presenters expressed the willingness of the NMFA to provide administrative assistance to land grants-mercedes and help with facilitating land grants-mercedes' financial requests and audit requirements.



**Update from the Chilili Land Grant-Merced (11:12 a.m.)**

Erwin Lesperance, vice president, Board of Trustees, Chilili Land Grant-Merced, provided an overview of the land grant-merced's community growth, highlighting new housing development projects, including multiple new lots available to provide housing opportunities for current and future residents. Emphasizing that the community is small but growing, Mr. Lesperance noted that the Chilili Land Grant-Merced is dedicated to keeping heirs in the community and fostering connection with the land. Funding for additional land purchases, infrastructure concerns and the need to maintain youth involvement were all noted as ongoing issues.

**Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) (12:47 p.m.)**

Jason Quintana, rural and frontier equity ombud, DFA, provided an overview of the training and support options available to land grants-mercedes through the DFA's Infrastructure Planning and Development Division. He discussed changes to policies and procedures resulting from the passage of House Bill 493 (2025), specifically noting changes to audit requirements. The rural and frontier equity ombud was also highlighted as a resource for land grant-merced assistance. He expressed the need for additional employees to support the ombuds, provide grant writing services and assist with infrastructure design and engineering and the need for more vehicles to support existing employees.

**Update from San Antonio de las Huertas Land Grant-Merced (1:25 p.m.)**

Kendra Lucero-Matteucci, president, San Antonio de las Huertas Land Grant-Merced, provided a brief history of the land grant-merced and reviewed recent property tax litigation involving Sandoval County. She discussed ongoing efforts with the Forestry Division of the EMNRD to help maintain forests in land grants-mercedes, noting that plans are being made to ensure that removed wood will be utilized by the community. Current projects include seeking greater water access and updating current bylaws.

**Update from the Town of Tome Land Grant-Merced (1:55 p.m.)**

Andrea Padilla, president, Town of Tome Land Grant-Merced, provided a brief history of Tome, emphasizing the importance of the church and the loss of lands held by the land grant-merced through time. She expressed the community's excitement concerning recent land and property acquisitions that will provide rental income and housing and discussed plans for future acquisitions. Current community projects, such as firewood collection, farmers market participation and improvements to the historic baseball field, were highlighted. Concerns were expressed regarding the need for infrastructure funds; the lack of housing, particularly for young residents; zoning issues related to housing; nuisance all-terrain vehicle use; and the need for law enforcement assistance. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=9/8/2025&ItemNumber=6>.

**Update from the Santa Cruz de la Canada Land Grant-Merced (2:32 p.m.)**

Camilla Trujillo, treasurer, Santa Cruz de la Canada Land Grant-Merced, provided a brief overview of the Santa Cruz de la Canada Land Grant-Merced, including its geography, history and population, emphasizing the community's long-rooted traditions in family and art. She discussed ongoing projects and needs, including efforts to maintain awareness of the history and culture of the land grant-merced, increase land holdings, support local farmers and promote local ranchers and the 4-H program.

**United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (3:01 p.m.)**

Tokey Boswell, deputy state director, Resources, Planning and Lands, New Mexico State Office, BLM, discussed the overarching mission of the BLM and its presence in New Mexico. He provided a general overview of how the BLM manages lands and its resource management plans and land disposal procedures and how they relate to land grants-mercedes. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=9/8/2025&ItemNumber=8>.

**Recess**

The meeting recessed at 3:45 p.m.

**Tuesday, September 9****Tour of the Manzano Land Grant-Merced (9:00 a.m.)**

Members of the committee and staff toured the Manzano Land Grant-Merced.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

Revised: October 7, 2025

**TENTATIVE AGENDA  
for the  
FIFTH MEETING  
of the  
LAND GRANT COMMITTEE**

**October 7, 2025  
State Capitol, Room 307  
Santa Fe**

**Tuesday, October 7**

- 8:30 a.m.           **Call to Order and Introductions**  
—Representative Linda Serrato, Chair  
—Senator Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair
- 8:45 a.m.       (1)   **Approval of Committee Letters**  
—Representative Linda Serrato, Chair  
—Senator Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair
- 9:15 a.m.       (2)   **Consideration of Legislation for Endorsement**  
—Representative Miguel P. García  
—Representative Matthew McQueen  
—Senator Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair  
—Arturo Archuleta, Program Manager, Land Grant Council/Land Grant  
  Studies Program, University of New Mexico  
—Paula Garcia, Executive Director, New Mexico Acequia Association  
—TBD
- 10:15 a.m.      (3)   **Updates from the Cristobal de la Serna Land Grant-Merced**  
—Nobert LeDoux, President and Chairman, Cristobal de la Serna Land  
  Grant-Merced  
—Peggy Duran, Treasurer, Cristobal de la Serna Land Grant-Merced  
—Mike Howsden, Secretary, Cristobal de la Serna Land Grant-Merced
- 11:00 a.m.      (4)   **Assistance from State Agencies for Outdoor Recreation in Rural  
Communities**  
—Michael B. Sloane, Director, Department of Game and Fish  
—Toby Velasquez, Director, State Parks Division, Energy, Minerals and  
  Natural Resources Department
- 12:00 noon       **Lunch**

- 1:30 p.m. (5) **Discussion of The Las Vegas Land Grant Governance**  
—Edward Sena, President, The Las Vegas Land Grant  
—The Honorable Michael Aragon, Judge, Fourth Judicial District
- 2:30 p.m. (6) **State and Federal Forestry Resources**  
—James Duran, Forest Supervisor, Carson National Forest, United States  
Forest Service  
—Belinda Mollard, Northern New Mexico Traditional Cultures and  
Government Liaison, United States Forest Service  
—TBD  
—Laura McCarthy, State Forester, Forestry Division, Energy, Minerals and  
Natural Resources Department
- 3:30 p.m. **Public Comment\***
- 3:45 p.m. **Adjourn**

\*Members of the public may make virtual public comments during the public comment period of the meeting by following the instructions under the "Additional Information" section of the Land Grant Committee [web page](#).

**MINUTES  
of the  
FIFTH MEETING  
of the  
LAND GRANT COMMITTEE**

**October 7, 2025  
State Capitol, Room 307  
Santa Fe**

The fifth meeting of the Land Grant Committee was called to order by Senator Leo Jaramillo, vice chair, on October 7, 2025 at 9:01 a.m. in Room 307 of the State Capitol in Santa Fe.

**Present**

Sen. Leo Jaramillo, Vice Chair  
Rep. Miguel P. García  
Rep. Anita Gonzales\*  
Rep. Susan K. Herrera  
Rep. Matthew McQueen  
Rep. Angelita Mejia  
Sen. Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics  
Sen. Anthony L. Thornton  
Rep. E. Diane Torres-Velásquez

**Absent**

Rep. Linda Serrato, Chair  
Sen. Angel M. Charley  
Sen. David M. Gallegos  
Rep. Stefani Lord  
Sen. Antonio Maestas

**Advisory Members**

Rep. Catherine J. Cullen  
Rep. Rod Montoya

Rep. D. Wonda Johnson  
Sen. Linda M. López  
Rep. Jimmy G. Mason  
Sen. Micaelita Debbie O'Malley  
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez

\*Appointed by the speaker of the house or the president pro tempore of the senate as a voting member for this meeting only.

**Staff**

Ian Keller, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council Service (LCS)  
Mark Edwards, Bill Drafter, LCS  
Nicole Waguespack, Researcher, LCS

**Minutes Approval**

Because the committee will not meet again this interim, the minutes for this meeting have not been officially approved by the committee.

**Guests**

The guest list is in the meeting file.

## **Handouts**

Handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file and posted on the legislature's website.

## **References to Webcast**

The time reference noted next to each agenda item in this document is cross-referenced to the webcast of the committee meeting, which can be found at [www.nmlegis.gov](http://www.nmlegis.gov), under the "Webcast" tab. The presentations made and committee discussions for agenda items can be found on the recorded webcast for this meeting.

## **Tuesday, October 7**

### **Welcome and Introductions (9:01 a.m.)**

Senator Jaramillo welcomed everyone and asked committee members and staff to introduce themselves.

### **Approval of Committee Letter to United States Office of Congressional Conduct (9:18 a.m.)**

Upon a motion and without objection, the committee approved a letter to the United States Office of Congressional Conduct requesting clarification of the rules regarding the ability of congressional staff to appear before state legislative committees to provide information.

### **Consideration of Legislation for Endorsement (9:19 a.m.)**

The committee considered and endorsed the following three bills for the 2026 legislative session:

232274.3, a bill to enact the Land Grant-Merced and Acequia Infrastructure Act and to create trust funds and project funds for building infrastructure or improving existing infrastructure at land grants-mercedes and acequias;

232275.1, a bill to amend the Land Grant-Merced Assistance Fund to change the requirements for full and 75 percent distributions from the fund and to make the fund nonreverting; and

232276.1, a bill to increase the annual transfer amounts from the New Mexico Irrigation Works Construction Fund to the Acequia and Community Ditch Infrastructure Fund. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=10/7/2025&ItemNumber=2>.

### **Approval of Committee Letter to Department of Finance and Administration (10:28 a.m.)**

Upon a motion and without objection, the committee approved a letter to the Department of Finance and Administration requesting the department to include full funding for the community governance attorney program when the department develops the governor's proposed budget for fiscal year 2027.

### **Updates from the Cristobal de la Serna Land Grant-Merced (10:31 a.m.)**

Nobert LeDoux, president and chairman, Cristobal de la Serna Land Grant-Merced, and Mike Howsden, secretary, Cristobal de la Serna Land Grant-Merced, outlined the challenges facing the land grant-merced due to the *lineas* plat map created by the Taos County Assessor for the land grant-merced in the early 1940s. At the request of a committee member, Arturo Archuleta, program manager, Land Grant Council/Land Grant Studies Program, University of New Mexico, and Enrique Romero, assistant attorney general and director, Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty Division, State Department of Justice, joined the panel to discuss efforts to develop legislative recommendations to address the issue. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=10/7/2025&ItemNumber=3>.

### **Assistance from State Agencies for Outdoor Recreation in Rural Communities (11:18 a.m.)**

Michael B. Sloane, director, Department of Game and Fish, and Toby Velasquez, director, State Parks Division, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, provided an overview of how the missions and programs of their respective agencies interact with rural communities. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=10/7/2025&ItemNumber=4>.

### **Discussion of The Las Vegas Land Grant Governance (1:43 p.m.)**

The Honorable Michael Aragon, judge, Fourth Judicial District, and Edward Sena, president, The Las Vegas Land Grant, provided an overview of the complexity of governance of the land grant due to having a board appointed by a district court rather than an elected board. Mr. Archuleta was requested to join the panel to provide a historical perspective of why The Las Vegas Land Grant is governed by its unique statute.

### **State and Federal Forestry Resources (2:23 p.m.)**

James Duran, forest supervisor, Carson National Forest, United States Forest Service; Belinda Mollard, northern New Mexico traditional cultures and government liaison, United States Forest Service; and Laura McCarthy, state forester, Forestry Division, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, reported on their respective agencies and how those agencies interact with land grant-merced communities. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=LGC&Date=10/7/2025&ItemNumber=6>.

### **Public Comment (3:29 p.m.)**

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 3:34 p.m.





## ENDORSED LEGISLATION



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HOUSE BILL

**57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2026**

INTRODUCED BY

DISCUSSION DRAFT

FOR THE LAND GRANT COMMITTEE

AN ACT

RELATING TO INFRASTRUCTURE; ENACTING THE LAND GRANT-MERCED AND  
ACEQUIA INFRASTRUCTURE ACT; CREATING THE LAND GRANT-MERCED AND  
ACEQUIA INFRASTRUCTURE TRUST FUND; CREATING THE LAND GRANT-  
MERCED INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT FUND AND THE ACEQUIA  
INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT FUND; PROVIDING FOR A DELAYED REPEAL FOR  
CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT; MAKING APPROPRIATIONS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

**SECTION 1.** [NEW MATERIAL] SHORT TITLE.--Sections 1  
through 8 of this act may be cited as the "Land Grant-Merced  
and Acequia Infrastructure Act".

**SECTION 2.** [NEW MATERIAL] DEFINITIONS.--As used in the  
Land Grant-Merced and Acequia Infrastructure Act:

A. "acequia" means an acequia or community ditch  
organized as a political subdivision pursuant to Chapter 73,

underscored material = new  
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underscored material = new  
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1 Article 2 or 3 NMSA 1978;

2 B. "commission" means the interstate stream  
3 commission;

4 C. "council" means the land grant council;

5 D. "department" means the department of finance and  
6 administration;

7 E. "infrastructure assistance" means the provision  
8 of grants to land grants-mercedes on terms and conditions  
9 approved by the council or to acequias on terms and conditions  
10 approved by the commission;

11 F. "land grant-merced" means a land grant that is  
12 designated as a political subdivision pursuant to Section  
13 49-1-2 NMSA 1978 or Chapter 49, Article 4 NMSA 1978;

14 G. "qualified project" means an infrastructure  
15 assistance project selected for infrastructure assistance  
16 pursuant to the Land Grant-Merced and Acequia Infrastructure  
17 Act; and

18 H. "trust fund" means the land grant-merced and  
19 acequia infrastructure trust fund.

20 SECTION 3. [NEW MATERIAL] COUNCIL--POWERS--DUTIES.--The  
21 council shall:

22 A. in consultation with the department, promulgate  
23 rules governing terms, conditions and priorities for providing  
24 infrastructure assistance to land grants-mercedes, including  
25 developing application and evaluation procedures and forms and

.232274.4

underscored material = new  
[bracketed material] = delete

1 qualifications for applicants and for qualified projects;  
2 B. provide infrastructure assistance to land  
3 grants-mercedes for qualified projects on terms and conditions  
4 established by the council; and

5 C. authorize funding for qualified projects,  
6 including:

7 (1) planning, designing, constructing,  
8 improving, expanding or equipping water and wastewater  
9 facilities, major water systems, electrical power lines,  
10 communications infrastructure, roads, health infrastructure,  
11 emergency response facilities and infrastructure needed to  
12 encourage economic development;

13 (2) developing engineering feasibility reports  
14 for infrastructure projects;

15 (3) providing special engineering services;

16 (4) completing environmental assessments or  
17 archaeological clearances and other surveys for infrastructure  
18 projects;

19 (5) acquiring land, easements or rights of  
20 way; and

21 (6) purchasing durable equipment.

22 SECTION 4. [NEW MATERIAL] COMMISSION--POWERS--DUTIES.--

23 The commission shall:

24 A. in consultation with the department, promulgate  
25 rules governing terms, conditions and priorities for providing

.232274.4

underscoring material = new  
~~[bracketed material] = delete~~

1 infrastructure assistance to acequias, including application  
2 and evaluation procedures and forms and qualifications for  
3 applicants and for qualified projects;

4 B. provide infrastructure assistance to acequias  
5 for qualified projects on terms and conditions established by  
6 the commission; and

7 C. authorize funding for qualified projects,  
8 including for planning, engineering design or construction of  
9 irrigation works and infrastructure projects, including dams,  
10 reservoirs, diversions, ditches, flumes or other appurtenances  
11 for the purposes of restoration, repair, improvement of  
12 irrigation efficiency and protection from floods.

13 SECTION 5. [NEW MATERIAL] LAND GRANT-MERCED AND ACEQUIA  
14 INFRASTRUCTURE TRUST FUND--CREATED--INVESTMENT--DISTRIBUTION.--

15 A. The "land grant-merced and acequia  
16 infrastructure trust fund" is created as a nonreverting fund in  
17 the state treasury. The trust fund consists of distributions,  
18 appropriations, gifts, grants and donations. Income from  
19 investment of the trust fund shall be credited to the trust  
20 fund. Money in the trust fund shall be expended only as  
21 provided in this section.

22 B. The state investment officer, subject to the  
23 approval of the state investment council, shall invest money in  
24 the trust fund:

25 (1) in accordance with the prudent investor

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1 rule set forth in the Uniform Prudent Investor Act; and

2 (2) in consultation with the commission and  
3 the council.

4 C. Income from investment of the trust fund shall  
5 be credited to the trust fund. Money in the trust fund shall  
6 not be expended for any purpose, but annual distributions from  
7 the trust fund shall be made to the land grant-merced  
8 infrastructure project fund and the acequia infrastructure  
9 project fund pursuant to this section.

10 D. Except as provided in Subsection E of this  
11 section, if, as of the end of a fiscal year, the balance in the  
12 trust fund is over five million dollars (\$5,000,000), three  
13 percent of the balance in the trust fund shall be divided into  
14 equal distributions to the land grant-merced infrastructure  
15 project fund and the acequia infrastructure project fund.

16 E. If, on July 1 of any year, four and seven-tenths  
17 percent of the average of the year-end market value of the  
18 balance in the trust fund for the immediately preceding five  
19 calendar years exceeds five million dollars (\$5,000,000), four  
20 and seven-tenths percent of the balance in the trust fund shall  
21 be divided into equal distributions to the land grant-merced  
22 infrastructure project fund and the acequia infrastructure  
23 project fund.

24 SECTION 6. [NEW MATERIAL] LAND GRANT-MERCED  
25 INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT FUND--CREATED--PURPOSE--

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1 APPROPRIATIONS.--

2           A. The "land grant-merced infrastructure project  
3 fund" is created in the state treasury and shall be  
4 administered by the department in consultation with the  
5 council.

6           B. The land grant-merced infrastructure project  
7 fund consists of:

- 8                   (1) distributions from the trust fund;
- 9                   (2) payments of principal and interest on  
10 loans for qualified projects; and
- 11                   (3) other money appropriated by the  
12 legislature or distributed or otherwise allocated to the land  
13 grant-merced infrastructure project fund for the purpose of  
14 supporting qualified projects.

15           C. Except for severance tax bond proceeds required  
16 to revert to the severance tax bonding fund, balances in the  
17 land grant-merced infrastructure project fund at the end of a  
18 fiscal year shall revert to the trust fund.

19           D. The department, in consultation with the  
20 council, may establish procedures and promulgate rules as  
21 required to:

- 22                   (1) administer the land grant-merced  
23 infrastructure project fund;
- 24                   (2) originate grants or loans for qualified  
25 projects recommended by the council; and

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1                   (3) govern the process through which qualified  
2 entities may apply for financial assistance from the land  
3 grant-merced infrastructure project fund.

4                   E. Disbursements from the land grant-merced  
5 infrastructure project fund shall be made by warrant of the  
6 secretary of finance and administration pursuant to vouchers  
7 signed by the chair of the council.

8                   F. A land grant-merced shall apply to the  
9 department for funding from the land grant-merced  
10 infrastructure project fund for an infrastructure project prior  
11 to submitting a request for a legislative capital outlay  
12 appropriation for that project. When requesting legislative  
13 appropriations for a qualified project, a land grant-merced  
14 shall provide evidence of a funding need, including proof that  
15 an application for funding for the qualified project was  
16 submitted to the department.

17                   SECTION 7. [NEW MATERIAL] ACEQUIA INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT  
18 FUND--CREATED--PURPOSE--APPROPRIATIONS.--

19                   A. The "acequia infrastructure project fund" is  
20 created in the state treasury and shall be administered by the  
21 department in consultation with the commission.

22                   B. The acequia infrastructure project fund consists  
23 of:

- 24                               (1) distributions from the trust fund;  
25                               (2) payments of principal and interest on

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1 loans for qualified projects; and

2 (3) other money appropriated by the  
3 legislature or distributed or otherwise allocated to the  
4 acequia infrastructure project fund for the purpose of  
5 supporting qualified projects.

6 C. Except for severance tax bond proceeds required  
7 to revert to the severance tax bonding fund, balances in the  
8 acequia infrastructure project fund at the end of a fiscal year  
9 shall revert to the trust fund.

10 D. The department, in consultation with the  
11 commission, may establish procedures and promulgate rules as  
12 required to:

13 (1) administer the acequia infrastructure  
14 project fund;

15 (2) originate grants or loans for qualified  
16 projects recommended by the commission; and

17 (3) govern the process through which qualified  
18 entities may apply for financial assistance from the acequia  
19 infrastructure project fund.

20 E. Disbursements from the acequia infrastructure  
21 project fund shall be made by warrant of the secretary of  
22 finance and administration pursuant to vouchers signed by the  
23 chair of the commission.

24 F. An acequia shall apply to the commission for  
25 funding from the acequia infrastructure project fund for an

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1 infrastructure project prior to submitting a request for a  
2 legislative capital outlay appropriation for that project.  
3 When requesting legislative appropriations for a qualified  
4 project, an acequia shall provide evidence of a funding need,  
5 including proof that an application for funding for the  
6 qualified project was submitted to the commission.

7 SECTION 8. [NEW MATERIAL] REPORTS.--

8 A. The council shall provide a report to the  
9 appropriate legislative interim committee tasked with examining  
10 land grant-merced issues no later than November 1 of each year  
11 regarding the total expenditures from the land grant-merced  
12 infrastructure project fund for the previous fiscal year, the  
13 purposes for which expenditures were made, an analysis of the  
14 progress of the projects funded and recommendations for  
15 improvement of the Land Grant-Merced and Acequia Infrastructure  
16 Act.

17 B. The commission shall provide a report to the  
18 appropriate legislative interim committee tasked with examining  
19 acequia issues no later than October 1 of each year regarding  
20 the total expenditures from the acequia infrastructure project  
21 fund for the previous fiscal year, the purposes for which  
22 expenditures were made, an analysis of the progress of the  
23 projects funded and proposals for improvement of the Land  
24 Grant-Merced and Acequia Infrastructure Act.

25 SECTION 9. Section 7-27-10.1 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2003,

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1 Chapter 134, Section 1, as amended) is amended to read:

2 "7-27-10.1. TRANSFER TO SEVERANCE TAX PERMANENT FUND  
3 BEFORE DETERMINING BONDING CAPACITY--AUTHORIZATION FOR  
4 SEVERANCE TAX BONDS--PRIORITY FOR WATER [~~PROJECTS~~] AND TRIBAL  
5 INFRASTRUCTURE AND LAND GRANT-MERCED AND ACEQUIA INFRASTRUCTURE  
6 PROJECTS.--

7 A. On December 31 of each year from 2019 through  
8 2028, the division shall transfer twenty-three million six  
9 hundred ninety thousand dollars (\$23,690,000) from the  
10 severance tax bonding fund to the severance tax permanent fund,  
11 unless the state board of finance determines that a lesser  
12 transfer amount is necessary pursuant to Section 7-27-8 NMSA  
13 1978 to avoid a potential shortfall in debt service  
14 obligations.

15 B. By January 15 of each year, the division shall  
16 estimate the amount of bonding capacity available for severance  
17 tax bonds to be authorized by the legislature based on the  
18 lesser of the following estimates:

19 (1) an estimate that provides for equal annual  
20 issuances over the expected term of bonds with terms greater  
21 than one year anticipated to be issued by the state board of  
22 finance in the fiscal year in compliance with the requirements  
23 of Section 7-27-14 NMSA 1978; and

24 (2) an estimate that provides that issuances  
25 for each year of that term shall be projected to result in

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1 stable levels of state tax supported debt relative to the  
2 median state debt ratios published by the national municipal  
3 bond rating agencies.

4 C. The division shall allocate nine percent of the  
5 estimated bonding capacity each year for water projects, and  
6 the legislature authorizes the state board of finance to issue  
7 severance tax bonds in the annually allocated amount for use by  
8 the water trust board to fund water projects statewide. The  
9 water trust board shall certify to the state board of finance  
10 the need for issuance of bonds for water projects. The state  
11 board of finance may issue and sell the bonds in the same  
12 manner as other severance tax bonds in an amount not to exceed  
13 the authorized amount provided for in this subsection. If  
14 necessary, the state board of finance shall take the  
15 appropriate steps to comply with the federal Internal Revenue  
16 Code of 1986, as amended. Proceeds from the sale of the bonds  
17 are appropriated to the water project fund in the New Mexico  
18 finance authority for the purposes certified by the water trust  
19 board to the state board of finance.

20 D. The division shall allocate four and one-half  
21 percent of the estimated bonding capacity for tribal  
22 infrastructure projects.

23 E. The legislature authorizes the state board of  
24 finance to issue severance tax bonds in the amount provided for  
25 in this section for use by the tribal infrastructure board to

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1 fund tribal infrastructure projects. The tribal infrastructure  
2 board shall certify to the state board of finance the need for  
3 issuance of bonds for tribal infrastructure projects. The  
4 state board of finance may issue and sell the bonds in the same  
5 manner as other severance tax bonds in an amount not to exceed  
6 the authorized amount provided for in this section. If  
7 necessary, the state board of finance shall take the  
8 appropriate steps to comply with the federal Internal Revenue  
9 Code of 1986, as amended. Proceeds from the sale of the bonds  
10 are appropriated to the tribal infrastructure project fund for  
11 the purposes certified by the tribal infrastructure board to  
12 the state board of finance.

13 F. The legislature authorizes the state board of  
14 finance to issue severance tax bonds in the amount provided for  
15 in this section for use by the land grant council to fund land  
16 grant-merced infrastructure projects. The land grant council  
17 shall certify to the state board of finance the need for  
18 issuance of bonds for land grant-merced infrastructure  
19 projects. The state board of finance may issue and sell the  
20 bonds in the same manner as other severance tax bonds in an  
21 amount not to exceed the authorized amount provided for in this  
22 section. If necessary, the state board of finance shall take  
23 the appropriate steps to comply with the federal Internal  
24 Revenue Code of 1986, as amended. Proceeds from the sale of  
25 the bonds are appropriated to the land grant-merced

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1 infrastructure project fund for the purposes certified by the  
2 land grant council for land grant-merced infrastructure  
3 projects to the state board of finance.

4 G. The legislature authorizes the state board of  
5 finance to issue severance tax bonds in the amount provided for  
6 in this section for use by the interstate stream commission to  
7 fund acequia infrastructure projects. The interstate stream  
8 commission shall certify to the state board of finance the need  
9 for issuance of bonds for acequia infrastructure projects. The  
10 state board of finance may issue and sell the bonds in the same  
11 manner as other severance tax bonds in an amount not to exceed  
12 the authorized amount provided for in this section. If  
13 necessary, the state board of finance shall take the  
14 appropriate steps to comply with the federal Internal Revenue  
15 Code of 1986, as amended. Proceeds from the sale of the bonds  
16 are appropriated to the acequia infrastructure project fund for  
17 the purposes certified by the interstate stream commission for  
18 acequia infrastructure projects to the state board of finance.

19 ~~[F-]~~ H. Money from the severance tax bonds provided  
20 for in this section shall not be used to pay indirect project  
21 costs. Any unexpended balance from proceeds of severance tax  
22 bonds issued for a water, ~~[project or a]~~ tribal infrastructure,  
23 acequia infrastructure or land grant-merced infrastructure  
24 project shall revert to the severance tax bonding fund within  
25 six months of completion of the project. The New Mexico

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1 finance authority shall monitor and ensure proper reversions of  
2 the bond proceeds appropriated for water projects, and the  
3 department of finance and administration shall monitor and  
4 ensure proper reversions of the bond proceeds appropriated for  
5 acequia infrastructure, tribal infrastructure and land grant-  
6 merced infrastructure projects.

7 ~~[G.]~~ I. As used in this section:

8 (1) "acequia infrastructure project" means a  
9 qualified project approved by the interstate stream commission  
10 pursuant to the Land Grant-Merced and Acequia Infrastructure  
11 Act;

12 ~~[(1)]~~ (2) "division" means the board of  
13 finance division of the department of finance and  
14 administration;

15 (3) "land grant-merced infrastructure project"  
16 means a qualified project approved by the land grant council  
17 pursuant to the Land Grant-Merced and Acequia Infrastructure  
18 Act;

19 ~~[(2)]~~ (4) "tribal infrastructure project"  
20 means a qualified project under the Tribal Infrastructure Act;  
21 and

22 ~~[(3)]~~ (5) "water project" means a capital  
23 outlay project for:

24 (a) the storage, conveyance or delivery  
25 of water to end users;



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- 1 (b) the implementation of federal
- 2 Endangered Species Act of 1973 collaborative programs;
- 3 (c) the restoration and management of
- 4 watersheds;
- 5 (d) flood prevention; or
- 6 (e) conservation, recycling, treatment
- 7 or reuse of water."

8 SECTION 10. A new section of the Severance Tax Bonding  
9 Act, Section 7-27-10.3 NMSA 1978, is enacted to read:

10 "7-27-10.3. [NEW MATERIAL] ALLOCATION OF BONDING CAPACITY  
11 FOR LAND GRANT-MERCED AND ACEQUIA INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS.--

12 A. The division shall allocate one and one-tenth  
13 percent of the estimated bonding capacity for land grant-merced  
14 infrastructure projects.

15 B. The division shall allocate one and one-tenth  
16 percent of the estimated bonding capacity for acequia  
17 infrastructure projects.

18 C. As used in this section, "division" means the  
19 board of finance division of the department of finance and  
20 administration."

21 SECTION 11. DELAYED REPEAL.--Section 10 of this act is  
22 repealed effective July 1, 2032.

23 SECTION 12. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the  
24 provisions of this act is July 1, 2026.



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HOUSE BILL

**57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2026**

INTRODUCED BY

DISCUSSION DRAFT

FOR THE LAND GRANT COMMITTEE

AN ACT

RELATING TO LAND GRANTS; AMENDING THE LAND GRANT-MERCED ASSISTANCE FUND TO CHANGE THE REQUIREMENT THRESHOLDS FOR FULL AND SEVENTY-FIVE PERCENT DISTRIBUTIONS FROM THE FUND; MAKING THE LAND GRANT-MERCED ASSISTANCE FUND NONREVERTING; MAKING TECHNICAL CHANGES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. Section 49-11-6 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2022, Chapter 32, Section 2) is amended to read:

"49-11-6. LAND GRANT-MERCED ASSISTANCE FUND CREATED-- DISTRIBUTION.--

A. The "land grant-merced assistance fund" is created as a nonreverting fund in the state treasury and shall be administered by the department of finance and administration. The fund consists of gifts, grants, donations,

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1 appropriations to the fund and distributions to the fund made  
2 pursuant to the Tax Administration Act.

3 B. On or before ~~[September 1, 2023 and on or~~  
4 ~~before]~~ September 1 of each ~~[subsequent]~~ year, the state  
5 auditor shall provide a list to the land grant council of the  
6 land grants-mercedes that are in compliance with the Audit Act  
7 and the category of compliance required for each land grant-  
8 merced pursuant to Subsection B of Section 12-6-3 NMSA 1978.

9 C. Within thirty days of the receipt of the list of  
10 Audit-Act-compliant land grants-mercedes and their Audit Act  
11 compliance levels provided by the state auditor pursuant to  
12 Subsection B of this section, the land grant council shall  
13 determine the land grants-mercedes on the list that are  
14 assistance-qualified pursuant to Paragraph (1) of Subsection F  
15 of this section and their distribution categories pursuant to  
16 Subsection D of this section and provide a list of those  
17 determinations to the department of finance and administration  
18 and the state treasurer.

19 D. An assistance-qualified land grant-merced with  
20 an annual revenue, calculated on a cash basis of accounting,  
21 exclusive of capital outlay funds or federal or private grants  
22 disbursed directly by an administrating agency or previous year  
23 distributions from the land grant-merced assistance fund, shall  
24 receive an annual distribution amount ~~[starting in fiscal year~~  
25 ~~2024 and continuing in each subsequent fiscal year]~~ in

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1 accordance with the following:

2 (1) less than [~~fifty thousand dollars~~  
3 ~~(\$50,000)] one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000), the  
4 assistance-qualified land grant-merced shall receive a full  
5 distribution;~~

6 (2) at least [~~fifty thousand dollars~~  
7 ~~(\$50,000)] one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) but [~~not~~  
8 ~~more~~] less than two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000),  
9 the assistance-qualified land grant-merced shall receive  
10 seventy-five percent of a full distribution;~~

11 (3) at least two hundred fifty thousand  
12 dollars (\$250,000) but [~~not more~~] less than five hundred  
13 thousand dollars (\$500,000), the assistance-qualified land  
14 grant-merced shall receive fifty percent of a full  
15 distribution; and

16 (4) five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000)  
17 or more, the assistance-qualified land grant-merced shall  
18 receive twenty-five percent of a full distribution.

19 E. Within thirty days of receiving the list of  
20 assistance-qualified land grants-mercedes pursuant to  
21 Subsection C of this section, the state treasurer shall  
22 distribute to each assistance-qualified land grant-merced the  
23 amount determined pursuant to Subsections C and D of this  
24 section. [~~If the balance in the fund as of the preceding June~~  
25 ~~30 exceeds the sum of certified amounts distributed, the~~

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1 ~~difference shall revert to the general fund.]~~

2 F. As used in this section:

3 (1) "assistance-qualified land grant-merced"  
4 means a land grant-merced that has supplied an account of its  
5 previous fiscal year revenue calculated in the same manner used  
6 for an annual calculation pursuant to Subsection D of this  
7 section to the land grant council, is in compliance with  
8 Chapter 49, Article 1 or 4 NMSA 1978, including having an  
9 elected board of trustees, and is in compliance with the Audit  
10 Act; and

11 (2) "full distribution" means an amount equal  
12 to the annual amount of money in the land grant-merced  
13 assistance fund at the start of a fiscal year divided by the  
14 total number of assistance-qualified land grants-mercedes as  
15 determined by the land grant council pursuant to Subsection C  
16 of this section for that fiscal year."

17 SECTION 2. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the  
18 provisions of this act is July 1, 2026.

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SENATE BILL

**57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2026**

INTRODUCED BY

DISCUSSION DRAFT

FOR THE LAND GRANT COMMITTEE

AN ACT

RELATING TO WATER; INCREASING THE ANNUAL TRANSFER FROM THE NEW MEXICO IRRIGATION WORKS CONSTRUCTION FUND TO THE ACEQUIA AND COMMUNITY DITCH INFRASTRUCTURE FUND.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. Section 72-14-23 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1955, Chapter 266, Section 15, as amended by Laws 2019, Chapter 62, Section 9 and by Laws 2019, Chapter 169, Section 2) is amended to read:

"72-14-23. NEW MEXICO IRRIGATION WORKS CONSTRUCTION FUND CREATED--LIMITATION OF LIABILITY UNDER ACT--REPARATION OF DAMAGES CAUSED IN CARRYING OUT POWERS GRANTED--AUTHORITY OF COMMISSION TO RECEIVE CONTRIBUTIONS.--

A. [~~There is created a fund to be known as the~~] The "New Mexico irrigation works construction fund" [~~which~~] is

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1 created as a nonreverting fund in the state treasury and shall  
2 consist of the income creditable to the permanent reservoirs  
3 for irrigation purposes income fund not otherwise pledged under  
4 Section 72-14-19 NMSA 1978 and all other money that may be  
5 appropriated by the legislature to the [~~construction~~] fund.  
6 [~~The fund shall be a continuing fund and shall not revert to~~  
7 ~~the general fund or to any other fund.~~]

8 B. Annually, [~~two million five hundred thousand~~  
9 ~~dollars (\$2,500,000)~~] five million dollars (\$5,000,000) shall  
10 be transferred from the New Mexico irrigation works  
11 construction fund to the acequia and community ditch  
12 infrastructure fund.

13 C. Annually, one million dollars (\$1,000,000) shall  
14 be [~~distributed~~] transferred from the New Mexico irrigation  
15 works construction fund to the forest land protection revolving  
16 fund.

17 D. The cost of investigations and construction as  
18 authorized in Section 72-14-11 NMSA 1978 shall be paid from the  
19 New Mexico irrigation works construction fund and also the cost  
20 of all preliminary work on any project, and all expenses  
21 directly chargeable to such project, prior to the receipt of  
22 the proceeds of bonds, shall be paid from the construction  
23 fund. The amount of all such expenses on account of any  
24 project and such part of the general administrative expenses of  
25 the commission and the cost of investigation as shall be

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1 properly chargeable, in the opinion of the commission, to such  
2 project shall be reimbursed to the construction fund upon the  
3 receipt of the proceeds of bonds issued for such project. No  
4 liability or obligation shall be incurred under the provisions  
5 of Sections 72-14-9 through 72-14-28 NMSA 1978 beyond the  
6 extent to which the money has been provided under the authority  
7 of those sections. All public and private property damaged or  
8 destroyed in carrying out the powers granted under those  
9 sections shall be restored or repaired and placed in its  
10 original condition, as nearly as practicable, or adequate  
11 compensation made therefor out of funds provided by those  
12 sections.

13 E. The commission shall also have authority to pay  
14 the cost of such investigations and construction on any project  
15 from the New Mexico irrigation works construction fund when  
16 contracts in form satisfactory to it have been entered into  
17 whereby title to works have been mortgaged, deeded, assigned or  
18 transferred by the owner to the commission, and a program for  
19 reimbursement of all amounts expended, together with operation  
20 and maintenance charges, have been agreed upon; provided that  
21 no construction contract shall be entered into without the  
22 prior approval of the state board of finance. The commission  
23 shall also have authority to receive and accept appropriations  
24 and contributions from any source of either money or property  
25 or other things of value to be held, used and applied for the

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underscoring material = new  
~~[bracketed material] = delete~~

1 purposes provided in Sections 72-14-9 through 72-14-28 NMSA  
2 1978."

3 SECTION 2. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the  
4 provisions of this act is July 1, 2026.





LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SERVICE  
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO