Acequias and Community Ditches in New Mexico: Updates and Policy Recommendations

Water and Natural Resources Legislative Interim Committee
Roswell, New Mexico
October 3, 2018

- **The New Mexico Acequia Association** is a grassroots, membership based organization of acequias and community ditches in New Mexico. Since 1989, we have been working to protect acequias and agricultural water rights through community education, organizing and advocacy.

- The NMAA provides workshops, training, and technical assistance to acequia elected officials on acequia governance including bylaws, easements, water management, financial compliance, and infrastructure planning.

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
Valencia	1
22 Counties	**640**

Since 2015, NMAA has conducted an annual survey of acequias and has developed a database of acequias with contact information for 640 acequias in 22 counties. The list continues to grow each year.
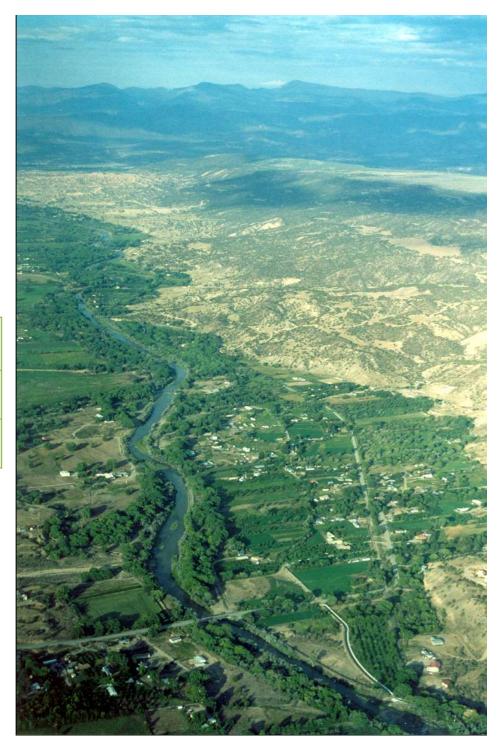
Acequia Agriculture

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.

	New Mexico	Acequia Counties	
Number of Farms	11,430	4,856	**42%**
Irrigated Acres	680,318	185,985	**27%**

* 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.

Photo: Velarde, Rio Arriba County. Home of numerous orchards and Las Nueve Acequias del Rio Grande.

Acequias contribute to the statewide agricultural economy.

Market Value of Livestock and Crops Produced		
	New Mexico	Acequia Counties
Livestock	$1.9 Billion	$104 million
Crops	$617 million	$84 million

In their respective counties, acequias are the foundation of the local agricultural economy.

	Average Market Value Produced per Farm	Market Value in Sales for County
Mora	$19,468	$11,623,000
Rio Arriba	$10,031	$18,979,000
San Juan	$27,135	$71,311,000
San Miguel	$21,244	$18,631,000
Sandoval	$10,287	$10,586,000
Taos	$8,560	$8,415,000

Los Sembradores is a farmer training program for apprentices to receive stipends to work with a farm trainer for an entire growing season. In addition to regular duties farming, apprentices learn about farm business planning and land/water issues.

Acequias:
Local Water Governance

- Acequias have managed water for centuries in New Mexico. They are self-sufficient and operate with volunteer labor and financial assessments on members.

- Acequias are governed according to state law Chapter 72, Articles 2 and 3, NMSA 1972. They are recognized as political subdivisions of the state.

- Acequias are governed by a three-member elected commission and mayordomo.

NMAA works with hundreds of acequias each year on governance issues, infrastructure planning, and financial compliance.

NMAA works with partners, NMACD, ISC and local SWCDs, to provide assistance to acequias with infrastructure planning and identifying sources of funding.

Interstate Stream Commission

90-10 Program: $1.9 million for acequia projects

Acequia Loan Program: 2% Loans

- Contact: Jonathan Martinez
- 505-827-6160, JonathanC.Martinez@state.nm.us

NM State Legislature

Capital Outlay: Amount available varies.

- Contact: Your State Legislator, List is at www.nmlegis.gov

Water Trust Board

- Contact: NM Finance Authority 505-984-1454, www.nmfa.net

NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

NM Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

- Contact: Your NRCS District Conservationist
- Contact: Norman Vigil 575-684-0042, norman.vigilsr@outlook.com
- NMAA can provide a list of names and phone numbers

USACE Acequia Program

- Funding for larger projects greater than $500k
- Contact: Jonathan Martinez from ISC