

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE NEW MEXICO ACEQUIA COMMISSION TO STUDY METHODS OF MUTUAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT AND ACEQUIA ASSOCIATIONS IN THE SOUTH VALLEY TO PROTECT ACEQUIAS IN THE MIDDLE RIO GRANDE VALLEY.

WHEREAS, the New Mexico acequia commission provides and assists the governor, the legislature, the office of the state engineer, the interstate stream commission and the United States corps of engineers in establishing acequia and community ditch rehabilitation priorities and in other acequia and community ditch matters; and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico acequia commission serves as a facilitator for communication between acequia and community ditch associations and state and federal agencies; and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico acequia commission is required to review any plan or legislation affecting acequias or community ditches and comment on that plan or legislation to the governor, the legislature, the director of the New Mexico department of agriculture and the interstate stream commission; and

WHEREAS, acequias in the middle Rio Grande valley have a long history dating back to the centuries-old settlements of Spanish land grants; and

WHEREAS, the lack of protection of acequias within the

middle Rio Grande valley threatens a local culture that is several hundred years old and that has served as the "bonding" instrument for many communities along the Rio Grande; and

WHEREAS, acequias in the middle Rio Grande valley were established over three hundred years ago and functioned in the same manner as those in other areas of the state; and

WHEREAS, protecting acequias in the middle Rio Grande valley supports the preservation of traditional cultural and spiritual values connected to land and water and promotes food security, food production and health benefits associated with local foods; and

WHEREAS, acequias are critical to the preservation of agricultural tradition and are essential for producing fresh local food for local consumption; and

WHEREAS, the preservation of traditional culture and small farming in the middle Rio Grande valley is being challenged by potential water transfers from agricultural use to new developments for municipal and industrial uses; and

WHEREAS, the benefits from farming within the middle Rio Grande valley potentially amount to nearly one hundred thirty-five million dollars (\$135,000,000) annually, which will help revitalize local communities by creating economic incentives to grow local foods that, in turn, will be distributed through local markets; and

WHEREAS, acequias in the middle Rio Grande valley

support the vital recharge of the aquifer and protect the habitat of hundreds of significant bird species and biosystems along the Rio Grande; and

WHEREAS, several acequias in the middle Rio Grande valley have reorganized under state law to strengthen water distribution, improve water availability for irrigation and maintain side and lateral ditches; and

WHEREAS, the status of acequias in the middle Rio Grande conservancy district that have received capital improvement funds from the state legislature has been questioned by the interstate stream commission;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the New Mexico acequia commission be requested to study conservancy district powers over acequias within the middle Rio Grande conservancy district; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Mexico acequia commission foster a dialogue that will strengthen the ability of conservancy districts and acequias to meet current and future water needs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Mexico acequia commission report its findings and recommendations to the appropriate legislative interim committee dealing with water issues by November 2012; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the New Mexico acequia commission, the middle

Rio Grande conservancy district, the acequia associations in the middle Rio Grande valley, the attorney general and the interstate stream commission.