

1 SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 15

2 **50TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2012**

3 INTRODUCED BY

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10 A JOINT MEMORIAL

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

15  
16 WHEREAS, the New Mexico acequia commission provides and  
17 assists the governor, the legislature, the office of the state  
18 engineer, the interstate stream commission and the United  
19 States corps of engineers in establishing acequia and community  
20 ditch rehabilitation priorities and in other acequia and  
21 community ditch matters; and

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

25 WHEREAS, the New Mexico acequia commission is required to

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1 review any plan or legislation affecting acequias or community  
2 ditches and comment on that plan or legislation to the  
3 governor, the legislature, the director of the New Mexico  
4 department of agriculture and the interstate stream commission;  
5 and

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

9 WHEREAS, the lack of protection of acequias within the  
10 middle Rio Grande valley threatens a local culture that is  
11 several hundred years old and that has served as the "bonding"  
12 instrument for many communities along the Rio Grande; and

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

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

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

24 WHEREAS, the preservation of traditional culture and small  
25 farming in the middle Rio Grande valley is being challenged by

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1 potential water transfers from agricultural use to new  
2 developments for municipal and industrial uses; and

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

9 WHEREAS, acequias in the middle Rio Grande valley support  
10 the vital recharge of the aquifer and protect the habitat of  
11 hundreds of significant bird species and biosystems along the  
12 Rio Grande; and

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

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

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

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Mexico acequia

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1 commission foster a dialogue that will strengthen the ability  
2 of conservancy districts and acequias to meet current and  
3 future water needs; and

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

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
9 transmitted to the New Mexico acequia commission, the middle  
10 Rio Grande conservancy district, the acequia associations in  
11 the middle Rio Grande valley, the attorney general and the  
12 interstate stream commission.