



SB 272 (Campos), Acequia and Community Ditch Education Program Appropriation Bill

New Mexico Acequia Association
February 15, 2023

Synopsis of SB 272:

This bill would increase funding for the **Acequia and Community Ditch Education Program** at DFA to expand technical assistance services to acequias with a \$200,000 appropriation for expenditure in fiscal year 2024. Any unexpended or unencumbered funds remaining at the end of fiscal year 2024 shall revert to the general fund.

Background:

Since 2007, DFA Local Government Division has included a line item for the Acequia and Community Ditch Education Program (ACDEP). NMAA works to implement the ACDEP, which is funded through a Professional Services Contract with DFA. The ACDEP supports community education and technical assistance for acequias, stakeholders, and youth. NMAA has worked for over twenty years to create a specialized program for education and technical assistance for acequias and community ditches based upon first-hand experience and knowledge of acequia leaders.

Why this Bill is Needed:

- **Disaster recovery outreach & technical assistance:** Through the ACDEP, the NMAA has been able to provide critical disaster response services including the following:
 - Education and outreach about state and federal disaster programs in the Hermit's Peak Calf Canyon (HPCC) and Black Fire disasters, including mapping and damage assessments.
 - Interagency communication and coordination for debris removal including communications with FEMA, NMDOT, ISC, and DHSEM. Weekly coordination meetings with acequia elected officials and agency officials to facilitate communication.
 - Technical assistance with submission of 38 FEMA Requests for Public Assistance as well as outreach to facilitate participation in USDA disaster programs.
- **Governance and infrastructure assistance:** Acequias are political subdivisions of the state and are required to follow state law. For example, acequias are required to have bylaws and are required to comply with the Audit Act. In recent years, the interest and demand for infrastructure funding has increased based statewide. NMAA staff, using resources from the ACDEP, provide specialized technical assistance in addressing these needs. Some of the examples of governance and infrastructure assistance provided in FY22 include the following:

- Governance technical assistance to acequias on water rights, acequia bylaws, infrastructure, financial compliance with Office of the State Auditor (OSA) and other governance matters;
- Infrastructure technical assistance with Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plans, Capital Outlay, and Acequia and Community Ditch Infrastructure Fund. Facilitating communication between funding agencies such as the ISC and acequias statewide.
- **Community and Youth Education**
 - Acequia Youth Leadership Institute. This program brings together an annual cohort of twenty youth to learn about issues regarding acequias, land, and water as well as to be introduced to leadership and advocacy.
 - Community workshops and events. NMAA attends numerous workshops, acequia meetings, and events to conduct education and outreach.