



*¡SOMOS LA SIGUIENTE GENERACIÓN DE ACEQUIERO/AS!*

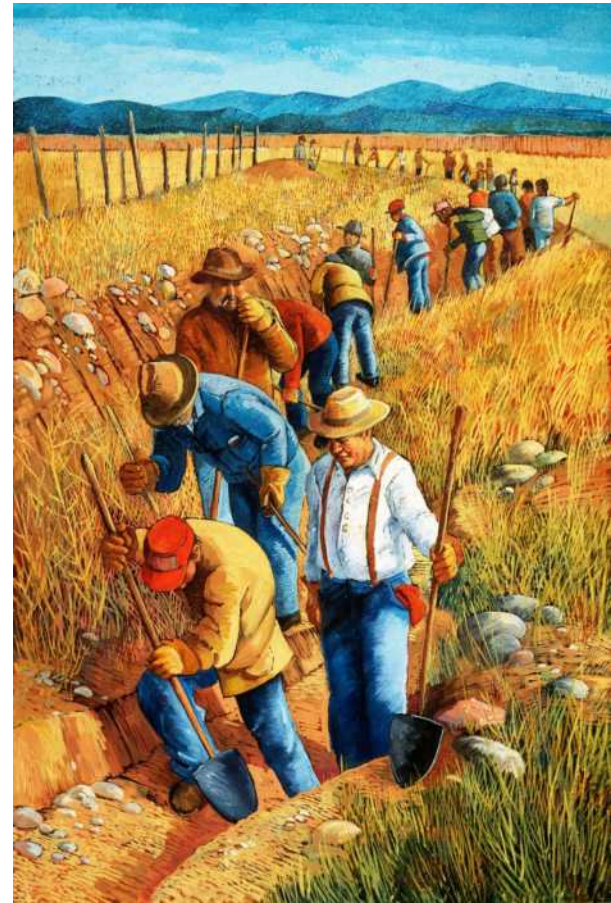
*WE ARE THE NEXT GENERATION OF ACEQUIA CARETAKERS!*



**WHAT ARE ACEQUIAS?** Acequias are the irrigation ditches which carry precious *agua* (water) from the *monte* (mountains), *rios* (rivers) and *ojos* (springs), to our homes and farms across New Mexico. They move water across the land just like the veins in our bodies, or the branches of a tree. When we say 'acequia' we are not just talking about the water, we are also talking about the whole community of people that is connected to it.

Acequias were dug by hand using tools like the *pala* (shovel), and the amazing strength of communities and families working together. The first NM acequias were dug over 400 years ago, when people from Spain and Mexico first settled here. These people brought with them the knowledge and traditions of their ancestors, and also learned from the Indigenous Pueblo people of this land, who have been caring for the land and water for thousands of years using their own irrigation systems and also dryland farming skills.

There are currently over 700 documented acequias in New Mexico that are flowing to bring water to their communities (this number doesn't include many 100's more ditches on Indigenous Pueblo land or those that aren't active anymore). Each acequia has its own unique name. These names often tell us important things about the history of the place, the features of the landscape (such as the *Acequia del Llano* or Acequia 'of the grassland'), or about the families who live along them (such as the *Acequia de los Vigiles*). Each acequia also has its own group of local leaders who are elected by their neighbors to be caretakers of the water.



The *mayordomo* or *mayordoma* is the person responsible for the daily care and maintenance of the acequia. They do things like walking the length of acequia to make sure the water is flowing properly and getting to each family. The *comisión* (commission) is a group of 3 local people elected to handle the business of the acequia and do things like hold community meetings and speak up for the needs of the acequia at the local, state and national level.

Every Spring, community members of each acequia come together for the annual *limpia* (cleaning) of the acequia and prepare to *regar* (irrigate) during the growing season. Many also hold a special celebration to give *bendiciones* (blessings) and thanks for the water because '*el agua es vida*' - water is life!

## WHY ARE THEY SO IMPORTANT?

- **Thousands of NM farms and ranches depend on the acequia water to grow the local food we need to be healthy and strong!**
- **Acequias nourish our whole environment** - they create ribbons of life that are home to all kinds of important bugs, birds, animals and wild plants. Acequia water can also bubble down and replenish the underground aquifers that provide our drinking water!



- **Acequias are based on the understanding that water is a sacred gift.** Learning about acequias helps us remember this and use our voices to speak out against anything that pollutes, wastes, or abuses water.
- **It takes a community to care for an acequia!** Working with the acequia connects us to each other, to our neighbors, and to the place we call home.
- **In the face of climate change, we need to re-learn how to live in a sustainable and healthy way that respects the Earth and natural cycles.** Acequias are a model for how to do this that we can learn from as our world changes.
- **Acequias help make us who we are as people of New Mexico!** When we care for acequias, we help carry on generations of wisdom, skills and memory.

GET INVOLVED! As youth living in (or near!) acequia communities - YOU are needed to help keep our acequias flowing for generations to come! Here are just a few ideas of ways to learn more and get involved:

- Take part in the annual acequia cleaning in your community.
- Celebrate the *primer agua* (first day of water) with your family and friends, give thanks to the water!
- Talk to your elders about their memories and knowledge about acequias and local farming. You may want to document their stories with a community history interview project!
- Use art, music, poetry and creative expressions to show your love of acequias - and participate in the yearly NMAA Acequia Art Contest!
- Learn to garden, farm, ranch and care for local seeds with your family or a community program!
- Use your future career to protect acequias - there are so many paths such as being a documentarian, scientist, lawyer, politician, teacher, artist, healer, farmer, builder + so much more!
- Contact NMAA to learn more and apply for the yearly Los Sembradores Farmer Training Program (ages 18 and up) - or Acequia Youth Leadership Institute (ages 14-19).

***We are here to support you! Contact us - [www.lasacequias.org](http://www.lasacequias.org) - 505-995-9644  
Instagram: @nm\_acequia\_association - Facebook: New Mexico Acequia Association***