

# Noticias de las Acequias

New Mexico *Acequia* Association • Summer 2016

## Acequia Culture and the Regional Food System

by Miguel Santistevan

Acequia irrigation practices originated in the highlands of Central Asia over 10,000 years ago and later travelled to places like India and the Middle East. As acequias were established in different areas from the Old World to the New, crops from these areas were incorporated into the diet and practice of acequia culture. By the time the acequia system arrived in the Americas in the 16th Century, it carried with it an entourage of crops and animals that represented its origins: apple trees and chickens from Asia, cattle and sorghum from Africa, and sheep and many legumes from the Near East, to name a few.

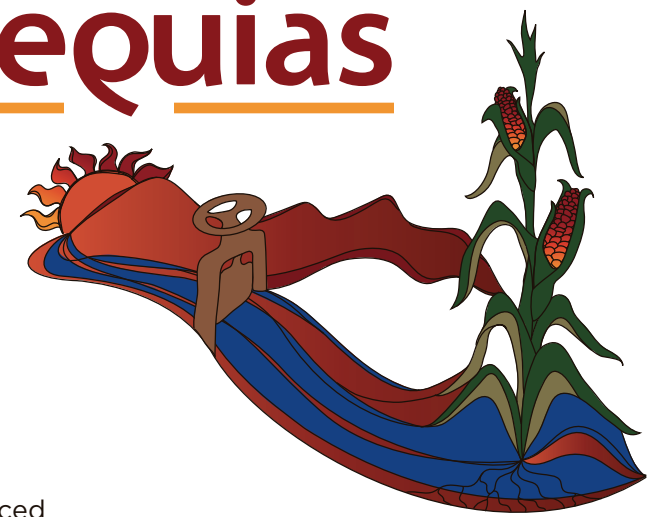
The Old World acequia tradition was matched by incredible agricultural development of the indigenous populations in the Americas. Indigenous peoples were practicing many kinds of agricultural production that relied on intensive management of the landscape including dry land agriculture, floating gardens, agri-forestry, terracing, and flood irrigation, to name a few. The acequia concept came northward with Spanish and Mexican settlers and later included the crops and practices of Puebloan cultures as it took root in New Mexico.

Over time a unique and integrated food system developed that can only be found in New Mexico. A mixture Old and New World foods, crops, and traditions developed into a regional food system that was mostly sustained by acequias. Communities relied on each other to provide the staples that could be abundantly produced in their respective environments. What could not be grown in particular areas was obtained through barter with other communities. For example, chile crops produced in villages of lower elevations could be traded with potatoes that came from higher elevations.

New Mexico eventually experienced many changes of modernization, many of which have interrupted agricultural practices and our relationship to local food and acequias. Some lands shifted to pasture and alfalfa production, feeding our desire for dairy and meat products. Today, acequia production can be measured in the production of bulk commodities and smaller-scale specialty production that feeds farmers' markets as well as the continuation of traditional agriculture and food traditions. Many foods from the acequia continue to be cornerstone of local culture and regional cuisine, with specialty foods like chicos (dried horno roasted corn stew), tamales, posole, and of course chile, making appearances at least for holidays. Many others consume atole and chaquegüe (blue and white cornmeal porridge) regularly, crops that were grown in or originated from an acequia landscape.

As a person looks to reconnect with local food, the best place to start is with what has worked in the past. The acequia tradition offers practicality and sustainability for food production in our environment that can be characterized by alkaline soils, limited water, and potential weather extremes. Over the generations of agricultural refinement, acequia culture offers examples for the expansion of our regional food system in terms of community organization, resiliency in practice, and its relationship with incidental food production in the landscape.

The term acequia not only refers to the physical irrigation channel, but to all the members who belong to it and help manage it. The local knowledge contained within the community and the organizational structure that keeps people



connected to the acequia tradition will be important for strengthening our regional food system. Acequia communities manage resources like water and land together for mutual benefits in agricultural production. These relationships result in people coming together to continue the practices necessary in the production of food like cleaning acequias, picking up bales, or butchering animals (matanzas).

The acequia tradition of agriculture can be described by the use of diverse crop and animal types and land use techniques in the watershed. Production takes on a seasonal character with different activities meeting each season. Root crops and certain grains can be planted in the late Fall; certain frost-tolerant legumes, roots, and other grains can be planted in the late Winter/early Spring; and most grains, legumes, and fruits vegetables can be planted in the late Spring and early Summer. Working with different crops at different times of the year can take advantage of potential qualities of each season, like temperatures and moisture, and can create the conditions for more sustainable yields over the long term.

Acequia culture also carries with it the concept of "jardín de riso" and gathering the landscape, components of a regional food system that are likely to gain importance as we begin to feel the effects of a deteriorating industrial food system and climate change. The jardín de riso is the collection of wild plants that serve as food and medicine that happen to propagate themselves in the irrigated landscape as "weeds." Several varieties of

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l to r: Kiko Pacheco, Chris Duran, Bernadette Valerio, and Jamie Rivera harvest corn from the Parr Field Garden Project located near Enos Garcia Elementary School in Taos, NM. The chicos made from this corn were fed back to the elementary school students for their Holiday meal. Photos by Miguel Santistevan.

An irrigated field in Taos connects this land and family to food and the community through connection to the acequia.

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## Protecting Water: From Acequias to Standing Rock



Women Water Protectors. Photo by Pacific Press Light Rocket Getty Images.

by NMAA Staff

Here in New Mexico, there is a long tradition of being caretakers and protectors of the water in the arid environment we call home. “El Agua es Vida/Water is Life” is a universal concept that echoes the fundamental importance of water to survival. In acequia communities, we view water as a don divino, or divine gift, and as a common resource that sustains all life.

Today, we are witnessing the rise of one of the biggest collective actions to protect water at the Standing Rock Sioux Nation at Cannon Ball, North Dakota. Hundreds of indigenous nations and their supporters are opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline Project (DAPL), a project of Energy Transfer Partners, planned to have the capacity to transport at least 570,000 barrels of oil a day across four states from the Bakken Oil Fields in North Dakota to Patoka, Illinois. The project is estimated to be more than half complete at a cost of \$3.7 million. In addition to Standing Rock, there has also been strong opposition to the pipeline by a coalition of organizations in Iowa where dozens have been arrested for protesting the pipeline. Iowa farmers have sued to object to the use of eminent domain to make way for the pipeline through their property.

The construction on the pipeline started in May with permits from regulatory agencies in states along the route. However, the project is under litigation over permitting by the Army Corp of Engineers, which has jurisdiction over those portions of the pipe that cross bodies of water. For the Missouri River Crossing, the Corps determined that the pipeline would have “no significant impact” on the environment and therefore waived the requirement for a detailed Environmental Impact Statement. Furthermore, the Corp used an expedited permitting process, National Permit Process No. 12, rather than the more rigorous 404 permit. Another complication was that the Corps issued a verification to bore underneath Lake Oahe before granting the easement to cross the lake.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe sued the Army Corp of Engineers in federal court over a lack of compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and adequate consultation with the tribe in the granting of the permit. In September, a federal judge denied the tribe’s request for an injunction and the tribe immediately appealed. At the same time, the Army halted further work on that section of the pipeline to review past permitting decisions. Although construction is proceeding in other stretches of the pipeline, the crossing of the Missouri River is on hold pending the ongoing litigation with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. A hearing is pending on the appeal for November but the litigation could go on over a year.

Besides crossing the Missouri River, the pipeline has another 209 river crossings. Opponents to the pipeline have raised concerns about the potential for leaks in the pipeline, which could contaminate communities, farms, rivers, and aquifers for millions of people. Communities have cause to be concerned about pipeline leaks. As recently as September 2016, a pipeline leak spilled 360,000 gallons of gas in Shelby County, Alabama. In 2011, a pipeline beneath the Yellowstone River in Montana leaked spilling 63,000 of crude oil leaving pollution along an 85 mile stretch of the river. A more recent spill in the same area contaminated the water supply for the community of Glendive, Montana. In the case of the Yellowstone River, Exxon Mobile paid a settlement of \$12 million for cleanup activities but local communities are left to wonder if their river and drinking water are safe.

In the case of the Standing Rock, if the pipeline were to fail, the leak from the pipeline could contaminate the river. Downstream communities on in the Standing Rock Sioux nation would be immediately affected but millions of communities downstream who rely on the Missouri would also be affected by the contamination if a leak would occur.

The pipeline has galvanized a movement that has unified indigenous nations and allies to protect water. Many local organizations, concerned citizens, and tribal councils including the All Indian Pueblo Council and Eight Northern Indian Pueblo Council, have organized around the issue, either through supply donations, political actions, or physical participation in the camps. In early September dozens of organizations, including Tewa Women United, Honor Our Pueblo Existence, Las Vegas Peace and Justice Center, and SWOP signed a letter to the president and

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# Reflections by Las Comadres de las Acequias

Women have had a historical role in the support and survival of acequias throughout the generations, including serving as part of the labor, providing meals for other laborers, teaching children the values of land-based culture and way of life, and serving as mayordomas and commissioners. Las Comadres women's caucus is a group of women wanting to support other women leaders, including young women, *para defender la agua y la tierra*. The New Mexico Acequia Association opened a space for women in the *Noticias de las Acequias* to reflect on the seasonal land based traditions, organizing, and other personal endeavors or struggles they are a part of in order to develop and strengthen support systems for women leaders, particularly in acequia communities.

## Acequias: Waters of All Possibilities

Escrito por Sylvia Ernestina Vergara

El agua esta respondiendo, rushing by, singing its own song about life. As I look into the water of the acequia, I ask for special words to share.

The waters of the acequia remind me that they bring gifts of life and this gift is not to be taken for granted.

When I irrigate, the acequia water beckons me to ask questions:

In times of economic challenge, how do we survive without losing our treasures of hope, love and profound experience?

How do we see ourselves as a waterway, a path to new visions of life, economic solutions, prosperity, happiness, abundance with plenty to share so there is no lack for anyone?

Yo creo que las aguas de las acequias tienen todas las respuestas in the very nature of what they are; waterways to be equitably shared that sustain life and create social justice.

The acequia can be heard singing in the distance as farmers transform the cosecha into foods that will sustain the body and spirit through the winter.

¡El agua! Its musical refrain over and over again reminds one of the deep relationships of honoring the land through sacrifice, hardship, hard work and sheer belief in its power.

In all this, there is dancing, music, singing, stories told, prayers, visiting, births, deaths, our life experience filled to the brim with challenge and moments of love, possibilities for serenity amid the storms.

Broken hearts cry out! Acequia waters reach back with healing.

New possibilities swirl and flow.  
Again, I can believe in miracles.

Imagine—

--freely without restraint like the acequia waters

--a renewed renaissance of dialogue between peoples that create new possibilities

--new laws that value and protect the acequia waters



Fruit of the Acequia del Medio. Photo by Sylvia Vergara.

--no more pollution of our lands and waters

--no more nuclear contamination of our lands and waters

¡Imaginate! Through an enlivenment of language, la visita comes to life. Through neighborly platica we all learn, resolve conflicts, forgive each other, create and work together, love and share.

Awaken! ¡Otra vez es la madrugada! As the water flows through our hearts on its way to the future, never let negligence and forgetfulness erase its sacred path. 💧

Sylvia Ernestina Vergara of New Mexico lives in the Dixon/ Embudo Valley of Rio Arriba County where she farms sustainably without chemicals and tends her orchard of heritage apples and other fruits. Vergara's nature-friendly approach and active irrigation use of the Acequia del Medio has helped her to produce her farm based fruit company called La Carreta that has been nationally recognized. She has been a two-term commissioner of the Acequia del Medio. Presently, (2016) she has participated in the Agri-Cultura Network with fresh fruits and is also a participant of the Partners Program of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in planting pollinator flowers on her farm.

## Acequia Culture and the Regional Food System

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wild spinach (quelites) and purslane (verdolagas) flourish amongst the crops in the acequia fields. The relationship acequias have with the extended landscape provides a connection to other food resources such as piñon, chimaja (wild parsley), and other food and medicinal plants. In this tradition, gathering from the landscape can strengthen our regional food system by making use of wild plants such as four-wing saltbush and Indian Rice grass. These food sources were an important part of the diet of indigenous people of the region prior to European contact and thrive in our landscape.

It is inevitable that there are some challenges to our food security in the future. But these challenges can be met by innovations in our relationship to food if they are based on what has worked in the past and develop in a manner that is respectful to the environment and the cultures from which they come. Acequia agriculture has been cornerstone in the organization of the com-

munity and the actualization of food security and can and should continue to play a fundamental role into our future. Then our regional food system will serve not only the food needs of our population, but will allow the continuation of our longstanding agri-cultural traditions in New Mexico. The acequia landscape has changed, but every square foot of land connected to the acequia now represents a great part and potential of our regional food system and its ability to feed us from our communities. 💧



# The Los Luceros Apple Harvest Festival...

...on September 25, 2016 was a tremendous success! Some 400 people turned out to pick apples, press cider, learn about the historic Los Luceros, eat home-made pastelitos and caramel, dance, and give thanks. Friends and neighbors came from as far as Albuquerque, Pecos, and other rural communities. Thank you to all the partners, Department of Cultural Affairs, Rio Arriba County Extension, Rio Arriba Farm Service Agency, and New Mexico Acequia Association. Thank you to the community for coming out—we are hoping for a second annual Apple Harvest Festival next year!



L to R: These young ladies exemplified the joy to be had in orchards and the abundant apple harvest. Juliet and Donne of NMAA made 200 servings of fresh made pastelito with apples picked and processed by the grandchildren of Mary and Fred Thrones. Haying, led by Paul Romero, a key organizer of the event; this crew picked up 420 bales of hay at Los Luceros, while the festivities took place! Tim Seaman showed local youth how to turn the apples they picked into cider; samples were offered to all. The *Musicos Bandera* kept our spirits lifted and our bodies moving. All photos taken by Patrick Moore, DCA and Valerie Huerta, Rio Arriba Farm Bureau.

## Protecting Water: From Acequias to Standing Rock

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NM's congressional delegation supporting Standing Rock's lawsuit and resistance. In less than one month over 100 tribes across the nation have gathered in North Dakota at the encampment. From New Mexico, various delegations of supporters, advocates, and ceremonial dancers have traveled to North Dakota to stand in solidarity and support with ceremony, prayers, supplies, and other volunteer services.

Recently, Virginia Necochea and Jorge Garcia, founders of the Center for Social Sustainability Systems (CESSOS) received a call to action for danzantes (ceremonial dancers) to pilgrimage and pray in solidarity with Standing Rock to protect nuestra agua divina. In an interview with Jorge and Virginia, they testified why Standing Rock is an important movement and a call for our acequeros here in New Mexico who have a powerful spiritual and physical connection to water to rally against developments and threats to water in our own communities.

Virginia reflected on her experience there, "Witnessing all these different tribes and nations getting together for this cause made clear to me why our fight for water back home [here in NM] is also so important!"

Emphasizing this, Jorge questions "What is the best way to help Standing Rock? We must ignite a fire where all water protectors can gather and better understand the water issues in New Mexico. There is a growing need to unify the indigenous nations and land-based people of this nation around water."

Virginia associates the Standing Rock struggle with the opposition to the Santolina development west of Albuquerque. "The village of Atrisco is questioning any development of Santolina because it is going to impact our acequias and wells with an

overdependence of pumping water from the aquifer. After all of the research, facts, and resistance Santolina is being built despite the fact that our water is going to be affected." Acequias are vulnerable to the impacts of overpumping of aquifers and the transfer of water rights out of agriculture which result in a loss of water rights to their respective communities. Acequias are also sensitive to contamination that affects water quality.

For this reason, NMAA has been involved with Honor Our Pueblo Existence and Tewa Women United, along with other organizations, to raise concerns about pollution originating from Los Alamos National Laboratories in recent years. At last year's Congreso de las Acequias, Marian Naranjo from HOPE explained that, because of concerns raised by the community, LANL now has one of the most stringent stormwater discharge permits in the nation which is intended to reduce contamination from the labs into the Rio Grande.

The vision of the NM Acequia Association is to see our acequias flowing with clean water, people working together to grow food, and communities celebrating cultural and spiritual traditions that are connected to land and water. The worldview that treats land and water as commodities threatens the continued life of our communities. NMAA shares concerns about water quality and the preservation of cultural and traditional uses of water. In keeping with our mission, the NMAA supports access to clean water for generations to come for all people. 💧

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/2016/05/20/farmers-sue-to-block-use-of-eminant-domain/84676294/>

[http://m.bismarcktribune.com/news/state-and-regional/timely-pipeline-completion-fades-amid-legal-delays/article\\_fd21fcd8-bbd3-5420-8f34-1d89a1eb80f3.html](http://m.bismarcktribune.com/news/state-and-regional/timely-pipeline-completion-fades-amid-legal-delays/article_fd21fcd8-bbd3-5420-8f34-1d89a1eb80f3.html)

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/e6f3899addf54c16948c85e211e03da/epa-other-agencies-look-for-more-careful-review-oil-pipeline>

[http://finance.yahoo.com/m/625430d8-9fbb-3e4a-9672-de6845cc01cf/ss\\_the-latest%3A-exxon-to-pay-%2412m.html](http://finance.yahoo.com/m/625430d8-9fbb-3e4a-9672-de6845cc01cf/ss_the-latest%3A-exxon-to-pay-%2412m.html)



## NEW MEXICO ACEQUIA ASSOCIATION: MISSION & VISION

The New Mexico Acequia Association is a statewide, non-profit organization founded in 1990.

### MISSION

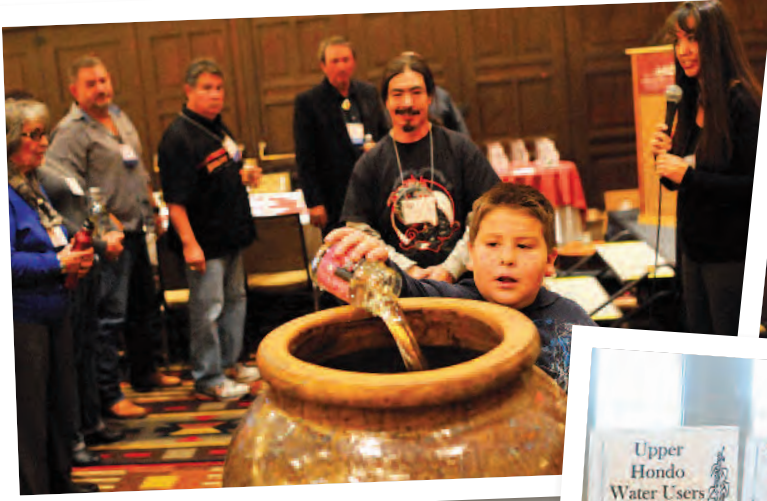
Our mission is to protect water and our acequias, grow healthy food for our families and communities, and to honor our cultural heritage.

### VISION STATEMENT

In our vision, acequias flow with clean water, people work together to grow food, and communities celebrate cultural and spiritual traditions. People honor acequias as part of our heritage and express *querencia* through a strong connection to land and community. Knowledge and experience about growing food, sharing water, and saving seed are passed on from generation to generation.

Guided by our core values, the New Mexico Acequia Association grows a movement of people of all ages and walks of life to defend and protect our precious water by resisting its commodification and contamination. Through involvement in NMAA, families and youth are inspired to cultivate the land, care for our acequias, and heal past injustices. Communities have an abundance of healthy, locally-grown food because we recognize agriculture as a respected and dignified livelihood and way of life.

## Join the NMAA for the Congreso de las Acequias!



Ignacio Gonzales offering water from his acequia to be blessed at the 2013 Congreso de las Acequias at Bishops Lodge in Santa Fe.



Los músicos de nuestra agua at the 2013 Congreso at Bishops Lodge in Santa Fe. All photos by Seth Roffman, Green Fire Times.



2015 Congreso de Las Acequias at the National Hispanic Cultural Ctr. in Albuquerque.

by Paula Garcia, NMAA Executive Dir.

This November marks the 17th annual Congreso de las Acequias, the largest statewide gathering of acequias in New Mexico. The Congreso is a celebration of acequia culture and a gathering of leaders to outline NMAA policy positions on current issues. NMAA invites all acequia parcientes and supporters to attend the Congreso and be part of the festivities.

The theme for the 2016 Congreso is *Nuestra Agua, Nuestro Futuro: Acequias Rising!* The program will feature a recognition of Water Defenders with dynamic storytelling about water struggles around New Mexico. In addition, project involving young people will be featured including a presentation about the Taos Valley Acequia Mapping Project in addition inspiring testimonials from the **Sembrando Semillas** project. In addition, NMAA leaders will give an update on **Agua es Vida: El Plan de las Acequias**, for which NMAA is using a participatory process that engages people in visioning and creating a vibrant future for our communities through the revitalization of the acequias. **Las Comadres**, the NMAA caucus of women leaders will

give an update on plans for 2017 to expand educational opportunities for youth to learn about acequias.

In a tradition started at last year's annual gathering, NMAA will honor several Water Defenders from communities around New Mexico who are organizing to protect water. Last year, NMAA recognized acequia leaders who successfully led water transfer protests and completed acequia construction projects. Other defenders were recognized for their work in protecting water quality and protect water rights in rural areas where water rights were at risk of commodification.

The NMAA will also involve attendees in creating an acequia quilt symbolizing a flowing acequia which will be comprised of hundreds of cloth pieces with each piece containing a message from an acequia about our hope for the future. The

acequia quilt, which we anticipate will have hundreds of pieces, will be unveiled at the 2017 Acequia Day at the State Legislature in February 2017 to raise awareness of the positive contributions acequias make to communities, heritage, and agricultural economy throughout New Mexico.

As is customary, NMAA will also recognize local leaders in an awards ceremony honoring mayordomos and other leaders, advocates, and scholars who have dedicated their lives to acequias in their local communities.

The Congreso is the annual statewide gathering of the New Mexico Acequia Association and everyone is invited. The event will be co-sponsored by the Taos Valley Acequia Association and the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District. 💧

## Cuentos Del Mayordomo

Over the years acequia leaders have not only dedicated their lives to protecting water and feeding our communities but also to holding our cultural narrative deep inside their hearts. Sharing stories, food, water, and occasionally a strong word or two with fellow parcientes or the Mayordomo, are some of the daily occurrences that are part of living on the acequia. We believe it is important for us to memorialize, share, and honor the experiences, language and stories that can only be found in our traditional acequia communities. NMAA is opening a section in the *Noticias de las Acequias* to highlight the stories of Mayordomos and Commissioners statewide with the hope of bringing a smile, laugh or tear to our readers. We think many readers will relate to the cuentos shared here and will feel proud to be a part of such a special culture!

One beautiful morning in San Fidel, New Mexico Mayordomo Leon Tafoya receives a call:

"Mr. Tafoya esta es la Señora Miranda, quiero saber porque no tengo agua? Y si no llega poco pronto, I am going to call the state engineer y aver como te va!?!? Mis rosas necesitan agua y mis arboles tambien. Yo conosco el state engineer and he doesn't put up with cosas like this! Oh! y te queria decir thank you for las semillas de chile. Hablamos al rato!"

A few moments later Leon receives another call:

"Señor Tafoya, esta es Señora Sanchez, que te hizo call la Señora Miranda? Porque I was calling to tell you that my pigs are acostados en la acequia y el agua estaba brincando bordo y no quiere pasar por lo de mas de la acequia. Tell her que estoy bien sorry pero sabes que? Pobres animales, esta muy caliente afuera pa' ellos. !Spensame!" 💧



Mayordomo Leon Tafoya con su pala en la Acequia San Jose de la Cienega. Acequia de San Jose de la Cienega. Photos by Marty Vigil, Secretary of Acequia de San Jose de la Cienega.



Little Tractors. Photo by Augustine Gonzales.

## Pig Tractor Project in Chamisal: Using Marranos for Weed Control

by Juliet Garcia-Gonzales

I have many beautiful memories of my family's corn field. Since I was a child, this was the field that grew rows and rows of maiz concho, sometimes blue corn, a variety of root vegetables, alberjon, and lots of beautiful calabazas. On occasion, my father would let the land rest for a while, and take the efforts to a different field. One year, my dad allowed our neighbors horses to graze the field to eat up what was left after a harvest. As a result, the horses brought in seeds of noxious weeds in their manure, and the takeover of the weeds in that field began. I remember looking at the field one season and seeing just a few plants, then from one

year to the next it seemed as if they had spread like wildfire. Looking for a solution, and talking about it amongst friends, it was recommended that we try raising some pigs. A few years ago we decided it was worth a try, but the attempt ended in tragedy when the neighbor's dogs got into the pen and killed both our pigs. It was clear we needed a better fence, so in small increments of time, when this precious time was allowed, my husband Edward, along with our sons Ignacio and Augustine, would go out and work on replacing or reinforcing the fence that surrounds the field.

This past May we were able to invest and currently have 3 healthy pigs that keep us busy. Early on, Edward decided to use the frame of an old trampoline, wheels from an old lawn mower tractor and some other material he has acquired to build a move-able "pig tractor," much like the chicken tractors that are popular now. The pigs are now able to be corralled and get moved as needed. They graze a portion of the field for a few days, and then the "tractor" is moved to another plot. We will continue this technique until they have grazed the whole field or until it freezes. Of course Edward is always building and refining his pig tractor design, and we are all fascinated by the pigs, and their ability to root up an area in a really short time, turning it all around, and leaving it fertilized in the same process.

So far the pigs have uprooted and eaten all of the weeds where they have grazed. Our goal is really to have them root out the milk thistle and bind weed in particular. We are happy with the results but we won't know until next year how it affects the bind weed and thistle. But an added benefit is that it's also been easier to keep the pigs fed because they are happy to just graze in their area for days. So it has cut down on daily feeding time. We are excited to see the impact of the fertilizer and their grazing on our garden next year, and will be happy to share the results and information! 💧

## Farmer Training Opportunity!

**Are you interested in learning how to be an organic acequia farmer in northern New Mexico?**

**Do you want to learn how to increase your production to sell commercially?**

**Are you looking for ways to put your agricultural land and water rights to use?**

**Are you interested in learning best practices and techniques from other local farmers?**

NMAA is proud to announce that we will be starting a yearlong Farmer-to-Farmer training program based in northern NM in 2017! The program will use a hands-on approach and a 15-point curriculum created by our partners American Friends Service Committee, based on the successful farm model pioneered by Don Bustos.

**Training includes:** farm planning, business planning, season extension, fertility and soil health, maintenance of equipment and usage, planting and harvesting techniques, organic pest management, marketing, value added processing, and an emphasis on network development/aggregation of food.

All training is free and will take place on farms located in the greater Española Valley and Taos County. Training is Mon/ Wed/Fri for approximately 6-7 hours per day, from February 2017 to December 2017. Trainees will receive a monthly stipend. **Participation is limited to three trainees and trainees must commit to the full year of training!**

**If you are interested in applying for this program, please contact Pilar Trujillo at [pilar@lasacequias.org](mailto:pilar@lasacequias.org) or (505) 995-9644.**



# The Call of the Stream

by Justina Trujillo, Acequia de San Jose de Barranco  
Participant in Sembrando Semillas de Abiquiu, NM  
15 Years Old



Justina Trujillo on her horse in Abiquiu, NM.

One block stuck in the flow of life—  
the troubles of one stream.  
A call for help where no one is seen.  
How can it thrive in time to produce la vida, when no one will listen to its call?

A quiet place with only few, where all speak with low tune and less trouble.  
He who hears la vida calling for help?  
Can you imagine the way it flows, speaks, listens?

He may only see the troubles of the stream, feel its pain.  
Only he may fit it, the chosen one, who has used la vida to stay alive and well.

Like a call to a dog with no ears, only spirit—  
he hears the soft and desperate call that only he can hear.  
Only he may help.  
He is the only one who knows la vida and understands the message of the stream.

Only he may find a way to keep it alive and remove this block—  
allow it to sing like one thousand blue jays!  
Only he may have la vida—  
only he who is worthy of la vida!

## Las Comadres de las Acequias Gathering

by NMAA Staff

On September 23, 2016 Las Comadres de Las Acequias, NMAA's Women's Leadership Caucus, gathered at the historic Los Luceros Ranch in Alcalde, NM. This gathering was a result of the Comadres Resolution recognizing women's leadership and declaring 2016 'The Year of The Woman' which was passed at the 2016 Congreso.

This beautiful intergenerational gathering of Comadres began with an opening blessing by Donne Gonzales, Lucinda Vigil and Doña Rose Hartnett, followed by a welcome by Paula Garcia, NMAA's Executive Director. In honor and celebration of Autumn/The Fall Equinox, each Comadre had the opportunity to share a meaningful item to the altar during introductions. The result was a beautiful homage to familia, comida, comunidad, tradición, agua y nuestra madre tierra which remained the center of the Comadres gathering.

After a rich platica regarding our work as Comadres, we were blessed to share a beautiful meal prepared by Margaret Garcia-Santistevan of Taos Real Food. After lunch, we were treated to a variety of desserts created by several Comadres. Lenora Romero brought us back to the circle with a song, "Semos Comadres," which was specially written for the occasion and then we continued our business at hand. As we progressed through the discussion of the day, several action items and next steps emerged, including nomination of the Comadres delegate and alternate to the upcoming Congreso.

After the afternoon platica on next steps and actions of the network we wound down as the wind kicked up ushering in the fall season. Las Comadres scattered to pick apples before giving a Despedida until the next gathering.

Comadres, y Compadres, remember to register for upcoming Congreso at [www.lasacequias.org](http://www.lasacequias.org). Nos vemos en noviembre!

To become involved with the Comadres de Las Acequias send an email to [maria@lasacequias.org](mailto:maria@lasacequias.org) 🍏



# Sembrando Semillas Youth Farmer Internship in Atrisco



All photos taken by Travis McKenzie at Cornelio Candelaria Organic Farms Atrisco, NM.

by Travis McKenzie

Through a partnership with the New Mexico Acequia Association, Cornelio Candelaria Organics, Think Like A Bee, and with generous contributions from the Albuquerque Community Foundation and W.K Kellogg Foundation, we were able to create the 2016 Sembrando Semillas Youth Farmer Internship in the Atrisco/South Valley of Albuquerque. We were able to work with 11 amazing youth for 8 weeks during the summer of 2016. The youth completed a 160-hour curriculum that taught them about traditional and modern methods of agriculture. We started each day by squishing squash bugs! Then we would circle up and check in and talk about the activities for the day. After that we would do stretches, yoga, Qi Gong, body movements, and then would all share a positive thought before we went to work. The youth learned about different planting methods, building planting beds, drip irrigation, hoop-houses, and how to grow blue corn, melons, and pumpkins with flood irrigation from our acequia. They also learned how to harvest and process vegetables for market, how to create compost and nutritious soil for our farm, and how to use different farm tools from the pala to our rototiller!

Another important part of the internship was working with Anita Amstutz of Think Like A Bee, and Lorenzo Candelaria and Dora Pacias of Cornelio Candelaria Organics. Anita taught the youth different bee proficiencies with hands on activities in our bee hives, including lessons on pollinator habitat and all about the importance of bees and how to care for them. The youth went to

farmers markets with Lorenzo and Dora, Sembrando Semillas Media Trainings with other youth, and field trips to other sites that are keeping bees and growing healthy food. We incorporated the concept of service leadership and encouraged the youth to be leaders in their schools and community.

At the end of the internship we held a small graduation ceremony in which everyone was awarded an Acequia Youth Farmer Certificate and a Certificate of Bee Proficiency! The youth blossomed in the short course of 8 weeks and many have expressed the life-changing qualities of their time spent with us.

It was an honor to work with these youth and witness how much they learned and how they connected to the healing energy of mother earth and the power to grow healthy, nutritious food for our community. This internship taught me that we need to come together to create more opportunities for our youth to engage in agriculture and work with our elders and with our acequia farmers across the entire state of New Mexico. Most of our youth stay inside over the summer glued to technology and really bored not knowing what is out there. We need to create opportunities to get youth on the field, with their hands in the earth, connecting with each other, and all the while doing something positive for their community. We look forward to the next season of interns and moving this work forward. ♦

***Que Vivan las Acequias y Que Vivan los Jovenes!  
Somos Gente de la Tierra!***

## GOVERNANCE TIPS Financial Compliance: A Responsibility for 21st Century Acequias

Acequias are political subdivisions of the state. One of the responsibilities as a unit of local government is compliance with the Audit Act. For smaller local governments, such as acequias, the Office of the State Auditor has a “Tiered System” for financial reporting. This applies to entities with revenues less than \$750,000. According to a statewide survey of acequias conducted last year, most acequias fall into either Tier 1 (revenues less than \$10,000) or Tier 2 (revenues between \$10,001 and \$50,000). A smaller number of acequias fall into Tier 3 or higher (particularly those who have expended state funds such as Capital Outlay).

For Tier 1 and Tier 2 acequias, all that is required to submit to the State Auditor is a Certification Letter that identifies your revenues for the past fiscal year. For Tier 3 and above, more detailed financial reporting is required.

NMAA would like to inform acequias about the deadlines for compliance with the Tiered Reporting System, which is five months after the close of the fiscal year:

- For acequias with a fiscal year end of June 30, 2016, the deadline to report to the State Auditor is November 30.
- For acequias with a fiscal year end of December 30, 2016, the deadline to report to the State Auditor is May 30, 2017.

The Department of Finance and Administration also has financial reporting requirements. Any governmental entity with revenues over \$10,000 in the upcoming fiscal year is considered a “local public body” and is required to report to DFA.

- If your acequia has a fiscal year start date of January 1, 2017, your preliminary budgets are due to DFA Local Government Division by November 30, 2016. After reconciling the financial statement for the previous fiscal year (January 1, 2016 to December 30, 2016), the acequias should submit a budget (approved by the acequia commission) by January 30, 2017.

- If your acequia has a fiscal year start date of July 1, 2017, your preliminary budgets are due to DFA Local Government Division by May 30, 2017. After reconciling the financial statement for the previous fiscal year (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017), the acequia should submit a budget (approved by the acequia commission) by August 30, 2017.

For more detailed information about compliance with the Audit Act or DFA financial reporting rules, please contact Serafina Lombardi, Director of Education and Outreach for NMAA at 505-995-9644. ♦

## Open Meetings Act Compliance

As political subdivisions, acequias are required to follow the Open Meetings Act (OMA), which is intended to allow the public access to decision-making by elected officials. The OMA requires meetings of the acequia to be open to the public and only held after reasonable notice.

Each acequia should have an Open Meetings Act resolution adopted annually that specifies the time and method for providing notice. NMAA has provided a template at: <http://www.lasacequias.org/news/open-meetings-act-resolution/>

The template resolution includes:

- 10-day notice by posting in a public place (additional notice, e.g., email, snail mail or as specified in your bylaws, is optional).

*continued on page 9*



# Acequia Annual Meetings: Opportunities for Building Community

by Paula Garcia, NMAA Executive Dir.

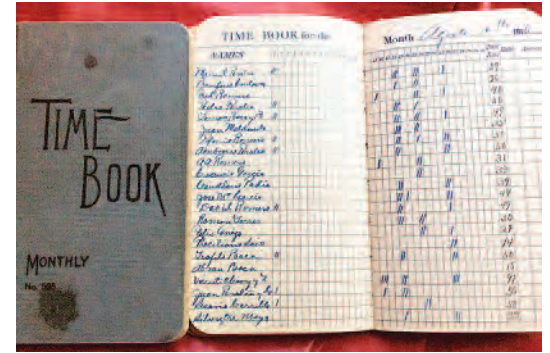
In acequia country, Fall is a time for harvesting crops, enjoying the changing colors, picking pinon, and stacking firewood for the winter. In many acequias, it is also time for acequia annual membership meetings. While the sacando la acequia (cleaning the acequia) is an important Spring tradition, acequia annual membership meetings are also an important tradition and customary practice. Membership meetings are a great opportunity to build community, address concerns, and renew commitments to maintain and improve the acequia for the next growing season. This article addresses the typical governance issues associated with annual meetings but also recommends that meetings have serve a broader purpose of strengthening community.

• **Community Building:** Host a meal or potluck, invite youth to participate or give a presentation, set aside time in the meeting for visiting with each other, recognize elders and past elected officials for their contributions to the community, etc.

• **Plans for the Future & Special Projects:** The annual membership meeting is also a good time to address the future of the acequia. For example, there may be a need to more intentionally recruit future commissioners and mayordomos to serve. An acequia may wish to discuss how engage youth in the operations and governance of the acequia. The acequia may also wish to give some of their members an opportunity to share information about their success stories or challenges from the previous year. Parciantes can learn a great deal from each other about conservation practices, irrigation systems, and farming and ranching.

• **Dates of Meetings:** Membership meetings are a long-standing practice in acequias but they are also specifically mentioned in state statutes governing acequias. State law requires that acequias hold a membership meeting at least every other year on odd-numbered years. Depending on the county in which the acequia is located, the statute specifies having meetings either in October or December.\* However, the statute also allows for the acequia to hold its meeting “or as soon as is practicable thereafter.” So although the statute provides a specific date, acequias often hold meetings at other times of the year. Furthermore, while the law requires a meeting every other year, most acequias hold their membership meetings on an annual basis.

• **Elections:** The acequia annual meeting is generally a time to conduct acequia business. This often includes elections. Each acequia has a three-member commission and mayordomo, and, depending on the bylaws of each acequia, the elections may be held staggered each year or held for all seats every other year. According to statute, acequia elected officials serve two-year terms. Prior to holding an election, it is helpful for the acequia to have an updated list of parciantes or members of the acequia. Additionally, the acequia commissioners who are presiding over an election should be clear on the method of voting. Bylaws generally contain the method of voting on the acequia, which may be a one vote per water right, a vote by proportion, or a variation of those. The acequia should also clarify the policy on proxy votes. State law allows proxy voting but the acequia should be specific about the use of proxy votes, including a form that specifies the date of the meeting and the names of the water right owner and



Grandfather's Log Book. Photo by Sarah Rivera-Cordova Acequia Madre de la Joya Socorro, NM.

the person serving as proxy. NMAA can provide sample proxy forms.

• **Reports to the Membership:** Another typical item of business is reports to the membership. At minimum, it is a good practice for the Treasurer to present a financial report to the membership. This could take the form of a statement of revenue and expenses. Additionally, a report from the Mayordomo may include an update on issues related to water distribution or the condition of infrastructure.

• **Water Supply and Allocation:** In addition to the Mayordomo's report, some acequias may find it useful to discuss the availability of water. Ultimately, the elected officials of the acequia will make the decision about the most efficient and equitable approach to allocating water, but the annual meeting is a good time to get input from the members/parciantes. As a general trend, there are more people interested in growing gardens for home use or commercial use. As more people transition to vegetable and fruit crops, it may help for the acequia to consider the diverse water needs of the members and how to fairly allocate water. In times of water shortage and drought, having a common understanding of sharing scarce water is important and the annual meeting can be a good place to communicate to reach that understanding.

• **Infrastructure Planning:** The annual meeting is an excellent opportunity to have a discussion about the short-term and long-term infrastructure needs of the acequia. The Mayordomo may give a report on his recommendations based on day-to-day experience on areas that need attention including major improvements such as a new diversion dam, repairs such as culvert replacements, or bank stabilization. If there is an ongoing or recently completed construction project or improvement, the annual meeting is a good time to provide an update. In recent years, many acequias have been affected by flooding in which case there may be discussion about how to improve disaster planning for the acequia. Parciantes can have the opportunity to offer their input about infrastructure priorities. This discussion should be summarized in the minutes and can be used to develop an Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) or funding applications later in the year. 💧

\*Dates of acequia meetings: For Article 2 acequias, the specified date for acequia meetings is the first Monday in October (Section 73-2-12, NMSA 1978). For Article 3 acequias, the specified date for acequia meetings is the first Monday in December (Section 73-3-1, NMSA 1978). If an acequia does not have a meeting on those dates, a meeting can be called “as soon as practicable thereafter” according to Section 73-2-15, NMSA 1978. For more information about the difference between Article 2 and 3 acequias, please call NMAA at 505-995-9644.



L: Manzano Springs & Ditch Bylaws meeting. R: Las Nueve del Rio Grande Regional Acequia Association Annual Meeting. Photos by Olivia Romo, NMAA Staff.

## Open Meetings Act Compliance *continued from page 8*

- The agenda should be posted or available (the notice should specify how to obtain a copy of the agenda) within 72 hours of the scheduled meeting time.
- It is especially important that any action items be identified on the agenda prior to the meeting.
- For more information about compliance with the OMA, contact the NMAA at 505-995-9644.

NMAA is available to attend acequia meetings by invitation. Please let us know if you would like NMAA staff to attend or to give a presentation on a range of topics related to water rights or acequia governance. It is best if we could have a two week notice of your meeting. 💧

## Enter The NMAA Acequia Photo Contest 2016!



Regando en mis botas. Photo by Theresa Webb, Acequia Madre del Rio Chiquito Taos, NM.

Enter your photograph and you could win cash prizes

1st Place: \$150.00

2nd Place: \$100.00

3rd Place: \$50.00

Your photo could be featured in NMAA Publications. Winners will be recognized at the 2016 Congreso de las Acequias.

**PHOTO CATEGORIES:** (Participants are limited to one photo per category)

- Acequias or Landscape
- Digitally Altered Imagery
- Regando
- Food and Seed Traditions

**PHOTOS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY OCTOBER 14, 2016**

Submissions must be sent electronically, in high resolution jpeg format. Please email photos to [olivia@lasacequias.org](mailto:olivia@lasacequias.org) along with the following information:

- Name of photographer
- Acequia Name
- Region (if applicable)
- Town
- County
- Photo Description

Terms and conditions: Upon photo submission, you agree to the use of your photo(s) in NMAA materials including but not limited to publications, calendar, website pages, and outreach materials. Photo credit will be given where appropriate.

## Drought, Flooding & Silting: Acequias threatened by summer monsoon

by NMAA Staff

This summer, New Mexicans were exposed to intense rainfall during the monsoon. However, climate projections across the United States suggest that even as total annual precipitation decreases in places like the Southwest, the heaviest annual rainfall events may become more intense (Walsh et al. 2014). When heavier precipitation falls on drought-hardened or wildfire-transformed soil, which has a reduced ability to absorb moisture, more of the water runs off into streams instead of percolating into the ground. Such extreme events are projected to become more common, forcing communities to prepare for both extreme droughts and extreme floods.

Flash floods can occur with little or no warning, move at very fast speeds and can reach a peak in a few minutes. They can roll rocks, tear out trees, sweep away cars and trucks, and destroy buildings and bridges. Rapidly rising water can reach heights of 30 feet or more. Flash flood-producing rains can also trigger catastrophic mudslides. You will not always have a warning that these deadly, sudden floods are coming. Most flood deaths are due to flash floods, and most fatalities occur in vehicles.

Acequia farmers and ranchers across the state, for many of whom acequia is their only non-rain form of irrigation, the effects of the drought were devastating for some. Yet, when the rains came it devastated crops, culverts, diversion dams and filled the ditches with silt. Many acequias had reduced flows leading to shortened irrigation seasons, priority being given to gardens—meaning that pastures might not get irrigated, long gaps in the availability of water—this translated into many farmers reducing their plantings and not doing regular succession plantings, threatening both their livelihood and local food security.

**Acequias may be eligible for emergency funding available for recovery and repairs resulting from the recent flooding.** Acequias officials should communicate with the emergency manager from their county as soon as possible to let them know the extent of the damage to their acequia. 💧

New Mexico Municipal, County, and Tribal Emergency Manager Contact List:

<http://www.nmdhsem.org/uploads/files/Preparedness/Municipal,%20County,%20and%20Tribal%20Emergency%20Manager%20Contact%20List.pdf>

If you have experienced extreme farm damage please see the FSA program links below:

The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) provides assistance to producers if their land was damaged by a natural disaster and needs conservation practices

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/emergency-conservation/index>

And contact your local FSA county office: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=nm&agency=fsa>



El Rincon Farm in Chimayo gets flooded on August 22, 2016. Photo by Pilar Trujillo, NMAA Staff.

## El Rincon Farm Flood Damage Testimony

by Adan Trujillo

The Acequia de la Cañada Ancha runs right through our front yard and our property. At least once a year we experience flooding that teaches us where the weaknesses are. We usually go and fix those weaknesses, but the next year Mother Nature will show you what you need to fix next. On August 22nd a violent 30-minute thunder and hail storm produced the worst flooding I've ever seen. The acequia was so full that it broke in at least 10 different places, nine of them where it had never broken before, and two of them right next to the house.

I am thankful that our houses did not get flooded, but it looks like every year the water gets closer and closer. I planted a small patch of grass in the spring for my two little boys to play on and a good sized chunk of it got flooded and covered in silt. The acequia broke at the neighbor's foot bridge so bad that it looked like a new acequia running through our property, and it roared through our property and over the leach field for our septic tank for 12 hours. Besides that, it completely flooded our corn and chile fields to the point of irreversible damage to the crops.

Besides the flooding on our property and on the properties of our neighbors, our acequia itself is broken and has no water in it. This is the 5th time that our acequia has broken in the past 3 months. The parciantes get tired of fixing it or sending peones to help and they ignore the mayordomo's phone calls to coordinate the labor. We have retention dams that are supposed to empty into the arroyos but they dump storm water and silt into our acequia instead. We are trying to work with the proper authorities to get that changed, but now people have put their mobile homes so close to the arroyos that when they run, their own homes are at risk.

*continued on page 11*



Enrique Romero attorney at NM Legal Aid with his son Taiyari. Photo by Rita Topete.

## Ask a Water Lawyer: Bank Accounts

by Enrique Romero, New Mexico Legal Aid Land and Water Rights Program

**Q: "My acequia is opening up a bank account. What sort of information is appropriate for a bank to require before allowing an acequia to open an account?"**

NMAA and NMLA have fielded a number of technical assistance requests dealing with the issue of what sort of documentation banks should be requesting from acequias when opening a bank account. Typically, the bank is confused about an acequia's status and may request documentation ranging from Employer Identification Number (EIN) verification letters (an acceptable request) to articles of incorporation (an unacceptable request).

As most of you know, an acequia is a political subdivision of the state of New Mexico. Section 73-2-28 of the acequia statutes states this fact unambiguously. We also know from reading the preceding section that ditches are acequias or community ditches as long as they are not private (have at least three owners) and are not incorporated under state law. However, anyone familiar with the "Blue Book" also knows that state law describes acequias and community ditches as "corporations or bodies corporate, with power to sue or to be sued as such." This does not mean that acequias are corporations the way Wal-Mart (for-profit) or the Red Cross (non-profit) are corporations, or even the way in some places a city or township may be described as a municipal corporation. Rather, acequias are a hybrid. The New Mexico Supreme Court held in *Wilson v. Denver* that "a statutory ditch association is a hybrid between a corporation and a public body...[having] a nominal public character but 'remain essentially business enterprises.'" Informing the Court's decision is the fact that an acequia is a governmental entity created primarily for limited purposes and exercising narrow functions. This "special purpose" entity, therefore, is relieved from certain requirements that apply to

general purpose local governments like counties and municipalities. The bottom line is that acequias, by statute, are a form of local government and corporation, making unnecessary—and not in an acequia's interest—the filing articles of incorporation with the Secretary of State.

Most banks are not going to know about the complexity of acequia law. What they are going to know is their standard operating procedure, and unfortunately, banks in New Mexico do not include a page from their playbook dedicated to assisting acequias. In any event, an acequia officer charged with the task of opening up an account should unhesitatingly state that the acequia is political subdivision of the state. Take your Blue Book with you to reference the statute, along with a copy of your signed bylaws, and be prepared to make specific individuals (other officers) signatories on the account. You may need to provide copies of the minutes from the election meeting at which the officers were elected. And finally, it is within the bounds of reason – and I'm guessing a requirement of federal law – that an acequia provide the bank with its EIN. Although acequias rarely have employees, and would therefore not consider themselves employers, the EIN is routinely issued by the IRS and an application can be done quickly and easily online. It should not be necessary to confirm the acequia's tax-exempt status for the purposes of opening an account. If the bank insists on some documentation regarding tax-exempt status, the acequia may provide the bank with the Governmental Information Letter from the IRS (accessible on the IRS' website) concluding that generally political subdivisions of the state are not subject to federal income tax. 💧

### El Rincon Farm Flood Damage Testimony *continued from page 10*

The weather patterns seem to have changed and we have a few spots where it now breaks every time there's a heavy rain because the arroyo runs into the acequia and fills it up with sand, and we have to go and dig it out over and over again. We need a long term fix for these problems and we are told that we are on the top of the list for engineering services and funding, but we don't seem to get anywhere. There are many issues to resolve and not enough money or manpower to get them done. Back in the day when our people relied on the acequia to survive, they would come together to fix things as many times as it takes to make sure we get the water where it needs to go. But in this day and age, our acequia is not used for survival and it has become more and more neglected, and the problems it develops are harder and harder to fix. 💧



Adan Trujillo diverting the water from entering his home. Photo by Pilar Trujillo, NMAA Staff.

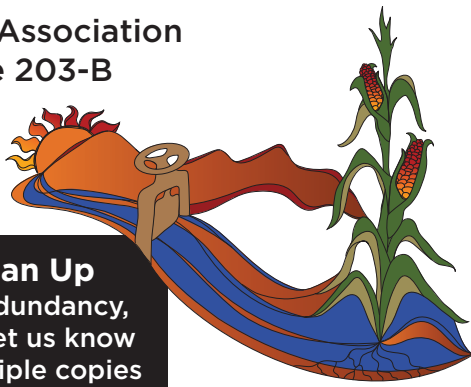


#### A Commissioner's Governance Check List:

- When was the last time your acequia updated its bylaws?
- Do you need to have an election of commissioners?
- Is your infrastructure causing problems with irrigation?
- Do you need assistance submitting financial or quarterly reports to DFA?
- Need support resolving challenges on your acequia?

For assistance or guidance with any of the above governance topics, please call the NM Acequia Association at **(505) 995-9644** or email [Serafina@lasacequias.org](mailto:Serafina@lasacequias.org) or [Olivia@lasacequias.org](mailto:Olivia@lasacequias.org)

New Mexico Acequia Association  
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## NMAA Database Clean Up

In an effort to reduce redundancy, we are asking that you let us know if you are receiving multiple copies of this newsletter and do not wish to. Please contact Lori Spillman at 505-995-9644 or [lori@lasacequias.org](mailto:lori@lasacequias.org)

## Fall Calendar

**OCTOBER 8TH • 10AM–1PM**

### Blue Corn Harvest Festival

AFSC farm site on NNMC campus, Española

**OCTOBER 15–16TH**

### Gathering for Mother Earth • Pojoaque Pow Wow Grounds

1.8 miles on Hwy 502 West near Pojoaque High School)

Pre-registration Online: [www.tewawomenunited.org](http://www.tewawomenunited.org)

**OCTOBER 21ST • 9AM–1PM**

### Acequia Pathways to Funding: Financial Compliance Workshop

El Cafecito, 820 E Santa Fe Ave, Grants, NM 87020 • Lunch provided

**OCTOBER 23RD • 8:30AM**

### 3rd Annual CESSOS Fun Run

Sanchez Farms, 1180 Arenal Rd SW

Register at [www.picatic.com/cesossfunrun2016](http://www.picatic.com/cesossfunrun2016)

**OCTOBER 28TH • 9AM–1PM**

### Acequia Pathways to Funding: Financial Compliance Workshop

Questa, NM VFW • Lunch provided

**NOVEMBER 19TH • 9AM–4PM**

### 17th Annual Congreso de las Acequias

Sagebrush Inn, Taos, NM • Pre-registration online:

<http://www.lasacequias.org/congreso-de-las-acequias/>

**DECEMBER 2ND • 9AM–1PM**

### Acequia Pathways to Funding: Financial Compliance Workshop

Los Luceros Alcalde, NM • Lunch provided

## ONGOING:

### Farm Service Agency Sign Ups

Visit your Local FSA Office to register your farm and become eligible for NRCS Programs

### NRCS EQIP Cost Share Program

Call NMAA for support applying for various farm improvement programs

Chicos drying at sunset  
Acequia del Marrano | Los Cordovas, Taos, NM.  
Photo by Jacinta Chavez