

Noticias de las Acequias

New Mexico *Acequia* Association • Winter/Spring 2019



Acequias Rally at the Roundhouse



"Que Vivan Las Acequias!" Photo by Seth Roffman.

by Olivia Romo, NMAA Staff

On February 5, 2019, acequia leaders, farmers, and advocates marched with their shovels from the NM State Land Office to the roundhouse with a strong message that farmers intend to be at the forefront of shaping policy to protect acequia water rights for future generations. Before the march, State Land Commissioner, Stephanie Garcia Richard, graciously thanked the crowd for their commitment to the land and historic acequias in New Mexico. Palms and voices were rattling in excitement as farmers prepared for their march to the capitol!

The march was led by esteemed musicians David Garcia and Jeremiah Martinez followed by proud chants like "Acequias, Our Future," "Pala Power" and "El Agua no se vende, el agua se defiende!" Paula Garcia, Executive Director of NMAA, said, "We bring our shovels to represent our way of life, working the land and caring for the water. We come together to protect agricultural water rights and to invest in acequia infrastructure." Garcia went on to summarize legislation, including

a bill to create an Acequia Infrastructure Fund and another to improve transparency at the Office of the State Engineer.

The march concluded with a "vuelta" around the capitol. After the march, parcientes left their shovels standing outside as a symbol of the work that must be done on the land and inside our legislature to create a sustainable future for agriculture. Over 30 acequia leaders from across the state were recognized by the House and Senate for their outstanding work with adjudications, infrastructure, and water management in their local communities.

The noontime celebration began with a performance by youth from Moving Arts Española, followed by presentations from legislators about policy initiatives benefiting acequias. Graduates from the NMAA Los Sembradores Farmer Training Program spoke on lessons learned in the duration of the program and their dedication to farming for their families. Poet and

continued on page 3

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“Maizyolotl by Mario Chacon

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Institute) and the Pueblo of
Tesuque.

Acequias Rally at the Roundhouse

continued from page 1

NMAA staff member, Olivia Romo, inspired the crowd with some of her latest poetry. Afterward, delicious tamales were served by Teresa's Tamales from Cleveland, NM.

A special thanks to all those who traveled near and far to assemble for a day of honoring acequia agriculture and to a future of abundant food, produce, and policy that protects land-based livelihoods for generations in New Mexico. We hope you can join us next year! 💧

Que Vivan las Acequias!



Farmers and ranchers ready to march! Photo by Seth Roffman.



Southwest Organizing Project and South Valley Regional Acequia Association march in unity with farmers statewide. Photo by Seth Roffman.



Musicians leading farmers and ranchers to the roundhouse for Acequia Day. Photo by John Denne.



Acequia leaders Jackie Powell and Narciso Quintana rally to keep water in agriculture. Photo by Olivia Romo, NMAA Staff.

Hemp Basics: What Acequia Farmers Should Know about the Hemp Renaissance in New Mexico



by Enrique Romero, NMAA Staff Attorney

There aren't many things Washington politicians agree on these days. The "legalization" of hemp, however, is one issue that both sides of the aisle agreed will benefit farmers across the country. The 2018 Farm Bill passed by Congress and signed into law in December declassified hemp as a controlled substance thereby opening up a market to farmers across the country.

The production of hemp, a plant known for its ability to thrive in a wide range of temperature and soil types, may especially benefit farmers in the arid Southwest. New Mexico's Department of Agriculture (NMDA), New Mexico State University (NMSU), and numerous entrepreneur-farmers are already looking to 2019 as a breakthrough year for hemp production in New Mexico. In fact, at least two bills are pending in our state legislature that aim to facilitate hemp production. Hemp has the potential to transform the agricultural landscape in New Mexico by offering small and large farmers a profitable alternative or supplement to crops like alfalfa, corn and chile. Hemp production is not a fad; rather, it could be a key component to an agricultural renaissance in New Mexico, hopefully putting fallow acequia-served land back into production.

There is a long history behind the prohibition, but the short answer is guilt by association. For decades, hemp was classified as a controlled substance because of its infamous cousin, marijuana. Fortunately for the farmer, the law now provides a clear, bright line between hemp and marijuana that should help to dispel myths and destigmatize hemp production. The NMDA's Hemp Cultivation Rule released last December defines hemp as "the plant *Cannabis sativa* L. and any part of the plant,

"Hemp production is not a fad; rather, it could be a key component to an agricultural renaissance in New Mexico, hopefully putting fallow acequia-served land back into production."

whether growing or not, containing a delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol concentration of no more than three-tenths percent (.3%) on a dry weight basis.” Clear and bright? Well, let’s break the definition down a bit.

You probably recognize the word cannabis and associate it with marijuana. You also probably recognize the chemical compound referenced in the definition as THC. Hemp, like marijuana, is the cannabis plant, but with one key difference: hemp has very little of the chemical compound, THC, that is associated with a “high”. In fact, to get the gold standard classification of hemp, your cannabis plant cannot have more than 0.3% THC. Anything above that percentage and your cannabis plant is marijuana, a controlled substance prohibited under federal law. And just to state the obvious, there are a lot of “cannabis” laws on the books currently dealing with medical and recreational cannabis. Those laws are not hemp laws because those laws deal with marijuana – cannabis plants with a concentration of more than 0.3% THC.

Hemp production, though legal, is regulated in ways that an alfalfa farmer, for example, might find burdensome. First, you need to have a license to grow and harvest hemp. Farmers apply to the NMDA for the license and can expect to pay at a minimum of \$800 for an “annual production” license fee and \$6.00 per acre. In addition to the fees, licensees are required to have their hemp crop tested to ensure that THC levels stay

at or below 0.3%. According to the Rules, licensees are financially responsible for costs associated with delivery and testing of samples. If the samples test above 0.3%, and the NMDA determines that the crop needs to be destroyed, the cost of destruction is borne by the licensee. In addition to these costs, farmers who are interested in entering the market need to do their research in order to make a number of important decisions, for one, whether to start crops from seed or clones.

The NMAA recently hosted a hemp workshop that attracted a diverse group of people: acequia farmers, hemp experts, and the Secretary of the NMDA. The bottom line is that people are excited about hemp. They see hemp production as not only a burgeoning industry in New Mexico, but as a way to protect dormant acequia water rights.

If you’re interested in growing hemp, you’ll want to do your homework – a quick internet search will provide you with tons of information on the variety of hemp products, from fiber to CBD oils used for pain management, and on the profitability of the crop. But, of course, the devil is in the details, and if you’re serious about producing hemp, you’ll want to contact local experts.

For a list of workshop presenters and other industry professionals that attended our workshop, call the NMAA at (505) 995-9644. 💧





Acequero taking care of his field in spring after irrigation in Albuquerque, NM. Photo by Donatella Davanzo.

Recap of Water Legislation from the 2019 Session

by Paula Garcia, Executive Director of NMAA

Water, agriculture, and natural resource issues were well represented among the nearly 1,300 pieces of legislation introduced. Most of the bills were versions of legislation introduced from past years while there were also a few new initiatives that gained traction. For acequias, the New Mexico Acequia Association and the New Mexico Acequia Commission agreed on a few top priorities for the 2019 legislative session. As of the last week of the legislative session, the outcome on these bills was still uncertain.

SB 12 (Cisneros-Salazar) Water Notifications Online – This legislation would require that the Office of the State Engineer post notices of water applications on the agency website in addition to the current requirement of publishing in the newspaper. This is vitally important to protect the due process rights of those whose water rights might be affected by a water right decision by the State Engineer. This applies to new appropriations and water transfers.

HB 17 (Chandler-Wirth) Water Leases and Water Uses – This legislation, in its original form, would have clarified that the State Engineer cannot approve a permit for a water lease until all requirements for public hearings have been met. This bill is in response to what NMAA has determined is an unlawful practice of approving leases without due process protections for water right owners potentially impaired. The bill was narrowed down substantially with language that clarifies that any water leases into or out of acequia require acequia approval, provided the acequia has the authorizing language in their bylaws.

SB 438/HB 517 (Cisneros, Campos, Romero, Gonzales) Acequia and Community Ditch Irrigation Fund – This legislation would create a fund of \$2.5 million per year for the ISC Acequia Program. For years, the ISC has received \$1.9 million in an annual appropriation. The purpose of this year's legislation is to ensure that there is recurring revenue from the Irrigation Works Construction Fund for acequia projects with an increase from \$1.9 to \$2.5 million.



Acequia leaders attending the legislative committee hearing for SB 12 and HB 379. Both passed because of local efforts. Photo by Toribio Garcia, NMAA Staff.

HB 379 (Chandler) Acequia Liens – This legislation would clarify that an acequia can obtain a money judgement from a Magistrate Court that can serve as a lien on property that has delinquencies. It simplifies the process of obtaining a lien so that it would no longer be necessary to go through District Court. It also has protections for the parciante by requiring notice and that the acequia release the lien when the delinquencies are paid.

HB 358 (Sanchez) Acequia License Plates – This legislation would create an acequia license plate to promote more awareness about acequias and to generate funding for the Acequia and Community Ditch Fund at the NM Department of Agriculture which provides resources for legal defense in water right adjudication.

NMAA was also supporting or tracking other bills that would potentially benefit acequias that were introduced by other organizations and advocates:

HB 204 Healthy Soils Act – This legislation would create a new program at the New Mexico Department of Agriculture to encourage farmers and ranchers to adopt practices that support healthy soils.

HB 332 Rural Heritage Act – This legislation would have addressed the issues of rising property tax values in areas with historic agricultural lands by creating another category of taxation (unimproved lands). Lands in this category would be eligible for a special method that values the land at 25% of residential value. The bill faced some technical issues and a memorial HM 81 was introduced to bring stakeholder together to continue work on the concept.

HB 581 Hemp Manufacturing Act – This legislation would expand commercial use of hemp and create a structure to regulate the production, testing, and manufacturing of hemp. The legislation would enable the growth of hemp as a potentially lucrative industry in New Mexico.

HB 37 No LEDA Funds for Water Rights Purchases – This legislation would prohibit the use of funds from the Local

Economic Development Act (LEDA) from being used to purchase water rights. NMAA supported this bill because LEDA funds should be to strengthen local economies, not, to take from an existing agricultural economy to lure an outside industry to the community.

HB 266 Forest Restoration Fund – This legislation will support water-

shed health and forest restoration with funds to support on the ground projects. NMAA supported the concept of the bill but was unable to prevent the use the Irrigation Works Construction Fund. However, a compromise led to language in the budget bill that solvency issues of the Irrigation Works Construction Fund would be addressed in the next five years.

HB 651 Water Data Act – This legislation creates a water data council with agencies and higher education institutions to standardize the management of water data in the state. The bill directs the council to develop consistent water data standards and best practices for data collection.

HB 315 Agricultural Workforce Development Act – Appropriates \$250,000 to NMSU to administer an internship program for new and beginning farmers to get paid to work with existing farmers and ranchers.

SB 5 Interstate Stream Commission Membership – This would change the composition of the ISC by specifying which sectors of water stakeholders and experts will have seats on the commission. The bill includes one seat out for an acequia representative. ♦



Acequia del Alto Al' Norte completed dam project. Photo by Paula Garcia.

19th Annual Congreso de las Acequias

"Labor y Fe: Acequias Caring for the Land and Water In Times of Change"



l to r, top to bottom: Critically acclaimed musicians open the 19th Annual Congreso. Farmers and Ranchers discuss water sharing strategies, ranching models and restoration initiatives for a changing climate. Teatro acequiero debuts their new puppet show Milagros de San Isidro. Young women farmers share lessons from working the land and visions for their acequia communities. Paula Garcia, Executive Director of NMAA receives a certificate of recognition for her 20 years of dedication and advocacy for acequias statewide. Max Martinez excitedly receives Rancher of the year award. All photos by Seth Roffman.

by Olivia Romo, NMAA Staff

On November 17, 2018, over 300 acequia farmers, leaders, and advocates gathered at the Marriott Pyramid Hotel in Albuquerque for the 19th Annual Congreso de las Acequias to evaluate how drought is impacting farmers in New Mexico and to celebrate our continued perseverance to work the land.

The theme, "Labor y Fe: Acequias Caring for the Land and Water In Times of Change," highlighted testimonies of acequia leaders who continued to manage water effectively, even in times of drought by entering water sharing agreements with other acequias and negotiating the realities of available water. Farmers and ranchers also discussed how they developed their ranching and crop models for viable markets and planting drought tolerant crops. This year's Congreso was a powerful space where we shared wisdom about seeds, caring for livestock and engaging the next generation in sustainable farming practices in the face of a changing climate.

A panel of young women farmers and leaders tackled the social and economic issues that push young people off the land. They countered the narrative by sharing their stories of working under their mentors and elders who taught them to farm, save seeds and move water. Tears were shed with a collective commitment to this way of life and to protect our water for future generations.

The meeting concluded with an educational presentation by Vicente Cordova and Leonard Salado on hemp production as a viable opportunity for acequias. By days end, acequia officials gained insight into how to manage water more effectively in times of drought, explore restoration projects that improve water quality and quantity while still producing crops that generate economic opportunities.

The Congreso was a day filled with incredible music, films, and theater! We were honored to have an opening by esteemed local musicians who filled the room with color and culture! NMAA showcased

Archie Chapa's "Acequia" trailer that captures the testimonies of acequia leaders telling the story of the present-day acequia movement in New Mexico. The Embudo Regional Acequia Association leaders shared a clip of their Embudo Oral History Project that honored the voices and experiences of Mayordomos in their valley. Olivia Romo shared her moving poem "Bendición del Agua," a cinematographic call to action for the next generation to carry the acequia tradition forward with honor, respect, and readiness to defend our land and water. Congreso participants were also entertained by Los Milagros de San Isidro Labrador, a puppet theater acto that depicts the lives of the holy family based loosely on the Alabanza de San Isidro.

We want to thank in a special way Congressman Ben Ray Lujan and Senator Tom Udall who discussed their priorities to build good policy that protects acequias and to draft language in the farm bill that gives direct access to monies for conservation and restoration projects. 💧

THE NMAA IS DEEPLY APPRECIATIVE OF OUR SPONSORS WHO HELPED US ORGANIZE ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL CONGRESO:

Guadalupe Credit Union, Carrizozo Soil & Water Conservation District, Otero Soil & Water Conservation District, Santa Cruz Irrigation District, Grant Soil & Water Conservation District, Youth Fellowship Fund, Sierra Soil & Water Conservation District, The Utton Center, Western Folklife Center, Acequia de Rincon, American Friends Service Committee, Waterwise Gardening, LLC, Conservation Voters NM Education Fund, NM Association of Conservation Districts, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, Tewa Women United, Gregory Swift, Acequia Commissioner, Con Alma Health Foundation in Memory of Facundo Valdez, Del Norte Credit Union, Climate Change Leadership Institute on behalf of the New Mexico Healthy Soil Initiative, USDA-NRCS, Taos Soil & Water Conservation District, Chris Ford.

Reservoir remote is solar powered in a central location where parciantes can easily access to get water flowing in the ditch. Photo by Roy Trujillo, Commissioner on Acequia Barranco Blanco.



Remote Controls and More! Acequia del Barranco Blanco Infrastructure Innovations

by Acequia del Barranco Blanco

Acequias have always been innovating and adapting. The story of the Acequia del Barranco Blanco is an excellent example of dedication, multi-agency networking and implementation of technical solutions it takes to keep our ditches running. We thank the Commission for persevering and sharing their story.

As you are driving through the Pojoaque Valley and exit toward Los Alamos on State Road 502, you will find yourself in the small, historical community called Jacona. Crossing the bridge over the Tesuque River you will encounter a large earthen reservoir on the righthand side of State Road 502. They are the largest and oldest irrigation storage ponds in the Pojoaque Valley. Little or no water has been stored in these ponds for over 40 years due to drought conditions. As you drive west you will see farm land, orchards, vegetable gardens and other types of agricultural activity. At this point the following question may come to mind, where does the water come from, the river has little or no visible water?

The Acequia Del Barranco Blanco Association has provided irrigation water to its Parciantes of the Jacona Community since the mid-1800's through open ditches and also through an earthen reservoir that was constructed to store flood waters as well as regular acequia water flow for parciantes to share during dry spells. In the late 1960's, due to the lack of surface water in the Tesuque River and little rain fall, the Acequia Parciantes converted to an irrigation well located in the Tesuque River. A water delivery system was installed at that time consisting of about three miles of eight-inch PVC pipe, vents, gate valves and alfalfa valves. The United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service provided the engineering design and funding. The New Mexico State Engineers Office also provided engineering assistance and required permits.

In 2014, through the strong efforts of the dedicated team of State Representative Carl Trujillo and State Senator Carlos Cisneros a rehabilitation program and improvement project got underway through a New Mexico State Legislative Capital

Outlay appropriation. In addition, the Acequia secured a 90/10 loan/grant from the New Mexico State Engineer's Interstate Stream Commission (ISC). Ray Acosta, Beatriz Vigil, Jonathan Martinez and Kerri Roybal from the ISC provided administrative services directly related to the engineering phase, design, contractor selection, and financial draw downs. The Pueblo of Pojoaque assisted in obtaining all permits needed to comply with tribal requirements.

This project encompassed the installation of an infiltration gallery, the relocation of the power supply,

continued on page 12

How to Safeguard Against Financial Losses

Is your farm or ranch registered with the Farm Service Agency (FSA)? Have you ever utilized the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) EQIP program?



Los productos de la acequia del Marrano: Verduras, borregas y lana. Photo by Jacinta Chavez, Taos, NM.

If the answer is no – or it has been a long time, get in touch with the NMAA team. We are here to support you in navigating the process and make you feel supported. New Mexicans have historically underutilized the cost share programs of the NRCS to implement on farm improvements which can be anything from installation of a high tunnel to extend the growing season, implanting modern irrigation techniques and a plethora of other practices aimed at protecting and enhancing the natural environment which in turns supports our agricultural operations. Additionally, many who are eligible do not take advantage of the FSA programs which can include loans and various economic safeguards to the risks of farming.

There are so many reasons to enjoy the benefit of these programs. Just getting your ag operation (which could be your milpa, your heirloom orchard, your backyard operation) signed up with FSA helps get you eligible and counted in the ag census, which helps better represent our farming community. You do not have to be selling at a farmers market or have a whole sale outlet to be eligible for these programs. One program that could benefit many New Mexicans is the Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) through FSA and authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill. FSA defines the program this way: “NAP provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters.” This means if

you lose a crop or cannot plant it due to drought, flooding, hail, excessive heat or wind, insect infestation and other natural disasters that you can be reimbursed for part of the value of the lost crop. When you sign up for NAP coverage you get a payment when you lose 50% or more of your covered crop and submit a notice of loss within 15 days. To participate there is a service fee of \$325 per crop, but per the FSA webpage “beginning, limited resource and targeted underserved farmers or ranchers are eligible for a waiver of the service fee and a 50 percent premium reduction when they file form CCC-860.” ***This means that if you are Hispanic or a woman, among many other descriptors, there is no fee to participate in NAP.*** Purchasing premiums is optional, making this coverage free for many. NMAA encourages you to contact your local FSA Office to sign up. Every year different crops have sign up deadlines that are well in advance of plant and harvest times so contact your FSA Office now to plan for 2020. Examples of the most popular crops covered by this program in Rio Arriba County are hay, mixed forage, and native grassland, as well as some apple growers. Many other crops can also be covered such as chile, garlic, honey, flowers and much, much more.

The NMAA team is here to support you in protecting your water rights and applying for NRCS and FSA programs. Please contact Serafina@lasacequias.org for more information. 💧



NEW MEXICO ACEQUIA ASSOCIATION

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.

Los Sembradores Farmer Training Program

Cultivating the Next Generation of Acequia Farmers

On December 19, 2018, the NM Acequia Association (NMAA) honored its second cohort of the Los Sembradores Farmer Training Program. Congratulations to our new graduates and amazing young farmers! They cleaned acequias, built hoop houses and cold storage, and planted amazing food fostering a deep love and dedication for acequia agriculture! Que vivan los jovenes! Our younger generation is committed and thriving!

NMAA is also excited to welcome our 3rd Sembradores cohort! We are looking forward to another productive year of connecting to the land, building community and learning how to grow food. We appreciate the enthusiasm and dedication of our newest apprentices (below) and wish them a wonderful year.



Recent graduates of the Los Sembradores Farmer Training Program Cohort # 2. Photo by Juliet Garcia-Gonzales, NMAA Staff.

Alejandro Mondragon

"I live in Llano de San Juan, part of the Peñasco community. I love anything outdoors and I live pretty rural. I want to learn how to farm because it's part of the Llano life! I also feel that there's too much energy put into bad things, in these small communities. I want to put my energy into something positive."



Corilia Ortega

"My parents are Karen and Leonardo Ortega from Arroyo Hondo, NM. I carry my maternal grandmother's name, Corilia, and my paternal abuelita's green thumb. We grew up collecting water off the techo, and watering abundant lilas, tulips & marigolds, apple, and apricot trees every summer (until the drought). There isn't a more fond memory I have than hearing the water run in the acequia. It is the soundtrack of my childhood and I look forward to bringing that childhood zeal to my home and community by becoming a farmer. Growing good food is an effort in honoring our herencia while cultivating closeness for the future of our community."



continued on page 12

Los Sembradores Farmer Training Program Cultivating the Next Generation of Acequia Farmers *continued from page 11*

** If you believe it is important to cultivate the next generation of acequia farmers, please consider DONATING to the NM Acequia Association's Los Sembradores Farmer Training Program. Please call Serafina at the NMAA to learn how you can support! (505) 995-9644 or serafina@lasacequias.org 💧*



Sembradores 2018 team showing off some of the fruits of their labor. Photo by Donne Gonzales, NMAA Farmer Training Coordinator.

The Sembradores Team also hosts a WORKSHOP SERIES.

This spring and summer we will cover irrigation, vermicompost, Bee keeping, pollinators, hemp planting and other topics. We will connect the hands-on skills to Natural Resource Conservation Service programs to help you implement these practices. Our goal is to encourage you to protect your water rights and improve your farming skills.

Please keep a look-out for dates and locations in our e-blast and on our Facebook page. Or email donne@lasacequias.org to receive direct email invitations.

Acequia del Barranco Blanco *continued from page 9*

the relocation of the power supply, full maintenance of the well, replacement of deteriorated pipelines and gate valves, and the addition of an electronic remote-control system for well and valve control. A pedestrian gate at the fence line, and access steps together with safety handrails were also installed at the reservoir site for the convenience and safety of all parcientes.

The infiltration gallery is a system of perforated 10" and 12" PVC pipes buried in the center of the Tesuque River in the up-hill direction from the present well and point of diversion. Its function is to collect underground water by employing gravity to drain into the main irrigation system. It can supply water independently or supplement the well for greater volume. An electronic remote system was designed and installed to control the on/off switch of the well and the open/close position of the infiltration gallery valve. An electric signal receiver was installed at the well site and a solar electric transmitter was installed at the Acequia Reservoir site about a mile from the well. The design included one manual valve installed to control seasonal or emergency opening and closing needs. A second butterfly valve with an electronic remote-control motor was installed in series with the manual valve for the everyday opening and closing of the supplemental water

supply. This electronic remote transmitter also turns the well on or off.

The new remote-control system is located at the reservoir property where the current directional valves for the northern irrigation line and the southern irrigation line are located.

Due to flooding and/or extreme dry conditions in the past years, the task of driving through the river bed to turn the irrigation system on and off has many times been difficult and dangerous. The remote-control system is at an experimental stage, however the Acequia's Parcientes, young and old, have become comfortable with the safety and convenience of utilizing the new remote system. The new system's ease of use encourages folks to keep irrigating and it enables us to conserve more water, only allowing water into the system. The well is a mile away, when there is a flood and we need it and to shut the system down quickly we are now able to do so.

NMAA staff is here to assist if you have an infrastructure project you would like to see completed on your acequias. Our team will explain the funding options, how to apply and all the requirements. Please contact Toribio@lasacequias.org or Serafina@lasacequias.org for further assistance. 💧

A Vision for New Mexico's Water



Regando con la Acequia Madre del Sur del Rio Don Fernando de Taos. Photo by Miguel Santistevan.

*by Paula Garcia, Executive Director,
NM Acequia Association*

*Op-ed published by the Santa Fe
New Mexican on January 12, 2019*

After enduring a year of historic drought, New Mexico started 2019 with much needed snow. Many are vigilantly watching mountain snowpack with hope for flowing rivers and replenished reservoirs. Anticipation of a better growing season this year

also coincides with the potential for a new era in which our new Governor will uphold the issue of water as a priority.

Water is fundamental to decisions about the well-being of our state. Hundreds of acequias and community water systems in New Mexico are caretakers of water as it flows through our fields and through the infrastructure that we build and maintain. For rural communities, water is intertwined with our way of life, livelihood, and survival.

Water rights are also an economic justice issue for rural areas of the state. Commodification and proposals to export water rights from rural areas threaten to dispossess communities of water rights needed to build their long-term futures.

The new administration will face profound decisions about managing our state's water. There will be pressure to conform our policy to short-term boom and bust

continued on page 14



Juntos sembraremos las semillas. Photo by Miguel Santistevan.



Acequeros working the land in Bernalillo, NM. Photo by Donatella Davanzo.

A Vision for New Mexico's Water *continued from page 13*

cycles of extractive industries and real estate speculation, but there is another path that is rooted in sustainability, cultural and natural heritage, and respect for rural areas of the state:

- **Equity in Water and Food Policy.** Local and regional food systems can contribute to efforts to lift rural areas out of poverty and improve affordable access to healthy, fresh food. Keeping water in rural, agricultural communities should be part of a strategy for rural economic justice.

- **Community-Based Water Management.** Water sharing, known among acequias as the repartimiento, is a timeless customary practice which is rooted in centuries of tradition and which is gaining prominence as a water management strategy for New Mexico. The State Engineer should be a committed partner in enabling local com-

munities to develop water sharing agreements and should support local decision-making about water rights.

- **Transparency and Participation.** Decisions about water can have profound impacts on local communities. Participation and involvement in permits affecting water rights or water quality should be enabled by transparency and access to electronic notices and data. For example, proposed legislation to publish water right applications online would be a good start.

- **Investment in Water Infrastructure and Governance.** Rural water systems and acequias, which are governed by volunteers, face constraints in generating revenue. The state should support training on governance as well as funding and technical assistance for engineering design and construction of infrastructure projects.

- **Water Planning.** New Mexico needs a robust water planning process with community participation as well as access to data and modeling to make informed decisions. For example, planning could incorporate research by the Water Resources Research Institute at NMSU on water budgets and the connection between irrigation and aquifer recharge.

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has a tremendous opportunity to improve the well-being of families in New Mexico in a manner that also respects the dignity of rural communities and acequias. At a time when our policymakers are called upon to grow our economy, educate our children, and create healthy, thriving communities, it is vital that water policy supporting sustainable rural communities is also part of that vision. 💧

JOIN THE NMAA & THE MOVEMENT TO PROTECT WATER!!

Dear Friends,

Thank you for being a member and supporter of the New Mexico Acequia Association! As we enter the growing season, we are grateful for the snows that will soon melt and flow through our rivers and acequias. Hundreds of acequias around the state are busy "sacando la acequia" in preparation for the year ahead!



As we look forward, NMAA invites you to be part of some of our 2019 projects and initiatives:

- 1. Acequia Youth Initiative:** NMAA will be sending staff and community volunteers to visit classrooms throughout the months of April and May. We have a variety of educational lessons we can offer related to history, science, and culture. If you are interested in participating, please let us know.
- 2. Acequia Education and Outreach:** We are available to attend local acequia meetings, regional association meetings, and other local gatherings to raise awareness about the importance of acequias and to provide training to local acequia leaders on water rights and governance. One of our colleagues, Dr. David Garcia will be composing versos for each acequia meeting we attend.
- 3. Los Sembradores - Farmer and Rancher Education:** We will enter our third year of training farm apprentices at Chicoyole Farm in Chamisal and we will soon establish a new center of operations at Los Luceros Historic Ranch near Alcalde. At both of these sites, we will have educational opportunities such as workshops for acequia farmers and ranchers on a range of topics from soils, irrigation, weed control, cultivation, cold storage, food safety, food preservation, etc.
- 4. Acequia Infrastructure:** There are an unprecedented number of acequias that are in some phase, planning, design, or construction, of an acequia project. We will be working with local acequias to connect them with state and federal funding opportunities along with our partners at local soil and water conservation districts, the NM Association of Conservation Districts, and the Interstate Stream Commission.

We need your help to continue working towards stronger local governance of water, protection of acequia water rights, cultivation of acequia and youth leaders, and supporting farmers and ranchers. During 2019, we hope to build on this work to continue to be a force for change in New Mexico. More than ever, we need our members to keep our work going.

Please join the NMAA or renew your membership on our website, www.lasacequias.org or by calling our office at 505-995-9644. Thank you for all you do to keep our acequias vibrant and beautiful!!

Que Vivan las Acequias!

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula Garcia".

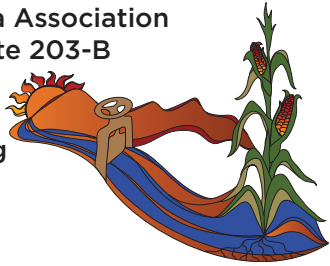
Paula Garcia, Executive Director



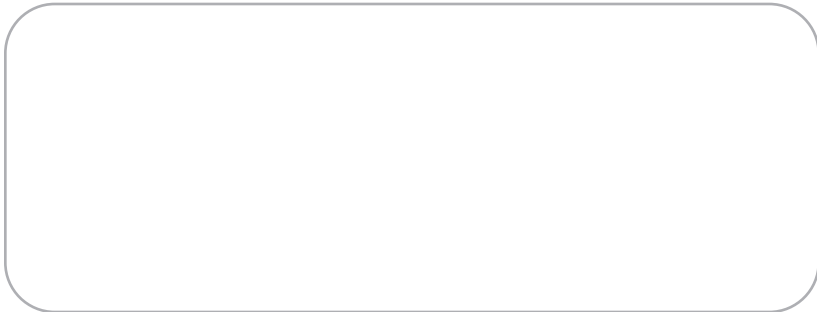
l to r: Acequia del Llano in Embudo. Photo by Sylvia Ernestina Vergara; Harvesting Lavendar "Ethan Vigil, parciante of the Acequia San Jose de la Cienega harvesting lavender for this grandmother. Photo by Marty Vigil, Finado Francisco: "Peones sacando la Acequia Finado Francisco Martinez de Taos. Photo by Alex Romero.

Noticias de las Acequias • Winter/Spring 2019

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Spring Calendar of Events:

HEMP WORKSHOP

MARCH 22, 10AM-3PM

Blue Hole Conference Center, Santa Rosa and Site visit to NM Hemp Services cloning facility in Puerto de Luna. Contact the NMAA office to RSVP and for more details. Registration is free but please sign up so we can plan accordingly:

<https://form.jotform.com/90686873343165>

Donations will be accepted at the door.

ÓWÍNGEH TÁ PUEBLOS Y SEMILLAS GATHERING AND SEED EXCHANGE

MARCH 23, 9AM-3PM

Tesuque Pueblo, Intergenerational Center. Contact Juliet@lasacequias.org or lori@lasacequias.org

to RSVP <https://form.jotform.com/90688715092163> (see flyer on page 2)

NEW MEXICO ACEQUIA COMMISSION MEETINGS

USUALLY EVERY 3RD FRIDAY OF THE MONTH, 10AM

Location varies. For details contact Chairman Ralph Vigil 505 603-2879, molinodelaisla@gmail.com

DIA DE SAN ISIDRO

Various communities across NM!

MAY 11, 2019 AT 10AM – The South Valley Regional Association of Acequias and the American Friends Service Committee New Mexico invite you to celebrate San Ysidro Day.

We gather at the San Ysidro Carousel at the corner of Isleta and Arenal SW and proceed to Sanchez Farm at Arenal and Lopez SW. More information at:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/243034269819840/>

MAY 15, 2019 5PM – 21 Acequia RD, San Fidel NM

SEBRADORES WORKSHOPS

MARCH- AUGUST TBA

Various Farm sites in northern NM

Join our hands-on workshops to exchange valuable farming info

Contact donne@lasacequias.org for more info and look for our FB and eblast announcements

2019 ACEQUIA SUMMER CONFERENCE

JULY 12, 2019

Los Luceros Historic Ranch, Alcalde. Save the date and be on the lookout for more details.

REGISTER WITH THE FARM SERVICE AGENCY

ONGOING - VISIT YOUR LOCAL FSA OFFICE

Become eligible for USDA programs and get counted in the Ag Census

SIGN UP FOR NATURAL CONSERVATION RESOURCE SERVICE ON FARM IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMS. ONGOING

Visit the NMAA office or Call Serafina at NMAA 505-995-9644 for assistance.



The ancient annual procession and blessing of San Ysidro y Santa María de la Cabeza in the South Valley of Albuquerque at Sanchez Farms Open Space. Photo submitted by Santiago Maestas.