

Congreso de Las Acequias 2025

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5-6
New Mexico Highlands University Las Vegas, NM



THANK YOU FOR JOINING US FOR CONGRESO DE LAS ACEQUIAS 2025!

The annual Congreso de las Acequias is the only statewide gathering of acequia leaders, parcientes and supporters where we share knowledge and create strategies for protecting our beloved acequias.

The Congreso is also the state-wide governing body of the NMAA, composed of regional delegates from across the state.



**WE SPEAK WITH A UNITED VOICE.
WE DEFEND WATER. WE ARE ACEQUIAS.**

AGUA Y JUSTICIA: SPEAKERS

David Benavides



DAVID BENAVIDES is director of the land and water rights project for New Mexico Legal Aid, a position he has held for 35 years. He received both his B.S. and J.D. from the University of New Mexico, and, upon graduating from law school in 1990, was awarded a Skadden, Arps Public Interest Law Fellowship to begin his work with acequias and land grants on land and water rights in New Mexico. David has advised countless acequia officials on water rights protection methods and governance matters. His work has additionally included representing acequias in gaining legal recognition for their water rights and their historic water-use customs, and to have greater decision-making authority in local water decisions. He lives outside of Santa Fe, N.M.

Enrique Romero

Enrique Romero is an Assistant Attorney General and the Division Director of the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty Division of the New Mexico Department of Justice. After graduating law school from Notre Dame, Enrique joined New Mexico Legal Aid's Land and Water Project as a Thomas L. Schaffer Public Interest Law Fellow, focusing his work on acequia and land grant matters. After serving two and half years as a staff attorney at NMLA and under the mentorship of David Benavides, Enrique joined the New Mexico Acequia Association as a staff attorney, and later became its Director of Legal Services. Enrique has a decade of experience advising local government clients, including acequias, land grants and county government on various legal and policy issues. A native of Nambe and Espanola, Enrique enjoys spending his free time with his wife and son, gardening at his home on Santa Fe's Southside, and irrigating and working his small ranch in Llano de la Llagua, Taos County.



AGUA Y JUSTICIA AWARD:

We are recognizing the Acequia de Tecolotito for their efforts to defend the water rights of their acequia. They made a decision as an acequia, in accordance with their bylaws, to protect water rights in their acequia and have remained steadfast in their legal battle.

Special thanks also to the NM Department of Justice and NM Legal Aid for ensuring a strong legal defense.

Special Thanks to our Concilio: Harold Trujillo, President, Alfredo Montoya, Vice-President, Stephen Trujillo, Treasurer, Don Bustos, Secretary, Santiago Maestas, Yolanda Jaramillo, Jackie Powell, Darel Madrid, Luciana Tapia, Luis Pena, Carlos Abeyta.

Special Thanks to everyone involved with the Bendición de las Aguas including our ceremonial leaders: Deacon Pete Campos, Immaculate Conception Parish, Anamaria Armijo-Glenn, Acequia Madre de las Vegas, Alicia Lily, and all who brought water to share.



DAY 1

Friday, December 5, 8:30am-8:00pm

8:30AM

REGISTRATION AND NETWORKING

9:30AM

OPENING SESSION - SUB THEATER

WORKSHOP BLOCK 1

10:00AM

- LA ACEQUIA ES NUESTRA ESCUELA: PLACE-BASED EDUCATION FOR OUR COMMUNITIES **SUB ROOM 321**
- EL AGUA SE DEFIENDE: STRATEGIES FOR ACEQUIAS AND ALLIES PROTECTING WATER, PART 1: WATER RIGHTS **SUB ROOM 322**
- ACEQUIA GOVERNANCE 101: OVERVIEW FOR COMMISSIONERS AND MAYORDOMOS **SUB THEATER**

11:30AM

NETWORKING BREAK - SUB ATRIUM

12:00PM

LUNCH AT NMHU SUB CAFETERIA

WORKSHOP BLOCK 2

1:00PM

- EL AGUA SE DEFIENDE: STRATEGIES FOR ACEQUIAS AND ALLIES PROTECTING WATER, PART 2: WATER QUALITY **SUB ROOM 321**
- LEGISLATION TO CREATE THE LAND GRANT-MERCED AND ACEQUIA INFRASTRUCTURE FUND **SUB ROOM 322**
- THE ROLE OF SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS IN SUPPORTING ACEQUIAS AND AGRICULTURE **SUB THEATER**

2:30PM

NETWORKING BREAK

WORKSHOP BLOCK 3

3:00PM

- YOUTH SPEAK ON THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH COMMUNITY, SCHOOL, AND YCC PROJECTS **SUB ROOM 321**
- GROWING GROWERS: PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION WITH SKILLS AND LAND/WATER/SEEDS **SUB ROOM 322**
- HEAVY METALS IN WATER FOLLOWING THE HPCC FIRE AND FLOODS **SUB THEATER**
- CONGRESO DELEGATE MEETING - **G-35 CLASSROOM**

4:30PM

NETWORKING BREAK

5:00PM

FILM SCREENING "THE WAY WE CARRY WATER" SUB THEATER

6:30PM

DINNER AND TEATRO AT PLAZA HOTEL - ILFELD BALLROOM

TEATRO ACEQUIERO PRESENTS: LAS AVENTURAS DE DON CACAHUATE AND MANA CEBOLLA



DAY 2

Saturday, December 6, 8am-3:30pm

8:00AM	REGISTRATION AND LAS MAÑANITAS
9:00AM	WELCOME, CANCIÓN DE LAS ACEQUIAS
9:15AM	BENDICIÓN DE LAS AGUAS
9:45AM	ROLL CALL AND RECOGNITION OF DIGNITARIES
10:15AM	OPENING REMARKS FROM HAROLD TRUJILLO, NMAA PRESIDENT
10:20AM	2025 STATE OF THE ACEQUIAS
10:30AM	"TRIALS OF THE PALA" POETRY BY OLIVIA ROMO
10:40AM	AGUA Y JUSTICIA: DEFENDING WATER IN OUR COMMUNITIES - A DISCUSSION BY ACEQUIA LEGAL ADVOCATES ABOUT THE MOVEMENT FOR JUSTICE FOR ACEQUIAS FOR THE PAST 40 YEARS AND THE CHALLENGES THAT LIE AHEAD
11:20AM	ACEQUIA PROJECT RECOGNITIONS
11:40AM	TEATRO ACEQUIERO PRESENTS: BEAVER TALES
12:00PM	YOUTH AND FARMER TRAINING RECOGNITIONS
12:20PM	FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AWARD TO NMAA
12:30PM	LUNCH + MUSIC
1:30PM	NETWORKING BREAK
2:00PM	WORKSHOP BLOCK <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACEQUIA DISASTER RECOVERY FROM 2022-2025: LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS SUB ROOM 321• PATHWAYS TO FUNDING: FUNDING PROGRAMS FOR ACEQUIA INFRASTRUCTURE, FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR. SUB BALLROOM
3:30PM	CLOSING REMARKS AND MUSIC, DESPEDIDA



WORKSHOP DETAILS

BREAKOUT SESSION 1: 10:00AM

LA ACEQUIA ES NUESTRA ESCUELA: PLACE-BASED EDUCATION FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

Moderator: Loretta Trujillo, Transform Education New Mexico. **Panelists:** Adrian Sandoval, Acequia and Land Grant Education Project, Travis Mackenzie, Teacher, Polk Agricultural Academy, Jorge Garcia, CESOSS

Educators and advocates will share updates on their work to create more opportunities for youth in New Mexico's public schools to learn through place-based education through educational materials and curriculum that integrate acequias and land grants into learning about language, science, and other subjects. Panelists will include educators who have integrated acequias and place-based learning into their teaching and advocates who are building institutional support at universities and in state agencies for education that is culturally responsive in our communities.

EL AGUA SE DEFIENDE:

STRATEGIES FOR ACEQUIAS AND ALLIES PROTECTING WATER, PART 1: WATER RIGHTS

Moderator: Aaron Villalpando, Staff Attorney for NMAA. **Panelists:** Maslyn Locke, New Mexico Environmental Law Center, JR Lucero, Acequia de Tecolotito, Enrique Romero, NM Department of Justice, Ann McCartney, Valencia Water Watchers

This panel will include community leaders who are in active campaigns to protect water from commodification. This includes acequias fighting water transfers out of agriculture to commercial uses outside the acequia as well as communities resisting other types of commodification such as water transfers or appropriations for data centers, bottled water, etc. Participants will share their stories of organizing and strategizing to protect their water as well as an update on their struggle and calls for solidarity across different types of campaigns.

ACEQUIA GOVERNANCE 101: OVERVIEW FOR COMMISSIONERS AND MAYORDOMOS

Moderator: Serafina Lombardi, Program Director for NMAA. **Panelists:** Darel Madrid and Rick Martinez, Acequia del los Salazares, Phillip Griego, Acequia del Medio, Rebecca Guay, NM Department of Justice

This session will include acequia leaders discussing ways in which they have worked to strengthen their governance, including updated bylaws, financial management, communications with parciantes, etc. NMAA staff and other experts will also participate offering their insight into the common areas of need as well as success stories of acequias rising to the challenge of being effective institutions of local, democratic governance.

BREAKOUT SESSION 2 - 1:00PM

EL AGUA SE DEFIENDE:

STRATEGIES FOR ACEQUIAS AND ALLIES PROTECTING WATER, PART 2: WATER QUALITY

Moderator: Paula Garcia, Executive Director, NMAA. **Panelists:** Beata Tsosie Pena, Birth of my Heart, Andrea La Cruz Crawford, New Mexico Acequia Commission, Janice Varela, Stop Tererro Mine, Rachel Conn, Amigos Bravos.

Grassroots leaders will discuss the problem of water contamination from various perspectives: fracking wastewater, PFAS, mining waste, nuclear lab waste, and heavy metals in post-fire landscapes.

LEGISLATION TO CREATE THE LAND GRANT-MERCED AND ACEQUIA INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Moderator: Vidal Gonzales, NMAA. **Panelists:** Leonard Martinez, Merced de San Joaquin del Rio Chama, Alfredo Montoya, Las Nueve Acequias del Rio Grande, Arturo Archuleta, New Mexico Land Grant Council

This session will be devoted to the 2025 legislative priority of the NMAA, which is the Land Grant-Merced & Acequia Infrastructure Act. Panelists will include acequia and land grant leaders who have led the effort to create a recurring source for infrastructure funding. This will include more information about how acequia members and supporters can participate in the upcoming legislative session.

THE ROLE OF SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS IN SUPPORTING ACEQUIAS AND AGRICULTURE

Moderator: Monica Rodriguez, NMAA. **Panelists:** Vicente Cordova and JR Lucero, Guadalupe SWCD, Gerald Romero, Tierra y Montes SWCD

The purpose of this panel is to highlight the important role that SWCDs play in supporting acequias, farming, and ranching in their respective communities. Some of the areas we would like to cover include local SWCD programs that assist acequias with infrastructure and the role of SWCDs in disaster recovery (specifically as EWP sponsors). We would also like to feature recent examples of Healthy Soils Program and Youth Conservation Corp efforts.



WORKSHOP DETAILS

BREAKOUT SESSION 3 - 3:00PM

YOUTH SPEAK ON THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH COMMUNITY, SCHOOL, AND YCC PROJECTS

Moderator: Alex Griffiths, NMAA Youth Coordinator, Naomi Mora, Mora Acequia YCC, Estevan Gonzales, Hermit's Peak Watershed Alliance, Youth from Polk Agricultural Academy

This session will center youth voices about their experience with community-based or school-based learning that involves place-based education and hands-on projects. Youth from various community and YCC projects, the Acequia Youth Leadership Institute, and schools with acequia education programs will share their reflections in a roundtable format.

GROWING GROWERS:

PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION WITH SKILLS & LAND/WATER/SEEDS

Moderator: Sam Hillborn-Naluai, NMAA Food, Farms and Seeds Coordinator, Donne Gonzales, Los Sembradores Trainer, Juliet Saucedo, La Semilla Food Project, Nicasio Reid, Los Sembradores, Gillian Joyce, Alianza Agricultura

Come learn about how we are preparing the next generation of farmers and ranchers. We will reflect on the experience with different types of farmer training programs with special consideration of how to support new generations with skills, land/water, and seeds while being steeped in land-based culture. A roundtable format will include a combination of mentors, apprentices, and providers of organizational support.

HEAVY METALS IN WATER FOLLOWING THE HPCC FIRE AND FLOODS

Moderator: Staci Matlock, NMHU Forest and Watershed Institute, Dr. Kate Zeigler, Hydrologist, Dr. Edward Martinez, NMHU

This session will feature Dr. Kate Zeigler and Dr. Edward Martinez in a discussion on current testing results for heavy metal contamination and ideas for ways to expand testing to include more wells and indicators of contamination of soils, surface water, etc.

CONGRESO DELEGATE MEETING

This is the official delegate meeting of the Congreso de las Acequias.

SATURDAY SESSION 2:00PM

ACEQUIA DISASTER RECOVERY FROM 2022-2025: LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

Moderator: Paula Garcia, NMAA. **Panelists:** Max Garcia, Acequia de Canoncito de la Cueva, Cristino Griego, Acequia de las Tusas, Jackie Powell, North Las Chosas Ditch, Ella Arellano, Acequia Madre de Holman, Destre Shelley, Gila Basin Irrigation Commission, DHSEM (TBD)

This session will include an update on Acequia Disaster Recovery. A panel of acequia leaders from various fires will share updates on progress or frustration, depending on their situation. Agency officials will be available to answer questions. This interactive session will be used to gather information to advocate for better disaster recovery funding and policies.

PATHWAYS TO FUNDING: FUNDING PROGRAMS FOR ACEQUIA INFRASTRUCTURE, FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR.

Moderator: Serafina Lombardi. **Panelists:** Carlos Abeyta, Arnold Lopez, Kim Sheehan, Harold Trujillo. **Agency Reps:** Manual Luna (OSA), Jonathan Martinez (ISC), Kenneth Branch (NRCS), Maryann Maestas (DFA), Jonathan Macias (DFA)

This session will be a roundtable format. Acequias with completed projects will share testimonials about infrastructure projects and financial compliance. Agency officials will introduce themselves and explain their role in the process: ISC, OSA, NRCS, SWCD.



CULTURA, MUSICA, & TEATRO

TEATRO ACEQUIERO PERFORMANCES

BEAVER TALES

3 beavers find unity through healing and go on to fight against the injustices of water contamination.

LAS AVENTURAS DE DON CACAHUATE AND MANA CEBOLLA

This beloved northern NM duo share their memories about the acequia and their brush with la Comadre Sebastian. Actors and Puppets. Liz Padilla, Rene Padilla and Dabi Soledad García. Puppets and play written by Liz Padilla .

FILM SCREENING AND DISCUSSION WITH MAKAIIO FRAZIER

THE WAY WE CARRY WATER



After the loss of his grandfather, a young man is called to carry more than memory. Filmed over four seasons in rural northern New Mexico, *The Way We Carry Water* explores grief, legacy, and the quiet stewardship of an acequia that sustains both family and tradition. Join us for a film screening and discussion with writer and director Makaio Frazier. Film by Makaio Frazier, produced by Diego Lopez, Fred Mady, and Dylan Summer

POETRY BY OLIVIA ROMO

TRIALS OF THE PALA

Olivia Romo is a farmer, poet and water rights activist from Taos, NM. She earned her dual Bachelor's degrees in English and Chicana/o Studies from the University of New Mexico in 2015. She intentionally focuses her activism and poetry to educate and mobilize New Mexicans around the risks and uncertainties of their natural resources. Her published works include the New York Times in the 2019 article "Work Songs of the Cowboy Poets". Olivia's flagship poem "Bendición del agua" was featured in the Western Folklife Center's "Moving Rural Verse" series in 2017 honoring acequia culture. She continues her journey in reclaiming her language, seeds, and stories of resilience.



DAVID & MAXIMIÑO MANZANARES

David Manzanares (he/him) and Maximino Manzanares (she/they) are from Abiquiu, New Mexico. They are son and grandchild of Herman and Eleanor Manzanares. They and their family have been parcientes on the Abeyta-Trujillo Acequia for four generations. As small children, their father and uncle played guitar while the family danced and sang the rancheras, corridos, huapangos, boleros and vales of another era. Their gift of music carries the tradition forward to the next generation.

TEATRO ACEQUIERO

Teatro Acequero is a community theater group that presents short "actos" – politically charged and comically infused plays. Its mission is to entertain and teach, through popular education, acequia values to audiences of all ages. Its goal is to affirm acequia customs, traditions and culture.



2025 ACEQUIA INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

NMAA recognizes the following projects completed over the past 10 years. We want to uplift the hard work and dedication of maintaining, improving, and rebuilding our acequia infrastructure. Felicidades y Vivan las Acequias!

Ponderosa Ditch Association - Ponderosa pond
Acequia de la Otra Banda - Geomorphic Evaluation of Riverbed & Proposed Presa Site
Acequia de Martinez de Abajo - Rebuilding Acequia de Martinez de Abajo
Acequia de Los Lovatos - Main Diversion Dam - Acequia de Los Lovatos
The Des Montes Ditch Association - DMDA 4-Way Splitter
Acequia de Las Joyas (Pojoaque) - Grade Stabilization Structure
Hillside Irrigation District - Hillside Ditch Headgate/Spillway Replacement
Acequia de La Isla - Morphy Lake Dam-Renovation Project
Acequia del Rancho - Arroyo flood control structures

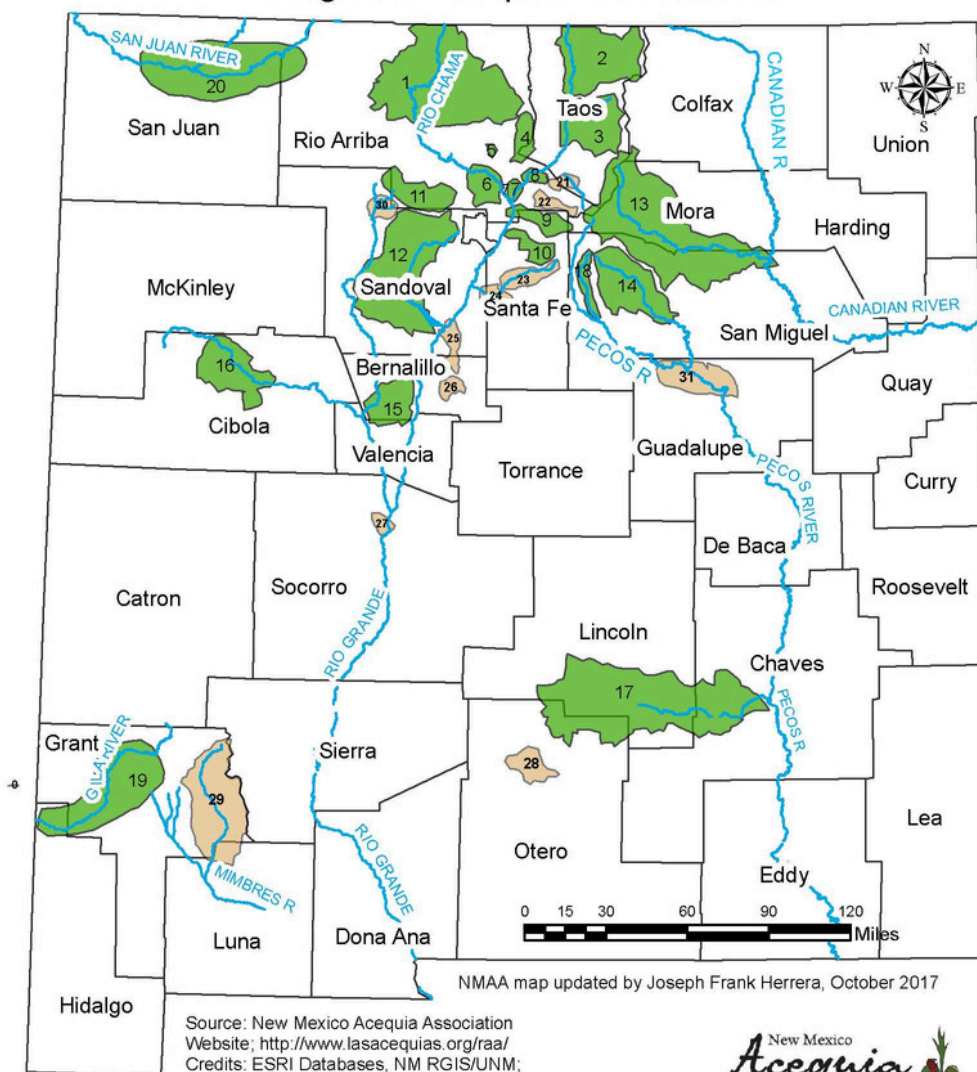
THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



WELCOME TO THE CONGRESO DE LAS ACEQUIAS

The Congreso de las Acequias is our governing body of the New Mexico Acequia Association and it is also our annual gathering of this body. The Congreso is a statewide federation of regional acequia associations that represent acequias in their respective stream basins or watersheds. We meet to share stories of our success and struggles, to learn from each other, and to make collective decisions about our strategic direction for the coming year. We also celebrate our culture with teatro, poetry, music, and shared meals! We center our Congreso de las Acequias each year with the Bendición de las Aguas, Blessing of the Waters, in which everyone is invited to bring water from their acequias, rivers, springs, or wells to honor sacred waters and our places of querencia.

Congreso de las Acequias Regional Acequia Associations



NM Acequia Regions

- Type 1 Region
- Type 2 Region

