



New Mexico Acequia Commission

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Subject: H.R. 3682 and Recognition of Traditional Uses by Acequias in US Forest Services Lands

Vice-Chair Haaland and Members of the Subcommittee:

The New Mexico Acequia Commission (NMAC) is statutorily charged with the duties of serving as a facilitator for communication between local acequia organizations and the state and federal governments, and for reviewing plans or legislation that affect acequias. Acequias are charged with the responsibility of ensuring adequate deliveries of water to its members, Acequias have a direct interest in forest management activities that concern water quality and water quantity.


New Mexico's acequias have a long history of water management and agriculture in New Mexico and in the Southwest that pre-date that of the US Forest Service. Acequias date back to the early 1600's where acequias were the first built by settlers to divert snowmelt from small streams to convey water to the valleys where families would irrigate farm lands for their families and communities.

Today, many acequias are located on lands occupied by the US Forest Service, and it is vital for acequias to have access without the requirement of obtaining special use permits, which can require full compliance with NEPA causing long delays in maintenance to keep water flowing during irrigation season for our traditional communities.

The acequias, US Forest Service and other federal agencies have mutually beneficial interest in maintaining clean and healthy watersheds for our communities for food production as well as recharge of our aquifers. For hundreds of years, acequias have played a major role in the culture, tradition and viability of our traditional communities in farming, agriculture and our way of life in the Southwest.

The New Mexico Acequia Commission supports the efforts of H.R. 3682, the Land Grant and Acequia Traditional Use Recognition and Consultation Act to provide for greater consultation between the Federal Government and the governing bodies of the land grant-mercedes and acequias in New Mexico to provide for a process for recognition of the historic-traditional boundaries. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ralph Vigil, Chairman
NM Acequia Commission