

La Acequia Madre del Ojo del Gallo
PO Box 4
San Rafael, New Mexico 87051

Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández (NM-03)
1510 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
<https://fernandez.house.gov/>

RE: Support for H.R. 1304/S. 595, the Rio San José and Rio Jemez Water Settlements Act of 2023

Dear Congresswoman Leger Fernández:

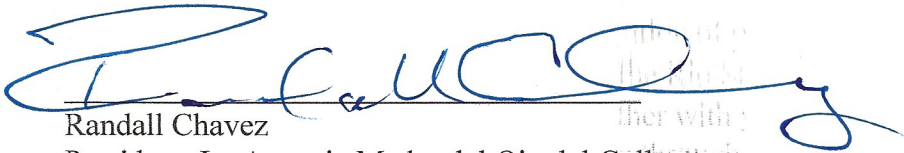
We are writing on behalf of La Acequia Madre del Ojo del Gallo, an acequia in the Rio San José Basin, to thank you for sponsoring Bill H.R. 1304, the Rio San José and Rio Jemez Water Settlements Act of 2023, and for your continued support of this very important legislation. This Bill gives Congressional approval of the Settlement Agreement for determination of the water rights of the Pueblos of Acoma and Laguna and includes many benefits for our Acequia and parciantes. The settlement was reached after many years and hundreds of hours of intense negotiations among the principal water right claimants in the Rio San José Basin in New Mexico, including this Acequia and the other eight Acequias and Community Ditches located in the Rio San José Basin.

We believe the Settlement Agreement contains many provisions beneficial to our Acequias and to this community as a whole. It brings the 40 year litigation over the Pueblos' water rights to a close while containing many protections for our own irrigation rights from the Pueblos' water uses. The Pueblos will not be able to make priority calls against our water rights and we will have the ability to evaluate and protest new Pueblo water projects and changes in their water usage. The State adjudication Court will retain jurisdiction to enforce and interpret the Settlement Agreement and appeals from Pueblo administrative decisions as to their water rights. The parties will seek State legislation to expressly authorize such appeals to the State adjudication Court. In addition, \$12 Million in State funding will be provided for development of water projects to improve and conserve the Acequias' water supplies and to evaluate and protest Pueblo water projects that might impact Acequia water supplies.

Because of the many benefits it provides, our Acequia approved the Settlement Agreement by vote of our parciantes meeting in quorum after public notice given in accordance with our Bylaws and the New Mexico Open Meetings Act. We understand that another Indian water rights settlement, the Fort Belknap Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Act of 2023, recently received Senate approval by attaching it to the National Defense Authorization Act bills voted on by the Senate. If an opportunity arises for H.R. 1304 to be similarly attached to the NDAA or other legislation that might be coming up for vote, we hope that you will advocate for that.

We thank you very much for your representation of our interests and all your efforts on our behalf to obtain Congressional approval of the Rio San José Settlement Agreement. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you and your staffers and answer any questions you may have. You can contact us through our legal counsel copied on this letter.

Sincerely,



Randall Chavez
President, La Acequia Madre del Ojo del Gallo

Date: 9-11-23

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