

2022 Congreso de las Acequias Declaration: Tierra Querida, Beloved Land

In the year 2022, after numerous years of megadrought, our communities experienced the worst year on record for wildfires including the two largest wildfires in New Mexico history, the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire and the Black Fire. Burned homes, forests, and ranches have devastated the people of the burn scars.

The trees, plants, roots, soils, and cloud patterns that were our source of water and our source of life will never be the same again. Places of our ancestors for harvesting remedios, fishing, hunting, and harvesting firewood, latillas, vigas and other building materials live only in our memories. Acequias, once flowing with clean, crystalline snowmelt from our beloved mountains, are clogged with ash and soils that eroded from the burned hillslopes.

Still, the land endures. Burned, scarred, wounded, and eroded, our beloved land is still in our care.

The Congreso de las Acequias, as representatives from acequias throughout New Mexico, express our deep sadness at the loss of watersheds, forests, and the headwaters in the burn scars from the 2022 fires.

We declare our resolve to heal our Tierra Querida, Beloved Land and we envision some of the work that lies ahead for recovering communities to heal, rebuild, and adapt for ongoing hardships and climate extremes. Our work is also important for communities who have not yet faced the catastrophe of megafires and flooding, but who are vulnerable.

1. Rebuild our acequias and community ditches ravaged by flooding by leveraging government programs, but also mobilizing communities and volunteers for communal work.
2. Heal our watersheds with massive investments for erosion control, river restoration, and reforestation. Watersheds not yet burned need restoration through thinning and erosion control.
3. Learn from the 2022 disasters to better prepare other communities for future disasters.
4. Establish emergency seed banks that are protected from fires and floods.
5. Adapt to water scarcity by strengthening our customs and practices of water sharing.
6. Protect our land and water, keeping water rights tied to farmland and preventing depletion of our aquifers.
7. Dedicate more resources toward adaptive agricultural practices to support local food production with drought resilient crops and livestock.

We resolve to build a stronger acequia movement that honors the contributions of the many volunteers who work tirelessly to keep water flowing to our lands, that supports leaders in our communities to be caretakers of the land and water, and that lifts up new generations of leaders to be defenders of our water, land, and way of life.

APPROVED BY THE CONGRESO DE LAS ACEQUIAS THIS DAY, THE 10th OF DECEMBER, 2022.