

of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Many grants were never recorded, others were destroyed and many were falsified when New Mexico became U.S. territory. Most water claims rely on oral history and scientific tests can date the age of acequias. Neither of these are acceptable evidence in court.

The world is watching the adjudication process in New Mexico. "Water is going to be the most important area of international conflict in the coming century," explains Geoff Bryce, "and we in New Mexico are establishing the terms of that conflict."

More Information

The University of New Mexico Press publishes a number of books about acequias. *Mayordomo* by Stanley Crawford and *River of Traps* written by William deBuys with photographs by Alex Harris, are both beautifully written books about life along an acequia. For an in-depth look at acequia history and the complex world of water rights, there is *Acequia Culture: Water, Land, and Community in the Southwest* by José A. Rivera. Order these books from your local bookstore, or call the press at 1-800-249-7737.

Vocabulary

Acequia

community irrigation ditch; cooperative that manages ditch

Parciante

shareholder; member of acequia cooperative

Mayordomo

elected manager of acequia

Acequia time line

1598	Juan de Oñate expedition settles Rio Grande valley. First acequia is constructed at Chamita, near confluence of Rio Chama and Rio Grande.
1610	Santa Fe is founded by Pedro de Peralta. Acequias retain independence as local governments distinct from municipalities.
1821	Mexico becomes independent from Spain. Nuevo Mexico becomes Mexican territory. Acequias remain basic units of local government in the territory.
1848	Mexico cedes Nuevo Mexico (the Southwest), California, and Texas to the United States. Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo protects property rights of Mexican citizens in ceded territories, insuring continuity of local acequia associations.
1848	U.S. Colonel Stephen Kearny occupies New Mexico. Kearny code preserves acequia system.
1851	Territorial legislature enacts water laws. Local water sharing customs and acequia management practices are preserved.
1891	Court of Private Land Claims created to confirm land grants. Only 6 percent of total areas of lands granted by Spain and Mexico is confirmed. Water rights remain the property of acequia parciantes.
1898	State Water Commission, investigating water rights, concludes acequia system is "just and progressive and simple" and should not be changed.
1907	State comprehensive water code recognizes acequias as managing a distinct class of water rights, governed by Spanish and Mexican water law and local custom.
1912	New Mexico becomes a state. State constitution confirms existing water rights.
1956	State files first general suit to adjudicate acequia water rights in lower Rio Chama valley stream basin.
1968	State files adjudication suit in Rio Hondo and Rio Pueblo de Taos stream basins.
1986	64 community acequias organize Taos Valley Acequia Association (TVAA) to provide defense in Rio Hondo and Rio Pueblo de Taos water rights adjudication suits.
1998	Parties to Taos Valley adjudication suits agree to negotiate water use based on valley-wide water plan.
1999	Trial on Taos Pueblo claims to begin. Negotiation continues.