

# Acequia champion Estevan Arellano dies

By J.R. Logan | Posted: Wednesday, October 29, 2014 10:48 am

Dogged acequia advocate and keeper of Northern New Mexican culture Juan Estevan Arellano died Wednesday (Oct. 29).

His wife, Elena Arellano, said the cause of death was heart failure. The Embudo resident was 67.

Arellano was a well-known and respected scholar on acequia culture and tradition, but he was perhaps most revered for his willingness to share that knowledge. He was often known by the moniker "maestro" — the Spanish word for "teacher."

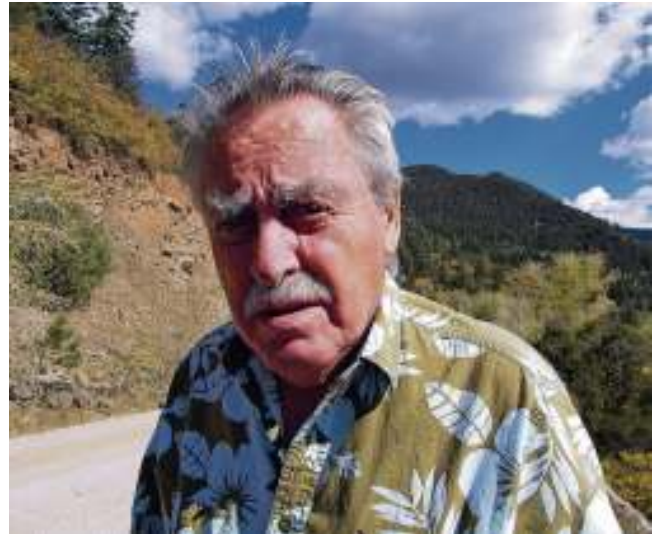
"He was so dedicated to the issues and the struggles and the love for the land and the water," said Pilar Trujillo, who works with the New Mexico Acequia Association, in an interview Wednesday. She called Arellano "a mentor" and "an icon." "He had a profound sense of *querencia*."

During his long career, Arellano worked with Facundo Valdéz and Tomás Atencio — founders of La Academia de la Nueva Raza — collecting traditional stories and folk-wisdom. Arellano later worked as director of the Oñate Center in Alcalde. Arellano recently published a book entitled *Enduring Acequias* and had done several book signings.

"He had a really strong voice and he wasn't afraid to use it," Trujillo said. "People might think he was overly critical. But it wasn't that. It was that he cared so much about those traditions and value. That knowledge."

Elena Arellano said in an interview Wednesday Arellano's struggle to preserve and share traditional knowledge was fueled, in part, by love of family. "He always thought of his grandchildren and wanted them to have a good life like he had, Elena Arellano said.

No memorial services had been planned as of Wednesday morning.



Estevan Arellano

Courtesy photo by New Mexico Community Foundation