

NM Acequia Association

El Agua es Vida. Water is Life.

A New Horizon for the TVAA

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Encuentro de TVAA facilitated by Paula Garcia- Photo taken by Olivia Romo

Taos Valley Acequia Association was established as a non-profit corporation in 1989 for charitable, educational and scientific purposes in order to serve the needs of acequias in the Taos Valley. The TVAA Articles of Incorporation list among its purposes:

To educate, inform, advise and assist acequias and their members about their water rights, the laws and regulations pertaining to their water rights, and historical uses, agreements, and customs and water uses.

Related purposes are to educate, inform, advise and assist acequias about water rights

adjudication suits and other administrative proceedings, water conservation practices, community development, and the 'protection and defense the water rights of acequias and their individual members in water rights adjudication suits.'

The protection and defense of acequia water rights in the Taos or Abeyta federal and state water rights adjudication suit became the primary focus of the TVAA from its inception until a final decree was issued on the case in 2016. As a representative body made up of commissioners from seven stream systems, the TVAA coordinated acequia participation in the adjudication process that culminated in a negotiated settlement between Taos Pueblo, the TVAA, the Town of Taos, the El Prado Water and Sanitation system, twelve Mutual domestic Water Associations, and the state and federal governments.

The Abeyta case has lasted a lifetime since it was filed in 1969. Several leaders who helped to found the TVAA and took part in the negotiations have died. The settlement was reached in 2006 as an alternative to litigation after seventeen years of painful struggle and hard-won, mutual compromise on the parts of Taos Pueblo and the TVAA. It took hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of meetings. Scores of public meetings have since been held to explain it. More continue today as the implementation phase gets underway.

The handful of original TVAA Board members who persevered in order to "keep the acequias whole" by protecting and maintaining their water rights performed a great service. Still, not everyone appreciates, agrees with, or understands the terms of the settlement. Some Taoseños have voiced confusion, skepticism or mistrust. A few have spread misinformation about the consequences and negotiators' motives.



TVAA Leadership & Education Committee

But regardless of whether the Abeyta settlement satisfies every Taoseño, the fact remains that the

coming years will bring escalating threats to acequia survival caused by a combination of economic, social, and political conditions as well as by climate change. Acequias' ability to survive will depend on dogged persistence, cooperation, mutual trust and respect, dedication, education, effective organization, and unrelenting defense and advocacy.

Therefore, in order to continue its mission, the TVAA Board has created a Leadership and Education Committee charged with envisioning and charting a post-Abeyta role for the association. Starting in 2017, the L & E Committee will embark on a program of community outreach in order to ascertain the most pressing needs and concerns of their membership; to collaborate on practical and educational programs; and to develop new leadership. Stayed tuned.