

Luján Applauds Grants To Benefit New Mexico’s Acequias And Tribal And Pueblo Farmers And Ranchers

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U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Luján

CONGRESSIONAL News:

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Ben Ray Luján (D-NM) applauded the announcement Monday that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has awarded more than \$330,000 in grants to benefit New Mexico’s acequias and farmers and ranchers from tribal and pueblo communities.

Both grants have been awarded through the USDA’s Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program (or, the 2501 program).

The New Mexico Acequia Association (NMAA) has received a grant of more than \$130,000 for the New Mexico Acequia Farmer and Rancher Education Project.

The project’s aim is to strengthen the agricultural operations of farmers and ranchers who use acequias or community ditches in New Mexico.

“In New Mexico, we know that water is life. I have acequias on my land and I grew up working with my family and community to maintain them. This grant will allow NMAA’s New Mexico Acequia Farmer and Rancher Education Project to continue that tradition,”

Luján said. “I’m proud to be a strong supporter of New Mexico’s acequias and of USDA’s 2501 program. I will continue to work in Congress to protect funding for projects like this and to ensure that our traditional communities can continue their work.”

"Acequias have sustained generations of families through farming and ranching. The NMAA is working to support acequias as part the local economy and culture with education and resources for acequia irrigation efficiency, beginning farmer and rancher training, and youth outreach. We are very grateful for the support from the USDA Office of Advocacy and Outreach and the New Mexico congressional delegation," said Executive Director Paula Garcia of the New Mexico Acequia Association.

The second grant, totaling nearly \$200,000, has been awarded to New Mexico State University’s Cooperative Extension Service’s New Mexico Pueblo Outreach Project to offer assistance to northern New Mexico’s tribes and pueblos. NMSU’s Cooperative Extension Service provides New Mexicans with practical, research-based knowledge and programs. Through this funding, the Pueblo Outreach Program will provide farmers and ranchers from northern New Mexico’s tribal communities knowledge about USDA programs they can benefit from, as well as individual assistance in applying for these programs.

“New Mexico’s farmers and ranchers are a critical part of our economy. With the support from this funding, we can ensure that farmers and ranchers from tribal communities have access to USDA programs that can help them on the road to success,” Luján said. “I will continue to support programs in Congress that can help tribal farmers and ranchers become a thriving part of our country’s agriculture.”

"The Pueblo of Santa Clara, like much of Pueblo Country, has deep agricultural and ranching roots. We are excited to hear of the new USDA grant opportunity available in New Mexico that will support the continued development of these activities in our community. The ability to farm and harvest traditional foods – such as corn and piñon nuts – nourishes both the body and the spirit. This new grant will provide us with increased access to the tools we need to further the revitalization of our traditional lifestyles and practices, while also strengthening our agriculturally-based economic development,” said Governor Michael Chavarria of Pueblo of Santa Clara.

Acequias are centuries old irrigation structures still in use today in rural communities across New Mexico and are governed by a board made up of private land owners known as the community ditch association. Luján has long been committed to supporting and protecting New Mexico’s acequias. Earlier this year, he introduced the [Acequia Conservation Program Eligibility Act](#) to enable community ditch associations to access federal funds through four conservation programs, and the [Land Grant and Acequia Traditional Use Recognition Act](#), to provide greater consultation between the federal government and New Mexico’s land grants and acequias.