



Auditor Wayne Johnson works with local acequias to ensure financial compliance and eligibility for funding

Sangre de Cristo Chronicle

April 19, 2018

State Auditor Wayne Johnson's office is providing audit and financial compliance training for local acequias across the state to ensure that these small but vital entities are in financial compliance with state law and eligible to receive capital funding.

The trainings, "*Acequia Pathways to Funding: Financial Compliance*" are meant to help acequias comply with laws that require local governmental entities to account for their receipts and expenditures of public monies.

"Acequias are a vital part of the fabric of our communities in New Mexico," said State Auditor Wayne Johnson. "They're a significant aspect of our culture, our economy, our food supply and our very way of life. These trainings and access to technical assistance from my office will not only help our acequia boards and mayordomos succeed, but ensure that they can continue to thrive. It is critical that the local boards understand how state auditing rules apply to them because mistakes can cost them critically needed funding at the state level."

The New Mexico Acequia Association (NMAA) hosts, organizes, and markets the trainings and works with Johnson's office and the state Department of Finance Administration to present the trainings and offer technical assistance.

"As an association, we've focused on helping acequias achieve their goals," said Serafina Lombardi, the NMAA director of Education and Outreach. "We appreciate Auditor Johnson's enthusiastic support of this program and look forward to a continued partnership with his office for the benefit of our acequias and parciantes."

Acequias and other small government entities, like mutual domestic water consumer associations, land grants, and special districts, are required to comply with state audit rules before they qualify for state funding like capital outlay. Too often, these small entities don't realize they are non-compliant until an emergency, like a damaged or flooded gate, forces them to seek state funding.

There are as many as 800 acequias across the state representing 5,000 miles of ditches. They are generally concentrated in Northern New Mexico, with 167 in Rio Arriba County, 97 in Taos County, and 65 in Santa Fe County. There are 598 acequias in 21 counties, with each one servicing anywhere from 3 to more than 800 irrigators. The NMAA estimates there are more than 15,000 "parciantes", or people with acequia water rights for crops or livestock, throughout the state and an estimated 186,000 irrigated acres.

“The economic impact in New Mexico is enormous,” Johnson said today. “The NMAA estimates the market value of livestock and crops produced in Acequia counties is nearly \$200 million and 42% of our farms are in these counties with 186,000 irrigated acres. Acequias are truly embedded in our state-wide economy.”

Johnson says the most recent Acequia training was in Nambe, NM. The next trainings will be in Truth or Consequences on April 26 at 10am at the T or C Albert J. Lyon Event Center and Pecos, NM on May 10, 2018 at 9am in the Pecos Municipal Building. Trainings have already taken place in Taos, Bloomfield, and Chimayo.

“Historically, acequias were the first type of formal government in this area, up and down the Rio Grande Valley,” said Johnson. “Our acequias have a long history of managing public money and of accountability to their members. We’re very proud of that heritage, and I’m honored to be a part of this process to help our acequias meet their goals.”