



Questions of Water Equity, Diversity, Inclusion

An Exploration for CSU Grad 592 November 9, 2021

With Rio de la Vista
Director,
Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center
at Adams State University
and
Ronda Lobato, 6th Generation Acequia Parciante
Costilla County Conservancy District Board Member

Water Equity's Bottom Line:

Access to Clean, Adequate, Accessible Water Supply

How many of you *personally* know someone in the United States, in Colorado who grew up without running water?
Without electricity?

How many of you personally know anyone who *currently* lives without running water?
Without electricity?

DEFINING EQUITABLE WATER ACCESS

The goal of this report is to spark a national response that ensures **SAFE, ACCEPTABLE, ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE, and NON-DISCRIMINATORY** access to water and wastewater services to all people. Equitable water and wastewater services are:

Safe:

Water quality does not have adverse effects on human health

Water meets or exceeds safety standards set by the World Health Organization and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Wastewater systems effectively store and treat sewage in a manner that prevents human contact and prevents backup, overflow, flooding, or runoff that can endanger public health

Acceptable:

Hot and cold running water in the home that is acceptable in color, odor, and taste

Plumbing and sanitation facilities that are culturally appropriate to communities

Accessible:

Sink, shower or bath, and toilet in the home *

Water and wastewater services are continuous and not subject to interruptions

Affordable:

Water and wastewater services do not create a cost burden that limits the ability to procure other essential goods and services like food, medicine, electricity, or housing

Non-discriminatory:

Access to services is not determined by race, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship status, gender, age, income, housing situation, geography, religion, creed, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other status

* Plumbing facilities may be shared in the case of homeless shelters or affordable housing, but must be well-maintained, clean, and safe without an unreasonable wait time to be considered accessible.



www.digdeep.org

HISTORICAL CAUSES OF WATER ACCESS CHALLENGES

**FOR THE COMMUNITIES
THAT WERE HISTORICALLY
UNABLE TO DEVELOP
WATER INFRASTRUCTURE,
THE DECLINE IN FUNDING
MAKES IT EVEN HARDER
TO CATCH UP TO THE REST
OF THE COUNTRY.**

**IN 1977, 63 PERCENT OF
TOTAL CAPITAL SPENDING
FOR WATER AND
WASTEWATER SYSTEMS
CAME FROM FEDERAL
AGENCIES; TODAY THAT
NUMBER IS LESS THAN
NINE PERCENT.³³**

NATIONAL DATA FINDINGS

The quantitative data findings on the water access gap summarized in this report are the product of research led by Michigan State University (MSU). This section describes our national quantitative findings, and the section following it describes our qualitative research.

Five Major Findings from the National Analysis:

- 1. FEDERAL DATA DOESN'T ACCURATELY MEASURE THE WATER ACCESS GAP**
- 2. RACE IS THE STRONGEST PREDICTOR OF WATER AND SANITATION ACCESS**
- 3. POVERTY IS A KEY OBSTACLE TO WATER ACCESS**
- 4. WATER ACCESS CHALLENGES AFFECT ENTIRE COMMUNITIES**
- 5. PROGRESS IS UNEVEN, AND SOME COMMUNITIES ARE BACKSLIDING**



**More than
2,000,000
Americans live
without basic
access to safe
drinking water
and sanitation.**



This number includes:

1.4 million  **250,000**
people in Puerto Rico

553,000 

people in the United States lack access to indoor plumbing (hot and cold running water, a sink, a shower/bath, or a flush toilet)

homeless people in the United States* who may lack equitable water and sanitation access

WHO IS AFFECTED



Black and Latinx households are twice as likely as white households to lack indoor plumbing.

Many more people face related water challenges:

Native American households are 19 times more likely than white households to lack indoor plumbing.

More than

44,000,000

people are served by water systems that recently had health-based Safe Drinking Water Act violations.⁹



23%

of private wells tested by the United States Geological Survey showed contaminants with health concerns, including arsenic, uranium, nitrates, and E. coli.¹⁰



17%

of people living in rural areas report having experienced issues with safe drinking water.



12%

of people living in rural areas report issues with their sewage system.¹¹

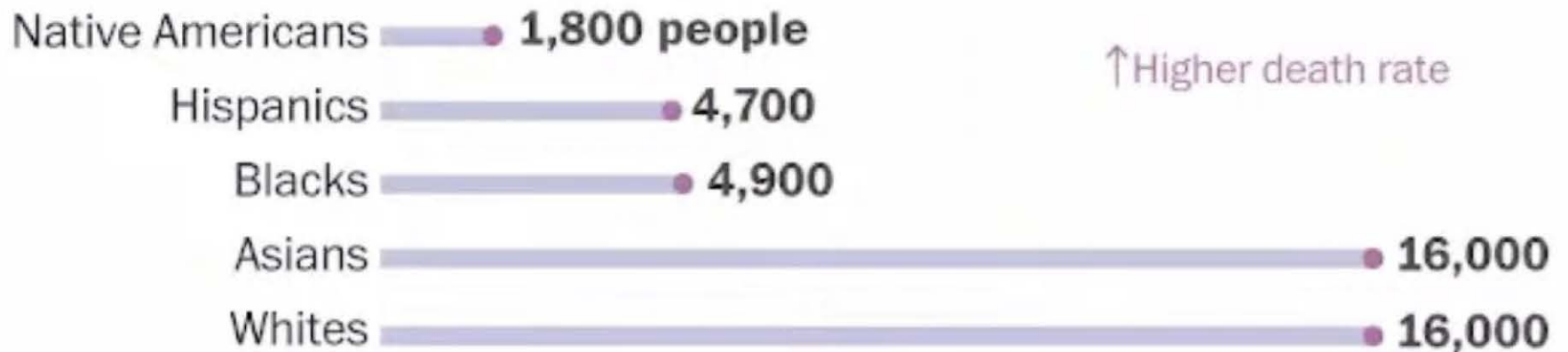


An estimated 30 percent of people on the Navajo Nation lack access to running water and must haul water.⁴⁵ Local officials report that the actual number may be even higher. The region itself has a wealth of water resources, but the Navajo were left out of compacts allocating water use. Although tribal water rights were recognized by the US Supreme Court in 1908 in *Winters v. United States*, their rights to water have been violated repeatedly for over a century. Water rights struggles and scarce funding make it difficult

Lack of access to water has life and death consequences during Covid pandemic:



One death in...



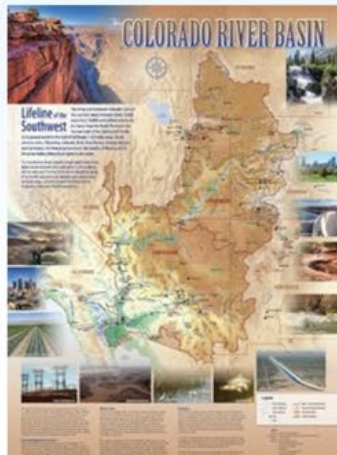
Washington Post, Sept. 15, 2021

<https://engagecwcb.org/waterequity>

SHARE THIS PAGE



[Print-friendly](#)



Western Water | November 2, 2018 | Gary Pitzer

AS SHORTAGES LOOM IN THE COLORADO RIVER BASIN, INDIAN TRIBES SEEK TO SECURE THEIR WATER RIGHTS

WESTERN WATER IN-DEPTH: A STUDY OF TRIBAL WATER RIGHTS COULD SHED LIGHT ON FUTURE INDIAN WATER USE

As the Colorado River Basin becomes drier and shortage conditions loom, one great variable remains: How much of the river's water belongs to Native American tribes?



<https://www.watereducation.org/western-water/shortages-loom-colorado-river-basin-indian-tribes-see-secure-their-water-rights>

Questions to consider:

Who Benefits?

- Who benefits from inequity? From increased equity?
- From lack of diversity? From greater diversity?
- From lack of inclusion? From greater inclusion?

Past, Present, Future:

- How can we address historical inequity?
- How do deal with present inequities?
- How to prevent future inequities?

Inspiring change:

- How can we reach across political, social, cultural divides to find common solutions?
- What kind of language will be heard?
- What messages will be received? By whom?
- What will motivate the changes we need?

What is the relationship between Water Equity and other overarching issues of our time?

- Environmental Justice
- Climate Justice
- Social Justice
- Loss of Biodiversity

How does climate change affect people of color, poverty, more than others?

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

‘The fight for climate justice and the fight for social justice must go hand in hand’

By [Sarah Kaplan](#) and [Michael Birnbaum](#) • 1:29 p.m.



Representatives and supporters of Indigenous communities participate in the Glasgow protest on Saturday. (Andy Buchanan/AFP/Getty Images)

FIRST THEY CAME

By **Martin Niemöller**

First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist
Then they came for the Socialists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew
Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me.

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

Climate and Environment

At least 85 percent of the world's population has been affected by human-induced climate change, new study shows

Researchers used machine learning to analyze more than 100,000 studies of weather events and found four-fifths of the world's land area has suffered impacts linked to global warming

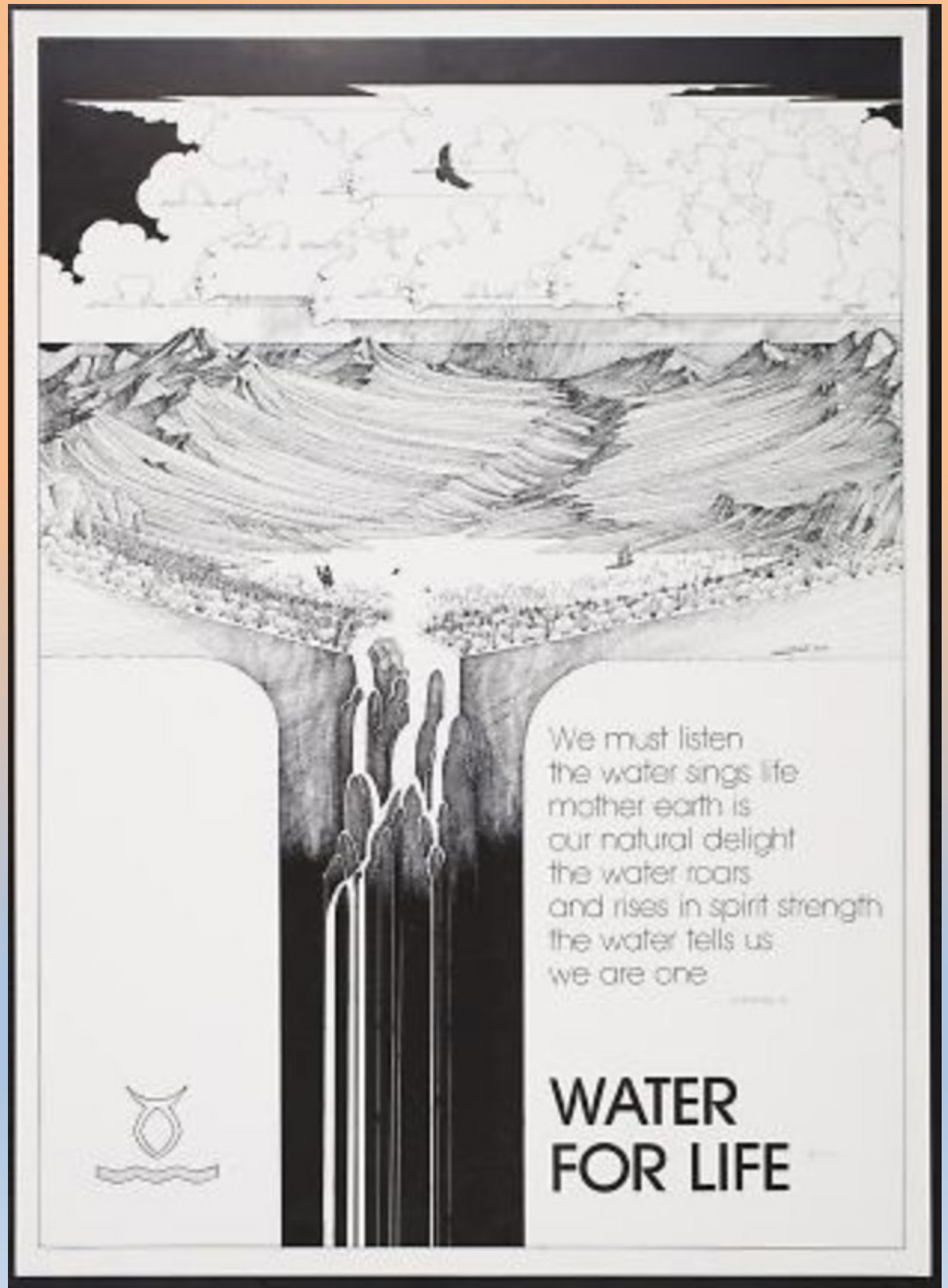
First They Came

adapted from Martin Niemoller's WWII Poem
by Rio de la Vista, November 2021

First they came for the wildlife
And I did not speak out
Because I am not wild
 though I like to see the birds and deer and coyote
Then they came for the forests
And I did not speak out
Because I do not live in the forest
 though I built my home of wood
Then they came for the farmland
And I did not speak out
Because I am not a farmer
 though I need the food they grow to feed my family
Then they came for the rivers
And I did not speak out
Because I do not live by a river
 though the river brings the water that feeds the farms, the bird, the deer, the coyote
Then they changed our climate
And I did not speak out
Because I need the gasoline to drive my car, the coal to power my home
 though the floods, and fires and heat endanger my very life
Then they came for the water
And I could not speak
Because I was too thirsty



Water is life!
Aqua es Vida!



We must listen
the water sings life
mother earth is
our natural delight
the water roars
and rises in spirit strength
the water tells us
we are one



**WATER
FOR LIFE**



Acequias

A community of historical water sharing

Ronda Lobato – 6th generation Parciante

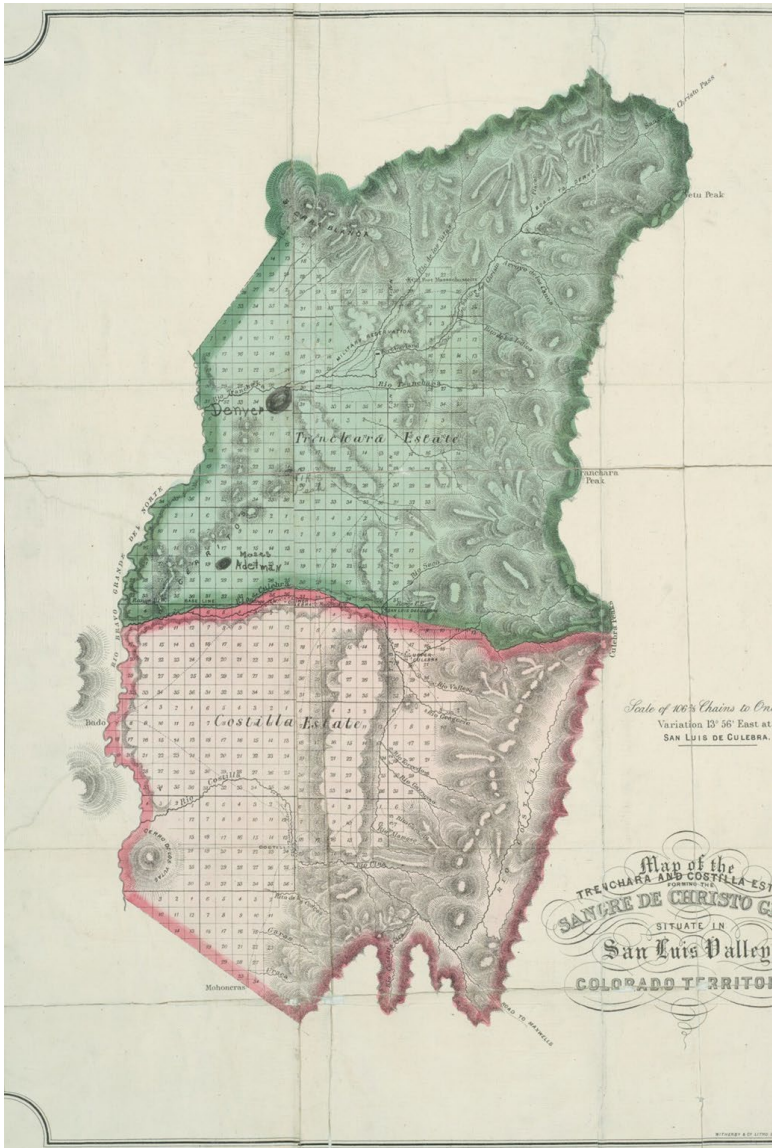
Acequia ah-se-kyah

- > The definition of Acequia is simply an irrigation ditch
- > The meaning of Acequia is so much more!
- > Acequias are a way of life for our small community of farmers and ranchers
- > They have existed in the southern half of Costilla, Conejos, and Las Animas Counties since before they were called counties.



Before Colorado became a State, Acequias were hand dug by the first settlers of what is now Colorado.





Costilla County – A Mexican Land Grant

- > Costilla County was the first area of the state of Colorado to be colonized with recorded history dating back to 1540, the year Coronado explored the Southwest.
- > The Sangre de Cristo Land grant was awarded to Narcisso Beaubien in January of 1844. Four years later, his father, Carlos Beaubien took possession of the land, which spanned more than 1 million acres in the San Luis Valley and Sangre de Cristo Mountains.
- > The grant was approved by Congress in 1860 and sold to former Colorado territorial governor William Gilpin in 1864.

Original Settlers

- > As an incentive to settle lands, Beaubien deeded perpetual communal rights to La Sierra (the mountain) and La Vega (the meadows) to the settlers.
- > Lands along the rivers of the Culebra watershed were deeded to the settlers in “Varas” (Strips of land) so that each land owner would have access to water to irrigate their crops.
- > These settlers hand dug earthen ditches called Acequias.



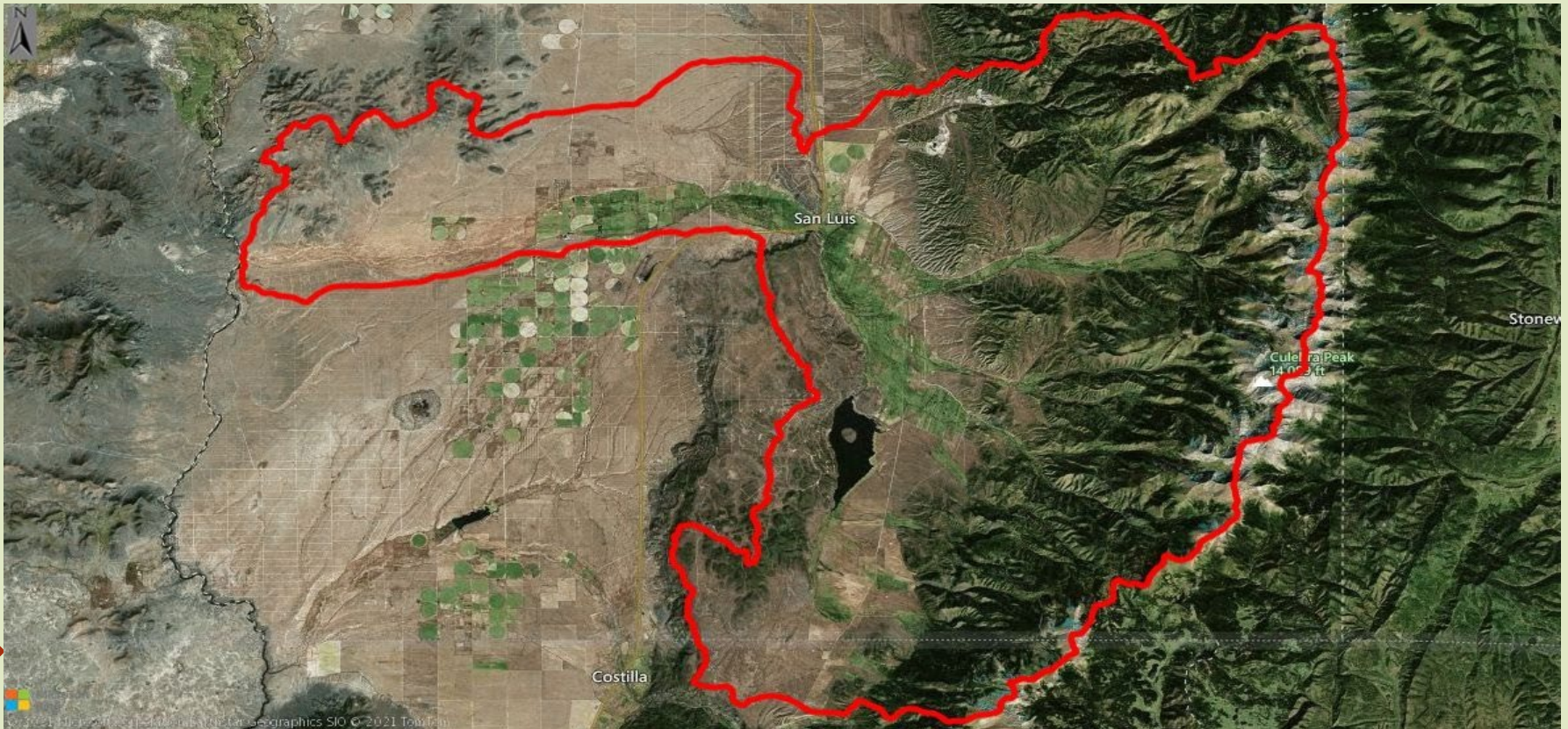
Varas



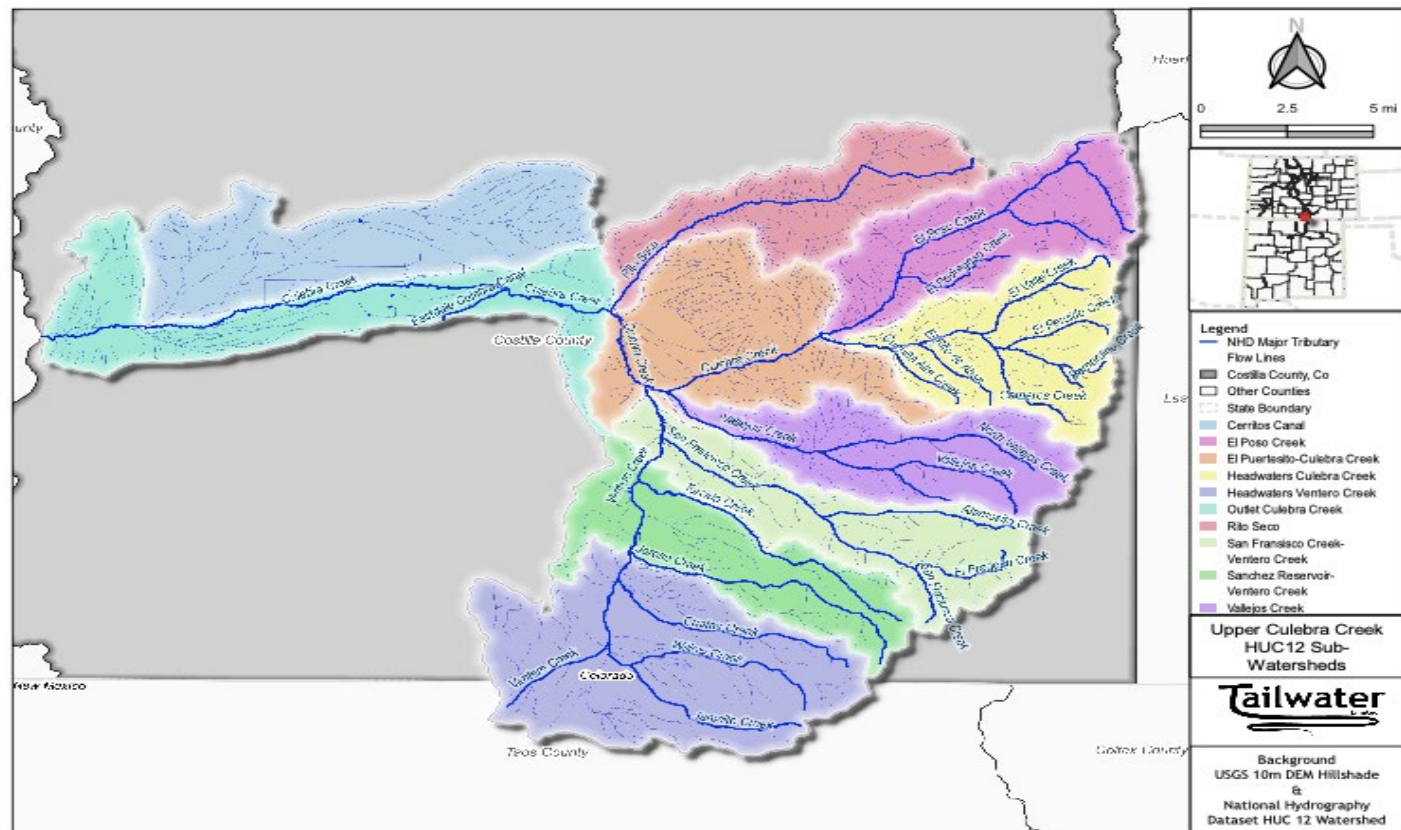
Why is this important?

- > The Acequia community consists of villages within the vara strips.
- > There are several villages in the southern half of Costilla County. San Francisco, Los Fuertes, San Pablo, San Francisco, Chama, Chama Canon, San Luis, La Corierra, and San Acacio.
- > These are the villages where Acequias exist to irrigate crops and raise livestock.
- > These villages thrive off of the Culebra watershed.

Culebra Watershed



Acequias of the Culebra Watershed





How the Acequia Community Operates:

- > Each Acequia has a “Mayordomo”(manger).
- > Every “Parciante” (property owner on the ditch) has a vote.
- > Each Acequia has an annual meeting where they appoint a Mayordomo. This usually happens at an annual meeting or gathering in the spring when the Parciantes on an Acequia gather to clean their ditch before irrigation season starts.
- > The Mayordomo uses a rotational schedule to ensure that each Parciante has their turn to water their crops.
- > This practice has always been used for Acequias in the Culebra Watershed
- > We hold keeping water tied to the land sacred.

Our History – Our Legacy

- > The 8th generation of original settlers are now learning the Acequia traditions of our ancestors.
- > It is vital to us that we educate our children how to carry on this practice.
- > We have established several organization in our community to ensure that our land and water is preserved and protected. They include the Sangre De Cristo Acequia Association, the Costilla County Conservancy District, and the Land Rights Council.
- > The Costilla County Conservancy District is now conducting a watershed assessment of the Culebra watershed in order to protect our land and water for the future. This was made possible by CWCB, and other funders.





If we take care of the land and water, it takes care of us –

Josephina Lobato <https://youtu.be/tPFr2AJKVsA>

