



Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association

El Parciante

PO Box 721 San Luis,
CO 81152

The Importance of the Upper Rio Culebra Watershed

By Dana Maestas

As a land and water based community, the people that live within the villages of the Rio Culebra Watershed, rely on the mountain water to nourish and sustain their crops of alfalfa and food gardens. The farmers here rely on the snow pack to keep the water flowing into the acequias. The Rio Culebra Watershed was an ideal site for settlement because of the stream systems and their connected riparian areas that criss-cross the western side of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Culebra Peak by its very existence creates a micro climate that supports diverse plants and wooded areas, perfect for settlement of the areas acequia farms and ranches. The Culebra Watershed includes Rio Culebra, El Valle, Vallejos, and San Francisco Rivers, and , the tributary creeks of El Poso, Carneros, Rio Aban, North Vallejos, Rito Agua Azul, Almosito, Torcido, Jaroso, Jarosocito, and Cuates (the most commonly known).

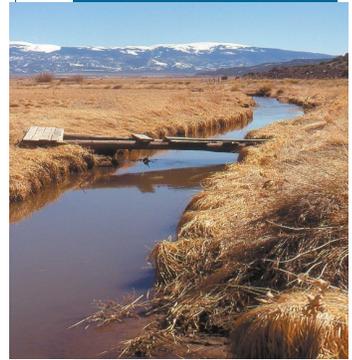
Our community's water supply is reliant on the headwaters of the forested watershed, intermountain wetlands, and riparian corridors of stream valleys. As water from snowmelt and rain travel downstream to reach rivers, it moves through varying terrain interacting with the watershed's

biology and physical environment. This is the watershed's ecosystem. The quality and quantity of the water is linked to the health of the watershed. Watershed health is a measure of ecosystem structure and function. Structure refers to species richness (abundance and diversity), inorganic and organic resources, and physical attributes (habitat). Function refers to ecosystem processes such as hydrologic cycle and energy flow. Critical to the hydrologic cycle is flow regime. This defines the frequency, changes, and timing of flows in stream systems. This system is key to ensure that wood can be gathered and timbered.

The long term drought that occurred in the 2000's, has caused the forests of the upper Culebra watershed to be stressed. This has created a situation that is ripe for the infestation of the spruce bud worm and spruce beetle in the upper watershed's mixed conifer forests. (Note: This already has infected the San Juans and northern Sangre de Cristo range) This situation is compounded by dry up of the connected river and stream riparian areas which affect the native plant communities and inhibit movement of crucial ground water needed to support

the native grasses critical for grazing. The importance of protecting the watershed is crucial because excessive runoff and sedimentation caused by logging or road construction into streams can increase costs for filtering water, interfere with the acequia irrigation system, and increase flood potential. Streamside damage affects the stability of the streams which impact fish, other aquatic life, and wildlife that rely on these habitats. When all of these factors are coupled with erratic climate conditions, the stage is set for wild fires that will destroy critical wood sources used by landowners in the lower basin. This increases the chance for water and debris flows into the populated basin below, which has the potential to impede irrigation, destroy structures and threaten the health and well being of landowners, their families and livestock. The CCCD will be holding stakeholder meetings and community meetings over the next coming months to assess the health of the Upper Rio Culebra Watershed. The meetings will be held on the 2nd to the last Thursday of each month, from 1 – 3 pm. at the CCCD office at 324 Main Street in San Luis, Colorado.

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[USDA Enrollment Period for Safety Net Coverage in 2018](#)

Farmers and ranchers with base acres in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) safety net program may enroll for the 2018 crop year. The enrollment period will end on Aug. 1, 2018. Call your local NRCS Office @ 719-672-3673.

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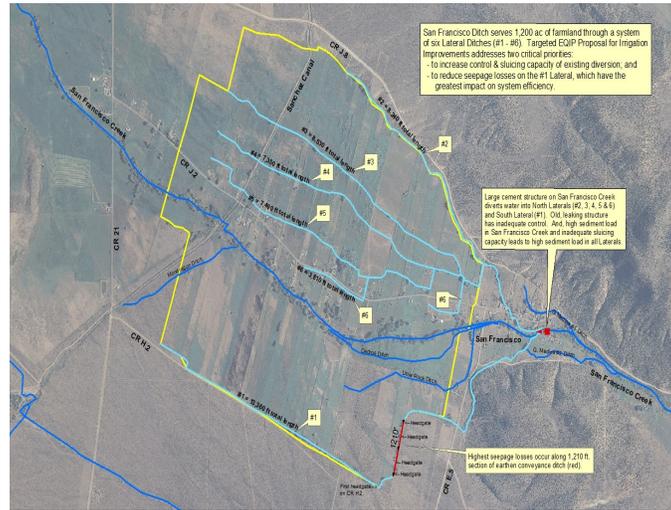
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Acequia Profile: San Francisco Ditch

The San Francisco Acequia holds adjudicated water rights granted by a court decree in Colorado, in June 14, 1889. The San Francisco Acequia serves approximately 54 owners and irrigates approximately 1,100 acres that are considered prime soil acres of hay, grass, other row crops and vegetables gardens.

The majority of landholders are descendants of the original founders of the "Acequia" system dating back to the mid-1800's

The San Francisco Acequia applied for EQIP funding from the NRCS to serve the six lateral ditches that include the ditch numbers 1 through 6 for irrigation. These irrigation improvements address two critical priorities: To increase control & sluicing capacity of the existing diversion; and to reduce seepage losses on the #1 Lateral, which has



the greatest impact on the system efficiency. This will improve the existing diversions leaking structure that has inadequate control and high sediment load in San Francisco Creek.

The San Francisco Acequia is also proposing to install 1, 210 ft. of the

earthen conveyance ditch with a pipeline. The pipeline shown in red on the map will have 4 headgates to improve water flow to the parciantes irrigating on the # 1 Lateral along CR H.2. The improved diversion will improve the distribution of water to the #1-#6 Laterals on the SF Acequia



The Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association and Colorado Open Lands recognized for Innovation in Conservation

Colorado is a national conservation leader. Behind every effort to protect and conserve our incredible state is an individual or organization dedicated to maintaining our state's quality of life through land conservation. Each year, Palmer Land Trust's Southern Colorado Conservation Awards (SCCA) honors the efforts made across our region by acknowledging the people and the partnerships that have had a significant impact on southern Colorado through their efforts.

This year's SCCA winners represent remarkable and inspiring

conservation successes throughout southern Colorado. This year, the SCAA award showcases innovative work in the San Luis Valley.

The 2018 Innovation in Conservation Award honors the partnership between Colorado Open Lands and the Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association, and their work to advance the cause of conservation by implementing unique partnerships that protect the Culebra Basins natural heritage.

Water is the lifeblood of communities in the San Luis Valley – culturally, economically, and ecologically.

With water rights in the Culebra watershed at extreme risk of transfer off properties, the Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association and Colorado Open Lands partnered to facilitate programs that support irrigators and provide resources so communities can be empowered to make decisions about their water future. This innovative and community-oriented approach to conservation has made it possible for farmers in the Culebra Watershed to navigate the challenging water future they face.

[File a Notice of Loss for Failed Acres and Prevented Planting](#)

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers to report prevented planting and failed acres in order to establish or retain FSA program eligibility for some programs. For more information call your local USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) office @ (719) 672-3673

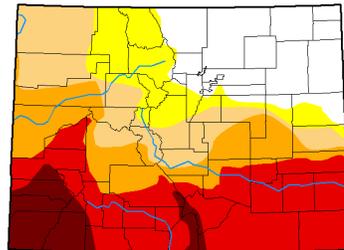


Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association

Drought Impact in the Southwest

Last week the intermountain west saw the remnants of Tropical Storm Bud roll through from southern Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado. Utah and western Arizona remained dry for the week with less than 0.10" of precipitation. New Mexico saw widespread precipitation amounts of at least 0.50" with isolated areas over 1.00". Colorado was mix of beneficial precipitation and lack of precipitation. Northwestern Colorado from Moffat and San Miguel counties were on the drier end with less than 0.25 inches. Southwestern Colorado saw some of the best precipitation for quiet a while with amounts of 0.50" to over 1.00" While this was above normal precipitation for the time of year and helped firefighting efforts. It was not enough to put out the fires or make up for the large precipitation deficits this area has been having over the last 9+ months.

U.S. Drought Monitor
Colorado



June 12, 2018
(Released Thursday, Jun. 14, 2018)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	Name	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current		20.33	79.67	67.52	51.18	36.21
Last Week	06-05-2018	24.69	75.31	63.91	50.80	36.13
3 Months Ago	03-10-2018	10.16	89.84	70.75	47.44	13.44
Start of Calendar Year	01-01-2018	6.57	93.43	33.53	7.27	0.00
Start of Water Year	09-01-2017	67.63	32.37	3.72	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago	06-12-2017	93.84	6.16	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

Author:
Brian Fuchs
National Drought Mitigation Center

USDA NDMC DOI EPA

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

Since early May drought conditions have worsened. Even with precipitation in southern Colorado SPI remained low on all time scales, worsening on the longer times. D4 exceptional drought conditions persist in the Four Corners region and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Parts of Central Arizona, the Four Corners and the San Luis Valley are experiencing their highest spring reference ET going back to the

late 70's. The La Nina event has finally petered out and ENSO neutral conditional prevail in the tropical Pacific. The majority of models predict the ENSO neutral conditions to continue through fall 2018, with 50-50 odds for the emergence of El Nino conditions by winter 2018. Barring some very unusual weather patterns, 2018 will not be remembered as a water supply victory for the IMW.

The Acequia Recognition Law

Acequias are unique and represent a long standing cultural institutions in Colorado. Spanish and Mexican farmers and ranchers who settled here long before Colorado became a state created these systems for irrigation and water sharing that ensure sustainable use of water, and create important community bonds. Despite their long history, it was not until 2009 that acequias received recognition in the Colorado state statutes. The 2009 Acequia Recognition Law, which was amended in 2013,

allows acequias to continue to exercise their traditional roles in governing community access to water, and also strengthens their ability to protect their water. For acequias in Colorado to take full advantage of the statute, it is necessary for each to have a set of written bylaws that formalize existing customs and adopt the recently recognized powers. A Handbook that was drafted by Volunteers UC Law students to highlight the opportunities presented by the Acequia Recognition Law, as well as to explain the

basics of Colorado water law for acequia members and those who work with acequias is available the SdCAA office at 401 Church Street, San Luis, CO.

To learn more about what this law means for you as an acequia parciante, go to our website www.coloradoacequias.org where you can view both the English and Spanish version of "The Acequia Handbook".

The Board & Staff

- Delmer Vialpando, President
719-672-0944
- Bea Ferrigno, Secretary
719-580-7378
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719-672-3949
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- Andy Manzanares
719-588-7607
- Dave Marquez
719-672-0334
- Mathew Valdez Executive Director
719-672-0810

SdCAA Meeting Dates:

SdCAA Meeting are held the 2nd Tuesday of the Month in the Economic Development Conference Room.

The SdCAA is looking to fill two (2) vacancies. If you would like to serve on the SdCAA Board, submit a letter of intent to SdCAA, P.O. Box 721, San Luis, CO 81152 or 719-672-0810.

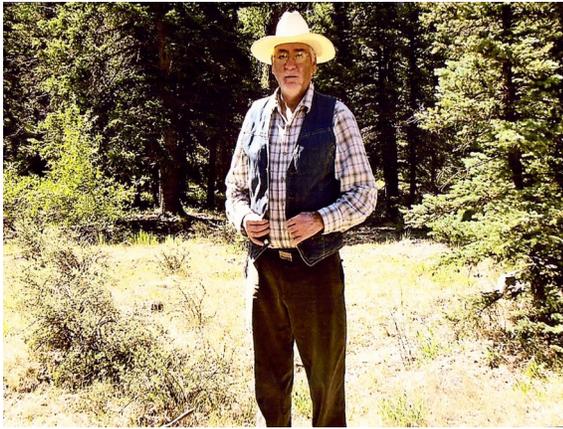


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401 Church Street – PO Box 721
San Luis, CO 81152
719-672-0810**

The Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association Memorial Scholarship Fund



Following the sudden deaths in 2016 of two valued board members, the SdCAA established a scholarship fund in their honor. Felix Lopez and Joe Gallegos were devoted to acequia traditions and lifeways; they also recognized the importance of both academic and practical education in sustaining the acequia way of life under changing conditions. To continue their work, the scholarship fund will help defray the expenses of college courses as well as internships and practical training. Modest scholarships will be available to parciantes, their family members, and others committed to upholding the acequia traditions. We are currently growing the fund, developing the application process, and defining award criteria. Watch our newsletter, *El Parciante*, for updates.

Please address contributions to the SdCAA Memorial Scholarship Fund, and mail to PO Box 721, San Luis, CO 81152. We are a 501 c (3) non-profit organization, so your donation is tax deductible. The Acequia Association will send you a return receipt acknowledging your donation. Thank You!