



The Acequia Community Colorado's First Settlements Grades: 6-8

These lessons are dedicated to the original hispano settlers and their descendants who have worked to maintain their culturally significant acequia communities and the organizations that help protect that heritage.

**Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association
Land Rights Council
Heredero's Grazing Association
Costilla County Conservancy District**

This curriculum is made possible through funding of

**The History Colorado State Historical Fund
Costilla County Economic Development Council
Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center
Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association
Costilla County Conservancy District
Colorado Water Conservation Board**



The Acequia Community Colorado's First Settlements Grades: 6-8

Learner Outcomes

- Recognize that geographic tools represent places and space
- Describe the characteristics of a community and how they are influenced by the environment
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano Communities

Connections to 2020 Colorado State Standards

Social Studies

6th Grade: History - 1, Geography - 2, Economics -3

7th Grade: History - 1

8th Grade: Geography - 2, Civics - 4

The Program

This program includes three key components: storytelling, hands-on lesson and the option of a field trip to visit the built historic landscape. While not all classes are able to visit the site, we hope that the visual and tactile experiences within these lessons help students develop an understanding of these Hispano settlements.



The Acequia Community Colorado's First Settlements Grades: 6-8

Contents:

	Page
Settling the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant	2
History of the Acequia - A Lesson in Sharing Water	10
Acequia Governance	12
Acequia Settlers and the Value of the Vega Commons	14
Acequia Field Excursions	20



Settling Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors

Learner Outcomes:

- Determine how physical and political features impact cultural diffusion and regional differences.
- Students will describe the resources needed to establish a viable community.
- Interpret maps and other geographic tools as a primary source to analyze a historic issue.
- Students will understand that a land grant was an early land purchase from the government that was used to encourage settlement of previously unsettled areas.

Materials

1. Globe, atlas or Google Earth
2. Map of Colorado
3. Map of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

Preparation:

Ensure that students have a copy of pages 3-9 of this lesson.

Introduction: In this lesson students will learn about the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant and how this type of land purchase helped settle the early San Luis Valley in Southern Colorado. Begin the discussion by having students draw a KWL chart in their Journals or use a photo copy of the chart included in this lesson. This is a great opportunity to use a globe, atlas, or Google Earth. Once you have your mapping device orient students to the location of the United States, then to Colorado. Using either the map in the lesson or a classroom map—move to the Colorado map and find the location of the San Luis Valley and from there move to the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant in south central Colorado. Using the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant map, explain that they will be learning about the Land Grant and its settlement today.

Activity: Begin the KWL lesson with the following leading questions:

- Who were some of the first groups of people to settle Southern Colorado?
- What natural resources did they need/use to build these settlements?
- How did they change the landscape to meet their needs?
- What is a land grant?

Before you begin the discussion have students write what they Know about these questions in column K of the KWL chart. Begin the discussion by having students identify the resources that humans needed to have in order to survive in previously unsettled areas. This should include things like water, clothing, shelter, food, livestock, etc. Next, preface the reading by discussing how early settlements were cut from wilderness and required settlers to build the things they needed for their families to survive. Then have students move to the W section and list what they want to know more about.

Once this is completed have students read the history of the land grant settlement. As students read ask them to take notes on three tracks:

- What were the key resources the settlers were looking for to ensure they could survive in the new settlement Area?
- Who were the people involved and what was their culture?
- What were the key buildings the settlers needed to construct to settle this land and build their communities?

Remind them that these notes will be the basis for the activity they will be doing to complete the assignment.



Settling Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

Time: 2 - 45 minute periods

Location: Indoors

Learner Outcomes:

1. Understand the nature of historical knowledge as a process of inquiry that examines and analyzes how history is viewed, constructed, and interpreted.
2. Apply geographic representations and perspectives to analyze human movement, spatial patterns, systems, and the connections and relationships among them.
3. Students will recognize people in communities manage and build using resources in their environment.
4. Students will understand that a land grant was an early land transaction that helped develop human settlement.

Materials

1. Copy paper
2. Colored pencils, markers
3. Lesson copies
4. Scissors
5. Ruler
6. Stapler

Preparation:

Make sure each student has 10 sheets of copy paper, Colored pencils or markers, scissors, and ruler.

Locate stapler(s) in a central location that can be easily accessed by students.

Copy of KWL chart and lesson pages 7,8 and 9 for each student.

Option to give students a copy of pages 5 and 6 or show on overhead projector.

Activity:

Once they have finished the reading, have students begin to layout the sequence of the events that occurred in the reading (students should use their KWL notes). These could include events like the Signing the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago, Beaubien's purchase of the land grant, following Beaubien to the land grant, building homes, the plaza, churches and digging the acequias, etc.

Using this event sequence students are going to make a Sangre de Cristo Land Grant flip book. A flip book is a book with a series of pictures that vary gradually from one page to the next, so that when the pages are turned rapidly, the pictures appear to animate, simulating a change over time, in this case a change in the settlement of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant.

To do this, fold a sheet of plain white paper into strips about 2 inches wide by 8 inches long. Cut along the folds so that you have a stack of paper strips. Next, cut those strips in half and create a single stack of papers. How many you cut depends on the events that you listed— you will need 3 flip pages per event. Staple cut pages creating a notepad. Open the notepad to the last page, and draw the first picture there. Draw each of your drawings on the outside edge, From there, work your way "up" by turning to the next sheet (the second from the bottom). Draw the next picture slightly different than the first, as if you were watching it move in slow motion. Continue with a slightly different image until you reach the next event in the sequence.

There should be at least 3 pages for each event until you've finished the flip book. Now, flip the book from back-to-front and watch the action! When single drawings are flipped quickly, the eyes can't keep up so even though you're not looking at the drawing anymore, the eye projects the image onto the brain for a moment longer. This experience is called persistence of vision, and it's why your flip book drawings look like they're moving! When you complete this task flip through your booklet, this will reveal the images in rapid succession to create a quick, easy animation of the land grant settlements.

Conclusion:

Students should be able to understand what resources the early Hispano settlers needed to live in the first days of the land grant settlements. how they utilized the areas natural resources to build their communities. Be sure that students give their community flipbook and acequia a name.

Wrap-up:

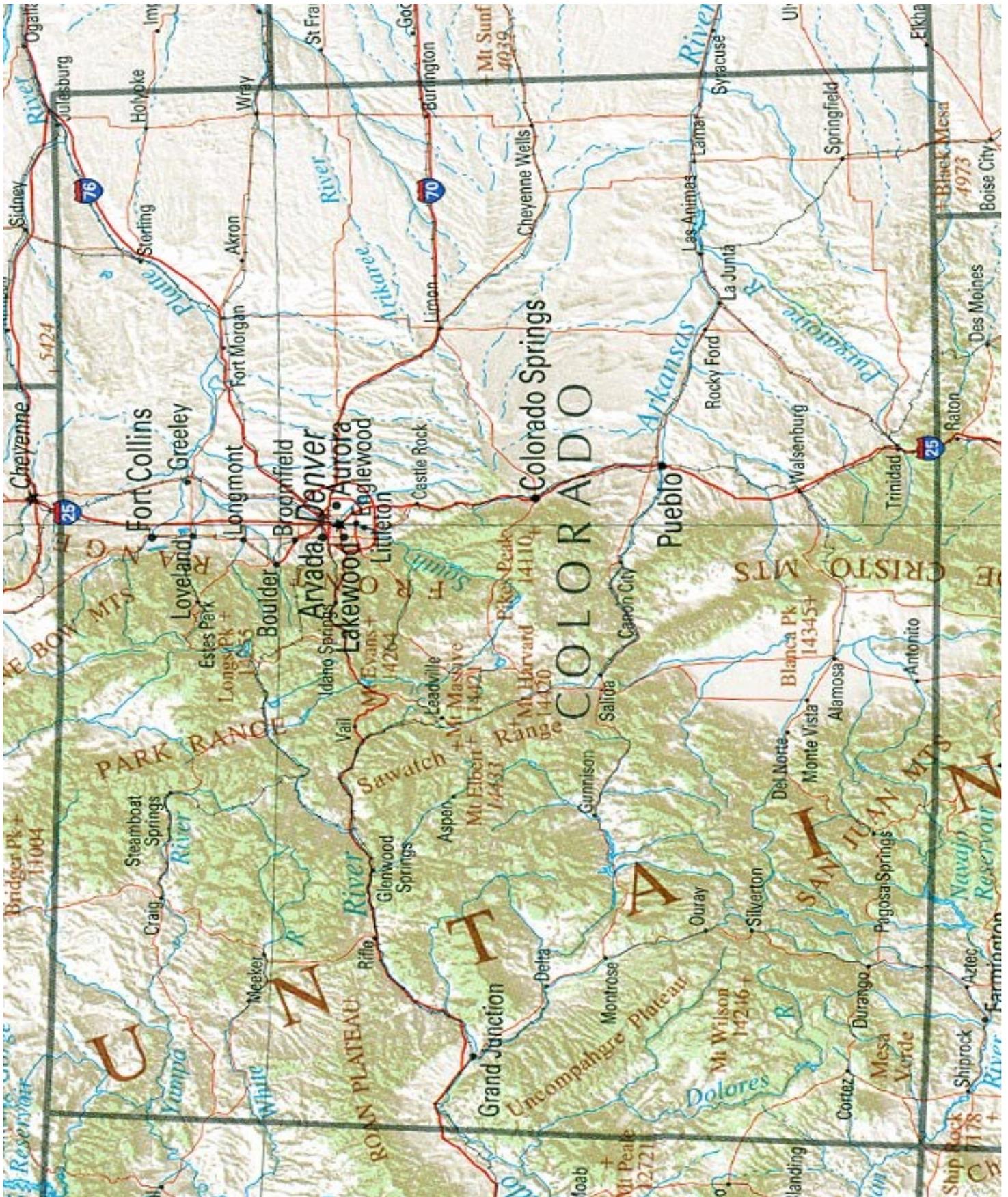
Have students share their flipbooks with the class. To conclude the project direct students back to their KWL chart, having them fill in the last column "L" - what I learned.

Name _____ Date _____

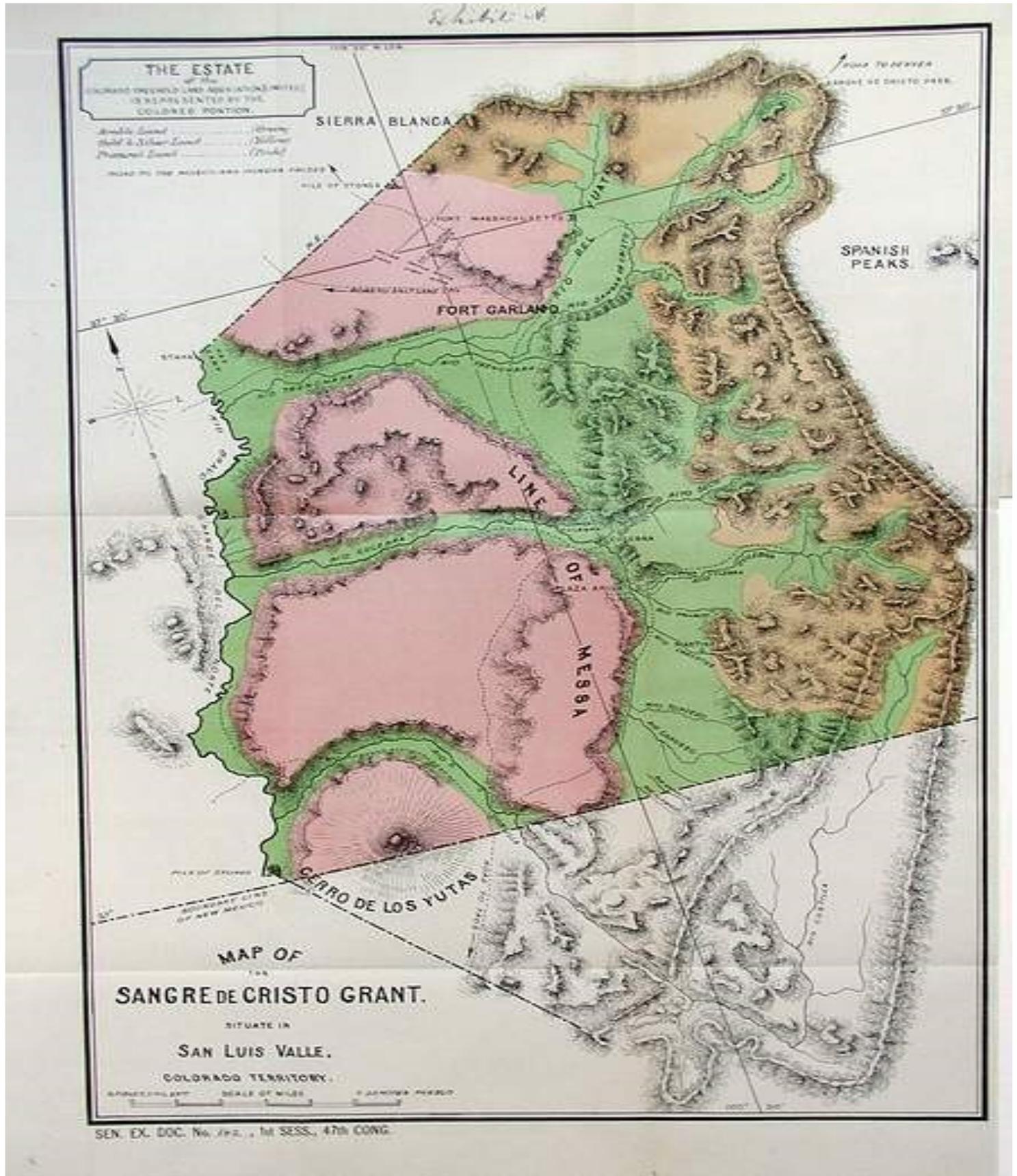
KWL Chart

Before you begin your research, list details in the first two columns. Fill in the last column after completing your research.

Topic _____		
What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned



Map of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant before Settlement





The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, brought an official end to the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), was signed on February 2, 1848, at Guadalupe Hidalgo, a city north of the capital where the Mexican government had fled with the advance of U.S. forces. The treaty required that Mexico give up 55 percent of its territory, including parts of present-day Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, Nevada, and Utah, to the United States. In addition, Mexico gave up all claims to Texas, and recognized the Rio Grande as the southern boundary with the United States. Mexico was suffering financially, which gave Canadian fur trapper, Carlos Beaubien, an opportunity to purchase and ultimately settle the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant.

Rio Culebra Villages

An important long-term influence on the function of the land grant was the terms of the land grant deed. The land grant deed stated “all inhabitants shall have the benefits of pastures, water, wood, and lumber” (Costilla County Clerk. 1863. Book 1. 1:256). The deed mandated that the land would be divided equally between all the inhabitants. To do this they developed extensiones or long lots, which gave each homestead the dry upland for their home, wet meadows to graze livestock and access to the creek. The width of the lots were measured in Spanish varas, which were equal to 33 inches. This pattern of long slender parcels gave the county its name Costilla, which means rib. Land grant recipients were given a donation or purchased land equaling between 50 and 100 varas wide and of different lengths, often several miles long. (Stoller in Exhibit A. [n.d],.32). Once the land was divided into individual parcels, the settlers then got to work developing a series of earthen ditches that supplied all the parcels with water for irrigation, livestock for human consumption. These ditches were called acequias (A-sek-ee-ahs). The tradition of the acequias came from their Spanish ancestry, where the tradition held that water would be shared equally and would not be held by any one person. This tradition ensured that everyone had water.

By 1851, the settlers from across the region, began constructing plazas, a village center, where the community would gather along the banks of Culebra, San Francisco, and Vallejos creeks. At each intersection a village was developed and subsequently named in honor of a saint. At the east of the Culebra river was the small village of San Pedro (ca 1850) in honor of Saint Peter, to the south was the Plaza de San Pablo (1852) dedicated to Saint Paul. The lower Culebra, was the smallest village of San Acacio (ca 1850-53), named in honor of Saint Acacio. La plaza de San Francisco (ca 1853-4), was located along San Francisco creek and was dedicated to Saint Francis. The final village, Los Fuertes, was situated midway between Chama and San Francisco, near Vallejos creek. Los Fuertes, means little fortress, and was named to honor San Isidro (the patron of farmers). The settlers named these places in honor of their saint-protectors and believed they would watch over them, as they did for their ancestors before them.

By 1861, the entire Sangre de Cristo Land Grant became a part of the Territory of Colorado. Once designated, the grant was one of Colorado’s first seventeen counties. Notwithstanding this newly acquired legal status, the villagers maintained ties, social networks, and religious bonds with New Mexico. The majority of the settlers had no idea what the new boundary meant, yet it was the beginning of big changes. To establish the villages, the settlers endangered their lives and those of their families. Often risking what meager resources they had, settlers believed Beaubien’s grant would replicate existing patterns. Unknown to the vast majority of the settlers, Carlos Beaubien divided the million-acre land grant between his family and business associates, while they were still struggling to settle the land. By 1860, well before Colorado was a state, Beaubien took the necessary steps to have the title to the grant confirmed by Congress. Between 1862 and 1863, he formalized 135 deeds to settlers in the Rio Costilla, Rio Culebra, and Rio Trinchera watersheds. In addition, Beaubien wrote and included a document outlining the rights and responsibilities of settlers.

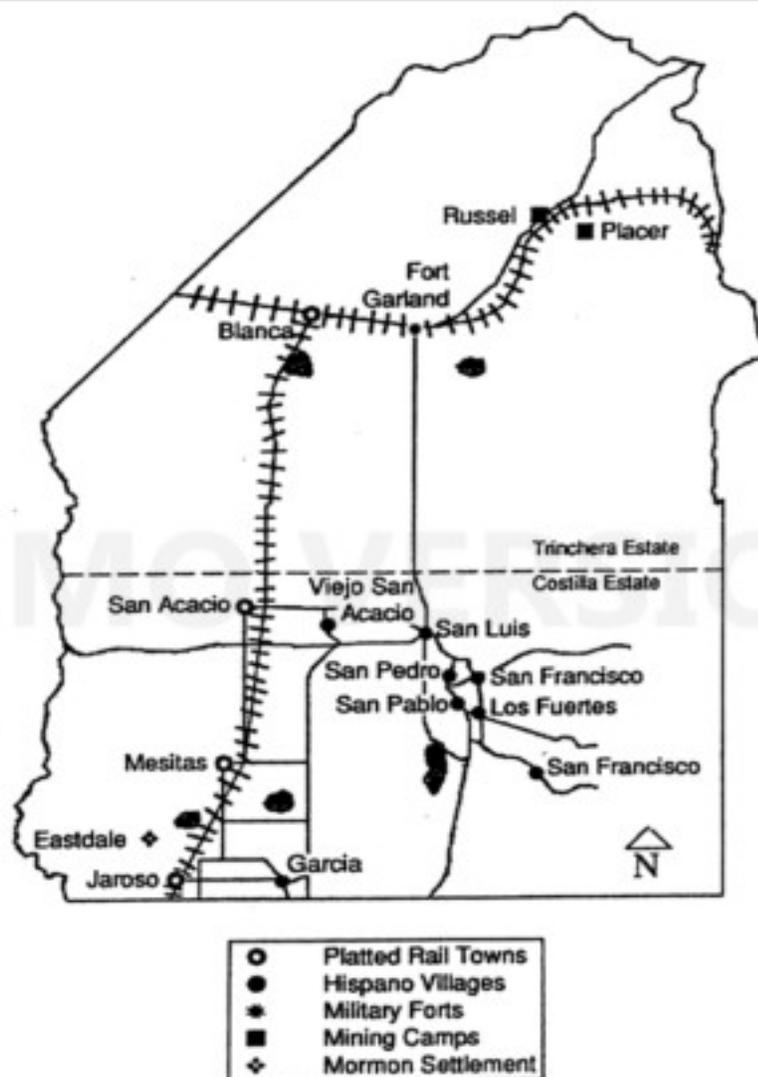


Figure 6. Early Settlements and Platted Towns (Courtesy of Valdez & Associates, 1990)

In 1863, an ill Beaubien agreed to sell the grant to William Gilpin, first territorial governor of Colorado, for four cents an acre. Beaubien filed a document requiring Gilpin to fulfill his promises, and commitments to the settlers. This contract was important in two ways. First it conveyed to Gilpin all covenants and agreements undertaken by Beaubien. Second, it clearly established his obligation to maintain the Mexican land grant tradition and custom by allowing the settlers to use resources in the uplands in common with any future owner of the grant. Many Hispanos, unaware of the promotion of the grant, co-existed with Gilpin, until he began to limit land holdings. This made the settlers suspicious of his business dealings. Eventually this led to legal proceedings and many were intimidated into repurchasing their land.

This was only the beginning of many legal challenges faced by the settlers. In the late 1890's, the Freehold Company who had been promoting mineral extraction, realized that the mining and farming colonies would not happen and after thirty years of recruitment, only one agricultural colony had purchased a block of land. The U.S. Freehold Land & Immigration Company defaulted on property taxes and finally went into bankruptcy.

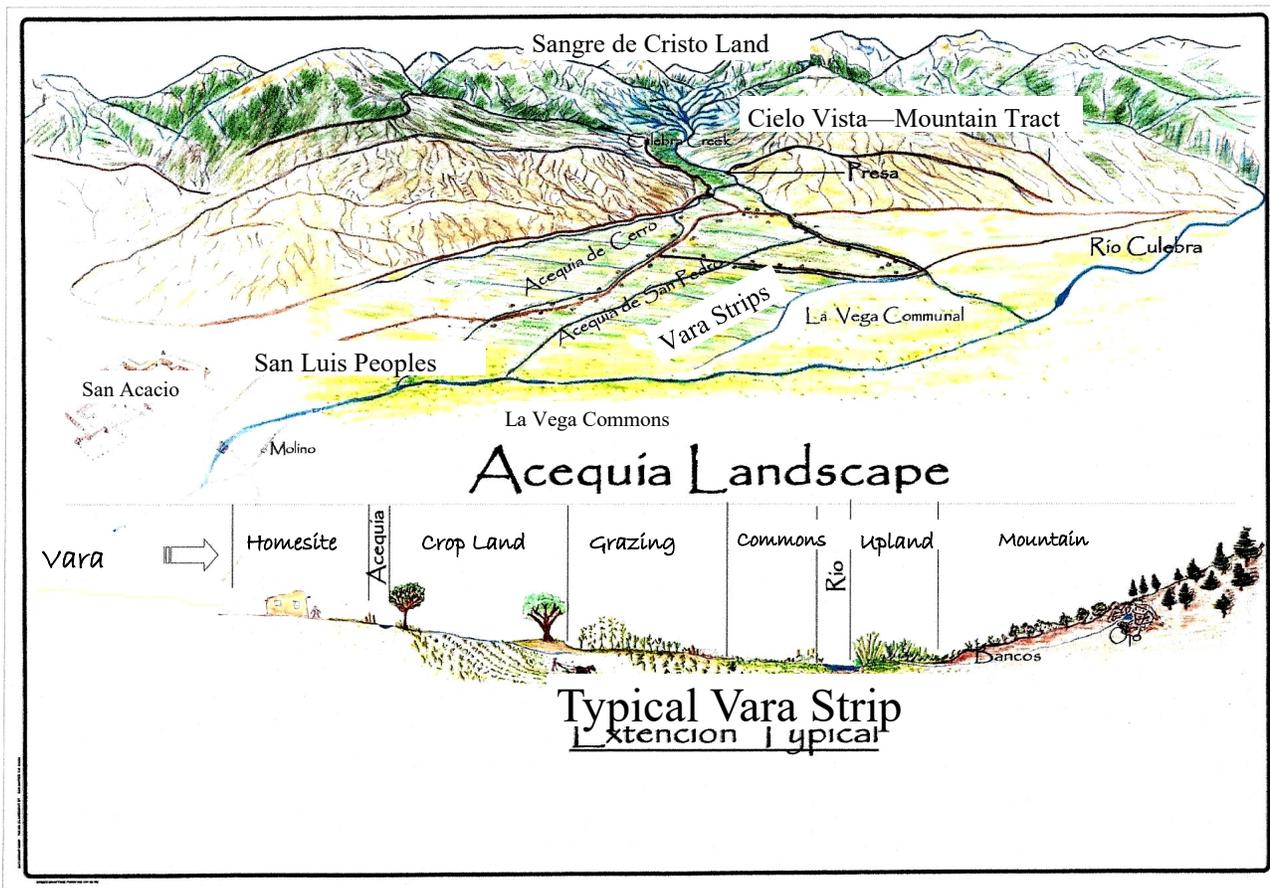


In 1902, the Costilla Estate Development Company sold 70,000 acres of the southern end of the grant for agricultural development (Griswold 1980,3). The construction of the San Luis Southern Railway, laid the foundation for the platted towns of New San Acacio, Mesita and Jaroso. Water was required for agriculture, so the development of canals and reservoirs were required to attract new immigrant settlers. This led to the purchase of land from the Sanchez Family to construct an earthen reservoir. The Sanchez Reservoir was completed in 1911, standing 120 feet high with 17.5 miles of shoreline it was designed to hold 104,000 acre feet of water. At the time of its construction it was considered the fifth largest earthen and stone dam in the world (Griswold 1980, 23). The arid landscape of the Costilla Estates was transformed into a rural Midwest rail and farm landscape. As new towns grew and water resources were diverted from the villages via the Sanchez Reservoir, the local Hispano economy became dominated by settlers from the Midwest.

Between 1940 and 1950, Costilla County lost 19 percent of its population. The trend continued in 1960, as out-migration accelerated by 25 percent. With the largest population decline in Colorado, Costilla County had the lowest per capita income in the state. The dismal statistics related to the fact that two-thirds of the residents earned less than \$3,000 annually, half the households having no telephone, water, or toilets in their homes, the census profile clearly demonstrates why so many people relocated to the city. Of those remaining, many continued to farm and raise livestock at subsistence levels.

Today, the acequia community in and around San Luis remains vibrant. There are 76 acequias, still irrigating their ancestral lands and many are still owned by the fifth and sixth generation of the same families who settled them.

View of the Vara Strip (long lot) settlement





The History of the Acequia and the Power of Sharing Water.

Time: 1- 45 minute periods

Location: Outdoors

Learner Outcomes:

1. Determine and explain the historical context of key people, events, and ideas over time including the examination of different perspectives from people involved.
2. Classify and analyze the types of human and geographic connections between places.
3. Students will recognize people in communities manage and build using resources in their environment.
4. Examine the characteristics of places and regions, and the changing nature among geographic and human interactions.

Materials

1. 6 large bowls or 1 bowl for each student group.
2. Enough dry pinto beans to fill each groups bowl.
3. One plastic spoon for each student

Preparation:

Have students sit in a reading circle to discuss what an acequia is and why it is important to the community.

Fill each bowl with dry pinto beans. Gather one plastic spoon per student participant.

Once the discussion is complete separate students into three groups that will work together during the relay

Introduction: The original settlers of Southern Colorado brought with them a form of land settlement and irrigation that was based on principles of equity, shared scarcity and cooperation in which water was viewed as a resource in place, rather than a commodity. This type of water system is called an acequia. The word Acequia (a-sek-ee-ah) comes from the Arabic language and means “that which gives water.” Acequias are earthen ditches that allow water to be conveyed from a creek or river to homesteads and agricultural fields. Acequias are unique and longstanding cultural and legal 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. The most robust acequia community is near the town of San Luis, Colorado. There are 76 working acequias that support over 300 families, most of whom are descendants of the original land grant settlers. Most of these acequia farms and ranches operate as they did when they were originally settled, growing heritage crops or raising livestock that are grazed on acequia fed wet meadows.

Activity: This activity breaks students into three groups to go through 3 years of water on the acequia.

They first relay is **Abundance**. During this relay, it is a great water year, that has high snowpack and rivers and streams that are full and so are the acequias. On this kind of year students are given the opportunity to take as much water (beans) from a large bowl as they can carry in their spoon, back to the community well.

The second relay is **Scarcity**, which means it has been a poor water year with minimal mountain snowpack that has left the creeks and streams very low and so the acequias do not have very much water. In this relay students can only take one item in their spoon back to their community bucket.

The final relay is **Drought**, and represents a drought year, where there is so little water that there is no water in the acequia. **So** students need to take water from the community bucket and put it back in the river (bucket at the end of room).

Line students up in three rows, make sure each student has a spoon. They need to line up with their group. The first student will go down get their item. Once they get back to their group the next student can go and so on.



The History of the Acequia and the Power of Sharing Water.

Time: 1- 45 minute periods

Location: Outdoors

Learner Outcomes:

1. Determine and explain the historical context of key people, events, and ideas over time including the examination of different perspectives from people involved.
2. Classify and analyze the types of human and geographic connections between places.
3. Students will recognize people in communities manage and build using resources in their environment.
4. Examine the characteristics of places and regions, and the changing nature among geographic and human interactions.

Materials

1. 6 large bowls or 1 bowl for each student group.
2. Enough dry pinto beans to fill each groups bowl.
3. One plastic spoon for each student

Preparation:

Have students sit in a reading circle to discuss what an acequia is and why it is important to the community.

Fill each bowl with dry pinto beans. Gather one plastic spoon per student participant.

Once the discussion is complete separate students into three groups that will work together during the relay

Review the rules with students and any one who doesn't follow the rules will have to put all of the water in the community bucket back into the stream and start over.

Line students up and let them know that when you say "**Abundance**" they can take all of the items they can fit in their spoon. When they hear "**Scarcity**" they can only take one item from the bucket back to their community bucket. If you say "**Drought**" they have to take one item back to the stream. Run each relay a few times and not necessarily in order.

To wrap up the activity have each group show how much water is in each bucket and discuss the following questions: Was any bucket empty? Did every community have water? How is this activity like sharing water on an acequia? This should demonstrate that when we work together to share resources everyone has something and our community is better.

To wrap up we are going to watch a video about "Fina" a young girl whose family lives on an acequia today.

<https://vimeo.com/366326367/2680c997e8>



Maintenance of the acequia system is an intensive process, which requires everybody in the community to pitch in.

Luke Runyon—History Colorado <https://www.historycolorado.org/Acequias-of-Southern-Colorado>





Acequia Governance

Time: 25 minutes

Location: Indoors

Learner Outcomes:

- Understand the allocation of scarce resources in societies through analysis of individual choice, market interaction, and public policy
- Express an understanding of how civic participation affects policy by applying the rights and responsibilities of a citizen

Materials

- 2 gallon jugs of lemonade
- Multiple cups of different sizes (ensure they are clean as students will be drinking from them)
- Marker
- Student Journals

Preparation:

Draw a line to the 2/3 full mark on each cup.

Set the cups in an easily accessible area along with one jug of lemonade.

Save second jug until the end of the activity so that all students can have a lemonade to drink

Introduction:

In this lesson students will learn how an acequia is governed. This tradition of governance dates back to Spanish Moors, who developed this water sharing system during their time in Spain. Their descendants who came to settle the new world brought with them this unique method of water sharing for the good of the whole community.

Acequia Governance

Administration of acequias remains largely as it was during the colonial period. The acequias are managed on a community basis, and each farmer is allocated a certain day and time to access their acequia water. Overseeing the general affairs of the acequia is a three person comisión (commission), typically consisting of a chairman, a treasurer, and a secretary.

The comisión distributes water to the parciantes (landowners along the acequia), sets the date of annual or biannual meetings for the acequia, determines when the irrigation season will begin, and sets the date for the annual ditch cleaning. The person who allocates and administers the water on an acequia is the mayordomo. The mayordomo acts as the superintendent of the ditch, directing all work on the ditch and the distribution of water as agreed upon by the parciantes and the comisión.

The appointment of the mayordomo varies from acequia to acequia, but can be done by the comisión, by volunteering, or by vote. Acequias typically set their irrigation schedules for the year at an annual meeting. At meetings each household of the acequia generally has the power to cast a single vote, regardless of the amount of land they have under cultivation.

The schedule determines who receives water on what days and when individual parciantes will receive their share of that water. The mayordomo translates these schedules into the delivery of water along the acequia. The acequia also agrees on a ditch cleaning day prior to the irrigation season. During this time each parciante must provide labor in proportion to the amount of land they have under cultivation to remove debris from the acequia, repair head-gates, remove noxious plants, and generally prepare the acequia to run water.

The mayordomo oversees this work, logging the hours of the parciantes and paying for any additional labor necessary. As we look to a future of increased water scarcity and uncertainty, acequias offer an interesting model of alternative water administration and use.



Acequia Governance

Time: 25 minutes

Location: Indoors

Learner Outcomes:

- Understand the allocation of scarce resources in societies through analysis of individual choice, market interaction, and public policy
- Express an understanding of how civic participation affects policy by applying the rights and responsibilities of a citizen

Materials

- 2 gallon jugs of lemonade
- Multiple cups of different sizes (ensure they are clean as students will be drinking from them)
- Marker
- Student Journals

Preparation:

Draw a line to the 2/3 full mark on each cup.

Set the cups in an easily accessible area along with one jug of lemonade.

Save second jug until the end of the activity so that all students can have a lemonade to drink

Activity:

- Read the prompt Acequia Governance aloud to the class.
- Fill a jug with lemonade, tighten the lid. Make sure there are different sized and more than enough cups. Draw a line on the side of each cup marking the point where the cup would be 2/3 to full, do this for each cup.
- Place jug and cups where students will see them as they enter the classroom. *Encourage the students to get a drink, the only rule is choose your cup and fill it to the line, and then go back to your desk. (The likely outcome is that the first students will pour themselves drinks, using the largest cups, and the drinks will run out or become very small well before all students have a chance to fill their glasses.)*

Start by asking:

- Why wasn't there enough for everyone? *(Accept a variety of answers. Expect accusations that the first-takers were greedy, and defensive replies about not knowing how much there was.)*
- Who owns the drinks? *(It's not clear. At one point the teacher owned it, but the directions indicated that it was given to the class.)*
- Why did the drink run out before everyone got some? *(There was no incentive to save any or to wait until later, and there was an incentive to get a large drink now for fear there wouldn't be any left later. Because of the directions everyone believed she or he had a right to the drink, and no one person or group acted to protect or ration the drinks.)*

Conclusion:

Wrap up:

Have students get out their Journals and answer the following questions:

How would you have made sure everyone got something to drink?

How is your method better than the way it was done?

How is what you would have done like a mayordomo?

Did your method avoid conflict and ensure everyone was treated fairly?

Why is the Mayordomo's role important?

Allow everyone to get a cup of lemonade to drink during the rest of the class period.



Acequia Settlers and Value of the Vega Commons

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors

Learner Outcomes:

1. Explain the establishment of human settlements in relationship to physical attributes and important regional connections.
2. Understand the allocation of scarce resources in societies through analysis of individual choice, market interaction, and public policy
3. Explain how people, products, cultures, and ideas interact and are interconnected in the Western Hemisphere and how they have impacted modern times..
4. Analyze positive and negative interactions of human and physical systems in the Western Hemisphere and give examples of how people have adapted to their physical environment
5. Express an understanding of how civic participation affects policy by applying the rights and responsibilities of a citizen

Materials

- 1 plastic spoon for each student
- 16 Goldfish crackers for each group of four
- 1 bowl for each group of four ("lake")
- 1 copy of pages 22-24 for each group

Preparation:

Place students in groups ensuring their at least 3 students per group.

Prepare the materials above for each group.

Introduction: The Common lands are considered cultural specific land plots that are shared by all community members. Common lands occurred in the upland areas or foothills that sit slightly above the river. They were near privately owned bottom lands that were set up in the pattern of the riparian long-lot in order to provide a cross section of the various resources ranging from the river to the foothills. These long lots of land were linked by acequias that irrigated them.

Carlos Beaubien first assigned the common lands of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant in 1863. The document laid out the terms that would govern the common lands. The document stated:

"It has been decided that the lands of the Rito Seco remain uncultivated for the benefit of the community members of the plazas of San Luis, San Pablo, and Los Vallejos, and for the other inhabitants of these plazas for pasturing cattle by the payment of a fee per head, and that the water of the said Rito remains partitioned among the inhabitants of the same plaza of San Luis.

The vega, after the measurement of three acres from it in front of the chapel, to which they have been donated, will remain for the benefit of the inhabitants of this plaza and those of the Culebra as far as above the plaza of Los VallejosNo one may place any obstacle or obstruction to anyone in the enjoyment of his legitimate rights Likewise, each one should take scrupulous care in the use of water without causing damage with it to his neighbors nor to anyone. According to the corresponding rule, all the inhabitants will have enjoyment of benefits of pastures, water, firewood and timber, always taking care that one does not injure another."

Carlos Beaubien, 1863



Acequia Settlers and the value of the Vega Commons

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors

Learner Outcomes:

1. Explain the establishment of human settlements in relationship to physical attributes and important regional connections,
2. Understand the allocation of scarce resources in societies through analysis of individual choice, market interaction, and public policy
3. Explain how people, products, cultures, and ideas interact and are interconnected in the Western Hemisphere and how they have impacted modern times..
4. Analyze positive and negative interactions of human and physical systems in the Western Hemisphere and give examples of how people have adapted to their physical environment
5. Express an understanding of how civic participation affects policy by applying the rights and responsibilities of a citizen

Materials

- 1 plastic spoon for each student
- 16 Goldfish crackers for each group of four
- 1 bowl for each group of four ("lake")
- 1 copy of pages 22-24 for each group

Preparation:

Place students in groups ensuring their at least 3 students per group.

Prepare the materials above for each group.

Activity: The purpose of the activity is to introduce the concept of "The Tragedy of the Commons." It is presented in guided inquiry fashion so that students are able to come up with a solution to the problem themselves. A solution that lines up with the directive of Carlos Beaubian. The Commons is a term often used in Spanish Colonial times to denote certain lands held "in common" by everyone in a village upon which they could graze their livestock. Since the land belonged to no one and everyone, an individual could benefit in the short-term by putting too many animals on the land, thus resulting in overgrazing and deterioration of the resource. There are consequences if they do this they face the scorn of their neighbors and perhaps more importantly the loss of the commons area all together.

Directions: Each one of you represents the head of a hungry family. In order for your family to survive, you must catch enough fish for them to eat. The only food source is a small local lake which can hold up to 16 fish. Once a year you will get a chance to fish and each time you fish you may take 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 fish from the lake. It is your choice how many fish you take!

As you choose your fish remember these things happen:

One fish: Your family starves.

Two fish: Your family survives.

More than 2 fish: You can sell them for a profit.

You will fish for 5 years (5 times). After each "year" of fishing, fill in the Data Table for Game #1.

Remember: The fish in your lake will reproduce once a year. Keep the fish that you "catch" in front of you. (You will be able to eat them later!) At the end of each "year," your teacher will add more fish to the lake to simulate reproduction. Finally, if any family has starved then you cannot fish the next year!

You are not allowed to talk or communicate while fishing! Do not begin until the teacher says to start fishing.



Acequia Settlers and the value of the Vega Commons

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors

Learner Outcomes:

1. Explain the establishment of human settlements in relationship to physical attributes and important regional connections,
2. Understand the allocation of scarce resources in societies through analysis of individual choice, market interaction, and public policy
3. Explain how people, products, cultures, and ideas interact and are interconnected in the Western Hemisphere and how they have impacted modern times..
4. Analyze positive and negative interactions of human and physical systems in the Western Hemisphere and give examples of how people have adapted to their physical environment
5. Express an understanding of how civic participation affects policy by applying the rights and responsibilities of a citizen

Materials

- 1 plastic spoon for each student
- 16 Goldfish crackers for each group of four
- 1 bowl for each group of four ("lake")
- 1 copy of pages 22-24 for each group

Preparation:

Place students in groups ensuring their at least 3 students per group.

Prepare the materials above for each group.

Directions continued:

After the first game, answer discussion questions 1 -- 6. You may discuss the questions with your group, but you should each write your answer in your own words. Remember to always answer your questions in complete sentences so that a reader will understand your answers even if he or she did not know the questions!!

After you have answered discussion questions 1 - 6, begin Game #2. Fill in the Data Table after each round. Remember, you **MAY NOT** communicate with each other while fishing! When you have completed Game 2, answer the rest of the discussion questions.

Go Fish!

Follow-up: As a class discuss your follow-up questions.



View of the Vega Commons from atop the Shrine at Stations of the Cross—San Luis CO
Photo by Jeremy Elliott—jdestudios.com.



Acequia Settlers and the Value of the Vega Commons

**GO FISH!
DATA TABLE
Game #1**

PERIOD _____

NAMES OF FISHERMEN/WOMEN: _____

	Number of fish in the lake [after reproduction]	Number of fish caught per person	Number of fish caught per year [by everyone]
YEAR ONE			
YEAR TWO			
YEAR THREE			
YEAR FOUR			
YEAR FIVE			
TOTAL			



Acequia Settlers and the Value of the Vega Commons

**GO FISH!
DATA TABLE
Game #2**

PERIOD: ___

NAME OF FISHERMEN/WOMEN: _____

	Number of fish in the lake [after reproduction]	Number of fish caught per person	Number of fish caught per year [by everyone]
YEAR ONE			
YEAR TWO			
YEAR THREE			
YEAR FOUR			
YEAR FIVE			
TOTAL			



Acequia Settlers and the Value of the Vega Commons

Questions:

1. Did anyone in your group take too many fish? What was the consequence?
2. How did it make you feel if anyone did take too many fish?
3. Did everyone in your group try to take as many as possible? Why or Why not?
4. Does our society reward those with the “most”?
5. Did anyone sacrifice the number of fish they caught for the good of the community? Why or why Not?
6. Does society ever reward that type of person?
7. In Game 2, did you change your strategy? If so, what did you do differently and why?
8. Is it possible to maximize the number of fish caught per person **AND** the number of fish remaining in the lake? Explain.
9. Think of a **local “commons”** that you are familiar with. (e.g. parking lots, public bathrooms, parks, the school cafeteria, the hallway, etc.) Do similar situations arise? Explain.
10. How might those problems be solved? Be specific!



Acequia Field Excursions

Settling the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

Overview: Students will visit the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant where they will visit “La Sierra”, the village of San Acacio, and the Vega Commons. See how settlers in the 1800’s used the built environment to settle the Land Grant.

Time: Day Long Visit

Location: Outdoors

Learner Outcomes:

- Formulate compelling and supporting questions after evaluating primary sources for point of view and historical context.
- Gather and analyze historical information to address questions from a range of primary and secondary sources containing a variety of perspectives.
- Gather and analyze historical information from a range of qualitative and quantitative sources. For example: demographic, economic, social, and political data.
- Construct and defend a historical argument that evaluates interpretations by analyzing, critiquing, and synthesizing evidence from the full range of relevant historical sources.

Preparation:

Please contact:
Sangre de Cristo Heritage
Center Museum
401 Church Place
San Luis CO 81152
719-672-0999
costillacountyedc@gmail.com

Arrangements should be made at least 3 weeks in advance to give staff time to set up your desired field experience

Welcome to the Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center

When you come to the heritage center you can choose from a variety of Land Grant tours. Just contact the office and they can help you set up your tour. You can choose from the following options:

A walking tour of a local acequia. You will see how they operated then and now.

A visit to La Sierra. In the past, like today, Hispano settlers gathered wood and timbers for building and grazed their livestock. The cabins in the Salazar Tract still stand and serve as an annual meeting place for grazers to begin the spring and summer grazing seasons.

La Vega grazing commons. You can see firsthand why this important resource still helps acequia ranches raise cattle. This is a key area recognized in the Beaubien document for “parciantes” (land owners) in the lower lands to have access to grazing for their livestock.

The Village of San Acacio. Visit the historic parish that serves as both the spiritual and business center of the village. Students will meet with the Morada elders who ensure the community’s spiritual heritage remains a key part of daily life.

The Comisión of the San Acacio Acequia. Meet with them to understand the key role they play in ensuring that there is equity in the distribution of acequia water to parciantes.

A local farm that grows heritage crops. Learn how they are grown and harvested.

Enjoy local foods snacks during your visit. Each visit is targeted to your specific need and grade level.

Note: While the sites will vary depending on the museums guide availability. We suggest helping students frame their visit using the following types of questions:

- How are places like communities similar to and different from where you live?
- How do people celebrate traditions?
- How do people use resources in the local community?
- How do individuals in the community use the environment?



Bibliography

Costilla County Clerk

1863. Book 1. 1:256 (San Luis: Costilla County Courthouse)

Griswold, P.R.

1980. Colorado's Loneliest Railroad-The San Luis Southern. Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company

Hammond, George P., and Agapito Rey

1953. Don Juan de Oñate, Colonizer of New Mexico, 1598-1628, 2 vols. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.

Tushar, Olibama Lopez.

1975. People of the Valley: A history of the Spanish Colonials of the San Luis Valley. Denver: Olibama Lopez tushar

Stoller, Marianne L.

n.d. "The History of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant and the Claims of the People of the Culebra River Villages on their Lands" in Exhibit A. (Unpublished: Review by permission of author only)

Valdez, Arnie and Maria.

1991. "The Culebra River Villages of Costilla County: Village Architecture and its Historical Context 1851-1940" Denver: Colorado Historical Society.

Valdez Arnold A.

1992. "Hispanic Vernacular Architecture and Settlement Patterns Of The Culebra River Villages of Southern Colorado (1850-1950). (Master of Architecture Thesis, University of New Mexico, 1992).

