

# Glossary - Land Grants, Acequias and the Law Continuing Legal Education Workshop

**abogado** – in Spain, a lawyer who researched the law that applied to a particular case, wrote case briefs, and presented the legal arguments orally to the judge; alternatively called a *letrado* or *licenciado* or *procurador*

**abrevaderos** – public right of ways to water sources

**acequia** – an irrigation ditch; from the Arabic ‘as-saqiya’; also, the community institution that governs the *acequia*

**acequia madre** – literally, “mother ditch”; main irrigation canal that carries water downstream through the community and empties back into the river

**acequia mancomún** – a community property ditch

**aguas sobrantes** - surplus, excess, or left over water.

**alcalde** – local government official with executive, judicial, and police powers; assisted by a *teniente*, an assistant

**atarque** – a temporary dam built across a river to divert water into the *acequia madre*

**ayuntamiento** – a town council

**cabildo** – a municipal council; also, the meeting place of the municipal council

**cazas** – common hunting lands, often within a land grant

**comisión** – elected governing body of an *acequia*

**compuerta** – the headgate used to release and regulate water flow from the stream to the *acequia madre*; also called the *toma de agua* and *saca de acequia*

**contra acequia** – lower-order ditches used to divert water from the *acequia madre* into individual fields or pastures; also called a *laterale*, *venita*, *lindero*

**dehesa** – common pastureland, often within a land grant

**delincuencia** – a fine imposed on an irrigator who fails to show up for the *limpia* or *saca* (annual ditch cleaning); monies collected enable the mayordomo to hire *peones* to substitute for the *parciante*

**desagüe** – refers to both a small channel to drain *aguas sobrantes* and excess waters flowing back into the river at the lower end of a ditch

**diputación** – territorial legislative body during Mexican period (1821-1848) empowered to make land grants

**diseño** – natural landmark used to delineate the boundaries of a grant

**ejido** – common land owned by a community; *ejidos* were a part of both private & community land grants

**escribano** – a notary or judicial assistant

**expediente** – a document detailing the proceedings in a land grant

**genízaro** – detribalized and Hispanicized Indian; *genízaros* were a significant segment of the population settling and inhabiting community land grants

**hijuela** – deed; also used to refer to private tract within a land grant or the deed recognizing said private tract

**impuestos** – water fees dues or taxes assessed of each irrigator on an *acequia*; used to pay for maintenance, repairs and other operating expenses and must be paid to remain in good standing

**jefe político** – governor; term was used in the Mexican Period (1821-1846)

**juez de paz** – justice of the peace; successor to *alcaldes* during the Mexican period

**leña** – firewood or place for gathering firewood

**limpia** or **saca la acequia** – annual ditch cleaning typically in the spring

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***lindero*** – a boundary; also, a lateral ditch; see also, definition of *contra acequia* above

***(de) mancomún*** – in common or collectively as a group

***mayordomo*** – official elected by the *acequia*'s *parciantes* or *comisión* to manage the ditch, its annual cleaning, and maintenance. Also in charge of apportioning the usage of the *acequia* by *parciantes*.

***merced*** – literally, a gift, but in this context, a grant of land or water to a community or individual

***mestizo*** – a person of mixed Spanish and indigenous racial or ethnic ancestry

***noría*** – a well dug to appropriate ground water for domestic use or irrigation

***ojo*** – a natural spring; some *acequias* are fed wholly or partially by *ojos*

***parciante*** – a member of an *acequia* receiving allotments of water from the *acequia*

***pastos*** – common grazing land; see also, *dehesa*, above

***prados*** - pasture lands used for growing grasses and other forage crops

***peón*** – a substitute worker sent to fill in for the absent *parciantes* during the *limpia* or *saca de la acequia* to avoid paying a fine

***pobladores*** - settlers

***presa*** – dam, dike or bank; also *atarque*, *toma*

***propios*** – municipally owned property

***regadío*** – the section of the farm that is irrigated; from the Spanish verb “*regar*” to irrigate

***reglas*** – the rules and regulations governing an *acequia* association

***repartimiento de agua*** – the dividing of waters between ditches that share the same stream or *parciantes* that share an *acequia*

***sitio, solar*** – regarding land grants, refers to home lots that could be subdivided, sold, leased or mortgaged

***surco*** – *surco de agua*, a measurement of water used in irrigation, determined by the amount of water that flows through the hub of a cartwheel placed at the mouth of the ditch; roughly fifty-one gallons per minute

***suerte*** – plot of farmland owned by the individual, which could be subdivided, sold, leased or mortgaged

***tarea*** - section designated by the *mayordomo* of the *acequia* to be cleaned by an individual during the *limpia*

***tequio*** - a community obligation, or a spirit of working together to assist and uplift one another; as in the *limpia*

***testimonio*** - a document detailing the granting of a land grant

***tierras baldías*** – public land, vacant land

***tierras concegiles*** – literally “lands of the council”; common lands owned by a community land grant

***tierra realengas*** – land owned by the King, considered public domain of Spain

***vara*** – a linear unit of measurement, roughly 33 inches; historically, the unit by which individual long lots (*suertes*) are measured upon the granting of a land grant

***vecino*** – a landowning resident of a community entitled to vote

Adapted from:

José Rivera, *Acequia Culture: Water, Land, and Community in the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); Malcolm Ebright, *Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), republished (Guadalupita, NM: Center for Land Grants Studies, 2008); Michael C. Meyer, *Water in the Hispanic Southwest: A Social and Legal History, 1550-1850* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1984); John O. Baxter, *Dividing John O. Baxter, Dividing New Mexico's Waters, 1700-1912* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).