

A MEMORIAL

URGING THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT TO INCLUDE THE ACEQUIA DE CHAMITA IN THE NEW MEXICO STATE REGISTER OF CULTURAL PROPERTIES AND NOMINATE THE ACEQUIA DE CHAMITA FOR PLACEMENT ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES.

WHEREAS, the colonist Don Juan de Onate called upon his men and fifteen Ohkay Owingeh villagers to dig the first irrigation system of Iberian-Arabic design in New Mexico on August 11, 1598; and

WHEREAS, the Acequia de Chamita, as the irrigation system has become known, is still in common use by the people of Ohkay Owingeh and the community of Chamita; and

WHEREAS, the map dated 1602 and created by Enrico Martinez depicting "Onate's kingdom" indicates the settlement of Sama at San Gabriel del Yungue, now known as Chamita; and

WHEREAS, in "Monarquín Indiana", the seventeenth century Franciscan scholar Fray Juan de Torquemada states in 1602 the importance of the new form of irrigated agriculture and describes the settlement of San Gabriel del Yunque, located between the Rio Chama and the Rio Grande, as having irrigated fields of wheat, barley and corn and within the settlement the remainder of the food for the community is cultivated in gardens, all served by the Acequia de Chamita; and

WHEREAS, the gravity-flow earthen canal system for

irrigation that was constructed along the Rio Grande and Rio Chama began the spread of civil and social "water democracy" throughout the southwestern part of what became the United States and the acequias served as the lifeblood for community development for thousands of civilian settlers or pobladores; and

WHEREAS, in New Mexico alone, the system of acequias has grown to exceed one thousand acequias within the state, all carrying the imprint of the Acequia de Chamita; and

WHEREAS, a map of the town of Chamita from the 1877 field notes of United States surveyors Sawyer and McElroy show the Chamita land grant indicating the Acequia de Chamita starting from the Rio Chama and emptying into the Rio Chama above its confluence with the Rio Grande; and

WHEREAS, very few significant changes since it was first constructed are seen today along the four-mile course of the Acequia de Chamita, with the exception of the replacement of the earthen diversion dam by a concrete diversion, installation of relatively modern headgates and a change of the point of egress to a place on the Rio Grande rather than the Rio Chama; and

WHEREAS, site records of a survey completed by the state highway and transportation department in 1994 and another survey completed by the army corps of engineers in 1995, both note the historic importance of the Acequia de Chamita and

recommend the acequia for inclusion on the national register of historic places; and

WHEREAS, the legal description of the location of the Acequia de Chamita is in the bylaws of the acequia, stating that the acequia "provides irrigation water from the Rio Chama for the communities of Chamita and San Juan Pueblo (once again called Ohkay Owingeh); and

WHEREAS, the four-hundred-nine-year history of the Acequia de Chamita places it as the oldest Euro-Arabic water management system still in use in the United States; and

WHEREAS, 2007 has been declared by Governor Bill Richardson to be the "year of water" and that will bring greater focus to protecting and insuring the survival of New Mexico's acequias;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that recognition be given to the social, cultural, historic and ethno-hydraulic engineering importance of and the long-lived contribution to New Mexico of the Acequia de Chamita; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the house of representatives urge the cultural affairs department to place the Acequia de Chamita on the New Mexico register of cultural properties and further consider nominating the Acequia de Chamita for the national register of historic places; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be

transmitted to Governor Bill Richardson, Governor Earl Salazar of Ohkay Owingeh, the secretary of cultural affairs, the acequia commission and the state and national register coordinator.