

1 A MEMORIAL

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

6  
7 WHEREAS, the colonist Don Juan de Onate called upon his  
8 men and fifteen Ohkay Owingeh villagers to dig the first  
9 irrigation system of Iberian-Arabic design in New Mexico on  
10 August 11, 1598; and

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

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

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

25 WHEREAS, the gravity-flow earthen canal system for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the senate urge the cultural  
21 affairs department to place the Acequia de Chamita on the New  
22 Mexico register of cultural properties and further consider  
23 nominating the Acequia de Chamita for the national register  
24 of historic places; and

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be

1 transmitted to Governor Bill Richardson, Governor Earl  
2 Salazar of Ohkay Owingeh, the secretary of cultural affairs,  
3 the acequia commission and the state and national register  
4 coordinator. \_\_\_\_\_

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