

**SUPPORT HB 1233**  
**“Recognition of Acequias**  
**and Authorizing Acequia Ditch Corporations”**  
*Senate Committee: Local Government and Energy*

The purpose of this act is to promote and encourage the continued operation of acequias and the viability of the historic communities that depend on those acequias. HB 1233 allows the creation of acequia conservancy districts and subdistricts and specifies the eligibility and other requirements for the creation and conversion of such districts.

**Definition of Acequias and Historical Significance**

- Acequia refers to ancient irrigation practices based on a community ditch where water is treated as a *community resource* and allocated based upon *equity* and *need* rather than appropriation.
- Maximizes the number of landowners who have access to water and governs usage through a *one landowner-one vote* system.
- Colorado communities that were historically served by an acequia have continued to treat water as a community resource, in spite of the constitutional prevalence of the prior appropriation system.
- Colorado’s prior appropriation system, which supercedes communal water rights, is *inconsistent* with the community-based principles upon which acequias were founded.
- Continued operation of these historic acequias is an “essential foundation for the sustenance of the local economy” in areas where such water rights are practiced.
- **Recognition by the general assembly of the continuing existence and use of acequias is critical to preserving their historic and community value.**

**Protecting Prior Appropriation**

- **HB 1233** complies with the constitutional requirements of priority administration of tributary water.

**Requirements for Conversion to an Acequia Ditch**

- At least two thirds of irrigated land served by the ditch is organized into long lots perpendicular to the ditch.
- Surface water rights provide all of the water rights used for irrigation in the ditch and have existed since before Colorado’s statehood.
- The irrigated land served by the ditch is located in the counties of Costilla, Conejos, Huerfano, and Las Animas.
- Owners equally contribute labor to the maintenance and repair of the acequia.