



Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association

P.O. Box 721 San Luis, CO 81152

719-672-0810

Colorado Water Conservation Board  
Department of Natural Resources  
1313 Sherman Street Room 721  
Denver, Colorado 80203  
Attn: Ben Wade

March 15, 2021

RE: CWP GRANTS –POGG1-PDAA-201900002073

[Water Plan Grant Water Sangre de Cristo Hispano Water]

**Final Report**

The Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association Colorado Water Plan Grant – Sangre de Cristo Hispano Water Curriculum is complete and the final report is attached. We have also attached digital lesson copies. Please let me know if you have questions and if you would like flash drive copies.

Thank You –Very Truly Yours,

*Delmer Vialpando*

Delmer Vialpando  
President, Board of Directors  
Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association



Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association

P.O. Box 721 San Luis, CO 81152

719-672-0810

RE: CWP GRANTS –POGG1-PDAA-201900002073

[Water Plan Grant Water Sangre de Cristo Hispano Water]

### **Final Report**

The Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association Colorado Water Plan Grant – Sangre de Cristo Hispano Water Curriculum is complete.

The SdCAA worked with partners to build a comprehensive lessons that include cross-curricular lessons that include history, math, science and writing lessons. These lessons are grouped by grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12. The lessons were developed by partners who engaged 15 teachers who worked to employ and student test the curriculum. The lessons were given a final review to clean up based on the teacher recommendations. These lessons are self contained providing background knowledge for the teacher and step by step lessons plans to ensure the ease of incorporation. Finally the lessons provide an opportunity to spend time surrounded by acequia history.

The lessons include hands-on experiences that incorporate a variety opportunities for learners to experience the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant and the vital role water has played in their development and continues to play in the areas long term sustainability.

Having gone through the final review from History Colorado we have put the lessons onto 200 flash drives and have sent them to teachers across the state. Additionally, the lessons will be put onto partner websites in mid-April 2021. This includes the SdCAA , Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center, Costilla County Water Conservancy District website and the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable.

I have attached the lesson sets for you file.



## *The Acequia Community* *Colorado's First Settlements* *K-2*

Acequias are intertwined with Colorado's agricultural history, tied into the original establishment of some of the state's oldest communities. In the early 1800's during the Spanish and Mexican colonial period, Acequias were born. Acequias are canal-like structures used for irrigation; they were often the first to be collectively constructed along with churches or homes. Growing food was so important that digging out the acequia to bring water to crops was a priority.

Communities typically grew around an acequia, as neighbors understood the importance of sharing this water. Established more than 150 years ago, acequias remain vital to Southern Colorado's Hispano agriculture.

In these pages, K-2 teachers will find lessons that help students understand how the early Hispano settlers came to settle Southern Colorado.

All lessons are tied to Colorado Content Standards.



# *The Acequia Community Colorado's First Settlements K-2*

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  
Costilla County Conservancy District  
Land Rights Council  
Heredero's Grazing Association

This curriculum is made possible through funding by

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  
and the  
Colorado Water Conservation Board



# *The Acequia Community Colorado's First Settlements K-2*

## Contents:

	Page
A Birds Eye View	2
Building a Community on the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant	3
Story of the Land Grant	4
Building a Community—Then (1830's)	9
Building a Community - Part 1	13
Building a Community - Part 2	14
Field Trip Opportunity	16



# *The Acequia Community Colorado's First Settlements K-2*

## Learner Outcomes

- Distinguish between a map and a globe.
- Explore the differences between children today and children in the past.
- Use words related to time sequences: past, present, future, first, next, last.
- Understand that the nature of history is stories of the past preserved in various sources.

## Connections to 2020 Colorado State Standards

### Social Studies

Kindergarten: History -1, Geography - 2

1st Grade: History - 1, Geography - 2

2nd Grade: History - 1, Geography - 2

## The Program

This program includes three key components: storytelling, a 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.



# Discovery Center

## Settling the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant *A Bird's Eye View*

### Learner Outcomes:

- Students will use geographic tools to describe places.
- Students will understand what a Bird's eye view means.
- Students will understand that when people build a community they use resources that they find in nature. This includes wood, water, and clay.

### Materials

1. Crayons
2. Markers
3. 8X10 Poster Board

### Preparation:

Have students sit in a reading circle to begin the discussion.

**Introduction:** To begin the lesson give each student a large piece of paper and have them draw a picture of their shoe from a bird's eye view—looking at it from above. If the students can see their heel then it is not a "bird's eye view." Next have students place 10 items on the floor, these should be small objects from around the classroom. Have students take turns standing on a stool and look down on various objects. Help students understand that they do not see the whole object, just the top of the object. Introduce a map and explain that a map is a drawing of all or part of the earth's surface. As seen from above - maps show specific features from a bird's eye view.

**Background Information :** Please review the following definitions with students.

**River:** A long body of water that flows over land

**Mountain:** a high area of land with steep sides and a sharp peak

**Hill:** a raised part of the Earth's surface that is lower than a mountain

**Valley:** An area of land that is surrounded on two side by higher hills.

**Tree:** Tall plant that has either leaves or needles. What does an Aspen have ...leaves or needles? What does a pine tree have ...needles or leaves?

**Garden:** A place where people grow food.

**House:** A place where people live.

**Farm animals:** Cows, pigs, sheep, chickens, ducks These animals live on a farm.

**Activity Procedures:** To begin the lesson "A Birds Eye View" draw or find a picture of a farm scene , place it on a table and have students look down on it as if they were a bird flying over the farm. Keep the scene in place so students have a tabletop model to reference.

After students have been given the opportunity to observe the scene, have student draw their farm from a "birds eye view" of the scene on their poster paper. Encourage them to put in as many details as they remember.

**Time:** 35 minutes    **Location:** Indoors





# Discovery Center

## Settling the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant *Building a Community*

### Learner Outcomes:

- Students will use geographic tools to describe places. For example: globes, maps
- Students will distinguish between a map and a globe as ways to show places
- Understand the difference between a map and a globe.
- Students will understand the differences between people who lived a long time ago and their lives now.
- Students will understand that when people build a community they use resources that they find in nature. This includes wood, water and clay.
- Students can explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials

1. Globe
2. Map of Colorado

### Preparation:

Have students sit in a reading circle to begin the story and discussion.

**Introduction:** *In this lesson students will learn how people build new communities. Begin by using the globe and have students identify the oceans, the continents, and the countries. Ask students if they know what country we live in? Then point out the United States, now move to a map of the US. Ask students if they know what state we live in? Finally, use the Colorado map and ask students to identify where they are right now. Students should name their town and school.*

*What does Colorado have that makes it special to you?. Write their answers on the board.*

**Activity:** *Begin by talking about what humans need to survive. Write student responses on the board. If necessary coach them to include things like water, clothing, shelter, food, etc. Next, preface the story by explaining that towns did not always look the way they do now. That once there was only wilderness and people had to build the things they needed for their families by using resources from the land.*

*After the discussion read the story of the land grant settlement, and show the attached photos as you read, stop from time to time to ask students about the resources the settlers would look for to help them construct a homestead? What might these people have brought with them to insure they could live with their families? What did the land grant provide for them and their families?*

**Time:** 35 minutes

**Location:** Indoors





## The Story of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

### The Story of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

A long time ago people had to build their homes and communities from things they found in the forest. To do this people often had risk their lives and those of their families, they faced bad weather that would bring big storms with snow or rain. They had to be careful because there were wild animals and rough mountain passes that they had to cross.

Today we are going to learn about The Sangre de Cristo Land Grant. The Sangre de Cristo Land Grant was a piece of land in southern Colorado that was settled by members of the Hispanic community.

To help guide them, the people needed a leader. A leader is a person who guides a group and helps keep them safe. In the days of the land grant, the people chose a leader that they believed could get them through these dangers. His name was Carlos Beaubien. Beaubien was a trapper and a good leader!

The settlers liked him and his love of the their traditions. The tradition the people valued the most was sharing. They knew that if they shared the things they had the whole community benefitted. Together they developed a place for all of their animals to graze. Together they gathered wood for building and to make fires to keep warm. Finally, they shared the land that had a river, so the people and animals would have water to drink, and so they could water their crops. The name of this place was the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant.

These early settlers built small log and adobe mud houses; kept chickens, sheep, and cattle for food; and grew gardens because there were no stores to buy food. They grew beans, corn, peas, and squash. They irrigated their fields using hand dug ditches called acequias (a-sec-e-uhs) to carry water from the stream to their fields and homes. Children on the acequia homestead would help with the chores. They did things like feed the farm animals, carry in the fire wood and helped do the dishes after each meal. When they played, they pretended they were different people and played games like hide and seek and tag. They grew up to be farmers and ranchers who loved the wide open spaces of the land grant and everything that it gave them. These land grant villages are still occupied by the descendants of those original settlers.









The San Luis Peoples Ditch—Originally an acequia, it is the oldest water right in Colorado. Recognized in 1852, it would be 24 years before Colorado became a state.



The San Francisco Acequia — Located in the village of San Francisco. Photos from the Sangre de Cristo Heritage Area Archive.



An original adobe homestead located in the acequia village of San Pablo.

Photo from the Sangre de Cristo Heritage Area archive.





Top: An original adobe homestead in San Pedro  
 Bottom: A modernized original log homestead Originally built in 1850 this homestead was still occupied in 1968



# Discovery Center

## Settling the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant: Building a Community—Then (1830's)

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Location:** Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Students will describe what they need to live.
- Students will understand that when people build a community they use resources that they find in nature. This includes wood, water and clay
- Explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials

1. Scissors to cut out figures if ability level allows, if not pre-cut all cut-outs for each student.
2. Larger paper.
3. Glue
4. Crayons

### Preparation:

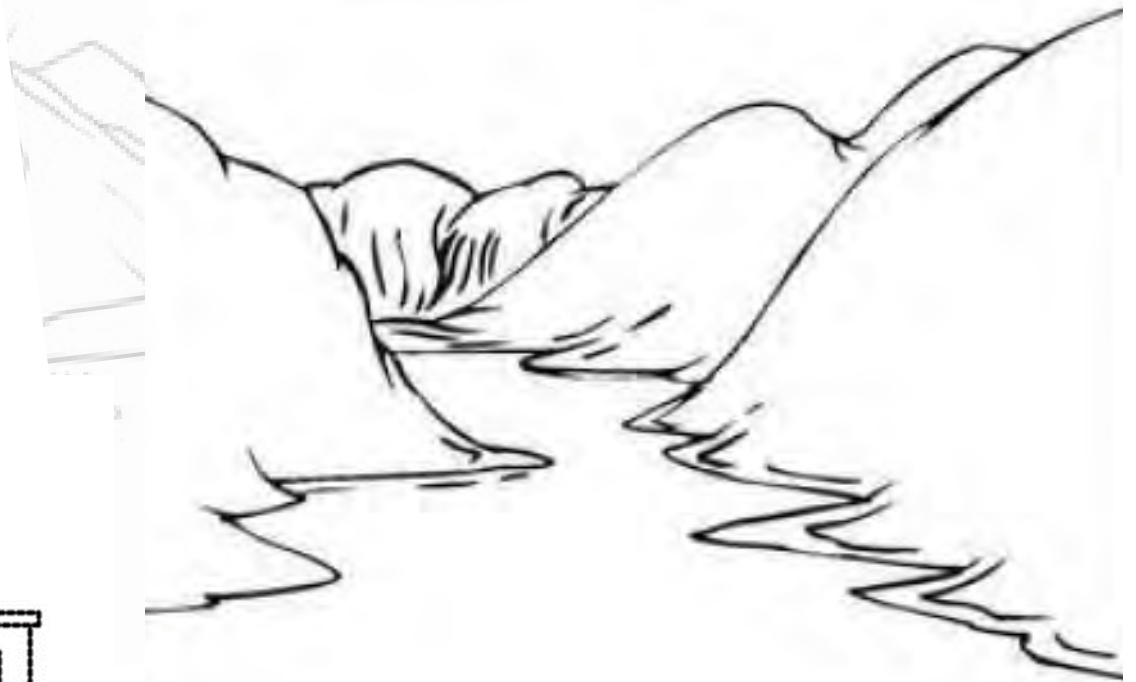
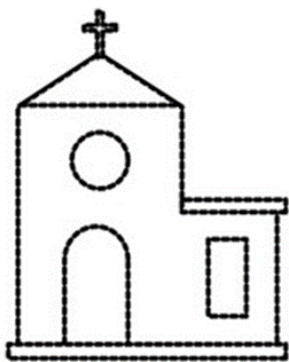
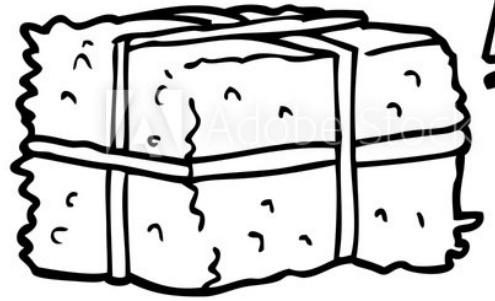
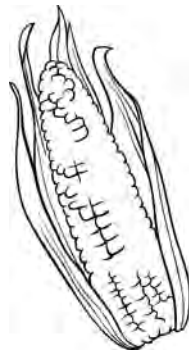
Have centers prepared and in small boxes/bags ready to set on to students desks/tables.

**Introduction:** *Students will use their knowledge of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant to develop their own land grant community.*

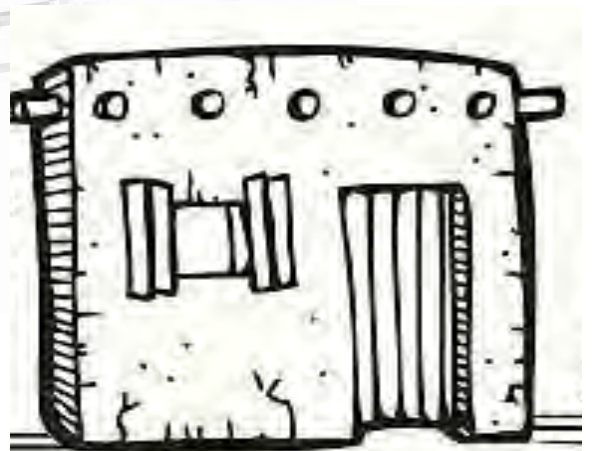
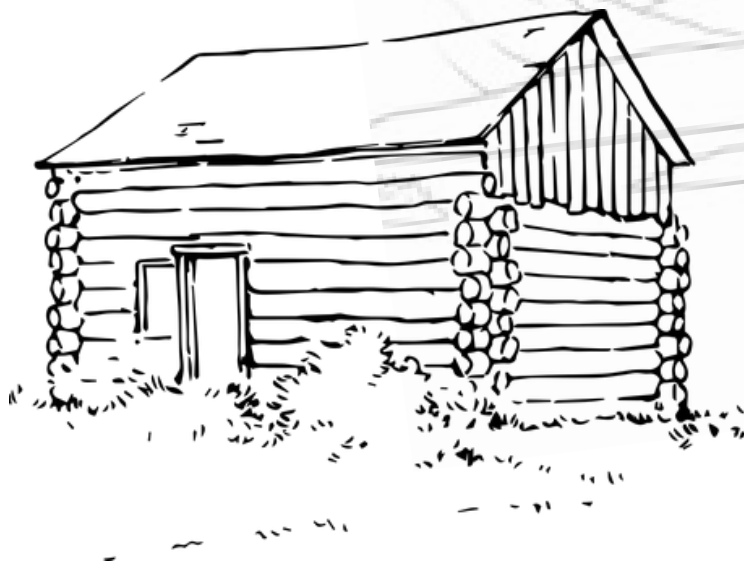
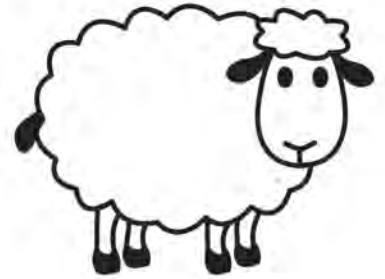
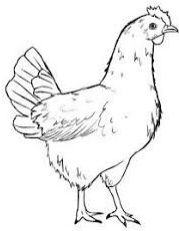
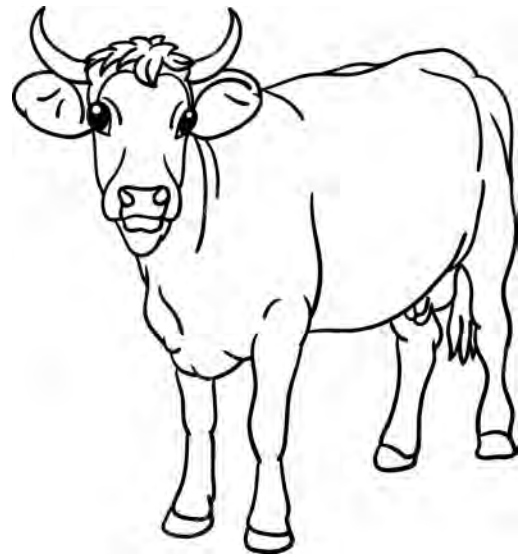
**Activity:** In this lesson students will choose the things that they would need to live on a Hispano homestead. Lay the cut-outs on the table. Have students then choose what they will need to live and build a community. Next have students color their items and then glue them on to their sheet of paper creating their own land grant community.

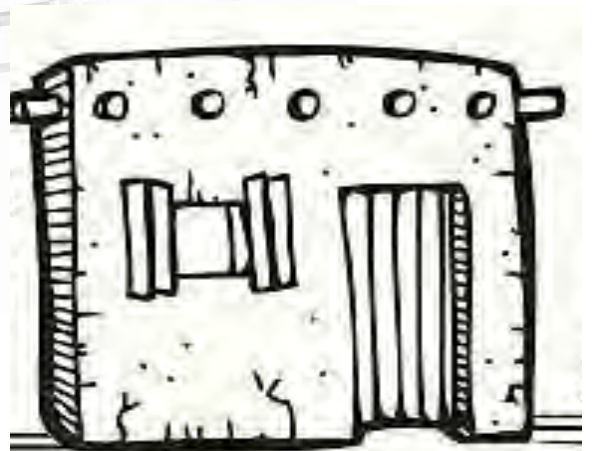
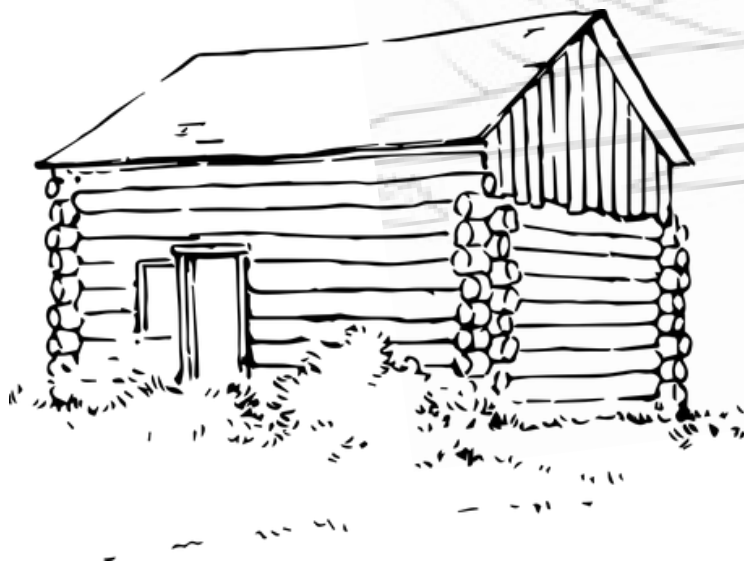
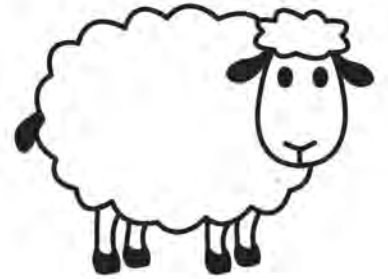
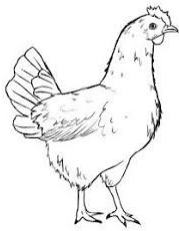
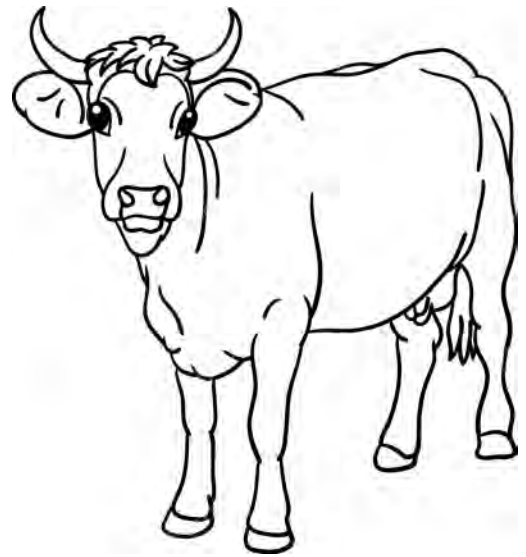
**Conclusion:** *Students should be able to understand what the early settlers needed to live in the early days of the land grant settlements and how they used the landscape to build communities.*

**Wrap-up:** *Once each homestead is complete have students choose a name for their village. Then post them on a wall or bulletin board,*











# Discovery Center

## Building an Acequia Community—Part 1

### Learner Outcomes:

- Students will describe what they need to live.
- Students will understand that when people build a community they use resources that they find in nature. This includes wood, water, and clay
- Explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials

1. Larger paper.
2. Crayons or Water Color Paints

### Preparation:

Have paper and paint ready to set on to students desks/tables.

**Introduction:** *Students will learn what an acequia is and why it is so important to the Acequia community;*

**Activity:** An acequia is a hand dug ditch that helps irrigate farms and ranches. The ditches allowed the water to flow from one farm to the next giving each family all of water they needed. When there was a lot of snow the ditches were full, so everyone got all the water they could use. In dry years where there wasn't much snow they still shared so that everyone had some water. What makes an acequia important is that it is a shared resource—everyone gets the water they need!

We are going to watch a video about “Fina” a young girl whose family lives on an acequia today.

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

After watching the video, ask students what makes an acequia so important to Fina? If you lived on an acequia today what would your house look like? Why is it important to know about events that happened in the past? Would we be where we are today without the sacrifice of these original settlers? Draw or paint your house today, how is it the same as the house of the acequia settlers? How is it different?

**Conclusion:** *Students will understand early settlers used sharing to make sure their whole community had the water that they needed.*

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors



# Discovery Center

## Building an Acequia Community - Part 2

### Learner Outcomes:

- Students will describe what they need to live.
- Students will understand that when people build a community they use resources that they find in nature. This includes wood, water, and clay
- Explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials

1. Clear plastic cups one for each student.
2. Paper towels for water clean-up.
3. Crayons.

### Preparation:

Have cups ready to set on to students desks/tables. Teacher should fill the main cup.

**Introduction:** *Settlers along an Acequia shared the water that flowed through the acequia. This gave everyone water to drink. It let the settlers grow food and have good pasture to graze their sheep and cattle. It also insured that wildlife could migrate.*

**Activity:** An acequia is a hand dug ditch that helps irrigate farms and ranches. The ditches allowed the water to flow from one farm to the next giving each family all of the water they needed. Today we are going to share our water!

Give each student group a set of cups—one for the main water source and one for each student in the group.

Fill each main water source glass with some water (it is helpful to place different amounts water in each main glass). Ask them to divide the water equally among each student in their group. Once completed have a class discussion about whether it was easy or hard share? Why?

**Conclusion:** *Students will understand early settlers used sharing to make sure their whole community had the water that they needed.*

**Wrap-up:** *Once you have completed the class discussion have students color their acequia irrigator.*

**Time:** 45 minutes

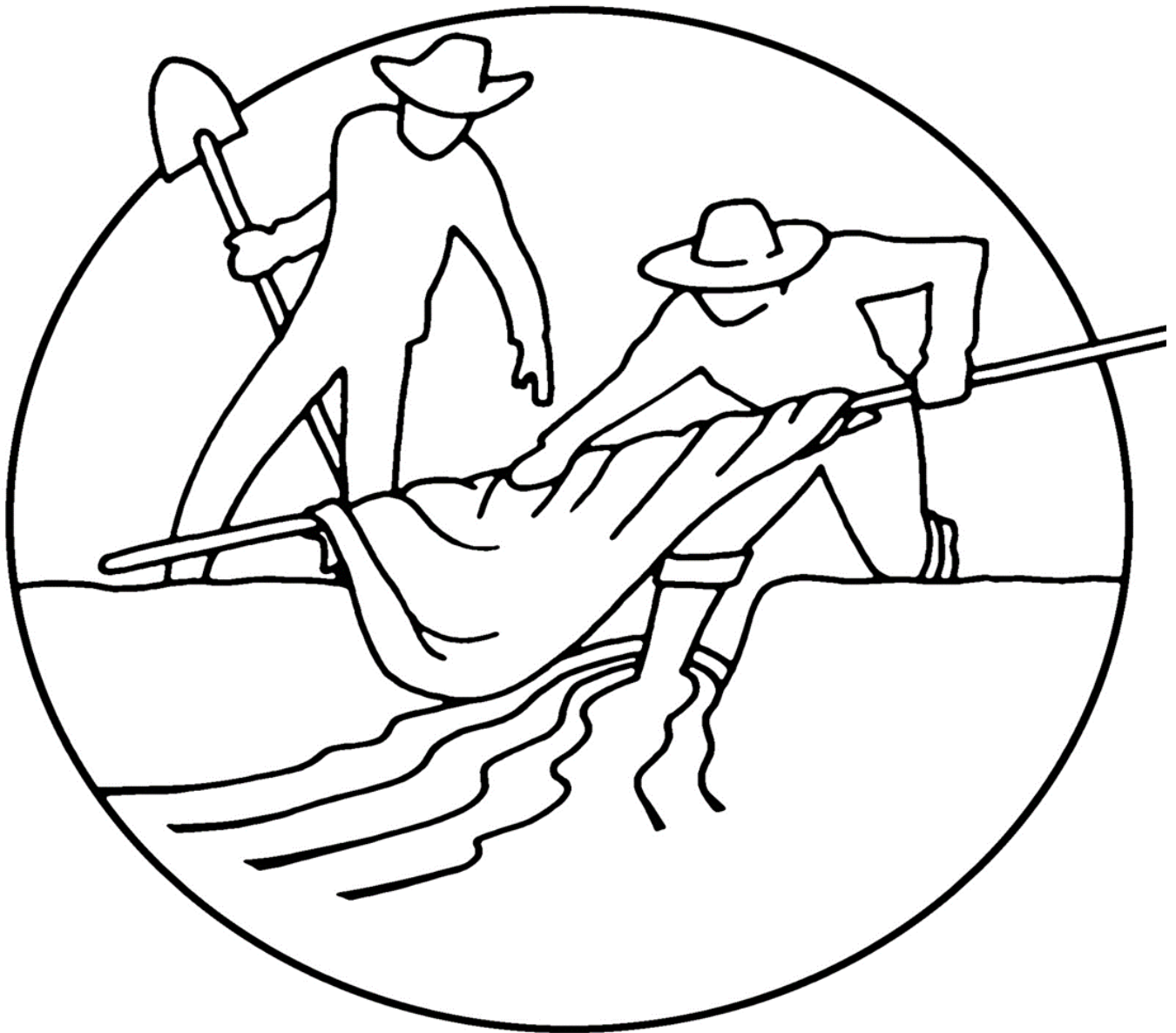
**Location:** Indoors or Outdoors





# Discovery Center

The History of the Acequia  
Building a Community - Now





# Field Introduction

Overview: Students will visit the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant where they will visit an acequia village. These sites will demonstrate how early Hispano settlers settled the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant.

**Time:** 2 hour visit.

**Location:** Outdoors

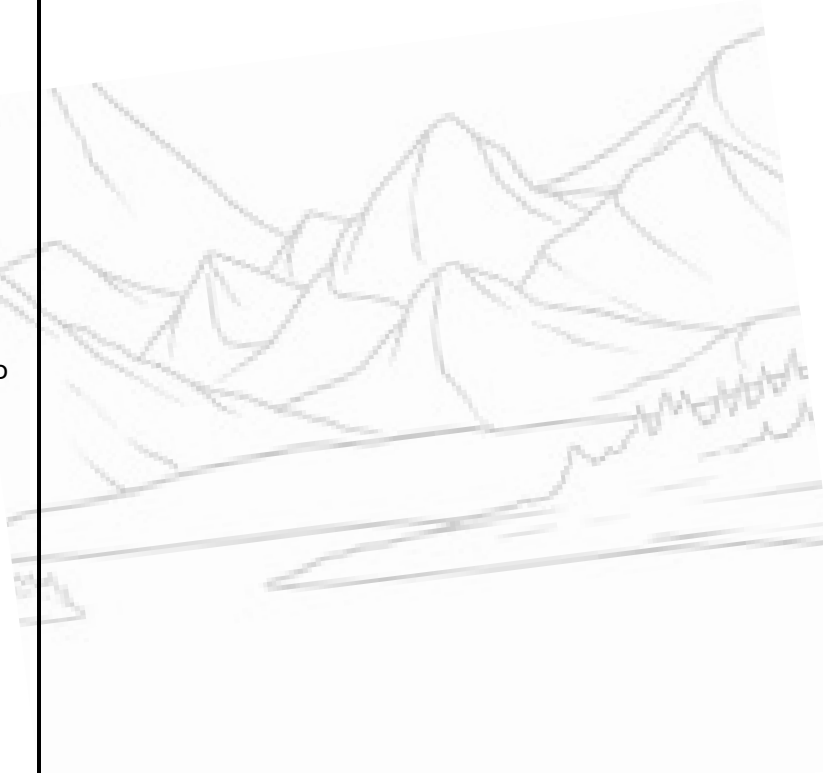
## Learner Outcomes:

1. Students will understand that early Hispano settlers were looking for certain resources on the landscape so they could build a settlement.
2. Students will understand that when people build a community they use resources that they find in nature. This includes wood, water, and clay
3. Students will understand how a land grant helped develop an early settlement in Colorado.
4. Students will experience the connection of people to the land and the arrangement of natural to man-made spaces

## Welcome to the Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center

Today we will visit an acequia village. This short walk will take students to an acequia home site, where students will have the opportunity to see first hand an original home, church and acequia.

While there, students will wrap up the day with an original land grant story told by village elders and have a snack of local foods.





## *The Acequia Community Colorado's First Settlements Grades: 3-5*

Acequias are intertwined with Colorado's agricultural history and tied to the original establishment of some of the state's oldest communities. Settled in the early 1800's, acequia communities in the United States began during the Spanish and Mexican colonial period. Acequias are canal-like structures used for irrigation.

They were often the first structures to be collectively constructed along with churches or homes. Growing food was so important that digging out the acequia to bring water to crops was a priority.

Communities typically grew around an acequia, as neighbors understood the importance of sharing this water. Established more than 150 years ago, acequias remain vital to Southern Colorado's Hispano agriculture.

In these pages, grade 3-5 teachers will find lessons that help students understand how the early Hispano settlers came to settle Southern Colorado.

All lessons are tied to Colorado Content Standards.





## *The Acequia Community Colorado's First Settlements Grades: 3-5*

These lessons are dedicated to the original Hispano settlers and their descendants who have worked to maintain their culturally significant acequia communities, as well as 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 by:

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  
and the  
Colorado Water Conservation Board



# *The Acequia Community Colorado's First Settlements Grades: 3-5*

## Learner Outcomes

- Recognize that geographic tools represent places and space.
- Compare past and present situations and events.
- Recognize how members of a community rely on each other and interact to influence the development of communities.
- Observe the physical, cultural, and human-made characteristics of the acequia community.

## Connections to 2020 Colorado State Standards

### Social Studies

3rd Grade:	History - 1, Geography - 1, Economics - 3
4th Grade:	History - 2, Geography - 2, Economics - 3
5th Grade:	History - 2, Geography - 2, Economics - 3

## The Program

This program includes three key components: storytelling, hands-on lessons, 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: 3-5*

## Contents:

	Page
Settling the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant	2
Acequias — a Lesson in Sharing Water	10
River Legends — The Legend of the Culebra River	12
Centennial Farms and Ranches — Rio Culebra Ranch	14
Building an Acequia Community — A Web of Life	20
Colorado Water Law — Who's on First?	22
Field Trip Opportunity	26



# Discovery Center

## Settling Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

**Time:** 35 minutes

**Location:** Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Distinguish between a map and a globe as ways to show places people live.
- Use geographic tools to describe places. For example: globes, maps.

### Materials:

1. Globe
2. Balloon
3. Markers
4. Rubber band
5. 8x10" Poster board

### Preparation:

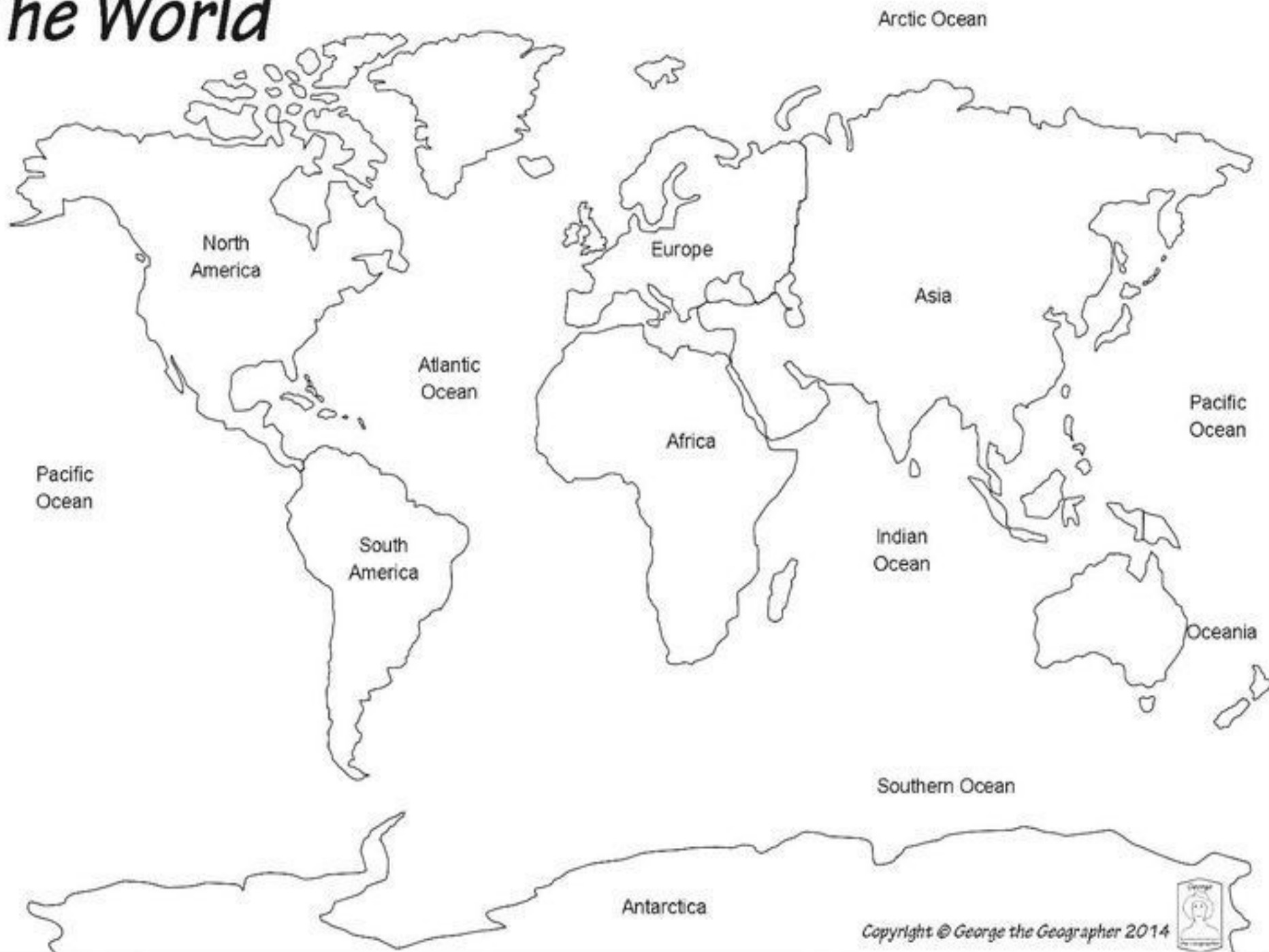
Have students sit in groups at their desks. Give each group the supplies needed to create their own globe.

**Introduction:** A globe is a model of the Earth. We use a globe to locate and distinguish between land masses and water. Students need to be given concrete experiences so that they will see that globes and maps are only representations of much larger places. The equator is an imaginary line that divides the Northern Hemisphere from the Southern Hemisphere.

**Activity Procedures:** Lead discussion distinguishing land masses from water on earth using a globe. Give balloons to students and have them blow them up and tie a knot to ensure that they maintain their shape. Tell students that the knot is the South Pole. Have students draw a small X at the top of the balloon with a marker. Tell the students the X is the North Pole. Let students put rubber bands on the balloon around the mid-section. Trace around balloon at the rubber band with marker. When dry, remove rubber band.

Have students compare their balloon to the globe and discuss Northern Hemisphere and Southern Hemisphere. Discuss the location of the continents using the equator as a guide. Which continents are above the equator? Which are below the equator? Which continents does the equator run through? Using the class room globe or world map included with this lesson as an example, have students trace the Antarctica shape first. Then let students trace the other continents onto the balloon, using the equator again as guide for continent placement. Instruct students to slip the knot of the balloon through an X cut in an 8x10" piece of poster board. The balloon globe should stand by itself, but if it doesn't or slips through, tape balloon tail underneath poster board. Trace continents in this order to make it easier: South America, North America, Africa, Europe, Asia and Australia.

# The World





# Discovery Center

## Settling Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Location:** Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Distinguish between a map and a globe as ways to show places people live.
- Use geographic tools to describe places. For example: globes, maps.
- Students will understand the differences between people who lived a long time ago and their lives now.
- Students will understand that when people build a community, they use resources that they find in nature. This includes wood, water, and clay.
- Students will understand that a land grant was an early land transaction that gave land to an organization or group of people.
- Students can explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials:

1. Globe
2. Map of Colorado
3. Map of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

### Preparation:

Have students sit in a reading circle to begin the story and discussion.

**Introduction:** In this lesson, students will learn about the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant and how it helped settle early Southern Colorado. Begin by showing students the map of the U.S. Have them outline the U. S. on their balloon globes. Using the map of the United States, show the students where Colorado is located and have them draw Colorado on their globes. Develop a classroom discussion around the different people that live on earth and the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements they each have. From that map point out the location of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant. Explain that they will be learning about the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant today.

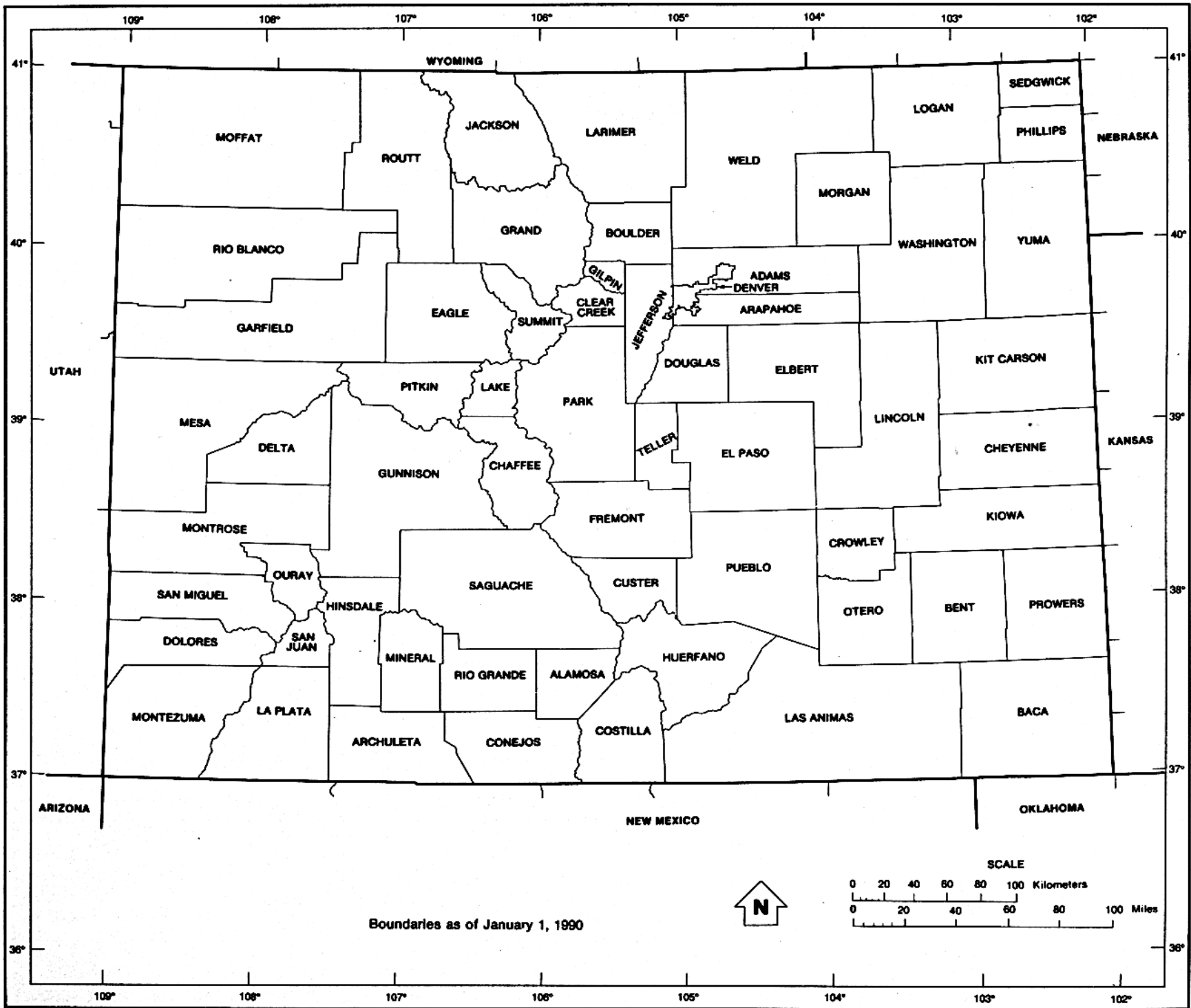
**Activity:** Ask students to imagine that they were there when the land grant was first settled over 150 years ago. What would it look like? What would you want to make sure was there so you and your family would survive in the isolated area of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant? This should include things like water, wood to build a shelter, food, etc. Begin by explaining that towns did not always look the way they do now — once it was a raw wilderness where people had to come in and build the things they needed for their families to survive. Use the attached pictures to illustrate.

After the discussion, read the story of the land grant settlement.

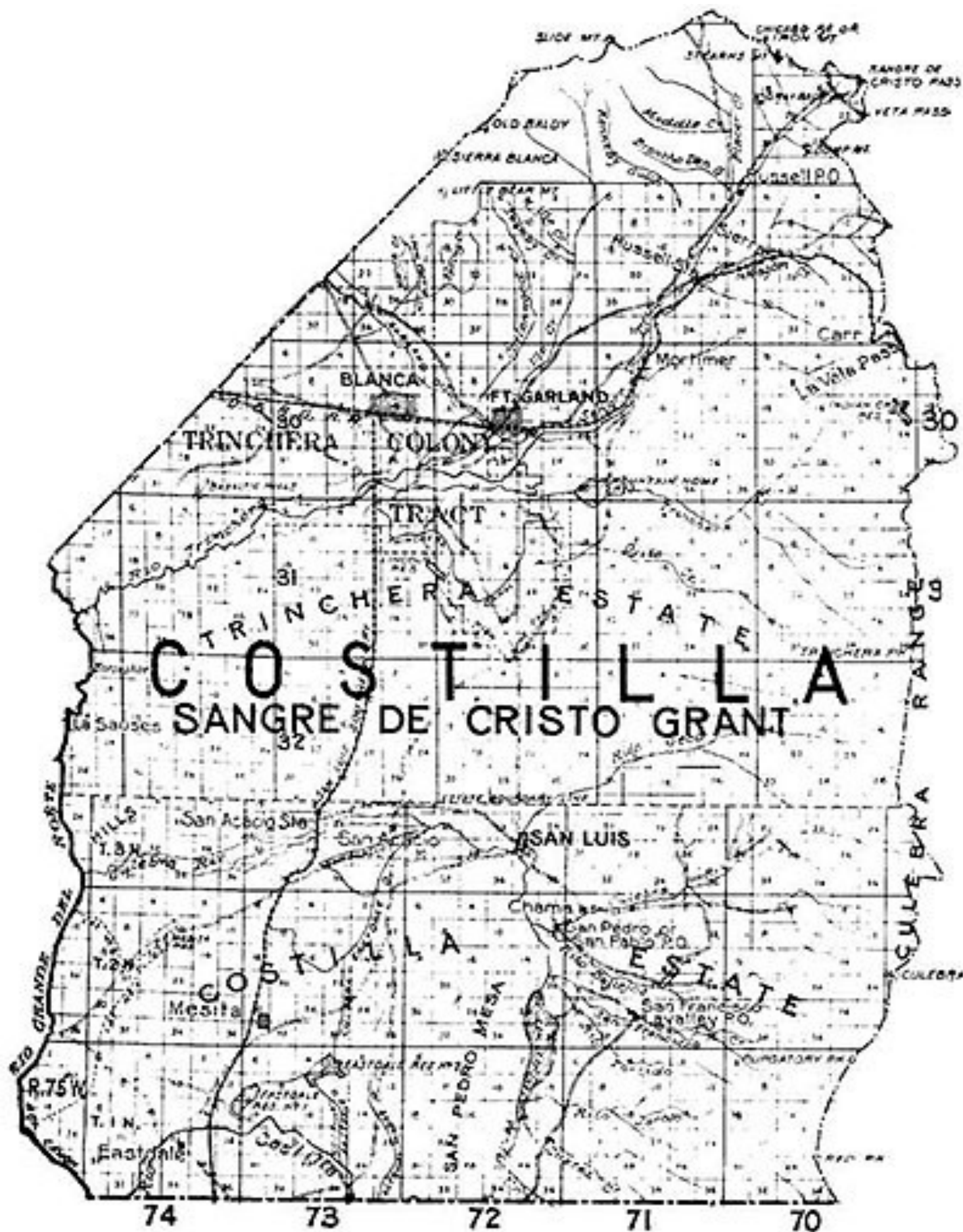
As you read stop from time to time to ask students:

- What were the resources the settlers were looking for to ensure that they could live in this new area?
- Who were the people involved and what was their culture?
- What things did the settlers need to settle this land and build their communities?

**COLORADO G-1**



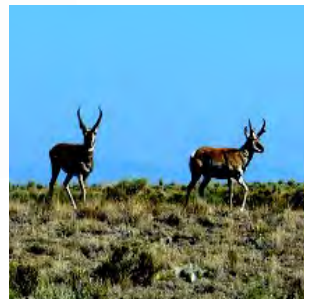






# Discovery Center

## Settling Sangre de Cristo Land Grant







## The Story of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

### The Story of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

Today we are going to learn about The Sangre de Cristo Land Grant. The Sangre de Cristo Land Grant is a piece of land in southern Colorado that was settled by members of the Hispanic community.

A long time ago, people had to build their homes and communities from things they found in the forest. To do this, people often had to risk their lives and those of their families. They faced bad weather that would bring big storms with snow or rain. They had to be careful because there were wild animals and rough mountain passes that they had to cross.

The people needed a leader to help guide them. A leader is a person who guides a group and helps keep them safe. In the days of the land grant, the people chose a leader that they believed could get them through these dangers. His name was Carlos Beaubien. Beaubien was a trapper and a good leader! In 1833 and again in 1843, Mexico officially granted land in the San Luis Valley to Carlos Beaubien. Settlers for the Sangre de Cristo Grant were recruited under the direction of Carlos Beaubien, owner of the land grant.

The settlers liked him and his love of their traditions. The tradition the people valued the most was a community that shared resources. They knew that if they shared the things they had, the whole community benefited. Together they developed homesteads and a place for all of their animals to graze. Together they gathered wood for building, and to make fires to keep them warm. Finally, they shared the land that had a river so the people and animals would have water to drink, and so they could water their crops. The name of this place was the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant.

These early settlers built small log and adobe mud houses. They kept chickens, sheep, and cattle for food, and also grew gardens because there were no stores to buy food at the time. They grew beans, corn, peas, and squash. They irrigated their fields using hand-dug ditches called acequias (ah-sek-ee-uhs) to carry water from the stream to their fields and homes. Children on the acequia homestead would help with the chores. They did things like feed the farm animals, carry in the firewood, and help wash the dishes after each meal. When they played, they pretended they were different people, or played games like hide and seek and tag. They grew up to be farmers and ranchers who loved the wide open spaces of the land grant and everything that it gave them. These land grant villages are still often occupied by the descendants of those original settlers and their children.



# Discovery Center

## Settling Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Location:** Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Distinguish between a map and a globe as ways to show places people live.
- Use geographic tools to describe places. For example: globes, maps.
- Students will understand the differences between people who lived a long time ago and their lives now.
- Students will understand that when people build a community they use resources that they find in nature. This includes wood, water, and clay.
- Students will understand that a land grant was an early land transaction that gave land to an organization or group of people.
- Students can explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials:

1. Poster board/butcher paper
2. Crayons, colored pencils, markers
3. Journal or notebook paper

### Preparation:

Have poster/butcher paper for each student.

**Activity:** It is preferable to have 3-4 students per center. Begin by having students work in their group and list the items they need to have in their community for them to survive. They should list things like water, land to graze their livestock, wood, etc.

Once they have agreed on their list of needs, have students begin to draw their settlements making sure each student has a homestead in their drawing. Once complete, have the group name their village.

**Conclusion:** Students should be able to understand what the early settlers needed to live in the early days of the land grant settlements and how they used the landscape resources to build their communities.

**Wrap-up:** Have students present their village to the class, making sure to show the acequia that takes water from the creek to their fields and out to their homes and livestock.



# Discovery Center

## Acequias– A lesson in sharing water

### Learner Outcomes:

- Students can explain how people in the past influenced the development and interaction of different communities or regions.
- Students can explain how connections are developed within and across human and physical systems.
- Students can explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials

1. 6 large bowls
2. Enough beans/goldfish to fill 3 bowls
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. Once the discussion is complete separate students into three groups that will work together during the relay.

**Introduction:** The word Acequia (ah-sek-ee-uh) comes from the Arabic language and means “that which gives water.” Acequias are ditches that allow water to be conveyed from a creek or river to homesteads and agricultural fields. The most robust acequia community in Colorado 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. The acequia is a shared water source, that gives each community member enough water for their family, animals and crops. This was really important during dry years when the amount of available water was far less than they were used to using.

**Activity:** This activity breaks students into three groups to go through three years of water on the acequia. They first relay is **Abundance**. During this relay, it is a great water year and students are given the opportunity to take as much water (beans or goldfish crackers) from a large bowl as they can carry in their spoon, back to their community bucket. The second relay is **Scarcity**, which means it has not been a great water year for the acequia community. 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, so there is no water in the acequia. So students need to take water from their community bucket and put it back in the river (large bowl on the other side of the 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.



# Discovery Center

## Acequias– A lesson in sharing water

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors or outdoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Students can explain how people in the past influenced the development and interaction of different communities or regions.
- Students can explain how connections are developed within and across human and physical systems.
- Students can explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials:

1. 6 large bowls
2. Enough beans/goldfish to fill 3 bowls
3. One plastic spoon for each student

### Preparation:

Have students sit in a reading circle to begin the story and discussion. then separate them into 3 groups who will work together during the relay.

Review the rules with students and say that anyone who doesn't follow the rules will have to put all of the water in their community bucket back into the bowl on the other side of the room 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. 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, watch a video about "Fina" a young girl whose family lives on an acequia today.*

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





# Discovery Center

## River Legends—Writing the Legend of the Culebra River

**Time:** 2–45 minute  
Class periods.

**Location:** Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Students can explain how people in the past influenced the development and interaction of different communities or regions.
- Students can explain how connections are developed within and across human and physical systems.
- Students can explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials:

1. Plain white paper for illustrations
2. Notebook paper

### Preparation:

Have students sit in a reading circle to begin the story and discussion. Then they can move to their desk to write and illustrate.

**Introduction:** Colorado is a headwaters state, which means no water flows into Colorado's boundaries. Colorado has five major rivers that begin here and flow out. They include the Colorado River whose waters begin in our mountains and flow through the states of Utah, Arizona, California, and to the country of Mexico. The Colorado River is the waterway that formed the beautiful Grand Canyon. Next are the North and South Platte Rivers, which headwater in the northern part of the state and ultimately make up the waters of the Missouri River. The Upper and Lower Arkansas Rivers join and flow to the southeastern part of the state, making up the mighty Mississippi. Finally, there is the Rio Grande River which has its origins high in the mountains above Creede, Colorado, on the Continental Divide. The Rio Grande's waters are shared by the states of Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and the country of Mexico.

Rivers are the lifelines of Colorado's economy, environment, and lifestyle. They touch everyone in our state, providing most of our clean, safe, and reliable drinking water; supporting our thriving farms and ranches; and contributing to culture, heritage, and recreation — everything from world-class fishing to paddling. The state's rivers also support our beautiful scenery, drawing visitors from around the world.

One of the rivers that support the acequias is the Culebra River. It begins high on the 14,000-foot Culebra Peak. The river uses water from snow melt and flows down the slopes to the acequia communities.





# Discovery Center

## River Legends—Writing the Legend of the Culebra River

**Time:** 2–45 minute  
Class periods.

**Location:** Indoors/  
outdoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Students can explain how people in the past influenced the development and interaction of different communities or regions.
- Students can explain how connections are developed within and across human and physical systems.
- Students can explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials

1. Plain white paper for Illustrations
2. Notebook Paper

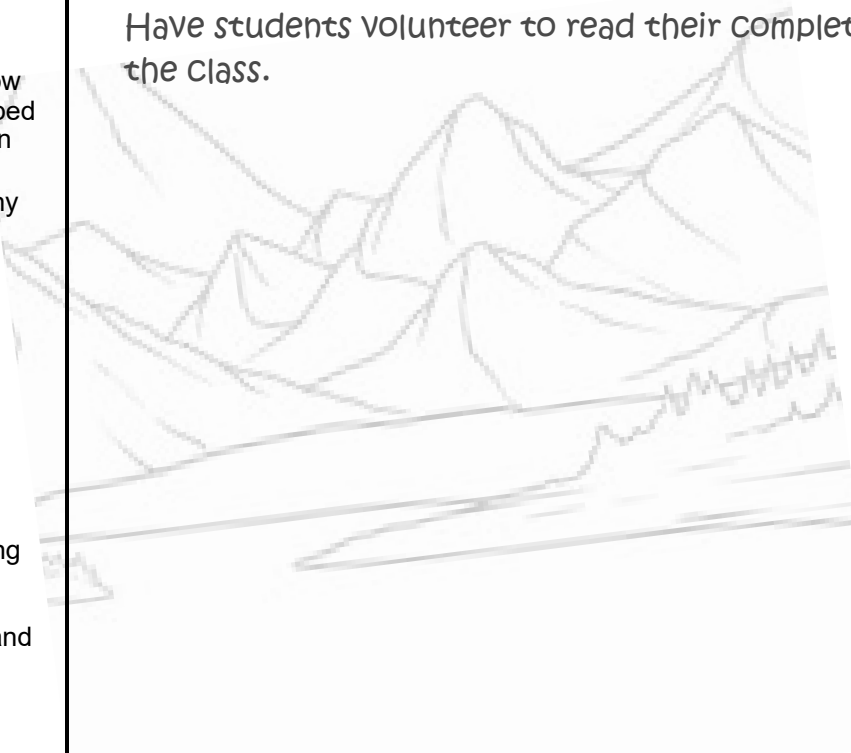
### Preparation:

Have students sit in a reading circle to begin the story and discussion. Then they can move to their desk to write and illustrate.

**Activity:** In this activity students will take what they have learned about the land grants, acequias, and the communities they support and write the legend of the Culebra River. Explain that a legend is a story handed down by tradition from earlier times and popularly accepted as historical. Their legend should describe how the Hispano settlers came to the Culebra Valley and settled it with their families.

Students should also illustrate their legend with scenes of land grant settlements and the acequias that run through them.

Have students volunteer to read their completed legends to the class.





# Discovery Center

## Centennial Farms and Ranches - The Rjo Culebra Ranch

**Time:** 2—45 minute  
Class periods.

**Location:** Indoors/  
outdoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Students can explain how people in the past influenced the development and interaction of different communities or regions.
- Students can explain how connections are developed within and across human and physical systems.
- Students can explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials

1. Plain white paper for illustrations
2. Notebook paper

### Preparation:

Have students sit in a reading circle to begin the story and discussion. Then they can move to their desk to write and illustrate.

**Introduction:** The harsh winter conditions at 8,000 feet in elevation were cold and wet, so settlers had to build shelters for both human and domestic animals.

Dwellings were built from vertical wood poles and horizontal logs, adobe, and stone. These buildings served as early homes for the inhabitants. Each of the Hispano farms exhibit a variety of buildings and associated structures such as irrigation structures, called compuertas. Secondary structures such as sheds, barns, and corrals supplemented the various agricultural functions of the farmsteads. Although many of the buildings have been maintained, a good number of others have suffered deterioration, and have been demolished and replaced with modern ones constructed of industrially-produced materials such as milled lumber, steel, and brick. The picture on page 17 can be used to help students orient the items in the story.

Take the time to read the students the history of the Rjo Culebra Ranch. After the story discuss how things were different in the early days of the land grant settlement, and how they are they are the same.

## History Of the Rjo Culebra Ranch

The Rjo Culebra Ranch was established in 1863 by Blas and Ygnacia Olivas. The family came north from Santa Cruz, New Mexico to settle on the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant. Located just east of the town of San Luis, the oldest town in Colorado, the Rjo Culebra Ranch is still a working cattle ranch and has the honor of being one Colorado's Centennial Ranches. This distinction is only awarded to those ranches that have been continuously operated by the same family for over 100 years.



# Discovery Center

## Centennial Farms and Ranches - The Rjo Culebra Ranch

**Time:** 2—45 minute  
Class periods.

**Location:** Indoors/  
outdoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Students can explain how people in the past influenced the development and interaction of different communities or regions.
- Students can explain how connections are developed within and across human and physical systems.
- Students can explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials

1. Plain white paper for illustrations
2. Notebook paper

### Preparation:

Have students sit in a reading circle to begin the story and discussion. Then they can move to their desk to write and illustrate.

When Blas Olivas settled in the Culebra valley, it still belonged to Mexico. In an effort to encourage settlers to stay in this rugged land, the settlers were promised that they would have access to the creek for water, the uplands for grazing cattle, and the rich forests for wood that surrounded the area.

The settlers worked together and divided the land into “extenciones.” These long narrow strips of land were measured in “varas.” A vara is 33 inches wide, and the Rjo Culebra Ranch extencione was 480 varas, or 1,300 feet wide and two miles long. The ranch had good grass, cottonwood-lined bottom ground, and water from the Culebra River. The ranch is irrigated by the San Pedro acequia, one of the oldest water rights that was adjudicated before Colorado became a state, giving the ranch the ability to irrigate first.

Today the ranch is operated by Earl and Eric Valdez. Their mother Maria (Ida) grew up on the ranch and is the granddaughter of Candido Olivas, one of Blas and Ygnacia’s seven children. Even with the ranch’s rich history, life in the Culebra Valley is harsh, with winter days that often remain below zero degrees. This 8,000-foot valley also has a short growing season. In the early days, the family raised sheep and grew crops including corn, cabbage, cauliflower, potatoes, field peas, and strawberries, which were sold at the train stop in San Acacio to be taken to market. They also lived off of the family garden which grew lettuce, radishes, and carrots. These were not sold, but traded between family members from New Mexico for fruits. They had no electricity or running water, and the children would walk to school— even in the winter! The family matriarch remembers that “hardships weren’t hard - they were just how we lived. We were with our family and we were loved.”

The family began to raise cattle in the 1940’s. The cattle raised in this area had to be hardy, to survive being born in February and March at the height of winter. The family remains here for the long haul and is devoted to keeping the ranch working.



# Discovery Center

## Centennial Farms and Ranches - The Rjo Culebra Ranch

**Time:** 2—45 minute  
Class periods.

**Location:** Indoors/  
outdoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Students can explain how people in the past influenced the development and interaction of different communities or regions.
- Students can explain how connections are developed within and across human and physical systems.
- Students can explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials

1. Plain white paper for student illustrations
2. Notebook paper
3. Copy of attached word search for each student or group.

### Preparation:

Have students sit in a reading circle to begin the story and discussion. Then they can move to their desk to illustrate and write a narration for the one scene from the story that stands out to them. To wrap up have students complete the words search.

The family is proud to play a part in keeping the ranching tradition alive, and while they still live in the original homestead, the home has been renovated and expanded beyond the original four-room adobe house that Ida Valdez grew up in. When you go inside, the 15-inch walls are still visible. The family is looking to the fifth generation to not just carry on the ranch but to learn the lessons that the ranch teaches you. As Earl Valdez would say, those are the “best memories.”

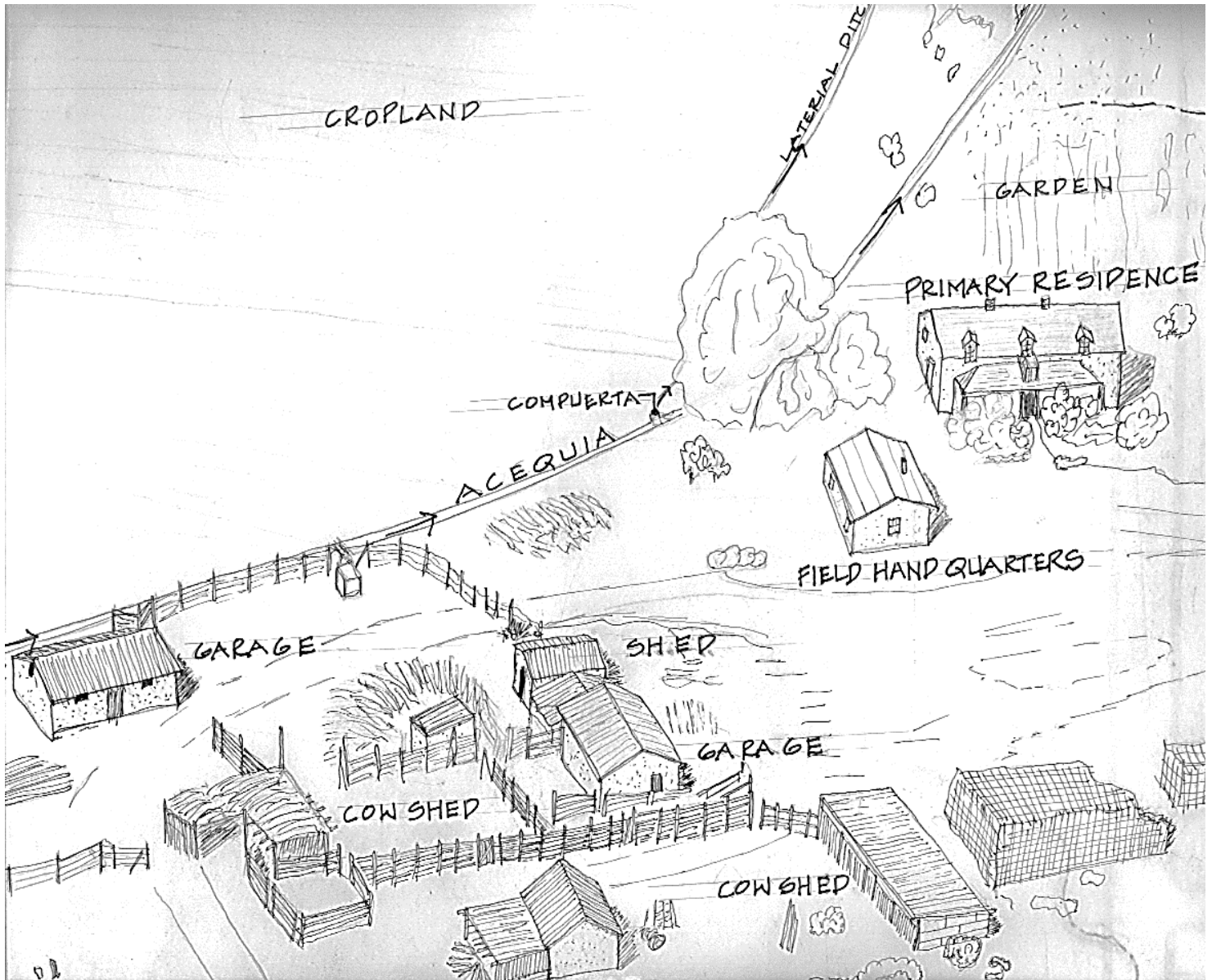
**Activity:** After reading the Rjo Culebra Ranch history, have students call out key events that they remember and list them on the board. When the list is complete have students help you get events in the correct order. Explain that all stories have an order—beginning and end. Have students move to their desks and choose one scene from the story to illustrate. Once their illustration is complete have them describe the scene. As a wrap up, have students do the word search either independently or as a group.





# Discovery Center

Centennial Farms and Ranches -  
The Rjo Culebra Ranch





# Discovery Center

## Centennial Farms and Ranches - The Rio Culebra Ranch

### Centennial Ranch Word Search

P R L S Q V S X I V K X Q N U Z H O B T  
 N B G C B G H L E D C Q R A C E Q U I A  
 C Z V R A M K E V X P O N Q W L S R A Q  
 W D P A A T L P Q N T P Q B X H J V U Y  
 K N A C R Z T N F I L E G V U K W S L B  
 F J C S E A I L I Y C R N T H B S M C G  
 G V Z V F N L N E C Y R Q C I I O C W E  
 N E A F B N T O G D S O U P I Y P U S X  
 I J N Z H U C E G X V K T X W O N V P T  
 W R A E G T T L N S N V D V R M N L X J  
 L A R Z R E W U A N Z I Z A P M Q E G L  
 I U O I J A E X M N I T V D S Y Y J G A  
 P T R G G W T C F W D A X J M E K B M D  
 J V I J M A X I Y U D G L A S X E D K O  
 L M E S Q G T I O X A P R R M T Y V Q B  
 M H X V X K S I A N H S R A A Q O E I E  
 V S G D V T M D O Z S S E E N N L N B R  
 S I M W T Z V S M N C X D K N T C U E L  
 S Y T L S X V N T S X W B G P L F H A Z  
 A E K C O L O R A D O T Y X R M U G D P

centennial ranch

generations

irrigation

extencione

land grant

colorado

grazing

cattle

acequia

adobe

stone

logs

vara





# Discovery Center

## Centennial Farms and Ranches - The Rio Culebra Ranch

### Centennial Ranch Word Search Answer Key

P R L S Q V S X I V K X Q N U Z H O B T  
 N B G C B G H L E D C Q R A C E Q U I A  
 C Z V R A M K E V X P O N Q W L S R A Q  
 W D P A A T L P O N T P Q B X H J V U Y  
 K N A C R Z T N F I L E G V U K W S L B  
 F J C S E A I L I Y C R N T H B S M C G  
 G V Z V F N L N E C Y R Q C I I O C W E  
 N E A F B N T O G D S O U P I Y P U S X  
 I J N Z H U C E G X V K T X W O N V P T  
 W R A E G T T L N S N V D V R M N L X J  
 L A R Z R E W U A N Z I Z A P M Q B G L  
 I U O I J A E X M N I T V D S Y Y J G A  
 P T R G G W T C F W D A X J M E K B M D  
 J V I J M A X I Y U D G L A S X E D K O  
 L M E S Q G T I O X A P R R M T Y V Q B  
 M H X V X K S I A N H S R A A Q O E I E  
 V S G D V T M D O Z S S E E N N L N B R  
 S I M W T Z V S M N C X D K N T C U E L  
 S Y T L S X V N T S X W B G P L F H A Z  
 A E K C O L O R A D O T Y X R M U G D P

centennial ranch

land grant

acequia

vara

generations

colorado

adobe

irrigation

grazing

stone

extencione

cattle

logs



# Discovery Center

## Building an Acequia Community— A Web of Life

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Location:** Indoors or outdoors

### Learner Outcomes:

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

### Materials:

1. Note Cards
2. Colored pencils, markers
3. Yarn

### Preparation:

Cut the cards out and roll yarn into a ball.

### Introduction:

The word acequia (ah-sek-ee-uh) 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. The most robust acequia community in Colorado is near the Town of San Luis. 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 graze on acequia-fed wet meadows. Acequia irrigation is different than most irrigation ditches because the people on a given acequia share the water equally. So in great water years everyone gets a share of 100% of the water, while in drought years they equally share the small amount of available water—giving everyone a little bit. Most other irrigation ditches are operated by a ditch company, and landowners buy the water that they can afford, giving folks with the capability to purchase water shares more say in the operation, and more water.

The acequia community not only shares their water, but also shares many aspects of the natural community. This includes cows and sheep that graze common meadows, gardens that grow heritage crops like bolita beans, chicos (small roasted corn) and field peas. They share the mountain track where they gather wood for fires and for building structures. They hunt local wildlife like deer, elk, antelope, rabbits, and turkey for food. They also help each other build houses, barns, and corrals and the attend church together.

### Activity:

In this activity, make the description cards from the list on page 22. One word should be written on each card. These can be made ahead of time or students can make them. Once complete mix them up, and place them upside down on the table. Have students take the cards and distribute until there are no cards remaining on the table (students can have multiple cards). Gather in a large circle and have the students hold their cards for others to see. Then using the ball of yarn, they must toss the yarn to a corresponding resource, holding onto the end. (Example: If you are a cow you might toss the yarn to an acequia—your water source.) Continue until everyone has attached their resource to another resource in the group. You will have a large web between students.



# Discovery Center

## Building an Acequia Community— A Web of Life

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Location:** Indoors or outdoors

### Learner Outcomes:

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

### Materials:

1. Note Cards
2. Colored pencils, markers
3. Yarn

### Preparation:

Cut the cards out and roll yarn into a ball.

### Activity con't:

Next, remove one resource from the community. For example—call out pastures, everyone with a pasture card will drop that line. Do this for two to three resources. Discuss what happened to the web when a resource was removed.

### Conclusion:

Students should be able to understand what the early Hispano settlers needed as far as natural resources and the built environment to live in the early days of the land grant settlements. Like all communities, the resources are shared, and when we share resources equitably, everyone in the community wins.

### Wrap-up:

*Have students answer the following questions in their journals:*

1. *What do you think was the most important resource to the community? Why?*
2. *How are acequia communities the same as a modern community? How are they different?*
3. *What is the most important built part of the community? Why?*
4. *Do modern communities share resources? If so, what do they share?*

River

Turkey

Acequia

House

Water

Corrals

Trees

Church

Grass

Garden

Crops

Bolita Beans

Corn

Field Peas

Cattle

Sheep

Pigs

Horses

Chickens

Deer

Elk

Antelope





# Discovery Center

## Colorado Water Law—Who's on First?

**Time:** 1- 45 minute period

**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. Paper cups
2. Bucket for water
3. Marker

### Preparation:

Each student will need a copy of the story "Colorado's Water"

### Introduction:

The story of Colorado's water began in the acequias, near present-day San Luis. Today's activity starts with students reading the story "Acequia's – Beginning Colorado's Water Story." After students have finished reading, begin a discussion asking students to think about how difficult it might have been to file for water rights in the 1850's. How would they get to the territorial office to file for their water right? What were the dangers they might have encountered? What happened to the water user if they never filed for their water right?

### Activity:

The activity will require students to work in groups. Once their groups are formed, have them name their group and assign each group member a number. (If there are four people in the group they would choose either 1,2,3, or 4. if there are fewer or more members in the group adjust accordingly). Next, go outside. Explain that you will be the Territorial water commissioner and in charge of seeing who files their claim and in what order. The idea will be that each acequia can only have a water right if they get their water to the water commissioner's bucket. Let them know that you understand how difficult this will be, given the terrain they need to cross and the changing weather they will encounter. Students will line up by their acequia. In a single file line beginning with the student who is number 1 and continuing in numerical order. Remember there be one line of students for each acequia. Give each group member a cup of water (small cups work better) and fill all cups at the same level. Explain that when you say go, students will need to move to the water commissioner based on what the commissioner says.

**Clear weather** means they can walk quickly.

**High winds** means they must turn circles.

**Steep mountains** means they must take big, exaggerated steps.

**Snow and ice** means they can only use baby steps.

**Cold weather** means they must hold their coat around them as they walk.

**Got a horse** means they can gallop.

**Hot weather** means that they need to hold a hand at their brow like a hat.

Show them that your office is about 150 feet away. Remind them that anyone that drops their cup is finished. And the only way the next person can begin is for the previous person to get their water in the commissioner's bucket. Once they get to you they need to stand in a single file line and cheer the group member on. The first group to get to their water to the commissioner's bucket will be the first water right and so on until all water rights are filed or lost.



# Discovery Center

## Colorado Water Law—Who's on First?

**Time:** 1- 45 minute period

**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. Paper cups
2. Bucket for water
3. Marker

### Preparation:

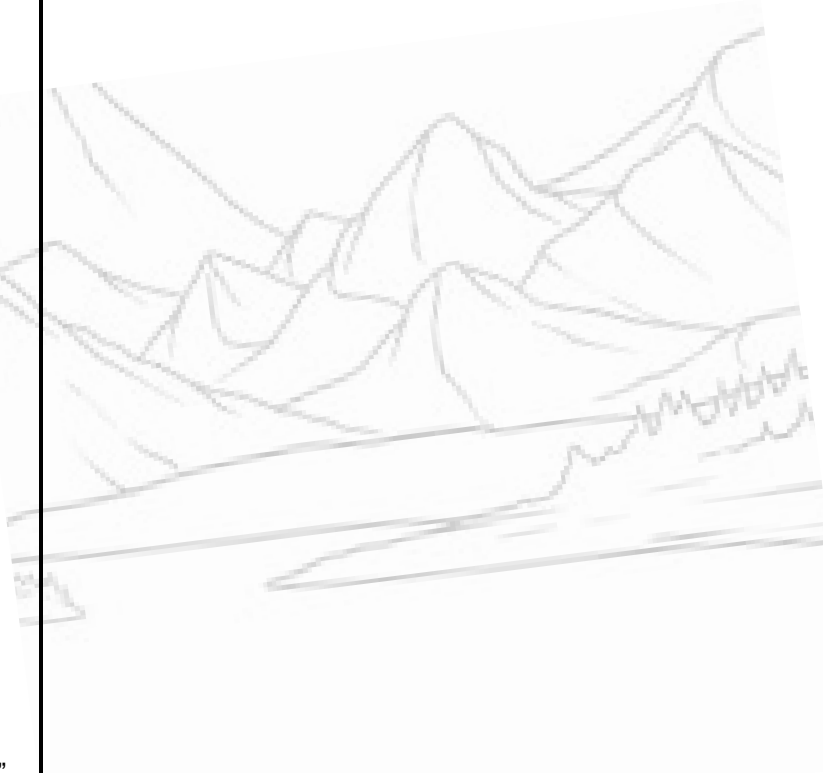
Each student will need a copy of the story "Colorado's Water"

### Conclusion:

Once all teams are back use a marker to mark how much water they have left in their cup. Return to class and have students fill out their water call sheet that you provided earlier.

### Wrap-up:

Once the students have completed their call sheet, open up a discussion. Was it easier or harder than they thought? Did everyone get their water? Why or why not? What happens if people keep moving to Colorado, will we have enough water? What can we do?





## Acequia's –Beginning Colorado's Water Story

The water cycle is an important process on earth, as it is essential for all life. The water cycle influences where plants will grow, where people can live, and what animals can survive in a certain area. On a very basic level, the water cycle influences what you wear every day. If it's snowing, you make sure to wear a coat. When it's raining, you wear rain boots and carry an umbrella. The water cycle also helps you live and grow, because all living things need water to survive. The water cycle even plays an important role in the production of food, clothing, and more! It's amazing to see the influence one small process has on the whole world.

This is no different in Colorado. In Colorado we enjoy four very distinct seasons: Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. Winter is very important in Colorado, not just because we can ski or sled, but because it is the snow that falls in the mountains that gives our state 85% of its water. In the winter snow falls and piles up on our mountain peaks and remains there until we warm up in the spring and summer. As the temperature warms the snow melts and fills our streams, rivers, and lakes. This water is used for drinking and cooking, showers, and baths, washing clothes and cars, water for animals, trees and plants. We grow crops to eat and feed our animals, we use it for recreation likes fishing, rafting, or swimming and all of our wildlife depend on Colorado's water.

As people came into the state they settled near water. This was especially true when the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant was settled in southern Colorado. The original land grant settlers were descendants of the Spanish Moors. The Moors recognized the value of water for people in their communities and believed that it should be shared equally. To ensure that it was shared equally, they developed a system of earthen ditches called *Acequias* that moved water around the community.

As more people moved into the state, water resources were quickly developed and claimed by the communities near them. This was a concern to the leaders of the Colorado Territory who recognized the need to assign water rights to communities and individuals to ensure the water remained with the people who had first developed them. These Hispano residents of Sangre de Cristo Land Grant developed the first permanent town in Colorado (San Luis) and hand dug the San Luis People's Acequia. This acequia, is the oldest continuous water right in the State. In 1852, the San Luis Peoples Acequia was the first of 16 water rights in the territory, all of which were filed by *parciantes* (water users) of the San Luis acequias.

This was no small feat. To legally claim these water rights the people had to travel to the territorial capital in Denver. This was a dangerous journey that took weeks of walking and riding in all types of weather and against many obstacles. Their determination is a testament to the value of water.



# Discovery Center

## Colorado Water Law—Who's on First?

Team Name:

Order by number:

Order by filing with the Commissioner:

Amount of water:

- ☐ The Acequia got all of the water they started with.
- ☐ The Acequia only got  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the water they started with.
- ☐ The Acequia only got  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the water they started with.
- ☐ The Acequia only got a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the water they started with.
- ☐ The Acequia didn't have any water.

1.) Did you finish in the order you each chose?

2.) If not, how will you make sure each one of you gets the water? What will you need to do?

3.) Can everyone get the water they file for?

4.) In a drought year only the first two rights holders will get their water. What happens to the others?



# Field Introduction

## 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 1800s 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.

### 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 Comision 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.



# *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 by:  
The History Colorado Foundation  
State Historical Fund  
Costilla County Economic Development Council  
Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center  
Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association  
Costilla County Conservancy District





# *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,  
7th Grade: History - 2, Economics - 3  
8th Grade: History - 2, Geography - 2, Civics - 4

### **The Program**

This program includes three key components: storytelling, hands-on lessons 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:**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Settling the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The History of the Acequia and the Power of Sharing Water</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Colorado Water Law—First in Right, First in Time</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Acequia Governance</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Acequia Settlers and the Value of the Vega Commons</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Field Introduction</b>	<b>26</b>



## Settling the 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 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 the attached Spanish and Mexican Land Grants maps.

**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 photocopy 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. 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 this wilderness. This should include things like water, clothing, shelter, food, livestock, etc. Next, preface the reading by discussing how early settlements were cut from raw 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 some things 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.

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.

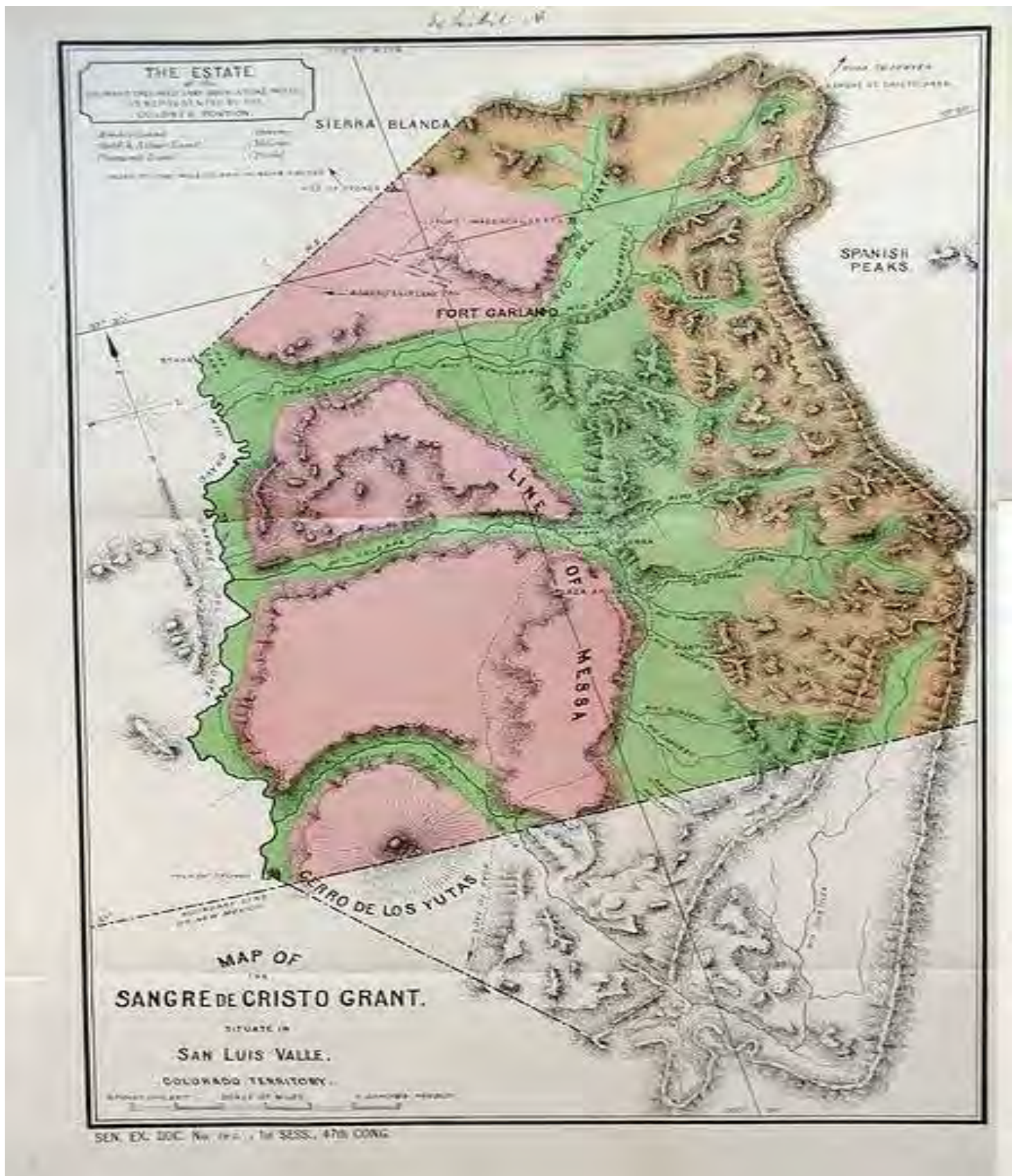
Topic _____		
What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned







## 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). It was signed on February 2, 1848, at Guadalupe Hidalgo, a city north of the capital where the Mexican government had fled upon the advance of U.S. forces. The treaty required that Mexico give up 55% of its territory to the United States, including parts of present-day Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, Nevada, and Utah. In addition, Mexico relinquished all claims to Texas, and recognized the Rio Grande as the southern boundary of 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 its deed. The land grant deed stated that “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 *extensions*, or long lots, which gave each homestead 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 to equivalent 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. (See 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, for livestock and for human consumption. These ditches were called *acequias* (A-sek-ee-ahs).

By 1851, the settlers began constructing plazas and village centers, 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 Catholic 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 featured 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, meaning “little fortress,” was named to honor San Isidro (the patron of farmers). The settlers named these places in honor of their saint-protectors because most of them were Catholic, like their ancestors before them.

By 1861, the northern half of Taos County (which included 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 and customs. 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 penned a document outlining the rights and responsibilities of settlers.



## Map of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant after Settlement





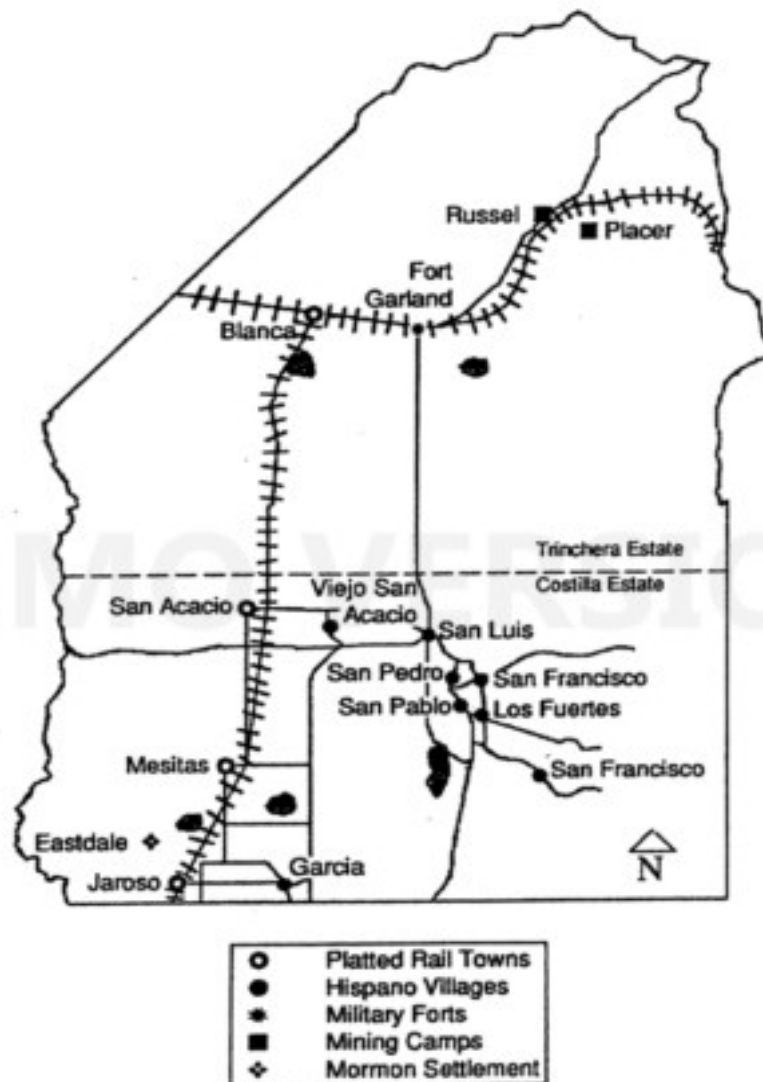


Figure 6. Early Settlements and Platted Towns (Courtesy of Valdez & Associates, 1990)

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. It conveyed to Gilpin all covenants and agreements undertaken by Beaubien. It also clearly established his obligation to maintain the Mexican land grant traditions and customs 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 settlers were intimidated into repurchasing their land.

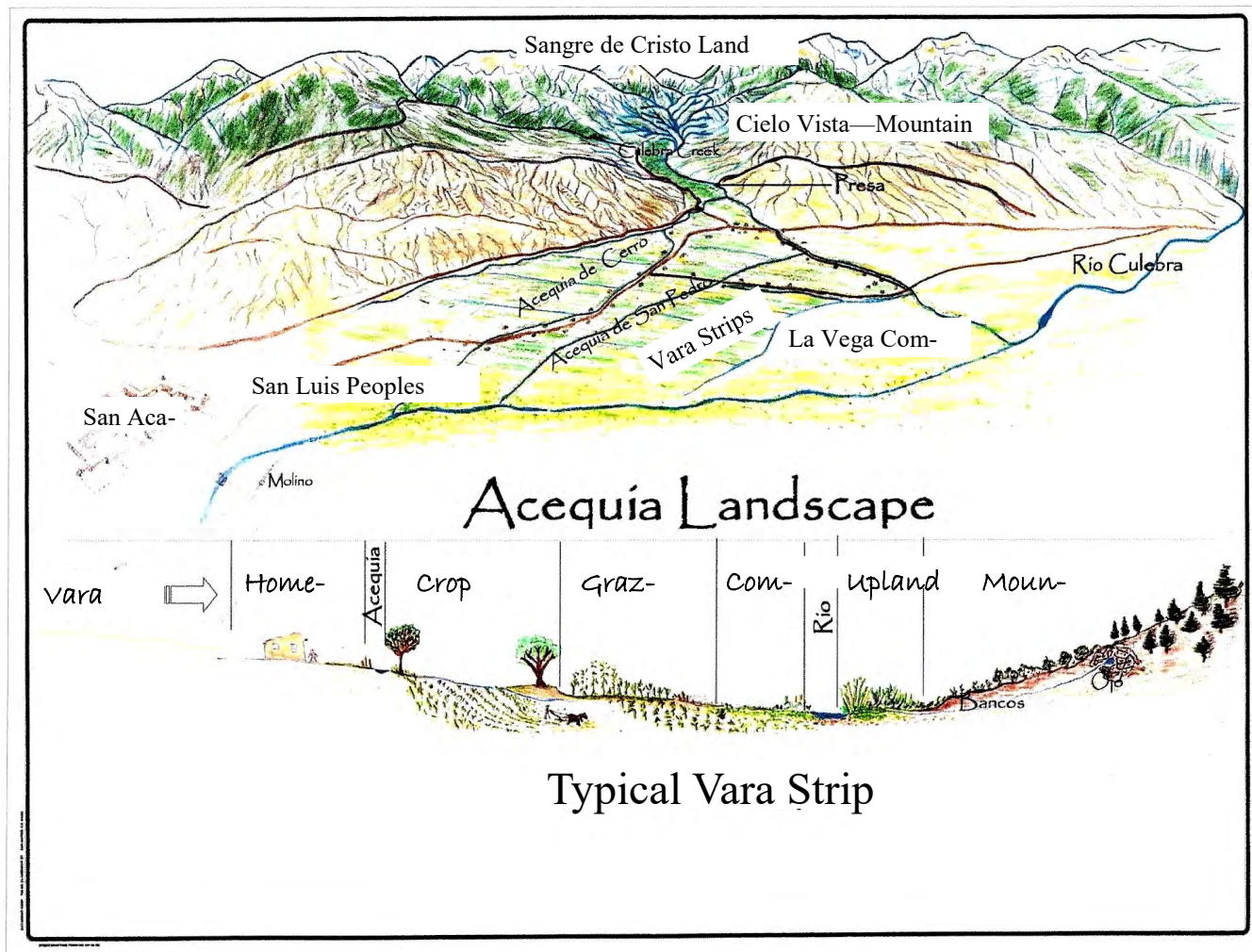
This was only the beginning of many legal challenges faced by the settlers. In the late 1890's, the Freehold Company which had been promoting mineral extraction realized that the mining and farming colonies would not happen. After thirty years of recruitment, only one agricultural colony had purchased 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 is 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% of its population. The trend continued in 1960, as out-migration accelerated 25%. With the largest population decline in Colorado, Costilla County also had the lowest per capita income in the state. These dismal statistics include the facts that two-thirds of the residents earned less than \$3,000 annually, half the households had 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.

### View of the Vara Strip (long lot) settlement





## Settling the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

**Time:** 2 - 45 minute periods

**Location:** Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Understand the nature of historical knowledge as a process of inquiry that examines and analyzes how history is viewed, constructed, and interpreted.
- Apply geographic representations and perspectives to analyze human movement, spatial patterns, systems, and the connections and relationships among them.
- Students will recognize that people in communities manage and build using resources in their environment.
- 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. Journal or notebook paper

### Preparation:

Have about 10 sheets of copy paper per student.

### Activity:

Once students have finished the reading, have students begin to layout the sequence of the events that occurred in the reading (students should use their 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 the plaza, churches and homes, 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 8.5 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 2 sheets per event. Staple along the short edge, 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 2 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 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 the early Hispano settlers needed to live in the early days of the land grant settlements and how they utilized the area's 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.*





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

**Time:** 1- 45 minute period

**Location:** Indoors or outdoors

## Learner Outcomes:

- Students can explain how people in the past influenced the development and interaction of different communities or regions.
- Students can explain how connections are developed within and across human and physical systems.
- Students can explain why the order of events is important.

## Materials:

1. 6 large bowls
2. Enough beans/goldfish to fill 3 bowls.
3. One plastic spoon for each student.

## Preparation:

Get 6 bowls or buckets  
1 bag of beans or goldfish per team  
1 plastic spoon per student.

## 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 and 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 not been a great water year for the acequia community. 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, so there is no water in the acequia. 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 and make sure each student has a spoon. They need to line up with their group. The first student will go down to the "river" bucket 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 period

**Location:** Indoors or outdoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Students can explain how people in the past influenced the development and interaction of different communities or regions.
- Students can explain how connections are developed within and across human and physical systems.
- Students can explain why the order of events is important.

### Materials:

1. 6 large bowls
2. Enough beans/goldfish to fill 3 bowls.
3. One plastic spoon for each student.

### Preparation:

Get 6 bowls or buckets  
1 bag of beans or goldfish per team  
1 plastic spoon per student.

Review the rules with students and state that anyone who doesn't follow the rules will have to put all of the water in their community bucket back into the river 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. 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>



## Colorado Water Law— First in Right, First in Time

**Time:** 1- 45 minute period

**Location:** Outdoors

### Learner Outcomes:

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

### Materials:

1. Copy paper
2. Colored pencils, markers
3. Journal or notebook paper
4. Dice

### Preparation:

Each student will need a copy of the story "Colorado's Water"

### Introduction:

The story of Colorado's water began in the acequias, near present day San Luis, CO. Today's activity starts with students reading the story "Colorado's Water." After students have finished reading, begin a discussion asking students to think about how difficult it might have been to file for water rights in the 1850's. How would they get to the territorial office to file for their water right? What were the dangers they might have encountered? What happened to the water user if they never filed for their water right? Finally, give each team of students a set of dice, a record sheet and a bag of papers (cut from worksheet, folded and placed in a bag. What they draw will dictate the final amount of water the irrigator receives.

### Activity:

The activity will require students to work in groups. Once their groups are formed have them name their group( acequia) and assign themselves a number representing their priority (order that they get to receive their water, (if there are four people in the group they would choose either 1,2,3, or 4. if there are less or more member in the group adjust accordingly). Explain that you will be the territorial water commissioner and in charge of seeing who files their claim and in what order. The idea will be that each irrigator can only have a water right if they get their water claim to the water commissioner and to have their right recorded. Let them know that you understand how difficult this will be given the terrain they need to cross and the weather they encounter.

The object of this game will be to roll the dice and get to 100. Each team member will take turns rolling the dice. After each roll they will record their number and add up a subtotal. If you roll a double you will be required to draw a fate card and do what the card tells you and record the number. Keep rolling until each member files their water right or loses their water.

The last final step will be to draw a Fate Card paper from the bag, which will represent your decreed amount of water.

### Wrap-up:

Once the students have completed their call sheet, open up a discussion. Was it easier or harder than they thought? Did everyone get their water? Why or why not? What happens if people keep moving to Colorado, will we have enough water? What can we do?



## Colorado Water Law— First in Right, First in Time

**Time:** 1- 45 minute period

**Location:** Outdoors

### Learner Outcomes:

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

### Materials:

1. Copy paper
2. Colored pencils, markers
3. Journal or notebook paper
4. Dice

### Preparation:

Each student will need a copy of the story "Colorado's Water"

## Colorado's Water

The state of Colorado is a headwater state, which means that many rivers in the western and midwestern United States originate in Colorado. These include the North and South Platte Rivers which flow across Nebraska and into the Missouri River. The Arkansas River, which flows out of Colorado, is a major tributary to the Mississippi river. The Rio Grande River begins in southern Colorado and provides water for New Mexico, Texas, and the country of Mexico. Finally, the Colorado River provides water to Arizona, Nevada and California.

Prior to the creation of the Territory of Colorado in 1861, few laws existed that pertained specifically to the issue of water rights in the area. These early Colorado settlers understood that the land was useless without water. Before Colorado became a state, citizens went to the territorial governor and placed a claim on their right to use water.

In 1876, Colorado became the first state to officially adopt the prior appropriation doctrine in its Constitution. The doctrine is often described as "first in time, first in right." This means that whoever files on a water right first gets to use the water before those who file after him. The first person to file is senior. Seniority is valuable, and it makes sure that the water needs of a senior water right holder are always met before those of a user that filed after him or her.

The doctrine of prior appropriation provides that the water of every natural stream is public property owned by the state and its citizens. Therefore, Colorado officials must ensure that the water is put to beneficial use and not wasted. Since water is so important, most rivers, streams and creeks have all of their available water already allocated and so there is no more water that can be used.



## Colorado Water Law—First in Right, First in Time

**Team Name:**

**Order by number: (Name and Number)**

**Order by filing with the Commissioner:**

**Order by amount of water:**

- 1.) Did you finish in the order you each chose?
- 2.) If not, how will you make sure each one of you gets the water? What will you need to do?
- 3.) Can everyone get the water they file for?
- 4.) In a drought year only the first two rights holders will get their water. What happens to the others?
- 5.) If you are on an acequia what happens?





## Colorado Water Law—First in Right, First in Time

There is a blizzard you must  
start over.

Your just had a child you must wait 6  
weeks—Lose six turns.

Good weather - double your roll!

You stopped to visit family –lose one  
turn.

The cows got out and you must  
help get them back in—subtract 15  
points

Your grandma let you use her faster  
horse— ad 25 points!

You sprain an ankle and must stop to  
rest—skip a turn.

You get there on Sunday and  
the water commissioner is  
closed—lose one turn.



# Acequia Governance

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Location:** Indoors

**Learner Outcomes:**

- Students can explain how people in the past influenced the development and interaction of different communities or regions.
- Students can explain how connections are developed within and across human and physical systems.
- Students will understand why communities follow tradition even as more modern methods are developed.

**Materials:**

1. Group questionnaire
2. Picture portfolio

**Preparation:**

Place students in groups and read the *Acequia Governance* article to the class. Discuss the roles that people fill to make the acequia a community tool.

## *Introduction:*

In this lesson students will learn about the how an acequia is governed. This tradition of governance dates back to the 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.

## *The History of Acequia Governance*

Administration of acequias remains today largely as it was during the colonial period. 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 executive officer of the acequia is the *mayordomo* and 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 and co-equal 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. As a community organizer, the mayordomo/a will organize yearly *limpías*, gatherings to clean and repair acequias, and measure and record work credits or debits of each of the parciantes. The mayordomo/a is responsible for gathering each worker and determining how much of the acequia's length each worker will clean. 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:** 45 minutes

**Location:** Indoors

**Learner Outcomes:**

- Students can explain how people in the past influenced the development and interaction of different communities or regions.
- Students can explain how connections are developed within and across human and physical systems.
- Students will understand why communities follow tradition even as more modern methods are developed.

**Materials:**

1. Group questionnaire
2. Picture portfolio

**Preparation:**

Place students in groups and read the Acequia Governance article to the class. Discuss the roles that people fill to make the acequia a community tool.

### *Activity:*

Once students are assembled in their groups have them work together to answer the following questions and present those answers in the large group discussion. To prepare for the final discussion students should be able to add to their knowledge using online resources that could include; Pictures documents and stories.

### ***Acequia Governance Group Questions***

- 1. What is an acequia and how is it different from regular flood irrigation?***
- 2. Who is the comisión?***
- 3. What is a parciante and why are they key to an Acequia?***
- 4. What is the mayordomo's role and how does he help the acequia function?***
- 5. What is the limpias? How does it help ensure equity along an acequia?***
- 6. Describe what happens on an acequia in a year when there is enough water for everyone and what happens when water is scarce.***



## Acequia Settlers and Value of the Vega Commons

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Location:** Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

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

### Materials

1. 1 plastic spoon for each student
2. 16 Goldfish crackers for each group of four
3. 1 bowl for each group of four ("lake")

### Preparation:

Place students in groups

**Introduction:** The common lands are considered culture-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-lots 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 Vallejos . . . No 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:

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

### Materials

1. 1 plastic spoon for each student
2. 16 Goldfish crackers for each group of four
3. 1 bowl for each group of four ("lake")

### Preparation:

Place students in groups

**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 Beaubien.

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. But in doing so, they face the scorn of their neighbors.

**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 from zero to four fish from the lake. It is your choice how many fish you take!

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.

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.

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:

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

### Materials

1. 1 plastic spoon for each student
2. 16 Goldfish crackers for each group of four
3. 1 bowl for each group of four ("lake")

### Preparation:

Place students in groups

### Directions Con't:

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.

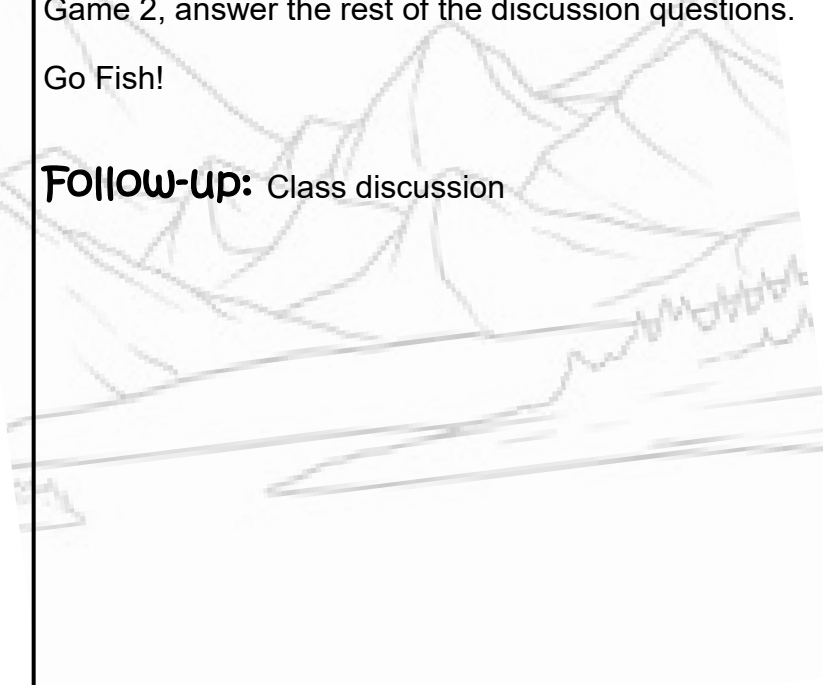
Remember to always answer your questions in complete sentences so that a reader would understand your answers even if he or she did not know the questions.

After you have answered discussion questions 1 though 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: Class discussion





# 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			

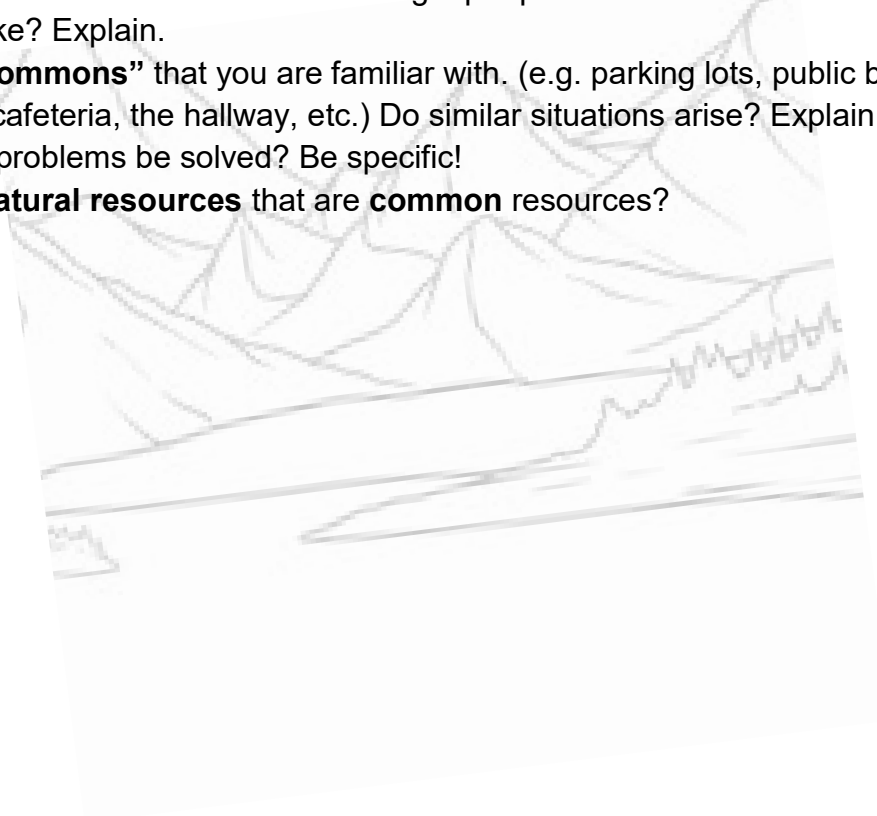




## Acequia Settlers and the Value of the Vega Commons

### Questions:

1. Did anyone in your group take too many fish? What was the consequence?
2. How did it make you feel if anyone took 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!
11. What are some **natural resources** that are **common** resources?





# Field Introduction

## Settling the Sangre de Cristo 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.

### 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. 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*, where you will see how they operated then and now.
- *A visit to La Sierra*, where then, 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*, where 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 in the lower lands to have access to grazing for their livestock.
- *The Village of San Acacio* with its 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.
- Meet with the *Comision of the San Acacio Acequia* to understand the key role they play in ensuring that there is equity in the distribution of acequia water to parciantes.
- *Visit a local farm* that grows heritage crops and 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.

To schedule a visit contact The Costilla County Economic Development Council at 719-672-4338.



## 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.

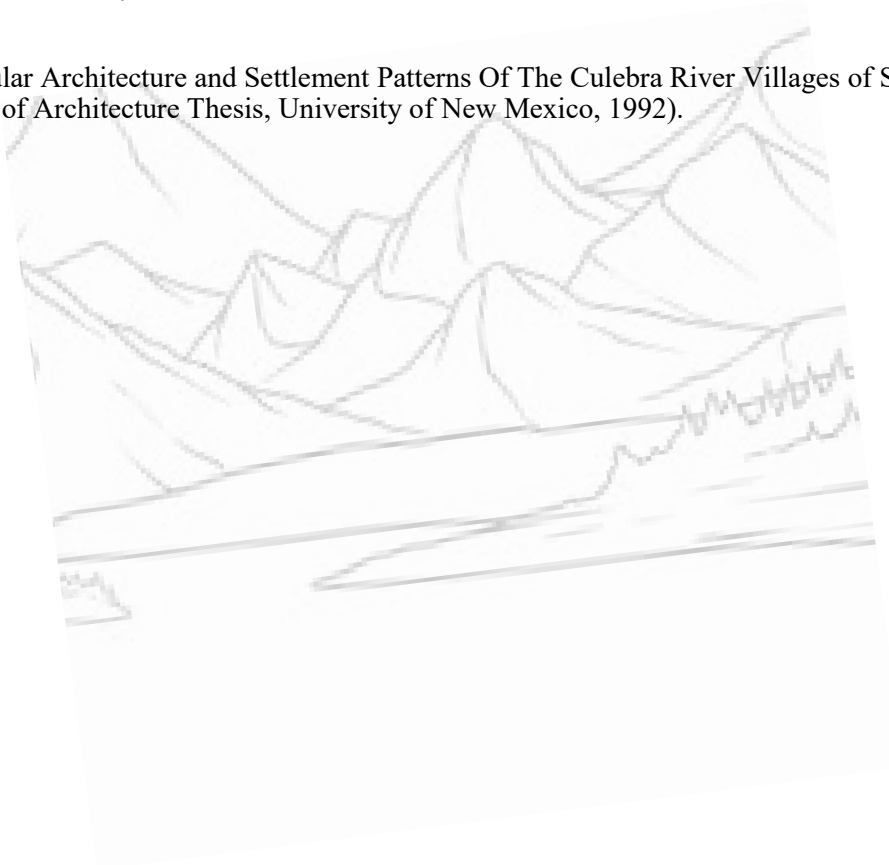
n.d. "The History of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant and the Claims of the People of the Culebra River Villages on their Lands" in Exhibit A. (Unpublished: Review by permission of author only)

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).





# *The Spanish and Mexican Land Grants High School*

## Learner Outcomes

- Investigate causes and effects of significant events throughout United States history.
- Analyze the complexity of events throughout United States history.
- Geographic variables influence interactions of people, places, and environments. The interconnected nature of the world, its people and places.
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano Communities

## Connections to 2020 Colorado State Standards

### Social Studies

High School: History - 2, Geography - 2, Civics - 4

## The Program

This program includes three key components: Reading for meaning and understanding, 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 High School*

## **Contents:**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>The Mexican American War</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Settling the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Understanding the Acequia— Past, Present and Future</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Acequia Community and the Fight to Keep Their Rights</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Colorado Water Law—First in right, First in time</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Acequia Field Excursions</b>	



## Settling the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant — The Mexican American War

**Time:** 2—45 minute class periods

**Location:** Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Investigate causes and effects of significant events throughout United States history
- Analyze the complexity of events throughout United States history
- Understand which geographic variables influenced interactions of people, places, and environments and the interconnected nature of the world, its people and places
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano

### Materials

1. Sheets of butcher paper
2. Colored pencils, markers
3. Journal or notebook paper

### Preparation:

Have about 1 sheets of butcher paper student group.

### Activity:

Show students a map of North America circa 1830. Ask them to explain how it is different from the geography of today. Note who is in control of which territories — particularly the size of Mexico. Note who is absent from the map (Indigenous communities).

Ask the students to think about the process through which the 1830s boundaries changed to those of today. Use the Mexican-American War to open that inquiry .

From the perspective of today, it can be difficult to imagine the fate of North America being in flux. But, this was exactly the case for many centuries. Only in the mid-1800s did the territorial borders that we are accustomed to, begin to take shape. St. Augustine was the first permanent European settlement in what is now the United States, founded over 50 years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock.

Santa Fe was founded eight years before Jamestown. The Spanish used missions and land grants to populate their northern holdings in California and other parts of the Southwest — all lands that eventually constituted the northern half of the new nation of Mexico. In the early 1800s, the small nation of the United States grew exponentially with the Louisiana Purchase — some of which had already been transferred from Spain to France.

Indigenous cultures struggled within this context to hold on to their ancestral lands and ways of life. Some, like the Comanche, proved more powerful than European derived cultures. Mexico invited Anglo settlers from the United States to settle Texas in order to buffer the impact of the Comanche. But, these settlers brought with them the social and racial views of the Plantation economy and Anglo superiority.

These views worked in concert with the evolving concept of Manifest Destiny — a notion of preordained right to conquer and rule North America from coast to coast. It was this notion — and the implied inferiority of non-Anglos like Indians and Latinos — that colored political, economic and social aspects of U.S. expansion.

The primary goal of this lesson is to help students understand the radically different geography of North America in the early 1800s and to invite them to examine U.S. expansion from diverse perspectives.

The Latino experiences of the Southwest in the 1800s illustrate how our nation's growth has sometimes been in tension with its core values of equality, democracy and individual freedoms.

Have students view the You Tube video— <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8U9vbZwFZL4> *What was the Mexican American War* (The History



## Settling the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant — The Mexican American War

**Time:** 2—45 minute class periods

**Location:** Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Investigate causes and effects of significant events throughout United States history
- Analyze the complexity of events throughout United States history
- Understand which geographic variables influenced interactions of people, places, and environments and the interconnected nature of the world, its people and places
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano

### Materials

1. Sheets of butcher paper
2. Colored pencils, markers
3. Journal or notebook paper

### Preparation:

Have about 1 sheets of butcher paper student group.

### Activity Continued:

The Latino experiences of the Southwest in the 1800s illustrate how our nation's growth has sometimes been in tension with its core values of equality, democracy and individual freedoms.

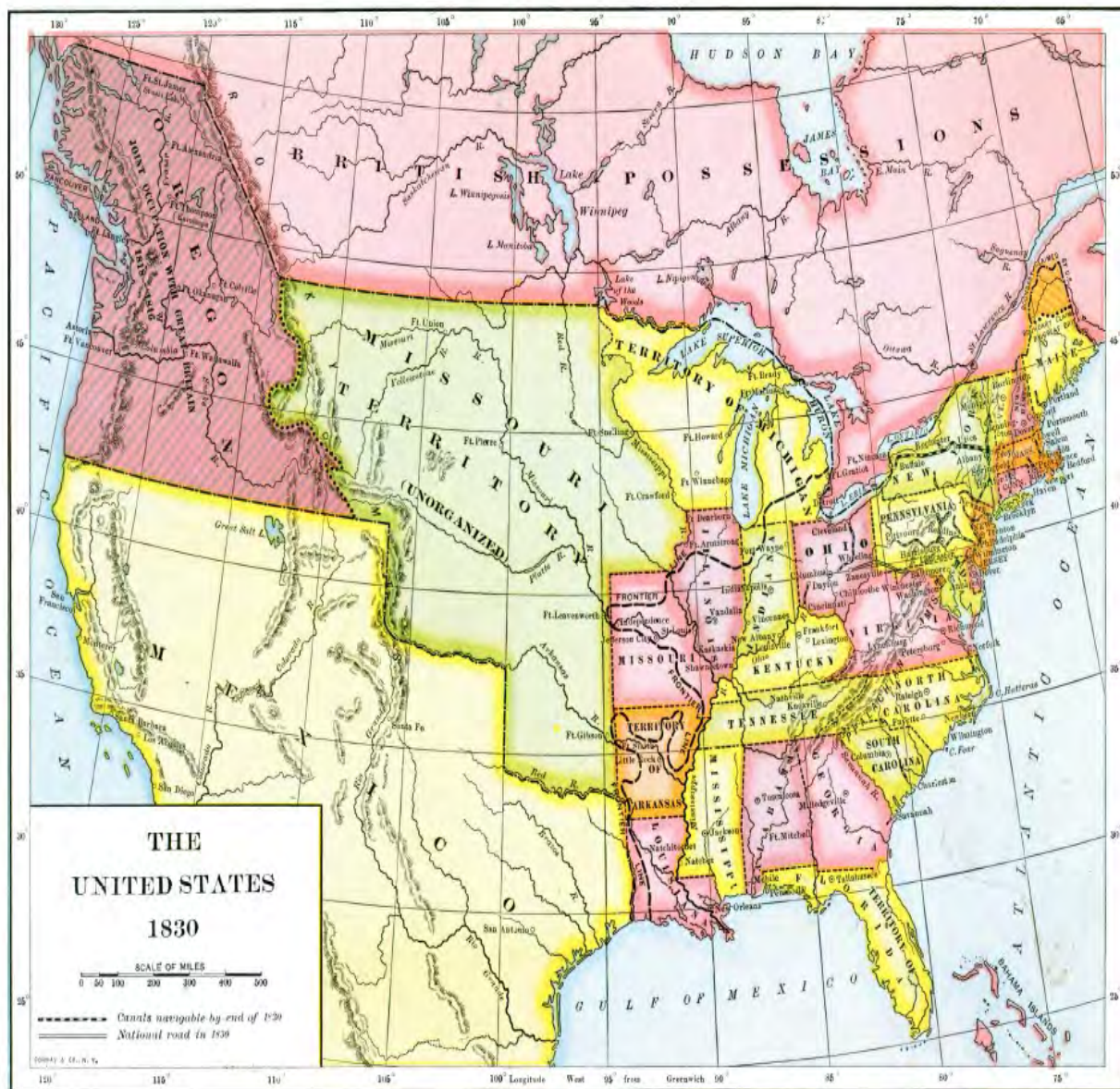
Have students view the You Tube video— <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8U9vbZwFZL4> *What was the Mexican American War* (The History Channel). After viewing the segment, explain that students will examine the story of U.S. expansion from the point of view of people in Texas, New Mexico and Colorado. Have student read the introduction on the next page. Then divide students into small research groups. Using film clips and internet articles have each group examine history from the point of view of particular characters and regions. They will detail locations, time frames and stories of at least two regions of Colorado and New Mexico.

Next they will track the tactics of U.S. expansion and examine the impact on Mexican citizens' wealth, rights and safety, contrasting formal treaty agreements with what actually happened. Students will examine the strategies used by early Mexican Americans to respond to political, economic and social change. After tracking this information on the activity sheet, they present their information to the entire class. All students respond to reflection questions in writing or through discussion.

### Conclusion:

*Students should present their findings to the class and then after all are presented, participate in a classroom discussion.*





The United States, 1830  
 Dixon Ryan Fox, *Harper's Atlas of American History* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1920)  
 Downloaded from Maps ETC, on the web at <http://etc.usf.edu/maps> [map #03303]





“The lands that America wanted to occupy, in their imaginations they were empty, but in reality they were not. They were full of Indigenous people of one sort or another and in various parts of the country they were full of Spaniards and their descendants.”

— Gary Gerstle, Historian

Much of what is now the United States was part of Mexico, not to mention the territory of Indigenous cultures. The mid-1800s marked massive expansion of the United States. While some Mexican citizens resisted U.S. expansion into their lands, others welcomed it. Regardless, all Mexicans in the region absorbed by the United States were guaranteed the rights of U.S. citizens according to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. But, things rarely worked out that way.

In this activity, you'll examine how particular individuals and communities responded to international borders changing around them.

1. In small groups, view at least two clips or articles. In each clip, you will follow the story of a particular historical figure. You may need to view the clip more than once to gather all the information.
2. Once your group has organized its information, present the story to the rest of the class.
3. Complete the reflection questions.

### Student Work Sheet

A.) Document where and when the historical figure(s) lived and what their life was like in Mexico before U.S. expansion:

NAME	LOCATION	TIME FRAME	STATUS/ACTIVITY BEFORE U.S. EXPANSION
------	----------	------------	---------------------------------------

B.) Next, consider U.S. expansion into the regions you selected above. Focusing on your historical figures, detail some of the actions and events that caused Mexicans to become “foreigners in their own lands.” What tactics did U.S. arrivals use to transform lands and social orders of what was Mexico?

LOCATION	TIME FRAME	EVENTS, TACTICS & ATTITUDES DIRECTED AT THE RESIDENT MEXICAN POPULATION
----------	------------	---

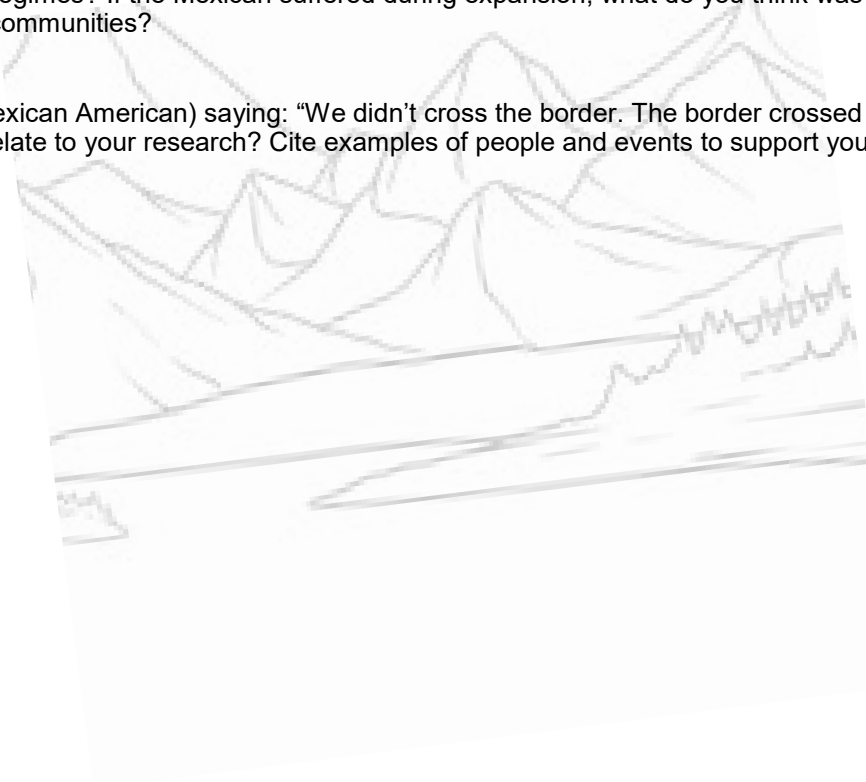
C.) Mexican Americans reacted to U.S. expansion in different ways. How did the individuals you selected respond? What did they do and how did their lives change?

NAME	LOCATION	DATE	RESPONSE/STATUS AFTER U.S. EXPANSION
------	----------	------	--------------------------------------



#### Reflection Questions:

- Consider the individuals you selected. What did U.S. expansion mean for them personally? Were they able to preserve their status, property and rights? If so, how? If not, what happened to them and how did they respond?
- A combination of attitudes, economic strategies and brute force were used to erode Mexican rights and social structures. What are some examples of these different tactics?
- Compare the experience of Colorado with that of New Mexico. How was the experience of U.S. expansion different there?
- Often, traditional views of U.S. history look westward and move from East to West. What other perspectives and issues surface when we examine this history from the Western perspective of the Mexicans of Colorado and New Mexico? Did the arrival of the United States necessarily mean the arrival of the brand of equality and democracy that are associated with it? Why or why not?
- When land transferred from the control of Mexico to the United States, there were certainly implications for the Mexican communities. But what communities — which had been on these lands longest of all — were subjugated under both Mexican and U.S. regimes? If the Mexican suffered during expansion, what do you think was the implication for the mestizo and Indian communities?
- There is a Chicano (Mexican American) saying: "We didn't cross the border. The border crossed us." What does this mean and how does it relate to your research? Cite examples of people and events to support your explanation.





## Settling the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Location:** Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Investigate causes and effects of significant events throughout United States history
- Analyze the complexity of events throughout United States history
- Understand geographic variables influence interactions of people, places, and environments and the interconnected nature of the world, its people and places
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano

### 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 the attached Spanish and Mexican Land Grants History and maps.

**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 the Cornell Note 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. Using either the map in the lesson or a classroom map move to Colorado 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 reading about the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant and its settlement.

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

- Why did early settlers choose to leave to build new settlements?
- Who were some of the first groups of people to settle southern Colorado?
- What variables influenced where Hispano settlers chose to build these settlements?
- Describe how they used resources in the landscape to build settlements and what role did people and places play in ensuring a successful settlement?
- What is a land grant? How did it help early Hispano settlers create viable settlements?

Discuss the Cue questions with students helping them develop a sense of what each question is asking. Have students begin reading, as they read they should identify and write down points that address each Cue question.

### Conclusion:

Once reading is complete, have students come back together and discuss what they learned. Be sure to frame all questions around the Cue questions. To wrap-up the lesson have students summarize the Land Grant lesson. Remind them that these notes will be the basis for the activity they will be doing to complete the assignment.



## Settling the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

**Time:** 2—45 minute class periods

**Location:** Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Investigate causes and effects of significant events throughout United States history
- Analyze the complexity of events throughout United States history
- Understand which geographic variables influenced interactions of people, places, and environments and the interconnected nature of the world, its people and places
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano

### Materials

1. Sheets of butcher paper
2. Colored pencils, markers
3. Journal or notebook paper

### Preparation:

Have about 1 sheets of butcher paper student group.

### Activity:

This activity will be centered around the reading and note taking lesson from the previous class. Break students in to groups and explain that they will be mapping out their own land grant settlement as if they were going in front of Congress to justify the purchase and settlement of southern Colorado.

Students should first create an inset map of their proposed land grant area highlighting features of importance such as rivers/streams, forests for timber and firewood, grasslands and other essential resources.

Next, they will develop their settlement. The location should include key components identified in the reading and should be drawn to scale. Careful attention should be paid to the location and size of each vara strip homestead, ensuring the width and location match those described in the story.

Once the homesteads are laid out, the team should design the settlement plaza, identifying where the parish might be and what size it would be need to fit the prospective settlers. Have students consider what other infrastructure might be needed near the plaza to ensure the success of settlement.

Finally, students should name their village. If appropriate students can research independently to get a more in depth understanding of these settlements.

### Conclusion:

*Students should present their communities to the class and then after all are presented, work as the Congress to approve the most appropriate settlement.*



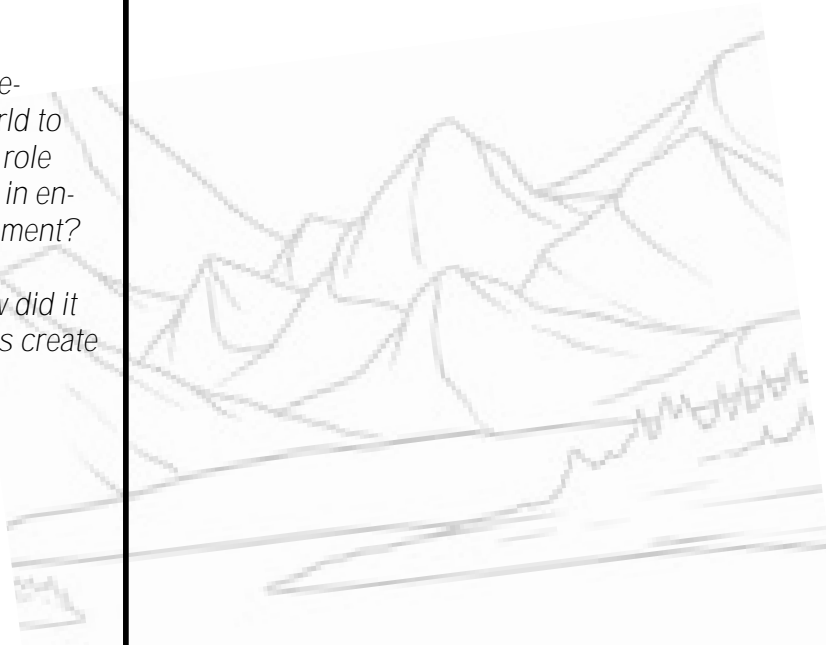
**Name:**

**Topic:**

**Cues:**

- Key words that are new or descriptive.
- Why did early settlers choose to leave to build new settlements?
- Who were some of the first groups of people to settle southern Colorado?
- What variables influenced where Hispano settlers chose to build these settlements?
- Describe how they used resources in the natural world to build settlements and the role people and places played in ensuring a successful settlement?
- What is a land grant? How did it help early Hispano settlers create viable settlements?

**Notes:**



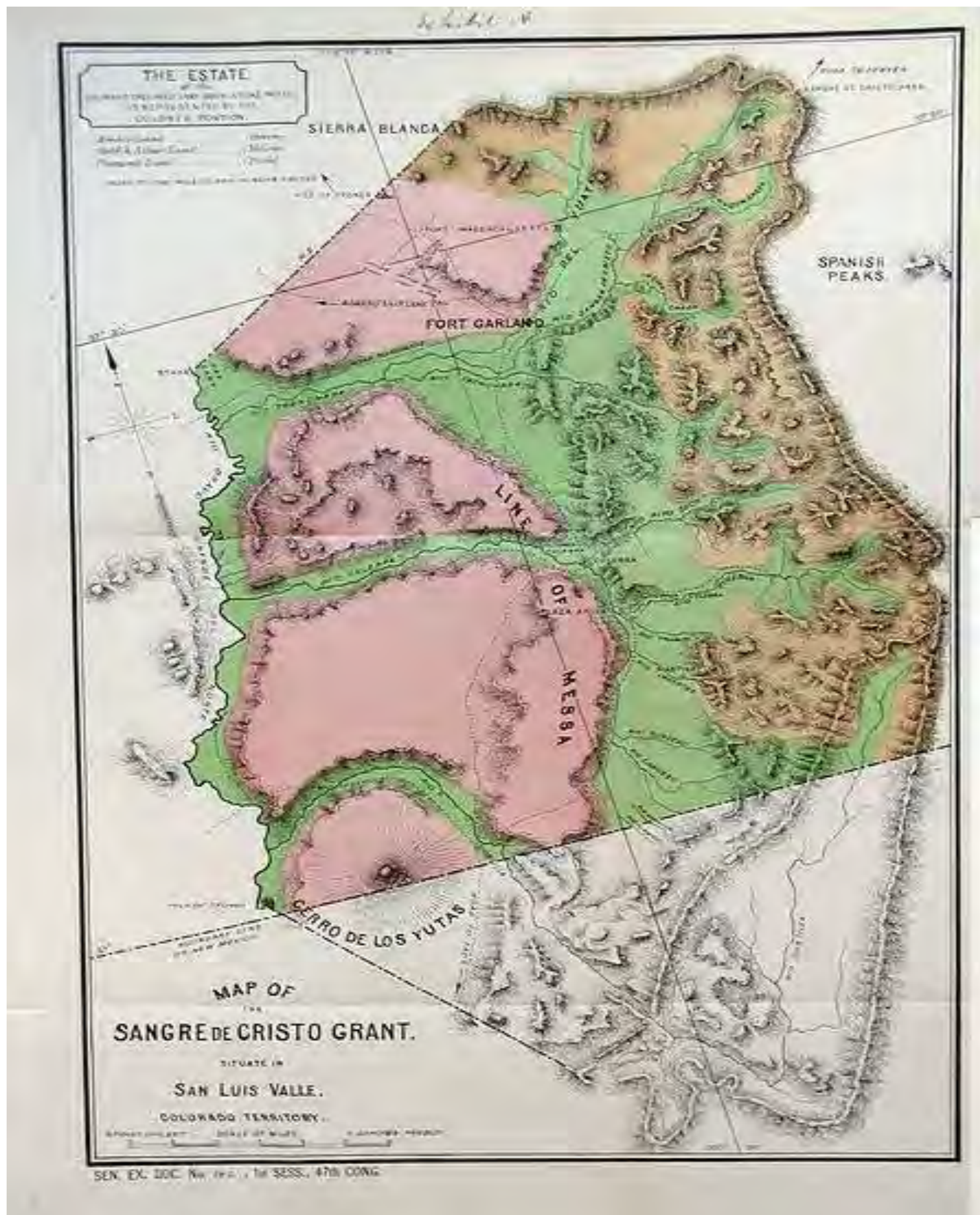
**Summary:**







Map of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant before Settlement

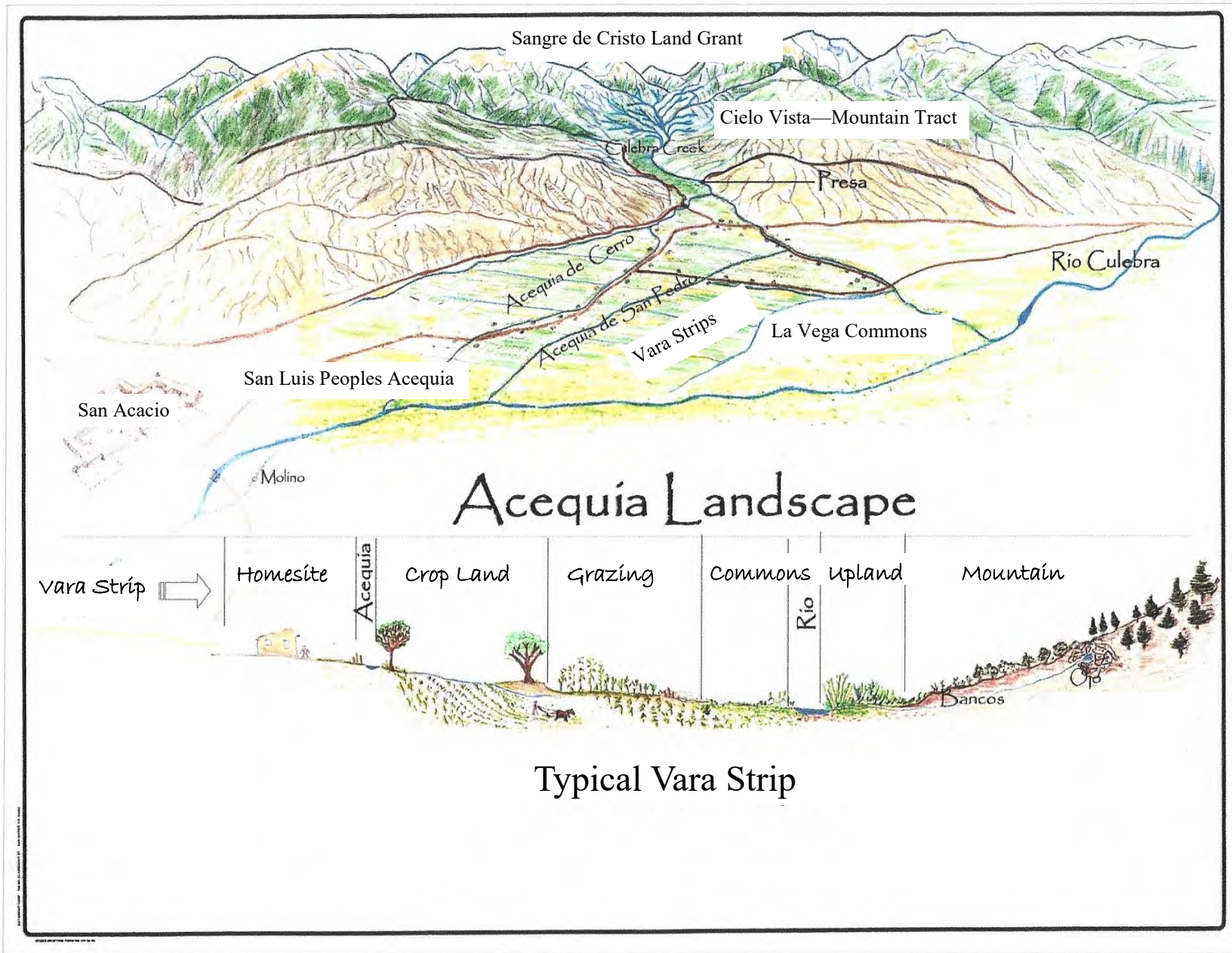




Map of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant after Settlement





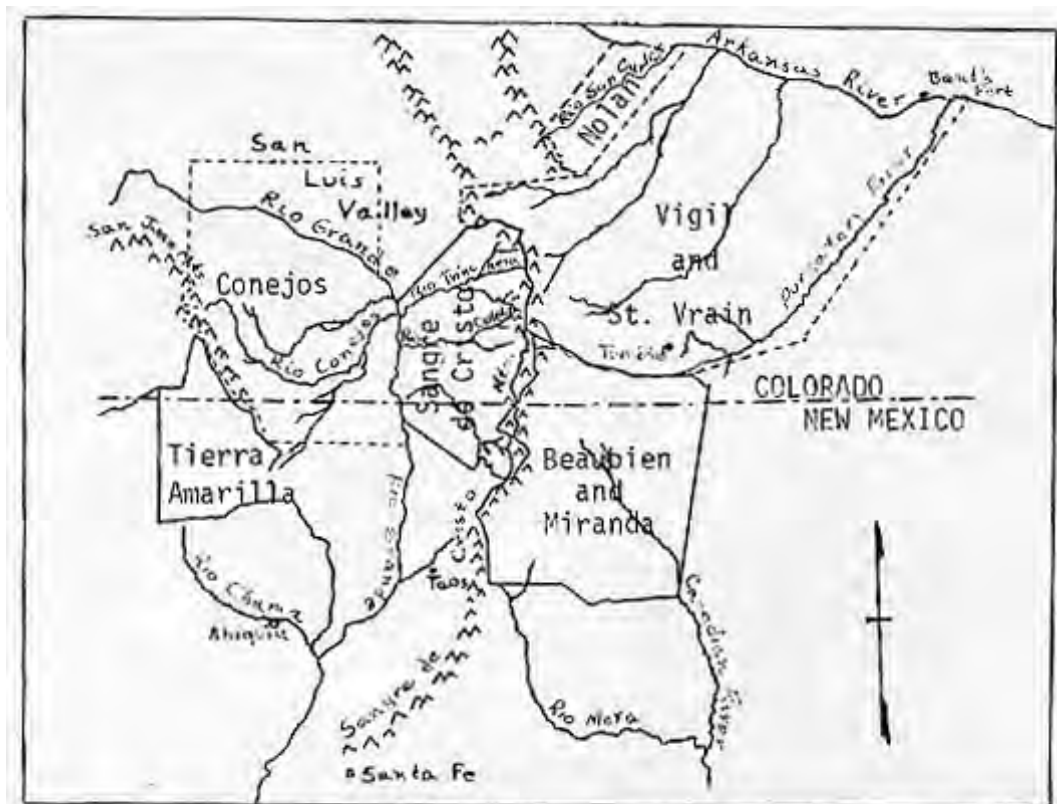




## SPANISH COLONIAL NEW MEXICO

The northern territory of New Mexico was colonized after 1598 under a system of land occupancy rooted in the Spanish practice of *la merced* (the land grant). Land grants were allocated to individuals or organized groups of settlers. Land use within the grants was divided into fields, house plots (*solares*) and common lands. Grants specified acreage be divided into a system of land use that was equitable to all the inhabitants. This is where the *extensiones* or long lots were developed. The acequia system then supplied all the parcels with water for irrigation.

Between 1832 and 1843, Governor Manuel Armijo of New Mexico made six land grants: the Tierra Amarilla Grant, the Conejos Grant, the Maxwell Grant, the Vigil and St. Vrain Grant, the Nolan Grant, and the Sangre de Cristo Grant.



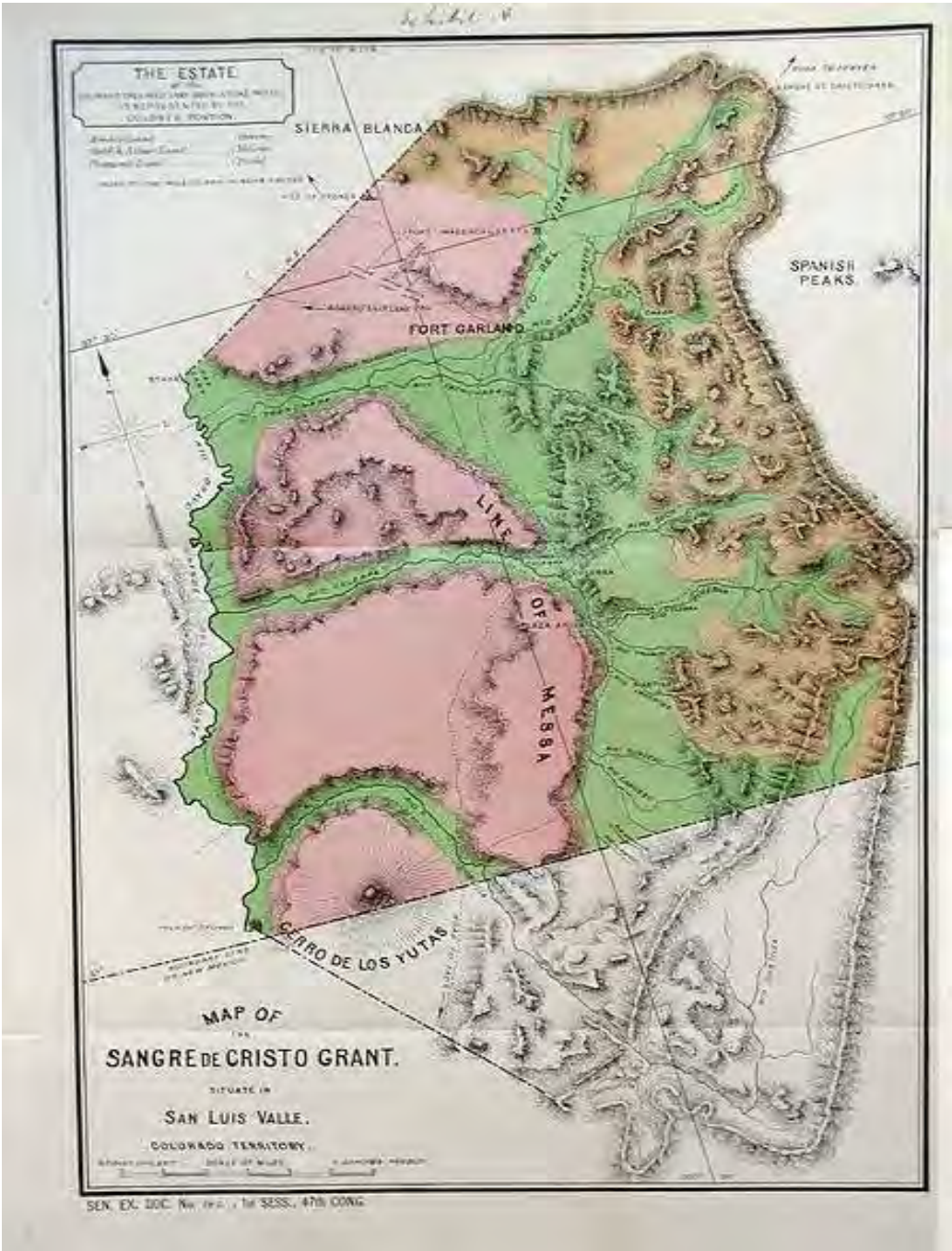
Map 2. Mexican Period Land Grants in Colorado

After Hufen. 1927. 85

### Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

In 1828-1829, the Republic of Mexico received the first application for a land grant on the Rio Culebra (Culebra River) (Stoller 1980, 24). In 1833 and again in 1843, Mexico officially granted land in the San Luis Valley, much of it currently located in Costilla and Conejos Counties. Settlers for the Sangre de Cristo Grant were recruited under the direction of Carlos Beaubien, owner of the land grant. Six years after the grant was made, Colorado's first permanent settlement began on the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant at Costilla-Garcia (Tushar 1975, 13).





Map of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant



In 1848 the defeated Mexican Republic signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo with the United States, severing half-a-million square miles of its northern territory to retain its core southern provinces. Because of Mexico's losses, land titles of former Mexican citizens throughout the Southwest were brought into question and often revoked by an American judicial system unaware of traditional Spanish-Mexican land occupancy and legal customs. All too often the process of invalidating land titles involved legal deception. Eventually, the courts diminished or denied a holdings. Against the foreground of a financially marginalized and politically paralyzed Mexico and the dominant occupation of American forces, Beaubien commenced populating the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant on the Rio Culebra.

Taos residents begin to expand northward into the uplands frontier. The extended family networks, the water-land rights, and religion provided the foundation for the villages to dig irrigation networks, establish food plots, and graze animals.

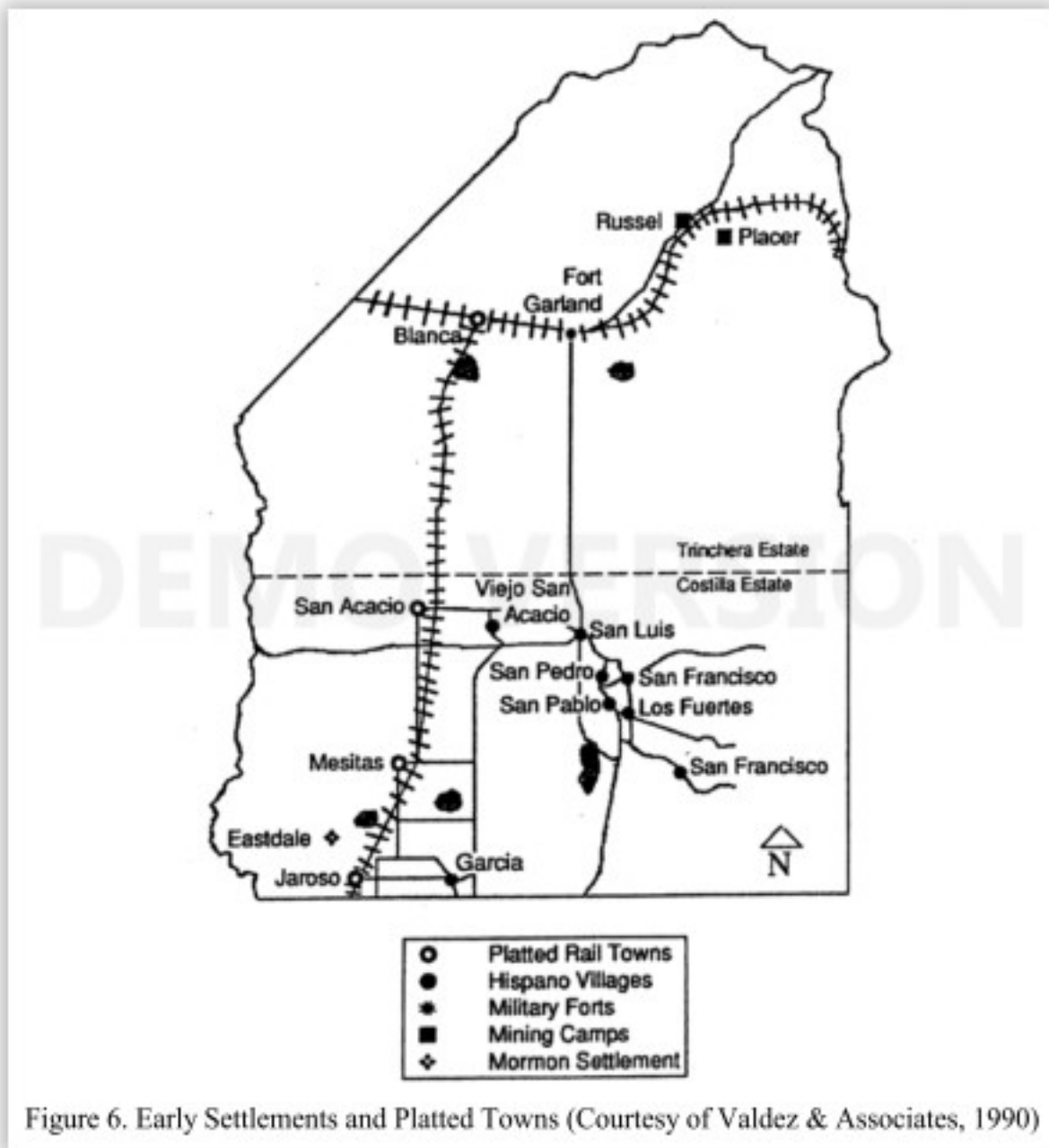
### **Rio Culebra Villages**

An important long-term influence on the function of a community is its siting (location), layout, and use patterns. Planning was of paramount interest to the Spanish in the development of the new world. The Spanish employed two methods for siting and land use in its provinces: The Laws of the Indies and granting of land, both of these methods became interwoven within isolated borderlands. The Laws of the Indies and land grant customs thus encouraged land use and sound siting practices in areas where self-reliance could be insured and the survival of a village maintained.

The siting of the Culebra Villages certainly applied the ordinances of the Laws of the Indies. The Beaubien Deed states; "all inhabitants shall have the benefits of pastures, water, wood, lumber" (Costilla County Clerk. 1863. Book 1. 1:256) Water allocation was likewise patterned after irrigation methods employed by both Hispanos and the Pueblo Indians of the Rio Grande (Simmons 1972, 136). Which was to combine the natural surface water courses and manmade acequias, to provide a basis for portioning out individual farmland to settlers. They also employed the French system of land division, where the lands were divided into long lots or *extensions* that were platted perpendicular to the river or stream. The width of the lots were measured in Spanish *varas* equivalent to 33 inches. Because of this predominant pattern of long slender parcels, the county was named Costilla meaning 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)

By 1851, the pobladores commenced constructing plazas, a village center where the community would gather, along the banks of Rio 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 Rio Culebra 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 Santo 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, meaning little fortress, was named to honor San Isidro (the patron of farmers). The pobladores place naming favored saint-protectors because the villagers were overwhelmingly Catholic as their ancestors before them.





One of the goals of the villagers after they moved out of the plaza was to construct central irrigation ditches, or acequias, and an interrelated network of laterals, or sangrias. Like their building techniques, the pobladores transferred acequia traditions from northern New Mexico into the highlands of southern Colorado. While the origins of the acequia nomenclature and some practices are rooted in the Moorish occupation of Spain, the techniques and infrastructure were hybridized by Roman contact with the Spanish and Spanish contact with Pueblos in the Rio Arriba.



## Understanding the Acequia— Past, Present and Future

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Understand geographic variables influence interactions of people, places, and environments and the interconnected nature of the world, its people and places
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano

### Materials

- 4' by 4' piece of Brown fabric.
- Colored pencils
- House cards with two types of house their should be 2 per person in the group.
- Green cards that represent agricultural fields.
- Blue satin ribbon 3' long, which represents the acequia madre
- Blue yarn in different lengths, (6,12,18,24 and 36 inches and a second 18inch piece with 4-5 knots in it ) which represents the acequia water
- Acequia water chart.
- Brown paper bags.

### Preparation:

Using the cut outs provided the teacher can prepare bags ahead of time or have students prepare materials and place them in the brown paper bags.

**Introduction:** In this lesson students will learn about the Sangre de Cristo acequias and water sharing within these communities. 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-e-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:** Begin the discussion with the video: *El Agua es Vida* (<https://vimeo.com/186250637>). When finished as a group discuss the following questions to begin the lesson.

1. Why do people decide to live where they do or move to other places?
2. Why is location important?
3. How do people interact with the environment and what are some of the consequences of those interactions?
4. How can we preserve fundamental values and beliefs in a world that is rapidly becoming one technology-linked village?



## Understanding the Acequia— Past, Present and Future

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Understand geographic variables influence interactions of people, places, and environments and the interconnected nature of the world, its people and places
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano

### Materials

- 4' by 4' piece of Brown fabric.
- Colored pencils
- House cards with two types of house their should be 2 per person in the group.
- Green cards that represent agricultural fields.
- Blue satin ribbon 3' long, which represents the acequia madre
- Blue yarn in different lengths, (6,12,18,24 and 36 inches and a second 18 inch piece with 4-5 knots in it) which represents the acequia water
- Acequia water chart.
- Brown paper bags.

### Preparation:

Using the cut outs provided the teacher can prepare bags ahead of time or have students prepare materials and place them in the brown paper bags.

### *Activity ( Continued):*

5.How are individual rights protected and challenged within the context of majority rule?

6.What is the most effective allocation of the factors of production (land, labor, capital, and resources)?

Next have the student divide up into groups of 3-5. A mixture of group sizes will make the lesson more compelling. Have the groups read the Administration of Acequia Water—A Community Project.

Using a 4' by 4' piece of Butcher paper, have the students draw a watershed that should include: a river, trees, native plants ( shrubs, grasses, etc.) Next have students open the brown paper bag, in it they will find the following items: house cards, green cards that represent agricultural fields, blue satin ribbon which represents the acequia madre, blue yarn in different lengths which represents the acequia water and an acequia water chart.

First, as an entire class, discuss how people decide where to live and how they plan their communities. Some useful questions to answer are: Why do people decide to live where they do or move to other places? Why is location important? How do people interact with the environment and what are some of the consequences of those interactions? Emphasize that the vast majority of the world's population live near a body of water which is called a waterscape. Together define and explain waterscape.

Next, explain that the class will work together to create a waterscape and prepare a model of a river and surrounding communities. Find a large floor space (20 feet x 20 feet). Have each group choose an area in this space and lay the brown fabric down to represent the land, be sure to shape one end of the fabric to look like mountains.

Next, take the light blue colored fabric, which will be the river, bunch them up and lay them along the length of the brown fabric, shaping curves and meanders that a river would naturally have.



## Understanding the Acequia— Past, Present and Future

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Understand geographic variables influence interactions of people, places, and environments and the interconnected nature of the world, its people and places
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano

### Materials

- 4' by 4' piece of Brown fabric.
- Strip of blue cotton fabric 5' long.
- Cards with various plant types.
- House cards with two types of house their should be 2 per person in the group.
- Green cards that represent agricultural fields.
- Blue satin ribbon 3' long, which represents the acequia madre
- Blue yarn in different lengths, (6,12,18,24 and 36 inches and a second 18inch piece with 4-5 knots in it ) which represents the acequia water
- Acequia water chart.
- Brown paper bags.

### Preparation:

Using the cut outs provided the teacher can prepare bags ahead of time or have students prepare materials and place them in the brown paper bags.

### *Activity ( continued):*

Then set up the natural features in and around the river; the forests and grasslands, containing a variety of plant types, the sandbars and other features. Briefly discuss how a natural river system acts, review what a watershed is, and then discuss what types of impacts human settlement along a river would have on the natural system.

Next add human settlements in chronological order. First place the Pueblos ,then the modern houses. Discuss what happens to the natural landscape when residential communities are built. Have groups make any changes to the model as a result of the discussion.

Then add some agriculture fields along the river and arrange an acequia madre (using the blue ribbon) from the river, around the fields and back to the river.

Now the model is ready for you to play the game! Explain that each of your groups will represent members of an acequia. That means that will need to work together as farming partners that will work the land off of each acequia. The object of the game is to grow as much food as possible in a growing season.

Groups will decide at the start of the growing season, how many fields they will work, between one and five fields. The challenge is not knowing how much water they will have in any one growing season and if they have enough water to irrigate all their fields in that growing season. As they begin to decide the number of fields explain they get one point per crop. Remind them that if they do not get enough water for all their crops, they earn zero points for that growing season.





## Understanding the Acequia— Past, Present and Future

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Understand geographic variables influence interactions of people, places, and environments and the interconnected nature of the world, its people and places
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano

### Materials

- 4' by 4' piece of Brown fabric.
- Strip of blue cotton fabric 5' long.
- Cards with various plant types.
- House cards with two types of house their should be 2 per person in the group.
- Green cards that represent agricultural fields.
- Blue satin ribbon 3' long, which represents the acequia madre
- Blue yarn in different lengths, (6,12,18,24 and 36 inches and a second 18inch piece with 4-5 knots in it ) which represents the acequia water
- Acequia water chart.
- Brown paper bags.

### Preparation:

Using the cut outs provided the teacher can prepare bags ahead of time or have students prepare materials and place them in the brown paper bags.

### *Activity ( continued):*

The amount of water in a growing season is determined by the length of a piece of yarn they select from the bag for that round . Make sure they understand that the length of yarn represents the volume of water delivered to their crops over a period of time. A long length of yarn may irrigate their crops for the whole season provided they don't have too many crops to water. A short length will either irrigate few crops per season or maybe even no crops per season.

You will use the acequia water volume chart to determine how many crops that volume of water will irrigate. Keep track of the points each group earns for each round on the board.

Now, complete these steps for each of the 3 rounds:

- 1 Have each group discuss how many fields (from 1-5) they will work for this growing season (round). Their hypothetical discussions can include whether there was a wet or dry winter, determining how much snow pack will melt, run off and be available in the spring for irrigation. What the forecast is for a rainy spring and summer. They can also determine how many of each type of field (gardens, pastures, cropland or orchards) they will plant/work.
- 2 Arrange that number of fields along the river within the acequia madre.
- 3 Have one person from each group pull a piece of yarn from the baggie.
- 4 The student will stretch that length of yarn on the chart to determine how many crops that volume of water will irrigate.
- 5 If they have enough water to irrigate each of their fields, they will earn a point for each field. If they do not have enough water to irrigate each of their fields, they will earn 0 points for the round. Record the point value on the board for each group. Yarn pieces with a knot in them are seasons in which there is a catastrophic flood. They will lose all crops for that season and earn zero points.



## Understanding the Acequia— Past, Present and Future

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Understand geographic variables influence interactions of people, places, and environments and the interconnected nature of the world, its people and places
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano

### Materials

- 4' by 4' piece of Brown fabric.
- Strip of blue cotton fabric 5' long.
- Cards with various plant types.
- House cards with two types of house their should be 2 per person in the group.
- Green cards that represent agricultural fields.
- Blue satin ribbon 3' long, which represents the acequia madre
- Blue yarn in different lengths, (6,12,18,24 and 36 inches and a second 18inch piece with 4-5 knots in it) which represents the acequia water
- Acequia water chart.
- Brown paper bags.

### Preparation:

Using the cut outs provided the teacher can prepare bags ahead of time or have students prepare materials and place them in the brown paper bags.

### *Activity ( continued):*

- 6 As a visual exercise, groups can arrange their yarn to “flow” through their crops. They can wind it from their acequia madre around their fields then back to the river. This will show them how the water flows in the system.
- 8 When all three rounds are completed, determine which groups were successful in their farming and which if any were not. This game only focuses on water as a limiting factor in production, discuss other factors that can limit production (invasion of pests, poor soil quality, etc) How is this game and model like the actual practice of farming? How is it different?

### *Conclusion:*

Once the groups have completed three rounds of the game, come back together and discuss what they experienced. Was there always enough water? Did their community have enough of the crop they were growing? What were the main drivers in having enough of a crop and how did that affect the relationship within their community?



## Understanding the Acequia— Past, Present and Future

### Administration of Acequia Water—A Community Project.

Using students' understanding of just how precious a resource water is, this exercise will demonstrate how a strict regime of using the water is practiced here in many hot, dry communities.

Acequia communities elect a mayordomo/a to manage and enforce water usage in the community. A mayordomo/a is a leader in a farming community who decides how surface water is used for irrigation. He or she will organize the yearly cleaning of the acequia, collect the dues required of each user, check to make sure all the parts of the system are working properly and make any necessary repairs, keep track of water allocations and with the input of the acequia commission, settle disputes among water users as well as make decisions about how to use the water when there is too little for irrigation.

As a community organizer, the mayordomo/a will organize yearly limpieas, gatherings to clean and repair acequias, and measure and record work credits or debits of each of the workers called parcientes. The irrigation season usually starts in mid-March. The mayordomo/a is responsible for gathering each worker and determining how much of the acequia's length each worker will clean. The mayordomo/a will often use a stick called a vara to measure and mark off sections of the acequia to clean. He or she will also keep track of the number of hours the parcientes spend cleaning and maintaining the acequia and will allocate water according to the time contributed.

Once the ditch is ready to receive water, the mayordomo/a will check to see that all parts of the system are in working order. Water is distributed according to the number of documented acres with water rights on the ditch per irrigator. Those who work the ditch get a share of the water. Those who don't must pay for a share of the water. The mayordomo/a will measure water in the main ditch, the acequia madre, and allot water to each irrigator accordingly. Distribution by means of tiempos, provides a volume of water over time to each field. In times of water scarcity, the mayordomo/a will decide if there is enough water for both agricultural irrigation and for animal consumption.







# Acequia Community and the Fight to Keep Their Rights

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors

## Learner Outcomes:

- Understand geographic variables influence interactions of people, places, and environments and the interconnected nature of the world, its people and places
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano

## Materials

- 4' by 4' piece of Brown fabric.
- Strip of blue cotton fabric 5' long.
- Cards with various plant types.
- House cards with two types of house their should be 2 per person in the group.
- Green cards that represent agricultural fields.
- Blue satin ribbon 3' long, which represents the acequia madre
- Blue yarn in different lengths, (6,12,18,24 and 36 inches and a second 18inch piece with 4-5 knots in it) which represents the acequia water
- Acequia water chart.
- Brown paper bags.

## Preparation:

Using the cut outs provided the teacher can prepare bags ahead of time or have students prepare materials and place them in the brown paper bags.

## Introduction:

In this lesson students will understand the struggles the Sangre de Cristo Acequia communities faced as the world began to modernize and outsiders came to the area to exploit the natural resources.

## Activity:

Students will begin the lesson by reading the **Fight to Keep Their Rights**. Once they have completed their reading have students answer the following questions in their journals.

1.) What are the Challenges for the Future?

2.) Acequia communities face major economic, social, and environmental challenges, including:

- Loss of farmers/ranchers in each generation because so many young people must leave to make a living.
- Urban development and real estate and water markets create increasing demands to transfer water rights away from agricultural to residential, commercial, and industrial uses.
- Municipal state, and federal policies can support or undermine traditional patterns of land/water rights ownership and use.
- Climate change and prolonged drought impact the availability of water for irrigation and the availability of vegetation for livestock grazing. Is there a tipping point from which there is no return? Explain your answer.

3.) Can and should these tipping points be averted?

4.) Is the acequia model a lesson for all of us? If so what should we learn and implement?

## Conclusion:

Discuss the students answers as a group.



## Acequia Community and the Fight to Keep Their Rights

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Understand geographic variables influence interactions of people, places, and environments and the interconnected nature of the world, its people and places
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano

### Materials

- 4' by 4' piece of Brown fabric.
- Strip of blue cotton fabric 5' long.
- Cards with various plant types.
- House cards with two types of house their should be 2 per person in the group.
- Green cards that represent agricultural fields.
- Blue satin ribbon 3' long, which represents the acequia madre
- Blue yarn in different lengths, (6,12,18,24 and 36 inches and a second 18inch piece with 4-5 knots in it) which represents the acequia water
- Acequia water chart.
- Brown paper bags.

### Preparation:

Using the cut outs provided the teacher can prepare bags ahead of time or have students prepare materials and place them in the brown paper bags.

## ***Fight to keep their Rights***

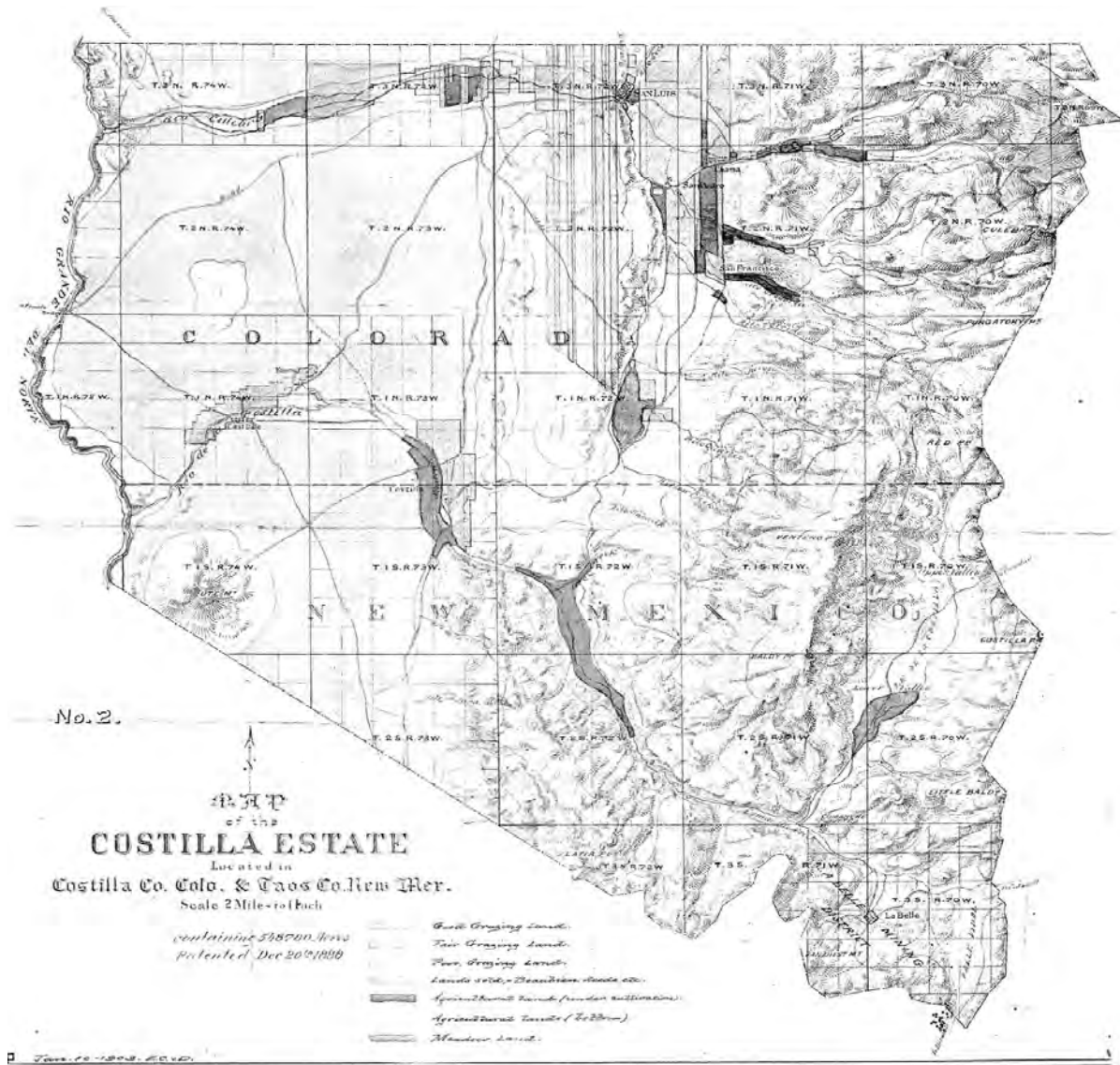
By 1861, the northern half of Taos County (which included the entire Sangre de Cristo Land Grant) became a part of the Territory of Colorado. Once designated, the grant was one of Colorado's first seventeen counties. Notwithstanding this newly acquired legal status, the villagers maintained extended kinship ties, social networks, and religious bonds with New Mexico. Although the vast majority of the populous had no indication as to what the new boundary demarcations meant, it marked the beginning of radical changes yet to come. To establish the villages, rancheros endangered their lives and those of their families.

Often risking what meager resources they possessed, settlers believed Beaubien's grant would replicate existing patterns. Unknown to the vast majority of the pobladores, Carlos Beaubien divided the million-acre 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 pobladores in the Rio Costilla, Rio Culebra, and Rio Trinchera watersheds. Correspondingly, Beaubien penned a conveyance outlining rights and responsibilities of settlers.

In 1863, an ill Beaubien (and the partners he controlled) 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, inducements, and commitments to the pobladores. This contract was important in two ways. Foremost, it conveyed to Gilpin all covenants and agreements undertaken by Beaubien. Second, it clearly established his obligations to maintain the status quo of Mexican land grant tradition and custom by allowing the pobladores to use resources in the uplands in common with any future owner of the grant.







1888 Map of The Costilla Estate

Company agents posed a serious challenge to the Mexican villagers who had worked the land they claimed by Beaubien's promise, by legal conveyance, and through twenty-five years of adverse possession. Beginning in 1871, the USFLEC undertook an aggressive campaign to remove the pobladores from their holdings. To accomplish this objective the company assembled representatives from the central villages. The village leadership could not read English and they were easily duped into signing a company prepared agreement that undermined communal rights of pobladores to the uplands and lowlands. Subsequently, the USFLEC attacked legitimate titles, forcing villagers into expensive legal proceedings.

Many Hispanos unaware of the promotion of the grant, co-existed with Gilpin. However, when he began to limit land holdings after his ownership, they became suspicious of his business dealings. Eventually legal proceedings began and many were intimidated into repurchasing their holdings, the court ordered others evicted, and a few sold their holdings and left.





In spite of the seeming prosperity in the late 1890's, the Freehold Company realized that the mining and farming colonies would not become a reality. After thirty years of recruitment, only one agricultural colony had purchased a block of land. Plagued by a series of financial and legal problems, the U.S. Freehold Land & Immigration Company defaulted on property taxes and finally went into bankruptcy.

In 1902, the Costilla Estate Development Company was formed to sell 70,000 acres of the southern end of the grant for agricultural development (Griswold 1980,3). The new company would accomplish this goal, in part by establishing another shorter track to link the Costilla and Trinchera Estates into the D & RG rail network. The construction of the San Luis Southern Railway, south from the mainline of the D & RG in 1910, 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.

Land south of Los Fuertes was purchased 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. The architectural styles were a stark contrast to the vernacular designs of the Rio Culebra Villages. As new towns grew and water resources were diverted from the villages via the Sanchez Reservoir, the local Hispano economy became dominated by Midwesterners.

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. With 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

This fragile equilibrium changed after a North Carolina timber speculator in 1960's purchased the 77,000-acre portion of the land grant, for \$7 an acre. The new owner fenced his property boundaries and erected gates at all entrances to La Sierra. Once the land was enclosed, the owner went to court to barricade county-maintained roads. The remaining task was to clear the disputed title to the land as inexpensively as possible. This was because it was "subject to the claims of local people" to pasture livestock, gather wood and lumber. To avoid the issue of historic settlement rights, the new owner hired a team of attorneys to attack Beaubien's compact with the ancestors of residents. The land was secured only after removing the proceedings to Denver and through the application of an obscure process called the Torrence Title Action. Many community members believed the village's constitutional rights to due process had been violated. Once the judge issued the legal declaration denying community access, grazing, wood gathering, and other activities were severely curtailed and the frail economy was dismantled.

Organized resistance continued throughout the 1960s, culminating in the incorporation of the Land Rights Council (LRC) in 1979. The Land Rights Council's legal team, operating on a pro bono (without charge) basis for nearly 25 years, continued to appeal for a new trial. In 1993, the case was argued before the Colorado Supreme Court. A year later the court ordered a new trial. Thirty-three years after the hearing to quiet the title to La Sierra, the community had its day in court. After the lower court ruled against the community, LRC's legal team looked to the Court of Appeals for relief. Again, the court upheld the ruling of the lower court. At the end of 2000, the Colorado Supreme Court allowed LRC's legal team to argue against the Court of Appeals decision. Ten months later oral arguments were heard, and in the summer of 2002 the justices made a courageous decision by acknowledging due process violations and awarding grazing, wood harvesting and timbering use rights to La Sierra.



In their groundbreaking decision, the Colorado Supreme Court's "easement-like" judgment will allow a certified class of individuals to undertake traditional rights to gather wood, timber and graze at domestic levels. Acting in accordance with the Colorado Supreme Court ruling acknowledging historic communal rights, LRC is key to implementing the Supreme Court decision by assisting the community in developing a comprehensive "use rights management plan." This plan will enable multi-generation residents living in the Rio Culebra Basin to continue their agricultural traditions and subsistence on La Sierra in an ecologically sustainable manner.





## Colorado Water Law— First in right, First in time

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors

### Learner Outcomes:

- Understand geographic variables influence interactions of people, places, and environments and the interconnected nature of the world, its people and places
- Understand the role Mexican Land Grants played in the settlement of these early Hispano

Materials:

Preparation:

### *Introduction:*

The state of Colorado is a headwater state, which means that many rivers in the western and midwestern United States originate in Colorado. These include the North and South Platte Rivers which flow across Nebraska and into the Missouri river. The Arkansas River which flows out of Colorado and is a major tributary to the Mississippi river. The Rio Grande River that begins in southern Colorado and provides water for New Mexico, Texas and the country of Mexico. Finally, the Colorado River that provides water to Arizona, Nevada and California.

Prior to the creation of the Territory of Colorado in 1861, few laws existed that pertained specifically to the issue of water rights in the area. These early Colorado settlers understood that the land was useless without water and so before Colorado became a state, citizens went to the territorial governor and placed a claim on their right to use water.

In 1876, Colorado became the first state to officially adopt the prior appropriation doctrine in its Constitution. The doctrine is often described as “first in time, first in right.” This means that who ever files on a water right first— gets to use the water before those who file after him. This means that the first person to file is senior. Seniority is valuable, and it makes sure that the water needs of a senior water right holder are always met before those of a user that filed after him.

The doctrine of prior appropriation provides that the water of every natural stream is public property owned by the state and its citizens. Therefore, Colorado officials must insure that the water is put to beneficial use and not wasted. Since water is so important most rivers, streams and creeks have all of their available water already allocated and so there is no more water that can be used.

### *Activity:*

### *Conclusion:*



## 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.

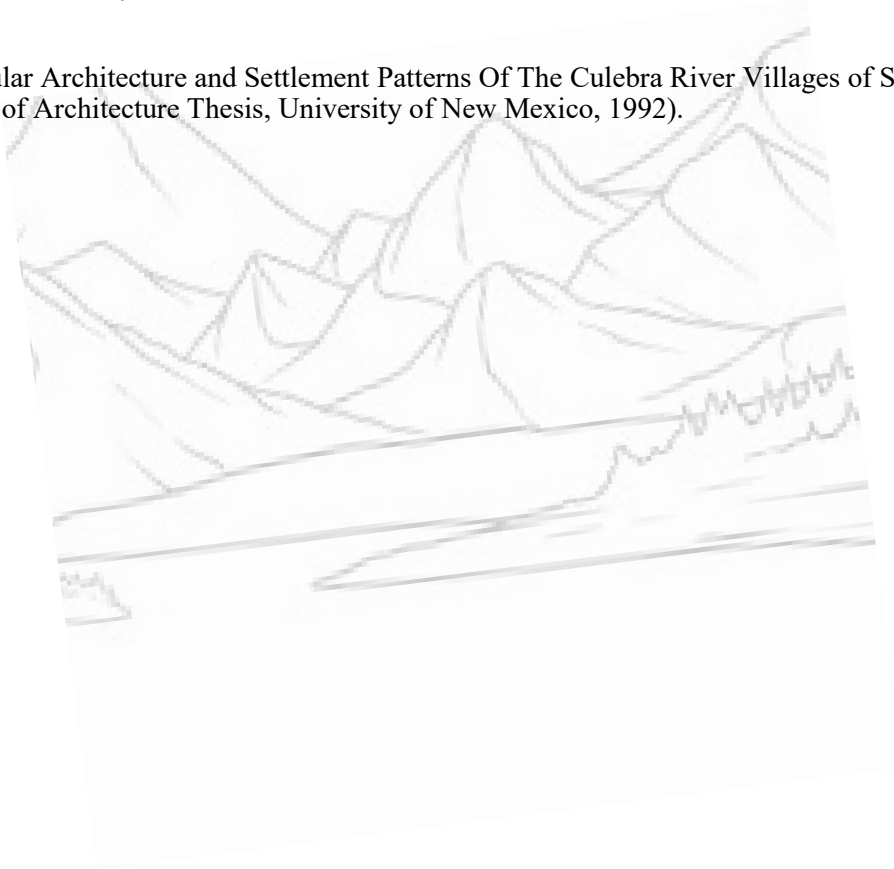
n.d. "The History of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant and the Claims of the People of the Culebra River Villages on their Lands" in Exhibit A. (Unpublished: Review by permission of author only)

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).







# Field Introduction

## Settling the Sangre de Cristo 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.

### 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. 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*, where you will see how they operated then and now.
- *A visit to La Sierra*, where then, 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*, where 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 in the lower lands to have access to grazing for their livestock.
- *The Village of San Acacio* with its 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.
- Meet with the *Comision of the San Acacio Acequia* to understand the key role they play in ensuring that there is equity in the distribution of acequia water to parciantes.
- *Visit a local farm* that grows heritage crops and 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.

To schedule a visit contact The Costilla County Economic Development Council at 719-672-4338.