

2024

WATER EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

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Environmental justice and water quality

- New Mexico is facing serious threats to our water
- Communities the least resourced to deal with these threats overwhelmingly bear the burden of their impacts
- Compromised waterways have serious consequences for communities that can take years to recover from
- In New Mexico, water is tied not only to industry but to culture and tradition. Communities cannot just move on if the water they depend on is degraded. These communities are tied to their land and water in culturally and economically significant ways
- Our state's unique multicultural makeup leaves us well positioned to serve as an example to the rest of the region when it comes to water equity and environmental justice. Our next steps as a state are critical if we wish to uplift communities

EPA definition of Environmental Justice

Environmental justice means the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment so that people:

- are fully protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects (including risks) and hazards, including those related to climate change, the cumulative impacts of environmental and other burdens, and the legacy of racism or other structural or systemic barriers; and
- have equitable access to a healthy, sustainable, and resilient environment in which to live, play, work, learn, grow, worship, and engage in cultural and subsistence practices.

Equality

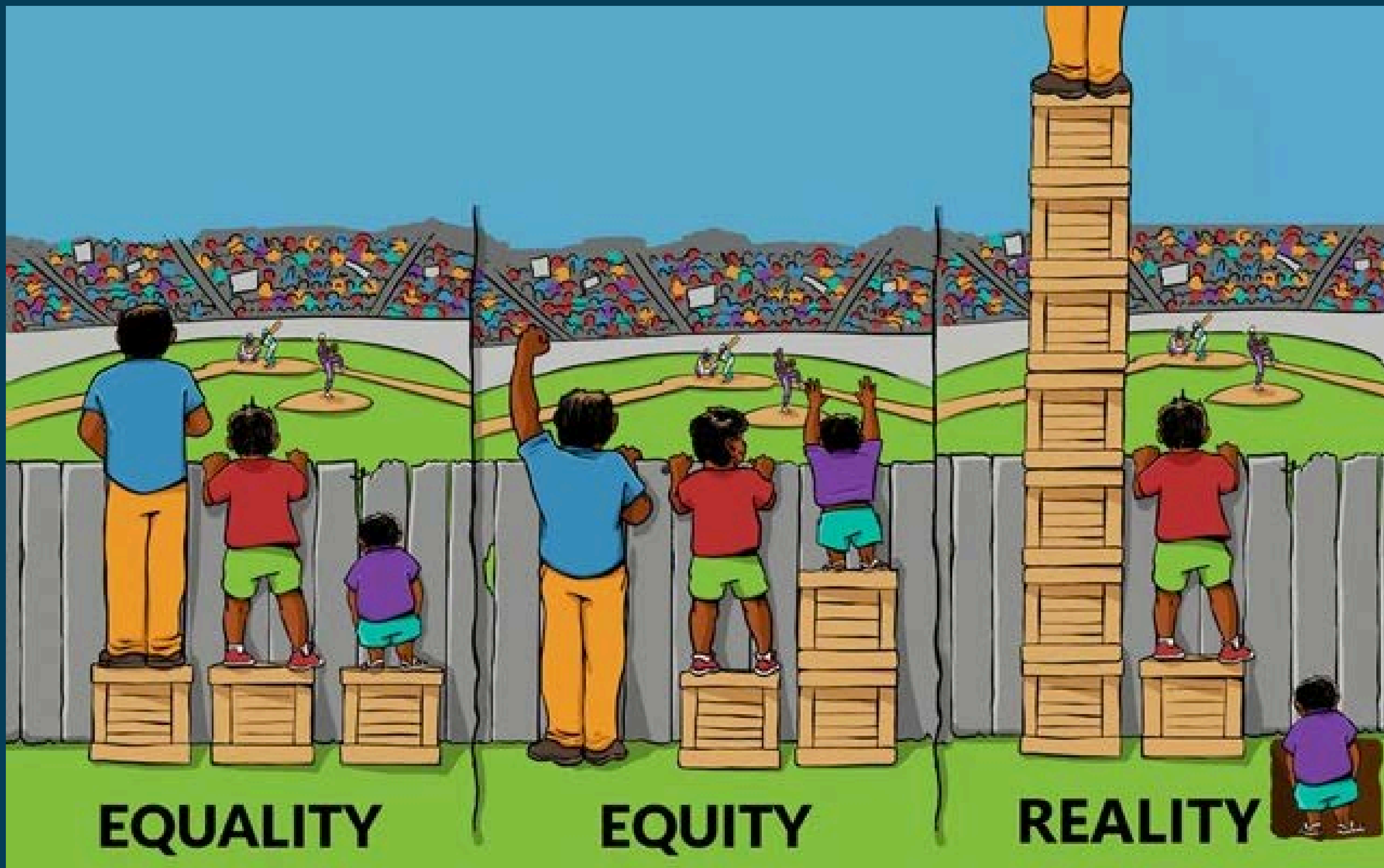
- Everyone is given the **same resources**
- Ability to succeed is directly tied to **disadvantages people and communities started with**
- Outcomes are **different for everyone**

Equity

- Everyone is given the **resources needed**
- Those who start at a disadvantage see increased **ability to succeed**
- Outcomes are **more equal for everyone**

Justice

Work towards removing systems that limit access to resources, tools, and opportunities for specific groups and create unequal outcomes in the first place




HISTORICALLY ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE AROUND WATER QUALITY HAS LOOKED LIKE

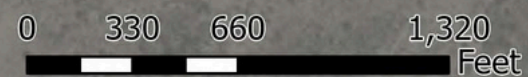
- **Unequal enforcement of existing regulations**
- **Lack of investment in water infrastructure that increases risks of flooding and pollution as well as degradation to natural systems that protect quality and provide flood control**
- **Cumulative impacts of other environmental issues that affect communities**
- **Low income and communities of color bearing disproportionate burdens around water hazards**
- **Increased occurrences of sources of pollution in low income and communities of color**
- **Community voices and water needs excluded from policy development and implementation**

Canon De Carñue Land Grant Ditch System Map

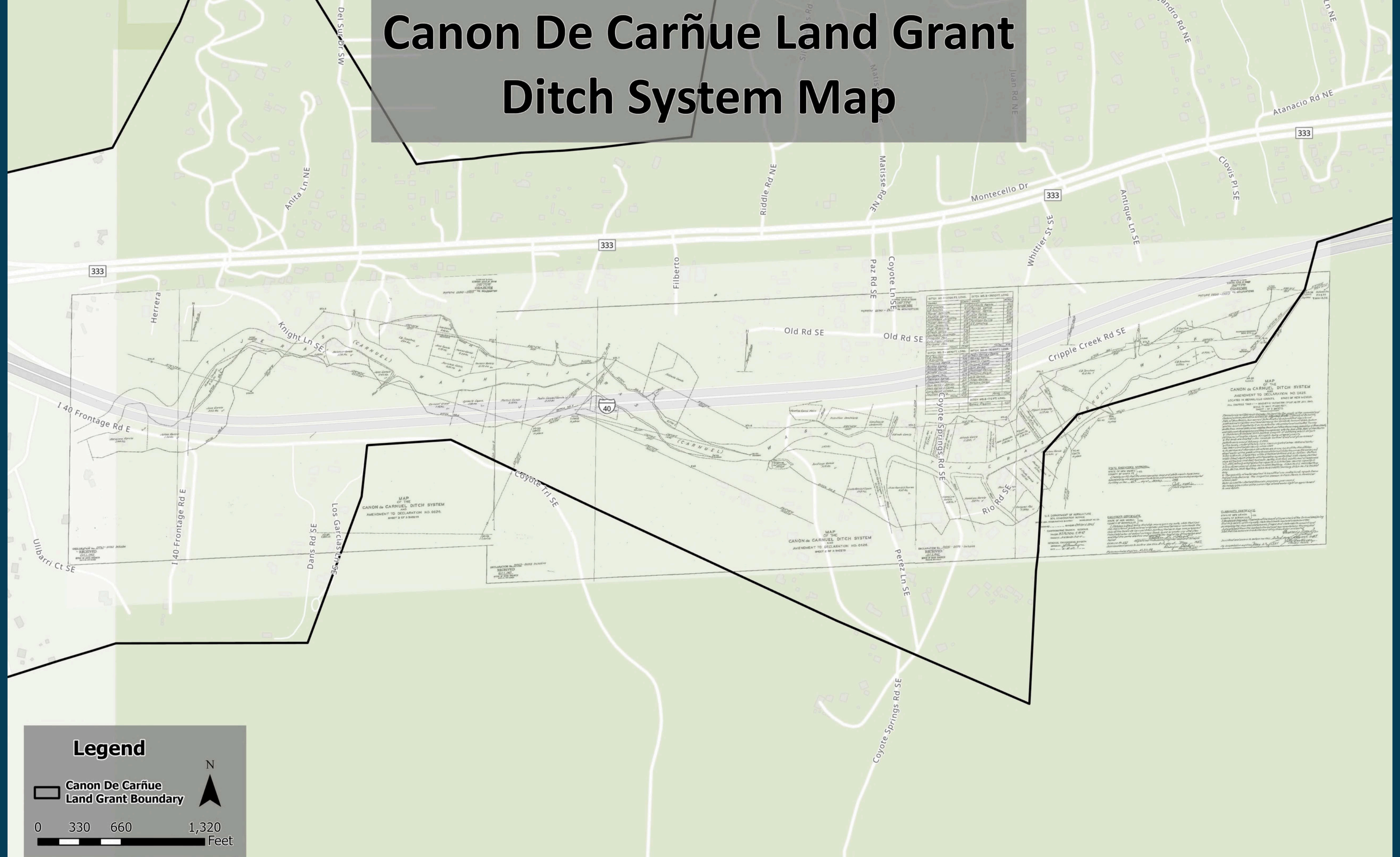


Legend

 Canon De Carñue
Land Grant Boundary



Canon De Carñue Land Grant Ditch System Map



Legend

 Canon De Carñue
Land Grant Boundary

0 330 660 1,320 Feet

Acequia perspectives



- **Early and often meaningful engagement in project development and implementation**
- **Meet the community on their playing field**
 - **Understand that disadvantaged communities need greater/different engagement styles**
- **Build relationships**
- **Recognize and understand the complexity of the community**
- **Recognize the community's needs**
- **Compassion and inclusion**



Tribal perspectives

- **Pueblo Tribal Council involvement**
- **Government to Government protocols and standards**
- **Constant verbal litigations and communication to all Tribes of changing guidelines or rules**
- **Pueblo water technical staff active involvement**
- **Voice to be heard from a Pueblo standpoint**

The background of the slide is a collage of four nature-related images. The top-left image shows three people wading through a shallow river with green foliage on the banks. The top-right image is a close-up of a steep, rocky canyon wall. The bottom-left image shows a wide, sandy riverbed under a cloudy sky. The bottom-right image shows a wide river bend with a forested bank.

Why does process matter?

Historically, voices from low income and communities of color have been excluded from environmental decision making processes that directly impact their communities, often disproportionately more than other communities. The only way to ensure that these voices are heard is to integrate a process that enables community participation

Sovereign to Sovereign Engagement

The collaboration and consultation between the State of New Mexico and Sovereign Nations across the state is inherently different and must be a separate process from engagement with other communities and constituencies



Community engagement

Meaningful engagement ensures timely opportunities to participate in decision-making, fully considers input received, and addresses barriers to participation for marginalized communities who may bear the largest burden of those decisions



Additions to state program to increase equitable engagement

- **All permits, including NOIs for coverage under general permits, be mapped by the state with information accessible to the public**
- **Higher mitigation ratios in environmental justice communities (discussion needs to be had on how to define these communities)**
- **Proposed new or increased discharges into these communities receive more rigorous antidegradation review**



[Additional tools](#)



Thank you!