

Finding new ways to keep the land alive

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El agua es vida. Water is life. This concept is universal, but it is particularly applicable in the dry, arid climate of northern New Mexico.

When people think about water in this area, acequias might immediately come to mind. They are an important part of New Mexico history and have been providing water to crops dating back to Native peoples in the 1400s. Year in and year out, the complex irrigation systems literally brought life to people in northern New Mexico.

Changes in snow, rain, and drought across the region will affect cities, operations and resources that rely on a consistent water source. Communities need to understand these changes and their impact so planners can prepare for times with less water. To help, a team of researchers at Los Alamos National Laboratory is using computers to model how the land is impacted by changes in temperature and precipitation, taking into account elevation, soil data, geology, vegetation and other factors. Their research shows how much rain or snowmelt is absorbed, how much becomes runoff and how that affects surface-water levels.

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