

March 16, 2020

Public Notice

Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District Pandemic Response

During the 2020 Irrigation Season

General Information on COVID-19 Response

The District is implementing its Business Continuity Plan in response to the Coronavirus outbreak and the Governor's call to minimize the exposure risk as much as possible for our employees and constituents. The full plan can be viewed on the website at mrgcd.com as well as other instructions for conducting business with us during these trying times. We will be conducting normal operations at a base level to perform four main functions in continuing the District's mission.

- 1) Deliver water – The ISOs will be scheduling water by text, calls and emails and will be following social distancing requirements on the ditch bank. Please consult the website at mrgcd.com and click the [ISO Contact Information](#) menu to find the ISO serving your area.
- 2) Conducting Base Business – Irrigators still needing to pay assessments and water bank fees are requested to **not come into the office** but to conduct business by phone, email and/or mail using credit cards, checks or money orders for at least the next 30 days. Those not able to pay or complete their Water Bank contract will still be allowed to receive water unless in arrears for more than the current year. Please call [505-247-0234](tel:505-247-0234) to make a specific appointment or to request additional information. The District will continue to process payments, payroll and meet contractual requirements for the duration of the crisis.
- 3) Emergency Response – The District will have crews working and available to perform necessary actions to keep the system running smoothly including weed management, turn-out repairs, dredging and emergency response. Non-essential items will be postponed.
- 4) Reducing Exposure – Starting March 17, there will be reduced public interaction in the Albuquerque office and all in-person public/agency meetings are cancelled but may be held telephonically. Official District Board meetings, the first being April 13th, will be noticed as telephonic meetings with call-in and listening capabilities for the public in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. The Division offices will be closed to the public for the next 30 days but can be contacted by phone or email.

Note: Purchasing of Bosque Access keys will be postponed until further notice and the locks will not be changed until we notify all users as to when locks are replaced.

2020 Irrigation Season

The irrigation season is starting off well as all major canals have been filled and flushed beginning on March 2nd. Secondary ditches are being flushed and the full system will be completed before April 1 and most areas can deliver water sooner. The Rio Grande is flowing normally for this time of year and it appears that we have somewhat normal March weather and moisture thus far. The snowpack is ranging from 80% to 100% of normal depending upon the watershed. A good March storm is heading into the northern mountains this week that will add to the snowpack. Water managers expect snowmelt runoff to be near normal April to July.

Reservoir Supply

Last year's runoff was the highest since 1997 and required that New Mexico deliver nearly 1 million acre-feet to Elephant Butte under the rules of the Rio Grande Compact. Even though the District managed the system to help make those deliveries by releasing all storage held in El Vado, a debit of 35,000 acre-feet accrued against the delivery requirement. The District is required to store and reserve the first 35,000 acre-feet flowing into El Vado Reservoir this spring under Article VI of the Compact for users below Elephant Butte. Approximately 70,000 acre-feet of additional space is available for storage of inflow into El Vado and the March 1 forecast will allow for the District to fill that space. However, various factors such as loss of snowpack from high winds, an extended or slow warm up, and dry conditions may reduce the forecasted volume. The District currently has 15,000 acre-feet of San Juan-Chama water in storage and expects to receive a full allocation of 20,900 acre-feet in 2020 so under worst case scenarios the District will have some storage to work with in the hopes of reliable water availability through the majority of the season.

Water Bank users will likely face some level of curtailment perhaps as early as late June under the Rule 23 policy and supply conditions. Long-term forecasts are showing a warmer and dryer spring and early summer with a 50-50 chance for summer monsoon moisture that may help in managing available storage but may also complicate general operations if storms create localized flooding.

To assist in stretching water supplies for as long as possible please **schedule for all irrigation deliveries** as taking water out-of-turn impacts other users, wastes water, and may result in the forfeiture of additional water deliveries.

For further information please contact us at: 505-247-0234; or consult the website at mrgcd.com for other departments and phone numbers