

MRGCD's stored water is now gone, irrigation delivery dependent on natural flow of the Rio Grande

To our Irrigators:

The last of the general District water storage supply was released from El Vado and Abiquiu reservoirs late last week (Aug 30/31). This resulted in changes to the outflow from Cochiti Dam Aug 31 and Sept 4. The District is now operating solely on the natural flow of the Rio Grande, and the available water supply for irrigation deliveries will be highly variable, depending on rains.

Initially, non-Indian irrigation in the northern part of the District will be suspended, as we transition to Prior and Paramount (P&P) operations for Pueblo water users. Certain lands of the Pueblos totaling around 8850 acres are designated by a 1928 Act of Congress as having rights "prior and paramount" to all other lands of the District. A small storage reserve was designated earlier in the year for P&P operations and will be released as needed. The District is obligated to serve P&P lands preferentially from the available supply. Water remaining after Pueblo P&P irrigation needs have been met will become available for use by other irrigators, including Pueblo lands without the P&P right (referred to as "newly reclaimed" lands). During "P&P Operations", the MRGCD works closely with the Pueblos and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to determine Indian irrigation needs, and how much, or how little water is available for other irrigators.

The Bureau of Reclamation and the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority will release water from storage to support river flows, endangered species, and water for ABCWUA customers. The District will work closely with these entities to maximize water available to our users, while insuring that water released by others for specific purposes is not diverted into District canals.

We are asking irrigators to continue to schedule and keep in touch with their respective ISOs. The District expects that there will be some water in our system for irrigation deliveries. However the amount will be variable, unpredictable at times, and we may not be able to guarantee delivery when requested. We will do our best to provide needed irrigation water through the remainder of the 2018 irrigation season.

In this very challenging year of record-low snowpack and extremely low river flow, the District feels fortunate to have reached September without major water shortages. Thanks to our ISO's, who have worked exceptionally hard this year to make the most of the available supply. Thanks to our irrigators for their cooperation and assistance. And thanks to the Pueblos for their flexibility with the P&P reserve, helping to support regular irrigation as long as possible for the benefit of all irrigators.