



News Release



The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District

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June 12, 2018

Dry Conditions in the Middle Rio Grande Valley Requires Irrigation Cutbacks and Additional Fire Restrictions within the Rio Grande Bosque

Irrigation Water Bank Curtailment

Albuquerque - The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (District) issued notice yesterday to area farmers that those using the water bank are now curtailed and the general public is being informed that additional restrictions are now in place to help prevent wildland fires in the Rio Grande Bosque.

Extremely dry conditions continue to be present throughout New Mexico. Although there have been a few recent rains, over 88% of the state remains in severe to exceptional drought. The six to eight weeks beginning around mid-May, and going through early July are often the hottest and driest months in the middle Rio Grande valley, and also a critical time for growing crops. So far this year, June is following that pattern with high temperatures and little rain.

David Gensler, the District's Chief Hydrologist, says that the District has been releasing water from storage from El Vado Reservoir near Chama, NM since April but we were fortunate to have stored enough last year where we still have a substantial quantity of water in storage but levels are falling rapidly.

Reservoir storage dropped below the level required to maintain delivery to all users, mandating increased conservation measures. As of June 11, the District is curtailing delivery to Water Bank contract users, to preserve supply to meet senior water rights, including certain lands of the Pueblos with "Prior and Paramount" water rights. Water Bank contract users may not irrigate until such time as natural flows or stored water exceeds values per Revised Rule 23 "Water Bank Rules" that is published on the District's website at mrgcd.com. Farmers will be notified by their Irrigation System Operator when water becomes available.

Bosque lands Fire Restrictions

Due to the continuing drought and extreme fire danger, the District is prohibiting all use of motor vehicles for Bosque recreational access and within the river bed. Fire restrictions

already in place in concert with all four Counties and New Mexico State Forestry lands in the valley require that there be no smoking, fireworks, cooking fires, barbeque grills, or any other use of fire within Bosque lands. At present, the Bosque will remain open for pedestrian, equestrian, and bicycle access.

These restrictions will remain in place until further notice.

About the MRGCD: The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District has been promoting sustainable agriculture for the past 85 years. The District delivers water to about 70,000 acres of cropland in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. That water is reused time and time again to irrigate crops, sustains the cottonwood bosque along the Rio Grande, helps create and maintain habitat for the endangered Rio Grande silvery minnow and recharges the aquifer. The District owns 30,000 acres of bosque in the valley, the largest continuous cottonwood forest in the world, and a stretch of land that provides unprecedented recreational opportunities and an irreplaceable swath of greenbelt in New Mexico's largest metropolitan area. The District was formed in 1925 to alleviate flooding and to reclaim farmland in the valley. Its boundaries stretch 150 miles from Cochiti on the north to the boundary of the Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge on the south, running through Sandoval, Bernalillo, Valencia and Socorro Counties. It operates more than 1,200 miles of canals, laterals and drains, which are used to convey water to and from cropland. The District is funded by water service charges and property assessments on the benefited lands within its boundaries.

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