

### **Regular 2020 Irrigation Season ends early**

The MRGCD Board of Directors voted to end water delivery this year on Oct 5. This decision was made both because of the lack of water and Rio Grande Compact obligations.

The 2020 season produced some of the worst water supply conditions on record. Although the winter started out reasonably well, conditions deteriorated in late spring, ultimately resulting in about 36% of normal runoff. Due to the poor runoff, and debit status under the Rio Grande Compact, the District was able to store only a very limited amount of water in El Vado reservoir. Making matters worse, the San Juan-Chama Project also failed to reach a full allocation. The runoff ended by mid-May, causing the District to have to rely on stored water much earlier in the season than normal. Delivery to Water bank users was officially curtailed May 19.

Unfortunately, the summer “monsoon” season also failed to produce any significant water. Although there were some local showers, especially towards the southern part of the District, rain added almost nothing to our water supply and the last of the Districts stored water was released on July 18.

At that time, the Rio Grande Compact Commission (New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado) approved a request by the District to use 36,000 acre-feet of water previously set aside in a special “debit account”. This water was intended to settle New Mexico’s remaining 2019 debt to Texas. But because of the dire water conditions, the States met and agreed to allow that water to be used for New Mexicans. This allowed the District to continue to deliver water from July 19 through Sept 7. From Sept 7 through Sept 23, the District operated on the small and declining natural flow, although this was insufficient for all users.

To assure adequate water for the 6 Rio Grande Pueblos, delivery to Corrales was ended Sept 20, and to the N valley of Albuquerque Sept 23. Delivery to South Valley users was ended Sept 25. After delivery to the Pueblos, the District made all remaining water available for water users in Valencia and Socorro counties on a rotating basis.

The small flows now in the river, canals, and drains are being carefully and intentionally routed downstream for the Rio Grande Compact. It is essential to pay back the water that the Rio Grande Compact Commission graciously allowed to be used by District irrigators this summer. Our ability to store and deliver water next year will depend on how efficiently we can deliver water to Elephant Butte this fall, winter and next spring.