

OVERVIEW OF 2022 IRRIGATION START-UP

In 2021, the MRGCD started charging the irrigation system on April 1st (a month later than usual) and it adhered to a reduced demand schedule during spring runoff. These measures were taken to maximize water deliveries to Elephant Butte given the year started with a New Mexico Rio Grande Compact (Compact) debt of 97,000 acre-feet to Texas. The 2021 non-pueblo irrigation season ended on October 1, due to limited water supply and a need to minimize the 2021 accrued debt under the Compact.

Despite the efforts of the MRGCD and cooperation of its irrigators, New Mexico's Compact debt increased to 127,000 acre-feet by the end of 2021. Given the current Compact status the MRGCD is limited in its ability to store water in El Vado Reservoir. The MRGCD has committed to implement a 2022 irrigation start-up strategy that is intended to provide Compact deliveries and irrigation deliveries for early season crop needs.

On January 10, 2022, the MRGCD Board of Directors approved an operational plan to divert no more than half of native inflows of the river as long as the river through the middle valley remains connected and Compact deliveries can continue to be made. Once river channel drying is imminent, the MRGCD will work with water management agencies to ensure drying is managed in a controlled fashion to facilitate fish rescue operations.

The MRGCD will stagger its diversions for charging starting in the Belen Division on March 7th, in the Socorro Division on March 14th, in the Albuquerque Division on the 21st of March, and in the Cochiti Division on the 28th of March.

Irrigation deliveries are not allowed while charging.

Contingent on water supply, deliveries to irrigators with early season crop needs will begin in Socorro on or about the 21st of March, in Belen on or about the 28th of March, and in the Albuquerque and Cochiti Divisions on or about the 4th of April. After early season irrigation deliveries have been made the MRGCD will then begin regular deliveries.

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2022 IRRIGATION SEASON OUTLOOK



Updated Outlook
January 18, 2022



SEASON OUTLOOK

The National Weather Service has identified La Nina weather patterns which typically means warmer and dryer conditions for the southwest. These conditions are expected to continue through the winter of 2021-2022 (90% chance) and into the spring of 2022 (50% chance during March-May). January is too early to predict spring runoff, as snowpack conditions can change quickly. Peak median snowpack is still about 69 days away. Snowpack conditions have improved recently, but continued accumulation is needed to benefit spring run-off.

For the 2022 irrigation season, the MRGCD will have little storage water available, and will have to depend on natural inflows for irrigation deliveries in 2022. Considering poor climate forecasts and a large outstanding Rio Grande Compact (Compact) debt, the MRGCD is warning all irrigators to expect significant changes to irrigation delivery. Water Bank users should not expect to receive water during the 2022 irrigation season. Urban users should expect a departure from "regular" irrigation and may unexpectedly see canals dry.

A top MRGCD priority is to deliver water to all users and manage available water that provides for productive agriculture while maintaining or improving quality yields even during drought. Irrigators should use caution when making farming plans this year and carefully consider their water needs, and that of others. If funding is approved by the State legislature, the MRGCD's Emergency Following Program (EFP) will provide financial compensation for irrigators who voluntarily forego irrigation this season. The intent of the program is to make water available for farmers whose livelihoods depend on it and to assist in reducing debt under the Compact. There is no danger of losing a water right for non-use when it is due to water shortage. Scan the QR code below for more information on the EF program and to access a pre-enrollment form.

SCAN THE CODE FOR INFORMATION ON EMERGENCY FOLLOWING

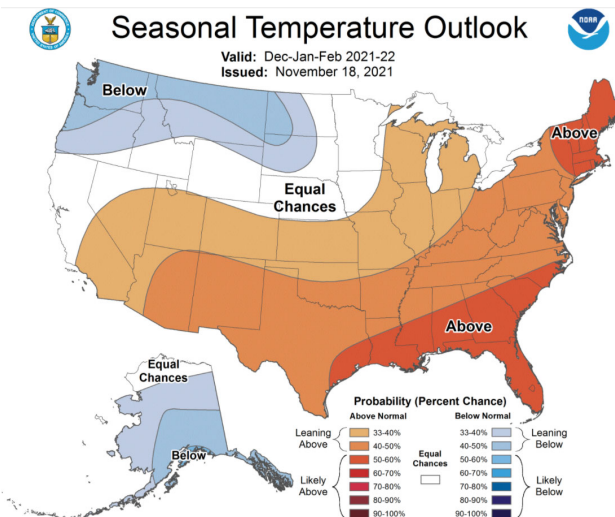


Figure 1. 90 Day Temperature Outlook (33-50% above average).

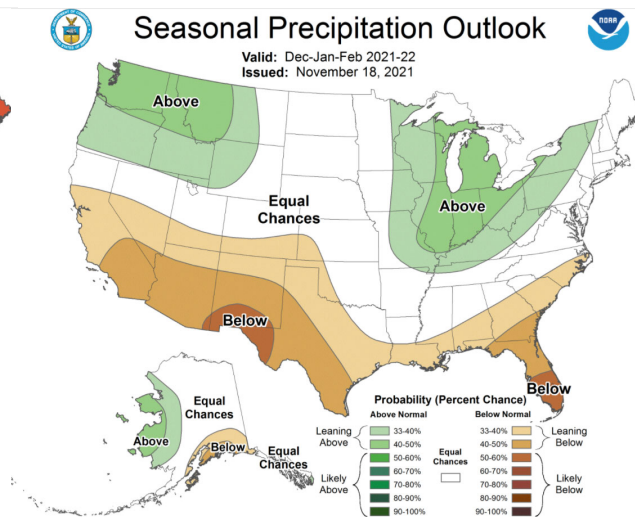


Figure 2. 90 Day Precipitation Outlook (33-50% below average)

Scan the QR code (right) to access the Three Month Outlook produced by the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center. This information can also be accessed at https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/seasonal.php?lead=1

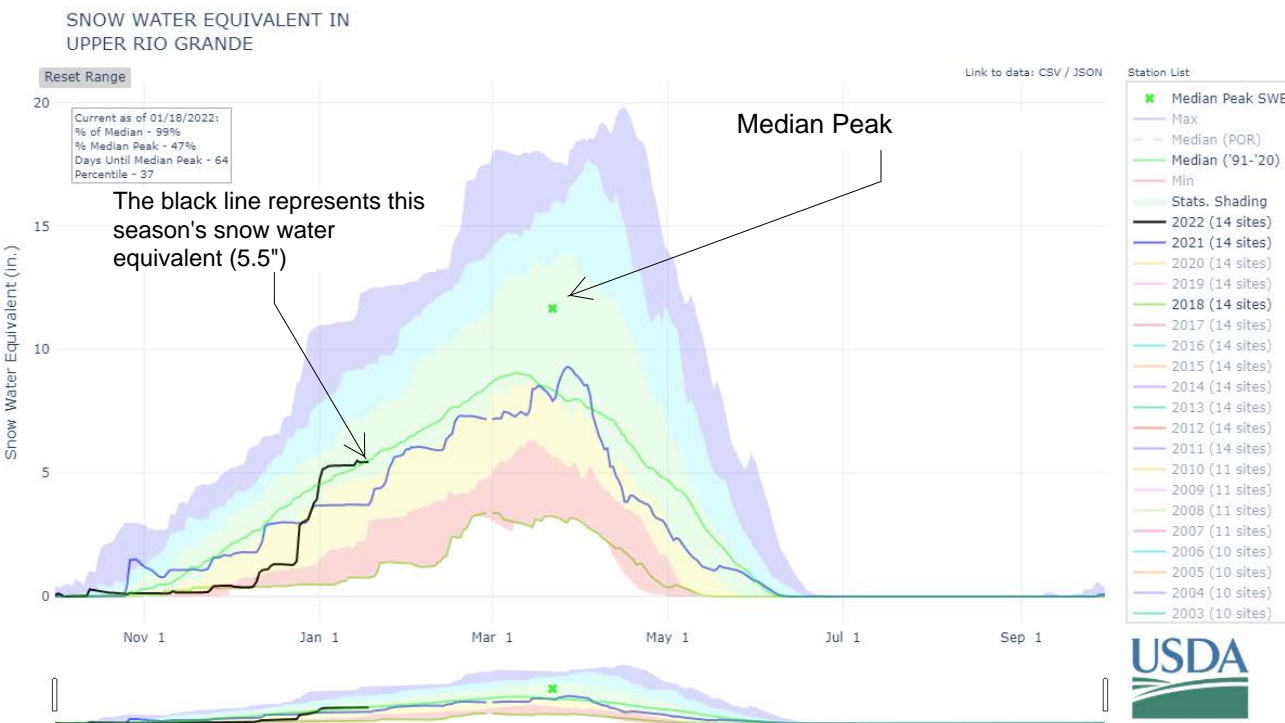


Figure 3. Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) is the amount of liquid water contained in snowpack. SWE is 99% of the median and 47% of median peak in the Upper Rio Grande Basin as of January 18, 2022. Scan the QR code to the right to access the NRCS Upper Rio Grande SNOTEL plot. This plot can be accessed at https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/WCIS/AWS_PLOTS/basinCharts/POR/WTEQ/assocHUC6/130201_Upper_Rio_Grande.html

