Water Distribution

For the better part of the last month river flows have provided adequate supply for irrigation deliveries. Regular adjustments are being made to ensure equitable distribution to each MRGCD division and within each division. During this period, some operational flexibility has been provided without creating inefficiencies for other irrigators. As available water supply decreases there will be less flexibility moving forward.

MRGCD policy is that available water is distributed in proportion with the amount of land served and that water is distributed considering local conditions, in proportion to and appropriate for acreage and crop. Last season a system was established to distribute by zone blocks within each division. Zone blocks are comprised of a grouping of ISO (Irrigation System Operator) zones with known acreage and a common point of diversion. An appropriate amount of water will be supplied to each zone block and a rotational cycle will be followed. Water is rotated through zone blocks to fully charge respective ditches instead of running a less than full supply in all ditches.

It is anticipated that June conditions will be like last year, but perhaps much worse. As flows decrease the duration between irrigation cycles will increase. Irrigators should be prepared for the duration between cycles to increase going forward and for canals to be rotated on and off. As much advanced notice will be provided when water rotates into a zone. When irrigators see the ditch turn back on in their area, they should contact the ISO to schedule, and get ready for their turn. Turnouts are to be opened fully and irrigation is to take place as quickly as possible, so that the next irrigator in line can start and so that cycles are moved through efficiently. Irrigation may be required at night and on any day of the week. Irrigators who are on main canals and drain fed ditches may not see their ditch turn off like other ditches; however, such irrigators must follow the same duration between irrigations as others.

CONTACT THE MRGCD

1931 2nd Street SW
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Tel: (505) 247-0234

Email: waterdistribution@mrgcd.us

Website: www.mrgcd.com

2022 IRRIGATION SEASON OUTLOOK

Updated Outlook
May 9th, 2022

MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Water Supply Conditions

Snowpack conditions in the Rio Grande Basin are significantly below median conditions. Warm and windy conditions have contributed to a May 1 Streamflow Forecast (from the Natural Resource Conservation Service) that projects streamflow volume into El Vado Reservoir to be 55% of median and for streamflow volume at the Otowi gage to be 32% of median between May and July.

90-day temperature and precipitation forecasts developed by the National Weather Service indicate that the Middle Rio Grande is likely to experience warmer and dryer than average conditions through July.

Little storage water will be available to non-Prior and Paramount lands within the MRGCD due to El Vado dam repairs and restrictions on storage. With little storage water available, irrigators can expect limited water deliveries after the spring runoff has receded, which could be as early as the end of May. For the first time since 1983, river channel drying in the Albuquerque reach is anticipated.

Prior and Paramount (P&P) water has been stored during the winter and spring of 2022 in El Vado Reservoir but is currently being moved to Abiquiu Reservoir due to dam repairs at El Vado which begin May 20th. If it is determined by the Bureau of Indian Affairs that the water supply is insufficient to meet P&P demand, then this water will be released to P&P lands for irrigation.

At the end of 2021, New Mexico's debt to Texas under the Rio Grande Compact (a water sharing agreement between New Mexico, Colorado, Texas and Mexico) was approximately 127,000 acre-feet. To maximize New Mexico's Rio Grande Compact deliveries , MRGCD developed and executed a staggered startup of the irrigation system in 2022 . MRGCD has also adhered to a diversion plan that capped diversions at no more than 50% of the available flows into the middle valley. MRGCD will continue to adhere to the 50% diversion plan until river channel drying is anticipated.

Despite the efforts of the MRGCD and the sacrifices made by its irrigators, New Mexico has under delivered approximately 30,000 acre-feet to Texas for the 2022 calendar year through April. The delivery shortfall highlights the need to improve infrastructure in the San Acacia reach of the Rio Grande. Progress is being made by the MRGCD and its partner agencies to develop projects to improve in conveyance efficiency.

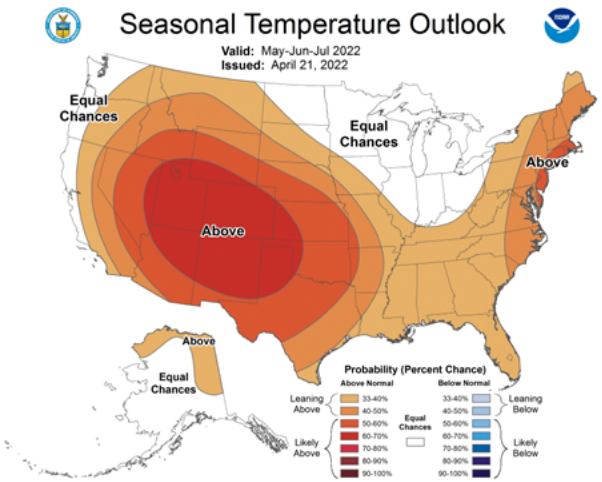

Figure 1. 90 Day Temperature Outlook (50-70% above average).

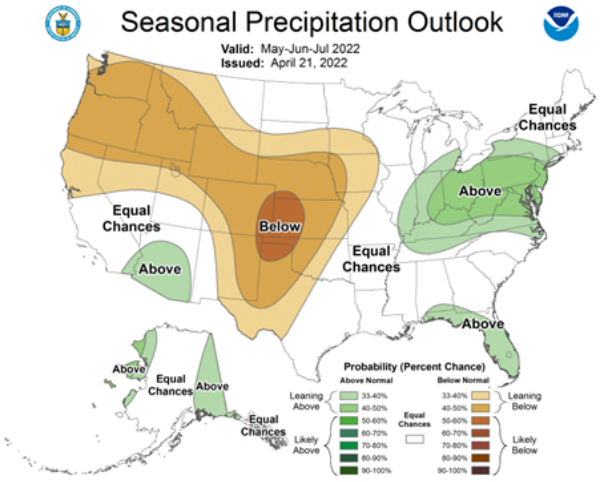

Figure 2. 90 Day Precipitation Outlook (33-50% below average)

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

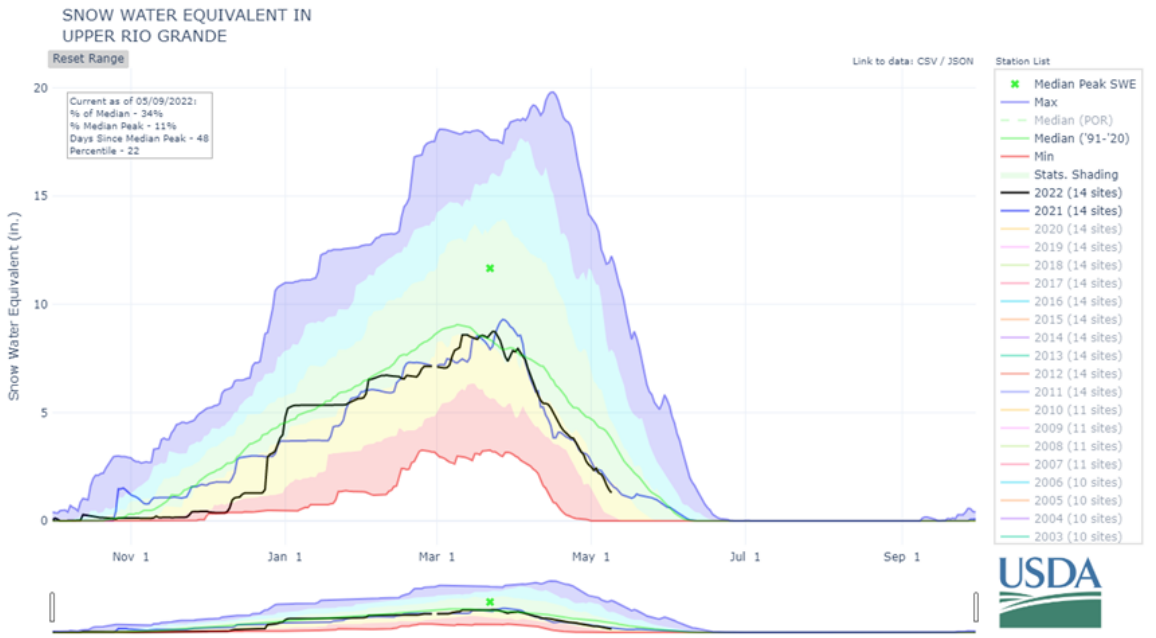

Figure 3. Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) is the amount of liquid water contained in snow pack. SWE is 34% of the median in the Upper Rio Grande Basin as of May 9th, 2022. Scan the QR code to the right to access the NRCS Upper Rio Grande SNOTEL plot. This plot can be accessed at https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/WCIS/AWS_PLOTS/basinCharts/POR/WTEQ/assocHUC6/130201_Upper_Rio_Grande.html