

Water Supply 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.

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 water conveyance efficiency.

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2022 IRRIGATION SEASON OUTLOOK

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Updated Outlook
May 18, 2022



Water Delivery

The Corrales Main Canal (Main Canal) delivers water to approximately 1000 acres in Irrigation Systems Operator (ISO) zones A03 and the west portion of A13. The Main Canal is supplied by a 5' diameter by 1200' long wood stave pipe, known as the Corrales Siphon, which conveys water from the east side of the Rio Grande to the west. In late 2021, a large sinkhole was discovered near the inlet of the siphon. An attempt was made to excavate and dewater the site to assess the extent of the damage and plan repairs. It was determined the siphon would not be operable for the 2022 irrigation season.

On February 28th, the MRGCD Board of Directors approved the 2022 Corrales Pumping Operation to include the temporary use of 2 diesel pumps (1 primary and 1 backup) to pump water directly from the Rio Grande into the Main Canal. The target flow rate of the operation is 20 cubic feet per second (cfs). The MRGCD has made a service request to PNM for the installation of three-phase power as a more efficient means of running the pumps (until a permanent solution is reached). The MRGCD has contracted an alternative analysis and design study and is seeking funding for a permanent solution.

Notice of the pumping operation was provided to impacted irrigators through Board reports, emails, text messages, and web statements. All MRGCD irrigators were given an opportunity to enroll in the Emergency Fallowing Program, a program which compensates irrigators to forgo irrigation for the season. A provision was made to allow lands less than an acre, supplied by the Corrales siphon, to enroll in the following program.

Safe operation of the pumps requires regular monitoring and routine maintenance. There are limitations to running the pumps continuously, but MRGCD staff has been working diligently to keep the pumps running as often as possible. A delivery schedule has been developed which includes consecutive days of 24-hour operation. The pumps will continue to operate as long as river water levels allow. It is anticipated water levels may drop below the minimum elevation for operation as early as the end of May, at which time the pumps can no longer operate.



Figure 1. Map depicting service areas of the Main Canal



Figure 2. Exploratory excavation at sinkhole

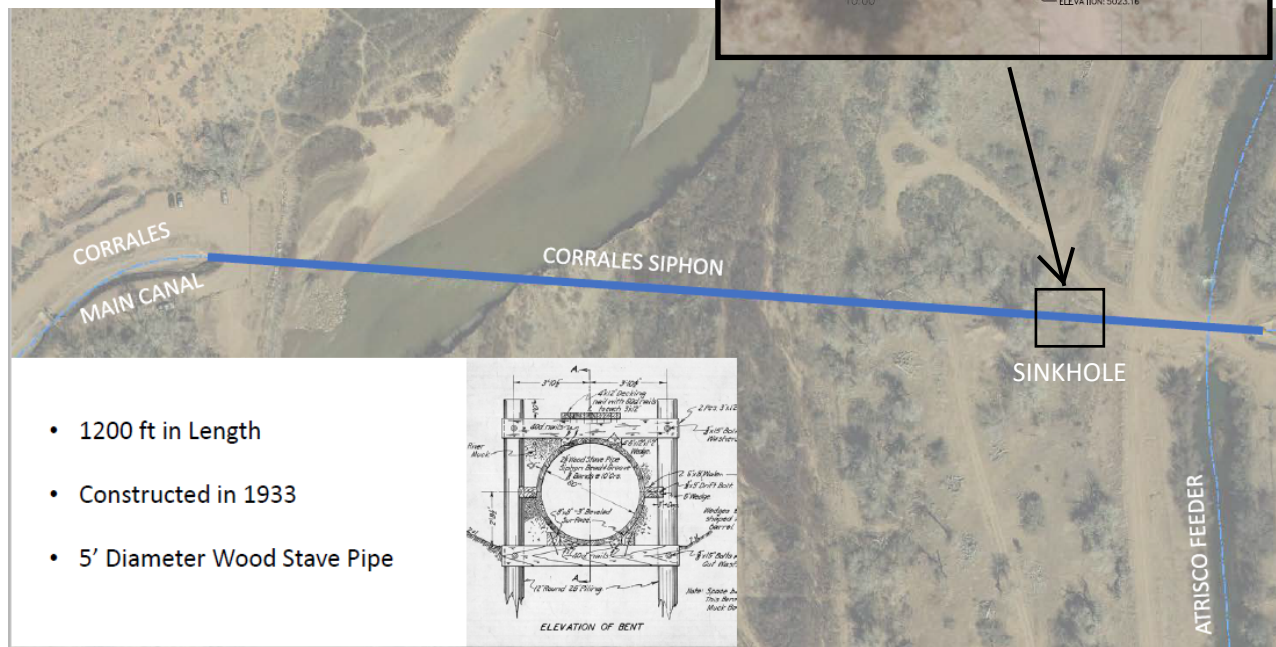


Figure 3. Image of Corrales Siphon area including close up detail of sinkhole location.