

**MINUTES OF THE  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT**

**MAY 31, 2022 - 3:00 PM**

Directors having been duly notified; Vice Chair Russo Baca called the special meeting to order as Madam Chair Dunning was exposed to Covid. The following Directors and Staff were present:

<b>DIRECTORS</b>		<b>STAFF</b>	
Karen Dunning, Madam Chair	Virtual	Jason Casuga	Chief Engineer/CEO
Stephanie Russo Baca, Vice Chair	Present	Lorna M. Wiggins	General Counsel
Barbara Baca, Director	Present	Eric Zamora	Chief Operating Officer
John Kelly, Director	Present	Anne Marken	Water Operations Division Mgr.
Joaquin Baca, Director	Present	Matt Martinez	Water Distribution Division Mgr.
Glen Duggins, Director	Present		
Michael T. Sandoval, Director	Present		

The following names of individuals were interested viewers, callers and/or participants

Erica DeSmet	Elaine Hebard
T. Scott Edeal	Mark Tafoya
Michael Foris	Josh Hind, MRGCD
Julia Maccini	Sloan Washburn, MRGCD
Anthony Wagner	Gabriella Coughlin, MRGCD
Dave DuBois	LeeAnn Corwin, MRGCD
Theresa Davis, Albuquerque Journal	Alicia Lopez, MRGCD
Hannah Grover	Francesca Shirley, MRGCD
Peter Rice, Downtown ABQ News	Doug Strech, MRGCD
Russell Trujillo	Julian Avalos, MRGCD
Laura Paskus	Jessica Lindsey, MRGCD
Blane Sanchez, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt. Governor of Isleta	Casey Ish, MRGCD
Rex Coriz	Marie VanDerGeest, MRGCD
Viola Sanchez	Yasmeen Najmi, MRGCD
Woodrow Crumbo	Rusty Swint, MRGCD
Josh Mann	

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Director Duggins led the Pledge of Allegiance at today's meeting.

Vice Chair Russo Baca declared a quorum, and the meeting was publicly noticed. This meeting was a hybrid meeting with Director Dunning attended virtually.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 2 – APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

No changes were made.

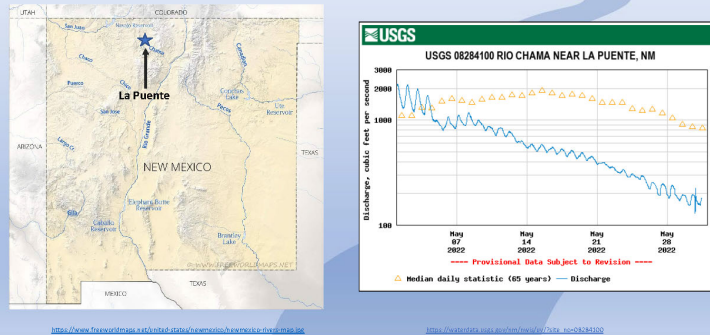
Director John Kelly made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA**. Director Barbara Baca seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 – REPORT ON WATER SUPPLY CONDITIONS**

Jason Casuga announced that the purpose of the meeting was regarding the news on water supply conditions which was not good news stating the conditions from the May 9<sup>th</sup> meeting have drastically changed and will change even more so by the June 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. He felt it important to update the Board as these conditions were taking place rather than after the fact.

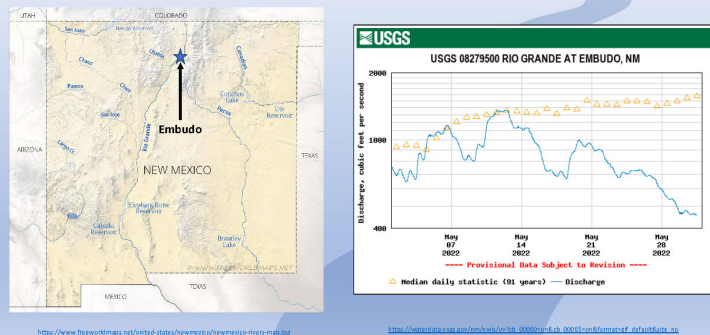
Anne Marken presented to the Board the following regarding the low flows for the year.

USGS La Puente Gage on the Chama

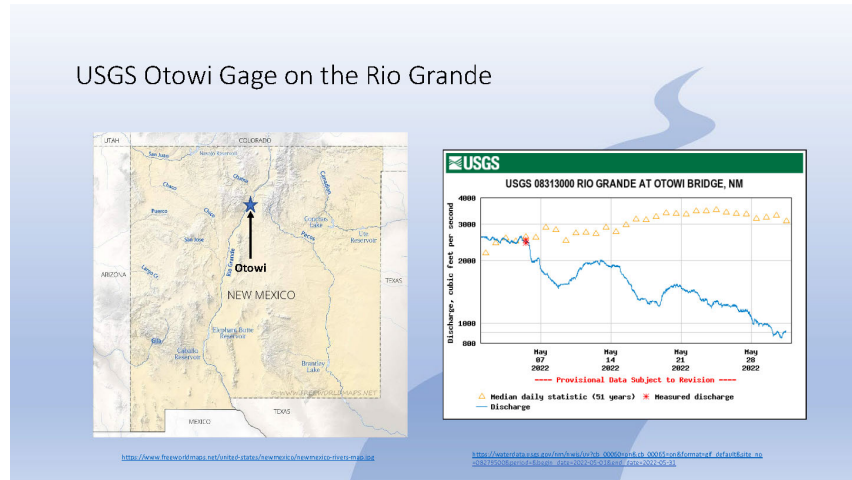


She reported that the La Puente Gage indicated native water entering the Chama river system at 175 cfs. Stating that it was down from 300 cfs from last week and continues on a downward trend. Slide two shows we are well below the median.

USGS Embudo Gage on the Rio Grande



Ms. Marken continued to report on the above hydrograph on the Embudo Gage on the Rio Grande. Its above the confluence with the Rio Chama and its on the main stem which is an indicator of the amount of native water the main stem is supplying to the Middle Rio Grande. She reported to date is at 450 cfs and has dropped over 450 cfs over the past week.



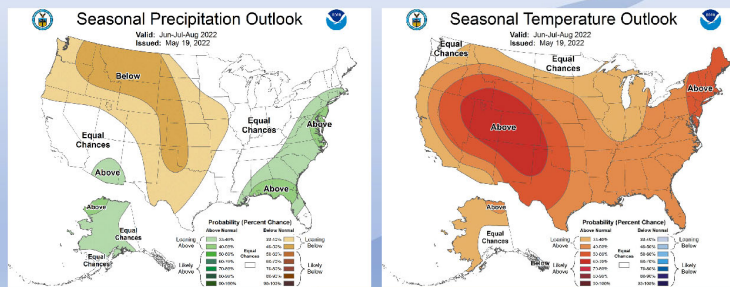
She then reported on the Otowi Gage on the Rio Grande which is below the confluence with the Chama and it gages all the water from the main stem and the Chama above the Cochiti Reservoir. She stated that this gage includes ABCWUA (Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority) San Juan-Chama release and the Bureau of Reclamation's minnow release, which is not just native inflow. The gage has dropped over 500 cfs over the past week.

She stated there's a pattern emerging amongst these gages that supplies are trending down quickly. The total native water entering the valley was reported to be 500 cfs, which was less than when irrigation season began in March. She felt that number will continue to drop into June and temperatures continue to increase.

She said the only storage water available to the MRGCD this year is the 2022 San Juan-Chama allocation due to Rio Grande Compact restrictions on native storage and the rehab project on El Vado dam. She reported there are 3600AF of San Juan-Chama in storage for MRGCD today and on June 15<sup>th</sup>, the District will receive its June allocation which is projected to be 5000AF. She inquired with the Bureau of Reclamation on receiving this allocation earlier than the 15<sup>th</sup> and have received that it may be possible which will help prevent any interruptions in the releases from storage once begun. She believed releases may begin as early as the end of this week and said the 8600AF total between our current allocations and our predicted June allocation that is available is a relatively small amount of water which will not last long.

She then stated middle valley inflows are low enough that river channel drying in the San Acacia Reach will begin in the coming days. MRGCD is currently utilizing water release by the Bureau of Reclamation to manage the rate of the natural river recession below San Acacia intended to facilitate minnow rescue operations. Ms. Marken said a similar recession will be conducted below the Isleta dam once the San Acacia reach operation is completed. At the end of the river recessions, the bypasses at San Acacia and Isleta dams will be minnow water released by the Bureau of Reclamation. She stated there is potential drying in the Albuquerque Reach later this summer if summer rains do not materialize. As supplies tend to decrease and the MRGCD runs out of San Juan-Chama water MRGCD will continue to bypass the Bureau of Reclamation release water below its diversion dams and distribute the limited natural supply as it is available. She felt irrigators should expect limited irrigation deliveries by mid-June, probably sooner unless significant summer rains occur.

## National Weather Service 3-Month Outlook



[https://www.coc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long\\_rnaps/seasonal.php?lead=1](https://www.coc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_rnaps/seasonal.php?lead=1)

Next the National Weather Service 3-month outlook was presented which projected above average hotter temperatures. Precipitation chances have slightly improved with some of the basin having equal chances for above or below average precipitation which leaned below average precipitation. She felt that it wasn't great but it's better than past graphs indicated.

There are currently 20,000AF of prior and paramount waters in storage at Abiquiu and releases from prior and paramount water will be made if Bureau of Indian Affairs determines the available need of inflows to the middle valley are less than what is needed to meet the demands of the prior and paramount lands.

Ms. Marken's summation is that supplies are trending down quickly and MRGCD has few tools at its disposal to continue to meet demands. Farmers should prepare for a difficult and dry summer and as always "pray for rain".

Jason Casuga added that the San Juan-Chama water expectation is that farmers have hay down to being picked up and demand will go up. The plan is to offset the reduction of native water of San Juan-Chama releases. As the native water continues going down, the draw on our San Juan-Chama water will go up. The rate of consumption of San Juan-Chama water will increase as the river goes down. The goal is to consolidate May allocations with early June to allow a continuous supplementing process happen without a break. If we do see a break, efficiencies drop or drying in sections, it may be hard to reroute the water at that time.

Director Duggins is still optimistic that it will rain and felt cooperation amongst the neighboring farmers is needed.

### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 – WATER DELIVERY UPDATE**

Matt Martinez felt it's been a challenging year but nothing for what's to come. He stated the District has worked through water shortages in March and early April along with major staff shortages. He recognized the Albuquerque north valley team who pulled together to make the Corrales Main Canal pumping operation successful as possible. He reported all divisions have faced brutal winds and weeds; ISOs (Irrigation System Operators) have worked long hours to rid the facilities of weeds interrupting water deliveries. He stated they have been preparing for much worse conditions with the river flows decreasing impacting diversions and beginning to impact water deliveries. He stated timing is not good as the last few weeks with adequate water, the demand was low as farmers cutting and baling their crops. Demand increases as bales come off the fields, but unfortunately as the demand increases the water supply decreases. Available water will continue to be distributed in proportion with acreage served. As the available water supply continues to decrease, the number of ditches run will be limited. Ditches

will be operated on a rotational basis in order to fully charge a ditch providing for more efficient irrigation. The duration between irrigation cycles will increase and irrigators should expect an extended periods without water.

Mr. Martinez recognized MRGCD irrigators and said that the challenges faced have not been lost on how the conditions impact their way of life and livelihoods. He stated the District's control over water supply is limited at best but will do their best to equitably and efficiently distribute whatever supply is available and remain optimistic that it will rain.

He continued to recognize the water distribution team saying there's too many to point out. He mentioned Bobby Wagner, Irrigation System Operator, was instrumental in keeping the Corrales Main Canal pumping operation going. Also, Johnny (Apodaca), the north valley Irrigation Systems Supervisor, Bobby (Wagner) and team mates were recognized for their hard work and dedication for delivering water to this area.

Jason Casuga reiterated that the District would move forward with their plan breaking up the amount of water by acreage served in each individual division and within that division the water will route or move the water ditch by ditch. He explained that if there's enough water for two ditches to stay open, they will keep two; enough for three, they will keep three; enough for one, they will keep one. The MRGCD's responsibility is to deliver water in a manner that allows irrigators to irrigate efficiently. He stated they will not be in the business of slicing the water in smaller and smaller increments.

He also reported on the approach to the Corrales pumping operation saying the District has learned much since the siphon broke. He thanked the District's administrative team for putting the procurement plan together and getting the siphon in production quickly. He acknowledged that the Corrales community has suffered more than much of the valley has. They had up to two cycles to irrigate, whether they took the first or second was up to them.

Lastly, he reported that since the District is pumping directly out of the river and the pumps require a certain amount of water surface elevation over the intakes to operate. We are quickly approaching a water surface elevation where those pumps will not operate. Expectations are that the Corp (of Engineers) will be making a cut today or tomorrow another 100 cfs and once that cut is made the ability to operate those pumps will not be there any longer. He felt they will not be able to supplement the river enough to keep the water surface elevation high enough to operate those pumps. By the end of this week, the pumps will be on for the last time unless something changes in the river drastically. He felt that the Corrales service area was informed but also stated they've learned much for the future seasons.

Vice Chair Russo Baca inquired about the Valencia County farmers meeting and questions arose about when there is rain on how the water will be distributed. Mr. Casuga replied that discussion was had that if it rains in such an amount, we will divert that water and deliver it. He stressed equity and fairness saying fair is everybody would get water but that's not reality as the rain events are flashy. This means diverting as much water as can be brought in, if given the opportunity; and distribute that water as long as we can.

Director Barbara Baca expressed how grateful the Board is on how everything Mr. Martinez and his staff has done during these hard times with the weather phenomenon we're going through. Mr. Martinez said some had phoned in and felt that meant much to them.

**AGENDA ITEM NO.5 - ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR (Comments are limited to six (6) minutes)**

**Erica DeSmet**

Ms. DeSmet questioned Directors Duggins, Russo Baca and Sandoval regarding the irrigation committee meeting and their suggestions regarding the one hour per acre. Jason Casuga commented that there will be a full report to the Board in June regarding the farmers meeting. He then stated the irrigation committee did meet and one of the topics was enforcement procedures to go along with actions that are deemed to be not allowed within the water distribution policy. The committee received direction and staff will be drafting those incremental procedures to be reviewed by the Irrigation Committee and presented to the whole Board.

Ms. DeSmet didn't understand why wait until next year and Mr. Casuga explained that he works for an elected Board of officials that often have to receive calls and understand why we do something. While the policy is there, he stated he would be amiss if he unilaterally adopt an enforcement procedure that has not been reviewed or approved by the Board. He wants to be timely and advertise to the public heading into the next irrigation season.

Ms. DeSmet stated she was discouraged that only three of the seven elected board members attended the farmers meeting in Valencia County and thanked Directors Duggins, Russo Baca and Sandoval as well as Jason Casuga for taking the time to discuss these issues at that time.

With no further comments, questions, or concerns, Vice Chair Russo Baca adjourned the meeting at 3:48pm.

Approved to be the correct Minutes of the Board of Directors of May 31, 2022.

**ATTESTED:**

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Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM  
Secretary/Treasurer

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Stephanie Russo Baca, Madam Chair  
MRGCD Board of Directors