

IRRIGATION SEASON UPDATE

While the heavy rainfall in the last half of June offered relief from ongoing water shortages, hot and dry conditions returned to the Middle Rio Grande Valley for most of July. On July 17th, the MRGCD began releasing its monthly allocation of San Juan-Chama (SJC) project water to continue irrigation deliveries as demand peaked. The release allowed for another week of limited irrigation deliveries. Another allocation of SJC project water is not expected this year.

As July's SJC project water release ended, river flows returned to historic lows. A section of the river in Albuquerque dried for the first time in decades. Shortly after this river drying, considerable rainfall runoff returned to the Rio Grande Valley which resulted in the reconnection of the river through Albuquerque. It is likely this stretch of the river will dry again and the extent of drying could increase.

After the spring runoff ends, it is common for stretches of the Middle Rio Grande south of Albuquerque to dry during the hottest summer months. However, the river from Cochiti Dam through Albuquerque has not dried since the 1980s due to careful coordination and supplemental water releases. The impacts of two decades of drought, amplified by three consecutive years of extreme drought conditions, have changed that this year. Due to construction at El Vado Dam near Chama and New Mexico's Rio Grande Compact debit, MRGCD could not store any additional water for release later in the irrigation season (as it would typically do).

At this time, the only water source available is the natural flow of the Rio Grande and Rio Chama, including rain runoff from river tributaries and arroyos. Unpredictable rainfall and unreliable river flows are resulting in unstable irrigation deliveries. Available water continues to be delivered on a rotational basis. Irrigators should expect delays and interruptions to water delivery. As interruptions occur, water delivery will be picked up where it was left off.



2022 IRRIGATION SEASON UPDATE

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TEMPERATURE & PRECIPITATION UPDATE

90-day temperature and precipitation forecasts developed by the National Weather Service indicate that the Middle Rio Grande is likely to experience warmer than average conditions and that there are equal chances for above or below average precipitation through October.

RIO GRANDE COMPACT UPDATE

At the end of 2021, New Mexico's Rio Grande Compact (an interstate and international water sharing agreement between New Mexico, Colorado, Texas and Mexico) debt to Texas was approximately 127,000 acre-feet. Thanks to heavy rainfall at the end of June, New Mexico over-delivered approximately 5,000 acre-feet to Texas for the month of June. However, the overall debt has increased during 2022. Official Rio Grande Compact accounting is done at the end of the calendar year, and it is too early to tell where New Mexico's Rio Grande Compact Debt will be at the end of 2022. MRGCD is coordinating with water management agencies to ensure that water is conveyed to Elephant Butte as efficiently as possible to minimize New Mexico's Rio Grande Compact debt.

PRIOR AND PARAMOUNT UPDATE

20,000 acre-feet of Prior and Paramount (P&P) water has been stored in Abiquiu reservoir for the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos. If the Bureau of Indian Affairs determines that the amount of native water entering the Middle Rio Grande is not sufficient to meet the needs of the P&P lands, then releases from P&P water storage may be made to meet the demand. If these releases are made, MRGCD will move to P&P only operations. Any water over and above P&P demand will be available to other lands within the MRGCD, but this may be an extremely limited amount of water.

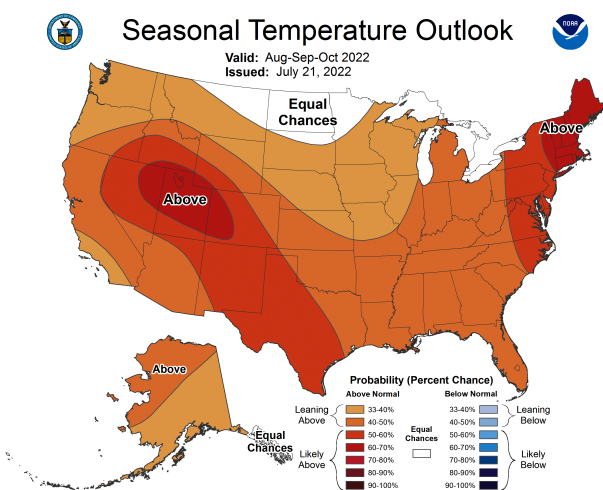


Figure 1. 90 Day Temperature Outlook

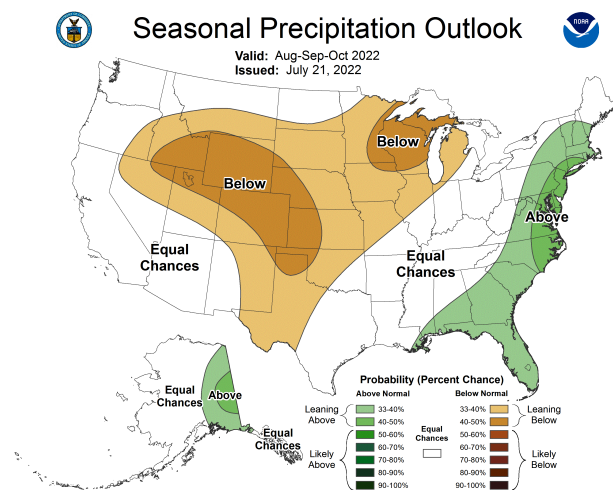


Figure 2. 90 Day Precipitation Outlook

Scan the QR code (right) to access the Three Month Outlook produced by the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center.

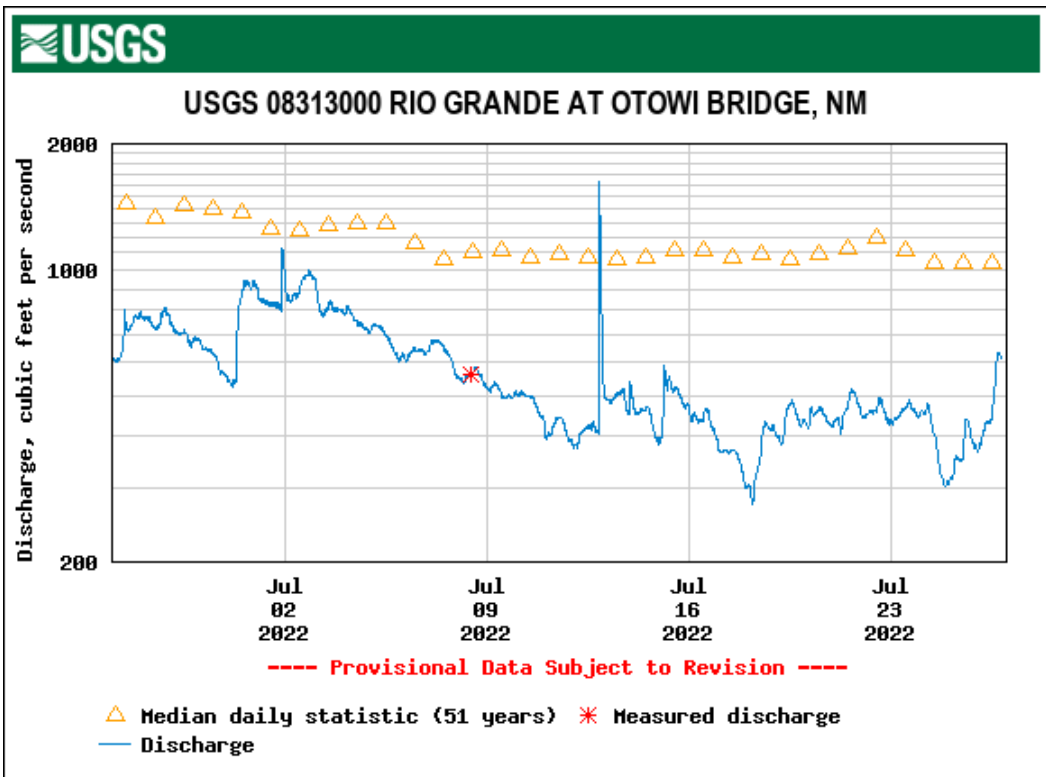


Figure 3. Otowi kiosk displays the natural flow of the Rio Grande and Rio Chama plus any water released from storage (for various water users including MRGCD) at the discharge station 614 (cfs). During July the value was as low as 300 cfs. For comparison, median daily value is over 1000 cfs which is typically achieved by supplemental water releases by MRGCD. Scan the link to the right for access to Otowi gage data.

