

IRRIGATION SEASON REVIEW

Thanks to an active monsoon season water supply exceeded expectations. Without adequate supplemental storage, MRGCD water users were dependent on natural river flow during the 2022 irrigation season. River flow varied significantly during the season.

The season start-up was staggered from south to north due to limited water availability and considering differences in the length of growing season. By early April, diversions were being made to all divisions of the MRGCD. Due to limited supply, deliveries were made on a rotational basis.

Water was in short supply prior to spring runoff. As pre-season predictions indicated, spring runoff only lasted for a short period (from the end of April to the end of May). Adequate water supply during spring runoff allowed for more predictability in scheduling, more flexibility in rotations, and more reliability in irrigation deliveries.

On May 31, 2022, the MRGCD held a special board meeting to notify water users of potentially poor water conditions as spring runoff tapered down. Water supply in June was extremely limited until the rains arrived near the end of the month. Rain in late June/ early July provided temporary relief from water shortages.

Hot and dry conditions returned for most of July resulting in historically low river flow until rains returned at the end of the month. Rain continued through August until dry conditions returned for most of September. Additional rounds of rain in late September and October eased irrigation demand and enabled sufficient water availability for the remainder of the season.

It is too early to predict water availability for the 2023 irrigation season. Early storms are encouraging, but conditions can change. One thing is certain, MRGCD water users will be dependent on natural river flow again next season because of Rio Grande Compact restrictions and ongoing construction of El Vado dam. A start-up plan for the 2023 irrigation season is under development and will be announced as soon as possible.

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2022 IRRIGATION SEASON UPDATE



**Updated
December 6, 2022**



TEMPERATURE & PRECIPITATION OUTLOOK

90-day temperature and precipitation forecasts developed by the National Weather Service indicate that the Middle Rio Grande Valley is likely to experience above average temperatures and precipitation chances are leaning below normal.

RIO GRANDE COMPACT UPDATE

The Rio Grande Compact (Compact) is an interstate and international water sharing agreement between New Mexico, Colorado, Texas and Mexico. At the end of 2021, New Mexico's Compact debt to Texas was approximately 127,000 acre-feet. Official Compact accounting is done at the end of the calendar year, but thanks to a credit water agreement between New Mexico and Texas, an active monsoon season, and effective water management it is projected the debt will decrease to approximately 100,000 acre-feet. MRGCD continues working with partner water management agencies to ensure water is conveyed to Elephant Butte as efficiently as possible. Complying with the Compact is important for the MRGCD and its water users to lift restrictions that currently prevent the MRGCD from storing supplemental water to augment low river flow during the irrigation season.

PRIOR AND PARAMOUNT UPDATE

For the 2022 irrigation season, 20,000 acre-feet of Prior and Paramount (P&P) water was stored in Abiquiu reservoir for the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos. No supplemental releases were made from P&P storage in 2022. Remaining P&P water in Abiquiu reservoir is being released for delivery to Elephant Butte reservoir by the end of the year. P&P water will be stored again next year. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is responsible for calculating storage volume and determining if releases are needed.

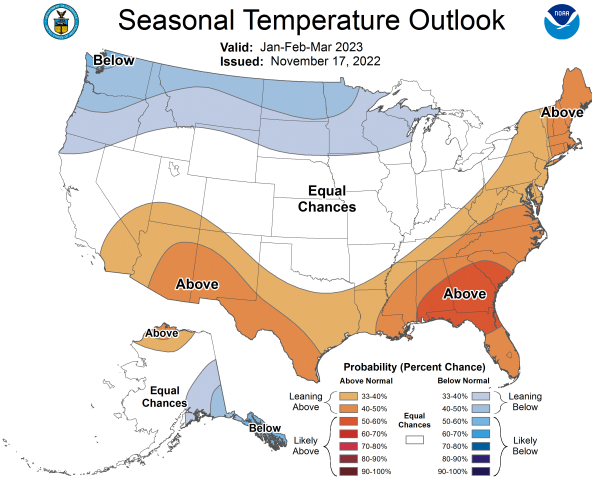


Figure 1. 90 Day Temperature Outlook

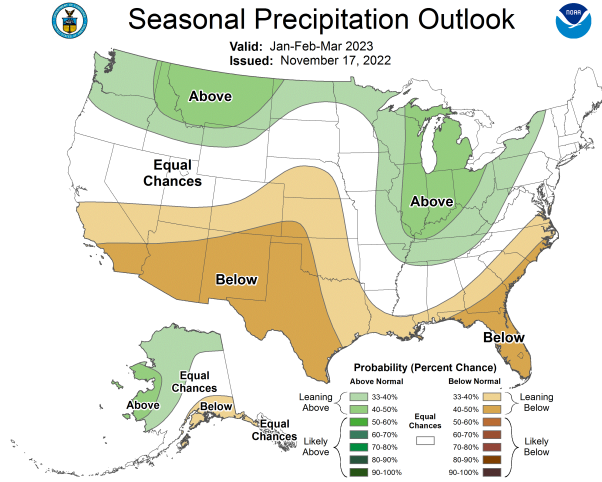


Figure 2. 90 Day Precipitation Outlook

Scan the QR code (right) to access the 90-Day forecast produced by the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center.

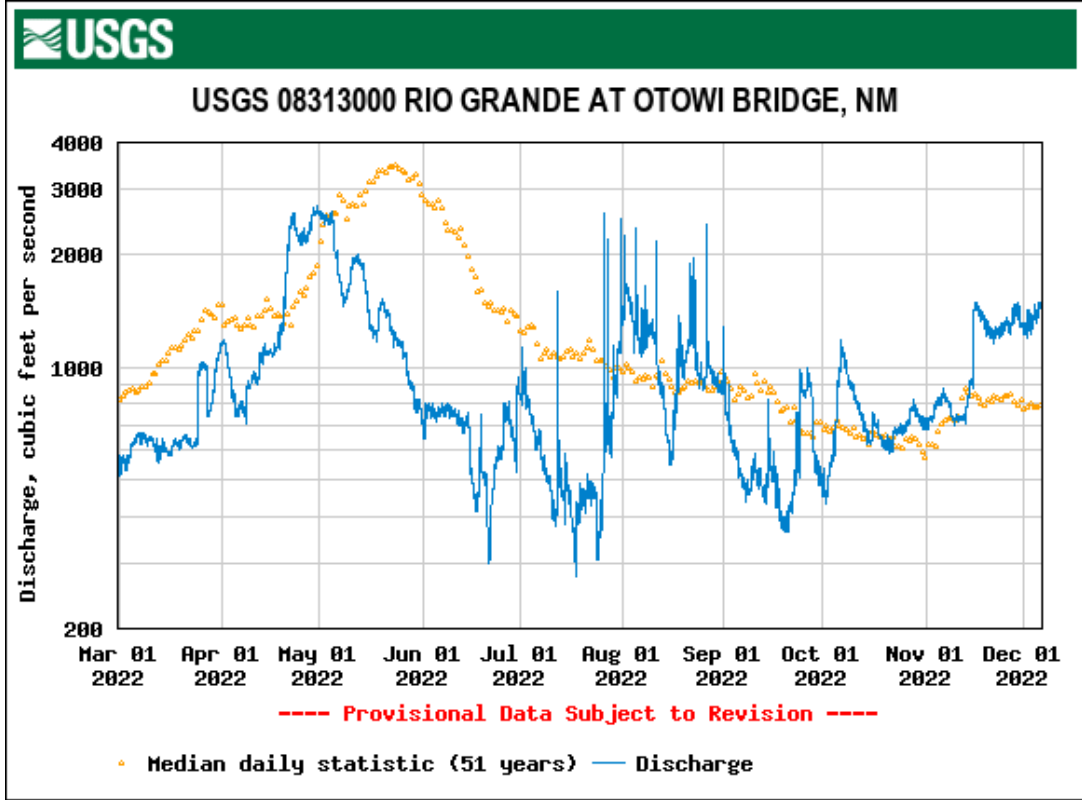


Figure 3. U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) natural flow of the Rio Grande plus any supplemental water released from storage (for various water users including MRGCD). At the time of the update discharge was 1450 cubic feet per second. For a significant part of the growing season flow was below normal (median daily statistic) The graph shows variability in water supply throughout the irrigation season (Mar-Oct). Scan the code (right) for access to the gage data.

