

**MINUTES OF THE
2,231st REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT**

JANUARY 12, 2026

Directors having been duly notified; Chairman Kelly called the regular meeting to order at 3:04 pm. The following Directors and Staff were present:

DIRECTORS

John P. Kelly, Chairman	Present
Colin T. Baugh, Vice Chairman	Present
Brian Jiron, Director	Present
Stephanie Russo Baca, Director	Present
J. Chris Lopez, Director	Present
Micheal T. Sandoval, Director	Present
Karen Dunning, Director	Present

STAFF

Jason Casuga	Chief Engineer/CEO
Joe Holvey	General Counsel
Jeff Wechsler	Chief Water Counsel
Pamela Fanelli	Secretary-Treasurer/CFO
Eric Zamora	Director of Technical Services
Christine Nardi	Director of Human Services
Amanda Molina	Director of Communications
Casey Ish	Director of Lands & Conservation

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

Anne Marken, MRGCD	Jimmy Beal	Martin Haynes
Patrick Taber, BIA	Jerome Cordova	Liz Anderson, OSE/ISC
Sharon Kindel, OSE	Tanja Trujillo, OSE/ISC	Henry Romero
Sharon Wirth, OSE/ISC	Tony Tafoya, Corrales	Jen Bachus, USBR
Hannah Riseley-White, ISC	Santiago Candelaria, Atrisco	Jess Bess, CESOSS
John Irizarry, USBR	Chris Sichler, Socorro	Paula Sichler, Socorro
Mayahvel Garcia, CESOSS	Rudy Perea, Corrales	Mike Lopez, LP
Kim Lopez, Lopez Precision	Santiago Maestas, SVRA	Jorge Garcia, CESOSS

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Paula Sichler led the Pledge of Allegiance at today's meeting.

Chairman Kelly declared a quorum, and the meeting was publicly noticed. This meeting was a hybrid meeting. Rollcall votes are not necessary for regular motions.

AGENDA ITEM NO.2 - APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA .

Mr. Casuga asked to add an item after the Consent Agenda for a report from their lobbyist, John Thompson, and to add another item under the Director of Lands and Conservations Report for an update on the 2026 Fallowing Program.

Director Dunning made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA WITH THE ABOVE CHANGES**. Seconded by Director Russo Baca. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 - CONSIDERATION/APPROVAL OF THE 2026 OPEN MEETINGS ACT RESOLUTION BD-01-12-26-60 - Pam Fanelli, Secretary-Treasurer/CFO

Ms. Fanelli voiced that there were no additional or new changes and explained it is required to approve a new resolution at the beginning of every year.

Vice Chairman Baugh made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT RESOLUTION**. Seconded by Director Lopez. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes. The **MOTION CARRIED**.

Chairman Kelly	Yes	Vice Chairman Baugh	Yes
Director Dunning	Yes	Director Russo Baca	Yes
Director Lopez	Yes	Director Jiron	Yes
Director Sandoval	Yes		

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 - REORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD - Joe Holvey, Wiggins, Williams & Wesenberg, MRGCD General Counsel

Joe Holvey announced the two positions up for election were Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Board of Directors. John P. Kelly was renominated for Chairman by Director Dunning, seconded by Director Sandoval, and Colin T. Baugh was renominated for Vice Chairman by Chairman Kelly, seconded by Director Dunning. Both nominations passed unopposed.

Chairman Kelly appointed himself along with Vice Chairman Baugh, and Director Russo Baca as the Finance Committee and Director Russo Baca, Director Dunning, and Vice Chair Baugh as the Legislative Committee. He noted they will have a new committee for the BO Consultation and he will make the remaining assignments at the February meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 - CONSENT AGENDA

- a. **Consideration/Approval of Payment Ratification – December 2025**
- b. **Consideration/Approval of December 2025 Invoice for Wiggins, Williams & Wesenberg, PC**
- c. **Consideration/Approval of December 2025 Invoices for Spencer Fane LLP**
- d. **Consideration/Approval of the Minutes for the Regular Board Meeting – December 8, 2025**
- e. **Consideration/Approval of Per Diem, Mileage & Expense Reimbursement regarding New Mileage Rates as of January 1, 2026**
- f. **Memo on MRGCD Approved Licenses for December 2025 (For Informational Purposes Only)**

Director Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA**. Seconded by Director Lopez. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6 - REPORT AND UPDATE FROM MRGCD LOBBYIST - John Thompson, MRGCD Lobbyist

Mr. Thompson reported that the Legislative Session will begin next Tuesday, at noon, and will be a 30-day session, so only items relative to the budget or matters of taxation are germane. He said the pre-filing period for legislation opened January 2nd and will run until January 16th. He shared there are already a few pieces of legislation filed that are of interest to the District, including HB 37, introduced by Representatives Cates, which deals directly with man-made infrastructure failures, like the siphon. Another bill of interest is HB 54, which deals with protests on water wells, and if it's less than 100 feet, it's removed from of the protest requirements. Mr. Thompson expressed they have the Water Trust Board projects already filed, and even though the Water Trust Board approves projects, a piece of legislation must pass for it to be finalized and for funds to go out. He explained that Senator Padilla has a bill that creates a 2-year pilot high school water management and conservation program that he is tracking. He talked about a

couple items that have not come yet but that he is expecting to see, including a piece of legislation dealing with jetty jacks and their classification under the State Historic Personnel Office and some legislation relative to Bosque management funding.

Director Dunning asked for an expectation for when the governor's call will be released.

Mr. Thompson answered that those messages trickle out on a daily basis and they can even have a message come down from the governor on the last day of introduction.

Director Dunning inquired if the Sanchez, Baca, and Stefanics bill uses the same language that was in the bill last year.

Mr. Thompson responded that it is slightly modified but the intent is exactly the same.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7 - REPORT(S) FROM THE WATER OPERATIONS

a. Report on Water Supply Conditions - Anne Marken, River Operations & Telemetry Manager

Anne Marken reported on water operations. She expressed that the basin received moisture late last week. She displayed SNOTEL maps and graphs from NRCS, showing that conditions were around 50% of median in each basin relevant to the Middle Valley water supply as of January 6th; however, today those same basins show slight improvements in the three upper basins in New Mexico due to the recent storms. She noted they still were below average for this time of year. She showed a graph with snowpack data from SNOTEL sites and the Upper Rio Grande Basin, which has the current conditions similar to last year, but still well below 2024 conditions. She stated that the NWS 2-week outlook showed warmer than average temperatures with equal chances of above or below average precipitation, and the seasonal outlook indicates that they will likely have above average temperatures and below average precipitation through March. Ms. Marken voiced there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding snowpack contributions to the spring water supply, but if the basin does not receive significant accumulation in the coming months, spring runoff could be short and small. She reiterated that MRGCD would not be able to store any native Rio Grande Water for Middle Valley use due to the Compact debt, and there is considerable uncertainty regarding water availability after spring runoff ends. She expressed this summer and fall, MRGCD will be largely dependent on rainfall driven inflows to meet Middle Valley farmer needs, and without significant rain inflows, farmers should expect extended periods between irrigation deliveries.

See also Appendix I.

Vice Chairman Baugh asked about the numbers of the Compact.

Ms. Marken responded that since the State was present, she would let them talk about those.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8 - UPDATE FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE ENGINEER - Elizabeth Anderson, State Engineer and Hannah Riseley-White, Interstate Stream Commission Director

Elizabeth Anderson, State Engineer, said that June of last year was incredibly dry, and she showed a drought monitor graphic to highlight the extreme drought they have been in throughout the course of last year and that they still are in. She stated that conditions last year were very difficult up and down the Rio Grande, with one of the driest years on record for snowpack and a very challenging irrigation year. She noted that Elephant Butte, who normally receives 3 feet of allocation, only received 3 inches. She expressed that they appreciate the partnership and direct working relationship they have with MRGCD.

Hannah Riseley-White, Interstate Stream Commission Director, went over Compact debt numbers. She shared that current Compact debit is 124,000 acre feet. She explained that New Mexico is in compliance with the Compact as long as they are above 200,000 acre feet of debit, so they are currently in compliance. However, they are very concerned with that cumulative debit status and implications in terms of upstream storage. She voiced it was great to get snow over the weekend, but they need more and are very concerned about the conditions looking into this irrigation season. She expressed it is very critical for them at the State to lead the charge in terms of support in Compact compliance and are gearing up to engage with a much broader audience through a fact sheet and document on what the Compact is, why it's important, and why they should all support New Mexico's efforts towards compliance.

Ms. Anderson discussed Ongoing Water Rights Administration. She said they operate in the Middle Rio Grande under Middle Rio Grande Administrative Area Guidelines and they have a continuation of policies already in place, including not allowing new supplemental wells to surface water. She reiterated that in the Middle Valley, the farm delivery requirement is 3-acre feet per acre. She said they are ramping up their enforcement and compliance within the agency, including cracking down on illegal use of groundwater and surface water, including pond compliance projects throughout the state. She shared that in the Middle Valley; they have an upcoming metering order modeled off of the one they did in the Lower Rio Grande. They also have the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos Water Rights settlement negotiations under way and are thankful to the federal government for moving that settlement forward.

Ms. Riseley-White explained they are looking to address the Compact situation by reducing depletions and increasing efficiency. She expressed appreciation to the Board and staff for the cooperative agreement they entered into over a year ago, which gave more agility between the State and the District. She noted they are both engaged in the Rio Chama sediment issues and looking at how to move water through the system more efficiently while also honoring commitments related to habitat and species. She said the State provided over \$45,000,000 in the last several legislative sessions specifically advance channel projects, and they are making additional requests this legislative session to further those efforts. She mentioned they were very pleased BOR awarded over \$140 million to the LSARI project. Ms. Riseley-White shared concern with things at the federal level and wanted to make sure they use that funding in the most productive way possible. She added they understand those issues will continue, so they are working on funding from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a planning study to try to identify zones where there's potential to prevent that from getting in the river. She added they are also very committed to Low Flow Conveyance Channel maintenance and improvements. She explained that the Interstate Stream Commission invests heavily in data and modeling, are hopeful to have their technical team work with MRGCD's technical team on how to direct that investment in a way that is useful for everybody. They are also looking at basin wide planning, engaging in Reclamation's Rio Grande Basin study, and looking at where they can get the biggest buck in terms of vegetation management.

Ms. Anderson laid out an overview of what they are looking at for the 2026 Legislative Session, including looking at modernizing the agency, a strong focus on the Rio Grande and funding

solutions, and planning for New Mexico's water future. She said they have a big focus on recruiting and retaining qualified staff and are catching up to 21st century technologies, including expanded measurement and metering. She stated they are working on a metering order that will be coming out and put emphasis on stronger enforcement capabilities, and they are looking at investing in the Lower Rio Grande through implementation of the proposed Texas v. New Mexico US Supreme Court settlement they have currently underway. In regard to the Middle Rio Grande, they are working on keeping water flowing through the system, water getting through the system efficiently, and ramping up administration capacities, including keeping the water flowing through to Elephant Butte Reservoir. She stated they are also working on advancing and tracking implementation of the 50-year Water Action Plan, reenvisioning Regional Water planning through continued implementation of the 2023 Water Security Planning Act, and prioritizing progress on Indian Water Rights Settlements. Ms. Anderson expressed they are happy to come present at more MRGCD meetings.

Ms. Riseley-White stated that Compact numbers are not final until after the Engineer Advisors and the Annual Compact Commission Meeting, but they are looking at under 10,000 acre feet of additional debit, which is good given the challenging year, and draft numbers are around 7,900 acre feet of additional debit. She expressed that they are aware that outcomes of the work they do together really affect the livelihoods of their farmers and constituents, and they are committed to working together to produce the best possible outcomes for everyone.

See also Appendix II.

Chairman Kelly thanked them both for coming and hoped this was the first of a long series of meetings on how they are going to get out of Compact debt and start storing water up in Abiquiu while they mess around with El Vado.

Director Russo Baca commented that in regard to the Ongoing Water Rights Administration, she knows MRGCD is in the Middle Rio Grande administration area and have the ability to manage water deliveries within the District, but she noticed that there was not any talk about adjudication. She noted that Pueblo Water Rights Settlement negotiations have started. She asked if that was something MRGCD and the farmers should be preparing for.

Ms. Anderson voiced she thought that was part of the equation, as they would need adjudication of some sort to figure out what they are administering to, and that is something on the horizon.

Director Dunning stated that a Bernalillo County commissioner is introducing a law that says they will not give tax abatement or any tax credits to data centers unless they meet certain conditions. She said everyone is concerned about how much water they consume and if they don't have enough water for our farmers, what are they going to do about data centers that want to come into the state and consume our water.

Ms. Anderson responded that people are very concerned about the amount of water they use, and she felt there's a whole range of efficiencies that those can have. She said everybody has to go through a process and if there is an impairment to a water right, there will be an offset, and if it's a closed basin, they have to apply for a water right through the standard process.

Ms. Riseley-White added that if there is not water available, they will have to acquire water from willing sellers.

Director Dunning pointed out that as a state, they do not value water differently and do not draw distinctions.

Ms. Riseley-White answered that there is no hierarchy of uses under state law, but something that could come out of alternative administration under active water resources management, is a community determining they value certain uses more than others.

Director Lopez inquired where the 3 acre feet came from and where it began.

Ms. Anderson responded that was the process and what is used when they do any kind of water rights transfers, and there have been studies used to support that number.

Mr. Casuga asked if it would be possible to do something where the administration of that 3 acre feet is actually presented in more detail. He stated if they have this conversation about adjudication and be able to lay out the history and where that comes from, that could help people be able to consider decisions. He said that is one thing he has heard from farmers is asking where that number comes from and the history of it.

Ms. Anderson said they would be happy to come back and provide a more detailed presentation on that.

Director Jiron inquired if they were certain the water being released now in the offseason is reaching its destination, so the numbers are calculated for this water Compact, because there was an issue before with river mile marker, where water was spilling over and they lost a lot of water that initially increased debt numbers.

Ms. Riseley-White responded they are watching that very closely, and the reason water was released late in the season is because that is when the system is the most efficient. She said they worked hard to reconnect the Low Flow Conveyance Channel at River Mile 60, and they believe that made a big difference. She added they are still looking at how to improve river channel efficiency as much as possible and how can we strategize with their partners to make decisions about river operations where the water is moving through the system at the most efficient time.

Director Jiron asked what the State's stance was on water transfers. He commented that he did not understand the logic from transferring water from the south, north, or vice versa.

Ms. Anderson stated they need to figure out what the different resources are and use within the structures aligned within the state. She was not sure what specific transfer Director Jiron was concerned with, but in general, importation and moving water between basins is extremely challenging and concerning, as they don't want to impact one water supply in one community while transferring water out.

Director Jiron voiced they don't want to starve one community and move water to another just for the sake of money and power. He inquired at what point in the future the river is going to be cleared up, as the river is being overgrown with vegetation. He noted it is a huge obstacle for water conveyance south, for farmers, and in the offseason for debt.

Ms. Riseley-White agreed and said they have shared concern about that. She shared her personal take is they could do better on all of it but need to be strategic about where they increase river channel efficiency and commit to long term maintenance of vegetation, but also where it makes sense to have some habitat zones.

Director Lopez asked if there was a possibility of getting the Low Flow Conveyance Channel going soon, as it would help the debt.

Ms. Anderson voiced that it is at the top of people's minds and they are working with MRGCD staff on solutions for how to move water through the system and meet different needs, including environmental needs, Compact needs, and getting water down to Elephant Butte to pay Compact debt.

Chairman Kelly shared that BOR is taking public comments on their EIS with three options, and they do not like any of them and believe there is a modification of Option C that would be the best option. He asked which option the State Engineer's Office and ISC are supporting.

Ms. Riseley-White responded that comment is due today and they collectively requested an extension so they could dig more into it. She stated their comment does not give any preference for any alternative but emphasized the critical need to prioritize deliveries to Elephant Butte. She added they want to see is a process they could workshop with MRGCD's technical staff, their technical staff, and Reclamation so the decision is something that takes into consideration all of the concerns at the table.

Chairman Kelly explained they built the Low Flow Channel in the 50s to get out of debt and it worked perfectly until Elephant Butte filled up and silted it in. He expressed that if the Bureau would have dug the channel back out as the reservoir receded, they would not be in this situation today. He voiced that any option to cut the Low Flow Channel in half and get rid of their most efficient corridor they have to take water down would not sit right with him as the Chairman or his fellow board members. He stated they are very concerned about a project that would put a lot of things forward other than the ultimate goal, which is Compact compliance.

Mr. Casuga commented that staying in good standing with the Compact is a conservation measure for everything they are trying to do together, and there are many other things they can do on the river for farmers and riparian area. However, all their ability to do that ends when they cannot store water. He expressed that he keeps seeing these studies, and the most recent was with the World Wildlife Foundation. He said while they do a good job of creating a water use table, they sometimes do a bad job of drawing attention to all the uses. He voiced that MRGCD is a partner with many different agencies about creating habitat on the river, but they also believe the river exists in its current form because of infrastructure that was created. He shared he and his team dug into the World Wildlife Foundation study data, and the Middle Valley piece of the Rio Grande came out where the riparian area is 39% of the depletions and Ag is 38%.

Ms. Riseley-White responded that during that period of time they dug out of Compact debit, a big piece of that was the Low Flow, but there was also many miles of river channel work by Reclamation. She said they have not kept up a strategic long term vegetation management plan, but they need to figure out how to have all the tools they can and how to strategize to solve all the problems in a very coordinated and strategic way, and she hoped they could do that together.

Vice Chairman Baugh stated his overall take away was there is a lot to be done and they are ready and excited for it. He thanked them for coming and giving them a great way to start the year off.

Chairman Kelly thanked them for coming and giving an informative report. He said they look forward to many joint meetings.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9 - ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR (Comments are limited to three (3) minutes)

Jimmy Beal

Mr. Beal, a farmer off the Barr Main, felt Director Jiron's point was deflected by the State. He said he has done research here in the MRGCD felt the District was being taxed not only physically, but metaphorically, with the task of saving water and so their competitors down below EBID can turn on a switch and pump at will. He added they know they are depleting the Mesilla Bolson, but they are seeing a farmers distribution tax on 3 acre feet that does not allow them to be able to dig a well so they can grow crops and survive in this situation.

Martin Haynes

Mr. Haynes, farmer in Bernalillo County, agreed that Director Jiron hit on exactly what the issue is that needs to be addressed, that illegal diversions have been occurring and the riparian stretch is taking its 39%. He said the issue of the Compact delivery is being levied upon them in the Middle Rio Grande like never before. He expressed it is great to hear they have funding coming, but it still isn't enough. He felt the Board, ISC, and Office of the State Engineer need to ramp this up and do as much as possible to the riparian stretch and Low Flow Conveyance Channel, as they are looking at a lose situation when they start pressuring farmers to change their ways of life, crops, and diversion allotment.

Chris Sichler

Mr. Sichler, Socorro County farmer and previous board member, reiterated what Chairman Kelly said about the Low Flow Conveyance Channel. He said it was estimated they saved 60,000 acre feet a year by using the Low Flow. He added they hit their peak in the 70s and 80s and paid back 500,000 acre feet and increased irrigation during that time. He said irrigation is not the cause of the debt, water delivery is, and they cannot get the water down to Elephant Butte. He voiced that the District is working hard to push the use of the Low Flow and he wants the State to do the same, as they could save 10,000 acre feet lost this year in debt easily if they used the Low Flow. He added they could have taken flows from the Puerco and Salado into the Low Flow and get them there, but instead they evaporate that 39%. He expressed that on-farm delivery concerns him a lot and did not know where the 3 acre feet came from. He was happy to hear they want to adjudicate, as they need the opportunity to be able to adjudicate and claim the water they use.

Santiago Maestas

Mr. Maestas was impressed with the conversation, Mr. Casuga's comments, and comments from the floor, because that is what they are protesting, a water right transfer from a traditional agricultural community, Los Padillas to Pecan Orchard, just east of the Highline Canal in Valencia County. He said in 1995, the District agreed to provide water to that property through its turnout and it has been irrigated for the last 30 years from that head gate. He explained that the landowner is proposing to transfer all 40 acre feet from that plat without providing any water to its proposed plat, and the proposed plat is a special use permit that will allow a minimum of 1 acre lots per each part of the property of the 40 acres. He added that they submitted a special use permit preliminary request and plat that would reduce that number to half an acre and adding another 20 lots to the plat. He said the Los Padillas Community Association held a community meeting and objected to those changes to the water transfer and the special use permit, so he asked MRGCD to support their protest. He added they can also file a protest as individuals.

See also Appendix III.

Paula Sichler

Mrs. Sichler thanked Mr. Jiron for his comments. She commented that not only does BOR need to clear the channel, they also need to look to their Forest Service to clear some forest lands so

water can get down to the river where it belongs and benefit the people of New Mexico. She explained that in 2000, the Office of the State Engineer restricted groundwater permits for irrigation in the Middle Rio Grande Valley, stating that they imposed other right holders rights and continued to issue irrigation rights of 1 acre foot to everybody in the valley who wanted one, which is an impairment to the rights of the people who had them in the first place. She asked for them to stop that and stop issuing 1 acre wells to anybody. She stated they all need to be diligent and make sure they are standing up for what is theirs in this state.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10 - UPDATE ON 2026 FALLOWING PROGRAM

Mr. Ish gave an update on the 2026 Water Leasing Program. He announced they decided to suspend the Water Leasing Program for the 2026 season due to the lack of funding right now, and they believe it is important to make this determination now so farmers have sufficient time to plan for the 2026 season, as well as give landowners who do not farm themselves, time to find contract famers for lands that might have been enrolled in the program. He noted this does not affect other sources of water use for their strategic outfall deliveries. He stated that MRGCD will continue to contribute 10% of its San Juan Chama allocation to the outfalls for 2026 and there still remains a substantial amount of important work in several key projects that will continue to move forward under the agreement they have with the State and NFWF once the funds are available. He assured that MRGCD remains fully committed to implementing its obligations advancing conservation and efficiency and look forward to potentially opening up a late season leasing option once funding is in place.

Director Russo Baca asked for an explanation on why funding was not available.

Mr. Ish responded that funding originates as federal dollars, and those federal dollars go to the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, and then go to MRGCD, so they are waiting on it and were told it would free up very soon, but they have waited as long as they can. He said they felt it was fair to farmers to let them make a choice now on what they want to do, because he was not sure they will get this program fully implemented before irrigation starts.

Chairman Kelly asked if they anticipate that funding to be in place in time to offer a late season fallowing program.

Mr. Ish answered yes.

Chairman Kelly inquired about the amount of funding being held up.

Mr. Ish responded roughly \$3.5 million.

Director Jiron asked if famers plant some spring crops because they are being told there might not be any funding available and then the funding comes in, will they still be allowed to apply for the late season funding.

Mr. Ish responded that if they get a late season leasing program organized, they would accept anyone who has irrigated in the 2026 season as long as the usual conditions are met.

Mr. Casuga asked if they cannot guarantee they will be able to put the money on the ground this year, would that money carry over in future years.

Mr. Ish answered it is a multi-year agreement and there are no penalties associated with losing this funding if they cannot implement.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11 - REPORT(S) FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

a. Bureau of Reclamation - John Irizarry-Nazario, Deputy Area Manager

Mr. Irizarry-Nazario gave the Board some updates. He said they do not have an approved budget yet, but they will have to reduce some of the budget. He noted there has been movement on HR, so hopefully they will start back hiring soon to provide the support they need. He talked about a secretarial order called Cutting Red Tape and Reducing Consumer Costs on Reclamation Construction Projects, where they believe there will be room for further collaboration with their stakeholders. In regard to El Vado, there is an end of year discussion tomorrow, a Reclamation meeting next week in Salt Lake City to discuss the Lessons Learned Report, and another meeting in April, where they will have the appraisal level Correction Action Study. He shared that they received a letter on Thursday requesting the extension relating to LSARI, but there is not enough time to continue it, so they have to close it and then look at alternatives to reopen it.

Director Jiron asked what BOR's stance was with El Vado.

Mr. Irizarry-Nazario responded they had to stop the construction project due to some issues they had and had to go back to the drawing board to review the alternatives. He said they will get the report going through the different new alternatives in April and will move forward from there.

Director Jiron commented it seems like this project is taking a very long time. He knows they cannot store water, but hoped the State and BOR were not using that as an excuse to not get the work done in a timely manner. He expressed that farmers are dying down here because they cannot store water up there and it is frustrating and mindboggling that this is not panning out. He shared that it is scary that the presentation started about funding still being on hold and nothing moving.

Mr. Irizarry-Nazario agreed it is taking longer than expected but they are hoping to be able to turn the page and move forward.

Chairman Kelly expressed that he attended the briefing last week and was not impressed with the options they were looking at and felt the focus was not on Compact delivery. He said they seem to be trying to turn it into a piece of river that looks good on the drawing board, but does not meet the needs of conveying water down to Elephant Butte, cuts a key piece of infrastructure in half, and loses 7 miles of the Low Flow Conveyance Channel. He stated they need to find a way to extend the comment period on that so leading water management regulatory agencies in the state can make comments about the project. He voiced that after seeing what happened up at El Vado with a project started after years and years of design, he did not want to see that down in the lower valley at San Acacia. He added they need to do it quickly and have the budget to maintain what gets built down there with regard to sediment removal and vegetation management. He felt that as a minimum, they need to tell them today they will accept comments from the State Engineer on their big project.

Mr. Irizarry-Nazario responded that partner agencies can continue making comments and they will listen to them, as the only part closing down today is the public comment period. He said he would work on getting that back open, but could not guarantee it.

See also Appendix IV.

b. Bureau of Indian Affairs - Patrick Taber, Acting Designated Engineer

Mr. Taber expressed that not only do they need additional water, they need additional cold weather. He explained that the surface reservoir is the snowpack in the upper mountains and without cold weather, early runoff would occur and they want to keep that as long as possible. He stated that in regard to water deliveries, he will be working with the Pueblos at the upcoming Coalition meetings on the upcoming deliverable dates and as charging of the systems, which is scheduled for March. He talked about operations and maintenance. He expressed he had not heard of any major issues and the new work request system has been operated and seems to be functioning. He shared they have continuing issues with gopher holes and with tumbleweeds, but hopefully they will have less issues with wind this year. He estimated they are at the halfway point in the season for snowpack and are behind in the game, so he hoped for a banner spring. He added there were changes happening within the BIA, as they have a new Acting Regional Director and new Southern Pueblo Agency Superintendent.

Director Dunning asked if the Coalition change leadership or have elections at the beginning of the year.

Mr. Taber answered yes, usually in the springtime.

Mr. Casuga expressed that during the period of time irrigation season ends in November, the hydrograph does something unique at the end of every year as water is released in storage that was stored for the Pueblos, is being moved down. He asked Mr. Taber if he could do a presentation on whose action that is at a later meeting, because they get a lot of public comments on that, but MRGCD does not do that.

Mr. Taber answered yes.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 12 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF PROCUREMENT OFFICER - Richard DeLoia

a. Consideration/Approval of the Pajarito Acequia - Durand Open Space Tree Removal

Mr. DeLoia presented on the approval for the removal of up to 13 trees in the Pajarito Acequia, Durand Open Space S to 5600 Isleta Blvd, which is funded through a New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Grant. MRGCD staff recommended award to Desert Gardens in the amount of \$60,000, with tax, through the MRGCD On-call Tree Trimming and Removal Contracts.

Director Dunning asked what they do with the wood when it's removed.

Mr. Padilla responded that they haul it off, but they can leave it there if needed for people to pick up, but another project is coming in from the District to rehab that section.

Director Dunning made the **MOTION TO AWARD \$60,000 TO DESERT GARDENS FOR THE REMOVAL OF UP TO 13 TREES IN THE PAJARITO ACEQUIA.** Seconded by Director Russo Baca. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

b. Consideration/Approval for Compact Wheel Loader

Director Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE COMPACT WHEEL LOADER**. Seconded by Vice Chairman Baugh. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

c. Consideration/Approval for Schmittle Road Pipeline Project

Mr. DeLoia presented the approval for the Schmittle Road Pipeline Project, which is funded through MOA with Socorro County, and MRGCD staff recommended award to Lopez Precision, LLC, for \$198,543.83, including tax. This project was awarded through the MRGCD On-call Contractor Infrastructure Contracts.

Chairman Kelly asked if their contractor is procuring an engineer to finish the 35% design.

Mr. Zamora answered they have a complete set of plans that's 100%.

Chairman Kelly asked Mr. Lopez if their company was prepared to finish the project for the price bid and the schedule established.

Mr. Lopez answered yes.

Director Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO AWARD \$198,543.83 TO LOPEZ PRECISION, LLC FOR THE SCHMITTLE ROAD PIPELINE DESIGN**. Seconded by Director Sandoval. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 13 - REPORT(S) FROM THE DIRECTOR OF LANDS & CONSERVATION - Casey Ish

a. 2026 Work Plan for Center for Social Sustainable Systems - Jorge Garcia, Executive Director, CESOSS

Mr. Garcia discussed the key initiatives and activities they are developing and collaborating on, main points on the strategic alignment with MRGCD, and their first quarter commitments. He talked about the Valle Vista Acequia Education and Agricultural site and the things that would be coming out of the agricultural side, which include a CSA and a partnership with the Family Resource Center for an after-school program to provide workshops to parents and students. He stated that key initiatives are the Acequia Walk and Talks and continuing the Primera Agua event. He said they were going to be setting up specific signage at the Landmarks Project, that will be tailored to represent the local history of Pajarito. He expressed that priority number one was the preservation of agricultural lands and traditional irrigation systems, which they support with several initiatives, including reviving the Atrisco Academy and having Acequia Workshops on water rights adjudication on a regular basis to educate the community. He voiced their other priorities consisted of water stewardship and a consistent resilience, including creating enough outreach materials to address land and water stewardship, public education and community engagement, and youth engagement and future generations of farmers. Mr. Garcia expressed they will be having the Acequia Olympias, working with the South Valley Regional Association, Mr. Ish, and MRGCD to reinstitute the acequias, the governance of acequias, empowering people to come and talk to this body, and planning the Primera Agua. He said they would also be bringing people from the Pueblo of Atrisco in Mexico so they can rekindle collaborations and relationships.

See also Appendix V.

Director Dunning asked if they got involved in the luminarias along the ditch.

Mr. Garcia answered no.

Director Russo Baca asked if Tarah Jaramillo had access to their calendar of events or if she could so they can attend.

Mr. Garcia responded that they will do that and provide all the information.

Mr. Casuga commented that sometimes when working with CESOSS or their funding, there seems to be an idea where some state entities sometimes question whether or not an acequia within the Middle Valley can receive money the same way an acequia in northern New Mexico can. He explained they always end up getting the project done, but it just seems like every year they have to jump through hoops with that. He suggested that they start administratively first in asking them to stop doing that and figure out what they need to do to clean that up in legislation. He added that they do not mind being their fiscal agent, but they would like the process with the State to be smoother.

Mr. Garcia responded that they welcome that and thanked him for saying it.

Mr. Maestas shared that at this year's Congreso de las Acequias, they met with the Attorney General's Department of Justice, Land Grant Division, and asked the Attorney General if they would be willing to issue an opinion on this issue, and he said he more than likely would but it needed to be requested by a legislator.

Mr. Casuga voiced that he was happy that conversation happened but still felt it wise for their legal counsel to look at it.

Vice Chairman Baugh expressed that was an issue he was passionate about and was on the Board because of the acequia culture. He said the Legislative Committee could look into that.

Chairman Kelly stated that as a member of the Finance Committee, they fund multiple NGOs, CESOSS included, and a report like this is something they expect from every one of those groups they support, and thanked them for that.

b. Update on Active Bosque Maintenance Projects - Jo Strange, Bosque Management Coordinator

Ms. Strange gave an update on Bosque Maintenance Projects. She discussed the completed the Big Hole Invasive Retreat, New Belen Bridge Project, new treatment of 65 acres on the New Belen Outfall, and the current treatment of the San Francisco Outfall. She stated that for the season, they are looking at a total of 445 acres treated, 223 retreats and 222 new acres treated.

See also Appendix VI.

Chairman Kelly asked what their acreage of MRGCD owned Bosque is.

Ms. Strange answered around 30,000 acres.

Ms. Strange showed images and videos from all the work they on the Big Hole South Project, the New Belen Outfall, and the San Francisco Outfall and explained all that was done at each site.

Vice Chairman Baugh asked how much was depleted from the invasive in regard to the San Francisco Outfall.

Ms. Strange answered they saved about 4.5 half feet per acre. She added that when funding comes through, they are going to continue to go north to 60.

Mr. Ish added that when they talk about invasives, there is also the water budget of the natives that follow it, so it is important to note there is a narrower band of actual water conserved because the native composition also has a water budget.

Ms. Strange shared they worked with a contractor to produce a fire risk model for all four divisions, which takes into consideration the fuel in the area, fire conditions, wind speed, and proximity to infrastructure. She said they will be getting all the GIS layers to layer all the fuel and fire probabilities and then start building priorities for treatment moving forward. She noted that the model will get ran every year.

Mr. Casuga added that it likely gives them other pathways for funding to keep feeding the machine.

Ms. Strange expressed that the data set is amazing and partnering with US Fish & Wildlife and making sure to meet all the ESA guidelines and demands, she felt they were on the right track to lower water usage, improve habitat, and support all the species using the area. She noted it should be out by the end of the month.

Mr. Casuga asked if their tribal partners could use this tool.

Ms. Strange answered yes.

Ms. Strange shared they are going to tour some of the project areas and go over the process and how they are approaching things, and if any Pueblos want to reach out and partner with treatments or what they are doing, she welcomed that. She said that US Fish & Wildlife and the Partners Program pays for restoration work that benefit wildlife habitat and partner with tribal entities.

Mr. Ish added that long term, MRGCD wants to be the clearing house for providing updates regionally on the status of Bosque healthy and fire mitigation, so they intend to hand this off to anyone doing work inside the Bosque, as it is a good foundational tool for helping everybody.

Mr. Casuga asked if this was useful as they begin to have a conversation with the Board about what an HCP looks like.

Mr. Ish answered yes, and one of the most compelling arguments they can make in an HCP is having a solid foundation and baseline of where they are from a natural resource perspective and how they plan to move that resource forward through mitigation.

Mr. Casuga voiced that MRGCD is not anti-habitat, they're pro balance. He felt brighter days were coming, but said they need to get everybody moving in the same direction. Chairman Kelly expressed they need this kind of on the ground proof to show people they can make things better and make habitat even better.

Mr. Lopez shared he has been in salt cedar removal for 20 years and this was the best he has seen.

Ms. Strange stated this is her passion and having the trust and support to go out and do the work she loves does not have to look one way. She said conditions and habitat are changing and they all have to evolve and survive.

c. Consideration/Approval of Urban Issues Advisory Committee Charter - Casey Ish, Director of Lands & Conservation, and Amanda Molina, Director of Communications

Vice Chairman Baugh made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE COMMITTEE CHARTER AND TO DIRECT STAFF TO PROCEED WITH THE ADVERTISEMENT**. Seconded by Director Russo Baca. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 14 - REPORT(S) FROM THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES - Eric Zamora, PE

a. Update on Off Season Operations and Maintenance Projects

Mr. Zamora advised the A and B will be a combined presentation.

See also Appendix VII.

b. Update on Capital Outlay Projects - Engineering Staff

Angel Madera, Engineer, gave an update on the offseason construction projects. The first project he discussed was the Socorro Main Canal Channel Lining Phase IIB, in which they have lined about 0.6 miles of concrete canvas, installed all the head walls for the turnouts, and installed all three concrete structures. He said in the next couple weeks, they will finish installing the concrete canvas and start shotcreting lined sections of the Main Canal. He then discussed the Belen Highline Canal Overflow Structure #2. He stated that Lopez Precision finished shaping the channel and are currently working on shaping the steps for the overflow. In the coming weeks, they will install the rebar and shotcrete next week.

Antoinette Ramos, Engineer, presented on the Low Flow Conveyance Channel. She shared they are at 92% on the contract amount and should be done by January 15th. She talked about their progress, stating they are 2 miles past Lake Escondida right now. She then talked about the Corrales Siphon Project. She said Compass Engineering mobilized in December on the Corrales side and will do the Sandia side in January. They are still hoping to get the HDD operation started in March so they can be done in December. She shared in the next three weeks, on the Sandia side, they would be installing turnouts, temporary crossings for access and turnaround within the right-of-way, and the 48-inch overflow pipe going to the Riverside Drain. She added they will also do additional fill from 93 to 95. On the Corrales side, they will install the 68-inch conductor casing. She expressed that funds expended are 9% and contract time use is

11% so far. And on the Loretta Road Project, they got a few comments from NMDOT they addressed and are looking at getting the project advertised on January 15th, with a contract time of 160 days.

Angelina Jiminez, Engineer, presented on the Acequia Madre Grant Project. She voiced that they are expecting to receive the 100% design by the end of this week are they are awaiting an executed agreement and transfer of the county funds to start on construction. She talked about the Feeder 3 Transmission Line Phase I Project, which is currently underway. She shared that MRGCD, BHI, and AU attended a pre-construction conference on December 23, 2025, and they intend to issue the official notice to proceed on January 19th. She noted the project timeline is 180 calendar days and they expect to complete it by July.

Mr. Casuga asked if any of the proposed work in this phase will have any effect on irrigation season.

Ms. Jiminez responded there are a few line items in this project that are in the channel, a concrete dissipation structure and at least 15 feet of concrete channel lining within the Feeder 3 Canal, which they expect AU to complete before the irrigation season begins.

Director Dunning asked if the City ever let MRGCD use the MRA, or are they still thinking they are going to do something with it.

Mr. Casuga responded they are still working on that meeting, and Councilor Baca is still helping them try to work together.

Chairman Kelly commented he was not keeping track of the money they have right now in live contracts, but it is a lot, and to run that kind of money through their accounts is huge and the ripple effect of that money is going through the economy and the people working on the project, who mostly live in the valley. He asked what the multiplier was for construction work.

Mr. Zamora answered \$4.

Chairman Kelly admitted he was skeptical about the concrete canvas at first, but it seems to be very cost-effective and moved things along. He was very pleased with their contract construction program.

Mr. Zamora stated they were blessed with some very successful and hard-working, experienced contractors this offseason.

Mr. Zamora gave a brief overview of what is going on with the divisions. In Cochiti, they have a culvert replacement, where they will be installing a new slightly large pipe, shotcrete lining the connection, and then reconstructing the water pass. He said in the Albuquerque Division, TR 7 is one of their major projects, and they have been coordinating with Isleta Pueblo and the governor to discuss that project. They also have a gas line relocation and water line relocation that will occur concurrently with their project. He stated that the Riverside Drain Maintenance Project is at the South Diversion Channel along the levee, where they have significant erosion and overgrowth of trees. For the Belen Division, they have the New Belen Wasteway Rehabilitation, where they have some buried pipelines. He voiced they also have the Peralta Main Check 13 Project, which is an upgrade from an old radial gate to a new Langeman Gate. He talked

about the Garcia Extension Acequia New Check, which resulted from a request for a new check. Mr. Zamora then went over the Socorro Division. He said they are starting to hit all the late season work, including culvert installations and turnout installations.

Vice Chairman Baugh asked about using temporary weed racks in Belen, as they helped areas in Socorro Division.

Mr. Zamora responded that all four divisions implement the use of weed racks at key locations, but there are probably a whole lot of pinch points they could add some to.

Director Dunning made the **MOTION TO EXTEND THE MEETING PAST 6:30 P.M.** Seconded by Director Lopez. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Chairman Kelly requested that they do away with the going passed 6:30 motion to extend the meeting at future meetings.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 15 - REPORT(S) FROM THE SECRETARY-TREASURER/CFO - Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM

a. Presentation/Approval of the 2nd Quarter Financial Statements for FY2026 and Report from the Finance Committee Meeting, January 12, 2025 - Chairman Kelly, Directors Russo Baca and Dunning

Ms. Fanelli presented for approval of the 2nd Quarter Financial Statements for FY26. She stated that the District's revenues and expenditures are in line with budgeted expectations. The General Fund, year to date through December, total revenues were \$9.7 million, plus other financing sources totaling \$160,000. She noted they are trending higher ad valorem from Bernalillo County based on the 2nd quarter of Fiscal Year 25. She said the total expenditures for the General Fund were \$14.2 million, and salaries and benefits were up by \$730,000, legal fees were up by \$143,000, and employee and Board related costs were up by \$178,000. She expressed that Grant Fund revenues were \$9 million and expenditures were \$9.4 million, which leaves about \$400,000 of expenditures to be billed as soon as checks have cleared. The Capital Investment Fund, revenues were \$1.1 million, 99% from ad valorem revenues. And expenditures were \$1.2 million, including \$785,000 of capital expenditures and \$355,000 of non-capital expenditures. She added that transfers from the debt service and the Grant Fund total \$500,000.

Chairman Kelly expressed that the Finance Committee went through this in a little more detail and they are in good financial shape given the time of the year in the budget. The Finance Committee recommended the Board accept the report.

Director Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE 2ND QUARTER FINANCIAL STATEMENTS.** Seconded by Director Dunning. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

b. Consideration/Approval of Resolution BA-01-12-26-110 Adoption of Amended Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 (07-01-25 to 06-30-26) Grant Fund

Director Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION BA-01-12-26-110.** Seconded by Director Dunning. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Chairman Kelly	Yes	Vice Chairman Baugh	Yes
Director Dunning	Yes	Director Russo Baca	Yes
Director Sandoval	Yes	Director Jiron	Yes
Director Lopez	Yes		

AGENDA ITEM NO. 16 - REPORT(S) FROM THE CHIEF ENGINEER/CEO– Jason M. Casuga, PE

- a. **Report on the 2025 Colorado River Water Users Association Annual Conference, December 16-18, 2025, Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO, Eric Zamora, Director of Technical Services, and Casey Ish, Director of Lands & Conservation**

Mr. Casuga reported there is no deal yet. He stated the Bureau listed a lot of alternatives but did not list a preferred one. He said the temperature of the overall meeting was better this year, and felt it was the middle of the road whether a deal will get done or not, but they are cautiously optimistic.

- b. **Report on Bureau of Reclamation public Comment Meetings on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Lower San Acacia Reach Improvements Project (LSARI) January 7th and 8th, 2026 - Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO, Casey Ish, Director of Lands & Conservation, Chairman Kelly, Directors Russo Baca, Dunning, and Lopez**

Mr. Casuga said there are public meetings on the draft impact statement and because of the extension, those comments got submitted right at the end. He shared that they made minor edits to the draft and are leaving the door open to take a look at their approach for an explanation of that. He expressed that there is nothing they are proposing that they love and they made that known.

Director Russo Baca noted there was still time today to make public comment for anyone still interested if they send it virtually by midnight.

Mr. Casuga commented that water counsel was optimistic they will get an extension, but MRGCD submitted comments anyway to just make sure they got them in.

- c. **Report on MRGCD's Sandoval County Farmers & Irrigators Informational Meeting, January 8, 2026, Jason M. Casuga, CE/CEO, Chairman Kelly, Vice Chairman Baugh, and Directors Russo Baca, Sandoval, Dunning, Jiron and Lopez**

Mr. Casuga mentioned that Vice Chair Baugh had a conversation about charging with them, as well as other concerns raised. He expects more volume of questions coming out of Bernalillo and the attendance to be much higher.

- d. **Information on Upcoming Events:**

1. **National Water Resources Association Policy Conference, April 27-29, 2026: Washington, D.C.**
2. **MRGCD's Farmers and Irrigators Informational Meetings 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**
 - a) **January 15, 2026 Bernalillo County - Los Duranes Community Center**
 - b) **January 22, 2026 Valencia County - Belen Community Center**
 - c) **January 29, 2026 Socorro County - City of Socorro Convention Center**

Mr. Casuga presented on the upcoming events.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 17 - REPORT(S) FROM THE MRGCD ATTORNEY(S) - Chief Water Counsel or General Counsel

MRGCD's Attorney's did not have any reports to share during open session.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 18 REPORT(S) FROM THE BOARD

- a. **Report on MRGCD, Office of State Engineer, and the Interstate Stream Commission Compact Discussion, December 10, 2025 - Vice Chairman Baugh, Directors Dunning and Russo Baca**
See also Appendix VIII.
- b. **Report on New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Meeting, December 11, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**
See also Appendix VIII.
- c. **Report on the Valencia Soil & Water Conservation District Board Meetings, December 18 and 31, 2025 - Director Russo Baca**
See also Appendix VIII.
- d. **Report on meeting with Constituent Regarding Damage Claim, December 31, 2025 - Director Jiron**

Director Jiron shared that he was confronted by one of his constituents in Valencia County who filed a claim that was denied by the District's insurance. He said he went out to look at what he was talking about and there was a spoil pile along the roadside of the Belen Highline. He displayed picture of it to the Board. The constituent claimed the soil was pushing over his fence and damaging it. Director Jiron expressed that section of the Belen Highline has filled in with floods in past history and asked if it would be possible to throw some of that dirt on the west side of the Belen Highline moving forward. He also noted there were not before pictures taken of that, which should be a must. He voiced that when dirt piles are pushing into a fence like that, he would have to side with the landowner.

Mr. Zamora responded that he talked to Mr. Otero about this, and without doing a lot of detailed research, he believes the development of the solar farm helped generate additional water and the area generated a lot more sediment, more runoff, and a lot more erosion down the two little arroyos that feed into the area. He added that based on their mapping, the fence line is in the MRGCD right-of-way. He said the dirt piles have been there for years and as a result of the storms they received this year, Mr. Otero's crews went in with a big dozer and flattened them out. He shared that he has not seen the insurance denial of the claim, but he would provide any additional information.

Director Jiron expressed that yes, the fence might have been there before, but when a resident provides pictures to the District where clearly the dirt is leaning against the fence, who is to say it wasn't like that before if they do not have before pictures. He said that in regard to it being on MRGCD right-of-way, his fence sits 5 feet to the east, towards the house. He asked if that meant that all of those residents are now encroaching on the right-of-way.

Mr. Zamora said that based on the aerial mapping he saw, the answer would be yes, but he would need to confirm all of that.

Mr. Casuga added that all the photos submitted to them were submitted to the State, their insurance carrier, and the claim was denied. He stated that they will doublecheck the survey, but the nature of the claim is closed unless the landowner chooses to take additional action, which they have the right to do.

See also Appendix IX.

e. Report on the South Valley Regional Association of Acequias Comisionado Meeting, January 5, 2026 - Director Russo Baca

See also Appendix VIII.

f. Report on the Valencia County Commissioners' Meeting, January 7, 2026 - Director Russo Baca

See also Appendix VIII.

g. Report on Farmers for Future Farmers Meetings, December 9, 2025, January 6 & 9, 2026 - Directors Russo Baca and Lopez

Director Lopez stated that he attended the meeting and was there to just take in information.

Director Russo Baca submitted written board reports. *See also Appendix VII.*

Chairman Kelly noted that the motion also includes 14(b), for the Bureau Meeting they went to that Mr. Casuga reported on.

Director Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE REPORTS FROM THE BOARD AND THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**. Seconded by Director Dunning. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Director Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION at 6:44 pm**. Seconded by Vice Chairman Baugh. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes. The **MOTION CARRIED**.

Chairman Kelly	Yes	Vice Chairman Baugh	Yes
Director Dunning	Yes	Director Russo Baca	Yes
Director Sandoval	Yes	Director Jiron	Yes
Director Lopez	Yes		

AGENDA ITEM NO. 19 EXECUTIVE SESSION

a. NMSA 1978 Open Meetings Act, Section 10-15-1(H)2

1. Limited Personnel Matters

b. NMSA 1978 Open Meetings Act, Section 10-15-1(H)7

1. Threatened or Pending Litigation

Director Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO GO BACK INTO REGULAR SESSION at 7:18 pm**. Seconded by Director Dunning. Rollcall vote was administered with all members voting yes. The **MOTION CARRIED**.


Chairman Kelly	Yes
Director Dunning	Yes
Director Sandoval	Yes
Director Lopez	Yes

Vice Chairman Baugh	Yes
Director Russo Baca	Yes
Director Jiron	Yes

With no further comments, questions, or concerns, Chairman Kelly adjourned the meeting at 7:18 pm.

Approved to be the correct Minutes of the Board of Directors of January 12, 2026.

ATTESTED:



Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM
Secretary-Treasurer/CFO



John P. Kelly, Chairman
MRGCD Board of Directors

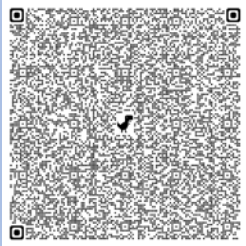
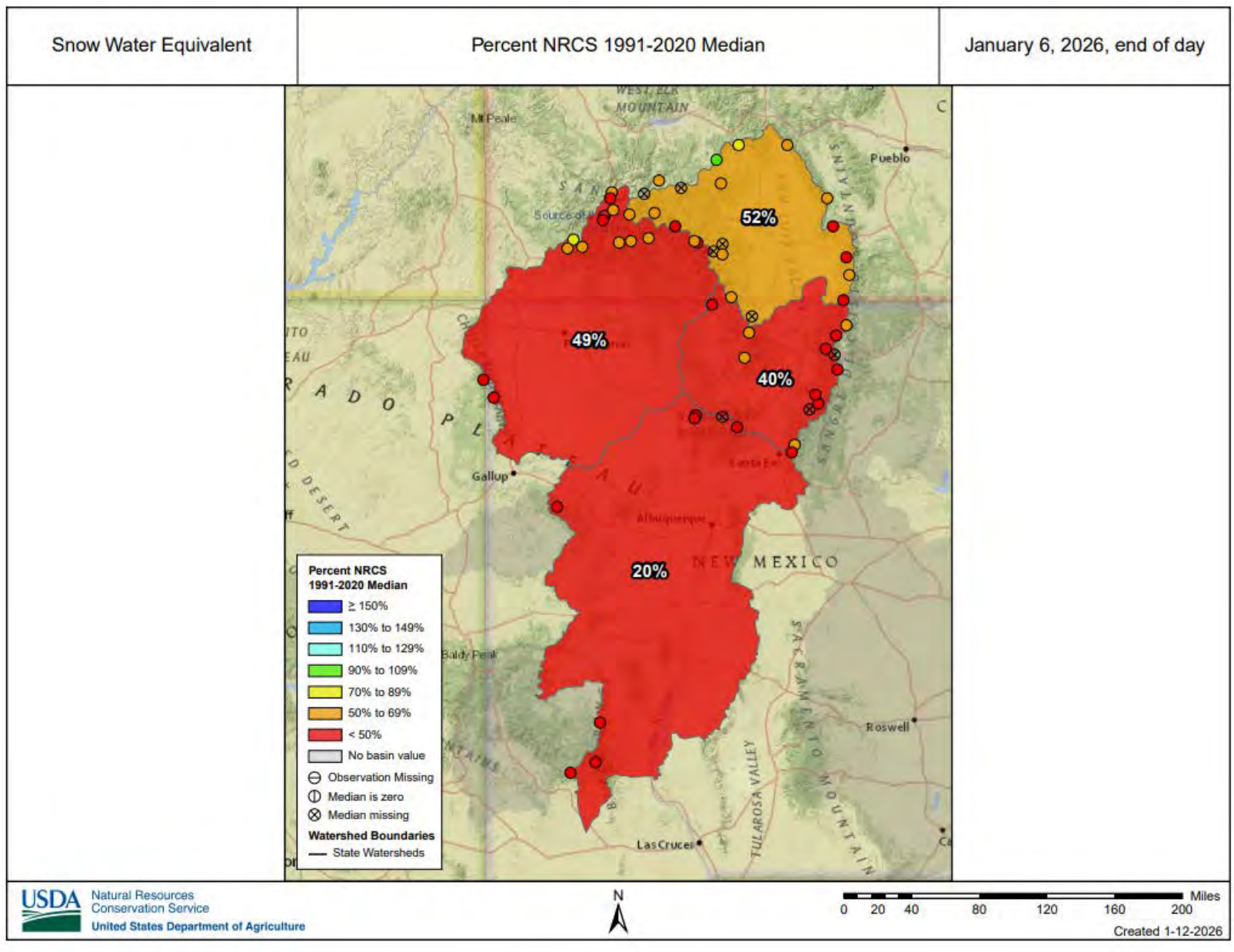
Water Supply Update

Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District Board of Directors Meeting

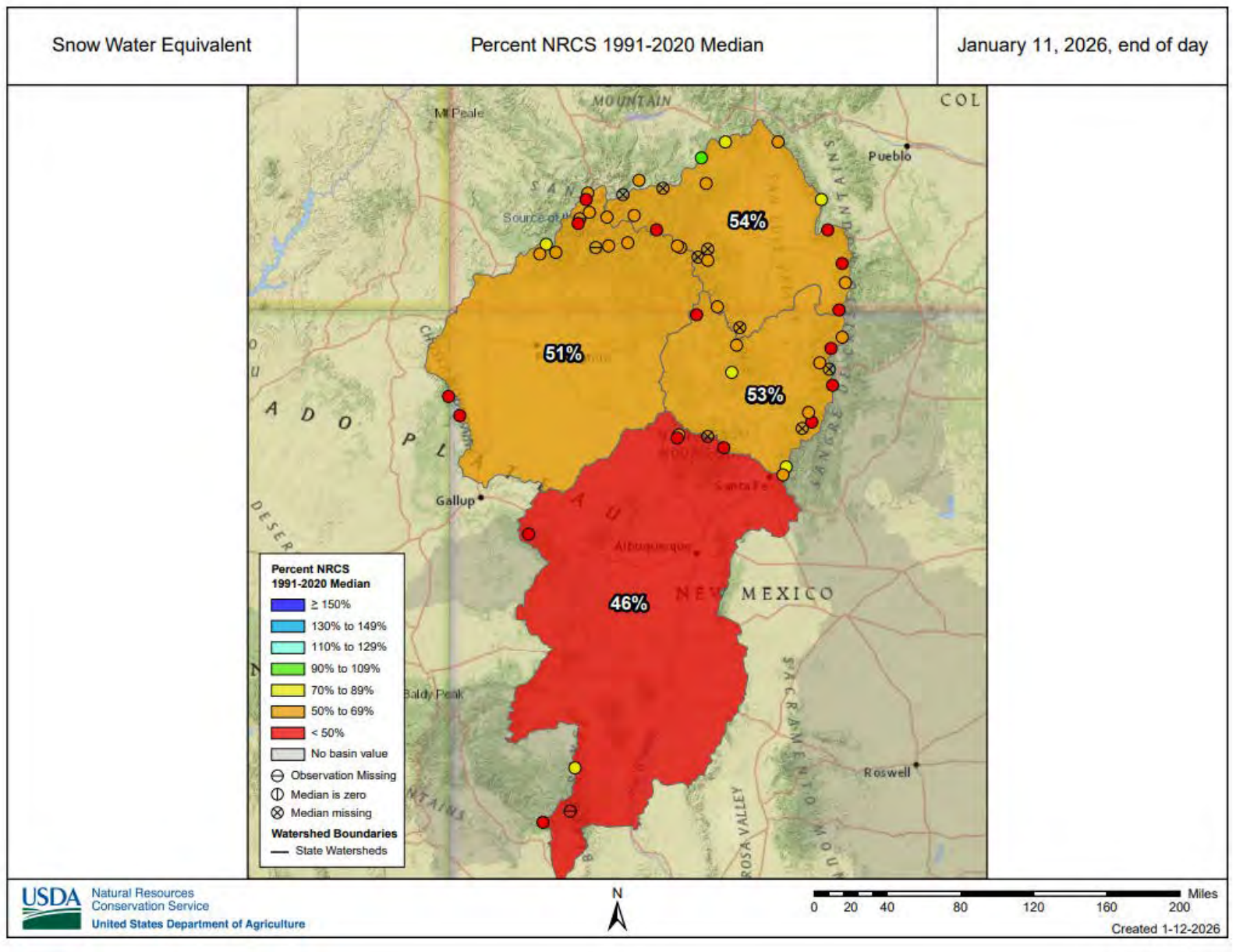
Prepared and Presented by: Anne Marken

Date: 1/12/2026



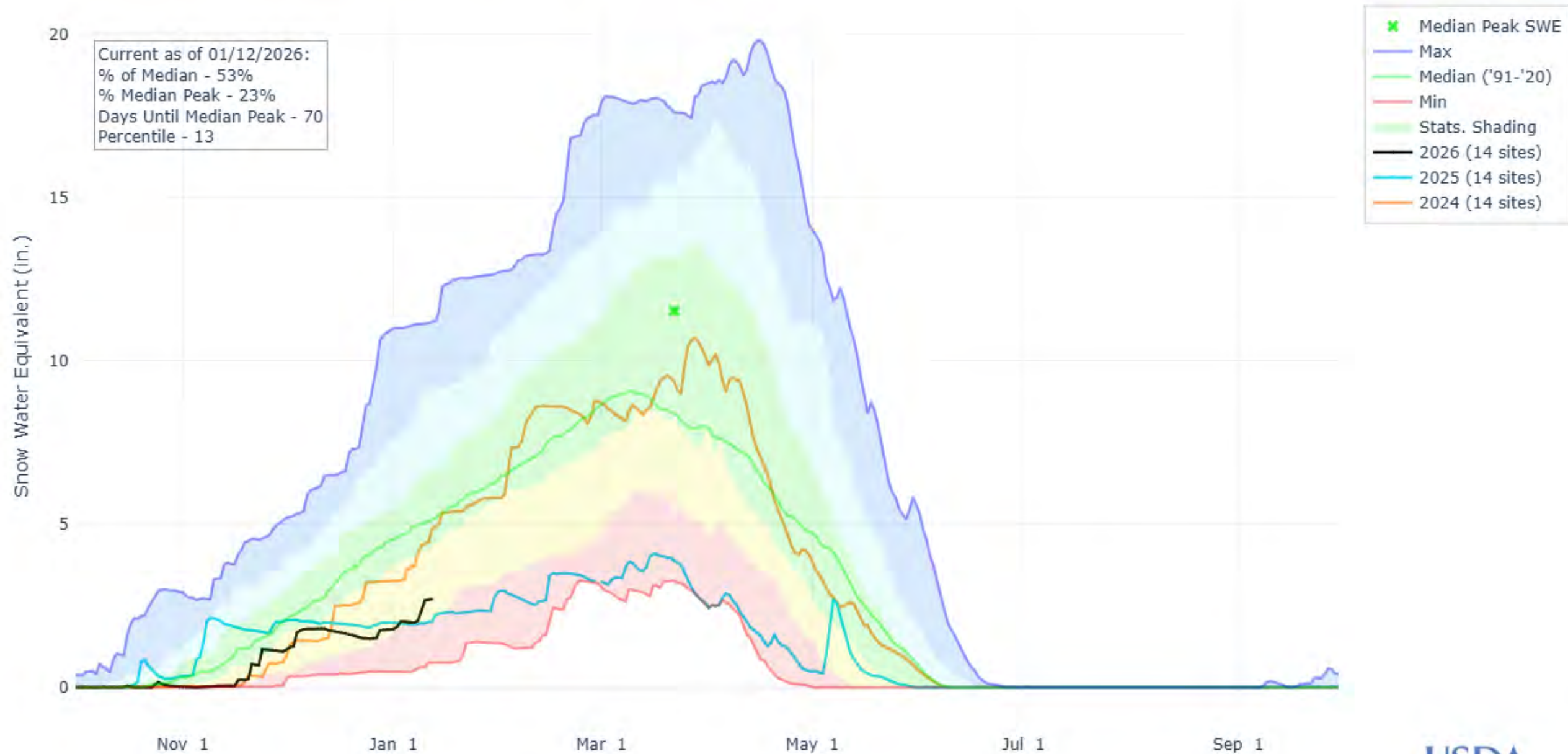


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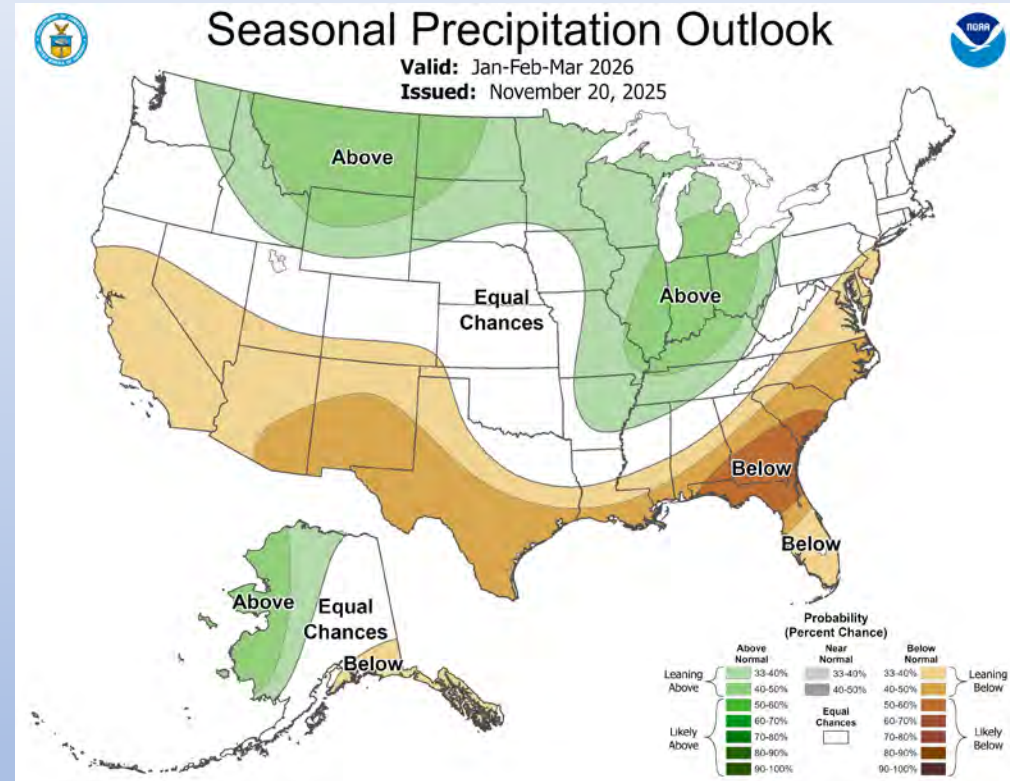
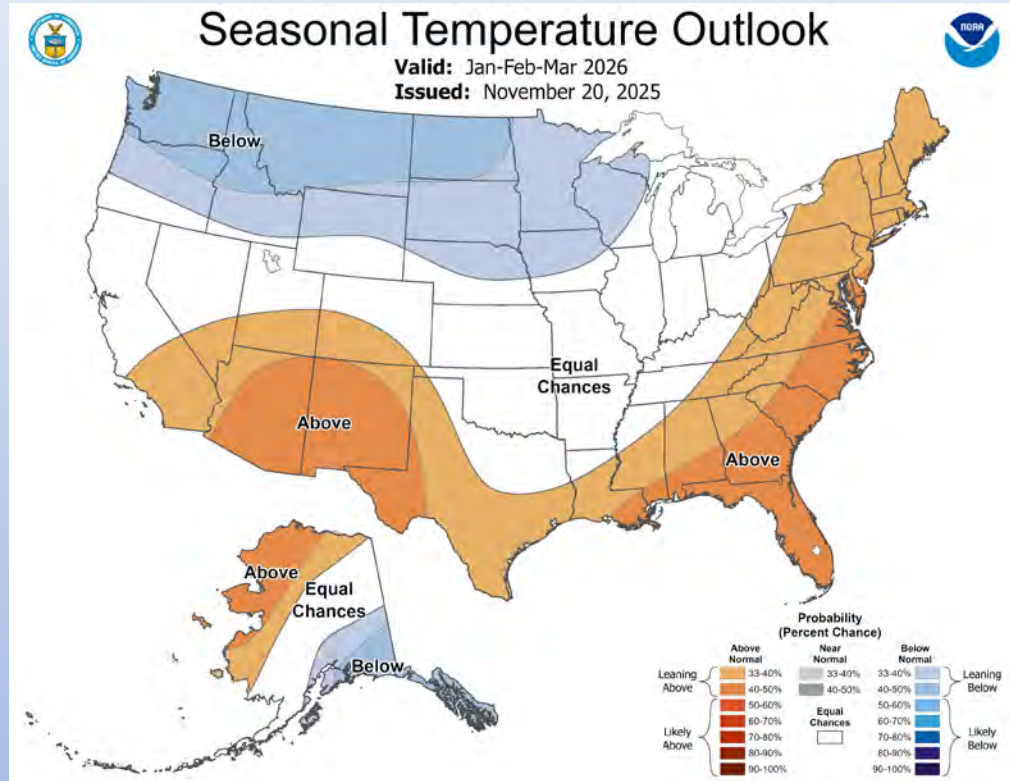


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SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT IN RIO CHAMA-UPPER RIO GRANDE



NWS Seasonal Outlook



https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/seasonal.php?lead=1



Questions?



Appendix II



New Mexico Office of the State Engineer / Interstate Stream Commission

State Updates for the MRGCD Board of Directors

State Engineer Elizabeth Anderson, P.E.

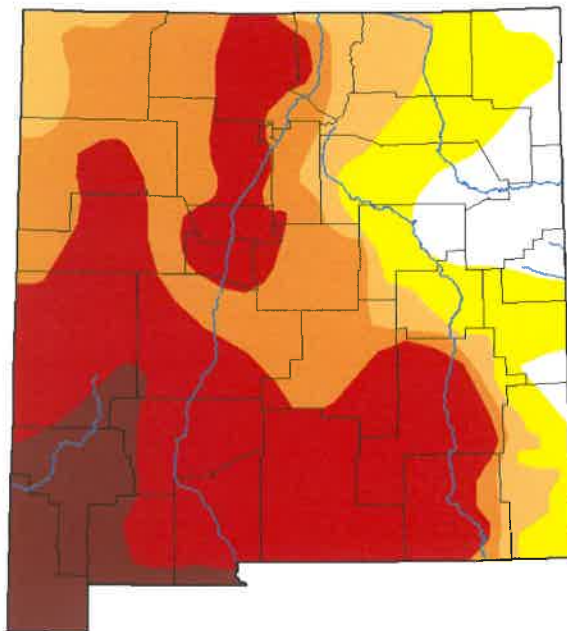
ISC Director Hannah Riseley-White

January 12, 2026

Climate and Hydrology Challenges

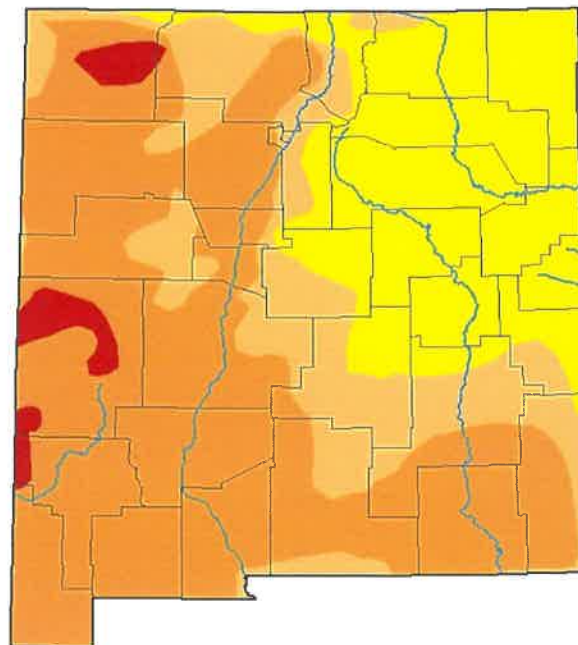
U.S. Drought Monitor

June 10, 2025



U.S. Drought Monitor

January 6, 2026

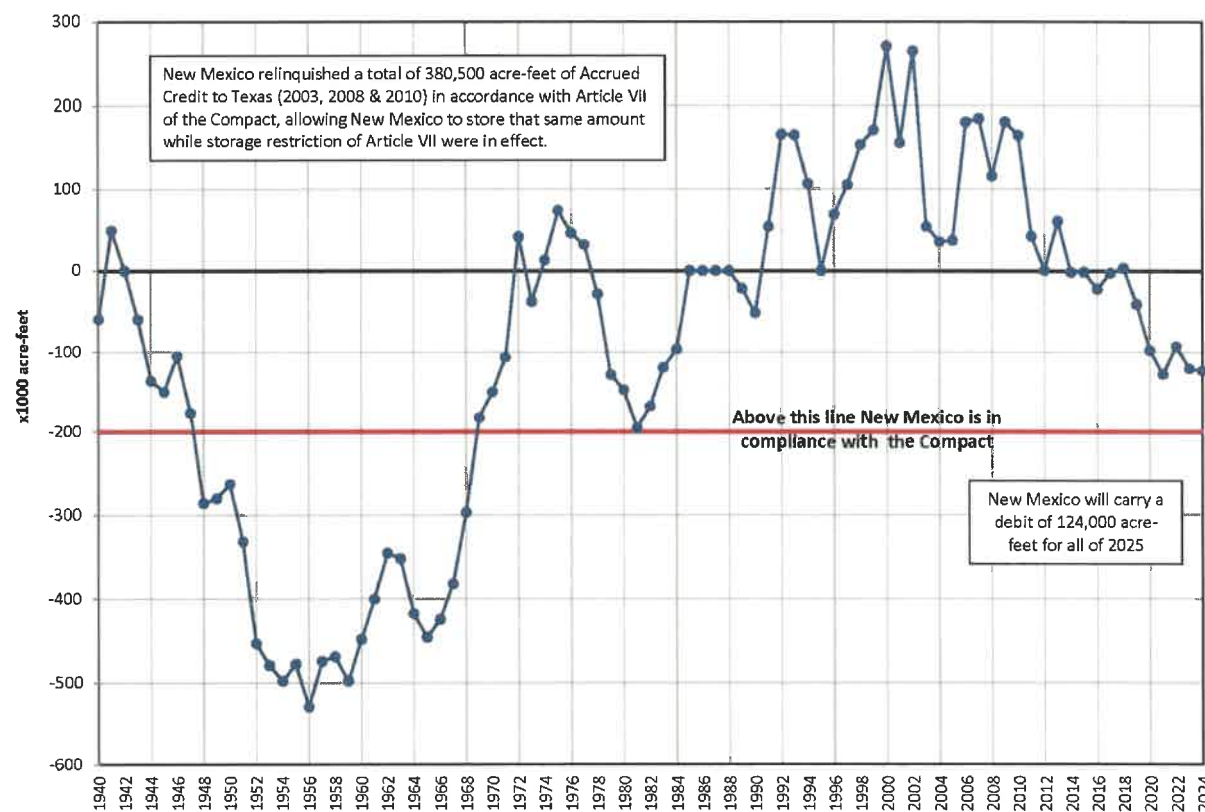


Persistent Drought Conditions (2025)

- 2025 was a very difficult year with challenging conditions throughout the Rio Grande Basin
- Most of the Middle Rio Grande Valley remains in 'severe drought' conditions as we head into the 2026 irrigation season

Rio Grande Compact Debt

Rio Grande Compact Cumulative Departures 1940 through 2025

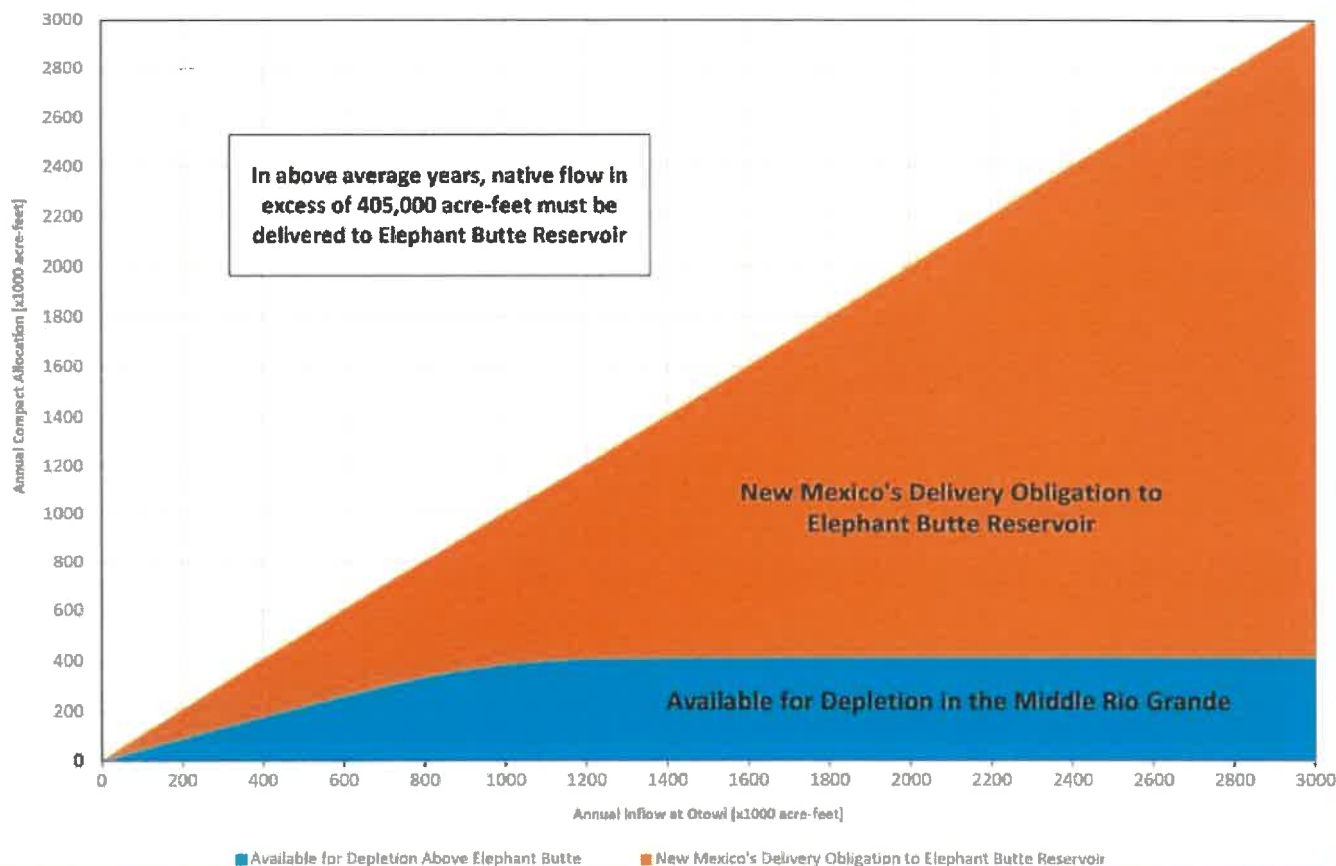


Compact Debt Requires Urgent Action

- Current debt **124,000 acre-feet**
- Compact violation = 200,000 acre-feet of debt
- Deliveries provide water for downstream users in New Mexico, Texas and Mexico
- *Compact status affects ability for **upstream storage**, critical for MRGCD water users*

Rio Grande Compact Obligation

New Mexico's Annual Middle Rio Grande Allocation Chart



Compact Limits Middle Valley Depletions

- MRG depletions capped at 405,000 acre-feet
- Increasing temperatures result in higher demands from water users and riparian vegetation
- **Creative solutions** will be needed to ensure continued compliance and ability to store upstream

All Hands on Deck Moment

OSE and ISC are taking pro-active steps to engage with all water users in the Middle Rio Grande.

Solutions will necessarily require engagement with various water use sectors:

- Agriculture
- Municipal and Domestic
- Industrial and Commercial

We must ***work together*** to both reduce depletions and increase efficiencies, including critical river channel work.

Effort will ***ensure local economies continue to thrive.***





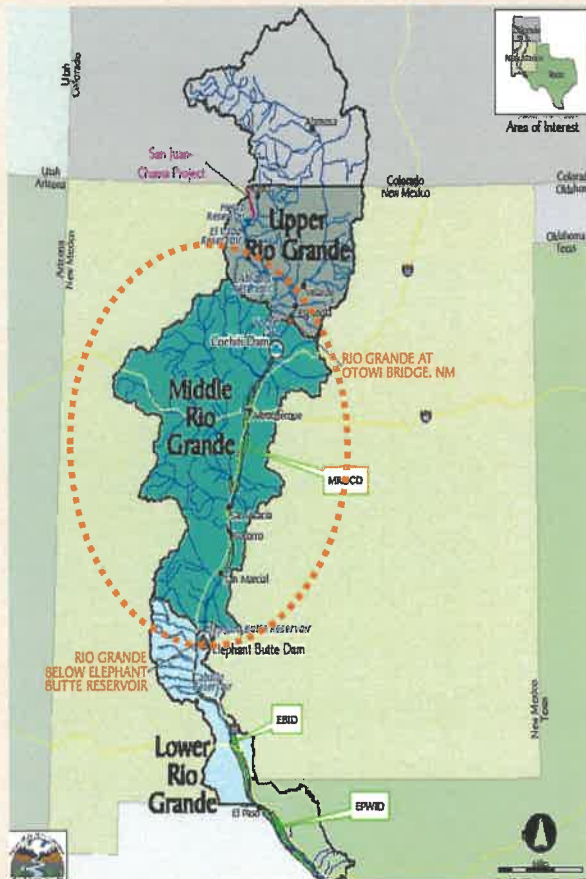
Middle Rio Grande Work Underway - OSE



- Ongoing Water Rights Administration
 - Middle Rio Grande Administrative Area (MRGAA) Guidelines based on Conjunctive Use Management
 - Continuation of policies in place (e.g. not allowing new supplemental wells to surface water)
 - Middle Valley FDR = 3 AF / acre
- Enforcement & Compliance (illegal use of groundwater & surface water, incl. pond compliance project).
- Upcoming Metering Order
- Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos Water Rights Settlement Negotiations



Major Work Underway - ISC



Middle Rio Grande

• **Active Channel Management for Improved Conveyance**

- Critical Partnerships: Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers, MRGCD
 - Cooperative Agreement with MRGCD
- State Funding = ~\$45 million, with additional asks this legislative session
- Lower San Acacia Reach Improvement: commitment to ensure that major river realignment by Reclamation improves deliveries to Elephant Butte Reservoir
 - Over \$140 million in additional funding to Reclamation for this project so far
- Rio Chama and Delta Channel: ongoing maintenance and sediment plug mitigation
- Low Flow Conveyance Channel Maintenance

• **Active Depletions Management**

- Support for MRGCD Voluntary Demand Reduction Programs

• **Planning for Improved Water Management**

- Data, Modeling, and Development of Various Management Tools
- Basin-Wide Planning for More Flexible Operations, e.g., Rio Grande Basin Study
- Depletions Reductions through Vegetation Management



2026 Legislative Session

Modernize the agency

- Retain and recruit highly qualified staff
- Catch up to 21st century technologies, including expanded measurement and metering
- Emphasis on stronger enforcement capabilities

Focus on the Rio Grande

- Invest in the Lower Rio Grande through implementation of the proposed TX v NM U.S. Supreme Court Settlement
- Keep water flowing to Elephant Butte Reservoir through more focused work in the Middle Rio Grande

Plan for New Mexico's water future

- Advance and track implementation of the 50-Year Water Action Plan
- Re-envision regional water planning through continued implementation of the 2023 Water Security Planning Act
- Prioritize further progress on Indian Water Rights Settlements

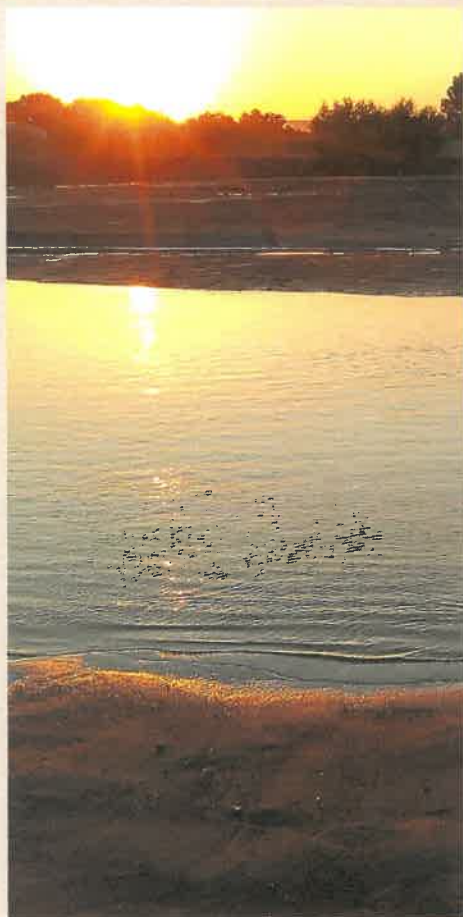




Strength through Partnership

Let us know how we can best work together.

Outcomes for New Mexico and the Middle Rio Grande Valley will depend on our ability to work together.



Rio Grande Compact Fact Sheet

The **Rio Grande Compact** is a legally binding agreement between Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas that divides the river's water among the three states. Compliance with the Compact protects water uses in New Mexico, including senior and groundwater rights. Given increasing water scarcity, the State of New Mexico is taking pro-active steps to engage New Mexicans throughout the basin to ensure our communities and economies that rely on the river can continue to thrive.



NEW MEXICO'S COMPACT OBLIGATIONS

The Compact requires New Mexico to take the following actions throughout the river:

Upper Rio Grande

Water use must be maintained at 1929 levels.

Middle Rio Grande

New Mexico must deliver a portion of river flows (this excludes imported San Juan-Chama water) entering the Middle Valley near Espanola to Elephant Butte Reservoir. In dry years, approximately 60% of flows must be delivered; in wet years, more than 80%.

Lower Rio Grande

Water stored in Elephant Butte Reservoir is delivered to users in southern New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico, with water apportioned based on the Compact and international treaties. New obligations below Elephant Butte reservoir may result based on the proposed settlement in the U.S. Supreme Court litigation. The settlement clarifies how water is apportioned below Elephant Butte, protects groundwater uses and the state's ability to administer, and provides greater long-term certainty to water users.



CHALLENGES

Compact Debt

New Mexico must carefully manage deliveries to avoid Compact debt—a running balance of under-deliveries to the Compact. If debt exceeds 200,000 acre-feet, it is considered a violation that could result in litigation. Compact rules restrict upstream storage when New Mexico carries debt (Articles VI & VIII) and when Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs hold less than 400,000 AF of usable water (Article VII).

Hydrologic Changes and Aridification

A warming, drying Southwest makes compact compliance more challenging. Reduced snowpack, variable monsoons, and higher evaporation all reduce flows in the Rio Grande. Meanwhile, demands from agriculture, riparian vegetation, sedimentation and channel conveyance issues, and domestic, commercial, municipal, and industrial (DCMI) uses, continue to rise while Compact delivery requirements remain constant.

Management Complexity

Balancing water use with available supply, while meeting compact obligations, requires collaboration, flexibility, and innovation. Together we can conserve water, improve conveyance efficiency, adapt to hydrologic variability, and protect local economies through efficient use of water in all sectors.



NEW MEXICO'S RESPONSE

Projects & Investments

- ~\$45 million in the Middle Rio Grande for channel maintenance, habitat improvements, cooperative agreements including with the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, sediment management, and water conservation programs.
- ~\$65 million in the Lower Rio Grande for groundwater conservation, stormwater management, aquifer recharge, cooperative agreements including with the Elephant Butte Irrigation District, and long-term planning with local stakeholders.

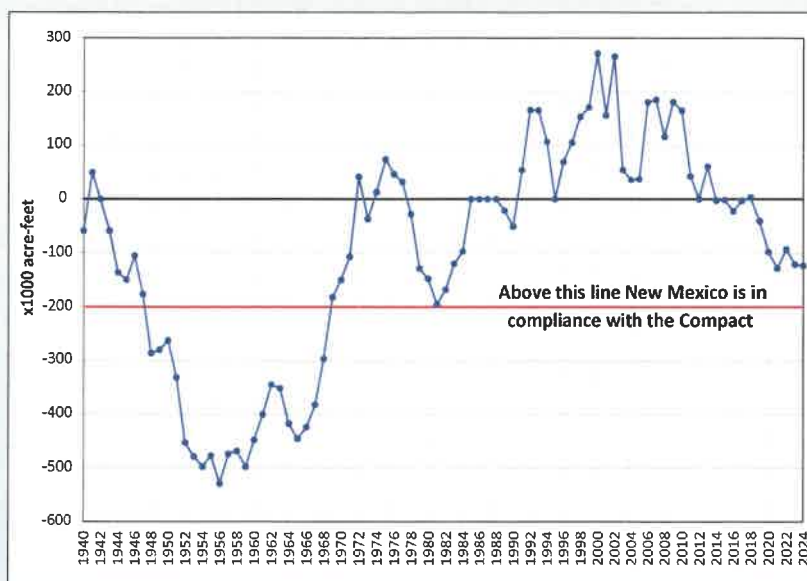
Administration & Tools

- **Conjunctive Use:** management of surface and groundwater to protect Compact deliveries.
- **Active Water Resource Management (AWRM):** proactive rules and regulations for water sharing and administration.
- **Strategic Water Reserve:** acquiring and managing water rights to support flows for Compact compliance and environmental needs.

Planning

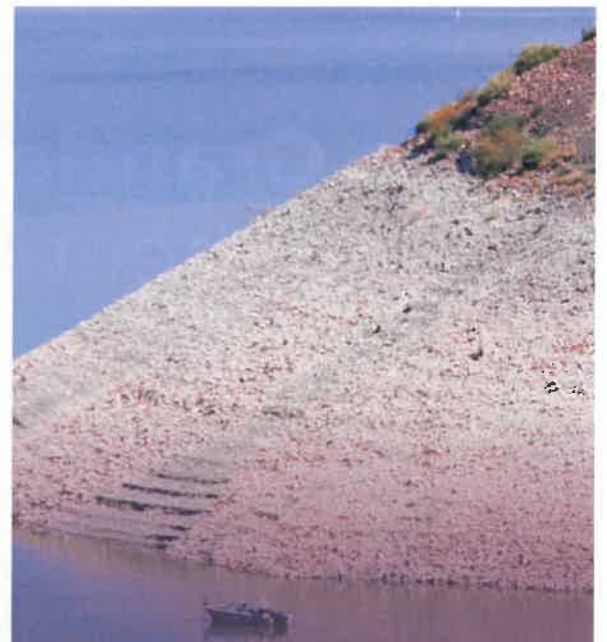
- The Water Security Planning Act modernizes regional water planning combining the best-available science, public involvement, and prioritizing funding for project implementation.

Figure 1. Rio Grande Compact Cumulative Departures from 1940 to 2024



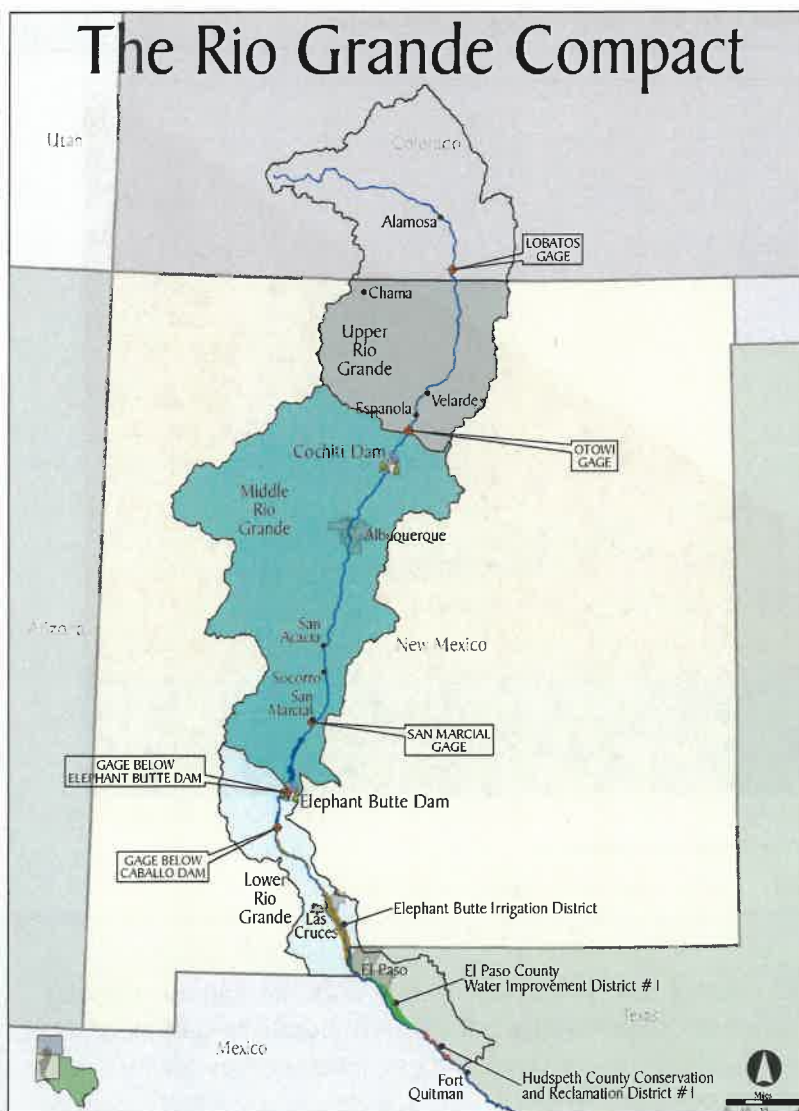
LOOKING AHEAD

Over the next 50 years, New Mexico is projected to have **25% less water** due to rising temperatures. A secure water future depends on careful management, collaborative planning, and statewide conservation. **Everyone—from farmers to municipalities to state agencies—must play a role in sustaining the Rio Grande and meeting Compact obligations. Together, we can protect this vital resource for generations to come.**



Rio Grande Compact and Administration

The **Rio Grande Compact** is a legally binding agreement between Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas that divides the river's water among the three states. Compliance with the Compact protects water uses in New Mexico, including senior and groundwater rights. Given increasing water scarcity, the State of New Mexico is taking pro-active steps to engage New Mexicans throughout the basin to ensure our communities and economies that rely on the river can continue to thrive.



RIO GRANDE COMPACT OVERVIEW

The Rio Grande Compact (Compact) is a 1938 water sharing agreement between the states of Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. It allocates the river's water among the three states and governs how water is stored, delivered, and used.

Within New Mexico, the Rio Grande basin includes three subbasins, each with distinct Compact requirements:

Upper Rio Grande (URG):

This subbasin must hold depletions of water to those that occurred around 1929. All reservoirs built after 1929 are subject to Compact restrictions under Articles VI-VIII. This subbasin includes the Rio Chama, the Rio Grande's largest New Mexico tributary, and where the San Juan-Chama Project delivers water to the Rio Grande from the Upper Colorado River basin. Imported San Juan-Chama water, which is explicitly provided for in the Compact, supplements local supply but does **not** count toward New Mexico's Compact delivery obligations. By law San Juan-Chama water must be fully consumed in the Middle Rio Grande.

Middle Rio Grande (MRG):

New Mexico must deliver a share of the annual Rio Grande flows that pass the Otowi gage to Elephant Butte Reservoir for downstream use by New Mexico, Texas and Mexico.

Native flows originate in the Rio Grande basin; native water is differentiated from imported water from the San Juan-Chama Project.

- In dry years, 60% of the flow past Otowi must be delivered to Elephant Butte Reservoir.
- In wet years, more than 80% of native Rio Grande flows past Otowi must be delivered to Elephant Butte Reservoir.

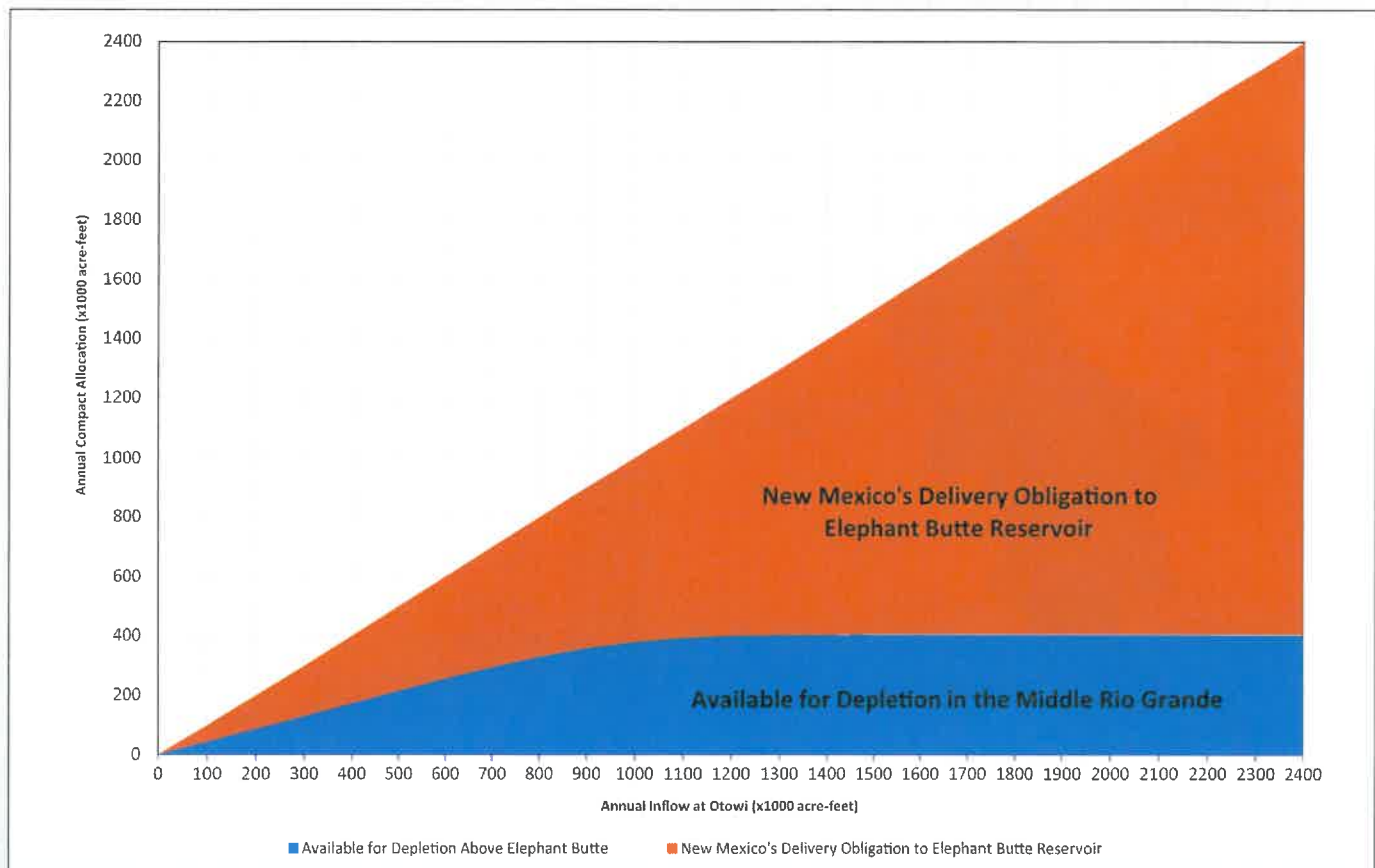
- Native water consumption in the MRG is capped at 405,000 **acre-feet per year**, regardless of the flows past Otowi.

An acre-foot is the amount of water that would cover one acre of land to a depth of one foot.

- Any precipitation between Otowi and Elephant Butte Reservoir - typically monsoonal precipitation - can be used in the MRG, may contribute to Compact deliveries, and does not affect New Mexico's delivery obligation.
- Over-deliveries of native water to Elephant Butte Reservoir result in credits to New Mexico, while underdeliveries result in Compact debt.

Figure 1 shows the annual maximum volume of water that can be depleted within the Middle Rio Grande. The remainder of which must be delivered to Elephant Butte Reservoir for users in the LRG in New Mexico, Texas and Mexico.

Figure 1. Rio Grande Compact: Annual Middle Rio Grande Allocation



Lower Rio Grande (LRG):

Water stored in Elephant Butte Reservoir is apportioned based on the Compact and international treaties. New obligations may result based on the proposed settlement in the U.S. Supreme Court litigation. The settlement clarifies how water is apportioned, protects groundwater uses and the state's ability to administer, and provides greater long-term certainty to water users.

CHALLENGES: COMPACT DEBT, ARIDIFICATION, AND INCREASED DEPLETIONS

Why Compact Debt Matters

Flexibility in managing upstream reservoir storage depends on Compact status.

When Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs together hold less than 400,000 acre-feet of usable water, or when New Mexico carries a Compact debt, upstream storage of native Rio Grande water in post-1929 reservoirs is restricted (see FIGURE 2).

- **Compact Violation Threshold:** A debt exceeding 200,000 acre-feet constitutes a violation.
- **2025 Status:** New Mexico's accrued underdelivery, or debt, is approximately 124,000 acre-feet, leaving a narrow margin before reaching the litigation threshold. If our debt reaches 200,000 acre-feet, administration would be necessary to remedy the debt, such as curtailment of water uses in the middle valley.

If a state violates Compact terms, case law affirms that the Compact represents the most senior water right — meaning all other uses, with the exception of tribal water rights, are subject to its fulfillment.

- When New Mexico is in an accrued Compact debt, upstream reservoirs constructed after 1929 shall retain that amount in storage, which is subject to call from Texas in January of the following year.

—Compact Articles VI and VIII

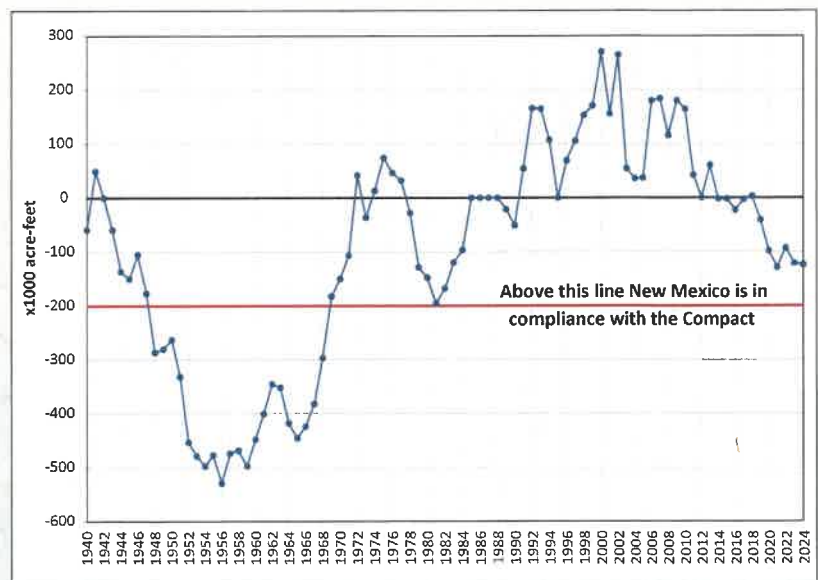
- When Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs have less than 400,000 acre-feet of Usable Water in storage, New Mexico cannot store native water in upstream reservoirs constructed after 1929. Usable Water is native Rio Grande water, exclusive of credit water, in Project Storage and available for irrigation demands in New Mexico, Texas and Mexico.

—Compact Article VII

- Compact Violation Trigger = 200,000 acre-feet of accrued debt

—Compact Article VI

Figure 2. Rio Grande Compact Cumulative Departures from 1940 to 2024

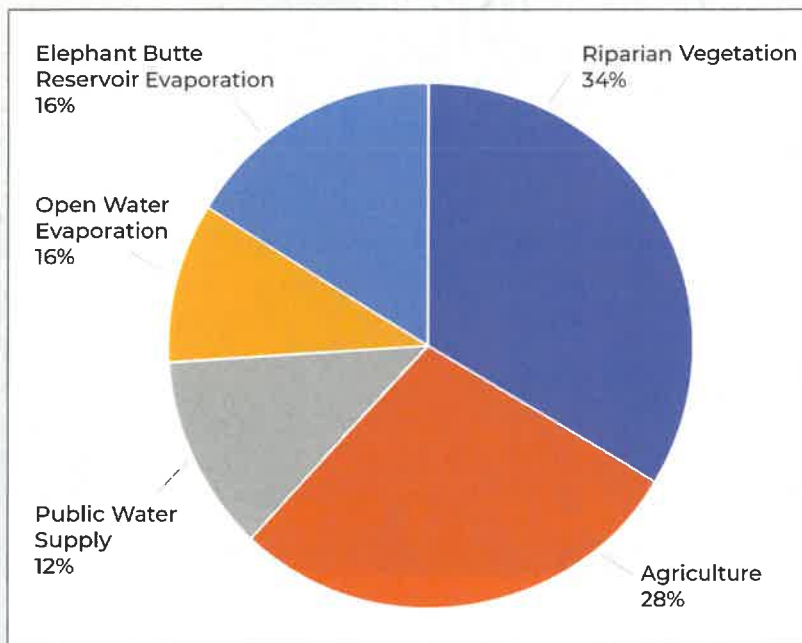


GROWING PRESSURE ON A LIMITED RESOURCE

Managing debt is becoming increasingly difficult. Less snowpack, hotter temperatures, and higher evaporation all reduce river flow. There has also been variable monsoon rainfall over the last 10 years. At the same time, water demand across agriculture, riparian ecosystems, and cities has not decreased. These pressures have made compact debts more difficult to manage.

By **2070**, New Mexico is projected to have **25% less available water** in our rivers and recharging our aquifers due to increasing temperatures. Effective management requires administrative action, channel conveyance improvements, and long-term adaptation. (see **FIGURE 3**).

Figure 3. Average Annual Middle Rio Grande Depletions by Sector 2002-2021 (from Upper Rio Grande Operations Model)





SOLUTIONS: PROJECTS, PLANNING, AND ADMINISTRATION

Given the many challenges facing New Mexico in the Rio Grande, including aridification, changes in precipitation patterns, river channel limitations, and increases in depletions, the State needs a multi-pronged approach to more effectively manage and balance water use with available supply, while meeting compact obligations.

PROJECTS AND INVESTMENTS

Middle Rio Grande

Through ~\$45 million in investments (2023–2024 legislative sessions), New Mexico is advancing multi-benefit projects that support Compact compliance, habitat health, and infrastructure resilience:

- **Active Channel Management** for improved conveyance and ecological function
- **Partnerships** with federal agencies (Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)
- **Cooperative Agreement** with the **Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD)**
- **Voluntary Depletion Reduction Programs** to reduce agricultural water use
- **Elephant Butte Delta Maintenance** and sediment mitigation
- **Sediment and Channel Management** particularly in the Rio Chama basin
- **Modeling and Data Improvements** to inform decision-making
- **Low-Flow Conveyance Channel Enhancements** to more efficiently convey water, including return flows from MRGCD, to Elephant Butte Reservoir

Lower Rio Grande

Through ~\$65 million in investments (2023–2025 legislative sessions), the state is implementing programs to manage depletions, develop new supplies, and strengthen local partnerships:

- **Groundwater Conservation:**
 - 6,191 acres enrolled in voluntary leasing agreements through the end of 2025
 - Over 8,300 acres included in applications to participate in the program beginning in 2026
- **Groundwater Acquisitions** for Compact and aquifer sustainability
- **Development of New Supplies** aquifer recharge, brackish water development, stormwater capture, and potential regional water importation
- **Stakeholder Engagement** developing long-term solutions through cooperative input
- **Cooperative Agreement** with the **Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID)**
- **Building the NMISC/NMOSE Team** in Las Cruces to support implementation and oversight

PLANNING

The **Water Security Planning Act** — passed unanimously — modernizes regional water planning to prepare for a hotter, drier future. Regional plans will:

- Incorporate **robust public involvement**, including major water rights holders
- Be **grounded in best-available science and modeling**
- **Link directly to implementation** through prioritization of projects for funding
- **Build local capacity** for proactive water management
- Adhere to **State water law** including priority administration

This framework fulfills recommendations from the **2022 Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force** and supports the **50-Year Water Action Plan**.

ADMINISTRATION + TOOLS

Conjunctive Management

New Mexico has led the nation in conjunctive surface and groundwater management since 1956. State courts affirm the State Engineer's authority to coordinate these resources to ensure Compact compliance — including through offset requirements (*City of Albuquerque v. Reynolds*, 1962-NMSC-173).

Active Water Resource Management (AWRM)

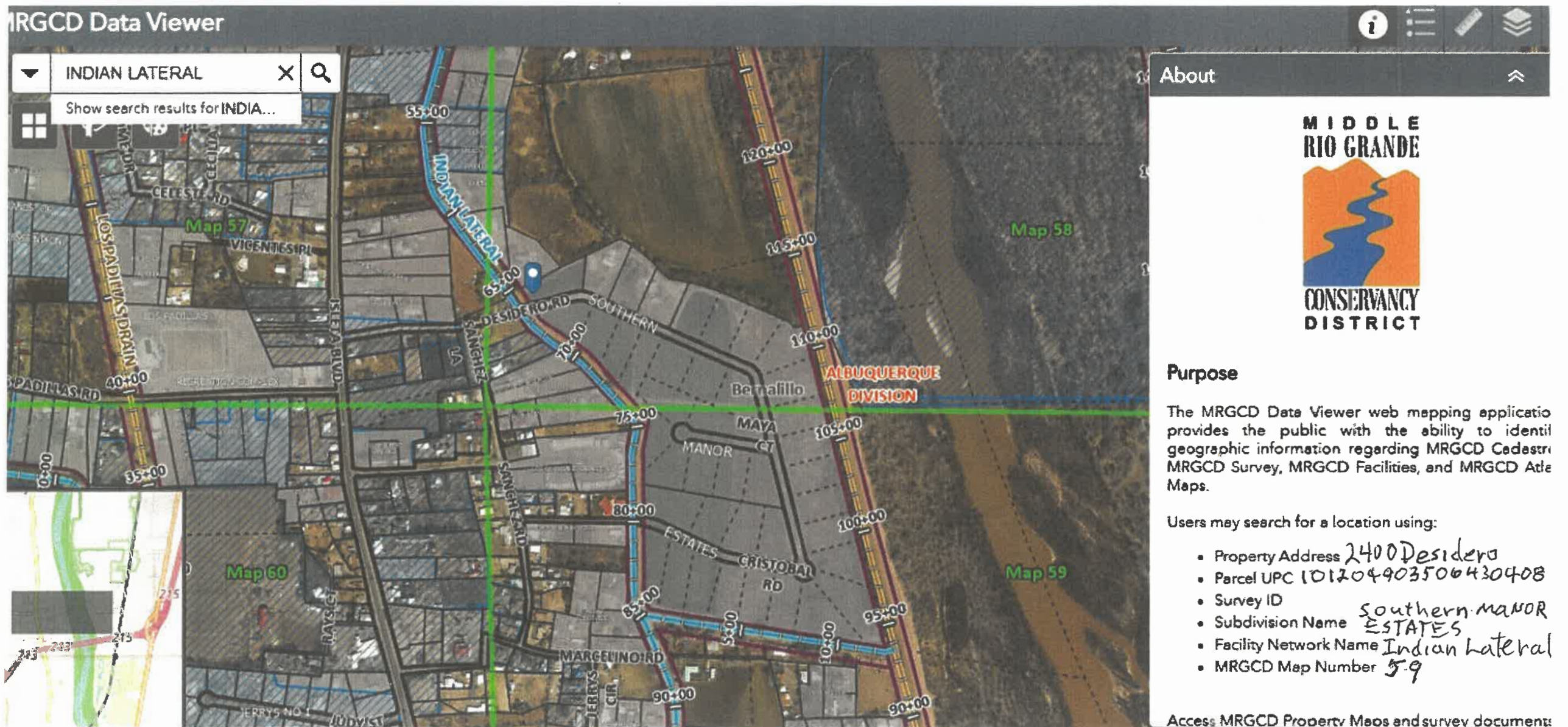
AWRM empowers the State Engineer to enforce water laws and manage use proactively — even in basins without completed adjudications. This will be one of the tools available to the State Engineer to reduce depletions to address our compact debt. It allows for the State Engineer to meter and limit water uses, but also allows for water users to develop alternative management plans that allow for cooperative water sharing. AWRM can be used to reduce depletions while providing flexibility and certainty for users.

Strategic Water Reserve

The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission maintains the Strategic Water Reserve — a vital tool to acquire, lease, and manage water rights that support both Compact deliveries and environmental flows. This authority is established under NMSA 1978, § 72-14-3.3.



Appendix III



JOIN THE SVRAA WATER RIGHT PROTEST

NOTICE is hereby given that on September 15, 2025, Mesa Verde Farms, LLC, and Kathleen Mae Williams, Mike Mechenbier, Jon E. Mechenbier et al., 3211 Highway 47, Los Lunas, NM 87031, filed with the **STATE ENGINEER** Application No. (SD-03108 into RG-10260 et al.)-T for Permit to Temporarily Change Point of Diversion and Place of Use from Surface Water to Groundwater within the Middle Rio Grande Underground Basin, in the State of New Mexico.

Valencia and Bernalillo are the counties affected by the diversion and in which the water has been or will be put to beneficial use. This notice is ordered to be published in the *Valencia County News-Bulletin* and the *Albuquerque Journal*.

The applicants propose to discontinue the diversion and use of a farm delivery requirement (FDR) of 134.40 acre-feet per annum of surface water, inclusive of a consumptive irrigation requirement (CIR) of 94.08 acre-feet per annum, from the Indian Lateral, with a point of diversion on the Rio Grande at the Angostura Diversion (SP-1690-2), on land owned by MRGCD, at a point where X = 363,856 meters and Y = 3,916,198 meters intersect, UTM Zone 13N, NAD 1983, for the irrigation of 44.8 acres of land, described as Southern Manor Estates on MRGCD Map 59, Lot 1 & Lots 5-23 of Block 1, and Lots 1-18 of Block 2, as designated on the plat of Corrected and Amended Southern Manor Estates, Document 95-054858 in Vol. 95c, Folio 198, Bernalillo County, NM, owned by Kathleen Mae Williams, Gerard Michael Mechenbier, John E. Mechenbier, Mark C. Mechenbier, and Jeffrey R. Mechenbier, located within Sections 1, 35, and 36, Township 8 and 9 North, Range 2 East, NMPM. The move-from lands are generally located 0.5-mile northeast of the intersection of Interstate 25 and NM Hwy 314, Bernalillo County, New Mexico.

The applicants further propose to temporarily commence the use of a farm delivery requirement (FDR) of 134.40 acre-feet per annum of groundwater, inclusive of consumptive irrigation requirement (CIR) of 94.08 acre-feet per annum, from three (3) existing, permitted wells owned by Mesa Verde Farms, LLC described as:

• • • • The move-to lands and wells are located on land owned by Mesa Verde Farms, LLC, and generally located west of Interstate 25 and east of the Belen High Line Canal. The north boundary is adjacent to Interstate 25 Exit 190, near Mile marker 190, and the south boundary is approximately 6 miles south of exit 190 near mile marker 196, Valencia County, New Mexico.

This application is filed under the Water-Use Leasing Act, NMSA 1978, §72-6-1 through §72-6-7, and is a temporary change. No new appropriation of water is sought by this application. Application is made for this permit that, if granted, would commence on March 1, 2026, and expire on February 28, 2027. Upon termination or expiration of the desired permit, the subject water right will automatically revert to the original move-from point of diversion, place, and purpose of use.

To view the application and supporting documentation, contact the State Engineer District 1 Office at (505) 383-4300, to arrange a date and time for an appointment. The District 1 Office is located at 5550 San Antonio Drive NE, Albuquerque, NM, 87109.

Any person, firm or corporation or other entity asserting standing to file objections or protests shall do so in writing (objection must be legible, signed, and include the writer's complete name, phone number, email address, and mailing address). If the protest does not include the complete name, phone number, email address, and mailing address, it may be deemed invalid and not accepted for filing unless Protester provides with the protest an affidavit stating that it does not have one of the above-listed elements/requirements (phone number, mailing address, email address, etc.). The objection to the approval of the application must be based on: (1) Detriment; if detriment, you must specifically identify your water rights; and/or (2) Public Welfare/Conservation of Water; if public welfare or conservation of water within the state of New Mexico, you shall be required to provide evidence showing how you will be substantially and specifically affected. The written protest must be filed, in triplicate, with the State Engineer, 5550 San Antonio Dr., Albuquerque, NM 87109, on or before Friday, February 13, 2026. Facsimiles (faxes) will be accepted as a valid protest if the hard copy is hand-delivered or mailed and postmarked within 24-hours of the facsimile. Mailing postmark will be used to validate the 24-hour period. Protests can be faxed to the Office of the State Engineer at (505) 383-4030. If no valid protest or objection is filed, the State Engineer will evaluate the application in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 72 NMSA 1978.

Contact: Santiago Maestas, President maestasy@hotmail.com

**BEFORE THE STATE ENGINEER
STATE OF NEW MEXICO**

In the Matter of:

**APPLICATION OF MESA VERDE FARMS, LLC, AND)
KATHLEEN MAE WILLIAMS, MIKE MECHENBIER,)
AND JON E. MECHENBIER ETAL.)**

**For Permit to Change Point of
Diversion and Place of Use of Surface Water**

**) Application No. SD-03108
) Into No. RG-10260 et al -T**

**FORMAL PROTEST OF APPLICATION FOR PERMIT TO
CHANGE POINT OF DIVERSION AND PLACE OF USE OF WATER**

COMES NOW, _____ hereby protests Applicants' above-cited application for permit to change point of diversion and place of use of water, for the following reasons.

A. Standing: I have standing to file this protest because pursuant to automatic standing to protest under §72-12-3(D) NMSA 1978. The Indian Lateral is fed from the Angostura diversion of the Rio Grande where the MRGCD diverts surface water from the Rio Grande for both the applicants and I.

B. Impairment of Water Rights: This transfer will substantially and specifically impair my water rights because it will reduce the available water supply as follows: The above application will transfer surface water from the Angostura diversion point to an underground place of diversion point, adversely affecting the availability and supply of water to the the South Valley of the County of Bernalillo due to a reduction in flow of water from our mutual point of diversion. This will be especially detrimental to me during times of shortage, which have occurred and will continue to occur in the future.

C. Detrimental to Public Welfare: This application will be detrimental to the public welfare because it will negatively impact MRGCD administration and operation of the MRGCD and degrade the historic cultural values and traditions of the acequia communities in the South Valley Regional Association of Acequias and the traditional cultural and religious practices of the Pueblo of Isleta. In addition, the loss of surface water rights in the area also negatively affects my property value and results in loss of agricultural lands which are subdivided and developed. The subdivisions and developments do not have any vested interest in maintaining acequias as they run through those properties and many acequia users are having to fight to ensure that these historic ditch rights are respected and not infringed upon as water rights are ultimately permanently lost through these so-called temporary transfers.

D. Contrary to Conservation of Water in the State of New Mexico: I have been working diligently to improve infrastructure with community cooperation of other users to improve efficiency and conserve water resources for the future. Removing water from our point of diversion to serve properties which have no Pre-1907 water rights and is already being irrigated by surface water from the MRGCD is wasteful and will result in less water being used beneficially in the MRGCD overall and specifically on the lands served by the Angostura diversion including my property.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the State Engineer deny the applicant's application to avoid impairment of my water right, the public welfare, and conservation of water in the State of New Mexico..

SUBMITTED BY:

Print Name

Signature
ADDRESS:

Albuquerque, NM _____
zip code

Phone Number

E-mail

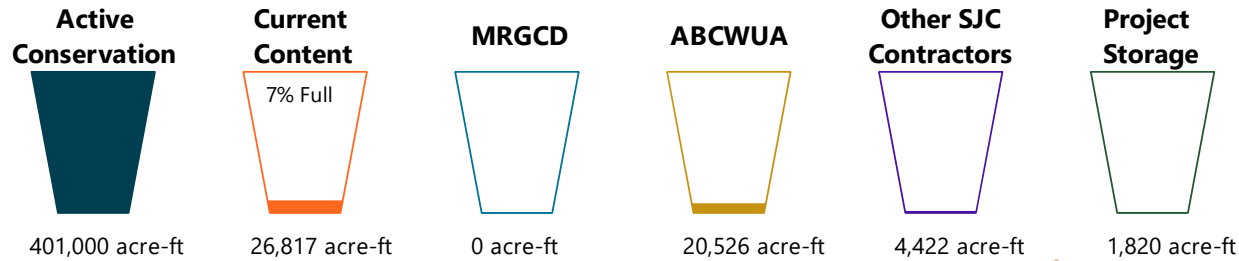
Appendix IV Reservoir Storage Status

Jan 6, 2026 data

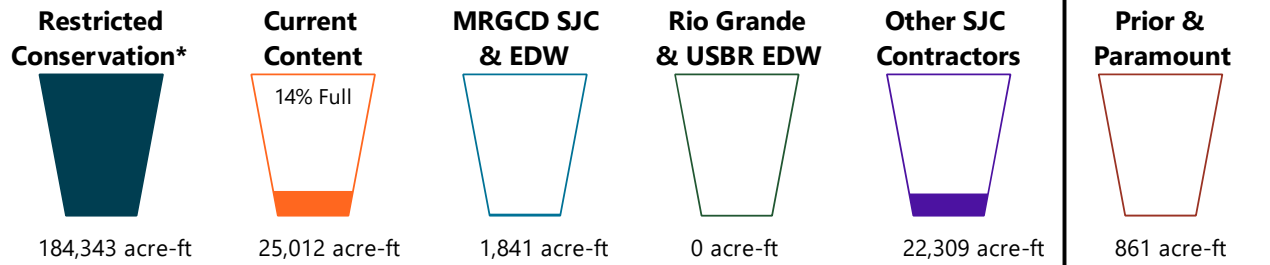


— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

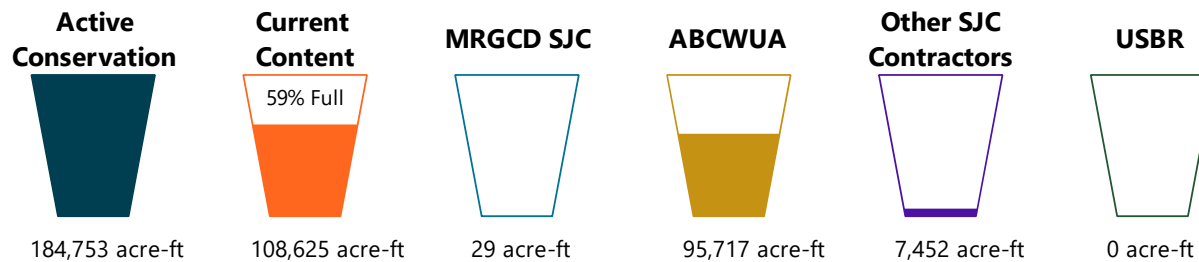
Heron



El Vado



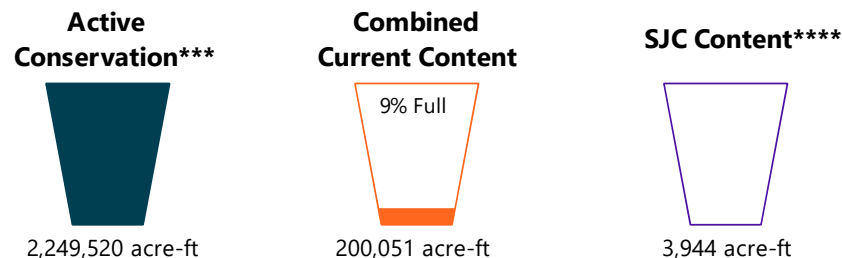
Abiquiu



Cochiti



Elephant Butte and Caballo



* Currently restricted to 25,678 acre-ft.

** Includes storage in both El Vado and Abiquiu

*** Varies by time of year. Reported number is for 04/01 - 09/30.

**** Max San Juan-Chama storage in Elephant Butte is 50,000 acre-ft.

Total reservoir content may include incidental storage of water in transit.

MRGCD BOARD MEETING (1-7-2026)

1. Heron Summary

Content:	26,817	ac-ft	(1/7/2026)
Azotea Tunnel:	0	cfs	
Total SJ-C Inflow (2026):	0	ac-ft	
Currently Releasing:	30	cfs	
Current MRGCD Storage:	0	ac-ft	

2. El Vado Summary

Content:	25,012	ac-ft	(1/7/2026)
Rio Grande Storage:	861	ac-ft	
MRGCD SJ-C Storage:	1,841	ac-ft	
P&P:	861	ac-ft	
Other SJ-C Contractors:	22,310	ac-ft	
Current Release:	92	cfs	RG Inflow: 40 - 75 cfs

3. Abiquiu Summary

Content:	108,625	ac-ft	(1/7/2026)
MRGCD SJ-C Storage:	30	ac-ft	
P&P:	170	ac-ft	

Total Supplemental Water Released (2026): 0 ac-ft

Total Precipitation for Water Year 2026 to 1/7 (% Median; NRCS SNOTEL)

Rio Chama Basin.....	81%
Upper Rio Grande Basin.....	63%
Sangre de Cristo Basin.....	71%
Jemez Basin.....	80%
San Juan River Basin.....	114%

Appendix V

CESOSS PLAN OF ACTION – 2025-26



JANUARY 12

CESOSS

Jorge Garcia, Director

www.cesos.org



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the Center for Social Sustainable Systems (CESOSS) Plan of Action for 2025–2026. The plan outlines CESOSS’s community-based initiatives focused on connecting residents of the Middle Rio Grande region to land and water traditions through education, outreach, and culturally grounded programming. Key activities during this period include the development of an Acequia Education and Agricultural Site at Valle Vista elementary, Acequia Walk and Talks, the Primera Agua event, and coordination of the Landmarks Project. These initiatives are implemented in collaboration with partners such as the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) and are aligned with culturally relevant educational goals, including those reflected in the Martinez-Yazzie mandate.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to document CESOSS activities and planned efforts for the 2025–2026 period. CESOSS is a community-based nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and preserving land- and water-based ways of life in the Middle Rio Grande region of Albuquerque and surrounding communities. This Plan of Action reflects CESOSS’s commitment to education, cultural continuity, and community engagement as pathways for strengthening social sustainability and environmental stewardship.

KEY INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1.1. Valle Vista Acequia Education and Agricultural Site

CESOSS completed the development of an Acequia Education and Agricultural Site to support the MRGCD Outdoor Education Classroom and Family Resource Center. Activities in 2025 included site preparation, planting efforts in July and September, and the establishment of a cover crop in December. Planned activities for 2026 include a seed blessing in February and ongoing field maintenance in March and August. The site will serve as a venue for community events, teacher professional development, and youth-focused after-school programming. See Appendix A

1.2. Acequia Walk and Talks

CESOSS organized Acequia Walk and Talks at five primary acequias in the Atrisco area, with an average participation of approximately 25 community members per acequia. These events engaged residents from the South Valley, the North Valley, Valencia County, and Northern New Mexico. For 2026, CESOSS plans to invite local Comisionados to help lead these events, with potential participation from MRGCD staff to provide technical and historical context. See Appendix B

1.3. Primera Agua Event

The 2025 Primera Agua event was organized as a pre-celebration leading into the San Isidro festivities. Building on this foundation, CESOSS plans to invite community leaders from the Pueblo of Atlixco, Mexico, to engage in dialogue with the Atrisco community during the 2026 event, including the incorporation of a community ceremonial dance and celebration. See Appendix C

1.4. Landmarks Project

CESOSS is coordinating the Landmarks Project, which aims to install interpretive signage along the Pajarito Acequia to honor its historical, cultural, and agricultural significance. See Plan Attached.

LOGIC SNAPSHOT: (Activities → Outcomes → Community Benefit)

Activities

CESOSS implements community-based educational programming, including acequia site development, walk-and-talk events, cultural celebrations, youth education initiatives, and historical interpretation projects.

Short-Term Outcomes

Participants increase their understanding of acequia systems, local agricultural traditions, and water stewardship practices. Community members gain access to culturally relevant educational spaces and opportunities for intergenerational learning.

Intermediate Outcomes

Stronger relationships develop between community members, local institutions, and land- and water-based knowledge holders. Youth and families demonstrate increased engagement with land and water traditions.

Community Benefit (Long-Term)

Communities in the Middle Rio Grande region are better equipped to sustain agricultural practices, protect water resources, and preserve cultural knowledge systems that contribute to long-term social and environmental sustainability.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2025–2026 Plan of Action advances the CESOSS mission by strengthening community engagement and preserving cultural connections to land and water. The initiatives outlined in this report demonstrate strong community participation and alignment with regional land and water stewardship goals.

Recommendations include:

-
- Continuing collaboration with MRGCD on the Acequia Education and Agricultural Site and Acequia Walk and Talks.
 - Advancing cultural exchange opportunities through the planned involvement of community leaders from the Pueblo of Atlixco and Atrisco in the Primera Agua event.
 - Sustaining flexible, community-responsive programming that can adapt to emerging needs and opportunities.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

CESOSS activities during the 2025–2026 period directly support and complement the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District’s strategic priorities related to agricultural viability, water stewardship, public education, and community engagement within the District’s service area. CESOSS’s role is supportive and educational in nature and does not replace or duplicate MRGCD operational or regulatory responsibilities.

Priority 1: Preservation of Agricultural Lands and Traditional Irrigation Systems

CESOSS programming supports awareness and understanding of acequia systems as living infrastructure essential to agricultural sustainability in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. Through educational events, interpretive projects, and site-based learning, CESOSS helps reinforce the cultural and historical significance of traditional irrigation practices.

Aligned CESOSS Activities

- Acequia Education and Agricultural Site development and maintenance
- Acequia Walk and Talks
- Landmarks Project along the Pajarito Acequia

Priority 2: Water Stewardship and Ecosystem Resilience

CESOSS initiatives emphasize community knowledge of water systems, seasonal cycles, and stewardship practices that contribute to long-term ecosystem resilience. Educational content is framed to complement MRGCD’s technical expertise while remaining accessible and culturally grounded.

Aligned CESOSS Activities

- Public workshops and walk-and-talk events featuring historical and ecological context

-
- Outreach materials addressing land and water stewardship
 - Collaboration with MRGCD staff when appropriate for technical information sharing

Priority 3: Public Education and Community Engagement

CESOSS serves as a community-based partner supporting MRGCD's goal of increasing public understanding of irrigation systems, water management, and agricultural practices. CESOSS focuses on relationship-building, culturally responsive outreach, and inclusive engagement.

Aligned CESOSS Activities

- Community workshops and forums
- School-based and youth-focused educational programming
- Cultural events such as Primera Agua that foster community dialogue

Priority 4: Youth Engagement and Future Generations of Farmers and Stewards

CESOSS programming introduces youth to land- and water-based knowledge systems in ways that support awareness, interest, and cultural continuity without establishing workforce or employment guarantees.

Aligned CESOSS Activities

- Acequia Education Program youth components
- After-school and curriculum-based outreach (e.g., Ciclos de la Tierra)
- Intergenerational learning opportunities at community events

MEASURABLE INDICATORS

The following indicators are intended for descriptive reporting purposes only. They document scope, reach, and engagement and are not intended to function as performance benchmarks, regulatory metrics, or outcome guarantees.

Activity-Level Indicators (Outputs)

- Number of community workshops, walk-and-talk events, or public forums conducted
 - Community Workshops: 2 Hybrid
 - Acequia Walks and Talks: 5 events with average of 25 attendees
 - ~ 7 acequia planning and envisioning meetings
- Number of educational or cultural events hosted or co-hosted

-
- Hosted 4 agricultural events (over 150 community members participated in these events)
 - Co-hosted 1 Teachers network (20 teachers)
 - Number of schools, community groups, or partner organizations engaged
 - 1 local school engaged in pilot project
 - 7 Partner organizations engaged
 - 7 Community groups engaged
 - Development or maintenance milestones for educational sites or interpretive materials
 - 4 signs will be developed, along with community participation and the artist community

Participation and Outreach Indicators

- Estimated number of participants attending CESOSS-supported events
 - +25 per event with an impact of over five hundred individuals plus our online outreach community
- General participant demographics (e.g., youth, families, educators), reported in aggregate
 - Demographics: Youth, local families, local irrigators, and educators
- Geographic areas within the MRGCD service area reached through programming
 - CESOSS serves schools anywhere in the state with an emphasis on the Middle Rio Grande Region

Engagement and Learning Indicators

- CESOSS collect Participant feedback collected informally through discussions, sign-in sheets, or voluntary comments made through an online survey. Our community is interested in programming related to Acequias, food, and the outdoors.

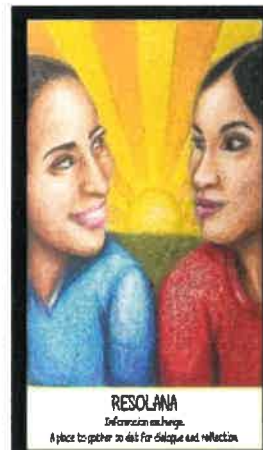
STATEMENT ON SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

CESOSS activities are educational and community-based in nature. While these efforts support broader goals related to agricultural sustainability and water stewardship, CESOSS does not engage in regulatory enforcement, land-use decision-making, or operational water management. Outcomes described in this report reflect community engagement and learning opportunities rather than guaranteed behavioral, economic, or environmental changes.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Valle Vista Acequia Education and Agricultural Site

The Valle Vista Acequia Agricultural and Education Project is a collaborative, place-based initiative that transforms underutilized school land into a vibrant outdoor classroom. By integrating the Ciclos de la Tierra curriculum with traditional acequia knowledge, the project provides hands-on learning in agriculture, ecology, and cultural heritage for students at Valle Vista Elementary. This two-year program (2025-2026) will establish a sustainable model for community-engaged education, directly supporting academic standards, the Yazzie-Martinez mandate, and the preservation of South Valley traditions. Key activities include six seasonal events, the creation of a replicable Farming Manual, the development of a CSA program, educational workshops through the Valle Vista Family Resource Center and deep partnerships with local farms, acequia associations, and family networks





Appendix B: Acequia Walk and Talks



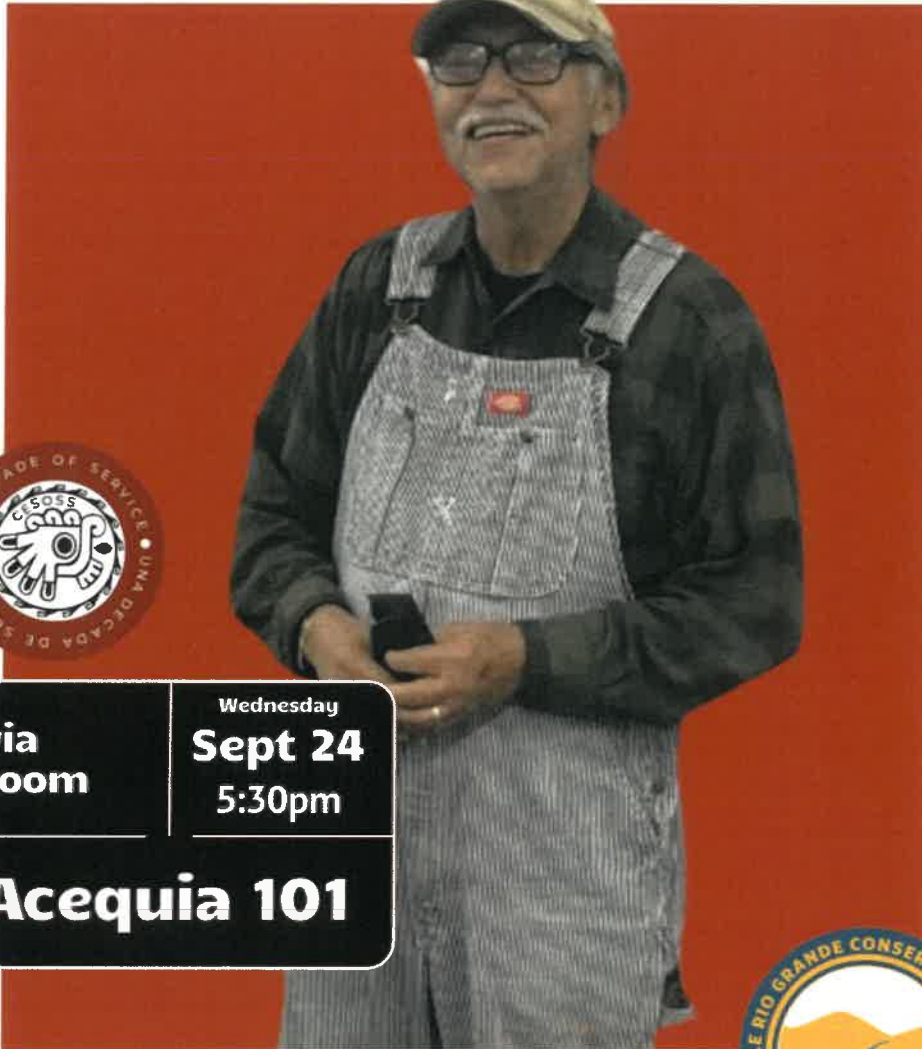
Appendix C: Primera Agua Event



Appendix D: Speakers Series

**acequia
speaker series**

**Santiago
Maestas**



**via
zoom**

Wednesday
Sept 24
5:30pm

Acequia 101



cesoss_nm



cesoss.org



Appendix E: Acequia Limpias 2025



Attachment 1: Landmarks Plan

Appendix VI

Bosque Management Update

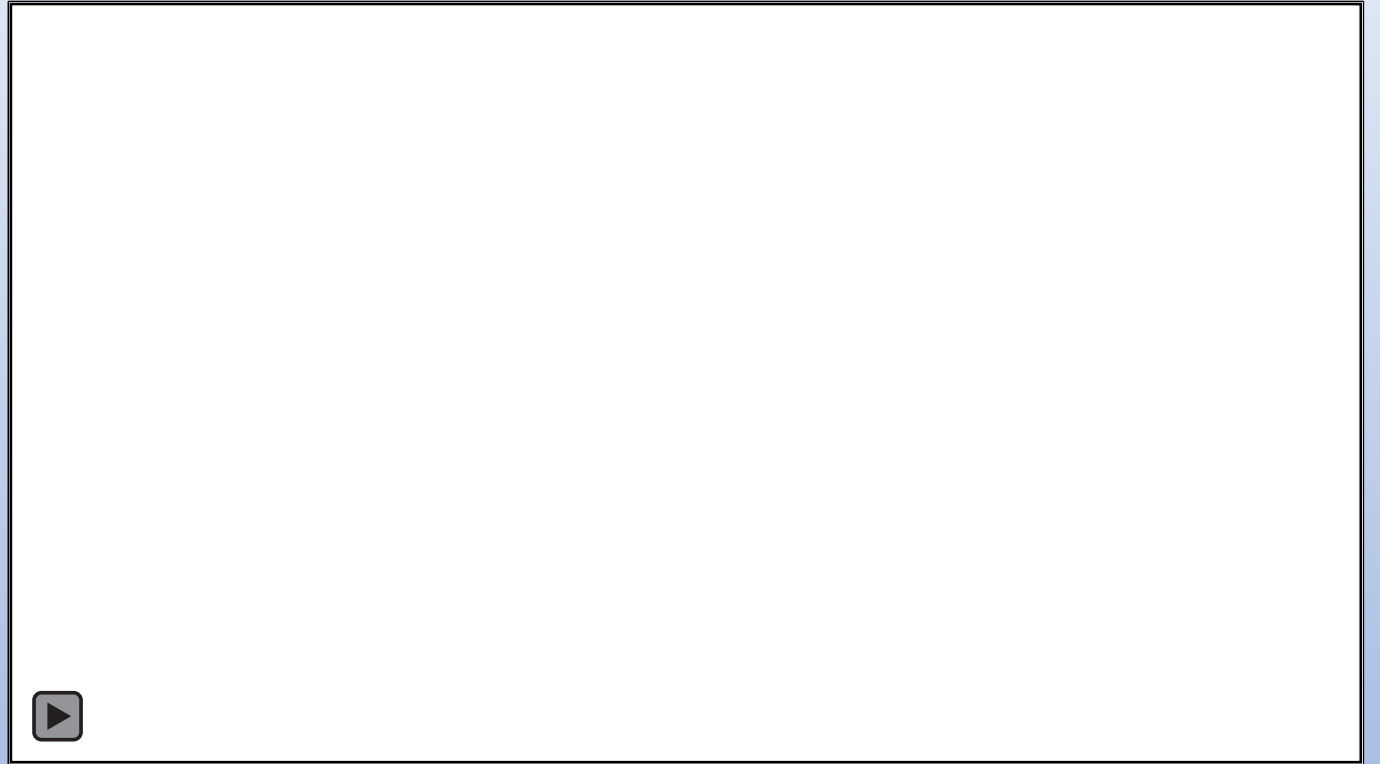
Fall/Winter 2025



- ❖ Big Hole Invasive Retreatment- 205 acres (EMNRD)
- ❖ Big Hole Goat Grazing- 5 acres
- ❖ Big Hole Invasive Treatment and Dead and Down Removal- 17 acres
- ❖ New Belen Bridge Woodchip Removal- 18 acres
- ❖ Bew Belen Outfall Invasive Treatment- 65 Acres
- ❖ San Francisco Outfall Invasive Removal- 140 acres



Big Hole South





Big Hole Year 3 Restoration Progress



Habitat is returning to native coyote willow, New Mexico olive, and diverse grasses after three years of treatment that included snag removal, chipping, and herbicide application.



New Belen Outfall Invasive Removal



Pre and Post Treatment



Pre and Post Treatment



San Francisco Outfall Invasive Removal



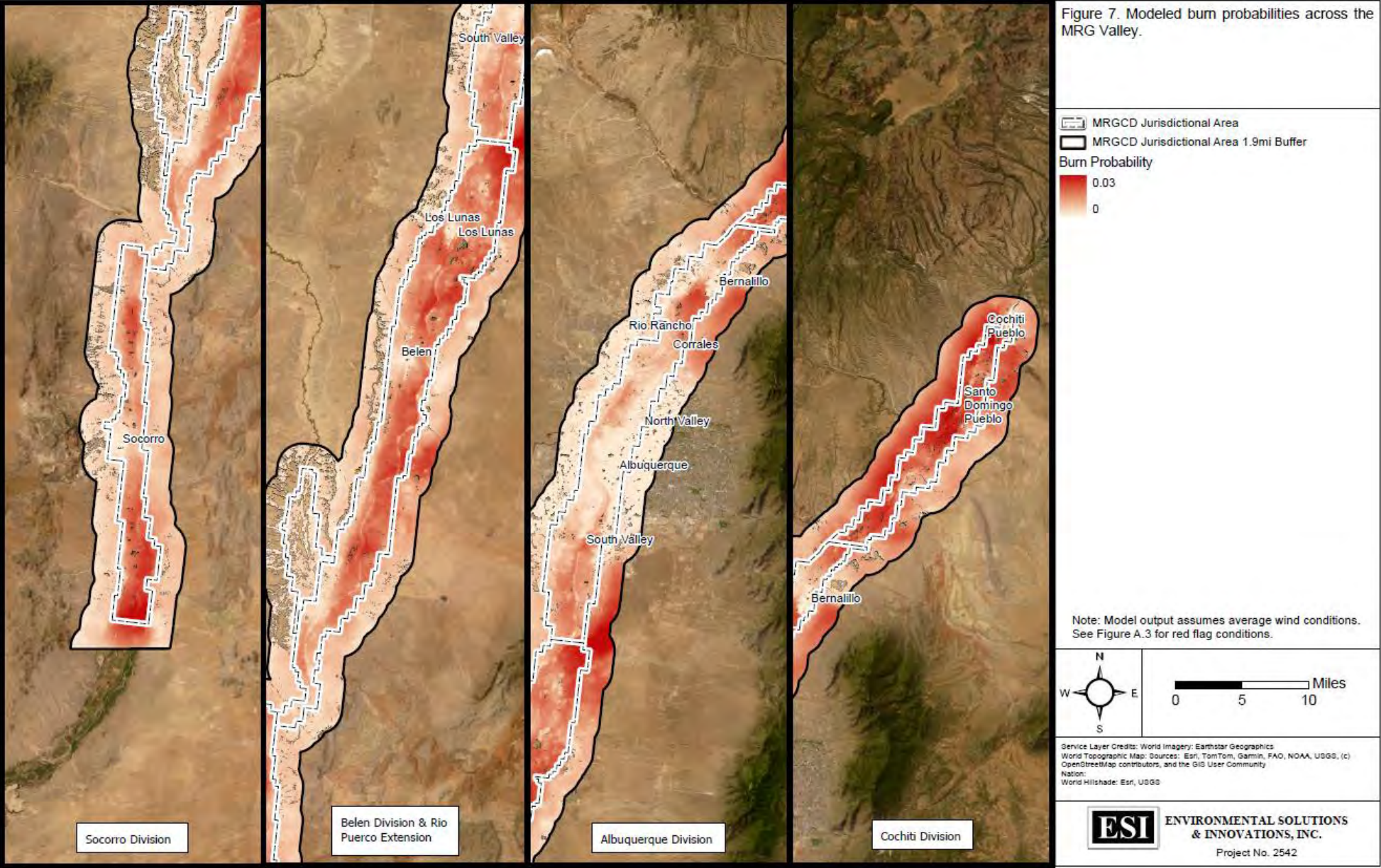
Treatment in Progress



Hand crews will protect native vegetation



Modeled Burn Probability by Division



Questions



'25/'26 Off-Season Construction Update

January 12, 2025

Presented by:
Engineering Department



Overview

Off-Season Construction Projects:

- A. Socorro Main Canal Channel Lining Phase IIB
- B. Belen Highline Canal Overflow Structure #2
- C. Low-Flow Conveyance Channel Phase 2
- D. Corrales Siphon Replacement Project
- E. Loretta Road/ Acequia Madre Grant Project
- F. Feeder 3 Transmission Line Phase 1
- G. Division Projects



Socorro Main Canal Channel Lining Phase IIB

Funding Source: WTB

Consultant Services: Wilson & Co. - \$287,495.50

Construction: Sanchez Demolition - \$6,878,359.05 (Including NMGRT)

- Contract time: 150 Calendar Days
- Progress
 - Currently lined 0.6 miles with concrete canvas
 - All turnouts, headwalls installed gates should be installed this week.
 - New Concrete Check structures and weir installed, waiting on gates.
- Look Ahead
 - Finish Installing Concrete Canvas
 - Install Shotcrete channel sections





Belen Highline Canal Overflow Structure #2

Funding Source: Fund Reserves
Consultant Services: BHI - \$85,102
Construction: Lopez Precision LLC. -
\$1,074,065.61 (Including NMGRT)

- Progress
 - Lopez Precision has finished shaping the channel
 - Currently finishing Shaping steps for overflow
- Look Ahead
 - Will be receiving rebar this week, and will start tying rebar in the channel section
 - Start pouring shotcrete in 2 weeks





Low-Flow Conveyance Channel Phase 2

Funding Source: ARPA
Consultant Services: Wilson & Co.
Construction: CF Padilla LLC-
\$6,209,717.50 (Including NMGRT)

- Progress
 - Funds Expended: 92% as of 12/15/25
 - Completion: January 15, 2026





Corrales Siphon Replacement Project

Funding Source: WTB

Consultant Services: Wilson & Co. - \$996,927.19

Construction: Compass Engineering - \$7,727,166.50

- Contract Times – 390 Calendar Days
- Tentative Schedule 3 Week Lookahead
 - Installation of turnouts
 - Installation of temporary crossings for access/turnaround
 - Installation of 48" Overflow Pipe
 - Borrow Sta. 93+00 to 95+55
 - Installation of 68" Conductor Casing
- Progress
 - Funds Expended: 9%
 - Contract Time Used: 11%



Loretta Road/Acequia Madre Grant Projects

Funding Source: Capital Outlay, Capital Development Program

Consultant Services: BHI

Partner Agencies: Bernalillo County, NMDOT

- Finalize Coordination with Stakeholders
- Advertise: January 15, 2026
- Contract Times: 160 Calendar Days, tentative signal lead time



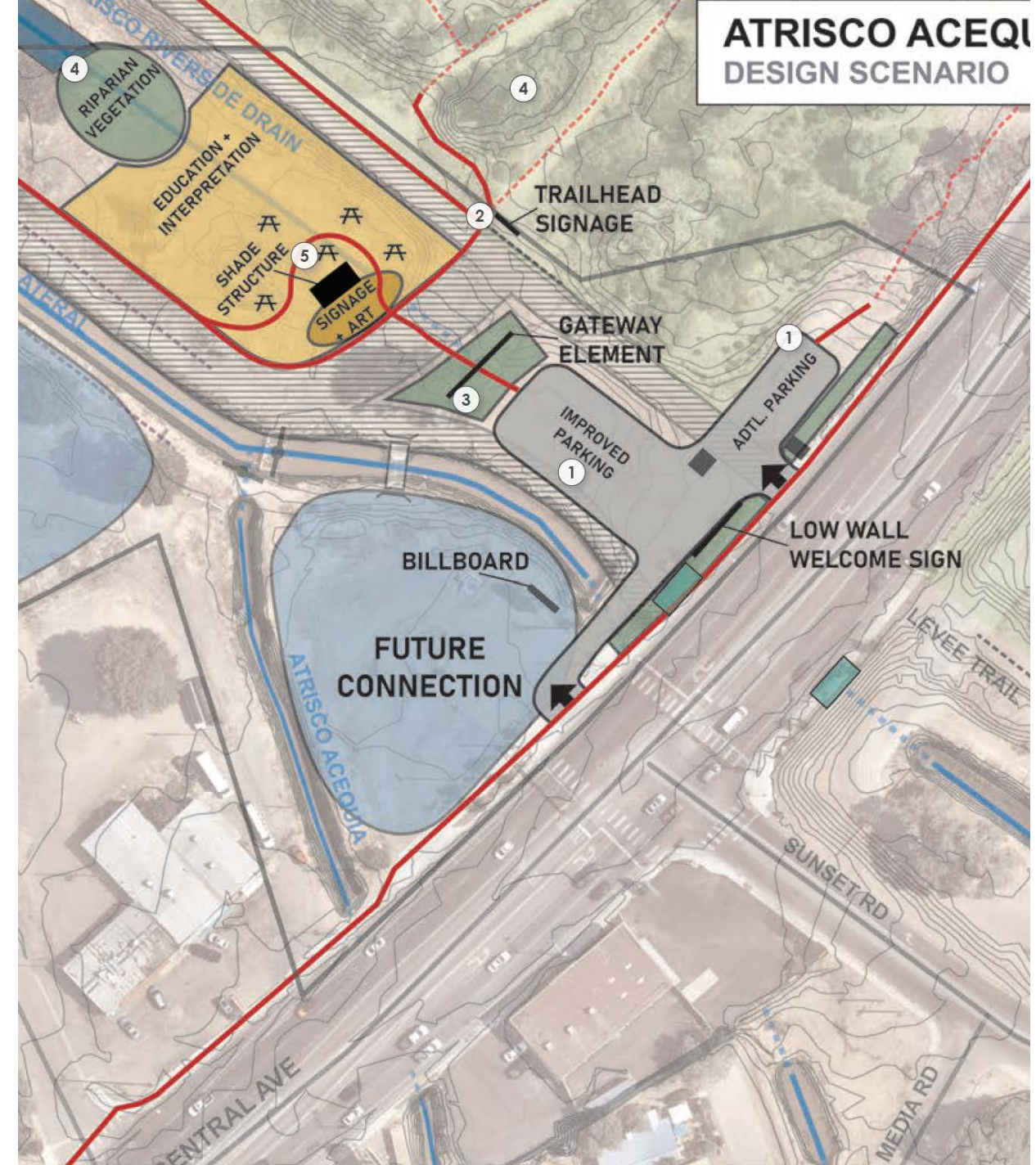
Loretta Road/Acequia Madre Grant Projects

Funding Source: Capital Outlay

Consultant Services: BHI

Partner Agencies: Bernalillo County, City of Albuquerque Open Space

- Contributed funding in 2024 for design up to 65%
- Bernalillo County is funding design to 100%
- Acequia Madre planned for completion in January 2026
 - CBC extension March 2026



Feeder 3 Transmission Line Phase 1

Funding Source: WTB

Consultant Services: BHI - \$286,732.37

Construction: AUI. Inc. - \$3,932,831.60 (w/NMGRT)

- Tentative Schedule
 - NTP – January 19, 2026
 - Permitting and Submittals – January 2026
 - Contract Times – 180 Calendar Days



Division Projects

- Cochiti
 - Culvert replacement in Cochiti East Main Canal
- Albuquerque
 - Tribal Road 7 Culvert Crossing Replacement
 - Riverside Drain Maintenance
- Belen
 - New Belen Wasteway Rehabilitation
 - Peralta Main Check 13
 - Garcia Extension Acequia New Check
- Socorro
 - Culvert Crossings Installations







QUESTIONS?



Appendix VIII

Director Russo Baca Board Reports December 2025

Report on the Farmers for Future Farmers Meeting, December 9, 2025, January 6 & 9, 2026

This meeting is open to the public and usually occurs on the second Tuesday of each month at 6 pm at 3211 Highway 47, Los Lunas, NM 87031. Just to recap, at the November meeting, the topic of how the organization can better assist local farmers came up. It was discussed that providing more resources and information to everyone would benefit everyone. The organization has decided to launch an informational series and will bring a new topic to each of our meetings. At the December 9th meeting, the organization had Sam Ruhala from Biomimetic Soil Solutions present. The January 6 meeting was a presentation by Jason Casuga regarding the Bureau of Reclamation Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Lower San Acacia Reach Improvements Project (LSARI). The meeting on January 9th discussed farm delivery requirements versus consumptive use and the possibility of forming a farmers' advisory committee within the irrigation committee.

Report on the Valencia County Soil and Water Conservation District Board Meetings December 18 and 31, 2025

Director Russo Baca gave the MRGCD partner reports to the VCSWCD, including the MRGCD 2025 irrigation season wrap-up newsletter: <https://www.mrgcd.com/2025/12/22/2025-irrigation-season-wrap-up-e-newsletter/> and the upcoming informational meetings: <https://www.mrgcd.com/2025/12/12/save-the-date-jan-26-farmers-irrigators-meetings/>.

Report on the MRGCD/ OSE/ ISC Compact Discussion, December 10, 2025

MRGCD board members and staff met with the State Engineer and Interstate Stream Commission Director, as well as OSE and ISC staff, to proactively discuss the State of New Mexico's compact debt and how best to convey water in the upcoming irrigation season to ensure water deliveries are done most efficiently to Elephant Butte Reservoir.

Report on the NM ISC Meeting, December 11, 2025

Full report and agenda can be found here: <https://www.ose.nm.gov/ISC/>

WORK AREA OVERVIEWS WATER OPERATIONS AND RESERVOIR UPDATES

Rio Grande Compact Status – New Mexico's cumulative Compact debit status is 124,000 acre-feet. According to provisional data through November 15, Usable Water in Project Storage (native Rio Grande water in Elephant Butte and Caballo, excluding San Juan Chama Project (SJCP) and credit water) was about 103,000 acre-feet. Article VII restrictions remain in place (no upstream storage in post-1929 reservoirs when Usable Water in Elephant Butte and Caballo is less than 400,000 acre-feet). Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs and Usable Water – Provisional data indicate that storage of all water in Elephant Butte Reservoir was 100,000 acre-feet as of November 15. The area around Caballo Dam and Reservoir received excessive rainfall from September 19-21. This caused sediment from adjacent arroyos to block the Rio Grande channel partially and resulted in either flow or backwater near

the gage below the Dam. This caused an unexpected increase in flow at the gage, which falsely appeared to be a release from the Dam. Reclamation cleared the sediment in November and has corrected the flow record.

RIVER CHANNEL CONVEYANCE AND BOSQUE MANAGEMENT PROJECTS NMISC, Reclamation, and MRGCD staff are collaborating on several projects along the Middle Rio Grande designed to improve conveyance of water and sediment and to improve deliveries to Elephant Butte. Major projects include: River Mile (RM) 163 and RM 161 channel widening projects (in the Isleta Reach), Lower San Acacia Reach Improvements (LSARI) river channel realignment (between Bosque del Apache Refuge and the Elephant Butte Delta), and Elephant Butte Delta river channel realignment. MRGCD is actively conducting vegetation management in the Isleta Reach with funding from the NMISC.

LEGAL UPDATE Texas v. New Mexico and Colorado, No. 141 Original in the United States Supreme Court The parties are still awaiting the Special Master Report and Recommendation, which is anticipated to be submitted to the US Supreme Court by the end of 2025 or in early 2026. The Supreme Court will likely make the decision in 2026 whether to accept the Joint Motion to Dismiss and the Report and Recommendation and decide whether to enter the Decree supporting the Rio Grande Compact. The NM Department of Justice is leading the legal effort for New Mexico.

Report on the SVRAA Comisionado Meeting, January 5, 2026

Discussion of how the SVRAA can be proactive in reviewing water rights transfers and filing water rights transfer protests, as well as an overview of water law 101.

Report on the Valencia County Commission Meeting, January 7, 2025

Director Russo Baca attended the Valencia County Commission Meeting to give the MRGCD's public statement on the Valencia County tax bill issue, stating that the MRGCD is aware of concerns from Valencia County residents regarding recent property tax bills. MRGCD does not prepare or issue property tax bills and is not involved in the billing process. Any inquiries received by MRGCD have been referred to the Valencia County Treasurer's Office. The MRGCD's current Mill Rate: Tax year 2025, Residential 6.069, and Non-Residential 7.333.

Report on the Bureau of Reclamation Public Comment Meetings on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Lower San Acacia Reach Improvements Project (LSARI) January 7 & 8, 2026

The Bureau of Reclamation is seeking public input on the **Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)** for the **Lower San Acacia Reach Improvements Project (LSARI)**.

The 45-day public comment period is open from **November 28, 2025**, through **January 12, 2026**.

Reclamation held two public comment meetings as follows:

- **January 7, 2026**, from **5 to 7 p.m. MT** at the Erna Fergusson Public Library, 3700 San Mateo Blvd NE, Albuquerque, NM, 87110.
- **January 8, 2026**, from **5 to 7 p.m. MT** at the Socorro Public Library, 401 Park St, Socorro, NM, 87801.

Reclamation will evaluate all comments received and consider substantive comments in the Final EIS, to be completed in 2026.

Comments can be submitted during the above in-person meetings, through the virtual public meeting room <https://www.virtualpublicmeeting.com/lsari-eis>, via email to bor-sha-aao-lsari@usbr.gov, or by postal mail. Written comments can be sent to Attn: Lower San Acacia Reach EIS, David (Sonny) Cooper, Project Manager, Bureau of Reclamation, 555 Broadway Blvd. NE, Suite 100, Albuquerque, NM 87102.

All public comments must be submitted/postmarked by **January 12, 2026**.

For more information on the **LSARI EIS**, please see the attached newsletter, visit the project website here: [LSARI EIS](#) , or contact David (Sonny) Cooper, Project Manager (bor-sha-aao-lsari@usbr.gov).

Report on the MRGCD's Sandoval County Farmers & Irrigators Informational Meeting, January 8, 2026

This was an informational meeting discussing the outlook for the 2026 irrigation season, followed by a question-and-answer session. This meeting was well attended by MRGCD staff and the public, and there were many good questions about what to expect for the upcoming season.

Appendix IX













56 feet













