Frequently Asked Questions
Farmers & Irrigators Meeting – 2025

Water Storage

What is the update on El Vado?
During the May 2024 MRGCD board meeting, the Bureau of Reclamation announced that construction to upgrade El Vado Dam is halted and that temporary alternative storage options are being developed. To read the full news release posted by the Bureau of Reclamation, visit our website.

Who is responsible for El Vado?
While the MRGCD owns the land where El Vado Dam and Reservoir are located, the Bureau of Reclamation owns the infrastructure and is responsible for the construction project and overall management of El Vado Dam.

When will construction be complete?
A timeline for new construction has not been released. Conversations with necessary entities are underway regarding alternative construction paths.

What are the alternate storage sites?
Prior to 2024, El Vado was the only reservoir authorized to store native Rio Grande Water. In 2024, the US Army Corps of Engineers-Albuquerque District completed an update to its Abiquiu Reservoir Water Control Manual. Subsequently, they signed an updated water storage agreement for Abiquiu Reservoir with the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA). These accomplishments now allow native Rio Grande water to be stored in Abiquiu Reservoir within ABCWUA's storage space. However, native Rio Grande water storage is NOT available in 2025 due to Rio Grande Compact debt status. An exception is made for Prior and Paramount Lands of the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos which carry a senior right.

Is Cochiti Dam part of MRGCD's system?
No, Cochiti Dam is a US Army Corps of Engineers facility that is used solely for the purposes of flood and sediment control in the MRG, and the MRGCD is unable to store water at this reservoir.

Is MRGCD able to store irrigation water in the Navajo Dam?
No, Navajo Dam sits on the San Juan River, downstream of the diversion structures that move San Juan River water under the Continental Divide and into Heron Reservoir on the Chama via the Federal San Juan-Chama Project.

Rio Grande Compact

How does the Rio Grande Compact affect MRGCD's ability to store water?
Article VI and Article VII of the Rio Grande Compact constrain MRGCD's ability to store native Rio Grande water. Article VI requires that when New Mexico is in Rio Grande Compact debt, it can only store water for use in New Mexico after a volume equal to the debt is stored for delivery to Elephant Butte when Texas requests. Typically, this water is moved after the MRGCD irrigation season is over.

Article VII requires that the stored water in Elephant Butte Reservoir and Caballo Reservoir combined must be more than 400,000-acre feet before water can be stored in reservoirs constructed after 1929.

What is New Mexico's current debt to the Rio Grande Compact?
The Rio Grande Compact debt at the end of 2025 was 132,000-acre feet.

Is there a plan to review percentages of Compact deliveries and storage permitting with changing watershed conditions, hydrology, land uses, and water uses?
There is not currently an effort to negotiate the terms of the Rio Grande Compact.

Prior & Paramount

What is the relationship between MRGCD and the BIA? How does this relationship affect non-pueblo water users?
MRGCD works closely with BIA to ensure the MRGCD is delivering the amount of water that is needed to meet the agricultural demand of the Prior and Paramount (P&P) lands. The volume of water needed for P&P lands is determined by the BIA. P&P lands have the oldest water rights in the MRG and are senior to all other water users.

Do Pueblo water rights fall under the State Engineer or MRGCD?
Pueblo water rights include some of the oldest uses of water in the MRG. These water rights are federally protected and are recognized by both the State Engineer and MRGCD. MRGCD administers the delivery of these waters to the 6 MRG Pueblos.

If we are in Prior and Paramount distribution and it rains, how is that water allocated?
If rains increase available supply above what is needed to meet the P&P demand, then MRGCD distributes this excess water to non-pueblo irrigators where possible.

Water Delivery & Processes

How do MRGCD water users know when to expect water deliveries without pestering ISOs?
MRGCD is working on a streamlined communication system that will include text messaging and email. Currently the best method is communicating with respective ISOs through phone call or text message to stay up to date with incoming deliveries. Monitoring MRGCD's online water data system is another method of anticipating water availability. With MRGCD's current inability to store native water, it is recommended that water users take deliveries when they are available.

Can anyone access irrigation records?
MRGCD retains an archive of irrigation records annually, generally going back to the 1990s, and these records are available upon request.

Can the MRGCD provide a schedule so that irrigators have set water deliveries?
The MRGCD does not provide irrigation deliveries on a fixed schedule. When there is a sufficient water supply, irrigation deliveries can be scheduled with more predictability. During times of shortage, the MRGCD will practice "shortage sharing" through a systematic rotation of water designed for equitable distribution. During rotations, there is less reliability and predictability in scheduling and irrigators are encouraged to accept deliveries when they are available. The MRGCD cannot make guarantees regarding the availability of water; however, the MRGCD will keep irrigators informed as to the status of supplies and outlook for the future.

Once we rely on the rain, what are the rules for distributing rainwater?
Our ability to distribute rainwater is influenced by various factors including the location of rain relative to diversion points and irrigated properties, the duration of runoff, and the potential impacts on our facilities and operations. Rain, while it can ease demand and augment supply, it can also increase the risk of canal breaks and overflows. Consequently, exercising caution in vulnerable areas during forecasted rain events is imperative. For example, rainwater above Cochiti Dam is less threatening to our facilities, can be better prepared for and utilized by all diversions. Whereas, a rain event in the Belen Division can cause us to evacuate irrigation water from our facilities to make room for uncontrolled stormwater inflows and cause interruptions to irrigation deliveries.

When we rely on rainwater for an irrigation water supply, it is recommended that irrigators be prepared to accept deliveries on short notice.

How is “waste of water” defined?
The Water Distribution Policy describes wasteful irrigation practices. The most common category of water waste is allowing water to leave land **actively** irrigated, flowing onto lands not intended to be irrigated or not under the control of the irrigator. The policy states that if an irrigator is unwilling to rectify the violation, the MRGCD may refuse, discontinue, or limit the delivery of water until the wasteful practices are remedied.

What is MRGCD’s procedure for enforcing its water policy?
The procedure starts with an incident report submitted by the ISO. Upon receipt of the incident report, MRGCD staff will investigate the incident. An incident determined by the ISS to be a violation of Policy may be addressed by the ISO and ISS through a Verbal Warning issued to the water user. Otherwise, the Conservation Program Manager and Water Distribution Manager will conduct a review to determine the appropriate action. Depending on the nature of the violation, the potential actions taken by the MRGCD are as follows: No Action, Verbal Warning, Warning Notice, or Notice of Violation. Warnings and notices will specify the corrections or requirements a water

user must make to rectify the violation. Staff decisions may be appealed to a committee or Board of Directors.

What are the penalties for illegal watering?
The penalties for illegal irrigation may include but are not limited to a written notice and ceasing deliveries by locking the head gate to the illegally irrigated property. Recurring violations may include more severe penalties like welding, burial, or removal of head gates and reporting to the Office of the State Engineer.

What if we need to get a hold of an ISO on the weekends?
ISOs are available by phone between the hours of 7 am to 11 am, and 4 pm to 6 pm Monday thru Saturday for scheduling water, and 24 hours per day for emergencies. In case an ISO cannot be reached, irrigators may call the appropriate ISO Supervisor, the Water Distribution Division Manager or the MRGCD General Office for assistance.

How do I submit a maintenance request?
For issues like turnout service, earth work, structure repairs or any others affecting your irrigation process, please contact the clerk in your respective Field Office (ABQ, Belen, Cochiti or Socorro). To find your clerk and contact number click on the Field Office tab at the top of our home page, then select your respective division.

The new process we have in place will allow clerks to immediately enter in and file the service request electronically and assign a number to the request, which can be used as reference for customers. From there, district supervisors will use the information to develop a work plan. The new process keeps track of all service requests and their progress. Water users can contact a clerk at any time to inquire about the status of their service request.

Does MRGCD prioritize water use outside of Prior and Paramount (respective crop needs)?
MRGCD does not prioritize irrigation deliveries by crop type. We do try to assist those irrigators with new crops and different crop varieties as conditions allow.

Is the water bank available?
Due to the size of New Mexico's Rio Grande Compact debt and the triggers built into the Water Bank Policy that limit the offering of lease water when the supply and storage allow, the MRGCD's Water Bank was not offered in the 2024 irrigation season other than for those property owners where they could offset the irrigation of lands by the drying of like areas.

Water Rights

What is the process for declaring or confirming a pre-1907 water right?
The Office of the State Engineer oversees all pre-1907 water rights. Contact the Office of the State Engineer's "OSE" at (505) 383-4000.

Does the MRGCD only enforce junior water rights?
The MRGCD assists in the enforcement of all water right actions taken by the Office of the State Engineer. If a property has severed its pre-1907 water rights the MRGCD will enforce the stopping of delivery of irrigation to that property.

How does MRGCD administer priority rights?
With the exception of the delivery of water to those lands with Prior and Paramount water rights on the six MRG Pueblos the MRGCD does not administer the priority status of pre-1907 water rights. All irrigators share an equal status for the delivery of irrigation water to their land regardless of the priority status of their water right.

How do we inquire about whether or not a property has water rights?
The Office of the State Engineer is the controller of the status of pre-1907 water rights in the State of New Mexico. For any questions on water rights of a specific property, please contact the OSE at (505) 383-4000.

Is the District delivering to lands without water rights or will it in the future?
By virtue of its establishment, the MRGCD delivers water to any property that is benefited by the works of the MRGCD and has physical access to accept delivery from the MRGCD's conveyance system, provided that property has not been severed of its pre-1907 water rights. These lands hold junior MRGCD water rights once they have been irrigated from the works of the District

Conservation

What is the Fallowing Program?
In its sixth year, the Irrigation Demand Management – Water Leasing Program offers landowners within the middle Rio Grande valley the opportunity to lease water back to the District. The MRGCD Water Leasing Program application has closed for the 2026 irrigation season.

What MRGCD programs are in place that are aimed at helping the MRGCD farmers?
MRGCD has an On-Farm Planning program, which aims to provide technical and financial support to farmers looking to improve their irrigation infrastructure and irrigation efficiency. This program provides a cost-share for projects that will reduce the annual volume of water consumed.

How does the Fallowing program impact pre-1907 rights?
At this time, MRGCD does not distinguish between a privately held Pre-1907 water right or MRGCD's water rights when making irrigation deliveries. Excluding Prior and Paramount land owned by the six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos, all acreage is served in parity (equal), regardless of the priority date.

Operations & Maintenance

Are we looking into concrete lining of mains and certain laterals?
MRGCD has initiated projects in the past to concrete line specific canals and ditches in areas where there is significant seepage. In other areas of the valley the benefits derive from such expensive lining projects would not save the amount of water due to the soil characteristics where clay is the dominant type and minimal seepage occurs.

What if I have a problem with tree growth affecting my ability to water or encroaching on my property?
In many areas of the MRG Valley, trees that are along the canals and ditches may be under the care and maintenance of the property owners. It is best to engage with MRGCD Right-of-Way Staff to determine the ownership and issues of trees along property boundaries and the ditches, both MRGCD and private.

Corrales Siphon

What is the current status of the Corrales Siphon?
On Thursday, September 25, the MRGCD and Pueblo of Sandia signed an agreement to allow construction to begin on the Corrales Siphon. Construction on the new siphon is expected to be complete by the end of 2026.

What is the existing size and proposed size of the pipes?
The existing pipe is 60" and the proposed pipe is 36" steel pipe

What are the new pipe characteristics?
The new pipe will be steel and has best flow capabilities

Is Sandia Pueblo receiving any benefit from the siphon?

No, Sandia Pueblo does not receive any benefit from the siphon, but does receive water from the Corrales Main Canal.

What is the overall length of the pipe, from east to west?

1200'