

July Water Supply Update

Presented by Anne Marken at MRGCD's July Board Meeting

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Good afternoon, Director Baca and members of the board.

The Middle Rio Grande has experienced 95.8 unique dry river miles, the highest total recorded since monitoring began in 2004. The previous record was 78.9 unique dry river miles, set last year. Over the monitoring period, the average annual unique dry length has been 37 river miles. This is significantly above what we typically see, and these figures underscore the severity of this year's challenges.

There have been a few rain events over the past month, but they have not produced enough inflow to improve the available water supply.

To clarify, there are only 9 cubic feet per second crossing the Colorado-New Mexico state line on the main stem of the Rio Grande. The Rio Chama upstream of El Vado is flowing at only 16 cubic feet per second.

The Otowi gauge, shown on the next slide, is located on the main stem of the Rio Grande upstream of Cochiti Reservoir. It is a good gauge for indicating the total supply available to the Middle Valley.

The next slide includes a hydrograph of the Otowi gauge. Today, that gauge is reporting 280 cubic feet per second.

The year-to-date cumulative volume of native Rio Grande water measured at Otowi is the lowest recorded for this point in the year since continuous gauging at this location began. That was in the early 1900s. I think 1918 was when they began continuously monitoring at that gauge.

Today's flow measured at Otowi is 500 cubic feet per second less than what is needed to meet Middle Valley agricultural and conveyance demand. That is illustrated by the red line on the hydrograph. The blue line represents measured flow, and the red line represents MRGCD agricultural and conveyance demand. There is a 500-cubic-foot-per-second gap between what we need to meet irrigation demand and what is available.

Most of the water currently measured at Otowi is being supported by releases from storage. That includes both San Juan-Chama Project water and Prior and Paramount water.

The amount of native Rio Grande water being produced by the basin is not sufficient to meet the needs of the six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos. As a result, Middle Valley non-tribal use upstream of Isleta Pueblo has been curtailed, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs is releasing Prior and Paramount water from storage.

Non-tribal lands upstream of Isleta will remain curtailed until rain inflows increase the available supply in locations that can benefit those lands. The landscape is incredibly dry right now, which will limit the amount of runoff that any individual rain event produces.

The forecast for this week calls for cooler temperatures, with temperatures in the 80s later this week and chances for rain throughout the week. We are preparing for potential rain inflows.

[The meeting paused briefly because of technical difficulties with Zoom.]

The seasonal outlook through September continues to show elevated chances for above-average temperatures across the basin.

The area with elevated chances of above-average precipitation has shifted west of the Rio Grande. In the previous outlook, the elevated chances for precipitation were sitting directly over us. We are still looking at equal chances for above- or below-average precipitation, and we are right on the edge of the area with above-average precipitation chances. I am going to be optimistic and hope we see some rain events come through soon.

MRGCD has also received authorization to move forward with a pilot low-flow conveyance channel monsoon operation. These operations will allow MRGCD to divert up to 200 cubic feet per second from monsoon events into the low-flow conveyance channel at the San Acacia intake gates.

The purpose is to help New Mexico improve Rio Grande Compact deliveries during the monsoon season.

Casey Ish worked very closely with the state and Reclamation to complete the necessary compliance work in time for monsoon season. I would like to thank everyone involved for getting that work done on time.

This concludes my report. I will stand for questions and encourage everybody to pray for rain.