



Agenda

For Presentation at the
Special Meeting of the Board of Directors of the
Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District



October 19, 2026 – 9:00 a.m.

Zoom Meeting Link:

<https://zoom.us/j/3112410839?pwd=9EhnTLvKupEsdcarXH5oo5nUuUH137.1>

Meeting ID: 311 241 0839 and Passcode: 193122

MRGCD General Office * 1931 Second Street SW * Albuquerque, New Mexico
Meetings are held on second Mondays/month. Any questions please call the Board Liaison at (505) 247-0234.
For more information, visit our website at www.mrgcd.com

All items on Agenda are Subject to Action and times shown are approximate and are subject to change.

- 9:00 1. **Pledge of Allegiance**
- 9:02 2. **Approval of the Agenda**
- 9:05 3. **Report(s) from the Water Operations**
 - a. Report on Water Supply Conditions – Anne Marken, River Operations & Telemetry Manager
- 9:20 4. **Staff Recommendation of Season Extension** – Casey Ish, Director of Lands & Conservation and Acting CEO
- 9:35 5. **Items from the Floor (Comments are limited to three (3) minutes)**
- 9:55 6. **Consideration/Approval of Extending the 2026 Irrigation Season**



MEMORANDUM

To: Chairman Kelly, Board of Directors

Casey Ish, Director of Lands and Conservation / Acting CEO for Jason Casuga, CEO-Chief Engineer

Date: October 16, 2026

Re: Staff Recommendation Regarding Extension of the 2026 Irrigation Season Beyond October 31st

PURPOSE

The 2026 irrigation season has been exceptionally challenging for our farmers and irrigators throughout the Middle Rio Grande Valley. Dramatic fluctuations in water availability, periods of severely constrained supply, and unpredictable delivery schedules have created significant hardships for all. Following the October 13th Board meeting where a request to consider extending the irrigation season was brought to the Board, leadership spent the better portion of the day talking to farmers and District staff around the valley trying to get a sense of demand for newly established seed or germinating crops. The feedback staff received was that demand is generally low and not widespread.

Staff recommend that the Board maintain October 31st, 2026, as the official end of the irrigation season while implementing a limited delivery window through November 5th, 2026. During this period, MRGCD would make reasonable efforts to fulfill remaining late-season irrigation demand, particularly demand associated with fall plantings of new seed. However, water availability is not guaranteed, and deliveries may end before November 5th if supplies become insufficient.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Staff have identified four primary considerations associated with the proposed limited delivery window.

1. Managing Irrigation Demand

A formal extension of the irrigation season could encourage additional planting throughout the valley, generating demand that the District may be unable to accommodate under current water supply conditions. The proposed delivery window is intended only to address lingering irrigation needs rather than initiate new agricultural activity after October 31st. Irrigators are encouraged to request water during this limited period only when necessary to meet existing crop needs, recognizing that every delivery draws from a limited water supply. MRGCD would make reasonable efforts to fulfill outstanding demand through November 5th, but this accommodation should not be interpreted as an assurance of water availability for new planting or existing crop demand more generally.

2. Rotational Delivery Constraints

The District will likely continue operating under rotational delivery conditions during early November unless the basin receives significant precipitation. Consequently, delivery timing will remain uncertain, and some irrigation requests may not be fulfilled before the end of November 5th. Producers planting new seed in anticipation of additional deliveries risk not receiving water in time for germination and crop establishment. Staff continue to encourage farmers considering fall or winter crops to plant and irrigate as soon as field conditions allow based on current water supply expectations for early November.

3. Financial Risk to Producers

Planting new crops requires investments in seed, labor, equipment, and field preparation. Producers who make these investments too late in October in anticipation of reliable November irrigation deliveries could experience financial losses if water does not arrive when needed. The District should clearly communicate that the limited delivery window does not guarantee water availability or delivery timing.

4. Late Season Environmental Water Leasing Program

Existing Late Season Environmental Water Leasing Program agreements, encompassing approximately 1,090 acres, expire on October 31, 2026. Expiration of these agreements could prompt renewed planting on participating lands if the irrigation season is formally extended, creating additional demand during an already constrained delivery period. Staff recommend communicating that the delivery window is a limited operational accommodation, not a general extension of irrigation service. Requests involving previously enrolled lands would remain subject to applicable contractual provisions, water availability, and operational constraints.

LONG-TERM WATER SUPPLY RELIABILITY AND RIO GRANDE COMPACT CONSIDERATIONS

Beyond the immediate operational challenges, staff encourage the Board to continue considering the broader implications of this decision for New Mexico's Rio Grande Compact obligations and the District's long-term water supply reliability. The State's relatively low Compact delivery obligation in 2026, coupled with the potential for a substantially higher obligation in 2027, presents an important opportunity and challenge to both improve New Mexico's Compact status and guard against further accumulation of debit. To be clear, staff does not believe that allowing this limited irrigation window will result in significant depletions or result in a dramatic increase in Compact debit for 2026. However, the optics of choosing to extend the irrigation season and increase middle valley depletions when the State's debit looms large is worth considering.

The proposed delivery window recognizes the immediate needs of agricultural producers following an exceptionally difficult year, while also acknowledging our responsibility to make decisions today that protect their ability to irrigate in the years ahead without establishing a precedent for formally extending the season. Staff believe the best use of available water is to meet remaining irrigation needs where feasible, without compromising our responsibility to assist the State in meeting Compact obligations and further position the Middle Rio Grande Valley to restore native water storage capability as quickly as possible.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend that the Board support a limited delivery window under the following conditions:

1. **October 31st, 2026, remains the official end of the irrigation season.**
2. **MRGCD will make reasonable efforts to fulfill remaining late-season irrigation demand through November 5th, 2026,** subject to water availability, rotational delivery constraints, and operational capabilities.
3. **The delivery window does not guarantee sufficient water supply.** Water users should not make new planting decisions based on the expectation of receiving full water supply during this period.
4. **Responsibly manage Rio Grande Compact deliveries** to improve New Mexico's Compact position and help restore the ability to store native water for future irrigation seasons.
5. **November 5th, 2026, will be the final date for irrigation deliveries to non-Pueblos lands,** provided sufficient water remains available. Deliveries may cease earlier if supply or operational conditions require. The end of the irrigation season for the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos is unchanged and remains November 15th.

Staff believe this recommendation provides a reasonable and balanced conclusion to an exceptionally difficult irrigation season while protecting the District's broader responsibility to improve long-term water supply reliability for all our water users.

Respectfully,

Casey Ish

Director of Lands & Conservation / Acting CEO for Jason M. Casuga, CEO / Chief Engineer