MINUTES OF THE
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

OCTOBER 19, 2026 - 9:00 A.M.

Directors having been duly notified; Chairman Kelly called the Special Meeting to order at 9:14 am. The following Directors and Staff were present:

DIRECTORS		STAFF	
John P. Kelly, Chairman	Present	Casey Ish	Director of Lands & Conservation & Acting CEO
Colin T. Baugh, Vice Chairman	Present	Lorna Wiggins	General Counsel
Brian Jiron, Director	Present	Jeff Weschler	Chief Water Counsel
Stephanie Russo Baca, Director	Present	Pamela Fanelli	Secretary-Treasurer/CFO
J. Chris Lopez, Director	Present	Alicia Lopez	Director of Technical Services
Michael T. Sandoval, Director	Present	Christine Nardi	Director of Human Services
Karen Dunning, Director	Present	Amanda Molina	Director of Communications

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

Julian Avalos, MRGCD Hannah Riseley-White, NMISC Sharon Wirth, NMISC

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Julian Avalos 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 with Director Dunning joining remotely. Rollcall votes will be necessary for regular motions.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2 – APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Vice Chairman Baugh made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA**. 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 Sandoval	Yes	Director Lopez	Yes
Director Jiron	Yes		

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 – REPORT(S) FROM THE WATER OPERATIONS

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

Ms. Marken reported on water operations. She stated September rainfall improved water supply through the Middle Rio Grande and New Mexico's positions in its 2026 Compact deliveries. However, river flows have steadily declined and they are approaching the end of the irrigation season with uncertainty on water availability in early November. She said

despite cooler temperatures, they are seeing continued decline in river flows. The discharge at Otowi Gage today was just under 400 CFS and expected to decline further. She expressed MRGCD's operational curve calls for approximately 400 CFS for irrigation today and the Cochiti Dam Release is about 450 CFS. She shared the Rio Grande in San Acacia Reach disconnected over the weekend and they saw a small increase inflow at the Lobatos Gage, which will provide temporary benefit. She voiced Colorado plans to continue deliveries on the Conejos River through the first week of November and the main stem of the Rio Grande for the first two weeks of November, so MRGCD should not expect a meaningful increase in water deliveries across the state line until the middle of November. However, rain is forecast this week and the NWS 8-14 outlook is showing above average temperature and precipitation. She said they should plan for continued uncertainty and possibility of further declines and available supply. The September rain allowed them to make significant progress on its 2026 Compact delivery obligations and extending the irrigation season would be expected to affect the amount of water New Mexico is able to deliver to Texas, but based on current conditions, she did not expect that impact to be significant. Preliminary reports from ISOs indicate around 1,200 acres of new seedling and fall planting activity through the District and many irrigators have already planted but are delaying irrigation requests due to wet field conditions. She encouraged irrigators to request water as soon as field conditions allow and irrigators who need a final delivery should schedule it as soon as they ready. Ms. Marken expressed that extending the irrigation season may provide additional opportunities for those who need water but is not a guarantee of supply.

See also Appendix I.

Vice Chairman Baugh asked Ms. Marken to share the new seedling and fall planting activity numbers for each county.

Ms. Marken answered 183 in Albuquerque, 568 in Belen, and 450 in Socorro. She noted she did not have a report from Sandoval.

Vice Chairman Baugh inquired how long it takes for the system to charge up if it is already kind of wet or if they might get some rain, as that flexibility would play a big factor in how fast they could move water or how long the system catches it.

Ms. Marken responded that rain events, depending on their magnitude, can supply rebound rapidly, especially when the landscape is already wet. In regard to how long they can start making deliveries, there are a lot of variables, including where it falls, how much, and where people are waiting for them.

Director Russo Baca asked if extending the season would be within MRGCD's diversions and depletions with the Compact debt.

Ms. Marken answered to deliver water into November would definitely make an impact to the Compact but given the low temperatures and ET the crops have this time of year and small amount of acreages requesting water, she felt the depletions would not be a gamechanger in the scale of the state's Compact deliveries.

Director Jiron inquired how much water would go towards the Compact if they stopped the irrigation season on October 31st versus if they extend the season a week or two.

Ms. Marken responded if they divert in November, it would be less than what they are right now, but diversions are currently climbing due to more activity on the pueblos. She said it would be dependent on how many people are requesting water and how much water is available.

Director Jiron asked if it was worth not giving farmers water to send a little more water to the Butte for the Compact.

Ms. Marken did not feel it would make a difference more than a couple thousands acre feet on the Compact deliveries. However, they will not know what the water availability is, and irrigators should know that if they extend the irrigation season that it will not be a guarantee of deliveries.

Chairman Kelly asked if they have looked at the special distribution of the 1,200 acres and if it is something they can efficiently irrigate.

Ms. Marken shared Julian down in Socorro said a lot of this demand is concentrated in one area, but she did not have a since of the special distribution other than that.

Mr. Martinez added the demand varies considerably throughout the District. He said the remaining demand for the rest of the season will depend on field conditions, weather, and individual irrigation decisions. He stated in the Cochiti Division, no new seed acreage has been identified, but diversions are increasing as tribal ditches come back online, so he expected an uptick in activity there. In the Albuquerque Division, they reported around 103 acres of newly planted fields, most of which have already been irrigated but could want a secondary irrigation to get the new seed established. In the Belen Division, around 568 acres were reported and a lot of those fields have already been planted, but his understanding is that some of the farmers are intentionally delay deliveries to maximum to existing soil moisture they have. He voiced that the demand is fairly scattered overall.

Director Dunning expressed it sounds like there are farmers that do not want to take the water available now because their fields are still wet and are asking to get water after their fields have dried out.

Ms. Marken responded that is accurate.

Director Dunning asked if they extend the season would it be extended for everyone or just those who have planted new seed.

Mr. Ish answered it would be difficult for them to not provide water available in the system to those requesting water if they extend the season.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 - STAFF RECOMMENDATION OF SEASON EXTENSION - Casey Ish, Director of Lands & Conservation and Acting CEO

Mr. Ish stated staff's recommendation is that the Board maintain October 31st as the official end of the irrigation season but allow for a limited delivery window through November 5th. He stated they would make efforts to fulfill remaining late season irrigation demand through November 5th, subject to water availability, rotational delivery constraints and operational capabilities. Staff are asking people to take water as soon as their fields allow for it, as the

delivery window does not guarantee sufficient water supply. He noted they are anticipating potentially a high snowpack in 2027, which comes with a high delivery obligations, so staff asks for them to take into account that they may be working very hard next year to not accrue a lot of debt, so the opportunity to deliver now in 2026 could be helpful.

See also Appendix II.

Director Lopez expressed that farmers had a rough season this year and many will have a hard time making payments they are obligated to, so if there is an opportunity to help them get a start for next year by putting seed in the ground now and getting water to it, it is a good idea. He shared the recent rain events have saturated the ground which makes it hard to get in the field to work it up to put new seed, so everybody is late in getting seed in the ground.

Mr. Ish responded the staff recommendation is attempting to accommodate where the new seed request may be coming from without generally expanding the season and not overdevelop demand when they know they do not have the water to meet it.

Vice Chairman Baugh asked when the ISO contracts stop and how that plays into staffing and extension.

Mr. Ish answered the contracts end on November 17th, but they need several days of ramp down and demobilization, as well as several days of data collection and cleanup before staff is let out.

Director Russo Baca liked the idea of not extending the regular season past October 31st but having the ability until November 5th. She asked the Board to defer to staff to have the flexibility on when exactly to stop it and at what time on the 5th to end it.

Director Jiron expressed this all started when farmers reached out to Director Lopez and asked him if this was possible. He said he did not know if a week would make that big of a difference and did not believe it was a big ask to do it for the two weeks originally suggested. He said if they do not extend it, farmers are going to see the river flowing south when it could have been put on some Ag lands. He felt if farmers are asking for water, he was inclined to help them out.

Chairman Kelly reminded everyone they have two full weeks of irrigation season left, and if people are calling for water, they need to get it scheduled and get it delivered to their best effort.

Director Dunning voiced at the last meeting, Chairman Kelly said the staff needed to look at the fact that if they extend the season, it could impact some ditch repairs. She asked if that was an issue.

Alicia Lopez answered technical services will work with whatever irrigation season they need to. She said extending it six days would mean they have six less days of a limited construction season, but she felt everything they have planned can still get done.

Director Lopez shared farmers are having to make changes and there should be changes made in other areas to try to help accommodate them, and weather is a big factor in those changes.

Mr. Ish stated staff agrees they would like to be able to provide more flexibility to farmers, but the issue is not having the flexibility to provide certainty to the farmers, as extending the season does not create supply to meet that demand.

Vice Chairman Baugh asked if they had any information on the pulse of water that came down from the Audubon Society and other partners released to look at the absorption in the valley as it pertained to the Bosque.

Ms. Marken responded it takes a lot of water to rewet the system after a prolonged period where the river channel is dry, so she did not know if that was a good comparison as to what is happening right now since the river channel was dry for so long.

Vice Chairman Baugh wanted to see how they are seeing some of the reabsorption and the benefit of the valley as a whole when they move water through it when levels and circumstances are right.

Mr. Ish added they are working with the group that facilitated that release and they are expecting a report on the data they collected.

Director Sandoval agreed the farmers need the water, but also agreed the staff oversee if there is an availability of water that can be delivered, as they are the experts and have the knowledge.

Director Jiron stated farmers know what they are doing and know it is a gamble and risk they are willing to take because it's their livelihood and they have already lost a lot this summer. He said if the District could give them an additional week of water, it might make a difference.

Director Dunning felt Director Russo Baca's suggestion was a good compromise and a practical solution.

Chairman Kelly felt they were at a point where they have been on their federal and state partners about Compact compliance on the need for improvements for more efficient deliveries, and it is incumbent on them to focus on the Compact so they can get back to where they were able to store water.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 - ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR (Comments are limited to three (3) minutes)

Hannah Riseley-White

Ms. Riseley-White, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Director, recognized it has been an incredibly challenging year for everyone, especially farmers. She felt the state and MRGCD need to focus on how to help farmers get through these difficult times and all pull together to support Compact deliveries to Elephant Butte Reservoir. She expressed that ISC is urging the Board not to extend the irrigation season, as it will interfere with those essential Compact deliveries. She said any diversions from the river after October 31st hinder their ability to get out of Article 7 restrictions. She noted the river is now disconnected in the San Acacia Reach, so they need everything they can to ensure the river stays connected and can deliver water efficiently to Elephant Butte. She noted they appreciated MRGCD's time and partnership and are excited to continue building on that.

Chairman Kelly voiced that despite how the vote goes, they look forward to continuing to work with her and her staff on very critical items.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6 - CONSIDERATION/APPROVAL OF EXTENDING THE 2026 IRRIGATION SEASON

Vice Chairman Baugh asked if they were to release some water from San Juan Chama, how much would they need to do the 1,200 acres of seedling for the four divisions they discussed earlier.

Mr. Ish answered they did not have that number readily available, but he guessed the demand was probably slightly greater than 1,200. He added if there is a release of water, he expected that water be made available for a larger demand. However, he reminded the Board they voted earlier this year to hold that water over so they can start 2027 with a measure of stability and control over their supply, so he cautioned them against walking that back.

Mr. Lopez did not feel releasing San Juan Chama was a good idea. He stated the request was if the water is available, but if there is no water available, that is just a gamble the farmer has to take by putting seed in the ground. He added if they get moisture in the ground this time of year, it stays in the ground for a long time. He expressed he would be willing to compromise and go a little longer to November 8th.

Vice Chairman Baugh felt Director Russo Baca's suggestion was a very ample reflection of negotiation and collaboration.

Director Dunning shared she basically supports the motion, but it bothers her that somebody could get paid for fallowing their field and then get extra water. She said that did not seem fair and she wished there was some way to only help out the farmers who have not fallowed.

Ms. Wiggins responded that would be an opportunity to maybe refine the contract language for next year, but right now they are stuck with the deal they made and the promises they extended.

Director Russo Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE STRICTLY OPERATIONIAL DISCRETION OF THE TECHNICAL STAFF OF THE MRGCD TO ALLOW IRRIGATION TO OCCUR UNTIL ON OR ABOUT NOVEMBER 5TH DEPENDENT ON WATER AVAILABILITY.** Seconded by Vice Chairman Baugh. Rollcall vote was administered with five members voting yes. The **MOTION CARRIED 5-2.**

Chairman Kelly	No	Vice Chairman Baugh	Yes
Director Dunning	Yes	Director Russo Baca	Yes
Director Sandoval	Yes	Director Lopez	No
Director Jiron	Yes		

With no further comments, questions, or concerns, Chairman Kelly adjourned the meeting at 10:26 am.

Approved to be the correct Minutes of the Board of Directors of October 19, 2026.

ATTESTED:

Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM
Secretary-Treasurer/CFO

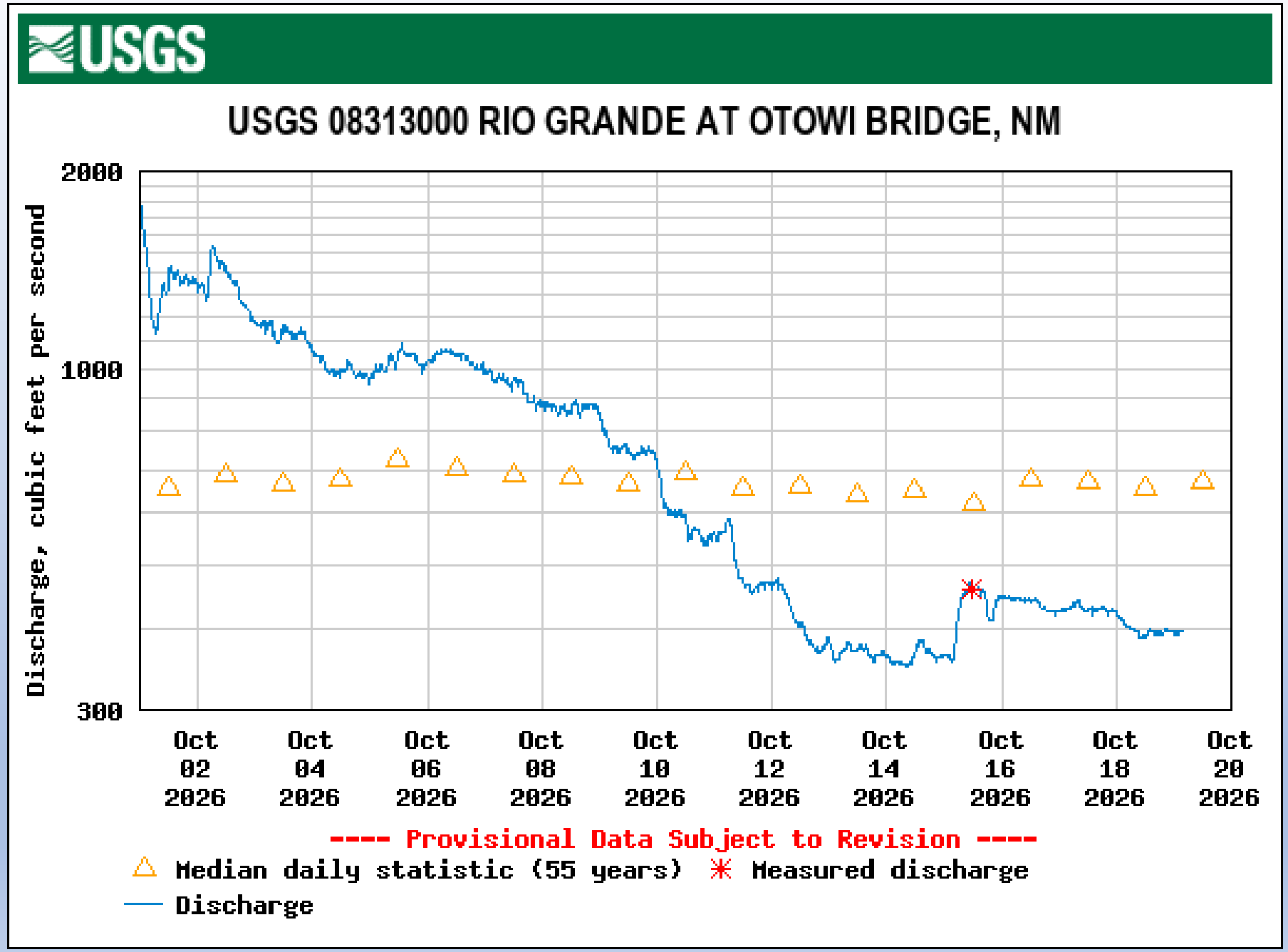
John P. Kelly, Chairman
MRGCD Board of Directors

Water Supply Update

Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District Board of Directors Meeting

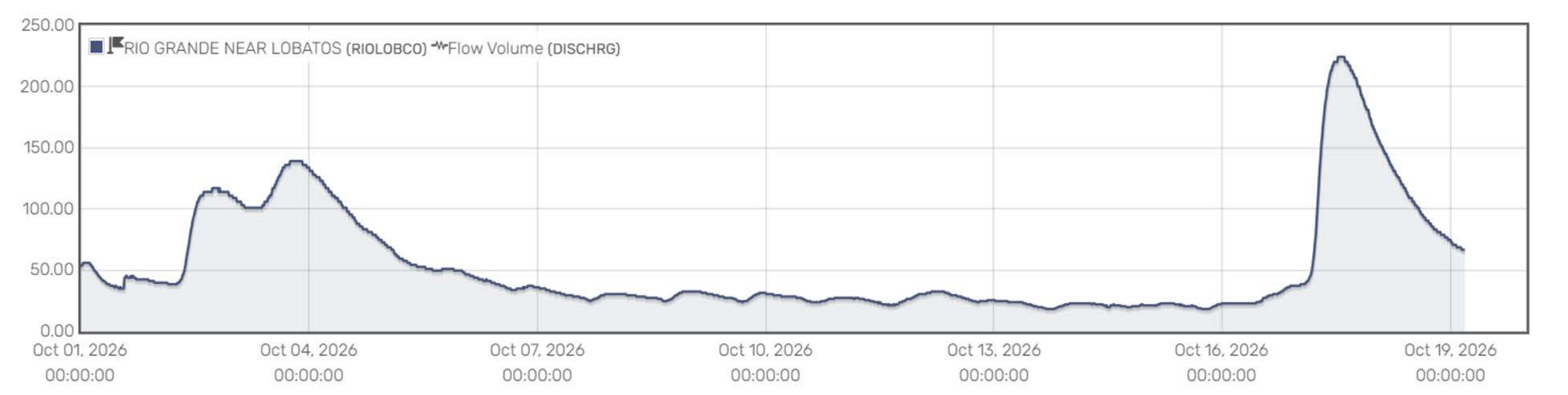
Prepared and Presented by: Anne Marken

Date: 10/19/2026



https://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv/?ts_id=101151&format=img_default&site_no=08313000&begin_date=20260201&end_date=20260309

Rio Grande at Lobatos Gage



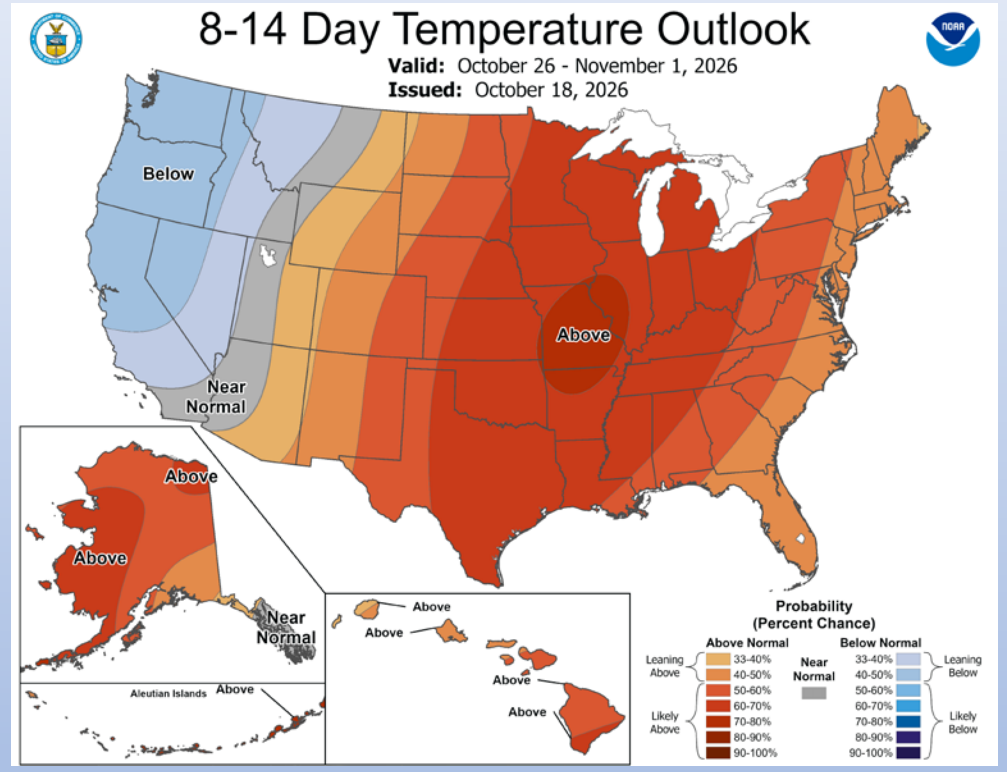
https://dwr.state.co.us/tools/stations

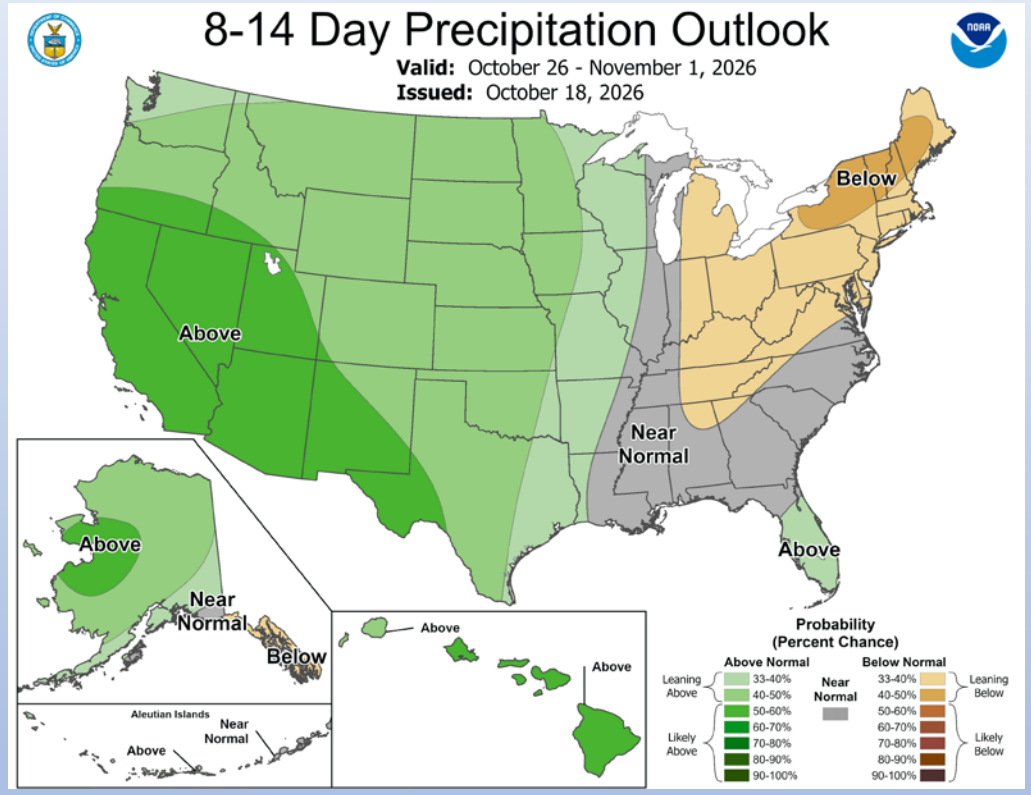
7-Day NWS Forecast

Location	Maximum Temperature							Probability of Precipitation						
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	10/19	10/20	10/21	10/22	10/23	10/24	10/25	10/19	10/20	10/21	10/22	10/23	10/24	10/25
Albuquerque	73	75	78	75	70	68	67	50	20	60	80	50	20	20
Santa Fe	70	69	73	70	63	62	62	50	20	70	90	60	30	30
Farmington	69	70	68	65	59	58	61	20	20	90	100	30	20	20
Gallup	66	69	68	63	55	55	59	40	30	90	100	20	20	20
Grants	67	71	70	66	62	60	60	60	20	80	90	20	20	20
Clayton	71	74	79	75	70	65	62	0	0	0	20	40	40	30
Raton	71	72	74	71	67	61	60	10	10	20	70	30	30	30
Las Vegas	68	68	72	67	63	61	58	40	10	50	90	50	40	40
Moriarty	72	73	77	74	68	65	64	40	20	50	80	40	30	30
Tucumcari	77	79	83	81	77	74	69	10	0	0	50	50	40	30
Clovis	77	78	82	80	78	74	70	0	0	0	20	60	40	40
Roswell	77	80	83	83	82	78	72	0	0	0	30	50	40	50
Socorro	74	78	80	77	73	70	69	50	20	40	80	30	30	30
Chama	61	59	61	57	51	52	54	30	50	90	100	70	30	20
Taos	68	66	70	67	60	59	60	30	30	60	90	70	30	20
Angel Fire	62	61	66	63	56	55	55	20	10	50	90	60	40	30
Los Alamos	66	66	68	64	59	58	58	50	30	70	90	60	30	30
Ruidoso	67	70	73	72	66	65	60	60	20	20	70	60	30	50
Quemado	68	70	72	67	61	61	63	40	30	60	90	20	10	10

https://www.weather.gov/abq/TempPop

NWS 8-14 Day Outlook





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


Questions?

Appendix II

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