

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Water supply conditions along the Rio Grande this year are historically difficult. The irrigation season began with below-average snowpack, and warmer-than-normal temperatures led to a faster-than-usual snowmelt and an early, compressed spring runoff. In 2022, the Rio Grande in Albuquerque experienced drying for the first time in more than 40 years. This pattern of drying was repeated in 2025, and water managers expect another occurrence in the coming weeks unless weather conditions change significantly.

Although agencies are working collectively to mitigate impacts, each faces unique challenges and responsibilities in managing the changing river conditions:

**Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District:** Below-average snowpack and ongoing dry conditions have created significant challenges for water management across the Middle Rio Grande Valley. The district has experienced constrained water supplies since the start of the season and anticipates that limited water availability will continue and likely worsen. As conditions continue to dry, the public and irrigators will soon notice lower river levels, fewer canals running at any given time, and longer wait periods between irrigation deliveries.

“Our priority is to manage the limited water supply as efficiently as possible across the district,” said Jason Casuga, MRGCD Chief Engineer and CEO. “Conditions this year are shaping up to be very challenging, and irrigators should be prepared for reduced deliveries and longer intervals between water availability, especially later in the season if dry conditions persist. Continued coordination with our state and federal partners remains essential as we navigate these conditions together.”

**Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority:** Barbara Baca, Bernalillo County Commissioner and Chair of the Water Authority’s governing board, explained that surface water from the San Juan-Chama Project, delivered via the Rio Grande, is the foundation of the Water Authority’s long-term supply strategy.

“When river flows are low or non-existent, the utility must turn to its groundwater reserves to meet customer demand,” she said. “We must do all we can to save these reserves for use in future droughts, and that’s why a dry Rio Grande should put everyone on notice that conservation is more important now than ever.” Baca urged

users to save water this summer by following the new-look *Water by the Numbers* program, which calls for watering lawns just two days per week in April and May and three days per week in June, July and August. She also reminded Water Authority customers that no sprinkler irrigation is allowed between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m., April through October.

**Bureau of Reclamation:** One of the lowest snowpacks on record, the earliest snowmelt on record, and already low reservoir storage have combined to create a third consecutive dry year on the Rio Grande. Snowmelt runoff peaked early this year due to record temperatures. Most reservoirs along the Rio Chama and Rio Grande are holding less than 15% of capacity which means there is little water in storage to supplement streamflow for irrigation, municipal, recreational, and endangered species water demands.

Drying in the San Acacia reach of the Rio Grande began on March 27, marking the earliest recorded onset in the past three decades. Due to the low runoff, limited water in storage, and a minimal supply of water for Reclamation to lease to supplement river flows, parts of the Rio Grande flowing through Albuquerque will experience drying this summer. National Weather Service predictions for precipitation are becoming slightly more favorable with equal chances of precipitation in May and then above average chances of precipitation during the summer monsoon season.

“Being faced with a third dry year in a row is a big challenge,” said Albuquerque Area Office Acting Area Manager John Irizarry. “We have had many years to prepare during this third decade of extended drought, and our Reclamation team will work closely with stakeholders to make the available water supply stretch as far as possible.”

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:** **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:** The Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. Under the Endangered Species Act, we work to protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems upon which they depend. Five threatened and endangered species live in and along the Rio Grande. The Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to work with all the partners involved to manage water shortages to minimize effects to the listed species in the Middle Rio Grande. In the circumstance that the Rio Grande does run dry and becomes intermittent, the Fish and Wildlife Service will continue efforts to rescue Rio Grande

Silvery Minnow from isolated pools and return them to areas where the river remains continuous.

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