

## **Plan Ahead – Dry Weather May Mean Shorter Ditch Season**

### **Announcement from Mayor Donald T. Lopez**

An unusually dry April and May, normally wet months with lots of rain, have led to drought conditions that will affect our irrigation water supply here in Los Ranchos de Albuquerque for the rest of this year's irrigation season (March through October).

The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District's (MRGCD) CEO, Mike Hamman, explained in a memo that there's less water stored and flowing than usual. The mainstem of the Rio Grande that normally runs about 700 cubic feet per second (cfs) is only producing about 250 cfs this month. He cautioned that while MRGCD is working to obtain water through other sources, such as San Juan-Chama water and borrowing water from the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA), depending on what's available the season may be cut short.

The best-case scenario is other water sources and rain keep the season going for all users until Labor Day, September 7. The worst-case scenario is that the general supply runs out around July 19, and available water will be allocated to the oldest water users first, and newer users later, if the water supply allows. Allocating available water to the oldest users during drought, such as the pueblos, is common here in the southwest, and it's up to mother nature to provide some much needed rain to keep the ditches in our community flowing. Read the full memo below for more information.

Consider the following to plan ahead for the worst-case scenario:

- Evaluate all of your water options: Do you have ABCWUA water for your home? A private well? Check whether you're allowed to use those water sources to irrigate, and whether you'd want to.
- Prioritize what needs water first: If there's not enough water for all of your crops, what do you want to make sure makes it to the end of the season? Could some things be harvested early to save water down the line?
- Remember that when drought hits, it hits us all, and every bit of water conversation in our daily lives helps. Some quick and easy tips:
  - o Check and repair any leaks around your home
  - o Reduce evaporation by watering in the early morning or evening
  - o Take shorter showers

If you have any questions, feel free to give me a call at (505) 977-2119.

For questions on irrigation ditches:

Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD): (505) 247-0234

Ditch Riders: Lawrence Otero (properties east of Rio Grande Blvd) (505) 249-5205; Tim Chavez (properties west of Rio Grande Blvd) (505) 225-4402

For questions on private wells:

Office of the State Engineer (OSE) District 1: (505) 383-4000

## **Original Memo from Mike Hamman, MRGCD**

### **RE: MRGCD Message to Constituents on Water Supply Conditions**

Water supply conditions have developed into a serious drought setting not seen since 1977 and 1981. Following a well above normal runoff in 2019, the 2020 snowpack was developing near normal through early March and then virtually all participation ceased in the normally wet months of April and May, leading to a 35% runoff that yielded little in the way of usable storage in the El Vado Reservoir. The mainstem of the Rio Grande that normally runs about 700 cubic feet per second (cfs) in July is only producing about 250 cfs. MRGCD had San Juan-Chama water carried over from last year and a 75% allocation so far for this year, which we are now using to maintain current river flows and diversions. ABCWUA allowed us to use an additional 10,000 a-f (acre-feet) of borrowed water and we are seeking other alternatives for use of Rio Grande Compact debit water now stored at El Vado Reservoir.

The best case scenario is that MRGCD is allowed to use this water and we get some rain, which would allow for the irrigation season for all users to hopefully extend into Labor Day (September 7). Worst case scenario is that we run out of MRGCD's general supply around July 19 and then begin the prescribed operations to serve prior and paramount lands of the six middle Rio Grande Pueblos. This requires curtailment of all non-pueblo irrigators until excess water develops above these base flow operations. In this case, most of all the ditches in the Los Ranchos area will cease to flow except for drain returns until the rains come. The Rio Grande itself may dry to a trickle in the Albuquerque reach that has not happened to that extent since 1981.

Let's all pray for rain.

Mike A. Hamman, CEO