Drought in 2021

Eric Boyda
Water Resource Director
Much of the state is in Exception Drought, especially Lincoln County.
Current drought is shaping up to be similar to 2012 drought.
Despite some recent precipitation, precipitation is still down from average.
Drought has impacted flows on the Rio Ruidoso and Eagle Creek
Current flows at Hollywood Gage are well below the median daily discharge
2021 is similar to 2012, however, in 2012 there was some spring runoff from snowmelt.
In 2018-2020 there was large storm events and snow to help with winter/spring diversions
Snowpack for this year has been a small fraction of the median snowpack water equivalent.
In late March, snowpack was approximately 2% of the median snowpack.
Diversions are substantially down this year compared to other years because of the lack of surface water from the Rio Ruidoso to divert to Grindstone Reservoir and from Eagle Creek to the Alto Crest Water Treatment Plant.
Diversion Breakdown (November through March)
The last 9 years demonstrates the Village of Ruidoso’s conjunctive water use strategy of using surface water when it is available and limiting groundwater pumping until it is needed in dry years. 2021 diversion have been predominantly groundwater diversions versus the previous 4 years.
Grindstone Reservoir has decreased in level with the inadequate monsoon season of 2020 and limited precipitation over the winter. Grindstone will not likely be refilled this year without a heavy monsoon season.
Grindstone Reservoir Storage

Month

Acre-feet


0 400 800 1200 1600

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Changes to Diversion Strategies

• Using Cherokee well to reduce demands on Grindstone Service area from the Cherokee Interconnect
• Utilizing the Alto-Grindstone Interconnect to bring water from Gavilan Canyon wells to Grindstone Service Area
• Use of Eagle Creek well field in absence of surface water on Eagle Creek

Village has prepared for drought through conjunctive use water diversion strategies.
Drought will likely persist at least until the summer monsoons.