

“Drought Watch on the Rio Grande” – April 15, 2008 Press Release & Graph

Forecast High Snowpack Runoff and Improved Reservoir Conditions

Winter precipitation in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, the major source of water for the Rio Grande was at near record breaking amounts this year, in some areas as much as 170% of the 30-year average for the season. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation March through July forecast snowpack adjusted runoff of 167% of the 30-year average is much improved over recent years. For comparison, runoff inflow into Elephant Butte reservoir last year was only 55% of the long-term average 573,000 acre feet and reservoir inflow in 2006 was a scant 16% (92,521 acre feet) of the 30-year average.

Combined storage in the two Rio Grande Project reservoirs, Elephant Butte and Caballo, is 547,105 acre-feet of water, or 24.9% of the total reservoirs' capacity of 2.2 million acre feet. While this is slightly less than was in the reservoirs last year at this time the anticipated high runoff this year will greatly improve reservoir storage conditions. Accounting for both reservoir inflows and releases, a peak reservoir storage of 851,000 acre feet is projected in late July. This will be the highest level in the reservoir since October 2001.

Water releases from the Rio Grande Project reservoirs for agricultural irrigation for the 2008 season began in February 20th and are expected to continue into October. The water allocation available to Rio Grande Project water right owners announced by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is currently 57.7% of a full water supply. Based on the high runoff forecast, a full water supply from the Project is projected to be available by late-June or early July. Project allocations are based strictly on the amount of water actually in storage and available for delivery. Of the total amount of water in storage, 90,519 acre-feet, or approximately 4%, is not available because it is owed as credit to the upstream states for previous over-deliveries to the reservoir. This is based on the Rio Grande Compact, a legal agreement dividing flows of the Rio Grande between Colorado, New Mexico and Texas.

On April 9, the Elephant Butte Irrigation District announced a 2.5 acre feet per acre allocation of water to water right land owners from Rio Grande Project water. In addition the El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1 announced a full 4.0 acre foot per acre water allocation to water right land owners from the combined sources of the 2008 Rio Grande Project allocation, 2007 conserved water stored in the reservoirs and additional treated water under agreement with the El Paso Water Utilities.

In 2007 the Paso del Norte region received above average precipitation and this winter's mountain snowpack was near record breaking. However, so far this spring conditions have been much drier and the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center is forecasting below normal precipitation and above normal temperatures for the next three months in the Rio Grande Basin. This just reminds us that water conservation is always important.

“Drought Watch on the Rio Grande” is provided by the Texas AgriLife Research Center at El Paso and the Texas Water Resources Institute, The Texas A&M University System, with support from the USDA-CSREES Rio Grande Basin Initiative, in collaboration with the United States Bureau of Reclamation El Paso Field Office. E-mail or call to receive future issues of Drought Watch.

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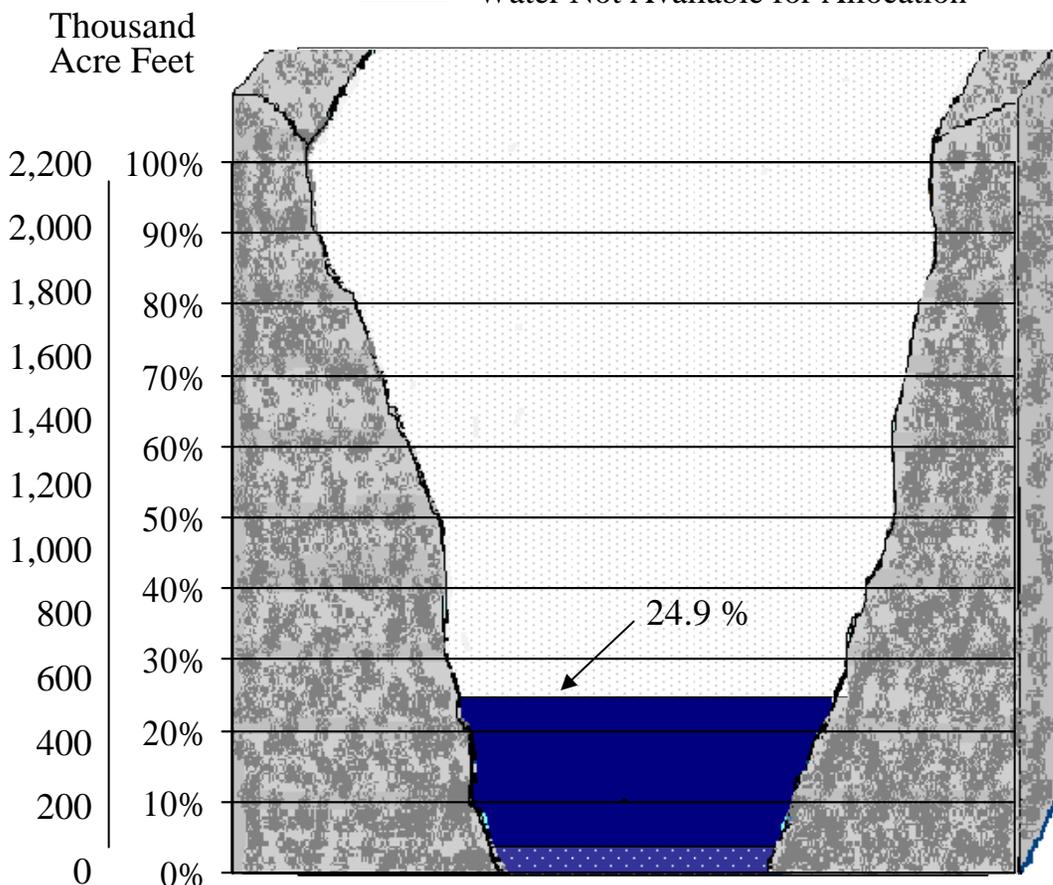
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Drought Watch on the Rio Grande

Surface Water Supply Conditions April 15, 2008

Combined Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoir Storage

Water Available for Allocation
 Water Not Available for Allocation



Water Supply Conditions & Forecasts

- **Water in Storage** is 547,105 acre-feet or **24.9%** of the combined reservoir capacity of 2.2 million acre feet.
- **Snowpack** in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado is 116% to 140% of average for this time of year. However, the National Weather Service three-month forecast calls for below normal precipitation and above normal temperatures.
- The **March-July inflow to Elephant Butte Reservoir** is projected to be **167%** of the 30-year average resulting in an improvement in water supply and reservoir conditions.
- The **2008 Rio Grande Project water allocation for the year is currently 57.7%** of a full supply. A full allocation is projected to be available by late June or early July.

Water allocation to agricultural and urban users as a percent of full supply

