

COLORADO WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

Department of Natural Resources

Bill Owens, Governor

Greg Walcher, DNR Executive Director

Rod Kuharich, CWCB Director



Rio Grande Basin Drought Impact Fact Sheet

Water Division 3

Reservoir Storage

Reservoir storage ranges from a high of 78% to a low of 23% of normal. The reservoirs are expected to be drawn down to near minimum pool at yearend. All of the reservoirs in the Rio Grande are for irrigation purposes and management may vary depending on the water users' use plans.

Use of Storage

Abnormally warm and dry weather has contributed to early melting of what little snowpack there is in the Rio Grande. However, river flows on the Rio Grande have barely exceeded 500 cfs to date. Based on 1977 data we expect the Rio Grande river to peak around 1200 cfs. A normal peak would be around 5300 cfs.



Streamflow

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Water Administration

Warm weather has caused early "runoff". Based on 1977 data we expect the Rio Grande river to peak early and at about 1200 cfs and many of the "later" water rights to not come in at all. Currently very senior priorities are diverting. Normally much more junior water rights would be diverting. The Rio Grande Compact should not impact Colorado water users who will be more impacted by intra-state water administration.

Comparison to Prior Years

The low year comparable to this year is 1977. Abnormally warm and dry weather has contributed to early melting of what little snowpack there is in the Rio Grande Basin. Cumulative precipitation on the valley floor since September 2001 is 2.05 inches below normal, a significant amount of the average annual 7.5 inches normally received. The Upper Rio Grande basin snowpack is essentially gone. As of April 22, 2002 the Upper Rio Grande Basin was at 10% of normal.

For more information about this or other water resource topics, please contact the CWCB at:

1313 Sherman Street, Room 721, Denver, CO, 80203

Phone: (303) 866-3441 Fax: (303) 866-4474

Internet: www.cwcb.state.co.us