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Water Supply Forecast for New Mexico - February 2011

Coordinated Release: National Weather Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service

Despite the brutally cold winter storm that brought snow to much of the state during the first few days of February, the influence of the ongoing La Niña event has kept the southern two thirds of New Mexico much drier than normal so far this winter. The colder than normal water in the equatorial Pacific that defines La Niña would favor a storm track that results in drier than normal weather conditions for southern and eastern New Mexico through this spring.

Forecast flows for the Rio Grande include 76 percent of normal into Cochiti Lake and 71 percent at Elephant Butte Lake. Other Rio Grande Basin reservoir forecast inflows range from 87 percent of normal at El Vado Lake to 38 percent of normal at Jemez Canyon Reservoir. Inflow to Santa Rosa Lake is expected to be 36 percent of normal while in the San Juan Basin, Navajo Reservoir is expecting 89 percent of normal inflow. Inflow to Conchas Lake is forecast to be only 42 percent of the 30 year March through June median inflow, while spring flows in the Gila River Basin are expected to average less than 40 percent of normal.

Precipitation across New Mexico during January 2010 ranged from near normal at a few spots in the northeast highlands to little or no measurable precipitation across the southern lowlands. Elsewhere in the state rain and snowfall was generally well below normal during January, even in the mountain regions. Seasonal precipitation, October 2010 through January 2011, was only slightly below normal in the far northwest, but was well below normal across the southern two thirds of New Mexico.

Surveys by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service indicate that snowpack water content in the Rio Grande Basin as of February 1 was 68 percent of normal and 61 percent of one year ago. In the San Juan Basin the snowpack water content was 105 percent of normal and 98 percent of the total of February 1, 2010.

The Rio Grande Basin snowpack water content average was 96 percent of normal as of New Years Day 2011, but a lack of snowfall during January had taken a toll on the snowpack just one month later. Snowpack in the Colorado portion of the Rio Grande headwaters was 80 percent of normal. Snowpack water content on the high peaks and east slopes of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains that comprise the headwaters of the Pecos and Canadian River Basins ranged from 54 to 59 percent of normal.

With the bulk of the snow accumulation season for the mountains more than half over, and a moderate to strong La Niña favoring a drier than normal spring, the prospects for near normal spring snow melt runoff are dwindling. Previous springs during strong La Niña events averaged less than 60 percent of normal March through May precipitation for most areas of the state, including the northern New Mexico Mountains.

New Mexico reservoir storage is well below normal in the Rio Grande Basin, Canadian Basin, and Pecos Basin, but near normal at Navajo Lake. In the Rio Grande basin, storage is 56 percent of the 1971 to 2000 normal and 90 percent of last years storage at this time. In the San Juan basin, Navajo Reservoir storage is 107 percent of the 30 year normal, and 110 percent of the storage of one year ago.

This water supply forecast reflects conditions as of February 1, 2011 and assumes near normal to below normal precipitation through rest of the winter and into the spring.

SNOTEL Site...	SNOTEL Data	
	February 1, 2011	1971-2000 Average
	Water Content	Water Content
	Inches	Inches
Chamita	6.7	6.7
Red River	2.6	5.0
Cumbres Trestle	16.7	16.0
Wolf Creek Summit	21.7	20.1

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STREAM AND STATION	Forecast Coordinated with NRCS			30-Year Avg (1971-2000) 1000 AF
	Forecast Period	Forecast 1000 AF	% of 30 Year Avg	
San Juan Basin				
Navajo Reservoir Inflow (San Juan River)	April - July	700	89	785
Vallecito Reservoir Inflow (Colorado) (Los Pinos River)	April - July	190	93	205
Durango, Colorado (Animas River)	April - July	440	100	440
Rio Grande Basin				
Del Norte (near), Colorado	April - Sept	485	91	531
Otowi Bridge, New Mexico	March - July	575	76	757
San Marcial, New Mexico	March - July	405	71	573
Mogote (near), Colorado (Conejos River)	April - Sept	182	91	200
El Vado Reservoir Inflow, New Mexico (Rio Chama)	March - July	205	87	237
Chamita (near), New Mexico (Rio Chama)	March - July	240	77	312
Pecos (near), New Mexico (Pecos River)	March - July	27	47	58
Santa Rosa Reservoir Inflow, New Mexico (Pecos River)	March - July	19	36	53
Canadian Basin				
Conchas Reservoir Inflow, New Mexico (Canadian River)	March - June	18	42	43 (30 yr median)