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Water Supply Forecast for New Mexico - May 2016

Coordinated Release: National Weather Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service

April 2016 brought about a much needed change to wetter conditions after an exceptionally dry January through March period. Several notable storm systems impacted the northern high terrain. Snow water equivalent values trended favorably at several locations by the end of the month.

This fifth and final water supply forecast for 2016 reflects the great start to the 2015-2016 snow accumulation season, followed by a poor mid into late season, then a return to a very active storm track near the end the season in April.

Forecast flows for the Rio Grande include 60 percent of normal into Cochiti Lake and 46 percent into Elephant Butte Lake. Other Rio Grande Basin reservoir forecast inflows include 61 percent of normal at El Vado Lake. Inflow to Santa Rosa Lake is expected to be 73 percent of normal. In the San Juan Basin, Navajo Reservoir is expecting 71 percent of normal inflow.

Precipitation across New Mexico during April 2016 was near to above normal. Water Year 2016 precipitation, October 2015 through April 2016, has been mostly below normal in the west, near normal in central areas, and above normal across the east. The New Mexico northern mountains and the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo Mountains in Colorado fell below normal for the first time this season. The snowpack ranges from around 70 to 120 percent of normal as of May 1<sup>st</sup>.

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 May 1 was 73 percent of normal, while it was just 38 percent of normal one year ago. In the San Juan Basin the snowpack water content was 77 percent of normal on May 1<sup>st</sup>, while only at 33 percent on May 1, 2015.

The ENSO (El Niño-Southern Oscillation) shows El Niño declining and it will continue to weaken over the next few months. Historically, this means near to above normal precipitation for the state during the spring. That was not the case for March, however April and early May have turned around. Long range models continue to suggest a more active weather pattern for May.

In the Rio Grande basin, storage capacity is only 16 percent of the 30 year average and at this time last year the storage levels were only 15 percent of normal. In the San Juan basin, Navajo Reservoir storage is 88 percent of the 30 year normal while last May 1st it was at 69 percent of the storage capacity.

This water supply forecast reflects conditions as of May 1, 2016 and assumes near normal precipitation through the spring.

SNOTEL Site...	SNOTEL Data	
	May 1, 2016	1981-2010 Median
	Water Content	Water Content
	Inches	Inches
Chamita	0.0	0.0
Red River	0.4	0.0
Cumbres Trestle	18.7	24.6
Wolf Creek Summit	28.7	35.1