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Water Supply Forecast for New Mexico - January 2016

Coordinated Release: National Weather Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service

December 2015 was an active month, highlighted by the blizzard across eastern New Mexico on the 26th into the 28th. Snowpack on the mountains is off to a good start with above normal values in every basin. Statewide snowpack as of January 1st was 141 percent of normal.

This first water supply forecast for 2016 reflects the good start to the 2015-2016 snow accumulation season as well as an active storm track that targets New Mexico, compliments of a strong El Niño.

Forecast flows for the Rio Grande include 105 percent of normal into Cochiti Lake and 111 percent at Elephant Butte Lake. Other Rio Grande Basin reservoir forecast inflows include 107 percent of normal at El Vado Lake. Inflow to Santa Rosa Lake is expected to be 140 percent of normal while inflows into the Conchas Reservoir are expected to be 133 percent of normal. In the San Juan Basin, Navajo Reservoir is expecting 105 percent of normal inflow.

Precipitation across New Mexico during December 2015 ranged from near to below normal in the west to above and well above normal in the east. Water Year 2016 precipitation, October through December 2015, has been near to above normal in the west and central areas, and well above in the east. Only the New Mexico bootheel has reported below normal precipitation for the first three months of the 2016 water year. The New Mexico northern mountains reported near to above normal precipitation in December, while the southwest Colorado Mountains experienced above to well above normal precipitation.

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 January 1 was 134 percent of normal, while it was 76 percent of normal one year ago. In the San Juan Basin the snowpack water content was 122 percent of normal while only 71 percent on January 1, 2015.

With the bulk of the snow accumulation season for the mountains yet to come, the prospects for a good spring snow melt runoff across New Mexico are encouraging. The ENSO (El Niño-Southern Oscillation) shows a strong El Niño in place and it is expected to continue through the winter and into the spring. Historically, this means above normal precipitation for nearly all of the state. This is especially true over the southern half of the state, while northern areas are near to a little above normal.

In the Rio Grande basin, storage capacity is only 41 percent of the 30 year average and at this time last year the storage levels were only 11 percent of normal. In the San Juan basin, Navajo Reservoir storage is 79 percent of the 30 year normal while last January 1st it was 64 percent of the storage.

This water supply forecast reflects conditions as of January 1, 2016 and assumes near to above normal precipitation through the rest of the winter and into the spring.

SNOTEL Site...	SNOTEL Data	
	January 1, 2016 Water Content	1981-2010 Median Water Content
	Inches	Inches
Chamita	5.2	4.0
Red River	4.1	3.6
Cumbres Trestle	14.8	10.4
Wolf Creek Summit	18.0	14.6