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Water Supply Forecast for New Mexico - February 2016

Coordinated Release: National Weather Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service

January 2016 was a much less active month than December 2015. There were no widespread heavy snowfall events, however there was an impressive local area of heavy snow centered in Mora County early on the 25<sup>th</sup>, with amounts up to 30 inches reported. Snowpack on the mountains is still in pretty good shape, with near or above normal values in all the basins as of February 1<sup>st</sup>. Statewide snowpack as of February 1<sup>st</sup> was 120 percent of normal.

This second water supply forecast for 2016 reflects the overall good early portion 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 100 percent of normal into Cochiti Lake and 102 percent at Elephant Butte Lake. Other Rio Grande Basin reservoir forecast inflows include 102 percent of normal at El Vado Lake. Inflow to Santa Rosa Lake is expected to be 141 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 100 percent of normal inflow.

Precipitation across New Mexico during January 2016 ranged was near to above normal across the northwest and north central areas, while mostly below normal elsewhere. Water Year 2016 precipitation, October 2015 through January 2016, has been near normal in the west, above normal in central areas and well above normal across the east. Only the New Mexico bootheel has reported below normal precipitation for the first four months of the 2016 water year. The New Mexico northern mountains and the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo mountains in Colorado reported near to above normal precipitation during the same time frame, helping to keep snowpack above normal.

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 122 percent of normal, while it was 78 percent of normal one year ago. In the San Juan Basin the snowpack water content is 113 percent of normal on February 1<sup>st</sup>, while only 64 percent on February 1, 2015.

With the majority of the snow accumulation season for the mountains still to come, the prospects for a good spring snow melt runoff across New Mexico remains encouraging. The ENSO (El Niño-Southern Oscillation) shows a strong El Niño still in place and it is expected to continue through the rest of the winter and into the spring, although weaken some. Historically, this means above normal precipitation for the state, but especially over the southern half of New Mexico.

In the Rio Grande basin, storage capacity is only 14 percent of the 30 year average and at this time last year the storage levels were only 12 percent of normal. In the San Juan basin, Navajo Reservoir storage is 82 percent of the 30 year normal while last January 1<sup>st</sup> it was at 64 percent of the storage capacity.

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

SNOTEL Site...	SNOTEL Data	
	February 1, 2016	1981-2010 Median
	Water Content	Water Content
	Inches	Inches
Chamita	7.7	6.5
Red River	5.6	5.0
Cumbres Trestle	19.7	15.5
Wolf Creek Summit	23.7	20.6

