

Contact: NWS - Brian Guyer/Chuck Jones (505) 244-9148
NRCS - Chris Romero (505) 761-4431

Water Supply Forecast for New Mexico - March 2016

Coordinated Release: National Weather Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service

February 2016 continued the trend of January with even less precipitation statewide. There were only two snowfall events, the first one from the 1st into the 3rd, and the other on the 22nd and 23rd. Thus, snowpack in the mountains has diminished, especially over western and southern basins. Statewide snowpack as of March 1st was 80 percent of normal, a little above last year's 72 percent of normal.

This third water supply forecast for 2016 reflects the great start to the 2015-2016 snow accumulation season but a poor midseason, as well as the likely return to an active storm track for New Mexico this spring, compliments of a still strong El Niño.

Forecast flows for the Rio Grande include 77 percent of normal into Cochiti Lake and 71 percent into Elephant Butte Lake. Other Rio Grande Basin reservoir forecast inflows include 80 percent of normal at El Vado Lake. Inflow to Santa Rosa Lake is expected to be 104 percent of normal. In the San Juan Basin, Navajo Reservoir is expecting 88 percent of normal inflow.

Precipitation across New Mexico during February 2016 was below to well below normal, except near normal over the northeast quarter of the state. Water Year 2016 precipitation, October 2015 through February 2016, has been near to below normal in the west, near to above normal in central areas and well above normal across the east. The New Mexico northern mountains and the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo Mountains in Colorado have reported near normal precipitation during the same time frame, helping to keep snowpack close to 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 March 1 was 89 percent of normal, while it was 79 percent of normal one year ago. In the San Juan Basin the snowpack water content was 94 percent of normal on March 1st, while at 70 percent on March 1, 2016.

With the snow accumulation season now more than half over, the prospects for a good spring snow melt runoff across New Mexico is slipping away. The ENSO (El Niño-Southern Oscillation) shows a strong El Niño still in place and it is expected to continue through the spring, although weaken. Historically, this means near to above normal precipitation for the state during the spring.

In the Rio Grande basin, storage capacity is only 15 percent of the 30 year average and at this time last year the storage levels were only 13 percent of normal. In the San Juan basin, Navajo Reservoir storage is 83 percent of the 30 year normal while last January 1st it was at 65 percent of the storage capacity.

This water supply forecast reflects conditions as of March 1, 2016 and assumes near to above normal into the spring.

SNOTEL Site...	SNOTEL Data	
	March 1, 2016	1981-2010 Median
	Water Content	Water Content
	Inches	Inches
Chamita	7.9	9.5
Red River	5.4	6.8
Cumbres Trestle	22.1	21.4
Wolf Creek Summit	26.1	24.9