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Water Supply Forecast for New Mexico - April 2016

Coordinated Release: National Weather Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service

March 2016 continued the trend of January and February with even less precipitation statewide. In fact, many parts of New Mexico received no precipitation at all during March.

This fourth water supply forecast for 2016 reflects the great start to the 2015-2016 snow accumulation season but a poor mid to late season, as well as the possible return to an active storm track for New Mexico during April.

Forecast flows for the Rio Grande include 60 percent of normal into Cochiti Lake and 44 percent into Elephant Butte Lake. Other Rio Grande Basin reservoir forecast inflows include 60 percent of normal at El Vado Lake. Inflow to Santa Rosa Lake is expected to be 71 percent of normal. In the San Juan Basin, Navajo Reservoir is expecting 72 percent of normal inflow.

Precipitation across New Mexico during March 2016 was well below normal to non-existent. Water Year 2016 precipitation, October 2015 through March 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 90 percent of normal as of April 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 April 1 was 66 percent of normal, while it was 54 percent of normal one year ago. In the San Juan Basin the snowpack water content was 77 percent of normal on April 1<sup>st</sup>, while at 60 percent on April 1, 2015.

With the New Mexico snow accumulation season coming into the home stretch, the prospects for a good spring snow melt runoff across New Mexico is now not very likely. The ENSO (El Niño-Southern Oscillation) still shows a strong El Niño, although it will continue to weaken over the next several months. Historically, this means near to above normal precipitation for the state during the spring. So far, that has not been the case. However, long range models are suggesting a change to a more active weather pattern over the last three weeks of April.

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 14 percent of normal. In the San Juan basin, Navajo Reservoir storage is 85 percent of the 30 year normal while last January 1st it was at 68 percent of the storage capacity.

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

SNOTEL Site...	SNOTEL Data	
	April 1, 2016 Water Content	1981-2010 Median Water Content
	Inches	Inches
Chamita	3.1	7.9
Red River	0.4	7.4
Cumbres Trestle	23.3	26.8
Wolf Creek Summit	29.0	31.4