News Release

The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District

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MRGCD DELAYS START OF THE 2015 IRRIGATION SEASON

Albuquerque – Recent snow and rain in the middle Rio Grande valley is causing the MRGCD to push back the start date of the irrigation season.

The District usually begins charging irrigation canals on March 1, but due to muddy ditch banks and the probability of additional rain or snow, the District is pushing the start date back to March 5 – 7, depending upon moisture over the next few days.

MRGCD Hydrologist David Gensler says that, as has been the case in recent years, this year water will be released into the system carefully. "We've learned over the years that a gradual startup helps prevent canal and structure damage as a result of debris in the system and other factors. This startup schedule will also allow maintenance to complete some improvement projects and protect the natural flow of the Rio Grande. We will charge up the District's canals in an orderly manner, a section at a time."

Water will be diverted at our Isleta dam first with that water being sent to the Socorro area as farmers there are planting and ready to irrigate.

Water will also be diverted at Angostura, north of Albuquerque, March 5 – 7. Cochiti diversions will not begin until March 14 and diversions at San Acacia will likely not occur until later in the irrigation season when the Isleta dam can no longer divert enough water to supply both the Belen and Socorro divisions.

As of today, District irrigators are facing another year of low water supply. The snowpack is below average and spring runoff is expected to be poor. Updates on the current snowpack conditions, run-off projections for the mid-valley and an irrigation forecast will be posted on the District's website and updated weekly throughout the irrigation season.

"The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District will be managing the system to make the utmost use of the water supply that Mother Nature provides to supply all irrigators in these water-challenged times. We will also be working very closely with our State and Federal partners to assist in meeting flow objectives for endangered species utilizing natural runoff above irrigation demand and federal water stored for this purpose. says new CEO/Chief Engineer Mike Hamman

MRGCD Board Chairman Derrick J. Lente adds, “It is our charge to work hard on behalf of all of our constituents to effectively manage water and lands within the District to preserve the agricultural and ecosystem values of the Rio Grande that all of us enjoy and rely upon.”

Irrigation season in the middle Rio Grande valley normally runs from March 1 to October 31. Water is generally not delivered to irrigators in the first 3-4 weeks of diversion as this preparation time is utilized to flush debris and sediment from the system and locate any erosion or obstructions.

About the MRGCD: The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District has been promoting sustainable agriculture for the past 85 years. The District delivers water to about 70,000 acres of cropland in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. That water is reused time and time again to irrigate crops, sustains the cottonwood bosque along the Rio Grande, helps create and maintain habitat for the endangered Rio Grande silvery minnow and recharges the aquifer. The District owns 30,000 acres of bosque in the valley, the largest continuous cottonwood forest in the world, and a stretch of land that provides unprecedented recreational opportunities and an irreplaceable swath of greenbelt in New Mexico’s largest metropolitan area. The District was formed in 1925 to alleviate flooding and to reclaim farmland in the valley. Its boundaries stretch 150 miles from Cochiti on the north to the boundary of the Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge on the south, running through Sandoval, Bernalillo, Valencia and Socorro Counties. It operates more than 1,200 miles of canals, laterals and drains, which are used to convey water to and from cropland. The District is funded by water service charges and property assessments on the benefited lands within its boundaries.

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