

“Drought Watch on the Rio Grande” – June 23, 2009 Press Release & Graph

March-June Inflow to Elephant Butte Below Average – Reservoirs at 33% Capacity

Water storage in the two Rio Grande Project reservoirs, Elephant Butte and Caballo, 120 miles north of El Paso, Texas, is 730,402 acre-feet or 33% of the total combined reservoirs’ capacity of 2.2 million acre-feet. Out of this quantity of water in storage, 166,813 acre-feet or 22.8% is owed to upstream users under the Rio Grande Compact between Colorado, New Mexico and Texas and to San Juan-Chama Project users. While contributing to higher lake levels this water is unavailable for Rio Grande Project users. At this time that leaves 563,589 acre-feet of the water in storage available to Rio Grande Project users in southern New Mexico and Far West Texas.

Wayne Treers at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation El Paso Office, projects the total March to July inflow to Elephant Butte Reservoir will be just 361,300 acre-feet or 63% of the long-term average after adjustment for upstream reservoir storage and use. This is down from the early season February spring runoff projection of 106.5% of average. Since then La Nina weather conditions have brought above average temperatures, below average precipitation and winds which resulted in greater evaporation of snowpack and runoff water. Over the last 13 years there have only been three years with above average spring runoff into Elephant Butte reservoir, 1997, 2005 and 2008. The National Weather Service three month forecast predicts normal temperatures with above average precipitation in the Rio Grande basin. Summer monsoon rains, if far enough upstream could increase inflow and reservoir storage levels.

As water is released for production of crops in the region and municipal, commercial and industrial use in El Paso, reservoir levels are anticipated to fall below 400,000 acre-feet of usable water about July 24th. When this occurs, under the Rio Grande Compact, Colorado and New Mexico would be restricted from storing additional Rio Grande water in upstream reservoirs built after 1929. The June 1st runoff forecasts indicate the reservoirs would stay below 400,000 acre-feet of Compact useable water for the remainder of the year. The July 4th water level at Elephant Butte is forecast to be 59 feet below the reservoir spillway crest. The lowest 2009 water storage level at Elephant Butte is projected to be about 333,177 acre-feet (16.7% of full) around mid-October.

To-date for the 2009 water supply season, the amount of water allocated to Rio Grande Project users is 90.8% of a full annual water supply. For comparison, last year the water supply allocation in June was 93.3% of a full annual supply. Supply allocations are based strictly on the amount of water actually in storage and available for use. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation anticipates close to a full supply for Project users by October based on current runoff and use forecasts.

Special note: After more than 30 years of federal government service, Wayne Treers will be retiring July 4th, 2009. Wayne has spent almost his entire career in water resources operations serving well the public and water managers and users of the Rio Grande Project.

Drought Watch on the Rio Grande is provided by the Texas AgriLife Research Center at El Paso and the Texas Water Resources Institute, The Texas A&M University System, with support from the USDA-CSREES Rio Grande Basin Initiative, in collaboration with the United States Bureau of Reclamation El Paso Field Office. E-mail or call to receive future issues of Drought Watch.

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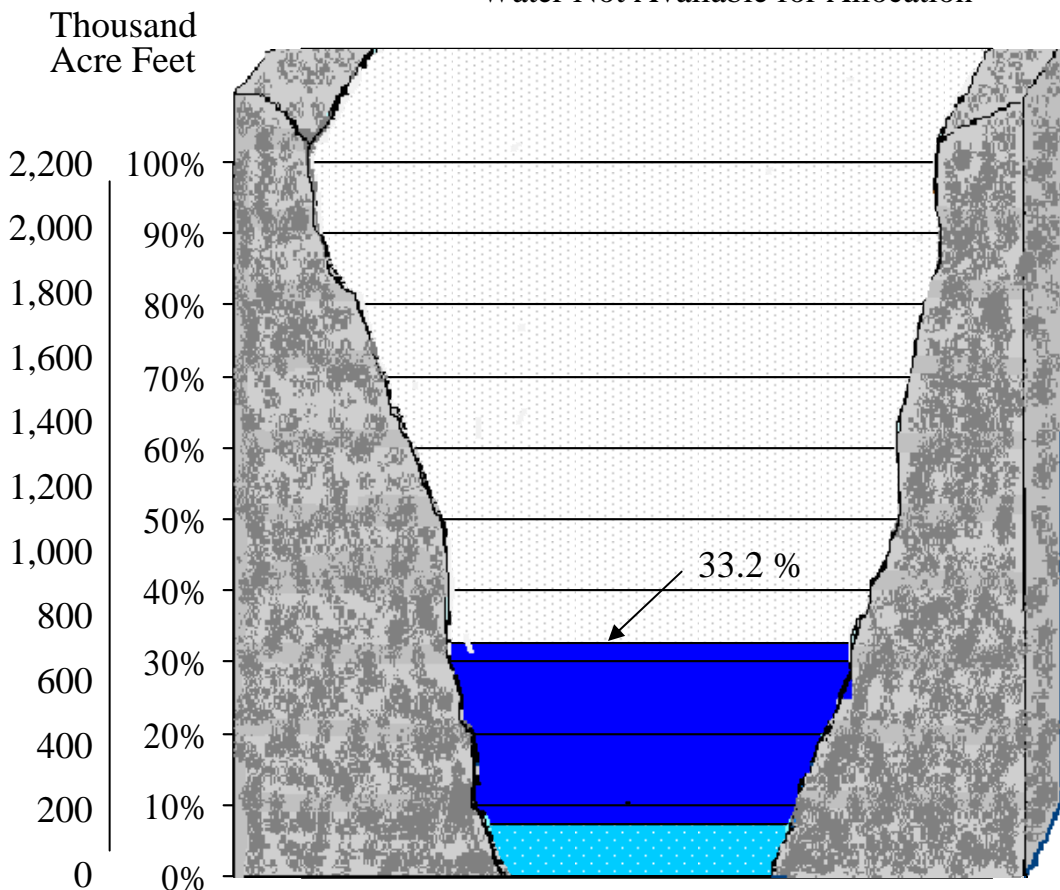
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Surface Water Supply Conditions June 23, 2009

Combined Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoir Storage

Water Available for Allocation
 Water Not Available for Allocation



Water Supply Conditions & Forecasts

- **Water in Storage** is 730,402 acre-feet or **33.2%** of the combined reservoir capacity of 2.2 million acre feet. Of this, 166,813 acre-feet or 22.8% of the amount in storage are Rio Grande Compact Credit and San Juan-Chama waters which are not available for use.
- **March-July Inflow to Elephant Butte Reservoir** is projected to be 63% of the 30-year average adjusted for upstream storage and use (down from the 106% February prediction). In the last 13 years only 3 have been above average runoff, 1997, 2005 and 2008. The National Weather Service three-month forecast calls for normal temperatures and an above normal chance of precipitation.
- **The 2009 Rio Grande Project water allocation to-date is 90.8% of a full supply.**

Water allocation to agricultural and urban users as a percent of full supply

