



For immediate release:

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Spring Runoff To Provide High Flows on the Rio Chama and Rio Grande

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – An average streamflow forecast of 152-percent at Otowi Bridge (near Española) and recent warm weather have produced early and bountiful spring runoff conditions this year, which is great news for farmers and recreational enthusiasts.

State Engineer John D'Antonio said today that the state's river and reservoir managers will be working in cooperation to manage snowmelt runoff inflows safely and quickly.

"Although river flows on the main stem of the Rio Grande due to snowmelt are anticipated to double between now and May, we are confident that the water can be safely managed to control the risk of flooding," said State Engineer John D'Antonio. "The good news is that it will be the best year in the past ten years for people who enjoy canoeing and river rafting. However, people who live in the Rio Grande Valley will see higher than normal flows, and should take proper precautions when walking, picnicking, or working in the bosque near the river."

As runoff inflows increase, the Army Corps of Engineers will slowly raise combined releases from Cochiti and Jemez Canyon Reservoirs peaking at safe channel capacity of 7,000 cubic feet per second (at the Albuquerque streamgauge), in effort to reduce the potential for flood damage. Peak flows above and below Cochiti Lake are expected towards the end of May.

People living on the Rio Chama below Abiquiu Reservoir will see flows of 1,800 cubic feet per second, which equals the safe channel capacity release from the reservoir. These peak releases will begin on April 18 as the Corps restrains significantly larger inflows beginning to arrive.

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“Our release from Abiquiu will continue at the safe channel capacity probably for several weeks, and we will be regularly monitoring the river and weather conditions during that time period,” said Mark Yuska with the Army Corps of Engineers. “Rio Chama irrigators are encouraged to place sandbags at their headgates to reduce the potential for overtopping, as a precaution.”

For more information on spring runoff conditions, contact Mark Yuska at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District Office at (505) 342-3608.

The Office of the State Engineer is charged with administering the state's water resources. The State Engineer has power over the supervision, measurement, appropriation, and distribution of all surface and groundwater in New Mexico, including streams and rivers that cross state boundaries. The State Engineer is also Secretary of the Interstate Stream Commission and oversees its staff

The Interstate Stream Commission is charged with separate duties including protecting New Mexico's right to water under eight interstate stream compacts, ensuring the state complies with each of those compacts, as well as water planning.

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