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Interstate Stream Commission Announces that Storage in Upstream Reservoirs Will Commence

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López announced today that storage prohibitions under Article VII of the Rio Grande Compact -- which have limited storage operations at El Vado, Nichols, and McClure reservoirs since July 2002 -- will no longer be in effect as of Saturday, May 21.

Article VII of the Compact prohibits storage of water in upstream New Mexico and Colorado reservoirs constructed after 1929 when the usable water volume in Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs falls below 400,000 acre-feet. This now allows the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District to store native Rio Grande water in El Vado Reservoir for later release to farmers as well as the City of Santa Fe to store and release native water in Nichols and McClure Reservoirs for municipal use.

“The storage prohibition has been in effect since July 2002 and has had a significant impact on water management in the middle valley since that time. With the useable project water reaching levels above 400,000 acre-feet, storage operations at these upstream reservoirs can now resume,” said Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López. “The Interstate Stream Commission and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation have collaborated over the past three years to construct and maintain a 22-mile channel through the Elephant Butte Reservoir delta that has significantly aided in delivering water to Elephant Butte Reservoir and hastened the date in which the Article VII storage prohibition goes out of effect.”

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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