

Balancing Water in the Middle Rio Grande

The staff of MRGCD, NMOSE/ISC, USFWS, USBOR, USACOE and others worked cooperatively to manage meager water supplies during 2013. This community effort assured both farmers and fish survived the extreme drought

2013 UPDATE

The Middle Rio Grande extends from near Cochiti Dam to Elephant Butte Reservoir and supplies surface water to almost a $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million people as well as for irrigation of almost 60,000 acres of farmland within the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District.

The MRGCD provides surface water to the irrigated lands of 6 Pueblo's, senior non-Pueblo water users, and more junior users on lands reclaimed since the 1930's.

Two endangered species exist in the Middle Rio Grande. Therefore water operations are conducted in compliance with a biological opinion that allows delivery of water to our farmers and cities while also protecting the endangered species.

The *Minnow Action Team* was formed in 2012 to track hydrologic conditions, to model options, and to recommend collaborative actions including ways to create spawning flows for silvery minnows in 2013.

The drought deepened through the winter creating water shortages for downstream users.

Benchmarks for success included: 1) water conservation that stretched out irrigation deliveries; 2) delivering water to the Pueblos, and 3) maintaining areas of wetted habitat for the fish.

The *Minnow Action Team* offered an alternative flow management strategy that eliminated dates and flow targets from the 2003 BiOp, in exchange for maintaining flows in key reaches for a longer time.

MIDDLE
RIO GRANDE



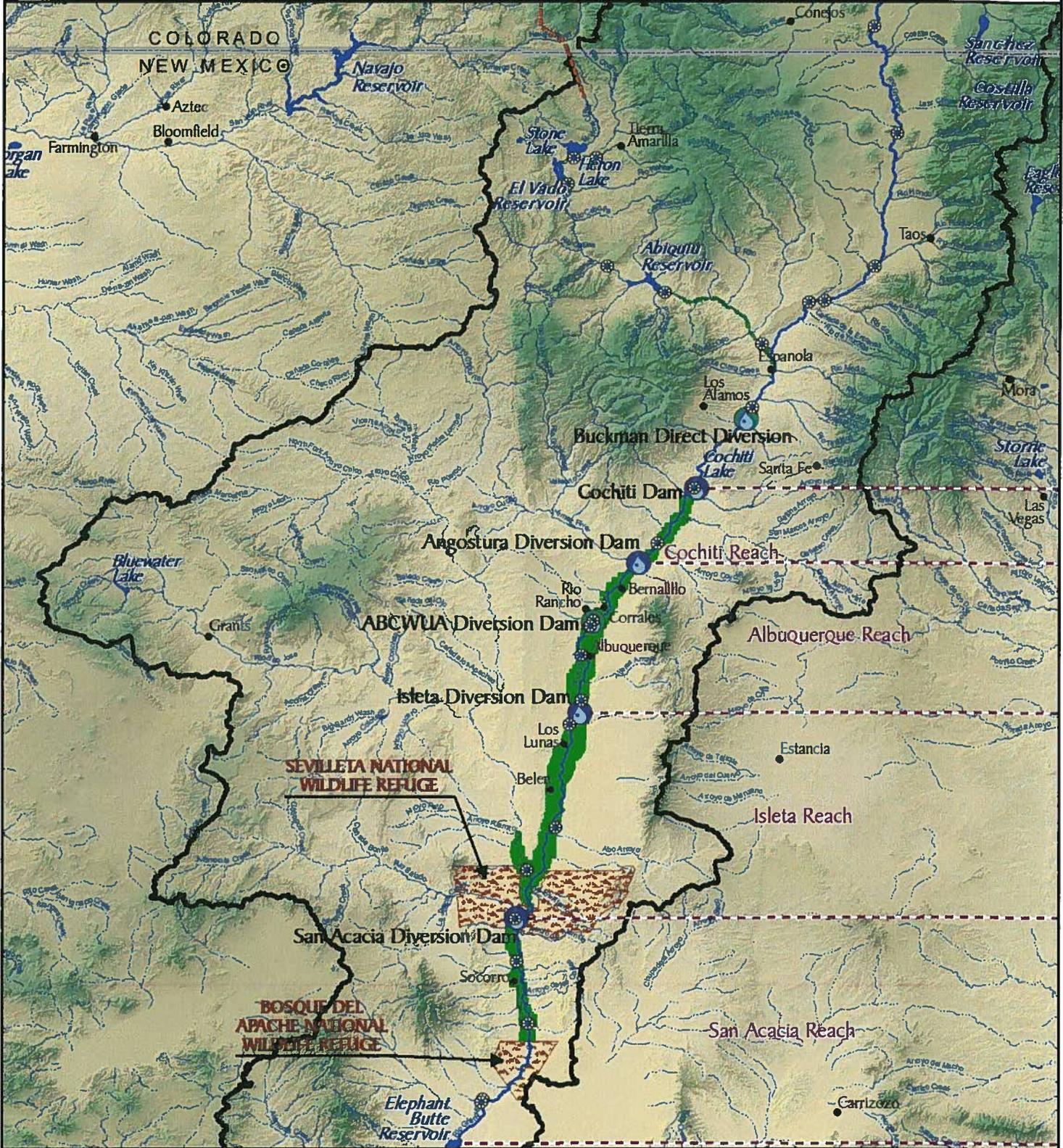
CONSERVANCY
DISTRICT

Regional Director of the USFWS Dr Benjamin Tuggle expressed support for efforts to maintain as much viable habitat as possible under dire conditions.

This cooperation has allowed MRGCD to become more actively involved in species recovery without impacting their agricultural constituents. Irrigation rotation allowed for a small amount of water to be released over Isleta Diversion that resulted in a silvery minnow spawn.



Rio Grande Basin Above Elephant Butte in NM



Miles



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Legend

- Rio Grande Compact Boundary
- Flow Gage
- Diversion Dam
- Municipal Diversion
- Irrigation District
- San Juan-Chama Project
- Rio Grande
- Lake or Reservoir
- Wildlife Refuge
- ESA River Reach

