

Rio Grande Compact

New Mexico Office of the State Engineer &
Interstate Stream Commission
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The Rio Grande Compact is an interstate river compact negotiated by the by the States of Colorado, New Mexico and Texas in the 1930's, approved by Congress and signed by the United States President in 1939.

Interstate Stream Compacts

An interstate stream compact is a legal agreement that details how the waters of a region will be divided among states that share it.

Interstate stream compacts are written by the states and the agreements reflect the intentions of the states.

Interstate stream compacts are all unique and are tailored by the States to fit the region and its river system.

Each compact can consider many variables including regional hydrology, current water use and expected future uses, water infrastructure, and current and future federal projects.

New Mexico has 8 interstate stream compacts.

Rio Grande Compact

The Rio Grande Compact was signed into place by the states in 1938.

The Compact requires Colorado deliver surface water to New Mexico annually at the State line and that New Mexico then deliver water into Elephant Butte Reservoir.

New Mexico has the longest portion of the river controlled by the Rio Grande Compact. Therefore, the Compact allows New Mexico to use the most surface water when compared to the other two states.

The surface water is used in 3 regions of New Mexico: The Upper Rio Grande, Middle Rio Grande & Lower Rio Grande.

The water delivered into Elephant Butte Reservoir supplies the Rio Grande Project. 57% of the land of the Rio Grande Project is in NM. The Rio Grande Compact Commission administers the compact. The Commission is comprised of the State Engineer of NM, the State Engineer of CO and an appointee of the Governor of TX and an appointee of the US President who chairs the commission.

All Commission decisions must be unanimous and the chair does not have a vote.

The Compact sets up a system of credits and debits similar to a bank account. There is NOT an annual fixed delivery amount for either Colorado or for New Mexico.

The compact guides when water can be stored or must be released from some reservoirs upstream of Elephant Butte Reservoir.

Credit water is water in Elephant Butte Reservoir above and beyond what New Mexico is required to deliver.

Credit Water can be relinquished from New Mexico and Colorado to Texas which provides more water to the Project and allows the upstream states to store more water during drought.

Current Status

In 2011, Reclamation released some of New Mexico's credit water to Texas without New Mexico's approval. Since that time, the Commission has been unable to agree to an accounting.

Although all three states differ in accounting, they all agree that New Mexico has an accrued credit and is in compliance under the compact.

New Mexico pro-actively funds extensive river maintenance operations ensuring water makes it into Elephant Butte Reservoir. -

This work moves snow melt runoff safely into the reservoir, ensures compact deliveries and protects our water users.

Upper Rio Grande Basin

