

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

BRIEFING FOR: New Mexico Water and Natural Resources Committee

DATE: August 1, 2011

ISSUE: Reclamation's Rio Grande Project, New Mexico-Texas 2008 Operating Agreement.

CURRENT STATUS: The Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID) and El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1 (EP#1) approved and signed an Operating Agreement for the Rio Grande Project on February 14, 2008. The Upper Colorado Regional Director signed the Operating Agreement on March 10, 2008. An agreement for the dismissal of lawsuits was signed by both Districts and the Regional Director on August 25, 2008.



The following objectives of the Operating Agreement will remain in effect until 2050:

- Water allocations to Rio Grande Project water user takes into account the actual yearly water delivery performance of the Lower Rio Grande. EBID's surface water allotment is determined by a water allocation and accounting method which calculates the amount of water available for EBID in New Mexico after water is allocated to EP#1 and Mexico using historical delivery equations. This method takes into account the effect of ground water use on Rio Grande Project delivery efficiencies.
- Each District may carryover the current year's unused allocation and accumulate and maintain a maximum carryover amount of 60 percent of a full year's allocation.
- In accordance with Rio Grande Compact provisions, Reclamation will utilize an average yearly release from Rio Grande Project storage of 790,000 acre-feet as the amount needed to provide a full allocation to EBID, EP#1, and Mexico.
- The allocation for Mexico will be calculated using the total amount of water released from storage in any one year, including any carryover water released.

The Rio Grande Project has been operating under the Operating Agreement for four years with improved cooperation and coordination between the irrigation Districts and Reclamation. Each District has accumulated carryover water with EP#1 also transferring water to EBID in two of the four years of operations under the provisions in the Agreement. The Operating Agreement has been reviewed yearly and adjusted for better operations.

BACKGROUND: The Rio Grande Project which was authorized by Congress in 1905, supplies irrigation water to 155,000 acres in New Mexico and Texas and to the City of El Paso, Texas. The Project also delivers 60,000 acre-feet to Mexico under the Treaty of 1906 in a full allocation year. The requirement for an operating agreement is a result of contracts which transferred the operation, maintenance and ownership of the irrigation and drainage system to each District in their respective States. Prior to this transfer, all operations of the Project were made by the Bureau of Reclamation.



RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

POSITION OF INTERESTED PARTIES: Reclamation, the International Boundary and Water Commission, EBID, and EP#1 are pleased that the Operating Agreement has been completed and signed by all parties. The Operating Agreement ended 28 years of dispute on the operations of the Rio Grande Project and allocations of Project water. The State of New Mexico is seeking assurance that the Rio Grande Compact will not be negatively affected under new Rio Grande Project operations.



U.S. Department of the Interior
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