



Rio Grande Operating Agreement Environmental Impact Statement

Rio Grande Operating Agreement NEPA

2007: Environmental Assessment was completed for Operating Agreement through 2012

2013: Supplemental Environmental Assessment covers Operating Agreement from July 2013 through June 2016

2014: Scoping for EIS to evaluate continuing Operating Agreement until end of its term in 2050

Cooperating Agencies

- *City of Santa Fe, Water Division*
- *Colorado Division of Water Resources*
- *Elephant Butte Irrigation District of NM*
- *Texas Commissioner, Rio Grande Compact Commission*
- *U.S. Section, International Boundary and Water Commission*

EIS Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose and need for action is to meet contractual obligations to EBID and EPCWID to implement a written set of criteria and procedures for allocating, delivering, and accounting for Rio Grande Project water to both districts consistent with their rights under applicable law each year in compliance with various court decrees, settlement agreements, and contracts.

These include the 2008 Compromise and Settlement Agreement among Reclamation, EBID, and EPCWID, and contracts between the United States and the EBID and EPCWID.

The purpose and need of an ancillary but potentially similar action is to implement the provisions of the Act of December 29, 1981, to allow the storage of San Juan-Chama project water acquired by contract with the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to Public Law 87-483 in Elephant Butte Reservoir.

EIS Proposed Action

The proposed federal action is to continue to implement the 2008 Operating Agreement for the Rio Grande Project over the remaining term (through 2050), and a potentially similar action under 40 CFR 1508.25, to implement long-term contracts for storage of San Juan-Chama water in the Rio Grande Project.



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Rio Grande Project Operational History

1889: United States first conducted studies and surveys on location that became Reclamation's Rio Grande Project

1903: Reclamation began construction on facilities that are now the Rio Grande Project

1908: Reclamation's first diversions and operations began (at Leasburg)

1916 – 1979: Reclamation operated all Rio Grande Project storage and irrigation systems in New Mexico and Texas

1979-2007: Reclamation transferred specific operations to EBID and EPCWID#1 and in 1979 started allocation of water to districts and Mexico through delivery to head gates, not project lands

2008 – present: Reclamation, EBID and EPCWID#1 signed contracts to create detailed operational plan and 50-year Operating Agreement was signed

Rio Grande Project Operating Agreement

- Was agreed to by Reclamation, EBID and EPCWID#1 to resolve litigation
- Describes how Reclamation allocates Project water to EBID, EPCWID#1, and Mexico
- Is consistent with applicable water rights, state and federal laws, and international treaties
- Promotes water conservation through carryover accounting procedures for unused portion of annual diversion allocations to EBID and EPCWID#1
- Provides for proportional delivery of annual surface water allocations to EBID and EPCWID#1
- Signed February 14, 2008





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Operating Agreement Storage

Elephant Butte Reservoir

Extends 35 miles when full, from River Mile (RM) 1418 to 1383

Extends less than 20 miles when reservoir stage is low

Current storage capacity is 2,024,586 acre-feet

Authorized for 50,000 acre-feet recreation pool and for hydropower generation



Caballo Reservoir

Extends 18 miles when full, from River Mile (RM) 1374 to 1356

Current storage capacity is 324,888 acre-feet

Authorized for 100,000 acre-feet of flood control storage managed by USIBWC

Re-regulates for hydropower releases from Elephant Butte Reservoir



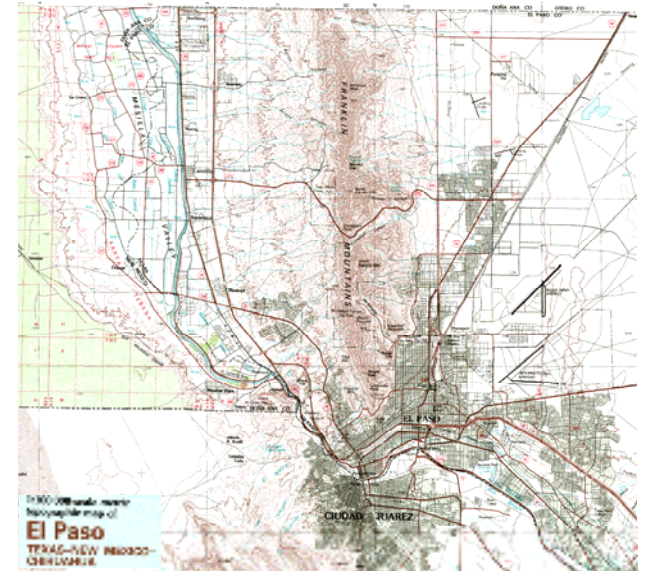
Operating Agreement Delivery Points

Five diversion dams

- Percha
- Leasburg
- Mesilla
- American
- International

Other points of delivery in the irrigation system

- La Union East Canal
- La Union West Canal
- Three Saints East Lateral



San Juan Chama Project Water Storage

Authorized by Congressional Act of December 29, 1981, Pub. L. 97-140, 95 Stat. 1717, providing for storage in Elephant Butte Reservoir (EBR)

Two contractors proposing to store up to 50,000 acre-feet in EBR each year, through 2050; Albuquerque Bernalillo Water Utility Authority & City of Santa Fe



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Rio Grande Operating Agreement EIS Environmental Effects to be Analyzed

- Surface-water allocations to the irrigation districts
- Groundwater levels, recharge, and groundwater pumping in the Rincon and Mesilla Basins
- Reservoir levels in Elephant Butte and Caballo
- Water quality under Section 303 (d) of the Clean Water Act in designated river reaches
- Species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act:
 - Rio Grande silvery minnow
 - Southwestern willow flycatcher
- Species proposed under the federal Endangered Species Act:
 - New Mexico meadow jumping mouse – proposed endangered
 - Yellow-billed cuckoo – proposed threatened
- Climate change effect will be analyzed, as appropriate

Operating Agreement and Carryover

Carryover could change reservoir storage levels in Elephant Butte and Caballo

Timing and duration of Article VII restrictions under the Rio Grande Compact may be affected over the long-term

- Reservoir evaporation may change due to variations in storage
- Compact delivery computations for New Mexico may change

Operating Agreement and Ground Water

Ongoing groundwater modeling will assist in assessing groundwater/surface-water interactions and groundwater pumping

Operating Agreement and Water Quality

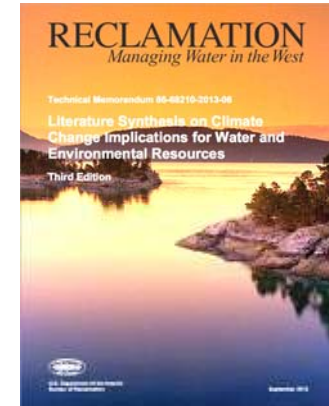
Rio Grande below Caballo Dam is identified as impaired under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act

Rio Grande from Percha Dam downstream to American Dam is part of Paso del Norte Watershed Council planning effort

Operating Agreement and Climate Change

Wide variety of hydrologic conditions likely to occur through 2050

Reclamation’s literature synthesis describes decreasing water supply over time in the Rio Grande Basin



Executive Order 13514 - Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change

Secretarial Order 3289 - Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change on America’s Water, Land, and Other Natural and Cultural Resources