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New Mexico agricultural producers encouraged to take advantage of drought management resources

LAS CRUCES – Despite the recent storms in the region, New Mexico’s drought intensity levels remain at severe, extreme or exceptional, according to the most recent U.S. Drought Monitor. As farmers begin to plant crops, the Southwest Border Food Protection and Emergency Preparedness Center at New Mexico State University and the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) remind producers of the seriousness of the drought situation.

New Mexico Agriculture Secretary Jeff Witte encourages agricultural producers in the state to use various resources available.

“New Mexico ag producers are the heart of our state, as they work hard year-round to put food on our tables,” said Witte. “At a time when they are recovering from the effects of a pandemic, it’s more important than ever to work together to find solutions to the effects of drought and for producers to utilize any risk management tools that may be available.”

Producers are encouraged to visit the new drought resource page on the NMDA website: <https://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/drought-resources/>.

Kerry Jones of the National Weather Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said drought conditions are expected to persist if not worsen in areas during the springtime.

“As of Feb. 18, over 80% of New Mexico is classified in extreme or exceptional drought,” said Jones. “Since around Thanksgiving Day, drought has worsened across all but portions of northwest, far north-central and the northeast corner of New Mexico, where drought conditions are still considered to be severe/extreme or worse. The historic Arctic outbreak that brought record-breaking cold temperatures to parts of the state in mid-February was accompanied by predominately dry, powdery snowfall that did little to significantly boost the amount of water locked up in the mountain snowpack. Current

snow water equivalent in the Upper Rio Grande basin, for example, is about two-thirds of normal and the third-lowest since 2009. Unfortunately, odds are tilted in favor of a warmer-than-normal and drier-than-average March through May period based on the latest seasonal outlook from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center."

Dr. Phil King, engineering consultant for Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID), warns that the watershed is drier than this time last year.

"The dry watershed means that, for a given level of snowpack, we will get less runoff into the river and Elephant Butte Reservoir," said King. "The harsh reality presented by the ongoing drought requires careful planning as agricultural producers prepare to plant the spring crops that will help feed and clothe the nation. Each year district farmers rely on the scientific data and analysis provided by the District to evaluate the situation and determine their best strategies for farming with a severely restricted surface water supply."

The new web page includes information about and links to various resources at the local, state, federal and university levels.

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Cutline: New Mexico's drought intensity levels remain at severe, extreme or exceptional, according to the most recent U.S. Drought Monitor. As farmers begin to plant crops, the Southwest Border Food Protection and Emergency Preparedness Center at New Mexico State University and the New Mexico Department of Agriculture remind producers of the seriousness of the drought situation and encourage producers to use various resources available. (Photo by Dave DuBois)



Cutline: New Mexico's drought intensity levels remain at severe, extreme or exceptional, according to the most recent U.S. Drought Monitor. Because the watershed is drier than this time last year, what moisture does fall is often consumed by the dry soils and parched vegetation before it can make it down to Elephant Butte Dam. The Southwest Border Food Protection and Emergency Preparedness Center at New Mexico State University and the New Mexico Department of Agriculture remind producers of the seriousness of the drought situation and encourage them to use various resources available. (Photo by Patrick Lopez, Elephant Butte Irrigation District)