

## Colorado farmers draw big piece of Rio Grande

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Irrigation season has begun in Colorado, causing a significant reduction in the amount of water flowing through the Taos County section of the Rio Grande.

Stream-flow data from the Colorado Division of Water Resources showed the Rio Grande was flowing at 1,330 cubic-feet per second (cfs) when it came out of the mountains near Del Norte, Colorado Wednesday (April 30).

But by the time it was just about to cross the New Mexico border, it was at just 209 cfs.

The 84 percent drop is due almost entirely to irrigation in the San Luis Valley, which begins in earnest around this time of year.

A hydrograph of the Rio Grande near Cerro showed the river was hovering at nearly 700 cfs between the end of February and the end of March.

But starting at April 1, the stream flow at Cerro begin to plummet.

At one point in mid-April, the river in New Mexico was at just 100 cfs.

The amount of water in the river as it crosses state lines is dictated by the Rio Grande Compact — a deal hashed out between New Mexico, Colorado and Texas in the 1930s.

Under the agreement, Colorado is obligated to deliver a certain percentage of the river to the New Mexico border each year. That percentage varies from year to year, depending on the water supply.

Water officials in New Mexico and Colorado say Colorado has met its legal obligation in recent years.

The total water delivery from Colorado is calculated on an annual basis, meaning water that runs unimpeded in the fall and winter makes up for big diversions in the spring and early summer.

Taos County residents — especially some rafting guides — have been vocal critics of the arrangement, which they say does harm to their business and affects the ecology of the river.

Farmers and water managers in the San Lu's Valley, meanwhile, point out that they too are

suffering from the effects of drought and are operating within the limits of the compact.