

# Milk River Project



— BUREAU OF —  
RECLAMATION

*Water Supply Outlook*

July 17, 2023

## Reservoir Storage

All three reservoirs were near full pool until end of June. Storage is being used out of Sherburne to balance U.S.'s use of St. Mary water and provide water for St. Mary Canal. Fresno Reservoir and Nelson storage is being used for irrigation.

Here are the current storage conditions.

- Lake Sherburne: 47878.5 ft, 50,700 af, 87% of average, 77% full
- Fresno Reservoir: 2570.9 ft, 72,700 af, 110% of average, 79% full
- Nelson Reservoir: 2220.1 ft, 72,800 af, 117% of average, 92% full

## Lake Sherburne and St. Mary Canal Operations

Snowpack melted out very early and precipitation has been below average in the St. Mary River Basin. Inflows into Lake Sherburne are expected to remain below average for the remainder of the year. Releases have been high to balance St. Mary River water use under the international accounting. Releases will be based on St. Mary Canal diversions and water accounting with Canada for the remainder of the year.

The St. Mary Canal diversions have been at 600 cfs since July 1 after a small decrease in June to conserve water. Diversions are expected to remain at 600 cfs into August when storage in Lake Sherburne is expected to be depleted. Towards the end of August canal diversions and reservoir releases will be ramped down. Reservoir releases need to remain at the minimum level of approximately 25 cfs through the end of September under the Bull Trout Biological Opinion.

## Fresno and Nelson Operations

Fresno Reservoir is expected to keep decreasing in storage until the end of the irrigation season. Storage is still good for this time of year. However, inflows have been low as the upper part of the Milk River Basin has remained very dry. Inflows are expected to decrease near the start of September due to the expected end date of St. Mary Canal operations in August. Remaining storage could also be a limiting factor by early September. Precipitation in the next 45 days could change the outlook.

There has not been a call made on natural flow use. A call is expected later this month based on Reclamation's natural flow priority date. Once natural flow decreases below Fort Belknap Indian Irrigation Project's diversion rate, a natural flow call will be made based on the Fort Belknap Indian Community's priority date.

## Irrigation Allotment

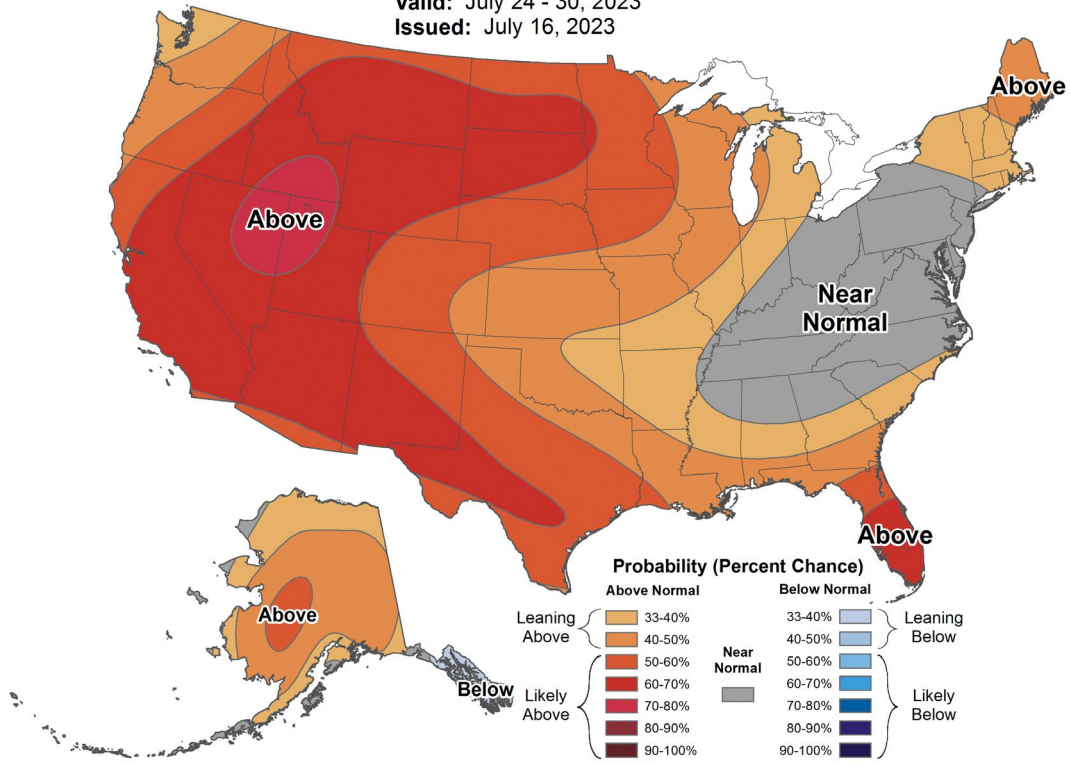
The irrigation allotment was set on April 25 at 2.0 af per acre. Currently, I recommend that the allotment remain the same. Reclamation has been conducting canal Hydromet station maintenance and has been making water measurements in the canals. Improvements to the sites made this year include better canal depth instrumentation and USGS training for staff on rating development. Some of the ratings have been difficult to match up with the manual measurements. Accuracy will improve with the continued collection of data.



# 8-14 Day Temperature Outlook



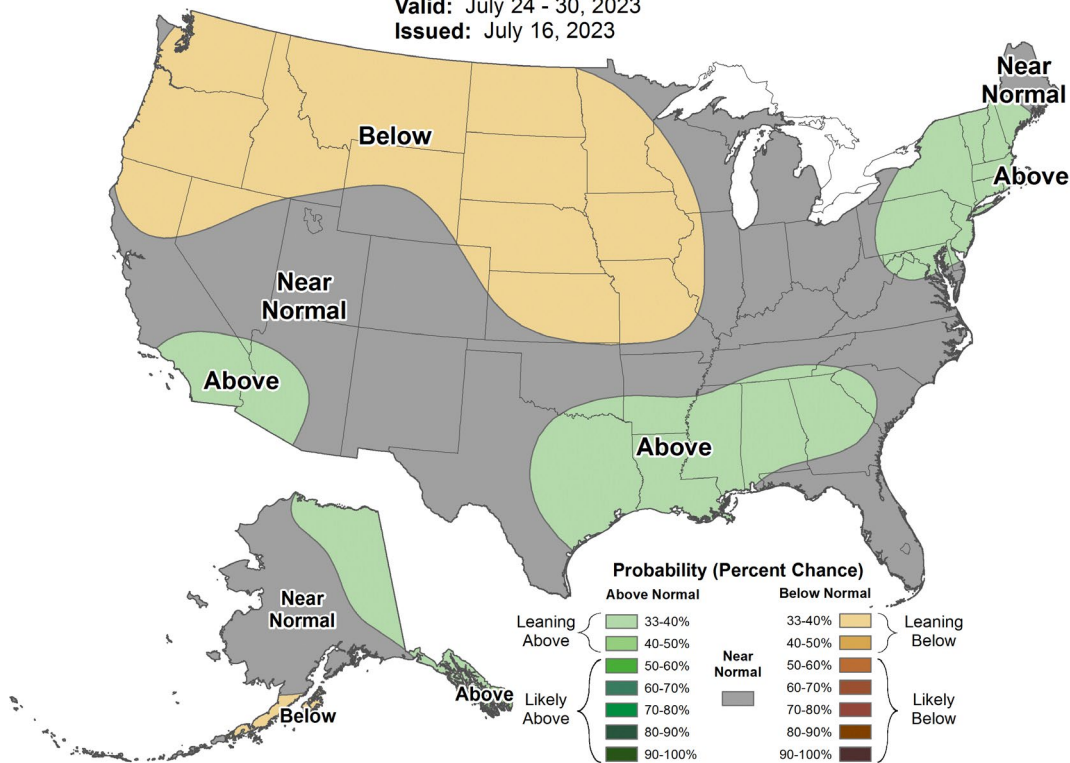
Valid: July 24 - 30, 2023  
Issued: July 16, 2023



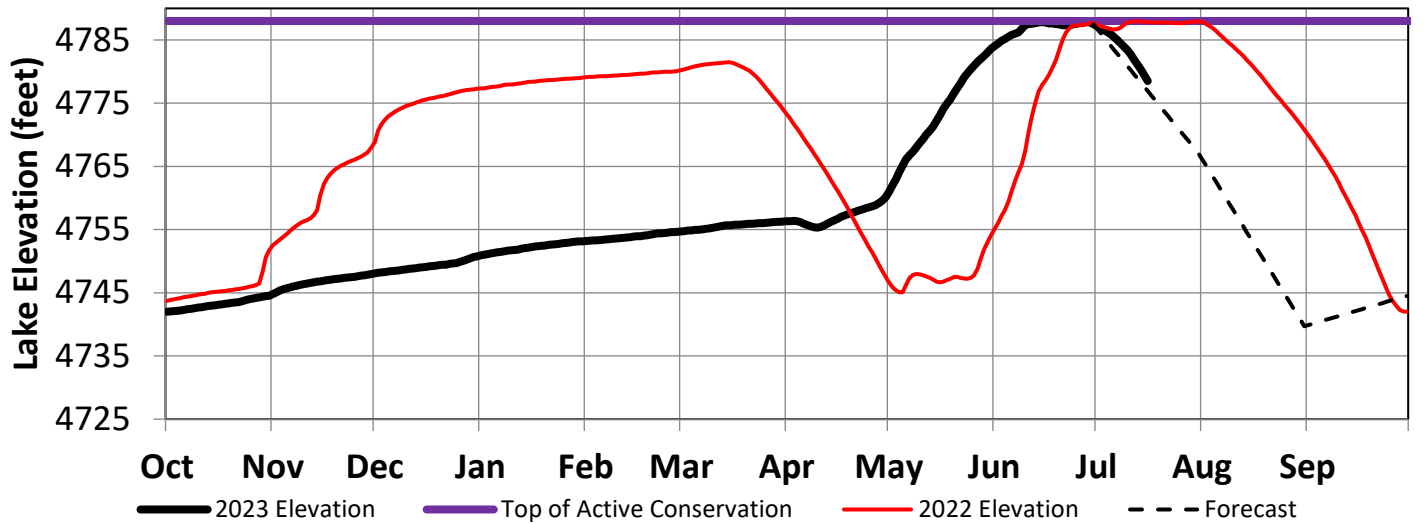
# 8-14 Day Precipitation Outlook



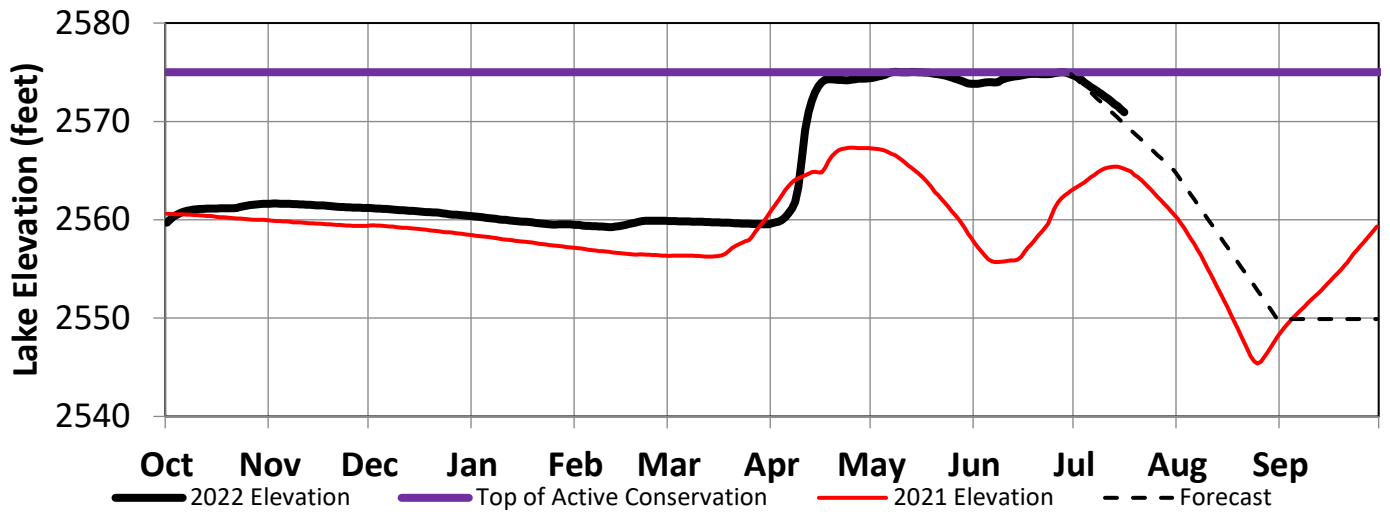
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### Lake Sherburne Elevation



### Fresno Reservoir Elevation



### Nelson Reservoir Elevation

