

Milk River Project Water Supply and Projected Operations



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

May 2026



Fresno Dam, May 2026

The May monthly operating plan covers actual operations from October 1, 2025, through April 30, 2026, and projected operations for May 1, 2026, through April 30, 2027. The projections are based on forecasted water supply and use.

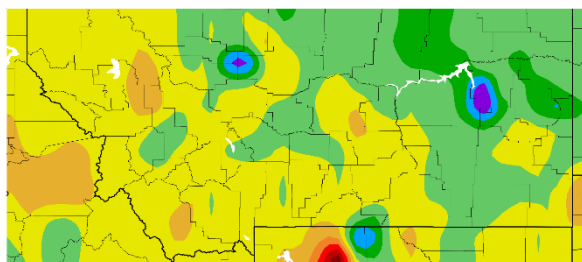
Median Forecasted Operations	Sherburne	Fresno	Nelson
May Inflow Forecast (kaf)	28	33	3
Percent of Average	89	82	33
May Release Forecast (cfs)	400	603	144
May 31 Elevation Forecast (feet)	4780.1	2561.8	2214.1

May-July Forecast	Sherburne
Inflow Forecast	76
Percent of Average	86

April 1 through April 30



Departure from Normal (°F)

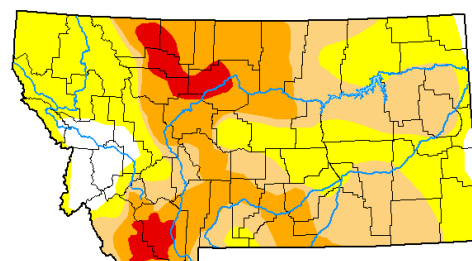


CLIMATE SUMMARY

In May, there is an equal chance that precipitation will be above, below, or near average in both basins. In the St. Mary and western part of the Milk River basin, there is a 40-60% chance that temperatures will be above average.

The drought intensity in the St. Mary and Milk River basins ranges from abnormally dry to extreme.

April 28, 2026



 None
  D0 Abnormally Dry
  D1 Moderate Drought
  D2 Severe Drought
  D3 Extreme Drought
  D4 Exceptional Drought



Monthly Precipitation Outlook
Valid: May 2026
Issued: April 30, 2026

Equal Chances

Below

Equal Chances

Above

Above

Equal Chances

Probability (Percent Chance)

Above Normal	Near Normal	Below Normal
33-40%	33-40%	33-40%
40-50%	40-50%	40-50%
50-60%	50-60%	50-60%
60-70%	60-70%	60-70%
70-80%	70-80%	70-80%
80-90%	80-90%	80-90%

Leading Above

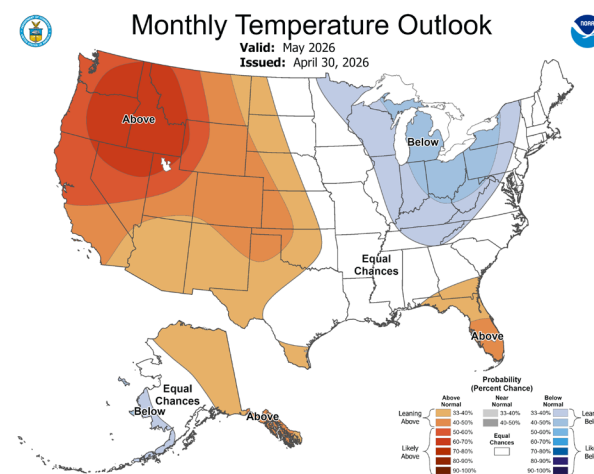
Equal Chances

Likely Above

Leading Below

Equal Chances

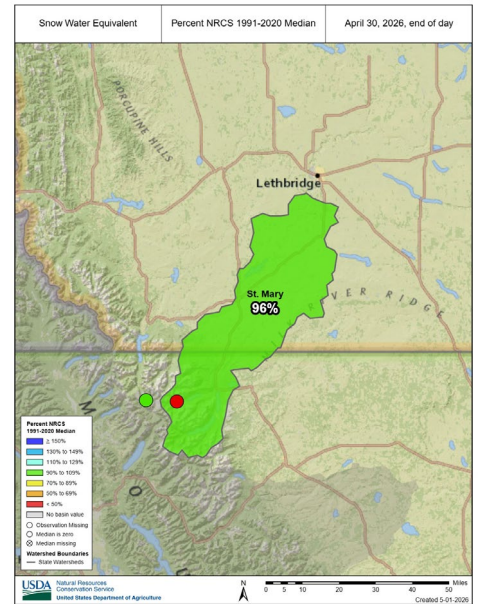
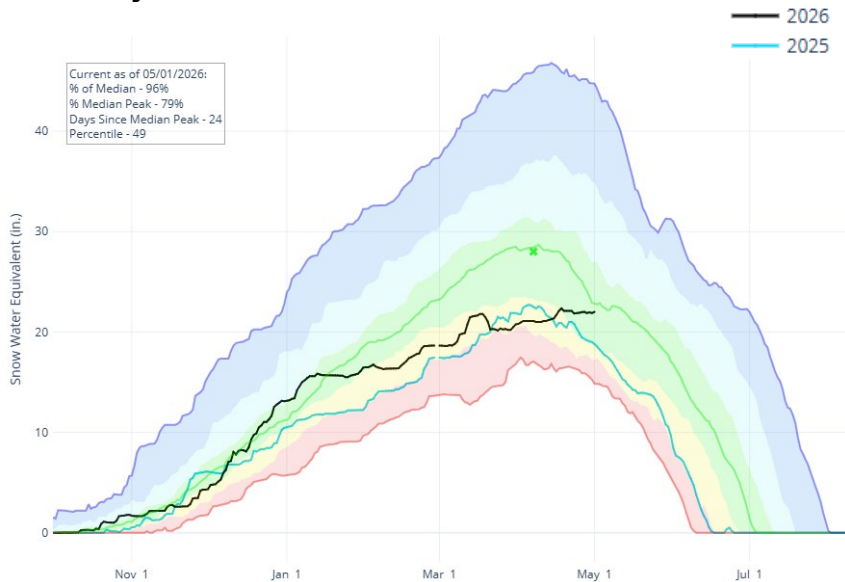
Likely Below



SNOWPACK SUMMARY

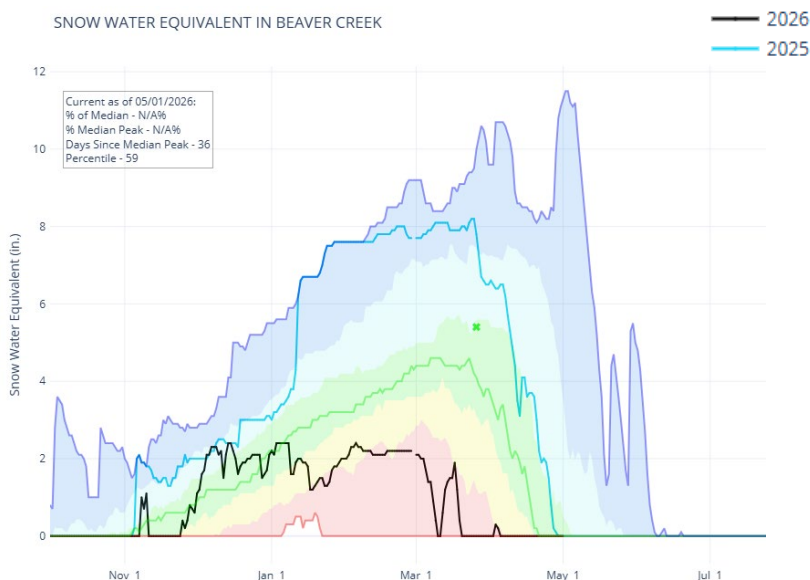
The snow water equivalent (SWE) graphs are a composite of SNOTEL sites within the St. Mary and Milk River Basins managed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

St. Mary River Basin



Milk River Basin

SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT IN BEAVER CREEK



NRCS Montana Snow Survey Website:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/mt/snow/>

Statistical shading breaks at 10th, 30th, 50th, 70th, and 90th Percentiles
 Normal ('91-'20) – Official median calculated from 1991-2020 data
 Normal (POR) – Unofficial mean calculated from Period of Record data

OPERATIONS REVIEW

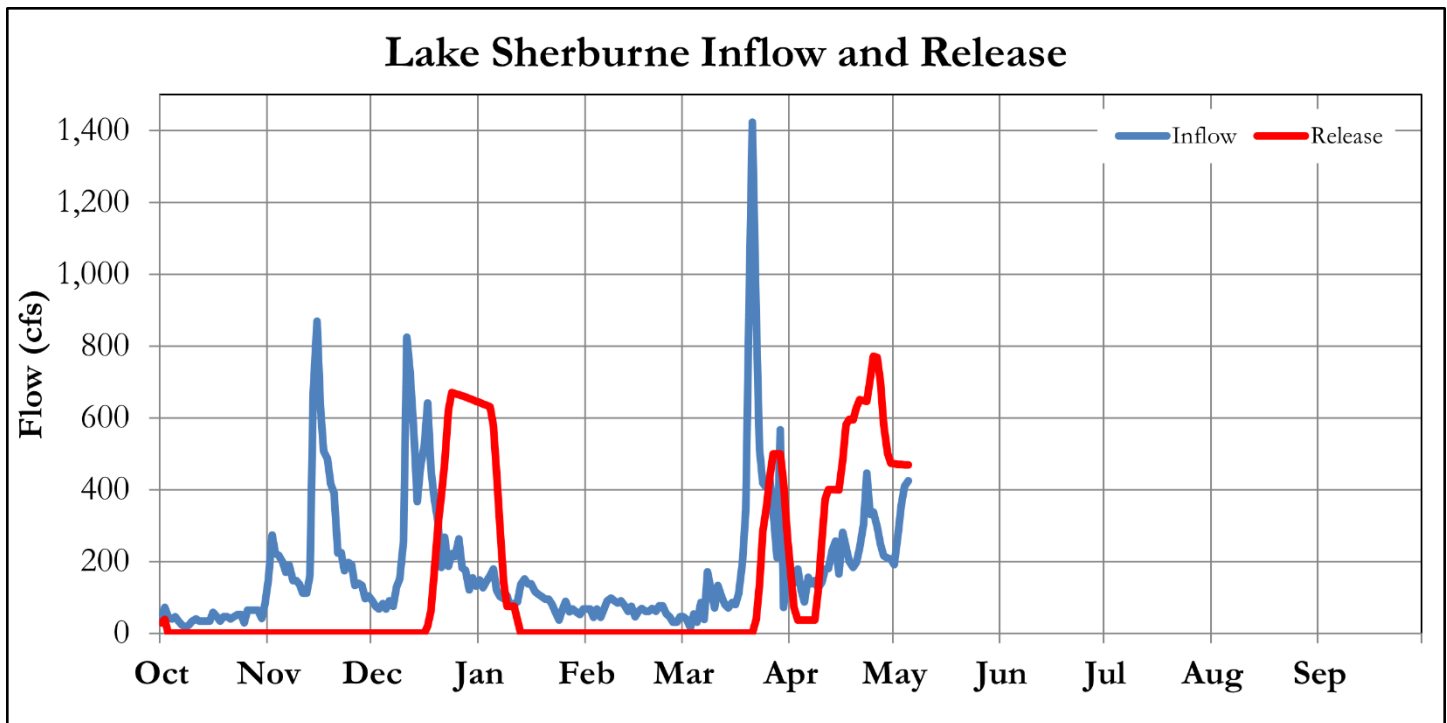
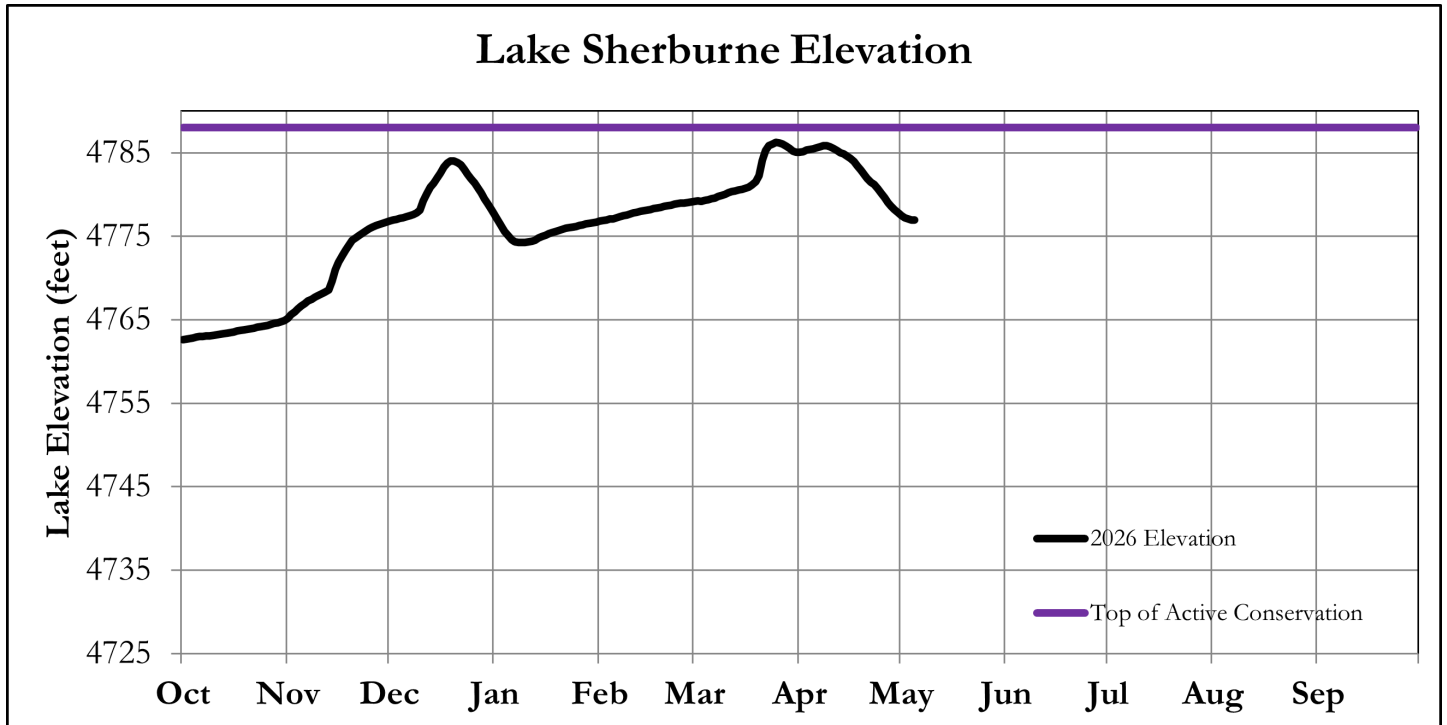
May 1 Elevation and Storage

	Elevation (feet)	Storage (acre-feet)	Percent of Average	Percent Full
Sherburne Reservoir	4777.85	49,725	200	75
Fresno Reservoir	2563.48	46,443	69	51
Nelson Reservoir	2216.35	58,089	89	74

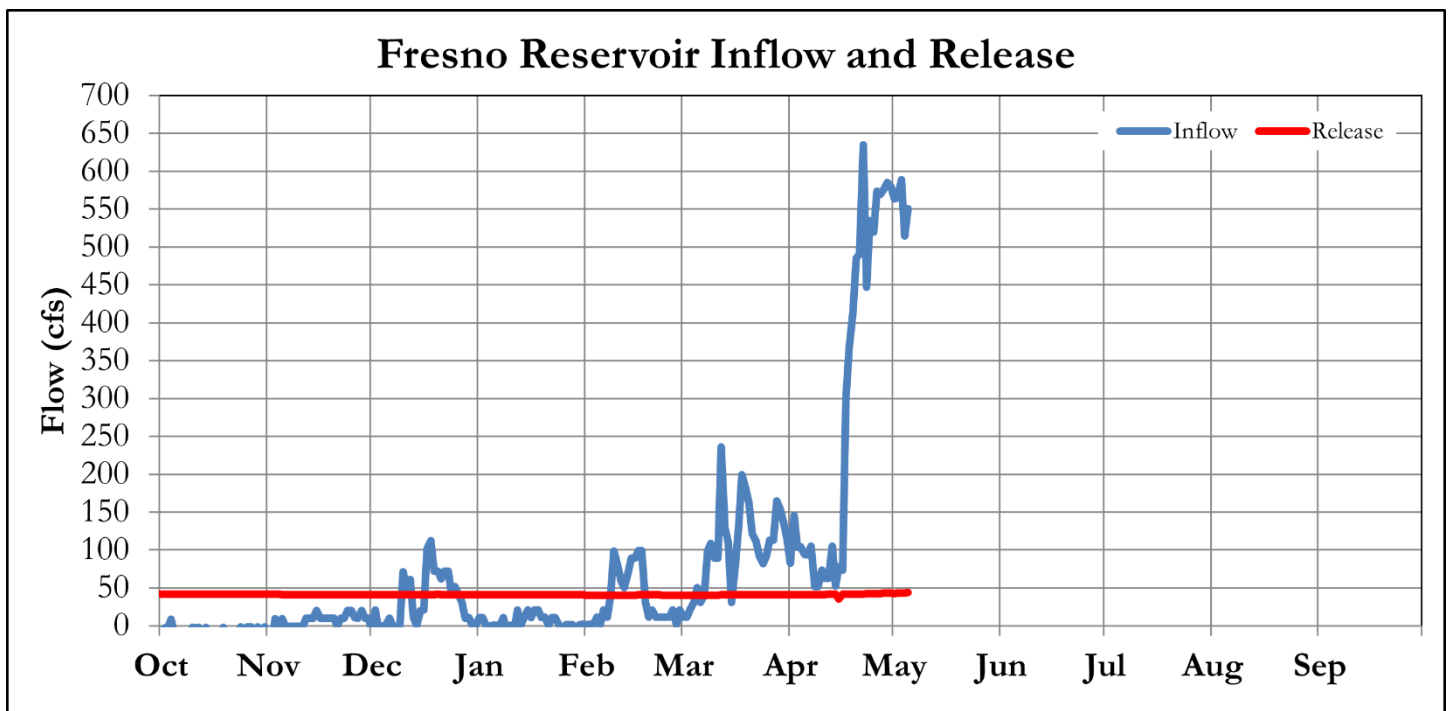
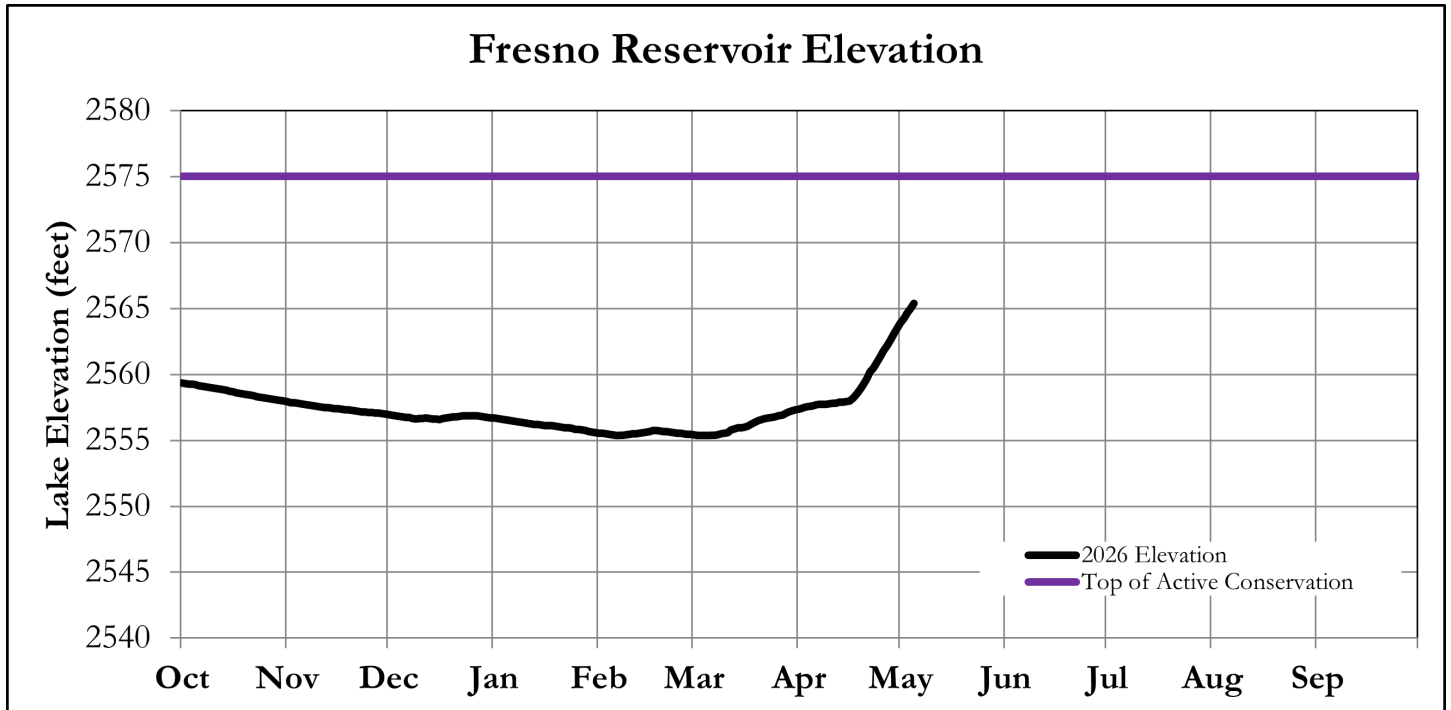
Past Inflows (1,000's of acre-feet)

Month	Sherburne Reservoir		Fresno Reservoir	
	Inflow	% of Average	Inflow	% of Average
<u>Water Year 2026</u>				
October	2.8	41	-0.6	-
November	15.5	198	0.4	15
December	16.7	411	2.0	129
January	6.2	226	0.3	27
February	3.6	155	2.0	40
March	16.4	444	6.2	31
April	12.6	128	16.7	50
<u>Water Year 2025</u>				
October	2.6	40	-0.3	-
November	2.9	37	0.0	-
December	2.5	62	0.1	6
January	1.3	44	0.0	-
February	1.4	56	19.9	456
March	4.4	117	13.6	67
April	9.9	102	4.8	14
May	31.6	101	1.6	4
June	20.5	52	1.9	4
July	14.8	80	14.9	55
August	6.2	73	24.9	90
September	1.5	28	0.7	4

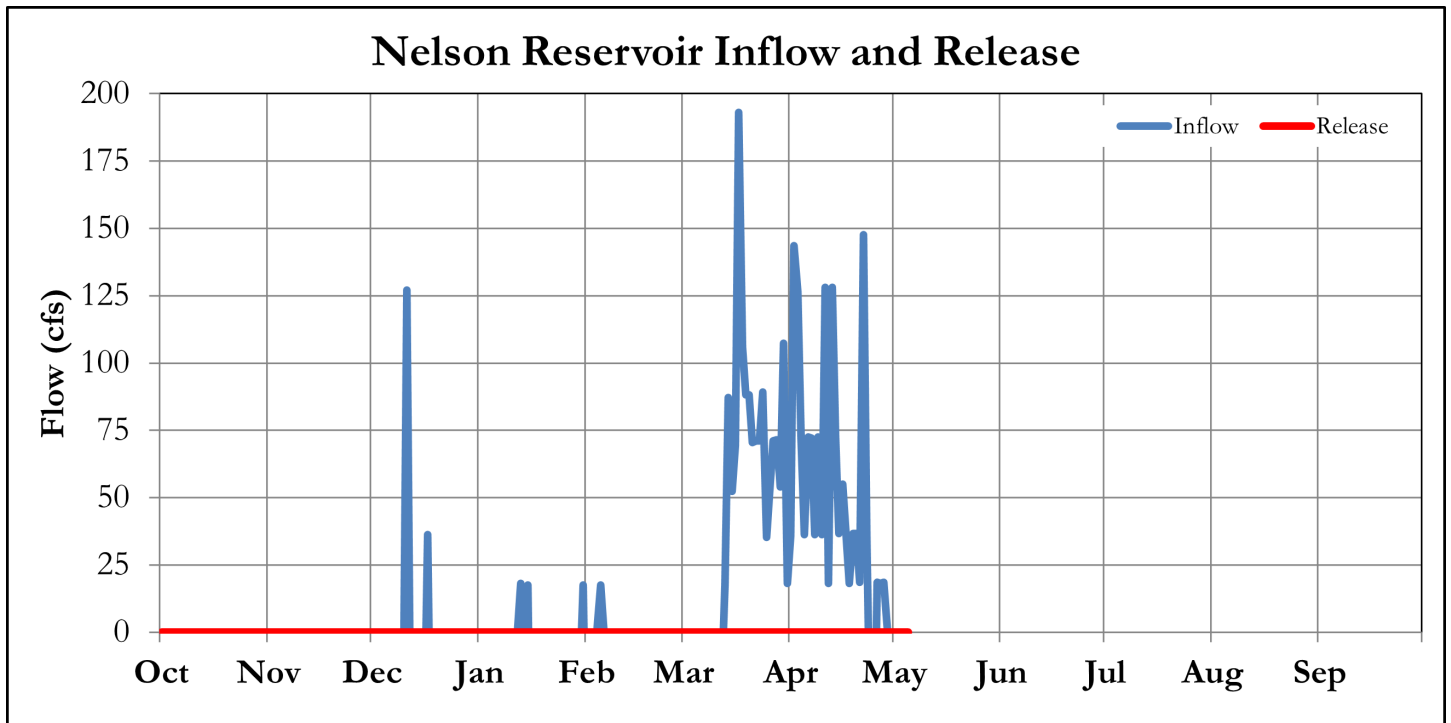
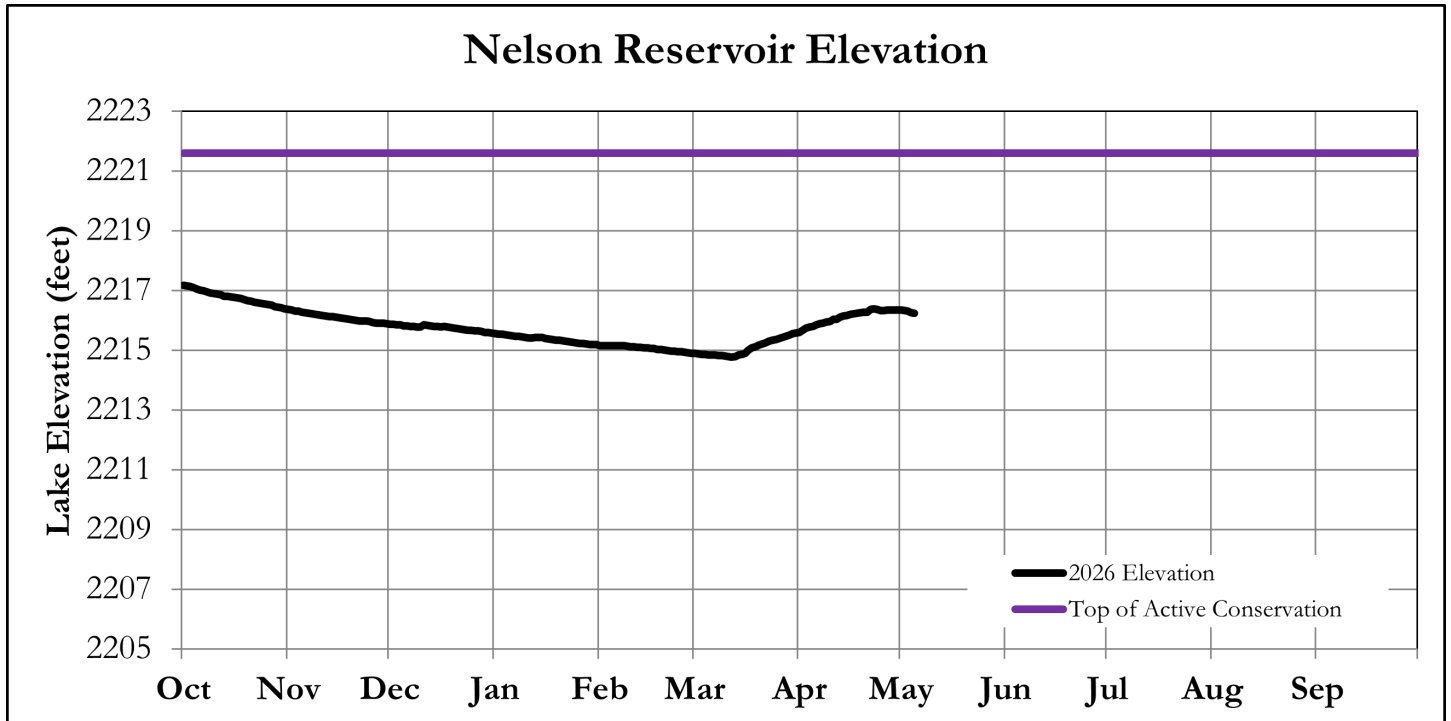
OPERATIONS REVIEW: LAKE SHERBURNE



OPERATIONS REVIEW: FRESNO RESERVOIR



OPERATIONS REVIEW: NELSON RESERVOIR



OPERATIONS OUTLOOK (May 1, 2026 through April 30, 2027)

Median Inflow Conditions

Sherburne Reservoir													
	Initial Content		49,725	acre-feet									
	Elevation		4777.85	feet									
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Sherburne Inflow (kaf)	28.1	31.8	15.6	7.2	5.2	5.4	4.5	3.4	2.4	1.9	3.0	8.9	117.4
Sherburne Release (kaf)	24.6	18.8	15.6	33.1	34.0	5.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.8	152.6
Sherburne Release (cfs)	400	316	254	538	571	93	0	0	0	0	0	350	
Net Content Change (kaf)	3.5	13.0	0.0	-25.9	-28.8	-0.3	4.5	3.4	2.4	1.9	3.0	-11.9	-35.2
End of Month Content (kaf)	53.2	66.2	66.2	40.3	11.5	11.2	15.7	19.1	21.5	23.4	26.4	14.5	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	4780.1	4788.0	4788.0	4771.2	4743.9	4743.5	4748.7	4752.4	4754.8	4756.7	4759.5	4747.4	
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
St. Mary River Runoff (kaf)	104.3	149.4	86.8	35.4	22.5	22.0	15.5	10.0	8.4	7.6	9.8	26.7	498.4
Natural Flow at Boundary (kaf)	132.4	181.2	102.4	42.6	27.7	27.4	20.0	13.4	10.8	9.5	12.8	35.6	615.8
St. Mary Canal Diversion (cfs)	600	600	600	600	600	150	0	0	0	0	0	350	
St. Mary Canal Diversion (kaf)	36.9	35.7	36.9	36.9	35.7	9.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.8	212.1
Fresno Reservoir													
	Initial Content		46,443	acre-feet									
	Elevation		2563.48	feet									
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Milk River Runoff (kaf)	3.5	2.6	0.2	0.2	1.4	2.8	1.6	0.9	0.9	2.3	8.4	7.8	32.6
From St. Mary Canal (kaf)	29.5	28.6	29.5	29.5	28.6	16.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.2	168.5
Fresno Inflow (kaf)	33.0	31.2	29.7	29.7	30.0	19.4	1.6	0.9	0.9	2.3	8.4	14.0	201.1
Fresno Release (kaf)	37.1	46.3	47.3	15.7	13.8	7.2	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.4	181.9
Fresno Release (cfs)	603	778	769	255	232	117	40	41	41	40	41	40	
Net Content Change (kaf)	-4.1	-15.1	-17.6	14.0	16.2	12.2	-0.8	-1.6	-1.6	0.1	5.9	11.6	19.2
End of Month Content (kaf)	42.3	27.2	9.6	23.6	39.8	52.0	51.2	49.6	48.0	48.1	54.0	65.6	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	2561.8	2554.8	2543.1	2552.8	2560.8	2565.5	2565.3	2564.7	2564.1	2564.1	2566.2	2570.0	
Irrigation Allotment (ft/ac)	0.40	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.40
Irrigation Delivery (kaf)	37.1	46.3	46.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	129.7
FBIIP Demand (kaf)	0.0	0.0	1.0	6.0	6.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.0
Fresno to Dodson Gain (kaf)	3.0	7.2	3.1	0.3	0.2	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.4	18.2	50.2
Bowdoin Demand (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	2.0
Transfer to Nelson (kaf)	3.0	7.2	3.1	10.0	8.0	8.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.4	16.2	72.9
Nelson Reservoir													
	Initial Content		58,089	acre-feet									
	Elevation		2216.35	feet									
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Delivery to Nelson (kaf)	2.7	6.5	2.8	9.0	7.2	7.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.7	14.6	65.7
Net Content Change (kaf)	-8.0	-6.5	-10.2	7.2	5.4	5.4	-1.8	-1.8	-1.8	-1.7	13.9	12.8	12.9
End of Month Content (kaf)	50.1	43.6	33.4	40.6	46.0	51.4	49.6	47.8	46.0	44.3	58.2	71.0	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	2214.1	2212.0	2207.9	2210.9	2212.8	2214.5	2213.9	2213.4	2212.8	2212.2	2216.4	2219.7	
Total Release (kaf)	8.9	11.2	11.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	31.3

OPERATIONS OUTLOOK (May 1, 2026 through April 30, 2027)

Minimum Inflow Conditions

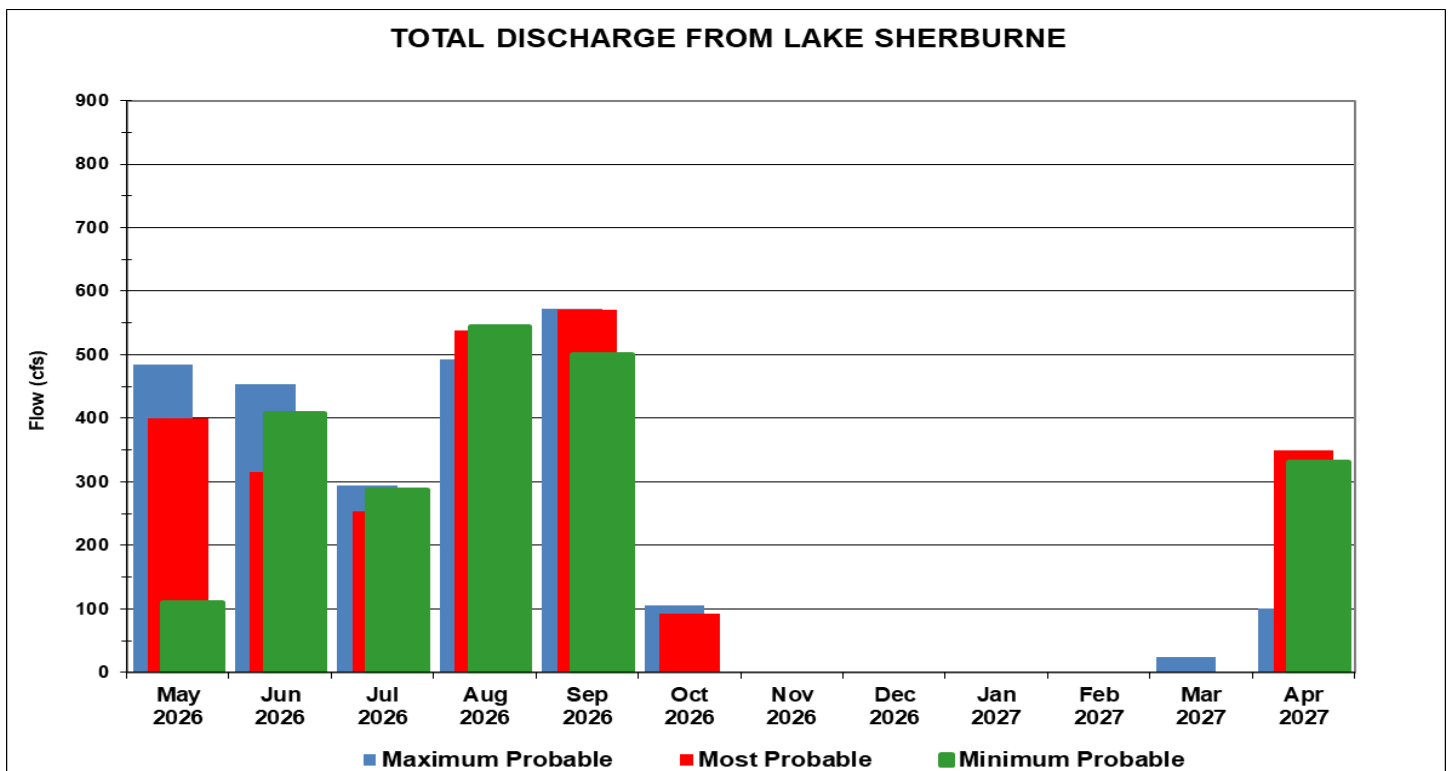
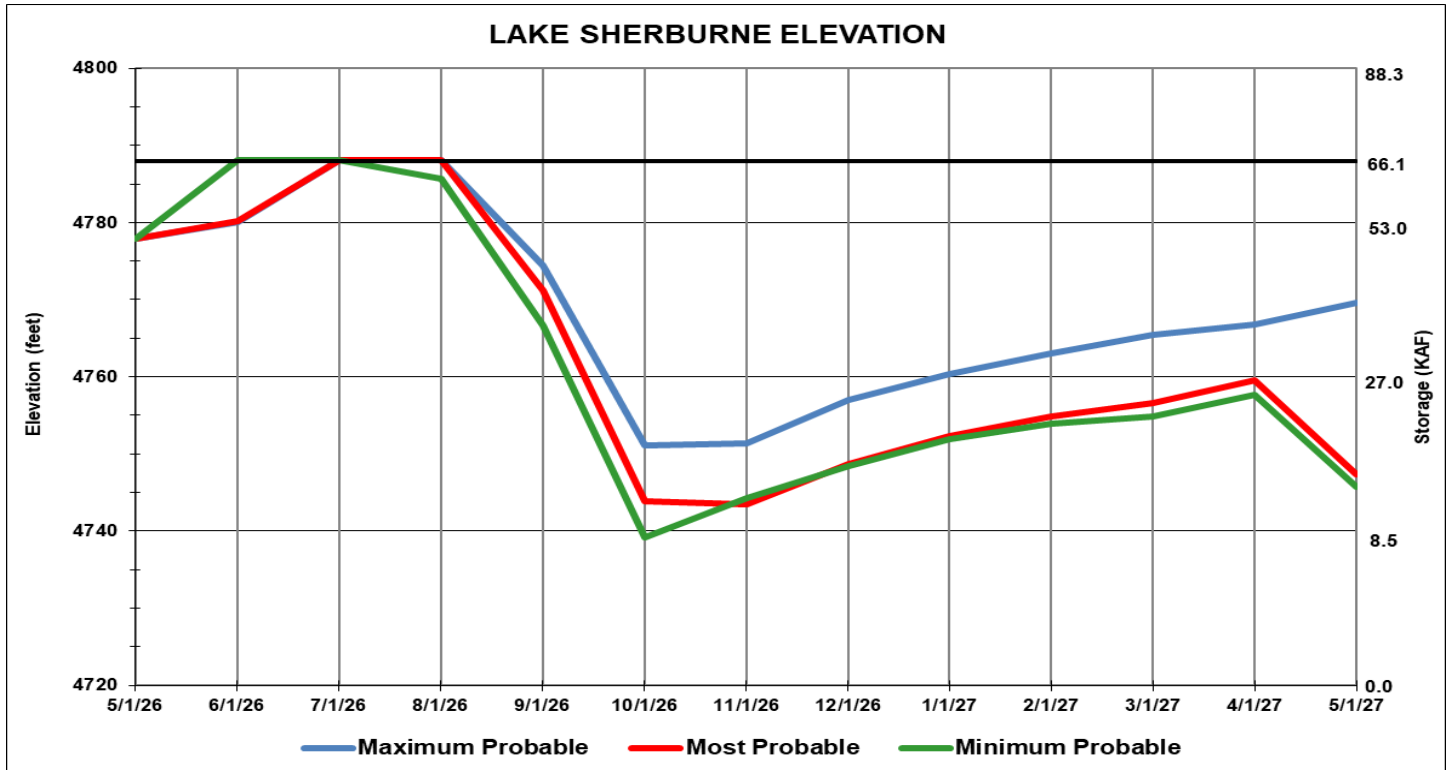
Sherburne Reservoir		Initial Content		49,725 acre-feet									
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Sherburne Inflow (kaf)	23.3	24.3	13.7	5.9	3.1	3.9	3.6	3.2	2.0	1.0	2.9	8.3	95.2
Sherburne Release (kaf)	6.8	24.3	17.7	33.5	29.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.7	131.8
Sherburne Release (cfs)	111	408	288	545	501	0	0	0	0	0	0	331	
Net Content Change (kaf)	16.5	0.0	-4.0	-27.6	-26.7	3.9	3.6	3.2	2.0	1.0	2.9	-11.4	-36.6
End of Month Content (kaf)	66.2	66.2	62.2	34.6	7.9	11.8	15.4	18.6	20.6	21.6	24.5	13.1	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	4788.0	4788.0	4785.7	4766.6	4739.2	4744.2	4748.4	4751.9	4753.9	4754.9	4757.7	4745.8	
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
St. Mary River Runoff (kaf)	95.3	131.7	72.7	31.4	21.0	18.0	12.0	8.1	7.0	7.1	7.6	20.6	432.5
Natural Flow at Boundary (kaf)	118.6	156.0	86.4	37.3	24.1	21.9	15.6	11.3	9.0	8.1	10.5	28.9	527.7
St. Mary Canal Diversion (cfs)	600	600	600	600	550	0	0	0	0	0	0	350	
St. Mary Canal Diversion (kaf)	36.9	35.7	36.9	36.9	32.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.8	199.9
Fresno Reservoir		Initial Content		46,443 acre-feet									
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Milk River Runoff (kaf)	1.7	1.5	0.0	0.1	0.8	2.1	0.7	0.3	0.4	1.0	5.4	4.4	18.4
From St. Mary Canal (kaf)	27.7	26.8	27.7	27.7	24.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.2	140.6
Fresno Inflow (kaf)	29.4	28.3	27.7	27.8	25.3	2.1	0.7	0.3	0.4	1.0	5.4	10.6	159.0
Fresno Release (kaf)	37.7	46.3	6.1	15.0	9.0	8.0	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.4	136.6
Fresno Release (cfs)	613	778	99	244	151	130	40	41	41	40	41	40	
Net Content Change (kaf)	-8.3	-18.0	21.6	12.8	16.3	-5.9	-1.7	-2.2	-2.1	-1.2	2.9	8.2	22.4
End of Month Content (kaf)	38.1	20.1	41.7	54.5	70.8	64.9	63.2	61.0	58.9	57.7	60.6	68.8	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	2560.0	2550.7	2561.6	2566.4	2571.5	2569.8	2569.3	2568.6	2567.9	2567.5	2568.4	2570.9	
Irrigation Allotment (ft/ac)	0.40	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.90
Irrigation Delivery (kaf)	37.1	46.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	83.4
FBIIP Demand (kaf)	0.0	0.0	1.0	6.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.0
Fresno to Dodson Gain (kaf)	1.6	2.4	0.8	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.7	9.1	23.0
Bowdoin Demand (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Transfer to Nelson (kaf)	2.2	2.4	5.0	9.4	9.0	8.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.7	9.1	53.8
Nelson Reservoir		Initial Content		58,089 acre-feet									
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Delivery to Nelson (kaf)	2.0	2.2	4.5	8.5	8.1	7.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.8	8.2	48.5
Net Content Change (kaf)	-10.8	-13.5	2.7	6.7	6.3	5.4	-1.8	-1.8	-1.8	-1.7	6.0	6.4	2.1
End of Month Content (kaf)	47.3	33.8	36.5	43.2	49.5	54.9	53.1	51.3	49.5	47.8	53.8	60.2	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	2213.2	2208.1	2209.3	2211.9	2213.9	2215.5	2215.0	2214.4	2213.9	2213.4	2215.2	2216.9	
Total Release (kaf)	11.0	13.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	24.9

OPERATIONS OUTLOOK (May 1, 2026 through April 30, 2027)

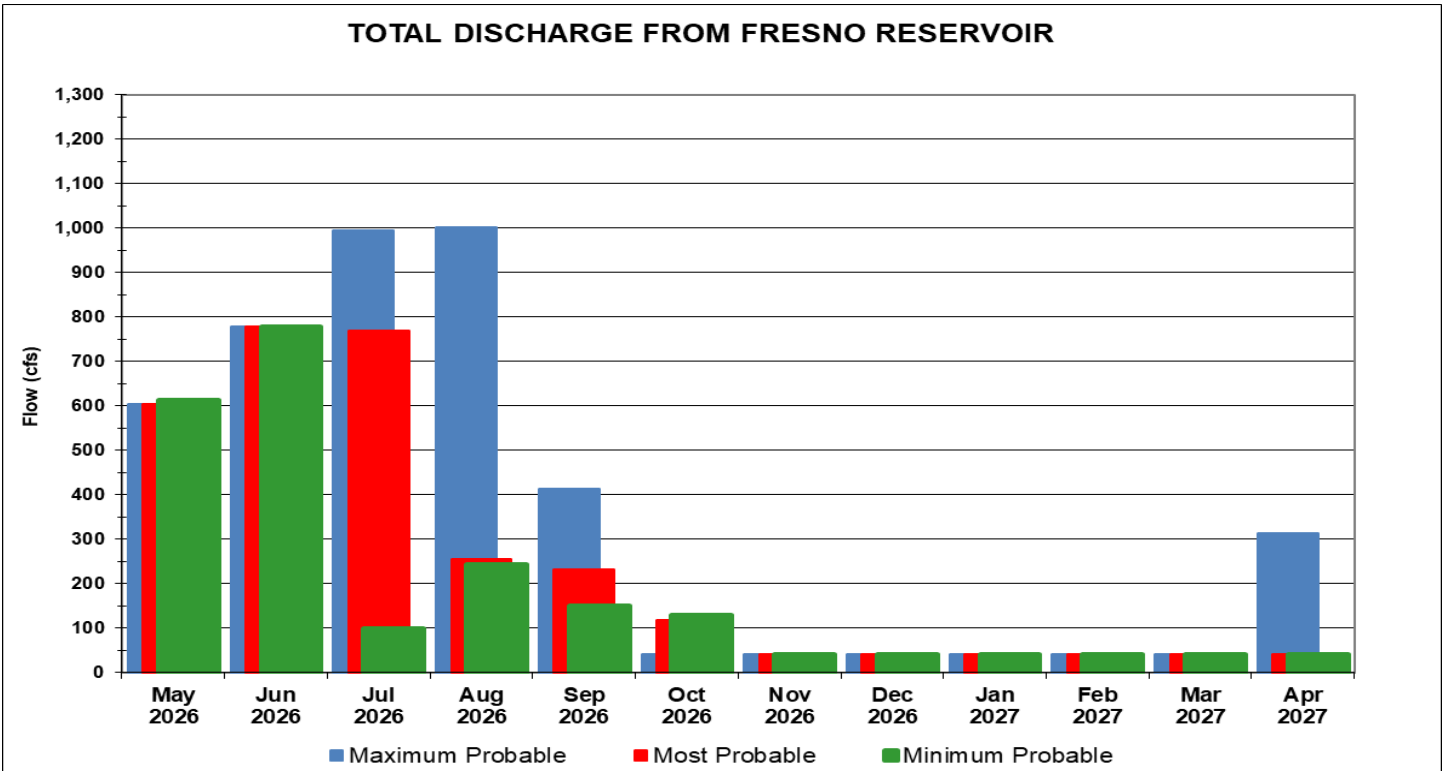
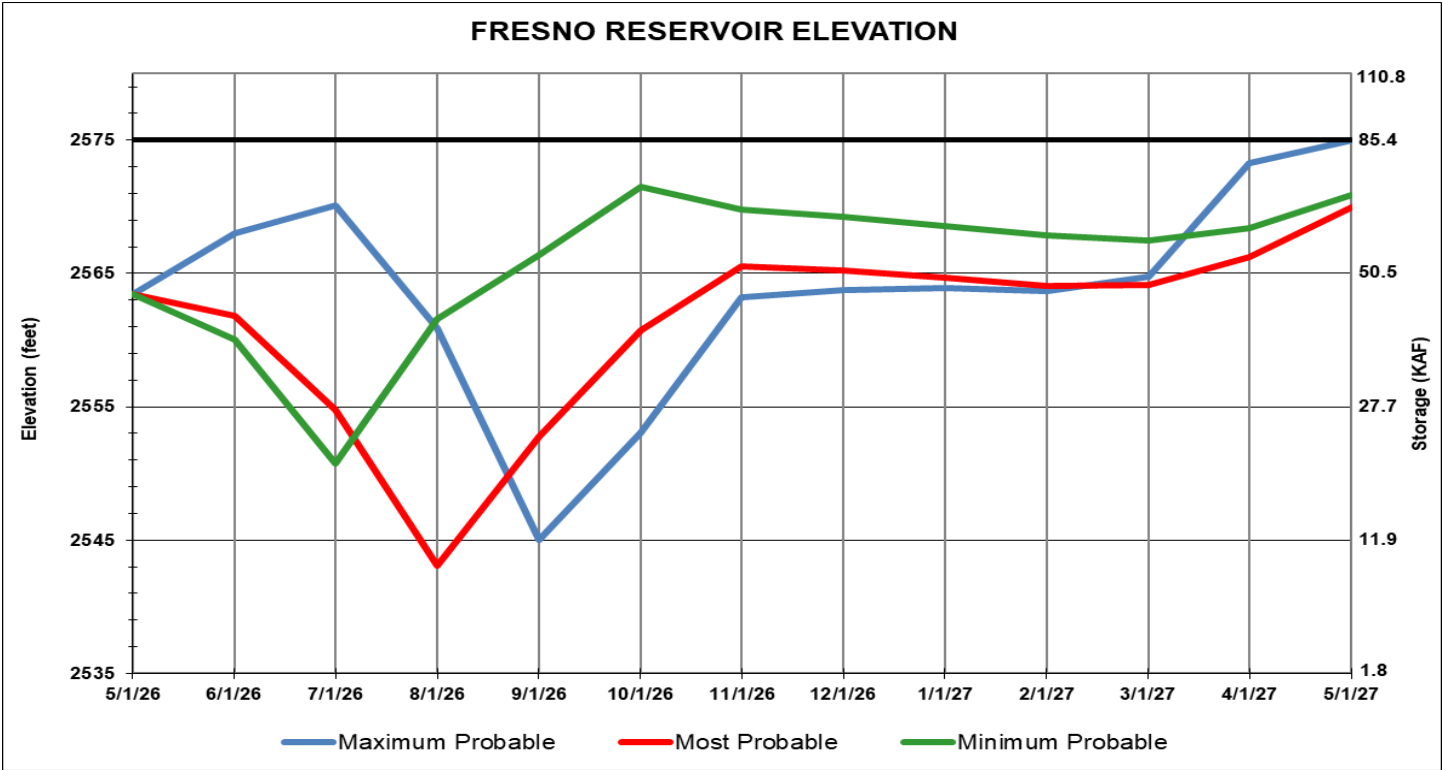
Maximum Inflow Conditions

Sherburne Reservoir		Initial Content	49,725	acre-feet									
		Elevation	4777.85	feet									
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Sherburne Inflow (kaf)	33.1	40.2	18.1	8.8	7.3	6.8	5.5	3.7	2.9	2.8	3.2	9.5	141.9
Sherburne Release (kaf)	29.8	27.0	18.1	30.3	34.1	6.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	6.0	153.3
Sherburne Release (cfs)	485	454	294	493	573	106	0	0	0	0	24	101	
Net Content Change (kaf)	3.3	13.2	0.0	-21.5	-26.8	0.3	5.5	3.7	2.9	2.8	1.7	3.5	-11.4
End of Month Content (kaf)	53.0	66.2	66.2	44.7	17.9	18.2	23.7	27.4	30.3	33.1	34.8	38.3	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	4780.0	4788.0	4788.0	4774.4	4751.1	4751.4	4757.0	4760.4	4763.0	4765.4	4766.8	4769.7	
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
St. Mary River Runoff (kaf)	120.2	177.3	107.2	42.5	28.3	31.0	23.7	14.4	11.3	9.9	14.6	34.3	614.7
Natural Flow at Boundary (kaf)	153.3	217.5	125.3	51.3	35.6	37.8	29.2	18.1	14.2	12.7	17.8	43.8	756.6
St. Mary Canal Diversion (cfs)	600	600	600	600	600	150	0	0	0	0	0	0	
St. Mary Canal Diversion (kaf)	36.9	35.7	36.9	36.9	35.7	9.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	191.3
Fresno Reservoir		Initial Content	46,443	acre-feet									
		Elevation	2563.48	feet									
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Milk River Runoff (kaf)	18.7	22.6	3.9	2.1	6.3	6.6	3.9	2.8	2.0	5.0	30.6	26.2	130.7
From St. Mary Canal (kaf)	31.4	30.3	31.4	31.4	30.3	17.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	172.3
Fresno Inflow (kaf)	50.1	52.9	35.3	33.5	36.6	24.1	3.9	2.8	2.0	5.0	30.6	26.2	303.0
Fresno Release (kaf)	37.1	46.3	61.2	61.6	24.5	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.5	18.7	264.0
Fresno Release (cfs)	603	778	995	1002	412	41	40	41	41	40	41	314	
Net Content Change (kaf)	13.0	6.6	-25.9	-28.1	12.1	21.6	1.5	0.3	-0.5	2.8	28.1	7.5	39.0
End of Month Content (kaf)	59.4	66.0	40.1	12.0	24.1	45.7	47.2	47.5	47.0	49.8	77.9	85.4	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	2568.0	2570.1	2560.9	2545.1	2553.1	2563.2	2563.8	2563.9	2563.7	2564.7	2573.3	2575.0	
Irrigation Allotment (ft/ac)	0.40	0.50	0.65	0.60	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.35
Irrigation Delivery (kaf)	37.1	46.3	60.2	55.6	18.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	217.7
FBIIP Demand (kaf)	0.0	0.0	1.0	6.0	6.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.0
Fresno to Dodson Gain (kaf)	16.4	21.3	12.0	3.0	7.0	5.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.6	23.7	111.2
Bowdoin Demand (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	2.0
Transfer to Nelson (kaf)	16.4	21.3	12.0	3.0	7.0	5.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	20.0	94.9
Nelson Reservoir		Initial Content	58,089	acre-feet									
		Elevation	2216.35	feet									
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
Delivery to Nelson (kaf)	14.8	19.2	10.8	2.7	6.3	4.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.0	18.0	85.5
Net Content Change (kaf)	2.0	3.1	-9.0	-15.7	-1.1	2.9	-1.8	-1.8	-1.8	-1.7	7.2	16.2	-1.5
End of Month Content (kaf)	60.1	63.2	54.2	38.5	37.4	40.3	38.5	36.7	34.9	33.2	40.4	56.6	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	2216.9	2217.7	2215.3	2210.1	2209.6	2210.8	2210.1	2209.3	2208.6	2207.8	2210.8	2215.9	
Total Release (kaf)	11.0	14.3	18.0	16.6	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	65.5

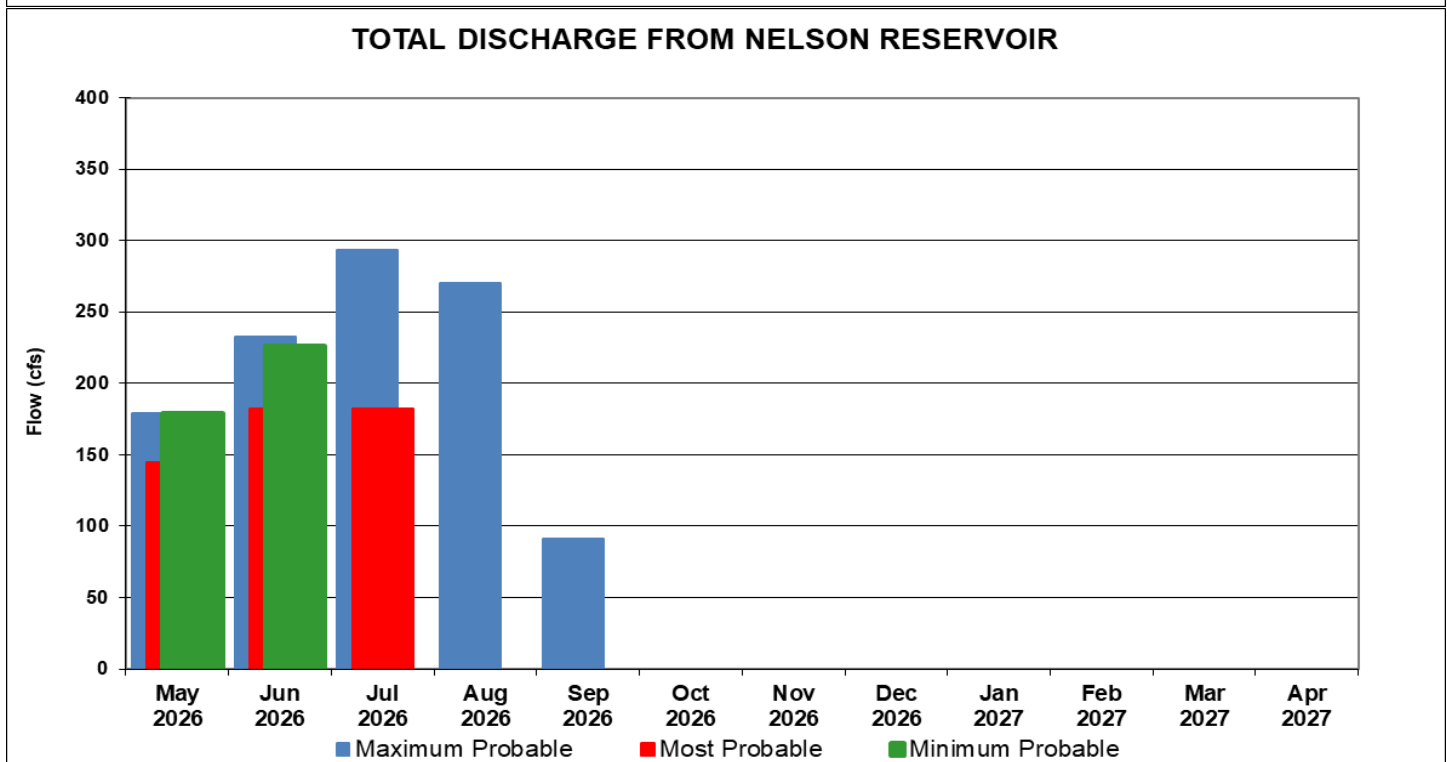
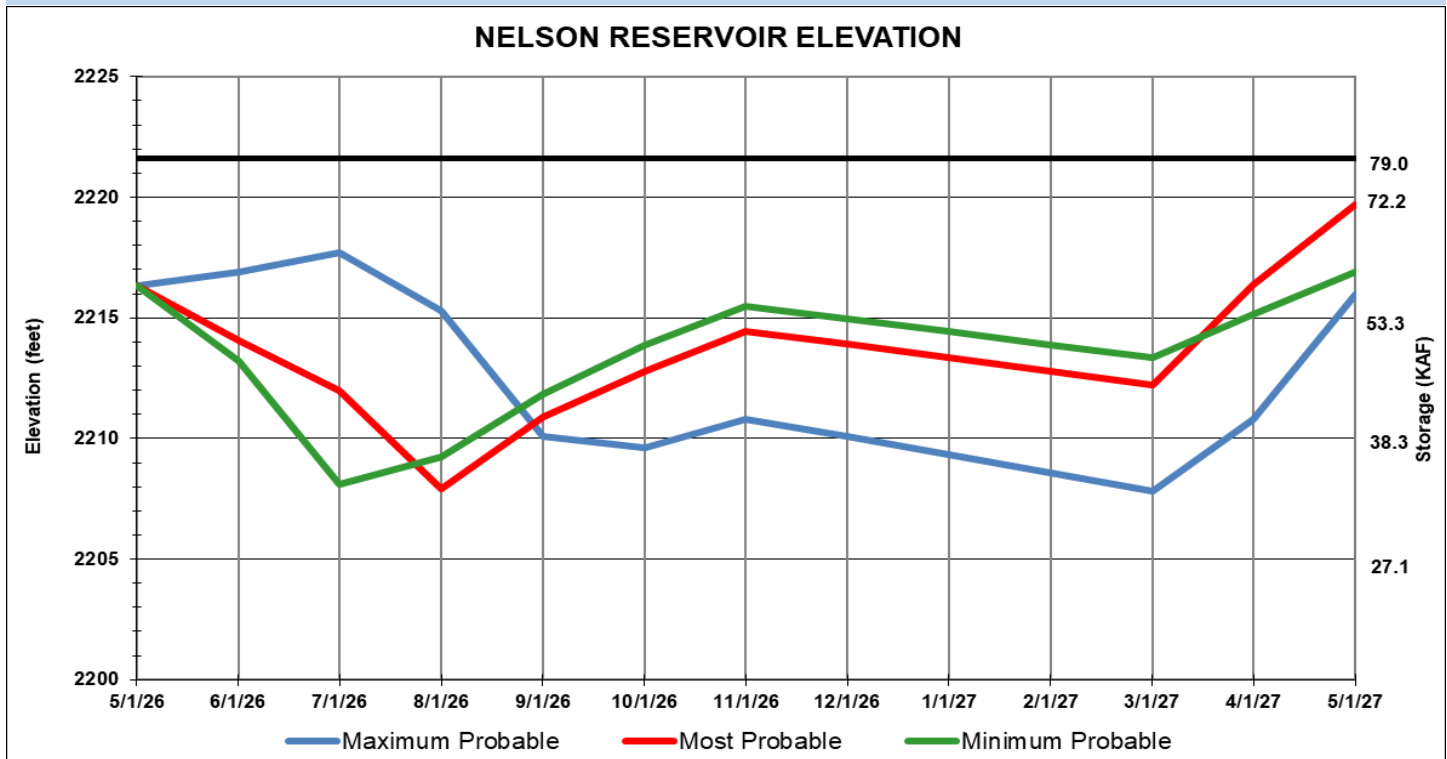
OPERATIONS OUTLOOK: LAKE SHERBURNE



OPERATIONS OUTLOOK: FRESNO RESERVOIR



OPERATIONS OUTLOOK: NELSON RESERVOIR



Contact Us

J. Brooks Stephens
jbstephens@usbr.gov
 406-247-7318

Clayton Jordan
cjordan@usbr.gov
 406-247-7334

Chris Gomer
cgomer@usbr.gov
 406-247-7307

Monthly Operating Plans, Current Conditions, Snowpack, and Other Water Management Information
https://www.usbr.gov/gp/lakes_reservoirs/wareprts/main_menu.html

Milk River Project Water Supply and Projected Operations

May 2026