

Milk River Project Water Supply and Projected Operations



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

October 2026



St. Mary Canal Siphons, September 2026

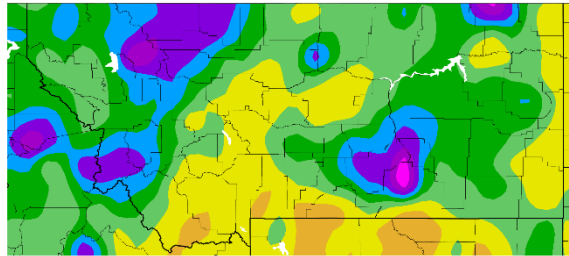
The October monthly operating plan covers actual operations from October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026, and projected operations for October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027. The projections are based on forecasted water supply and use.

Median Forecasted Operations	Sherburne	Fresno	Nelson
October Inflow Forecast (kaf)	5	3	0
Percent of Average	77	146	34
October Release Forecast (cfs)	5	41	0
October 31 Elevation Forecast (feet)	4748.3	2566.7	2215.9

Climate Departure from Normal

September 1 through September 30

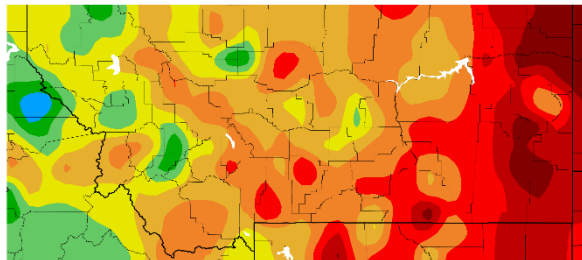
Precipitation



Departure from Normal (inches)

Temperature

Departure from Normal (°F)



HPRCC using provisional data NOAA Regional Climate Centers

CLIMATE SUMMARY

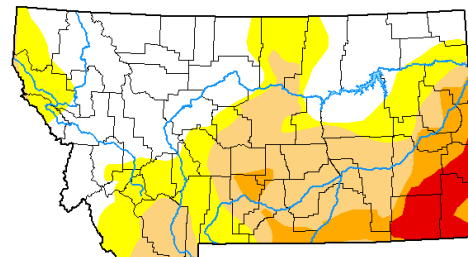
In September, precipitation was above average in most of the St. Mary and Milk River basins. Temperatures were near normal in the St. Mary basin and above average in the Milk River basin.

For October, there is a 40-50 percent chance of below average precipitation in the St. Mary and Milk River basins. Temperatures have a 40-50 percent chance of being above average in both basins.

Drought conditions are classified as none for the St. Mary River basin and range from none to abnormally dry in the Milk River basin.

Montana Drought Monitor Map

September 29, 2026



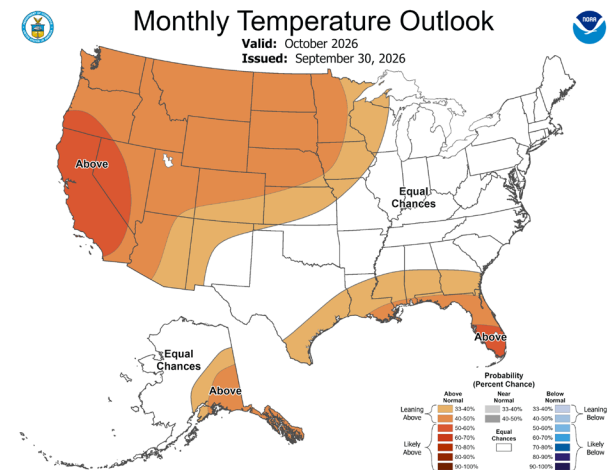
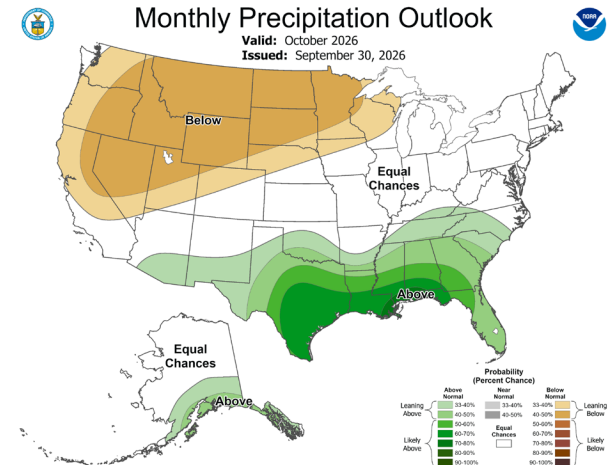
Intensity

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



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

October Climate Outlook



OPERATIONS REVIEW

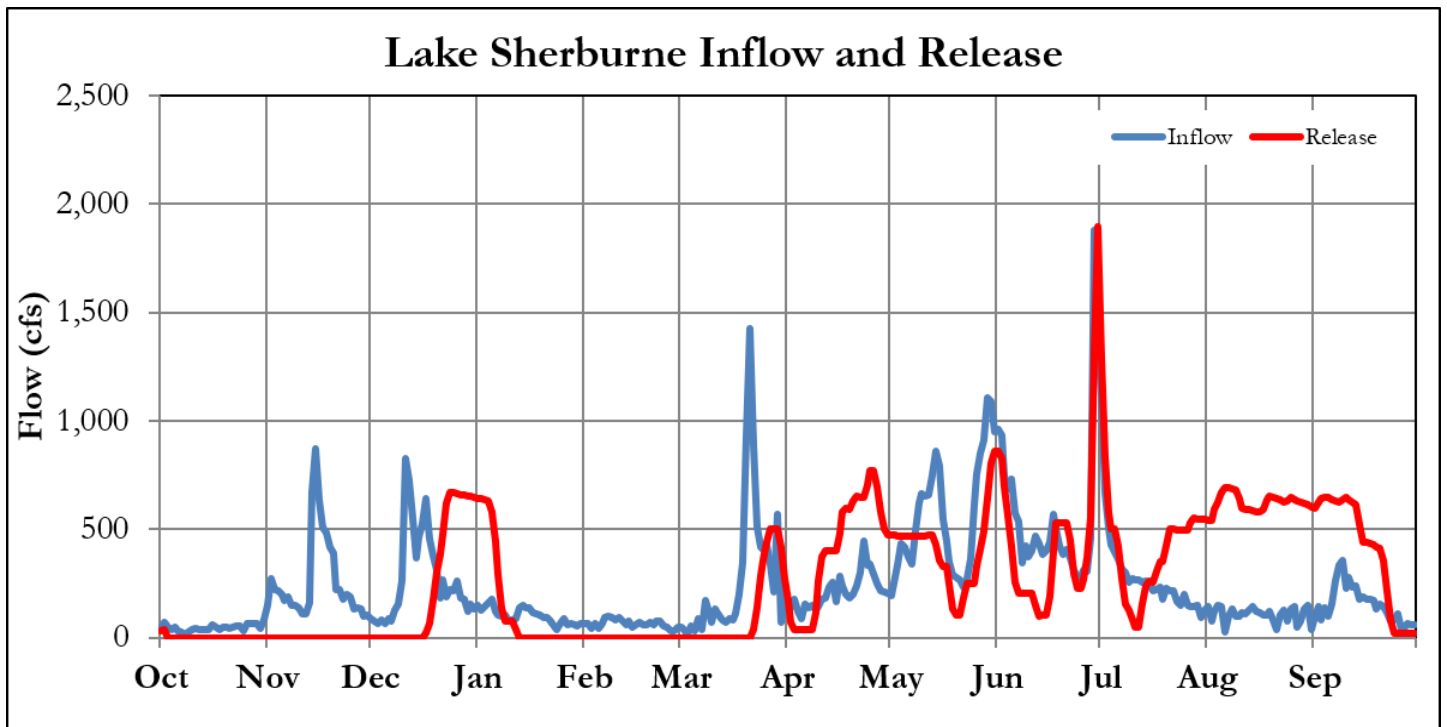
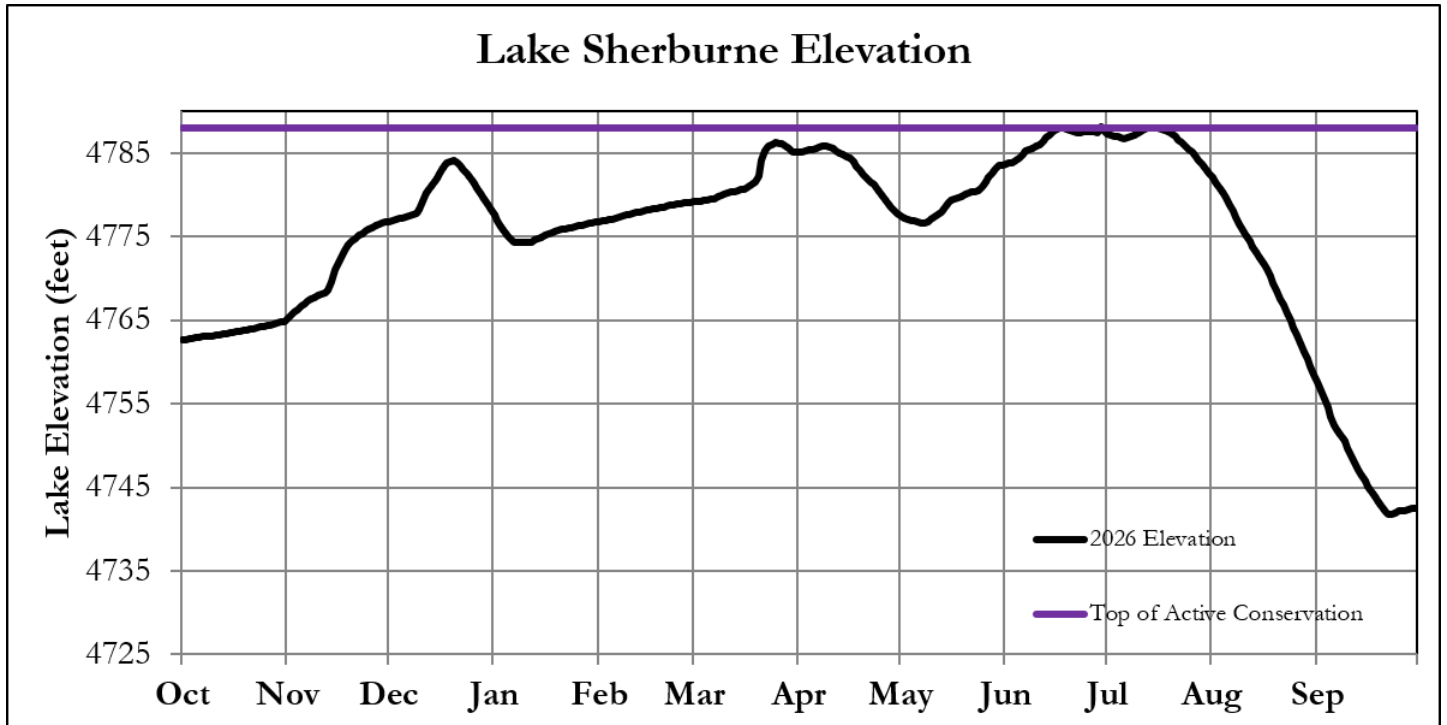
October 1 Elevation and Storage

	Elevation (feet)	Storage (acre-feet)	Percent of Average	Percent Full
Sherburne Reservoir	4742.55	10,446	63	16
Fresno Reservoir	2566.51	54,806	136	64
Nelson Reservoir	2216.42	58,345	103	74

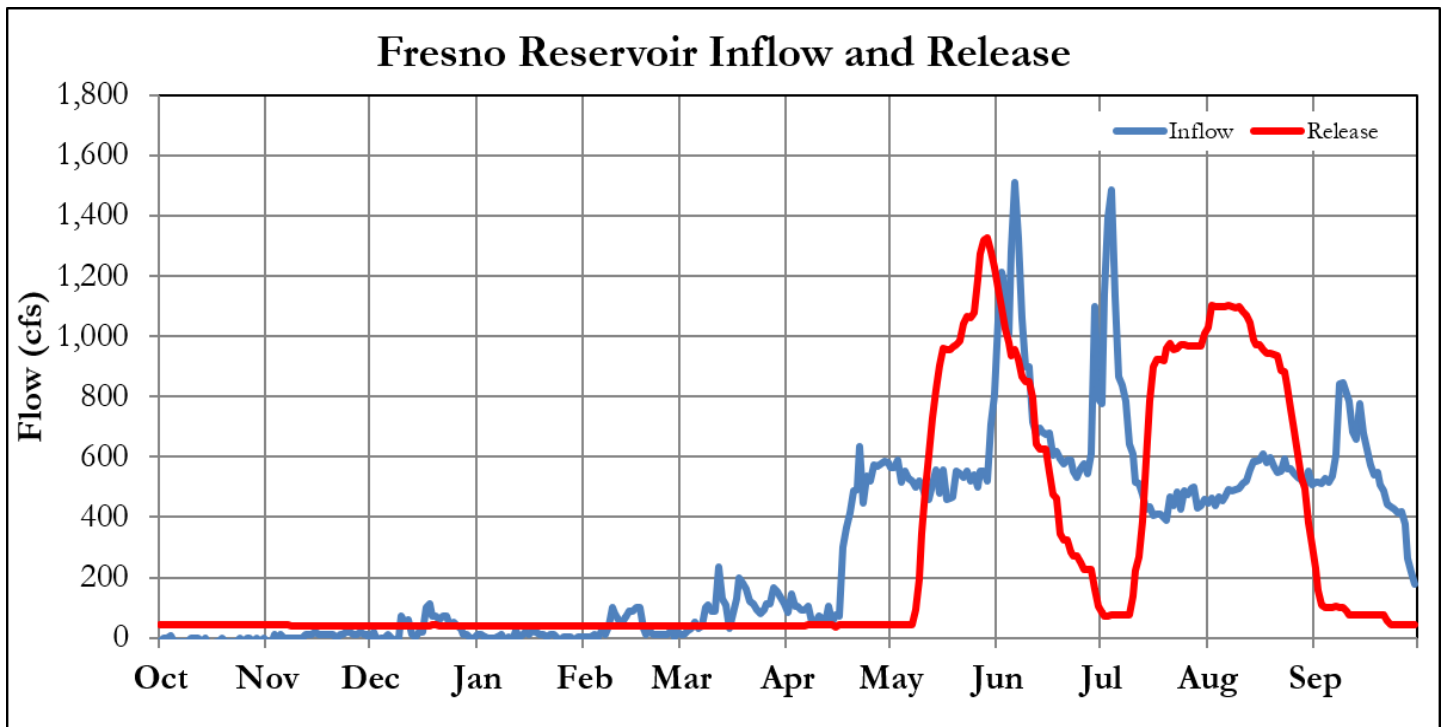
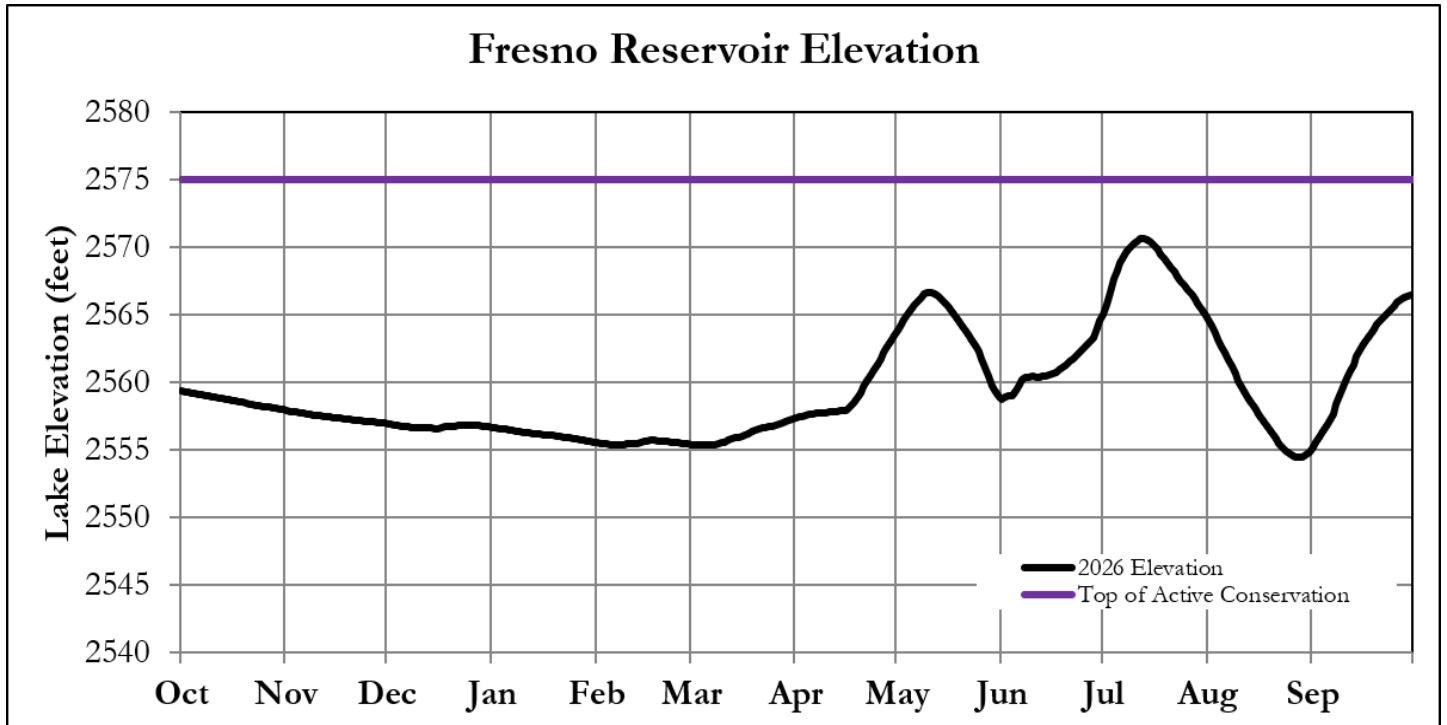
Past Inflows (1,000's of acre-feet)

Month	Sherburne Reservoir		Fresno Reservoir	
	Inflow	% of Average	Inflow	% of Average
Water Year 2026				
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
May	34.0	108	33.0	82
June	33.2	86	48.3	105
July	17.4	96	37.9	144
August	6.5	80	32.5	118
September	9.2	172	32.2	164
Water Year 2025				
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

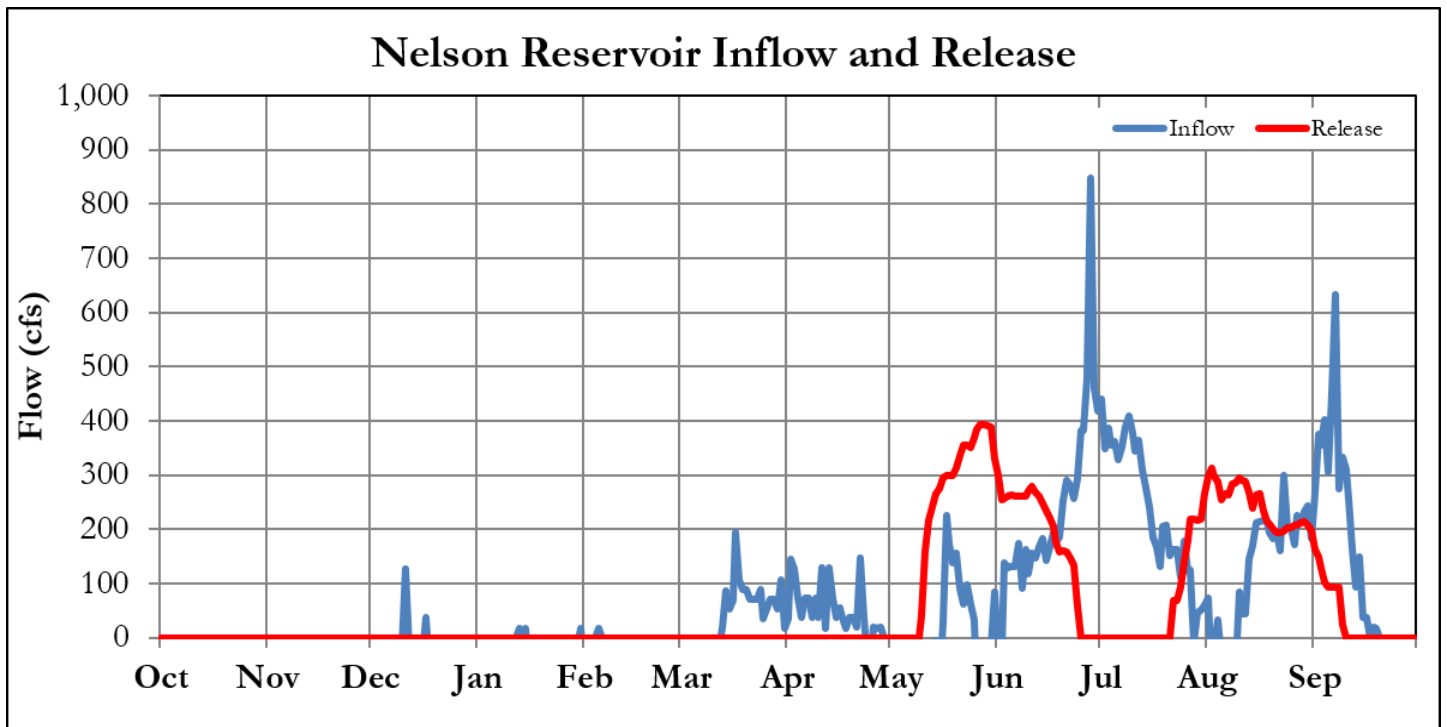
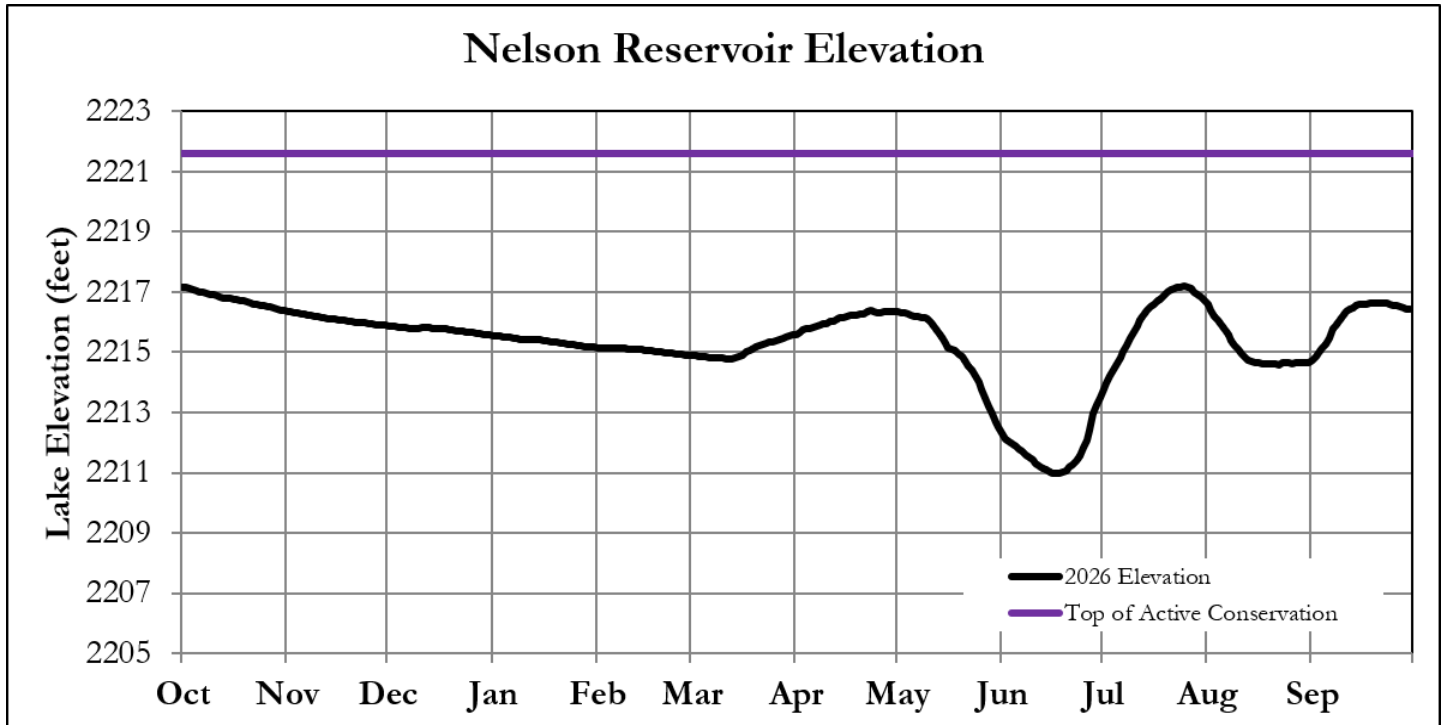
OPERATIONS REVIEW: LAKE SHERBURNE



OPERATIONS REVIEW: FRESNO RESERVOIR



OPERATIONS REVIEW: NELSON RESERVOIR



OPERATIONS OUTLOOK (October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2027)

Median Inflow Conditions

Sherburne Reservoir Initial Content Elevation 10,446 acre-feet 4742.55 feet													
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Sherburne Inflow (kaf)	5.2	4.7	3.6	2.9	2.8	3.2	9.5	32.9	39.3	17.5	8.6	7.2	137.4
Sherburne Release (kaf)	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.8	15.9	10.3	17.5	35.3	36.3	137.4
Sherburne Release (cfs)	5	0	0	0	0	0	366	259	173	285	574	610	
Net Content Change (kaf)	4.9	4.7	3.6	2.9	2.8	3.2	-12.3	17.0	29.0	0.0	-26.7	-29.1	0.0
End of Month Content (kaf)	15.3	20.0	23.6	26.5	29.3	32.5	20.2	37.2	66.2	66.2	39.5	10.4	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	4748.3	4753.3	4756.9	4759.6	4762.1	4764.9	4753.5	4768.8	4788.0	4788.0	4770.6	4742.5	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
St. Mary River Runoff (kaf)	15.3	9.8	7.2	7.2	6.1	8.7	24.5	95.5	135.0	80.6	32.3	19.0	441.2
Natural Flow at Boundary (kaf)	20.5	14.5	10.8	10.1	8.9	11.9	34.0	128.4	174.3	98.1	40.9	26.2	578.6
St. Mary Canal Diversion (cfs)	0	0	0	0	0	0	350	600	600	600	600	600	
St. Mary Canal Diversion (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.8	36.9	35.7	36.9	36.9	35.7	202.9
Fresno Reservoir Initial Content Elevation 54,806 acre-feet 2566.51 feet													
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Milk River Runoff (kaf)	3.2	2.5	1.9	1.9	4.9	14.5	15.1	7.3	5.0	0.4	0.6	2.8	60.1
From St. Mary Canal (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.2	29.5	28.6	29.5	29.5	28.6	151.9
Fresno Inflow (kaf)	3.2	2.5	1.9	1.9	4.9	14.5	21.3	36.8	33.6	29.9	30.1	31.4	212.0
Fresno Release (kaf)	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.5	5.0	36.8	46.3	61.2	58.6	6.0	228.5
Fresno Release (cfs)	41	40	41	41	40	41	84	598	778	995	953	101	
Net Content Change (kaf)	0.7	0.1	-0.6	-0.6	2.7	12.0	16.3	0.0	-12.7	-31.3	-28.5	25.4	-16.5
End of Month Content (kaf)	55.5	55.6	55.0	54.4	57.1	69.1	85.4	85.4	72.7	41.4	12.9	38.3	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	2566.7	2566.8	2566.6	2566.4	2567.3	2571.0	2575.0	2575.0	2572.0	2561.4	2545.8	2560.1	
Irrigation Allotment (ft/ac)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.65	0.60	0.00	2.00
Irrigation Delivery (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	23.2	46.3	60.2	55.6	0.0	185.3
FBIIP Demand (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	3.0	3.0	7.0
Fresno to Dodson Gain (kaf)	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.4	18.2	12.6	16.4	6.8	2.0	5.4	79.6
Bowdoin Demand (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.5
Transfer to Nelson (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.4	16.2	10.3	16.4	6.8	2.0	5.4	74.5
Nelson Reservoir Initial Content Elevation 58,345 acre-feet 2216.42 feet													
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Delivery to Nelson (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.7	14.6	9.3	14.8	6.1	1.8	4.9	67.2
Net Content Change (kaf)	-1.8	-1.8	-1.8	-1.8	-1.7	13.9	12.8	2.9	-0.9	-13.7	-16.6	3.1	-7.4
End of Month Content (kaf)	56.5	54.7	52.9	51.1	49.4	63.3	76.1	79.0	78.1	64.4	47.8	50.9	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	2215.9	2215.4	2214.9	2214.4	2213.9	2217.7	2220.9	2221.6	2221.4	2218.0	2213.4	2214.3	
Total Release (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.6	13.9	18.0	16.6	0.0	53.1

OPERATIONS OUTLOOK (October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2027)

Minimum Inflow Conditions

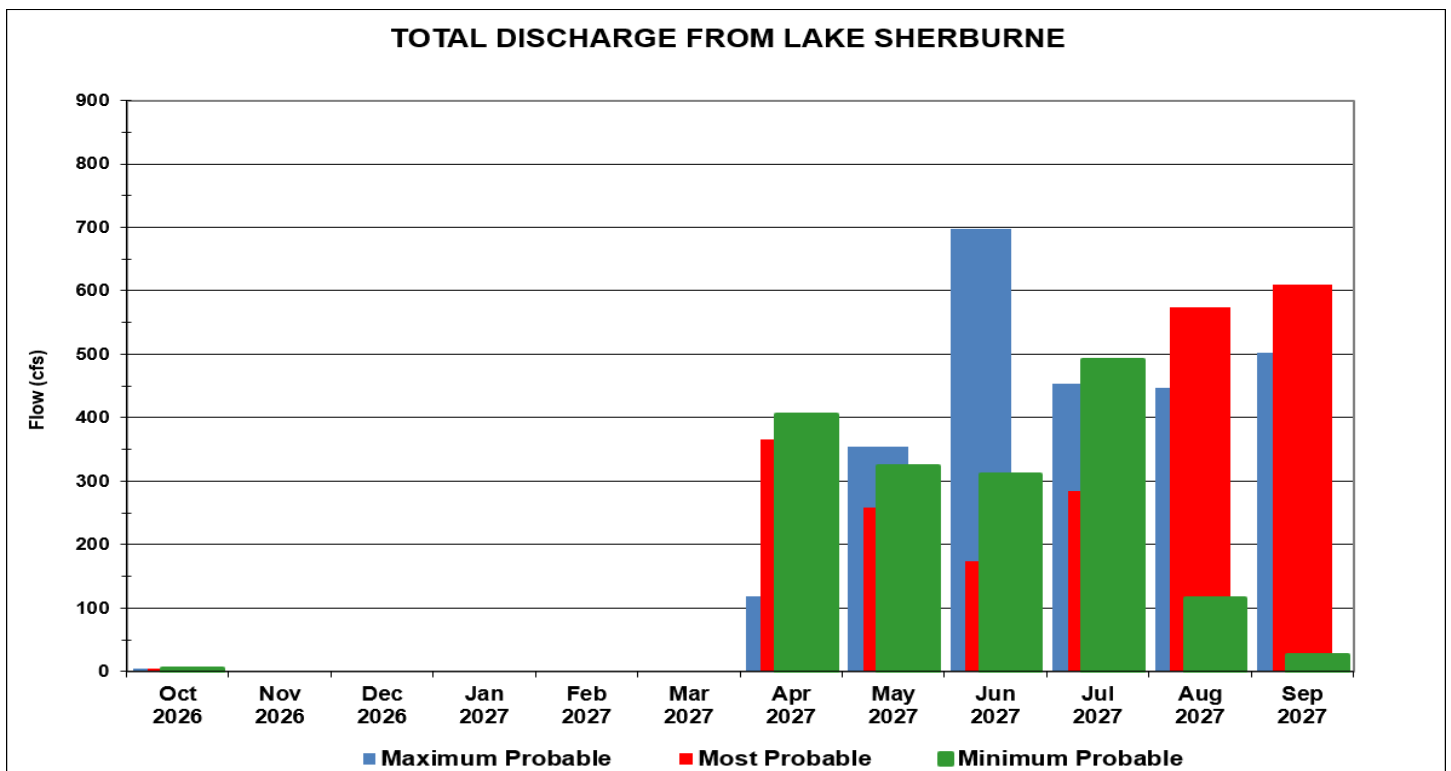
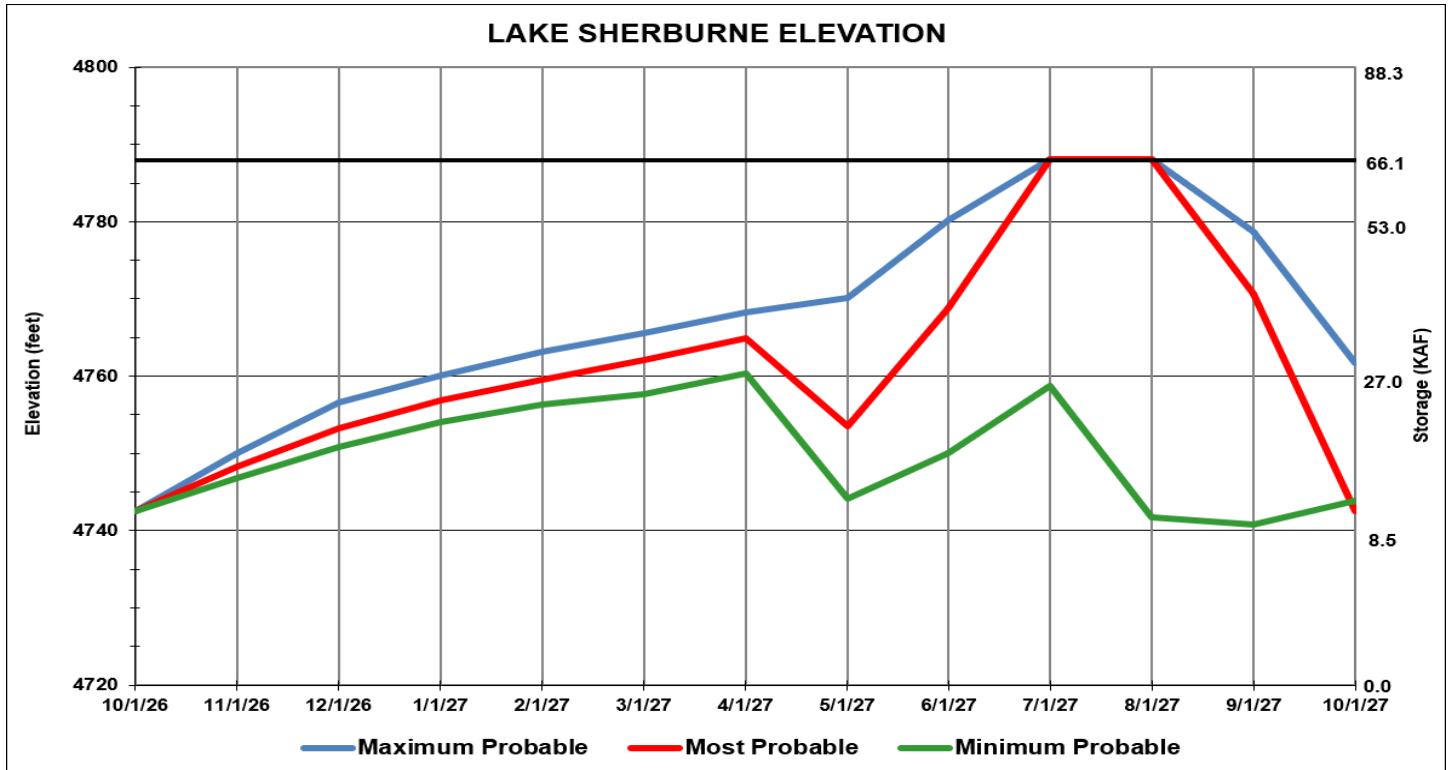
Sherburne Reservoir		Initial Content	10,446	acre-feet									
		Elevation	4742.55	feet									
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Sherburne Inflow (kaf)	3.9	3.6	3.2	2.2	1.4	2.9	8.5	25.1	27.2	14.4	6.4	3.9	102.7
Sherburne Release (kaf)	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	24.1	19.9	18.5	30.2	7.1	1.5	101.6
Sherburne Release (cfs)	5	0	0	0	0	0	405	324	311	491	115	25	
Net Content Change (kaf)	3.6	3.6	3.2	2.2	1.4	2.9	-15.6	5.2	8.7	-15.8	-0.7	2.4	1.1
End of Month Content (kaf)	14.0	17.6	20.8	23.0	24.4	27.3	11.7	16.9	25.6	9.8	9.1	11.5	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	4746.8	4750.8	4754.1	4756.3	4757.6	4760.3	4744.1	4750.1	4758.7	4741.7	4740.8	4743.9	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
St. Mary River Runoff (kaf)	10.6	6.1	5.3	4.0	4.6	4.1	7.4	68.2	81.5	42.1	21.7	14.5	270.1
Natural Flow at Boundary (kaf)	14.5	9.7	8.5	6.2	6.0	7.0	15.9	93.3	108.7	56.5	28.1	18.4	372.8
St. Mary Canal Diversion (cfs)	0	0	0	0	0	0	350	600	600	550	125	0	
St. Mary Canal Diversion (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.8	36.9	35.7	33.8	7.7	0.0	134.9
Fresno Reservoir		Initial Content	54,806	acre-feet									
		Elevation	2566.51	feet									
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Milk River Runoff (kaf)	2.1	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.7	4.7	3.5	1.3	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.6	15.3
From St. Mary Canal (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.2	27.7	26.8	25.3	13.1	0.0	99.1
Fresno Inflow (kaf)	2.1	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.7	4.7	9.7	29.0	28.0	25.3	13.1	0.6	114.4
Fresno Release (kaf)	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.4	23.2	46.3	52.0	6.1	6.0	150.6
Fresno Release (cfs)	41	40	41	41	40	41	40	377	778	846	99	101	
Net Content Change (kaf)	-0.4	-1.8	-2.2	-2.2	-1.5	2.2	7.3	5.8	-18.3	-26.7	7.0	-5.4	-36.2
End of Month Content (kaf)	54.4	52.6	50.4	48.2	46.7	48.9	56.2	62.0	43.7	17.0	24.0	18.6	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	2566.4	2565.7	2565.0	2564.2	2563.6	2564.4	2567.0	2568.9	2562.4	2548.7	2553.0	2549.8	
Irrigation Allotment (ft/ac)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.55	0.00	0.00	1.30
Irrigation Delivery (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	23.2	46.3	51.0	0.0	0.0	120.5
FBIIP Demand (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	3.0	3.0	7.0
Fresno to Dodson Gain (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.7	9.1	6.3	8.2	3.4	1.0	2.7	39.4
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)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.7	9.1	6.3	8.2	3.4	1.0	2.7	39.4
Nelson Reservoir		Initial Content	58,345	acre-feet									
		Elevation	2216.42	feet									
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Delivery to Nelson (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.8	8.2	5.7	7.4	3.1	0.9	2.4	35.5
Net Content Change (kaf)	-1.8	-1.8	-1.8	-1.8	-1.7	6.0	6.4	-3.0	-8.3	-13.9	-0.9	0.6	-22.0
End of Month Content (kaf)	56.5	54.7	52.9	51.1	49.4	55.4	61.8	58.8	50.5	36.6	35.7	36.3	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	2215.9	2215.4	2214.9	2214.4	2213.9	2215.6	2217.4	2216.5	2214.2	2209.3	2208.9	2209.2	
Total Release (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.9	13.9	15.2	0.0	0.0	36.0

OPERATIONS OUTLOOK (October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2027)

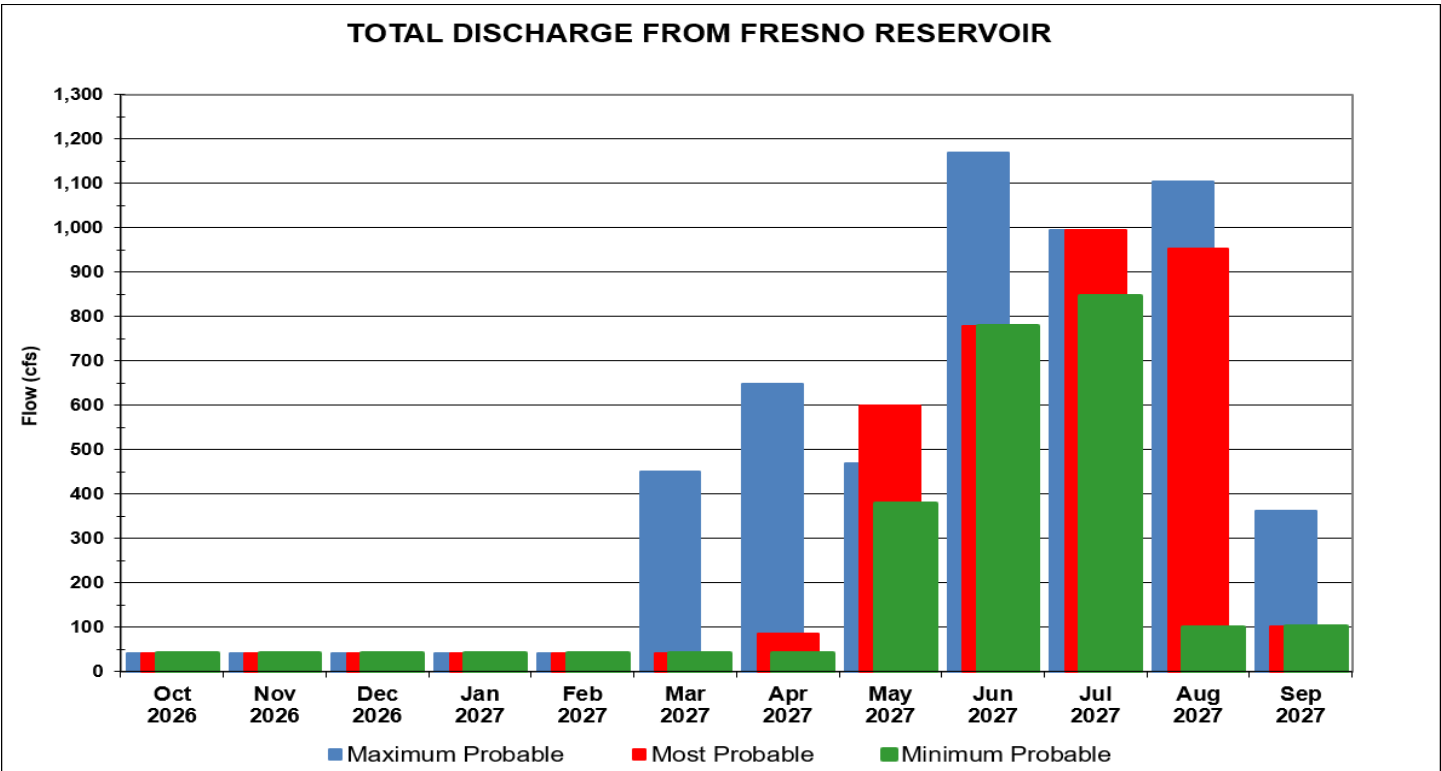
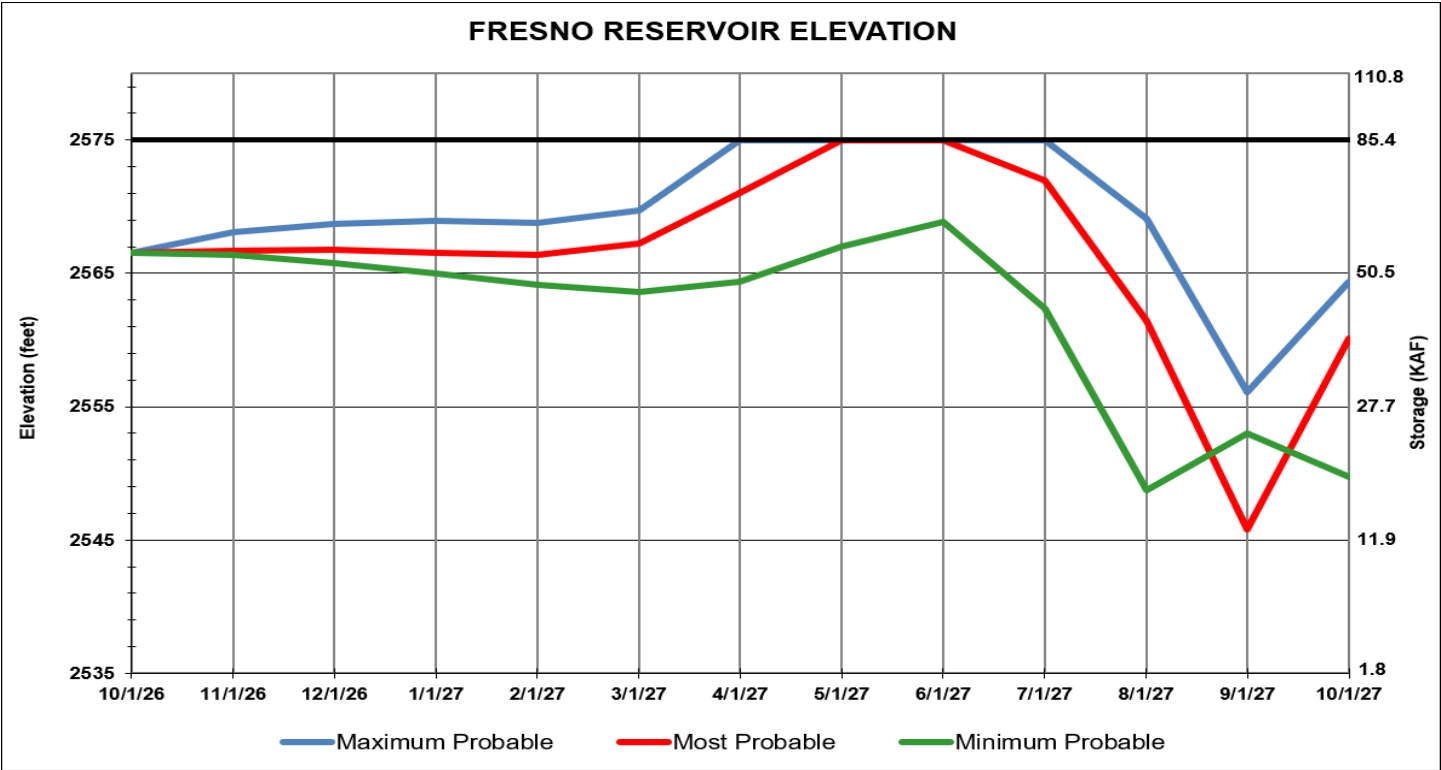
Maximum Inflow Conditions

Sherburne Reservoir		Initial Content	10,446	acre-feet									
		Elevation	4742.55	feet									
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Sherburne Inflow (kaf)	6.8	6.4	3.8	3.4	2.8	3.2	9.5	36.1	54.5	27.9	12.3	7.8	174.5
Sherburne Release (kaf)	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.1	21.8	41.5	27.9	27.5	29.9	156.0
Sherburne Release (cfs)	5	0	0	0	0	0	119	355	697	454	447	502	
Net Content Change (kaf)	6.5	6.4	3.8	3.4	2.8	3.2	2.4	14.3	13.0	0.0	-15.2	-22.1	18.5
End of Month Content (kaf)	16.9	23.3	27.1	30.5	33.3	36.5	38.9	53.2	66.2	66.2	51.0	28.9	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	4750.1	4756.6	4760.1	4763.2	4765.6	4768.2	4770.1	4780.1	4788.0	4788.0	4778.7	4761.7	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
St. Mary River Runoff (kaf)	28.9	26.4	18.7	15.8	14.4	21.7	46.1	147.5	215.6	130.5	51.7	39.3	756.6
Natural Flow at Boundary (kaf)	35.7	32.8	22.5	19.2	17.2	24.9	55.6	183.6	270.1	158.4	64.0	47.1	931.1
St. Mary Canal Diversion (cfs)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	250	600	600	600	600	
St. Mary Canal Diversion (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.4	35.7	36.9	36.9	35.7	160.6
Fresno Reservoir		Initial Content	54,806	acre-feet									
		Elevation	2566.51	feet									
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Milk River Runoff (kaf)	7.3	4.2	3.3	2.1	5.1	48.4	38.5	27.4	39.2	7.0	3.7	10.3	196.5
From St. Mary Canal (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	30.3	31.4	31.4	30.3	124.9
Fresno Inflow (kaf)	7.3	4.2	3.3	2.1	5.1	48.4	38.5	28.9	69.5	38.4	35.1	40.6	321.4
Fresno Release (kaf)	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.2	27.7	38.5	28.9	69.5	61.2	67.9	21.5	327.3
Fresno Release (cfs)	41	40	41	41	40	450	647	470	1168	995	1104	361	
Net Content Change (kaf)	4.8	1.8	0.8	-0.4	2.9	20.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	-22.8	-32.8	19.1	-5.9
End of Month Content (kaf)	59.6	61.4	62.2	61.8	64.7	85.4	85.4	85.4	85.4	62.6	29.8	48.9	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	2568.1	2568.7	2568.9	2568.8	2569.7	2575.0	2575.0	2575.0	2575.0	2569.1	2556.1	2564.4	
Irrigation Allotment (ft/ac)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.65	0.70	0.20	2.30
Irrigation Delivery (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	23.2	46.3	60.2	64.9	18.5	213.1
FBIIP Demand (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	3.0	3.0	7.0
Fresno to Dodson Gain (kaf)	5.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.6	23.7	16.4	21.3	12.0	3.0	7.0	111.2
Bowdoin Demand (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.5
Transfer to Nelson (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.6	21.7	9.8	12.2	12.0	3.0	7.0	78.3
Nelson Reservoir		Initial Content	58,345	acre-feet									
		Elevation	2216.42	feet									
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total
Delivery to Nelson (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.3	19.5	8.8	11.0	10.8	2.7	6.3	70.4
Net Content Change (kaf)	-1.8	-1.8	-1.8	-1.8	-1.7	9.5	17.7	2.4	0.0	-9.0	-18.5	-1.1	-7.9
End of Month Content (kaf)	56.5	54.7	52.9	51.1	49.4	58.9	76.6	79.0	79.0	70.0	51.5	50.4	
End of Month Elevation (feet)	2215.9	2215.4	2214.9	2214.4	2213.9	2216.6	2221.1	2221.6	2221.6	2219.5	2214.5	2214.2	
Total Release (kaf)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.6	9.2	18.0	19.4	5.6	56.8

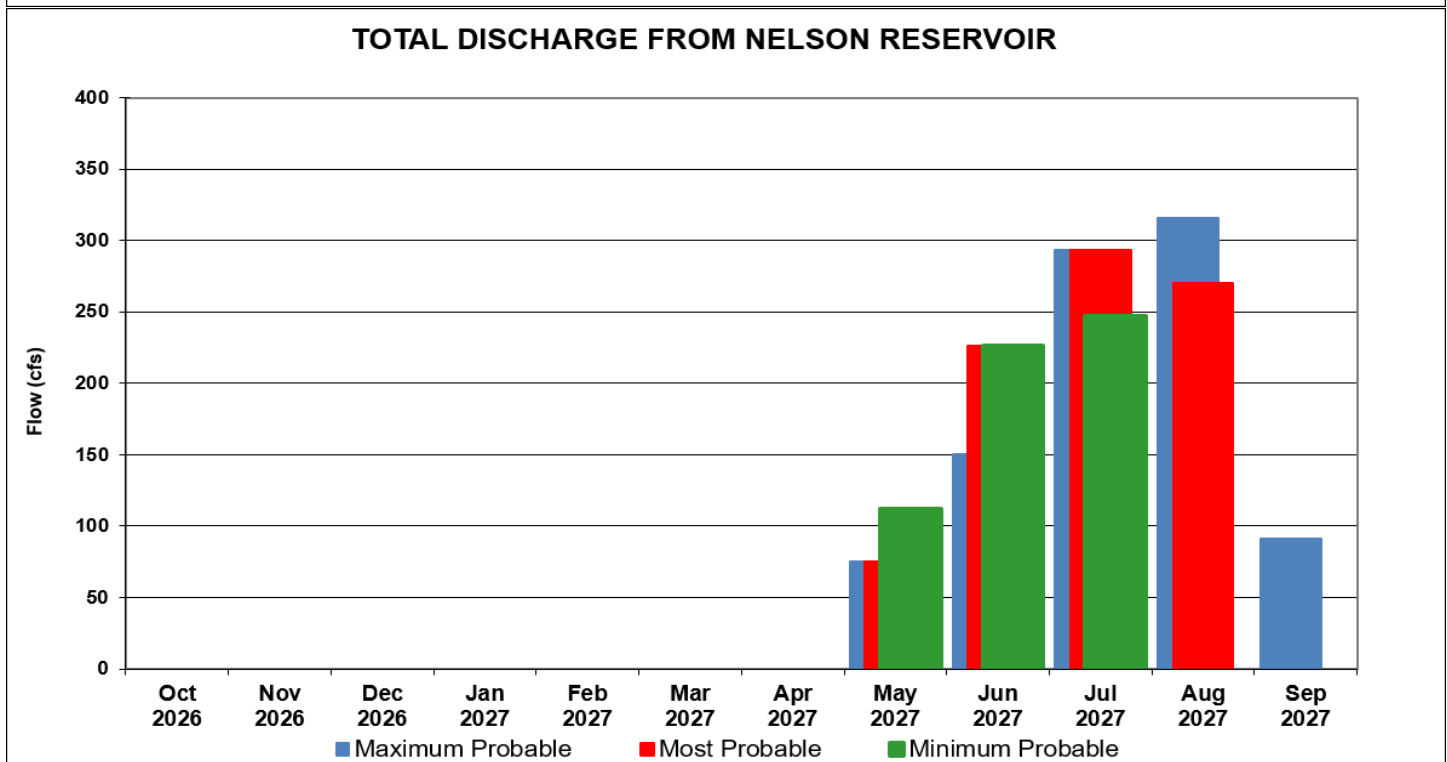
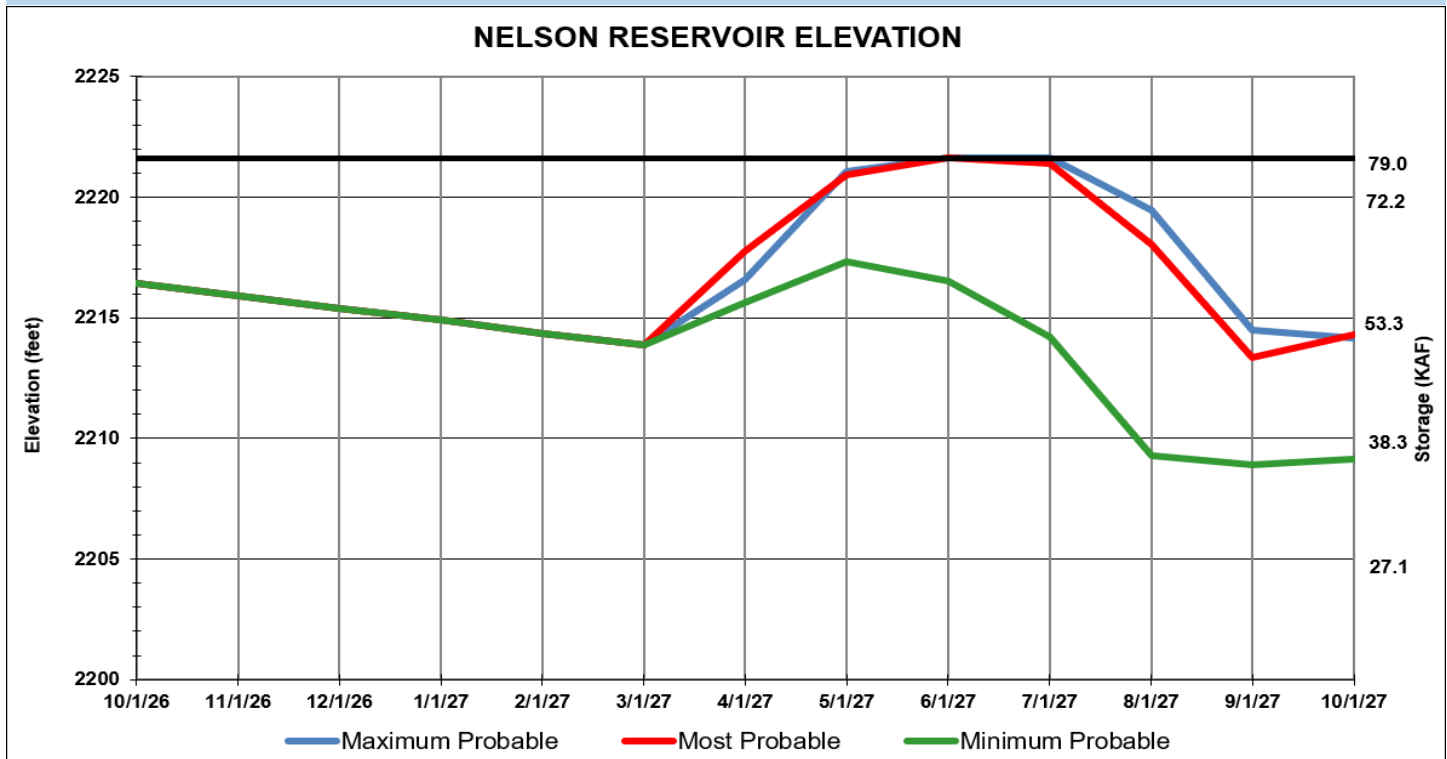
OPERATIONS OUTLOOK: LAKE SHERBURNE



OPERATIONS OUTLOOK: FRESNO RESERVOIR



OPERATIONS OUTLOOK: NELSON RESERVOIR



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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

October 2026