

LOWER RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM MEETING

USIBWC Office

Mercedes, TX

January 16, 2008

Tentative Meeting Notes*

Board Members in Attendance

Carl A. Boyd
Joseph Coulter
Laura DeLa Garza
Glenn Jarvis
William R. Lewis
Bradly Nibert
Phillip D. Waldron

Board Members Absent

Kika DeLa Garza
Edward J. Vela
Jose L. Muñoz

USIBWC Staff in Attendance

Carlos Marin
Rick Reyes
Francisco Martinez
MaryAnn Rivera

Members of the Public in Attendance

Gumecindo Ybarra, Dos Logistics
Hugo P. Gonzalez, Dos Logistics
Ana Garcia, Senator Cornyn's Office
Chris Hathcock, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Denisha Thompson, Dos Logistics
Dionicio "Donnie" Valdez, Farmer
Ernesto Reyes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Charles Holbrook, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Arnulfo Gallegos, Brownsville PUB
Juan Guajardo, Brownsville PUB
Godfrey Garza, HCDD#1
Rick Reynoso, Progress Times
Wayne Bartholomew, Frontera Audubon
Julian Alvarez, U.S. Senator Hutchison's Office
Jimmy Hutchinson, Citizen
Becky Medellin, Reporter, New Channel 5, (Asst. Reporter and Cameraman)

Welcome and Introductions

USIBWC Project Manager and Citizens' Forum Co-Chair Rick Reyes made brief opening remarks and asked the board members and members of the public to introduce themselves.

Lower Rio Grande Projects and Priorities for 2008

U.S. Commissioner Carlos Marin gave a presentation regarding USIBWC plans for the year. Commissioner Marin stated that a study a few years back had found that the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project levees were defective, not necessarily in the structural stability but in height. He continued to state that during a course of time and traffic, (Border Patrol, farmers, and IBWC vehicles), the levee lost height. Therefore, USIBWC decided to fix the surface to get them to the necessary height. The study revealed that the levees could not handle the design flood.

He then stated that after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, FEMA stated it would require flood insurance if the flood control levees were not certified as meeting FEMA standards. USIBWC is currently working with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Hidalgo County to determine the date when the levee work will be completed. He then stated that he thought the deadline for construction of a combined border wall-levee is December 2008 since that is the DHS deadline for completing border fence/wall construction. He also added that once the levee work is completed and the levees are certified, that information would be provided to FEMA so that flood insurance would not be imposed.

Godfrey Garza interjected on behalf of Hidalgo County stating that FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps would be going out by the end of 2008. He added that without the levees being constructed, the maps will indicate the flood-prone areas. Discussion with Hidalgo County and USIBWC is to get the levee construction underway before release of those maps showing deficiencies.

Carlos Marin responded that the USIBWC budget in previous years only had 2 to 3 million dollars to rehabilitate levees from El Paso to Brownsville. In the FY-08 budget, Congress had appropriated 10 million dollars. He thanked Senator Cornyn, Senator Hutchison, and Congressmen Ortiz, Hinojosa, Rodriguez, Reyes and Cuellar for their great effort in obtaining the funding.

He then stated that it would take 6.5 million dollars to award Hidalgo Phase I which was considered Priority 1 for the levee upgrade project. He also stated that 1.5 million dollars were devoted to maintaining the Cameron County levees which would be worked on by the USIBWC staff of the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project. He stated the money would cover the hiring of additional equipment operators and leasing equipment to perform as much work on the levees as possible. Cameron County levee work began January 7th and would continue with an estimate end date of the summer of this year.

Question: Where does Phase 1 begin?

Rick Reyes responded that the Phase 1 area begins where the river levee takes off from the floodway and the Common Levee down to the Hidalgo-Reynosa Bridge.

Commissioner Marin then proceeded to state that 1.5 million dollars were dedicated to El Paso due to a flood that drew attention in that area. He stated that USIBWC performed 12 miles of levee upgrade using USIBWC El Paso crews and equipment with a minimal amount of

money. He stated that there was also 250,000 dollars to be used in the Laredo area for a feasibility study. He stated that Laredo was interested in constructing a dam similar to what was proposed in Brownsville (Brownsville-Matamoros Weir). The remainder of funding would be used for the Safety of Dams program, which includes necessary studies to see what is needed to repair Amistad Dam.

He stated that in the Hidalgo Phase I, USIBWC prepared a construction contract and bids would be going out by the following week. Hidalgo Phase I covers 3.3 miles from Banker Floodway to the Hidalgo-Reynosa Bridge and that estimated construction was 180 days. Phase II is under design. Phase II begins at the Hidalgo-Reynosa Bridge and ends 1.2 miles downstream.

Question: Is it being raised by a couple of feet?

Commissioner Marin responded that it varied in different areas, adding that some areas needed to be raised 5 to 6 feet and in some areas just 2 feet.

Question: Is the levee being widened as well?

There is a need to keep a 16- foot wide driving surface; if the levee must be widened to meet this standard, it will be widened on the land side of the levee and not the river side. He continued to state that the project with the City of Hidalgo consisted of making a Hike and Bike Trail on the levee and in that area USIBWC made a decision to have the levee raised, adding that it was better to make it a joint project rather than have the City build a Hike and Bike Trail and then have USIBWC remove it later in order to rebuild the levee.

Question: What kind of consideration was given to vegetation in planting native grasses?

It was responded that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service coordinated with USIBWC for ecological purposes and reviewed the project and found that vegetation would vary along the project and that USIBWC would use what was available. It was stated that there wasn't enough seed available for native species. Therefore USIBWC would use whatever was available. If native seed/native grass had been available, that's what USIBWC would have used. U.S. Fish and Wildlife would have recommended using native species throughout the project.

Commissioner Marin added that the Hike and Bike Trail project was a grant project that the City of Hidalgo had gotten through the State of Texas and therefore they combined a lot of contracting issues to finalize it and get the levee to the proper elevation and then met U.S. Fish and Wildlife's specifications on the project.

He then added that regarding Phase III, and IV, USIBWC had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Hidalgo County Drainage District # 1 (HCDD). He stated that HCDD would be doing levee rehabilitation work from Penitas to the Banker Inlet south of Mission in 3 phases totaling 17 miles. He stated that HCDD would be using funding from a 100- million dollar bond the District received from the community for the levee raising. MOU says that Hidalgo County would be investing their funds and the government would not be reimbursing them. Commissioner Marin stated that there were Congressmen presently working on trying to revise it so that the County didn't fund the bill. The MOU would cover the Hidalgo County levees in the area but that would require HCDD to invest about 30 to 40 million dollars.

Commissioner Marin stated that USIBWC was also working with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on the construction of the fence/wall/levee. He stated that DHS was proposing to build the fence not in the entire area from Penitas to the Gulf but only certain areas and that USIBWC was also in communication to incorporate all those different projects into one issue.

Ernesto Reyes stated that U.S. Fish and Wildlife consulted with USIBWC on the Environmental Impact Statement and now that the proposed wall issue had come up USIBWC needed to go back and re-consult with Fish and Wildlife on that.

Commissioner Marin responded that was correct. He added that USIBWC was basically raising the levee and not constructing the wall and added that whether DHS or USIBWC did the work was a different issue. He stated that USIBWC would go back and meet with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to discuss that issue and work together to meet USFWS requirements.

Question: Was there mention of the wall as part of the Environmental Assessment (EA)?

Commissioner Marin responded that he thought it was mentioned but only as a proposal but thought that DHS had rejected the idea.

Godfrey Garza added that it was mentioned in the EA but it was not the selected alternative and added that it was based on cost.

Commissioner Marin continued, stating that USIBWC had initiated levee-raising in Cameron County using its own personnel and equipment. He stated that USIBWC would raise deficient segments in Cameron County by 6 inches in some areas to 30 inches in others.

Godfrey Garza commented that in his view, the deficiencies in levee height were due to all the vegetation along the river that caused a backwater effect of the river from the original design and that it was hard to believe that the levee had eroded 5-6 feet.

Ernesto Reyes stated that he didn't believe that vegetation had anything to do with lowering levels of the levee.

Carlos Marin stated that USIBWC had done the hydraulic modeling of the vegetation and that modeling showed that vegetation had minimal effect. There's an issue with the Consent Decree with USFWS and we have a cooperative agreement with them and discussions on remedying that situation in the event of a flood. He stated that in the event of a wall, he didn't know if there was additional mitigation that needed to be done but in the event that there was, they would have discussions.

Commissioner Marin stated that USIBWC is also working to raise levees in Cameron County from Donna Pump to 26 miles downstream from Gateway Bridge. Preliminary cost estimate for this work is 1.5 million dollars. This work will be completed by the summer of 2008. He stated that the USIBWC El Paso office would be assisting the Mercedes office with the additional resources, including manpower and equipment.

Question: Does the material come out of the easement or right-of-way?

He responded that USIBWC is purchasing material. Currently there is a contract in place to get the necessary material.

Commissioner Marin stated that levee work in the Sabal Palms area had been started; he visited the site and the work looks good. He stated that all Environmental Assessments had been completed to raise the levees, the wall issue was another thing. USIBWC is looking to see if modification or supplementation of the environmental documents is needed. Some of the design work is being done in-house and some is being contracted out to S&B Infrastructure.

Commissioner Marin recently met in Washington, DC with officials from Hidalgo County, the U.S. Border Patrol, and others from the Department of Homeland Security to discuss the wall/fence/levee issue. Homeland Security is accepting the wall as an alternative to follow. There was a proposal that was developed by USIBWC that would take care of Homeland

Security issues, our levees, and maintenance issues. One thing to stay away from is encroachment in the floodway due to environmental issues or issues with Mexico.

Question: How would you provide access to areas where access already exists?

He responded that if the wall is to be constructed, USIBWC still needs access. Basically the ramps that are there still exist. He stated that he insisted at that meeting that USIBWC have access to perform daily operations. He added that any existing ramps would stay in place as far as USIBWC was concerned. He added that it had at first been proposed to place gates up to the ramps but that the current discussions focused on a wall; therefore they might not have any gates. He added that those discussions were still underway.

Question: Was there any precedent for those structures DHS is proposing on the levee systems?

Commissioner Marin responded that he was not aware of any precedent.

Question: Is there somewhere they can be considered?

He replied that maybe in some other areas the security wall could be considered a floodwall. New Orleans has flood walls on their levees, therefore maybe if they put the concept together, they can be considered floodwalls instead of security walls. He added that USIBWC insisted on that being a requirement in the design because IBWC still has the flood fighting responsibilities. Homeland Security has a mandate from the White House to complete fence work by December of 2008. USIBWC doesn't have to repair all its levees by that time but whatever work is incorporated, everything should be performed in a joint manner. USIBWC needs to be sure that if Homeland Security constructs something USIBWC doesn't destroy what they have constructed and vice versa. USIBWC has submitted a proposal that requires that the wall be at the same elevation as the levee. If those specifications aren't adhered to, then USIBWC can have issues with treaty requirements concerning Mexico.

Godfrey Garzey elaborated a little further stating that one of the items discussed with DHS was that there was to be no longer a requirement of a fence placed on top of the levee and that the structure itself would be the correct height for any impediment of coming across. They are looking at a structure of impermeable surface of 15 feet high; anything that would be projected above and beyond the required base flood elevation levee height would be a breakable type wall that would break back down in order to maintain the structural integrity of the levee and stay at the elevation required. Basically, what we're are looking at right now is an 18 foot high vertical impediment built as an integral part of the levee and no fencing on top. That is what is proposed to DHS and SBI and basically they've agreed to that concept. Border Patrol has looked at their systems; it meets their guidelines. Border Patrol is supporting the issue. As you are aware Fish and Wildlife has discussed the proposal in Washington, DC and Hidalgo County has scheduled a meeting Thursday and Friday at the local level to bring these issues up. One of the items that has been looked at on these ramps going up is that there is a possibility of no gates being placed on top and some other type of security being utilized for access to these ramps but Commissioner Marin is correct in that the accessibility to farm lands would be there. It would avoid cutting through Fish and Wildlife properties and would avoid condemnation, avoid any type of fencing. It looks like a possible win-win for everybody. We will inform you of any new mitigation plan acceptable to Fish and Wildlife to address these issues and keep this project on track. Commissioner Marin is correct about USIBWC coming up with this concept and Hidalgo County trying to move forward and expedite a timetable of deliverables to the federal government. We consider it a win-win for citizens of Hidalgo of no fence itself and we get our

levees repaired and therefore, avoid a 150 million dollar a year flood insurance for our community.

Commissioner Marin stated that he wanted to clarify that if it was 18 feet high and the levee was not 18 feet high then it would not be allowed.

Godfrey Garza responded that he understood that was an issue that was being looked at.

Question: Are you talking about 17 miles?

Commissioner Marin responded that in Hidalgo County it was about 22 miles and those mandates were basically around populated areas. It is not going from county line to county line but built in segments across areas.

Question: They would be fencing that area but they wouldn't be fencing elsewhere?

Godfrey Garza responded that there would be no fencing; instead there would be an 18-foot tall structure incorporated as part of the levee.

Question: Would this proposal also impact the residents on the south side?

Commissioner Marin responded that the fence issue was not only in the Rio Grande area but along the entire land boundary along the United States, New Mexico, Arizona, and California border. He stated that IBWC participated in ensuring that the Homeland Security contractor and the Border Patrol contractor stayed within the U.S. USIBWC had sent its survey crew and Mexico had sent its as well to ensure everything was done on the U.S. side. He advised that it had made news in Mexico that the U.S. had constructed an 18 foot high wall 13 feet into Mexico. It had to be removed. Therefore IBWC was now doing surveys in areas to make sure it was done correctly and placed in the U.S. If we are in the process of issuing a contract for levee work, we need to get clarification on what is actually going to be built. Hidalgo County needs the same because they have contracts ready to go. What is being built, a fence/levee, needs to be straightened out and agreed to within the next two weeks in order to meet schedules.

Question: Is this going to require a supplemental EA on your part and a supplemental EIS on DHS's part of the wall and if so will you be able to get that done between now and then?

Commissioner Marin responded that was another issue that USIBWC was facing. USIBWC will not know until meeting with Fish and Wildlife next week for additional Section 7 Consultation.

He explained that 67 miles need to be worked on to achieve certification, that USIBWC is raising the levees in phases as funding becomes available for this purpose, working with the funding that's available. Hidalgo Phase I, to be constructed this year, is a 3.3-mile project.

Godfrey Garza responded that was the reason Hidalgo County jumped on board to move things forward because there is a potential of 27 billion dollars in property plus over a million population in the area that was being jeopardized, at risk of having major floods. In addition, if levees aren't repaired within a certain amount of time it would hinder economic growth. Also there would be an issue of the Red Cross not opening up any shelters south of Expressway 83 because of non-certification of the levees. There would also be a situation of water and wastewater plants being shut down, unable to provide any type of water south of McAllen or anywhere along the river if these levees are not fixed so those are some of the reasons Hidalgo County is working closely with IBWC, DHS, the Interior Department and everybody to address the issues as quickly as possible and mitigate these plans as quickly as possible. Our Senator

and Congresspersons have been very supportive of the issue. We are not here to hurt the environment, but we also have a million people's lives at stake.

Commissioner Marin stated that the levee and FEMA issues are number one priority for USIBWC. USIBWC will use every resource it can in order to help the situation. We don't want those people that live in the community to pay that extra cost in flood insurance. We are the agency that needs to certify the levees. We send the information to FEMA and then FEMA modifies our maps. Otherwise, the maps that they intend to develop won't even show a levee; we have questioned their criteria in terms of how they project flooding through the Valley itself.

There was some discussion about how the levee work planned in Hidalgo County takes into consideration the way the water flows from west to lower areas in the eastern part of the county.

Commissioner Marin continued with his presentation. A routine dam safety inspection was performed in 2007 using the dam safety action class rankings that the U.S. Corps of Engineers uses. It was found that several of the dams met criteria and also brought forth issues that were pretty alarming. He stated that Amistad Dam has sinkholes on the Mexican side of the dam. At present there are 30 sinkholes that are seeping water underneath the embankment but not to the extent that the dam would fail. The geological conditions affecting this have existed since construction of the dam but they have gotten worse. If the Amistad Dam were to fail, approximately 4.9 million acre-feet of water would be released or lost.

Falcon Dam also has some issues but they are not as critical. Both dams are used for water storage, flood control, hydroelectric power, and recreation. Falcon is smaller, Amistad is a deeper reservoir with less surface area. Storage has improved a lot. In past years we were at 30% capacity, now the U.S. capacity at the dams is full and Mexico is at 30-40% capacity at each one of the reservoirs.

Question: In the sinkholes, the water that actually bypasses the dam and re-enters the river, is that water accounted for?

He responded that it was accounted for in the total releases at the gaging stations just downstream of the dam.

Under the treaty agreements for Amistad, 56% percent of capacity at the dam is assigned to the U.S. and 44% percent of capacity is Mexico's. Both countries are responsible for maintenance in proportion to their ownership of capacity. He continued to state that IBWC had recently done surveys to determine the ownership and the capacity of the reservoir due to siltation. There had been a lot of storms that brought in a lot of sediment. Therefore, the U.S. and Mexico agreed to updated capacity tables for the two reservoirs.

He then showed a slide of Anzalduas and Retamal Dams and explained their functions as diversion dams in the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project. He explained that Retamal had a problem with its center gate and IBWC would be repairing it and that there was an island downstream that needed to be removed to keep the flows and releases going.

He then showed a picture of Amistad Dam and stated that it was potentially unsafe due to sinkholes; IBWC needs to refer to technical consultants to determine what actions need to be taken. He stated that 10 years ago the same situation occurred and that Mexico had pumped concrete for two weeks yet the sinkhole hadn't closed.

He then stated that Falcon Dam was a high but not urgent priority. He stated there are some conditions with the foundation where it has a lens of chalky material. When you release

water sometime you could see the material. A comprehensive seepage analysis is needed. He stated that Falcon was a priority but not as urgent as Amistad.

Commissioner Marin stated that at Anzalduas Dam all that was needed was to upgrade the electrical and mechanical components and that there was some sediment near the dam. Retamal is not urgent but will be looked at since there is a problem with the center gate. Every time the gate is opened, it vibrates considerably.

USIBWC is hiring the Bureau of Reclamation, the Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Geological Survey as its expert consultants. Mexico is hiring technical consultants as well. USIBWC will use \$222,000 in funding available during the current fiscal year to do a study to find out what's going on and how we can repair it. Technical experts will be providing the recommendations. If anyone wants to see our Safety of Dams reports, they are on our website.

In October of last year, Mexico delivered the necessary volumes of water to the United States to comply with the treaty. As you all are aware, for the past 13 years there was a deficit in Mexico's water deliveries to the United States. Mexico was to deliver to the U.S. 1.75 million acre feet during the five-year cycle. At the end of the cycle they were about 200,000 acre-feet short but they made a transfer on the last day to comply with the treaty. Unfortunately right now they are under six different lawsuits from Tamaulipas farmers and the state government challenging the water deliveries to the United States. We continue to track the deliveries from Mexico. In the past four months they've delivered 40,000 acre feet which shows they might not be able to meet their 350,000 acre-foot delivery for this year. Therefore, IBWC we will keep a close eye on compliance. Hopefully next year will be a wet year to make up what's lacking. The last cycle ended without a deficit with a paper transfer in the reservoirs to the United States.

He then began to explain the process and involvement the Lower Rio Grande Water Committee has on the Morillo Drain. He stated that at one point there were high saline flows into the river. Therefore, there was an agreement between the communities in the U.S. and in Mexico to build a project in Mexico. The way this system works is that Mexico pays 50% and the U.S. pays 50% of the cost in order to operate and maintain it. For the U.S., the Water Committee pays 25% and USIBWC pays 25% of the operational costs. A couple of years ago, Senator Hutchison acquired 650,000 dollars for us to do some work. We contracted with Mexico to install a piped section of the drain; there had been a big problem with erosion of the drain's side slope in that section, which caused sediment to go into the canal, generating high maintenance costs. Only a thousand feet was encased with the 650,000 dollars. IBWC is working with the Water Committee to acquire more funding. It is a very important project to make sure that the water in the river is of good quality for the farmers and the community.

Before ending his presentation, the Commissioner suggested that the public log on to the USIBWC web page for information about projects and treaties. The information has been updated and is now more informative. [HTTP://www.ibwc.state.gov](http://www.ibwc.state.gov)

Ditch Stabilization Demonstration Project at Estero Llano Grande State Park, Weslaco

Chris Hathcock, Habitat Restoration Coordinator for the Texas Parks and Wildlife gave a presentation on this topic. Mr. Hathcock began his presentation by expressing that he would be speaking about a demonstration project that Texas Parks was proposing and wanted to emphasize that the project had not yet been funded. He continued to state that the techniques of what they are proposing could be used anywhere there was an erosion problem or a drainage

ditch problem where there's a lot of surface runoff causing erosion, and that their proposal would benefit wildlife and decrease sedimentation into the waterway.

He described a drainage ditch that wound around Estero Llano Grande State Park and met up with the Llano Grande Lake. He continued to state that it was part of the Arroyo Colorado and that the drainage ditch around Llano Grande actually drained into the Arroyo. Water quality problems include sedimentation, pollution, and low dissolved oxygen in the ditches, which goes into the Arroyo. What we are proposing are ways to benefit water quality, benefit wildlife, and also protect those banks to decrease maintenance costs associated with clearing woody vegetation off the banks. Most of these banks are bare and have very little vegetation therefore, lots of times the dirt will over time fill up the ditch and we have to go through and dredge it again. The following are practical solutions to deal with this problem.

Brush and cattail become very dense and fill the wetlands and cause a lot of problems and restrict water flow. The drainage district has been working with Parks and Wildlife to preserve some vegetation along the bank for wildlife value. There are a few nice wetlands in the Rio Grande Valley-- one is next to the levee close to San Benito and the other is a pond at the Audubon Thicket in Weslaco.

There are California bull rush and coastal cattail. It is good when they are restricted to the margins but after extended periods of time, the wetland will dry out and the bull rush and cattail fill in the wetland. Once that happens, it's very hard to get rid of.

He then showed a slide of Bentsen State Park in Mission. It showed where a wetland had filled with a very robust plant after it had completely dried out. He showed a picture of a resaca that had been kept full by a farmer that raised sugar cane. There was a buffer of trees along the banks of the resaca. Most of the time trees on the resaca are cleared all the way to the bank. Trees perform a valuable function for the water quality as they filter out sediments that go into the resaca and also control erosion along the banks. They also provide shade to keep down the vegetation along the banks that clog up some of these drainage ditches.

The next slide consisted of Mexican Ash, Sugar Hackberry and Mexican Button Bush which are slow to grow and take a long time to arrive but once they do, they are very beneficial to have.

He then showed a slide of the Estero Llano Grande State Park and added that all the trees had been removed from the service road. He also advised that there was a little erosion problem where all the dirt was going back into the drainage ditch. Returning to the first slide, he stated that there was a lot of woody vegetation growing on the bank. They have some retama and they had a lot of Mesquite and plant species that required a lot of sun and thus clogged the drainage ditch.

He then showed a slide of people participating in a kayak event and stated that when there is a lot of vegetation in the drainage ditch, irrigation districts control the vegetation so that excessive vegetation doesn't hinder people from rowing through the canal. He advised that in the event of a flood, vegetation along the drain would back up all the flood water. Therefore, there is a benefit to flood control to remove all the woody vegetation out of the waterway.

Mr. Hathcock then suggested that there be a compromise between clearing all the vegetation and having high maintenance costs vs. having some vegetation that benefits wildlife and benefits water quality as well as prevents erosion of the drainage ditches. Estero Llano Grande will be using an erosion control technique called Bio-Engineering. Bio-Engineering is

popular throughout the world and is gaining ground in the Valley, where it has not previously been popular.

Bio-Engineering uses both living materials, such as plants, and inert materials, such as erosion cloths, logs, rip-rap, walls, etc. Benefits of Bio-Engineering are that it controls bank erosion, reduces sediment loads into the Arroyo Colorado, improves water quality, and improves wildlife habitat.

The Demonstration Project will evaluate six different Bio-Engineering techniques with two replicas for each technique. They will evaluate each technique considering various measures such as “roughness” of vegetation as it relates to flow (They will measure how much a certain type of plant impedes the water flow in the ditch. The taller the plant, the less flexible the stem. The lower the stem, the less it will impede water flows.). They will also measure effectiveness in minimizing slope erosion, reducing sediment loads, and water quality improvement. Some of the plants that will be used are Soft Stem Bulrush, Arrowhead, Alkali Bulrush, Sedges, Water Hyssop, Pennywort, Creeping Lovegrass, Carolina Wolfberry.

Ending the presentation Mr. Hathcock gave a list of names of the project contributors:
Martha Garcia, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)
Kay Jenkins, TPWD
Loretta Mokry, Alan Plummer Assoc., Inc.
Tim Noack, Alan Plummer Assoc., Inc.
Jennifer Owen, TPWD

Remark: This seems to be an excellent project, I am glad to see someone is doing this.

Question: Has anyone ever surveyed the pilot channel that runs through the Main Floodway in terms of invasive species?

Mr. Hathcock responded that he is not aware of such a survey but the most common invasive species are bermuda grass, fragmeiti, common reed, and cattail.

Question: Will you look at oxygen levels in the water?

He responded that this will be included as part of the water quality sampling.

Laura DeLa Garza stated that the Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board is interested in funding the project.

Public Comment/Board Discussion/Future Agenda Items

The board discussed a suggestion that the Lower Rio Grande Citizens’ Forum meeting be combined with the Lower Rio Grande Water Committee meeting, which is held quarterly on the third Wednesday of the month. The board expressed interest in seeing if the two meetings could be coordinated in this fashion.

It was proposed that the two meeting presentations be placed on the USIBWC website. The USIBWC will do so.

Eric Eillman made a comment on behalf of Los Caminos del Rio. He congratulated the IBWC on its effort to promote the fence issues as well as maintaining the levees to secure the Valley. He went on to thank them for working with different entities in licensing different projects such as the Hike and Bike Trails, which help to promote health/physical fitness in the Valley. He then also acknowledged and congratulated the IBWC for promoting the Valley and motivating tourism.

It was also suggested that the USIBWC look at proposals such as the one Chris Hathcock made about the ability of plants and sediment to stabilize slopes and improve water quality.

*Meeting notes are tentative and summarize in draft the contents and discussion of Citizens' Forum Meetings. While these notes are intended to provide a general overview of Citizens' Forum Meetings, they may not necessarily be accurate or complete, and may not be representative of USIBWC policy or positions.