



## **International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section**

For immediate release  
July 1, 2008

### **USIBWC STARTS CONSTRUCTION ON RIO GRANDE FLOOD CONTROL LEVEE IN THE MESILLA VALLEY**

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has begun construction of Rio Grande flood control levee improvements in Doña Ana County, New Mexico. The work will repair structural deficiencies and raise levee height to meet Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) criteria.

The project is being carried out using \$11.8 million in federal funding provided to the USIBWC for levee work in the area. Construction has begun on the east river levee in the Mesilla Valley. In the coming months the USIBWC expects to raise and rehabilitate the east levee for approximately ten miles from Mesilla Dam extending upstream past Picacho Bridge. A small section of the west levee near the Calle del Norte Bridge and the Mesilla Valley Bosque Park will also be repaired.

The USIBWC is raising the levee to meet FEMA standards requiring 3 feet of freeboard during the 100-year flood. Freeboard refers to the distance between the water surface elevation and the top of the levee. In the Mesilla Valley, studies show the levees do not have sufficient freeboard so they are being raised by up to 2.5 feet. A recent geotechnical analysis has also shown that the levees, which were constructed between 1938 and 1943, have a high sand content, which could lead to seepage and erosion. To repair this structural deficiency, the levees are being

plated with engineered material containing clay. All construction work is being performed by USIBWC staff.

In 2007, the USIBWC completed a Rio Grande levee-raising project in El Paso County, Texas to provide flood protection for much of the urban portion of El Paso. Additional improvements will be made to levees in both El Paso and Doña Ana Counties as funding becomes available in future fiscal years.

For more information:

Sally Spener  
915-832-4175  
sallyspener@ibwc.gov