



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
October 24, 2007

RIO GRANDE FLOOD CONTROL LEVEES, HABITAT, BORDER SECURITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT ON AGENDA FOR NOVEMBER 7 MEETING IN LAS CRUCES, NM

Rio Grande issues affecting the greater Las Cruces, NM-El Paso, TX region and environmental considerations related to border security will be on the agenda of the next public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens' Forum (RGCF) on Nov. 7, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m., 103 Hernandez Hall (Engineering Complex II) at the corner of Espina and Frenger Streets at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. The RGCF is a public outreach program of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC), which is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the United States and Mexico.

Steve Smullen and Al Riera, USIBWC Principal Engineers, will present the latest information about plans to raise and rehabilitate Rio Grande flood control levees in the region. Although funding has not yet been approved for the current fiscal year, the USIBWC is undertaking planning work to raise Rio Grande flood control levees in Doña Ana County, NM. A significant amount of levee work was recently completed in El Paso. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is currently developing Flood Insurance Rate Maps for Doña Ana County, NM and El Paso County, TX to identify properties at risk of flooding. Where levees are inadequate, property owners may be required to purchase flood insurance.

The agenda will also include an update on the Rio Grande Canalization Collaborative Project.

The USIBWC constructed the Rio Grande Canalization Project in the 1930s and 1940s, covering 106 river miles from Percha Dam, NM to American Dam in El Paso, TX. The project ensures delivery of water to Mexico in conformance with the Convention of 1906 and to U.S. users, such as Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID) in New Mexico, El Paso County Water Improvement District #1, and the City of El Paso. The project includes 130 miles of flood control levees in New Mexico and Texas. The Collaborative Project is a welcome development in federal and private efforts to enhance habitat for fish and wildlife on the Rio Grande in Southern New Mexico. The Collaborative Project is an effort by conservation groups, EBID, and stakeholders to balance

the need for flood control and water delivery with river habitat restoration. The presentation is an update on the results of the baseline study and development of a conceptual restoration plan including target habitats, restoration approaches, and environmental flows. Dr. Phil King, Associate Professor of Civil Engineering at New Mexico State University and EBID Consultant, will give a joint presentation with Beth Bardwell, Program Officer with the World Wildlife Fund-Chihuahuan Desert.

In other business, USIBWC Public Affairs Officer Sally Spener will present the recommendations and findings of the Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB) from its report on Environmental Protection and Border Security on the U.S.-Mexico Border. The GNEB is a committee that advises the U.S. President and Congress on good neighbor environmental and infrastructure practices along the U.S. border with Mexico. The report considers the complex environmental issues related to border security, including hazardous materials at the border and the impacts of both illegal crossings and enforcement activities. The report makes recommendations for policies to address these environmental challenges.

The RGCF was established by the USIBWC in 1999 to facilitate the exchange of information regarding USIBWC activities on the Rio Grande between Percha Dam, NM and Fort Quitman, TX. It is designed to bring together community members, enabling the early and continued two-way flow of information, concerns, values, and needs between USIBWC and the general public, environmentalists, irrigation districts, municipalities, and others interested in the river. Members of the Rio Grande Citizens' Forum Board, who serve as unpaid volunteers, represent a variety of interests along the Rio Grande in west Texas and southern New Mexico.

The meeting agenda is attached. Members of the public can obtain more information from Public Affairs Officer Sally Spener at 915-832-4175, sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov.

For more information:
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RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM
Wednesday, November 7, 2007, 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.
Room 103 Hernandez Hall/Engineering Complex II
corner of Espina and Frenger Streets*
New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, NM

AGENDA

- Welcome & Introductions - Al Riera, Principal Engineer, USIBWC, Citizens' Forum Co-Chair
- Rio Grande Canalization Collaborative Project - Dr. Phil King, NMSU Assoc. Professor of Civil Engineering, Elephant Butte Irrigation District Consultant; Beth Bardwell, Program Officer, World Wildlife Fund-Chihuahuan Desert
- Rio Grande Flood Control Levees, Update on FEMA and IBWC Activities - Steve Smullen and Al Riera, Principal Engineers, USIBWC
- Environmental Protection and Border Security on the U.S.-Mexico Border, 10th Report of the Good Neighbor Environmental Board - Sally Spener, Public Affairs Officer, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion, Suggested Future Agenda Items

If you have a disability that you wish to self-identify confidentially that requires accommodation, please advise us ahead of time. For more information, call 915-832-4175 or e-mail sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov