Colorado River Citizens' Forum
Yuma, Arizona
December 3, 2007
***Tentative Meeting Minutes**

Board Members in attendance:

Tom Davis	Mark Watson
Bill Plummer	Francisco Zamora
Kevin Eatherly	Wade Noble
Cary Meister	Richard Ryan

Board Members absent:

Brian McNeece	Stella Mendoza
Nancy Wright	

USIBWC Staff in attendance:
Al Goff
Cliff Regensberg
Sally Spener
Anna Morales

MXIBWC Staff in attendance:
Juan Riosmoreno

- 27 Members of the public in attendance

Welcome and Introductions
Bill Plummer, Chaired the meeting, welcomed the attendees and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Restoration Activities in the Colorado River Delta in Mexico: Francisco Zamora, Director Legacy Program, Colorado River Delta and Upper Gulf of California, Sonoran Institute

Conservation Priorities in the Colorado River Delta report is available, send request to francisco@sonoran.org

A network of 15 Conservation Priority areas, totaling 850,000 acres, with proper management, will ensure the long term persistence of the Delta biodiversity.

Colorado River Corridors overall goal is to develop an 80,000-acre functional ecological area from Northerly International Boundary to the limits of the biosphere reserve.

Laguna Grande: Planted 2,400 native trees in 23 acres in 2006-2007 which included 1,300 mesquite and 1,100 cottonwood and willow trees. Mesquite was very successful with a 99% survival rate. Cottonwood had a survival rate of 50-70%. Using drip irrigation system for trees.

Monitoring of the trees has been on-going for the last year.

Developed a community vision for restoration that has reached over 1,500 local community members and 60 government officials, 20-25 percent of which participated in the restoration actions and created five full-time jobs.

In the next 2-3 years if funding permits, will enhance 250 acres and secure 5,000 acre-feet of water.

Federal land concession for restoration is pending final approval.

Hardy River: Planted native trees in 7 sites totaling 36 acres. Inundated about 2,500 acres, which are in process of becoming marsh wetlands.

Hardy River is extremely important for the Cucapa Tribe in Mexico.

Developing an Eco-camp at the Hardy River. Will become the center of environmental education in the Delta along the Hardy River.

A native tree nursery was built in 2002 and was rehabilitated in 2006 which produced 8,000 mesquite trees ready to plant this season.

Total annual drainage water flows into the Hardy River average 21,000 acre feet at 0.9 cubic meters per second and an average salinity of 3-5 parts per thousand.

To secure a permanent flow to the Hardy River, the State of Baja California signed an agreement to dedicate 0.5 cubic meters per second of treated water from Las Arenitas Plant in Mexicali.

Mini-estuary component: Dr. Karl Flessa from the University of Arizona is leading the experiment. The experiment is to explore if a portion of the estuary can be restored with limited water supply.

Challenges to the restoration projects:

- Water quantity a key factor
- Water quality, not only in salinity but coliform as well
- Funding for research, monitoring, implementation
- Lack of data/information vs. decision making
- Impacts of climate change: drought, Sea level rise

Question & Answers:

Q: Who funds the project?
A: 85% come from different foundations.

Q: Where are the foundations located?
A: Depending on organization, most of the foundations are from the United States and some from the Federal Government under the NAFTA Program. We are also receiving approximately $20,000 from the Mexican Government.

Q: Do you plan to move the irrigation system from where the cottonwood has established itself so it can use the groundwater to maintain itself?
A: Yes, using the system for about 2 years.

Q: On the Colorado River restoration, are you using a drip system?
A: We are not using it for the pole planting but with the mesquite.

Q: As for the groundwater, have you looked at whether the river has gained water or if the residents up long the river are pumping water out?
A: Estimate on the base flow is really small; the water table is really high. Currently working with the University of Arizona to develop a groundwater model for that area. Have found that there is a lot of farmland seepage on both sides of the levee so the river is gaining water.

Morelos Dam Sediment Removal Project: Sally Spener, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission, El Paso, Texas

USIBWC is mandated by the 1944 Treaty to maintain the flood capacity of the Limitrophe Reach of the Colorado River. The U.S. delivers 1.5 million acre feet (maf) of Colorado River water to Mexico. The 1944 Treaty authorized construction of Morelos Dam in 1950.

IBWC Minutes 182, 188 and 208 adopted recommendations for the design of Morelos Dam and flood control works. The adopted levee design flood for the limitrophe reach is 140,000 cubic feet per second (cfs).

IBWC Minutes 217 and 291 established requirements for the clearing and removal of vegetation and sediment to preserve Mexico's diversion capacity and the long-term flow capacity of the Limitrophe Reach.

The flood event in the 1980's and 1990's on the Colorado and Gila River deposited substantial amounts of silt in the Colorado River channel and the floodplain between the confluence of the Gila River and the Southerly International Boundary (SIB).

These floods increased vegetation with the floodplain.

Dam inspections conducted in 2001 and 2006, revealed that the dam gates and spillway are severely impaired due the extensive sedimentation and vegetative growth. Conditions are considered unacceptable to dam safety and flood control issues.

Inspections are done in an international fashion with participation by the IBWC, U.S. and Mexican Sections, Mexico's National Water Commission and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

USIBWC works very closely with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and they have done quite a bit work removing sediment in the past few years. In 2001 the BOR removed sediment above the dam.

Goal:

- Restore the spillway to the original design to safely operate the structure
- Allow full functionality of the diversion dam to discharge the required design flood flow as required by international treaty

Project Elements:

- Phase 1 (1 month)
  - Clearing of vegetation (38 acres)
  - Temporary access road across the Colorado River downstream to dispose material in Mexico. Work to be done October through March which is the non-breeding and non-migration season for endangered species.
- Phase II (2 months)
  - Excavation and removal of approximately 3 ft of soil to bring the terrace elevation above and below the spillway to approximately 107.6 feet mean sea level (msl)
- Phase III (1 month)
  - Excavation of approximately 2.5 ft of sediment directly above and below the spillway to lower the site elevation to 103 feet msl. Will be removing approximately 20,420 cubic yards of sediment upstream and 45,000 cubic yards below the spillway.
  - Sediment would be dried and transported to disposal site in Mexico
- Annual Maintenance

Resource Agency Coordination:

- Biological assessment conducted by USIBWC
- Entered into Section 7 consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in March 2006, final Biological Opinion issued on August 23, 2006
- Arizona State Parks – no adverse effect finding, October 15, 2001
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) – verified wetland delineation, November 30, 2006
- USACE Section 404 Permit application submitted March 2007, request suspended due to additional information requested by USACE.

Current Status:

- Acquire USACE individual permit
- Develop Restoration plan and attain USFWS approval
- Identify potential offsite mitigation sites. Looking at 17 acres offsite mitigation. Hope to join with projects already planned such as Minute 306 Delta restoration projects or Hunter's Hole.
- Coordinate with Mexico

Schedule:

- Funding available for planning, permitting and development of a restoration plan
- Construction and onsite restoration (8 months once approvals and funding are in hand)
- Offsite mitigation (up to 4 years allowed)
- Construction could begin in fiscal year 2009 subject to availability of funding

Question & Answers:

Q: Where is funding coming from?
A: It's an appropriation through the U.S. Section of IBWC.

Q: Who owns the dam?
A: Mexico

Q: What is the estimated cost of the project?
A: Approximately $2 million

Q: In regards to the safety of dams inspections, is the USBR involved with the inspection?
A: Our inspections are coordinated with the Corp of Engineers. In the Texas area, some of the dams are followed up by USBR.

Q: What NEPA documents are being used?
A: Work done for the EIS for the Boundary and Capacity Preservation Project, the Biological Opinion by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the permit application through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Q: With spillway so clogged, this is very risky for the Yuma residents, is there any level of expediting the process?
A: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is the permitting agency. They are aware of the dam safety concerns because they inspected the dam.

Q: Should dam fail, who is responsible?
A: It's an International Dam, so it would be an International issue.

Project Update and Status Reports:

- Hunter's Hole Pilot Restoration Project: Kevin Eatherly, Yuma Crossing National Heritage

  The project is 435 acres of restoration in the Limitrophe reach along the Colorado River.

  Current Status:
  - U.S. Bureau of Reclamation conducted mapping
  - Submitted proposal to the private foundation so remaining studies needed to complete the Environmental Assessment, cultural work and consultations can be finished.
  - Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has just published the Environmental Assessment of the area cleared outside the Hunter's Hole area.
  - Project struggle: DHS fencing project is progressing at a fast pace. A letter has been sent to Secretary Chertoff to recognize the Hunter's Hole project and work with the project with different alternatives on the fencing project.

- All-American Canal Lining Project: Todd Shields, Project Manager, Imperial Irrigation District

  Overall project is nearly 30% complete.

  - Reach 1A: Excavation complete to maintenance road level, dewatering wells half completed and will begin canal excavation and lining this month.
  - Reach 1B: Begun limited excavation towards east side of reach.
  - Reach 2: Excavation complete, dewatering system in and lined entire reach on south side. Will be passing water through the new canal within 45 days.
  - Reach 3: Entirely cleared, excavation approximately 50% complete and once lining machine is complete at Reach 2, will move to Reach 3.
  - Reach 2 and 3 will be entirely completed by middle of next summer 2008.

  Challenges:
  - Continuous water delivery
  - Construction tie-in of system
  - Mild security issues along the border

  Questions and Answers:
  Q: How are you going through the sand dunes?
  A: Building parallel canal.

  Q: Who is the major contractor?
  A: We have two. At Reach 1 we have Kewitt-Pacfic and Reach 2 & 3 Ames & Coffman.

Q: When will the whole project be complete?
A: March 2010 is the target date.

Q: What will happen to old canal?
A: The canal adjacent to Reach 2 will have a liner installed and used as a reservoir. The rest would be abandoned.

Q: What is the cost of the project?
A: $290 million

- Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and Coordinated Operations for Lakes Powell and Mead: Cindy Hoeft, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Yuma Area Office

Update:

- Final EIS published November 2, 2007. Is available on website and printed 4-volume set or CD. It includes 6 alternatives, including preferred and no action alternatives. Accepting public comment through December 3, 2007.
- Final Biological Opinion to be published in early December.
- Interim Operational Guidelines for Lake Powell and Lake Mead.
  - Updated draft issues November 16th
  - Final guidelines will be part of the Record of Decision (ROD)
- Sign final ROD December 2007.
- Sign other agreement in December 2007.

Preferred Alternative Key Elements:

- Shortage strategy tied to Lake Mead elevations. Specific water level will be used to determine when a shortage condition would be declared in the lower Colorado River Basin and the shortage would be shared. This is a U.S. only action. Separate consultations are being held with Mexico pursuant to the 1944 Treaty on their water delivery reductions.
- Annual operations of Lakes Powell and Mead determined by specific reservoir conditions at the reservoirs. This would minimize shortages in the Lower Basin and avoid the risk of water delivery curtailments in the Upper Basin.
- Intentionally Created Surplus (ICS), mechanism to encourage and account for augmentation and conservation of water supplies in Lake Mead. This would minimize the severity of potential future shortages and provide flexibility to meet water use needs.
- Interim Surplus Guidelines modified and extended through 2026.

Questions and Answers:
Q: Can you describe the process of consultations with Mexico?
A: That is handled through our Regional office and U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission in El Paso.
Sally Spener, USIBWC response: We have had consultations with Mexico under the terms of Minute 242, which calls for consultation in the event a water development project in one country would potentially negatively impact the other country. The EIS is for domestic shortages only. There is language throughout the EIS that it's not intended to constitute the application of the Treaty. Numerous Policy and Technical meetings have been held with Mexico. So they are fully aware of the process. Mexico commented on the Draft EIS.

Under Article 10 of the 1944 Treaty, in the event of an extraordinary drought, Mexico would have a proportional reduction in allotment of water. This has not been fully addressed. This is a function of U.S.IBWC and the State Department.

Q: Is there a deadline?
A: No, hopefully before there is a shortage.

- Proliferation of Utilities in the Yuma Area (roads, power lines, railroad) - Bill Plummer, Manager, Yuma Mesa Irrigation and Drainage District

  A map was handed out of the APS alternative and preferred routes

  - APS has 3 different transmission line projects.
    - A power plant in Mexico would go to the substation northeast of Yuma.
    - North Gila to TS-8 substation 230 kv
    - TS-8 to San Luis 69 kv line
  - APS schedule, now that they have their preferred route, will go to the Power Line and Transmission Line Siting Committee at state level, get a Corporation Commission decision by June 2008, begin construction immediately and in service by June 2012.
  - The water users are continuing to work with APS on their preferred location. The angle route on their preferred location is near the Yuma Mesa Irrigation canals and poses some problems.
  - There is a final EIS on the Western Area Power Administration line from Mexico to Gila Substation.
  - APS moving along even with the concerns that have been written to them.
  - Arizona Siting Committee hearings March – May 2008

  For more information visit the project website at www.aps.com/siting

Board Discussion
Proposed date for next meeting – March 3, 2008 from 4-6 p.m. (PST) in Imperial County.

Suggested Future Agenda Items
- Drought Status update
- Las Arenitas Plant
- New River water quality report from the California Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Minute 306 Restoration Project
- Update Yuma East Wetlands
- Colorado River Salinity Control Forum's effort to control salinity/selenium in the Colorado River – Jack Barnett
- Giant Salvinia/aquatic nuisance update
- Overview of the Yuma Proving Ground activities that will impact the Colorado River – Colonel Bullington

Thank you to all the presenters for their presentations.

*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.