

BACKGROUND

The Upper Rio Grande Projects Office is headquartered in El Paso, Texas with satellite offices in Las Cruces, New Mexico and Fort Hancock, Texas. The Upper Rio Grande Projects cover 270 miles of river from Percha Dam, New Mexico downstream to the tri-county line at the southern end of Hudspeth County, Texas.

Major responsibilities of the Upper Rio Grande Projects staff include maintaining 221 miles of flood control levees (protecting hundreds of thousands of U.S. residents from flood), removing obstructions from the floodway, delivering Rio Grande water to Mexico, maintaining bridges, measuring flows in the Rio Grande, demarcating the international boundary, and maintaining canals and dams.

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION

In 1889, the U.S. and Mexican governments signed a convention agreeing to establish the International Boundary Commission. Under the Water Treaty of 1944, the Commission was reconstituted and designated the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC). The IBWC is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the United States and Mexico.

The IBWC consists of a U.S. Section and a Mexican Section. Each section is headed by a commissioner appointed by his respective president. The USIBWC receives foreign policy guidance from the State Department.

The IBWC works on many issues including flood control, boundary demarcation, border sanitation, construction and operation of dams, and the division and use of international waters.

CONTACT US

International Boundary and Water Commission
Upper Rio Grande Projects Office
2616 W. Paisano Drive
El Paso, TX 79922
915-351-1030
fax: 915-351-1511



International Boundary and Water Commission
U.S. Section Headquarters Office
4171 N. Mesa Street, Suite C-100
El Paso, TX 79902-1441
915-832-4100
fax: 915-832-4190

www.ibwc.state.gov

THE UPPER RIO GRANDE PROJECTS New Mexico and Texas



American Dam

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION

United States Section



THE UPPER RIO GRANDE PROJECTS

AMERICAN DAM AND AMERICAN CANAL

LOCATION: In the United States 3.5 miles upstream of downtown El Paso, Texas.

PURPOSE: To regulate the quantity of water delivered to U.S. irrigators and Mexico under terms of the Convention of 1906. The dam diverts water for U.S. use into the American Canal and releases water downstream for use by Mexico.

FACILITIES: Built in the 1930's, American Dam is 284 feet long. It has 13 gates, each 7.5' wide by 20' high. The original American Canal extends two miles downstream from the dam before connecting to the new Rio Grande American Canal Extension. Water from the Rio Grande enters the canal over a 250-foot long weir adjacent to the dam.

RIO GRANDE CANALIZATION PROJECT

LOCATION: Extends 106 miles along the Rio Grande from Percha Dam, New Mexico downstream to American Dam in El Paso, Texas.

PURPOSE: To facilitate delivery of Rio Grande water to Mexico in accordance with the Convention of 1906 and to provide flood protection.

FACILITIES: Constructed between 1938 and 1943, the project has a normal flow channel, a floodway, 130 miles of flood control levees, and 27 bridges. The USIBWC also maintains five dams built on adjacent arroyos between 1969 and 1975 to control sediment and flood runoff to the Canalization Project.

RIO GRANDE AMERICAN CANAL EXTENSION

LOCATION: Adjacent to the Rio Grande in El Paso, Texas.

PURPOSE: To assure delivery of water to irrigators by limiting unauthorized withdrawals; to conserve water that would otherwise be lost to seepage and evaporation; to provide equitable distribution of waters between the U.S. and Mexico; and to eliminate hazards through installation of fences, safety ladders, etc.



View of the Bridge of the Americas with the U.S. on the right. The two channels are the Chamizal Project Channel (l) and the Rio Grande American Canal Extension (r).

FACILITIES: Constructed in the 1990's, the project consists of a new 12-mile concrete-lined canal and the rehabilitation and enlargement of three miles of existing canal.

CHAMIZAL CONVENTION PROJECT

LOCATION: El Paso, Texas/Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua.

PURPOSE: To resolve a boundary dispute that arose after the Rio Grande shifted course in the 1800's, transferring land to the U.S. side of the river. The project relocated and stabilized

the boundary; it also provides flood protection in both countries.

FACILITIES: Dedicated in 1968 by Presidents Johnson and Diaz Ordaz, the project consists of four miles of concrete-lined river channel marking the boundary. The project also required the replacement of six bridges and the transfer of 630 acres of land to Mexico and 193 acres to the United States. The Bridge of the Americas, constructed in 1967 as part of the project, was replaced by the IBWC in 1998.

RIO GRANDE RECTIFICATION PROJECT

LOCATION: From El Paso to Fort Quitman, Texas.

PURPOSE: Provides flood protection and stabilizes the international boundary line.

FACILITIES: Built in the 1930's, the project has a rectified river channel in the center of the floodplain and 85 miles of levees. To stabilize the boundary, loops in the river were removed, shortening the channel length from 155 miles to 86 miles. Three new international bridges were also constructed.

BOUNDARY PRESERVATION PROJECT

LOCATION: From Little Box Canyon near Ft. Quitman, Texas downstream 70 miles.

PURPOSE: Restore and preserve the Rio Grande as the international boundary and minimize future channel changes.

FACILITIES: Some work to re-establish the river channel as the international boundary was done in the 1980's, consisting of excavating the channel which had become clogged with sediment and vegetation. There is also ongoing maintenance of the channel and cleared floodway.