

**UNITED STATES SECTION
INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION
PROJECT PAPER**

RIO GRANDE CANALIZATION PROJECT

DESCRIPTION

The Rio Grande Canalization Project (Canalization Project) extends for 105.4 miles along the Rio Grande from Percha Diversion Dam, Sierra County, New Mexico to immediately downstream from American Diversion Dam, El Paso County, Texas. The Canalization Project was constructed by the United States Section, International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) between 1938 and 1943 in compliance with the convention between the United States and Mexico concluded May 21, 1906 to provide water deliveries to the Rincon and Mesilla valleys in New Mexico, El Paso Valley in Texas, and Juárez Valley in Mexico. The Canalization Project also controls floods in the river that extends through its length in southern New Mexico and the upper valley of El Paso.

STATUS

The USIBWC evaluated river management alternatives for future operation and maintenance of the Canalization Project to accomplish its flood control and water delivery mission and, if possible, enhance the restoration of riparian habitat in the project area. In 1999, the USIBWC began preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) for project management in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969.

A Notice of Intent was issued in August 1999 and public scoping meetings were conducted during October 1999 in Las Cruces, New Mexico and El Paso, Texas. Preliminary alternatives were developed and presented for stakeholder review during two technical workshops conducted in September and October 2000. The USIBWC conducted additional meetings and workshops with representatives of regulatory agencies, irrigation districts, and environmental organizations. Based on all this input river management alternatives and associated environmental measures were modified to further address stakeholders' concerns and recommendations. A Reformulation of Alternatives Report was completed in August 2003 and summarizes this development of alternatives; it documents alternatives modifications since preparation of an earlier March 2001 Alternatives Formulation Report and the rationale for these modifications. Both these reports are found in the link below to the Final EIS.

The Draft EIS was released for public review and comment on December 18, 2003 and was filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality procedures, on December 24, 2003 for a 45-day review period. The USIBWC held a [Public Hearing at the USIBWC headquarters in El Paso, Texas on January 27, 2004](#). The purpose of the public hearing was to provide the public with an opportunity to present its views, opinions and recommendations concerning the Draft EIS. The comment period for the DEIS was extended from February 10, 2004 to March 1, 2004 at the request of stakeholders. Public comments received on the Draft EIS were considered in development of the [Final EIS](#). The [Final EIS](#) was released to the public on June 29, 2004 and the EPA published its Notice of Availability on July 9, 2004 for a 30-day wait period ending August 9, 2004. The Record of Decision is currently on hold because of requests from elected officials and stakeholders to delay its issuance pending resolution of preferred alternative selection concerns.

GOAL

Ensure that USIBWC maintains the Canalization Project in a manner that accomplishes flood control and water delivery and, if possible, provides environmental enhancement.