

Lower Rio Grande Citizens' Forum Meeting
USIBWC Office
Mercedes, Texas
October 16, 2006
*Tentative Meeting Notes

Board Members in Attendance:

Mary Lou Campbell
Joseph Coulter
Kika De La Garza
Laura De La Garza
Jerry Freeman
Neil Hamman
William Lewis
Jose Munoz
Martha Noell
Wayne Wells

USIBWC Staff in Attendance:

Enrique Reyes
Christopher Anzaldua
Wayne Belzer
Nancy Hanks

Mexican Section Staff in Attendance:

Ing. Felipe Chalons
Ing. Alfonso Carmona

About 15 others in attendance.

Welcome and Introductions:

Co-chair Wayne Wells opened the meeting and advised that Enrique Reyes would be making the presentation for Carlos Marin due to an unexpected absence.

Rick Reyes gave updates on the following topics: Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project Levee Rehabilitation, Morillo Drain Project, and Mexican Water Deliveries under the 1944 Water Treaty. Major points made by Mr. Reyes in his presentation are as follows:

LOWER RIO GRAND FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT LEVEE REHABILITATION

Hidalgo Hike & Bike Trail Levee—completed in April 2006

- Hidalgo Levee Rehabilitation

Environmental Assessment(EA) Jan 05-Sept 05

Design (Phase I-II) Sept 05-Aug 07

Construction (Phase I) June 2008-June 2009

Construction (Phase II) Nov 2008-Dec 2009

- Mission Levee (Penitas to Anzalduas) Levee Rehabilitation

EA Aug 2005-Sept 2006

Design Aug 2007-July 2008

Construction June 2009- Sept 2011

- FEMA Certification: FEMA has requested USIBWC to certify federal levees in Hidalgo & Cameron Counties.

Information is to be provided to FEMA by November 1, 2006

USIBWC will inform FEMA that certain levee reaches are not certifiable.

Model Validation: USIBWC hydraulic model will be validated by USIBWC consultant S&B Infrastructure. Work to be completed by Aug. 2007.

Morillo Drain Project

Approximately 300 meters of canal to be enclosed in pipe in the reach adjacent to Anzalduas Dam where high bank area is subject to erosion and sloughing. U.S. to provide \$625,000 for materials, installation, and construction and Mexico to provide design, contracting, acquisition, administration, and installation of pipe. Tentative schedule shows start of construction on December 18, 2006.

Mexican Water Deliveries under the 1944 Water Treaty

Combined U.S. share at Amistad and Falcon = 75.1% of capacity

Combined Mexico share at Amistad and Falcon = 44.6% of capacity

- Mexican Reservoirs

Upper Basin, Rio Conchos Reservoirs are at 93% of capacity

Middle Basin, Amistad to Falcon, reservoirs are at 20% of capacity

Lower Basin, below Falcon, reservoirs are at 87% of capacity

- Deliveries during the current cycle, Oct 2002-Sept 2007

Mexico delivered the minimum annual average requirement of 350,000 af for 1st three cycle years.

Mexico's deliveries for the 4th cycle year, ending Sept 30, 2006 fell short of the minimum Annual average requirement by 114,190 af

Requirement for delivery during the 5th year to avoid a deficit is 464, 190 af

Spills from Rio Conchos Reservoirs in September have contributed significantly to 4th year deliveries.

High storage levels in Rio Conchos Reservoirs have greatly improved the outlook for ending the current cycle without a deficit.

After E. Reyes' presentation, Wayne Wells introduced Nancy Hanks.

Nancy Hanks made her presentation titled: Water Quality in the Lower Rio Grande.

Her presentation included discussing the objectives of the Texas Clean Rivers Program, Water Quality and the 305b Report, Monitoring Parameters, Field Data, Public Water Supply, Contact Recreation, Aquatic Habitat, General Use Criteria, Monitoring and Assessing Water Quality, Developing Local Partnerships, Providing a public forum and report on Water Quality, Lower Rio Grande Basin Segments, Designated Uses /Tidal Stream, and Designated Uses/ Freshwater Stream.

Questions asked were:

Why the bacteria had decreased so dramatically lately? (Below Anhelio Drain).

When was it that Las Milpas, connected their colonias up to sewer and they eliminated their septic tanks, wasn't that about the same time frame?

Is Reynosa still dumping their sewage in the river?

Nancy Hanks said she did not have a response and redirected the question to Wayne Belzer.

In addition a member wanted to know about phosphorus and if there was any explanation to why and noticed that it almost looked like they were cleaning up their process every year at the beginning of the year (February).

Hanks agreed and responded that it did look like it was some kind of seasonal thing. She stated that she hadn't done any studies and was actually in the learning process; however, if someone had a plan, they could feel free to advise. She was willing to accept information or any plan.

A question/discussion ensued between two members about the Las Milpas colonia connection and whether Reynosa still had their holding ponds (and the effects of heavy rainfall)

Hanks advised that she was unaware of the high rainfall.

A member advised her that it was critical that she go back when searching for information.

Hanks responded by saying that she had provided the most recent information; however, it was raw data that hadn't been refined or analyzed. She advised that she had provided information that was the most up to date and that it wasn't even on the internet yet.

A forum member advised that perhaps there was still a high phosphorous level in the Rio Grande because they still sell phosphorous-laden detergent across the border.

Hanks advised that they had the same problem in El Paso and added that perhaps the concentrations were higher there and perhaps made it appear worse.

At the end of the presentation, Wayne Belzer gave a more in depth explanation advising about the MOU's between TCEQ and USGS and partnerships to gather data. Hanks added that if anyone had areas of concern that USIBWC was not monitoring to advise so that USIBWC could look into it.

A question was brought up on maintaining and improving the Arroyo Colorado.

Wayne Belzer advised that Laura De La Garza and also USIBWC have been looking for resources and manpower and were beginning to get equipment to strive to reach those goals.

Ray Prewett mentioned that with the spinach outbreak in California a lot of attention was being given to the *e. coli* problem, he added that because they grow a lot of vegetables and citrus down here, they knew who the experts were in case IBWC wanted to know who might be able to use their data.

Belzer advised that, unfortunately, being Federal Government USIBWC could only sample the river itself and that it was pretty much up to the Irrigation Districts themselves to sample their water that they use to irrigate with. That IBWC data goes through stringent process and it takes more than 3 months to post. Usually IBWC data is used for assessment of an ongoing problem or by academia for research. But for something like that it is best for the Irrigation Districts to get a program going and sample prior to them using that water or as they're using that water. However, if IBWC gets an area that has been assessed with having a problem with *e. coli*, it is a pretty serious issue and, thus requires an everyday constant monitoring process.

How often are IBWC sampling sites monitored?

Wayne Belzer responded by stating that the majority are done quarterly to as much as 8 times a year and up in El Paso more often than that because that's pretty much the worst segment of the Rio Grande. Depending on the problems that are there.

A member of the Regional Planning Water Group mentioned that in Nancy Hanks' presentation it stated that groundwater wasn't used. However advised that a lot of the groundwater was used for domestic wells and livestock and that some of the irrigation districts were going into the

desalination of groundwater. She continued to state that she just wanted to point that out.

A member wanted to know what the impairments were as far as stating that they are worse higher up.

Wayne Belzer stated that as in El Paso and further down, that the major impairment was the salinity approx. 5 to 9,000 parts per million. Therefore, water was prevented by using it as drinking water source. Further advised that due to such, it's even a problem for when it reaches a certain point they have to rotate crops or grow brackish-water crops only. There are a lot of theories on that -- groundwater intrusion that's salty, improper bank management that allows for soil salts to climb, agricultural processes that aren't using more modern methods, influx of water from uncontrollable sources. Further added that it climbs, it'll go from drinking water standards in El Paso to 9,000 parts per million only 50 to 60 miles downstream of El Paso.

A member addressed Rick Reyes at the end of the meeting stating that salt levels had been really good and wanted to know if they had come back down again.

Rick responded that it was down to 740.

Mr. Wells asked for any other questions and comments.

Joe Tucker advised that as a suggestion for future agenda items - - the Border fence. That it seemed as though there would be plenty of funding for that. That it couldn't be built between the levee and the river because it would foul up the floodway and wildlife corridor. Maybe they could build it in conjunction with raising the levee. That IBWC could probably get funding that way.

A member added that advertisement for the hundred million dollar bond election for the county of Hidalgo and some of the money going toward funding of the levees and wanted to know if there was a joint effort being discussed with the county.

Rick responded that there was a meeting between Commissioner Marin and Godfrey Garza the prior week and that Godfrey Garza expressed all the different items that were in the bond issue which included the Mission inlet and possibly the area upstream of Anzalduas to Penitas. Further adding the possibility of getting the IBWC and County into an agreement where the County would start with the work and get reimbursed when IBWC got the funding.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

*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.