

For immediate release
June 1, 2010

RIO GRANDE WATER SUPPLY AND REGIONAL FLOOD CONTROL ISSUES ON AGENDA FOR JUNE 15 PUBLIC MEETING IN LAS CRUCES

Regional water supply and flood control projects will be the focus of the June public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens Forum sponsored by the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC). The meeting will take place on Tuesday, June 15, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Doña Ana County Government Center, Room 113, 845 N. Motel Blvd., Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Lorenzo Arriaga with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, will discuss the Rio Grande water supply forecast for the year. Water for Southern New Mexico, the El Paso area, and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico originates as snow in the mountains of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. As it melts, the runoff flows into Elephant Butte Dam in New Mexico for subsequent release to downstream users. Mr. Arriaga will present data on this year's conditions and plans for operations at Elephant Butte and Caballo Dams.

The Bureau of Reclamation's Woody Irving will discuss invasive species that are rapidly becoming a serious challenge for western water managers. Mussels, particularly zebra and quagga mussels, have altered the way dams and power plants are operated in a number of western states by clogging up every opening big and small that is exposed to reservoir water, damaging equipment, piping, and related infrastructure. The cost of removing them and preventing them from colonizing is escalating. Although the Rio Grande has so far been spared the infestation, officials believe the time is coming when this region will be affected. Reclamation and other water agencies have found that informing the public about the situation helps to reduce the spread of the mussels.

In other business, storm water management in the region will be addressed by Paul Dugie of the Doña Ana County Flood Commission and Gary Esslinger with the Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID). Serious flooding can occur away from the Rio Grande due to storm water runoff in the Mesilla and Rincon Valleys. The Storm Water/Watershed Integrated Management (SWIM) Task Force is working to address this challenge by establishing a countywide regional flood control authority similar to what has been established in the Albuquerque area. EBID also has a number of initiatives and proposals related to climate change and flood management. Esslinger will describe EBID's efforts in dealing with climate change, conflicts driven by water scarcity, and adaptive strategies to control and monitor storm water runoff within the boundaries of the irrigation district.

USIBWC Engineer Planner Gabriel Duran will give an update on Rio Grande levee improvements in Hatch, the Mesilla Valley, and the Canutillo area. The work is intended to bring the levees into compliance with standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The USIBWC received \$220 million in Recovery Act funds for rehabilitation of Rio Grande flood control levees in New Mexico and Texas. The purpose of the Recovery Act is to create and save jobs, promote economic recovery, and invest in infrastructure that will provide long-term economic benefits.

The Rio Grande Citizens Forum 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. A complete meeting agenda follows.

For more information:

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The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) invites you to a public meeting of the...

RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM
Tuesday, June 15, 2010, 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.
Doña Ana County Government Center
Room 113
845 N. Motel Blvd.*
Las Cruces, NM

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions – Carlos Peña, Principal Engineer, USIBWC, Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- 2010 Rio Grande Water Supply and Annual Operating Plan for Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs – Lorenzo Arriaga, Bureau of Reclamation
- Impact of Invasive Mussels on Western Water Infrastructure – Woody Irving, Bureau of Reclamation
- The Need for Storm Water Management in Doña Ana County and the Elephant Butte Irrigation District – Paul Dugie, Director, Doña Ana County Flood Commission, and Gary Esslinger, Treasurer/Manager, Elephant Butte Irrigation District
- Rio Grande Flood Control Levee Construction Update – Gabriel Duran, Engineer Planner, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion/Suggested Future Agenda Items

***Directions:** From El Paso, take I-10 west to Las Cruces, exit 139. Travel north on Motel Blvd.

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 sally.spener@ibwc.gov