



**International Boundary and Water Commission
United States Section**



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For immediate release
May 25, 2010

**RIO GRANDE WATER QUALITY AND LEVEE CONSTRUCTION
ON AGENDA FOR JUNE 8 PUBLIC MEETING**

Rio Grande water quality studies, levee construction being carried out with funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act), and environmental monitoring of construction impacts will be discussed at the June 8 public meeting of the Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum (LRGCF). The LRGCF was established by the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) to facilitate the exchange of information between the USIBWC and members of the public about Commission activities in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The meeting will be held Tuesday, June 8, 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. at the Commission office at 325 Golf Course Road in Mercedes, Texas.

USIBWC Environmental Protection Specialist Elizabeth Verdecchia will provide an overview of water quality in the Lower Rio Grande as well as discuss current and future water quality monitoring and outreach activities through the Texas Clean Rivers Program (CRP) for the Rio Grande Basin. In the Lower Rio Grande, bacteria levels remain a concern in the Brownsville area. USIBWC and the University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) have completed the first phase of an intensive bacteria study of the Rio Grande in the Brownsville area, and UTB's Dr. Elizabeth Heise will provide preliminary results of the study. CRP staff will be available to discuss any issues and questions the public has related to Rio Grande water quality. Copies of the CRP's *2010 Rio*

Grande Basin Highlights Report, with detailed water quality information, will also be available for distribution.

USIBWC Civil Engineer Rod Dunlap will give an update on the Recovery Act levee construction projects in the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties. The projects will enhance flood protection in the Valley in accordance with standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The presentation will include current project construction updates on several levee construction contracts along the Rio Grande and off-river floodways affecting the communities of McAllen, Granjeno, Hidalgo, Pharr, San Juan, Alamo, Donna, Weslaco, Mercedes, La Villa, and La Feria. 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.

In a related presentation, Field Environmental Monitor Wacey Hough of contractor H² Environment Services, will discuss environmental issues associated with levee construction. The presentation will discuss nesting surveys, rare and endangered plant identification and relocation, wildlife identification and relocation, coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, wetlands preservation, and storm water pollution prevention.

A complete meeting agenda follows. Members of the public who would like more information about the meeting may contact the USIBWC's Lower Rio Grande Project Office at 956-565-3150 or the Public Affairs Office at sally.spener@ibwc.gov. For additional information about the Recovery Act, go to www.recovery.gov.

For more information:

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LOWER RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

4:00 - 6:00 P.M.

USIBWC Conference Room

325 Golf Course Road

Mercedes, TX 78570

AGENDA

- # Welcome and Introductions – Rodolfo Montero, Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- # Update on Recovery Act Levee Construction Projects in the Lower Rio Grande Valley – Rod Dunlap, Civil Engineer, USIBWC
- # Environmental Issues Associated with Rio Grande Levee Construction – Wacey Hough, Field Environmental Monitor, H² Environmental Services
- # Clean Rivers Program Annual Water Quality Update and Rio Grande Basin Advisory Meeting – Elizabeth Verdecchia, Environmental Protection Specialist, USIBWC
- # Update on Study of Bacteria in the Rio Grande at Brownsville – Dr. Elizabeth Heise, University of Texas at Brownsville
- # Public Comment
- # Board Discussion
- # Suggested Future Agenda Items

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 956-565-3150.

Note: The next meeting of the Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum will be Wednesday, August 25.