



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



**RECOVERY.GOV**

**STATEMENT OF U.S. COMMISSIONER EDWARD DRUSINA  
ON RECOVERY ACT FUNDING AND  
THE LOWER RIO GRANDE FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT**

September 17, 2010

Flood control levees in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas operated and maintained by the United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) saved millions of dollars in property damage and untold lives over the summer during the worst river flood in 43 years in the Valley. I am extremely proud of the performance of our levees and our dedicated staff during the flood.

The USIBWC received \$220 million in Recovery Act appropriations for improvements to the Rio Grande Flood Control Project in Texas and New Mexico. To date, the USIBWC has awarded Recovery Act contracts in the amount of \$209 million and will award an additional \$11 million by the end of the month. We have done so in accordance with timelines established by the Recovery Act and with an unprecedented level of transparency. Nearly 600 jobs have already been preserved or created – a number that will increase significantly as construction continues over the next year.

The USIBWC was provided Recovery Act funding in large part because the agency had previously undertaken hydraulic studies, geotechnical analysis, and environmental studies, making our projects “shovel ready.” The availability of this funding supported by the Obama administration allowed us to accelerate the completion of our initiative.

Prior to the availability of Recovery Act funding, we were pleased to partner with Hidalgo County and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to permit construction of a levee-wall along the Rio Grande to serve the dual purpose of border security and flood control. The USIBWC had also undertaken other levee improvement projects with our annual appropriations.

Some of the Recovery Act levee construction in the Lower Rio Grande Valley has already been completed. Coupled with construction projects previously undertaken by the USIBWC and Hidalgo County, the levees were in their best condition in years when Hurricane Alex and Tropical Depression #2 caused flood conditions over the summer. The U.S. interior floodway system in Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties, which was revamped following Hurricane Beulah in 1967, was used for the first time since 1988 and experienced its greatest flood flows ever. No major structural problems were identified with the levees and minor problems that arose were quickly addressed by USIBWC crews who worked round-the-clock for more than one month. The USIBWC also assisted local communities by pumping out floodwaters from neighborhoods with local drainage problems. Unfortunately, the Rio Grande flood did cause damage to property in some upstream communities where the USIBWC does not have authority for flood control.

I am extremely proud of the USIBWC's execution of Recovery Act funds -- the benefits of which have already been experienced by South Texas. We take very seriously our commitment to provide flood protection and to execute expenditure of those funds in a manner that creates and preserves jobs, promotes economic recovery, and invests in infrastructure that will provide long-term economic benefits. By any reasonable measure, we are succeeding on all counts.

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