



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section



For immediate release
March 14, 2011

EL PASO FLOODPLAIN ADMINISTRATION AND PORTS OF ENTRY OPERATIONS PLAN ON AGENDA FOR MARCH 29 PUBLIC MEETING IN EL PASO

Efforts to improve floodplain administration in the City of El Paso, access to river trail parks during Rio Grande levee construction, and a study of El Paso's international ports of entry will be discussed at the next public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens Forum, an outreach program of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC). The meeting will take place Tuesday, March 29, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at USIBWC Headquarters, 4171 N. Mesa Street, Building C, El Paso, Texas.

El Paso City Engineer Alan Shubert will discuss the City of El Paso's Floodplain Administration. The Floodplain Administration Division provides various services to the community with regard to properties that are in or near a Special Flood Zone Hazard Area (SFHA). As part of this charge, the City has implemented several measures to improve its rating under the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Community Rating System that can result in insurance rate premium savings for the El Paso community. An overview will be provided of key activities underway for this effort. Additionally, the latest information regarding the preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps issued by FEMA will be highlighted.

As part of the effort to improve flood control infrastructure, the USIBWC is undertaking improvements to its Rio Grande flood control levees in the El Paso and Las Cruces area with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. During construction, access to the levee, river, or river park trails may be affected. USIBWC staff will give an update on efforts to control access during construction.

In other business, consultant Jim Brogan of Cambridge Systematics will discuss the Texas Department of Transportation's Regional Ports of Entry Operations Plan. The project entails reviewing and assessing operations at the existing ports of entry in the El Paso region, analyzing how they currently function, and developing recommendations to improve cross-border mobility in the region. The plan will also identify operational improvement strategies, such as the use of technology to reduce border inspection and processing times, charging higher tolls, increasing staff levels at peak traffic hours, or restricting some ports to commercial traffic only. Other aspects are to estimate the transportation, economic, and environmental impacts and benefits of potential operational improvement strategies and to develop a plan to help the region finance and implement operational, infrastructure, and institutional recommendations. A key element of the study is extensive public involvement and outreach to ensure that all interested groups in the El Paso region are actively engaged in the planning, development, and implementation of the Operations Plan.

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, New Mexico and Fort Quitman, Texas. 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 is enclosed.

For more information:

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RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM
Tuesday, March 29, 2011
6:30 - 8:30 P.M.
USIBWC Headquarters
4171 N. Mesa St., The Commons, Building C*
El Paso, TX 79902

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions – Louis Irwin, Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- City of El Paso Floodplain Administration Update – Alan Shubert, City Engineer, City of El Paso
- Update on Levee and River Park Access During Rio Grande Levee Construction – Andrea Glover, Civil Engineer, Construction, USIBWC
- El Paso Regional Ports of Entry Operations Plan – Jim Brogan, Project Manager, Cambridge Systematics
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion
- Suggested Future Agenda Items