



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
April 11, 2014

RIO GRANDE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND FLOOD INSURANCE ISSUES ON AGENDA FOR APRIL 24 PUBLIC MEETING IN LAS CRUCES

The U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) will discuss its River Management Plan for the Rio Grande in southern New Mexico during the next public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens Forum. The meeting will take place Thursday, April 24, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Las Cruces City Hall, 700 North Main Street, Las Cruces, NM.

In 2009, the USIBWC signed the Record of Decision (ROD) for the River Management Alternatives for the Rio Grande Canalization Project. Part of the ROD required the USIBWC, in collaboration with stakeholder organizations, to update the River Management Plan for the stretch of the Rio Grande from Percha Diversion Dam in New Mexico downstream to American Diversion Dam in El Paso, Texas. The River Management Plan describes agency procedures for managing the river levees, the river channel, and the floodplain, including vegetation, habitat restoration sites, and invasive species. For example, the plan outlines areas that will not be mowed in order to be converted to managed grasslands, as stipulated in the ROD. In addition, in 2012 the USIBWC consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the ROD activities and their potential impact on endangered species, resulting in a 2012 Biological Opinion which required the USIBWC to complete a Flycatcher Management Plan to document conservation practices to protect the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. USIBWC Natural Resources Specialist Elizabeth Verdecchia will present the River Management Plan and the Flycatcher Management Plan, which are combined into one management document, currently in draft format.

In addition, USIBWC Area Operations Manager Tony Solo will discuss Rio Grande de-silting operations undertaken in accordance with the River Management Plan. The de-silting work initiated on December 4, 2013 and will continue through May 30, 2014. To date, the USIBWC has removed sediment at three locations: upstream of

Hatch Siphon, upstream of Rincon Siphon, and at the mouth of the Rincon Arroyo. There are also plans to remove sediment at the mouth of the Placitas Arroyo upstream of Hatch, NM, at the Montoya Arroyo, Tierra Blanca Arroyo, and at the outlet of the Montoya Drain located in Sunland Park, New Mexico.

Removing silt from the river channel will help to assure the delivery of water to Mexico from upstream reservoirs in compliance with the Convention of 1906 between the United States and Mexico, to maintain the flood capacity of the floodway, to avoid localized flooding in Sunland Park (in the case of Montoya Drain), and to minimize waterlogged land on farmland in the vicinity of the river.

The Citizens Forum will also hear from Paul T. Dugie, Doña Ana County Flood Commission Director, with an update on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps and flood insurance. He will present an estimated timeline for the Seclusion Mapping Process to allow Flood Insurance Rate Maps that are not affected by the Rio Grande levee certification process to move forward. He will also discuss a new federal law known as the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014. The law lowers recent rate increases on some flood insurance policies, prevents some future rate increases, and implements a surcharge on all policyholders.

In other business, Albert J. Moehlig, USIBWC Strategic Planning Program Manager, will give a presentation on navigating the USIBWC's website to access maps depicting the status of Rio Grande levee improvement projects. These status maps delineate the different levee improvement projects along the existing Rio Grande levee system with labeled, color-coded lines. The maps include a table, which reports the status of these projects. The maps are available at: http://www.ibwc.gov/GIS_Maps/levee-rehab-status_tabbed.html.

The USIBWC established the Rio Grande Citizens Forum 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 follows.

For more information:

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RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM

Thursday, April 24, 2014

6:30 - 8:30 P.M.

Las Cruces City Hall

700 North Main Street*

Las Cruces, NM 88001-3512

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions – Conrad Keyes, Jr., Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- Update on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps and Flood Insurance – Paul T. Dugie, PE, CFM, Doña Ana County Flood Commission Director
- Rio Grande Flood Control Levee Improvement Status Maps – Albert J. Moehlig, Strategic Planning Program Manager, USIBWC
- River Management Plan for the Rio Grande Canalization Project – Elizabeth Verdecchia, Natural Resources Specialist, USIBWC
- Rio Grande Sediment Removal Activities – Antonio Solo, Area Operations Manager, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion/Suggested Future Agenda Items

***Directions:** From I-10 west, take exit 142 Valley Drive. Keep left at the fork in the ramp and continue onto Valley Drive. Travel about ¼ of a mile and veer right onto Main Street. Continue on Main about 2.4 miles to City Hall.

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