



THE BOUNDARY MARKER

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RECOVERY ACT LEVEE WORK NEARS COMPLETION

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) is in the final stages of constructing Rio Grande flood control levee improvements in New Mexico and Texas funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The USIBWC received \$220 million in Recovery Act appropriations for the work. At press time, the projects were 87% complete and more than \$190 million had been paid out to contractors.

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. USIBWC Recovery Act expenditures have already preserved or created an estimated 2500 + jobs.

Most of the remaining construction is expected to be completed by summer 2012. The USIBWC is using the funds to raise and strengthen levees to provide enhanced flood protection to U.S. communities. Much of the embankment work has already been finished

while construction progresses on floodgates at bridge crossings, structures that pass through the levees, and other related items.

The Recovery Act funds have allowed the USIBWC to make good progress on rehabilitating its aging levees, which were originally constructed in the 1930s to 1970s.

“What would have taken over 20 years to accomplish under previous appropriation levels will be accomplished in approximately three years, protecting hundreds of millions of dollars in property,” said U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina.

Communities benefitting from the Recovery Act work include Doña Ana County, New Mexico

and El Paso, Hudspeth, Presidio, Hidalgo, and Cameron Counties in Texas. In Presidio County, the USIBWC is restoring levees damaged during a 2008 flood. In other areas, USIBWC contractors are rehabilitating levees to conform to standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which should lead to reduced flood insurance costs.



Crews work on a structure through the levee.



OFFICIALS TOUR MEXICAN SANITATION PROJECTS

Officials from the United States and Mexico on February 22 toured wastewater infrastructure in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua to see recent improvements firsthand. The tour was organized by the local water utility, the Junta Municipal de Agua y Saneamiento de Ciudad Juarez (JMAS), and coordinated through the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC).

In 2011, the JMAS upgraded its North and South Wastewater Treatment Plants to secondary biological treatment and doubled the capacity of the South Wastewater Treatment Plant. The JMAS also constructed a 6-mile (9.66 km) long pipeline to transfer sludge from the North Wastewater Treatment Plant to the South Wastewater Treatment Plant, where it is treated using anaerobic digestion. Additionally, in 2010 the JMAS completed the Anapra Wastewater Treatment Plant in the western part of the municipality. The improvements were undertaken at a cost of approximately US\$58 million (700 million pesos).

During the tour, participants visited the Anapra and North Wastewater Treatment Plants. U.S. participants included Commissioner Edward Drusina of the International Boundary and Water Commission, El Paso Mayor John Cook, Carlos Rincon with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Border Program Outreach Office in El Paso, Peter

Sloan from the U.S. Consulate in Ciudad Juarez, and other representatives from those agencies. Mexican participants included Commissioner Roberto Salmon of the International Boundary and Water Commission, JMAS President Nora Yu, and other officials from both agencies. Maria Elena Giner,

General Manager of the binational Border Environment Cooperation Commission, also participated.

During the tour, JMAS officials provided information about the upgrades to their sanitation infrastructure, including improvements that reduce odors to the benefit of residents on both sides of the border and improve the quality of effluent that

is reused for irrigation or discharged into the Rio Grande.

“The improvements we saw at the wastewater treatment plants in Ciudad Juarez are significant,” said U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina. “These upgrades improve the environment and the quality of life for residents in both El Paso and Ciudad Juarez.”

Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon expressed his support for the improvements undertaken by the JMAS and reiterated the commitment of the Mexican Section of the IBWC to continue working with the JMAS to improve sanitation conditions in Ciudad Juarez to benefit the best interests of both countries.



U.S. and Mexican officials at Ciudad Juarez treatment plant.



RIO GRANDE RESERVOIR LEVELS DECLINE

Ongoing drought has water managers concerned about declining Rio Grande reservoir levels. The International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) operates two of those reservoirs – Amistad Reservoir at Del Rio, Texas-Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila and Falcon Reservoir downstream at Falcon Heights, Texas-Nueva Ciudad Guerrero, Tamaulipas. The reservoirs provide water for downstream communities and farmers in both countries.

At the end of 2010 both reservoirs were at 100% of conservation capacity following a busy 2010 hurricane season that brought heavy rainfall to the Rio Grande basin. At the peak of that year's flood season, Falcon Reservoir reached its highest elevation ever and Amistad Dam had its largest flood control releases in 36 years.

Dry conditions have prevailed since late 2010. Coupled with dam releases to supply water users, this has caused a significant drop in reservoir storage. By March 2012, Amistad Reservoir had declined to 66% of capacity while Falcon was at 47%. Falcon has actually risen slightly this year due to water supply releases from Amistad.

Farther upstream, conditions are much worse. Under the Convention of 1906, the United States delivers Rio Grande water to

Mexico for irrigation in the Juarez Valley in the State of Chihuahua. The water originates as snow melt runoff in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado and New Mexico. This snow melt eventually flows into the region's main storage reservoir at Elephant Butte Dam in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, which is operated by the United States Bureau of Reclamation. In March, Elephant Butte Reservoir was

less than 20% full, foreshadowing significant reductions to water users in the months ahead.

Under the 1906 treaty, "In case, however, of extraordinary drought or serious accident to the irrigation system in the United States, the amount delivered to the Mexican Canal shall be diminished in the same pro-

portion as the water delivered to lands under said irrigation system in the United States." Because of this treaty provision, the drought means that water users in New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico are all expecting significant reductions in their water allocations this year. The final allocations will depend on evolving snow pack and runoff conditions for the next few months.

The IBWC has had regular meetings with U.S. and Mexican water managers to discuss the latest runoff and inflow forecasts and water delivery schedules.



Back in 2002, Falcon Reservoir dropped to less than 10% of normal conservation capacity.

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