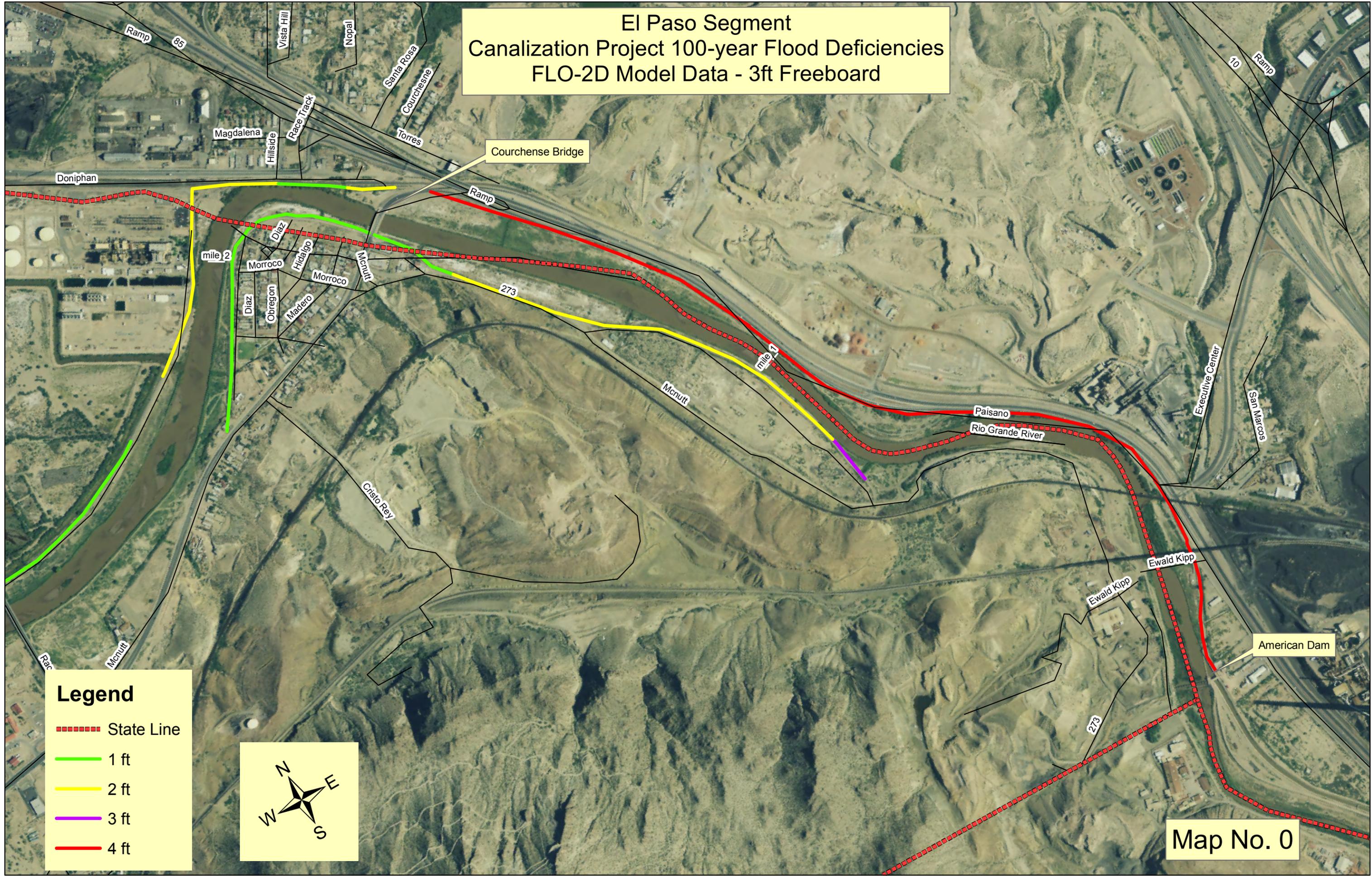


APPENDIX A
DETAILED MAPS OF PROJECT AREA

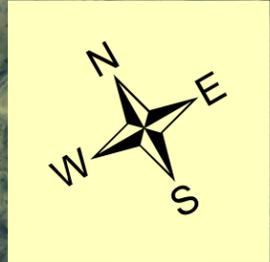
(Note: map numbers correspond to USIBWC ROW Alignment Maps)

El Paso Segment
Canalization Project 100-year Flood Deficiencies
FLO-2D Model Data - 3ft Freeboard

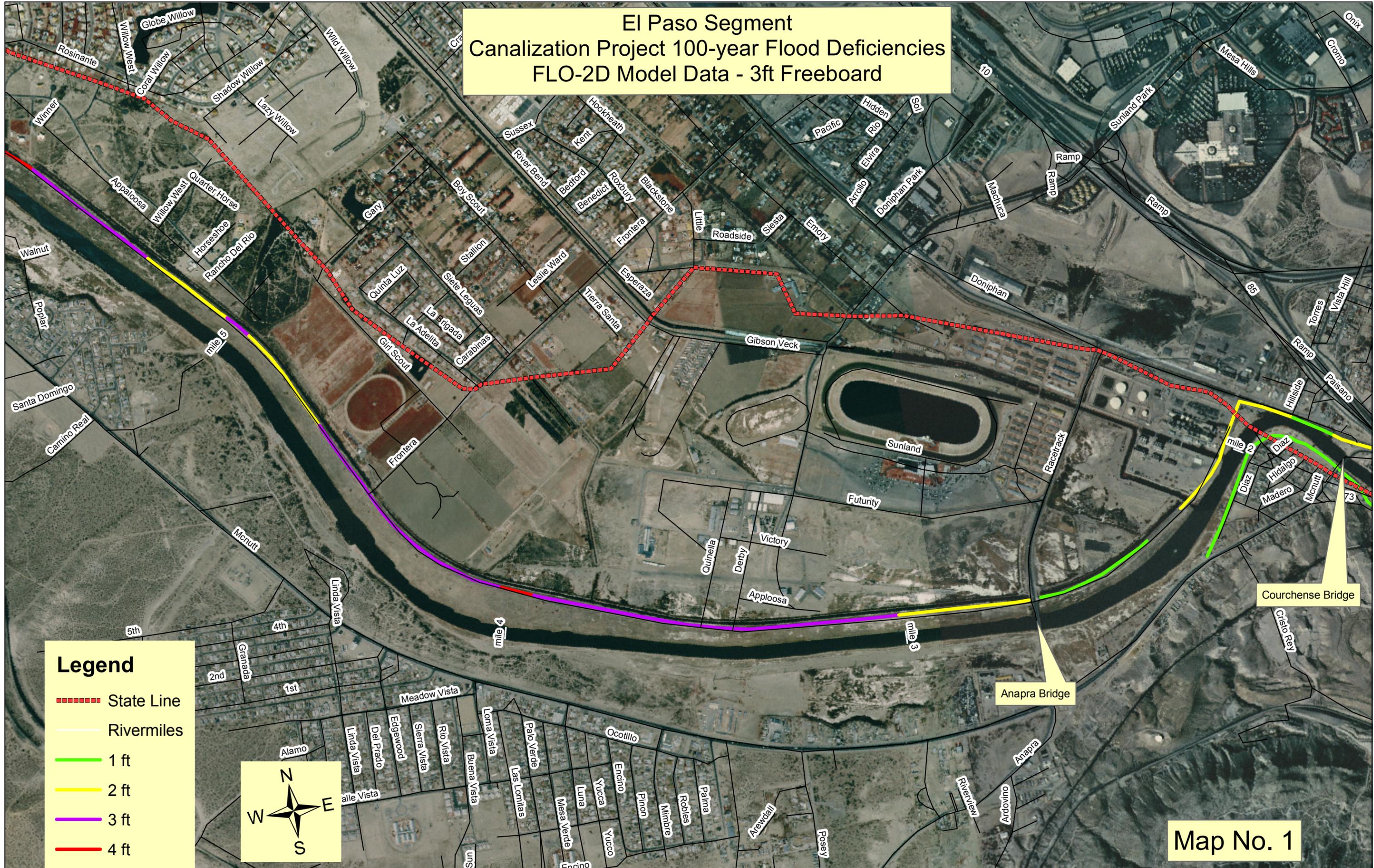


Legend

- State Line
- 1 ft
- 2 ft
- 3 ft
- 4 ft



El Paso Segment
Canalization Project 100-year Flood Deficiencies
FLO-2D Model Data - 3ft Freeboard

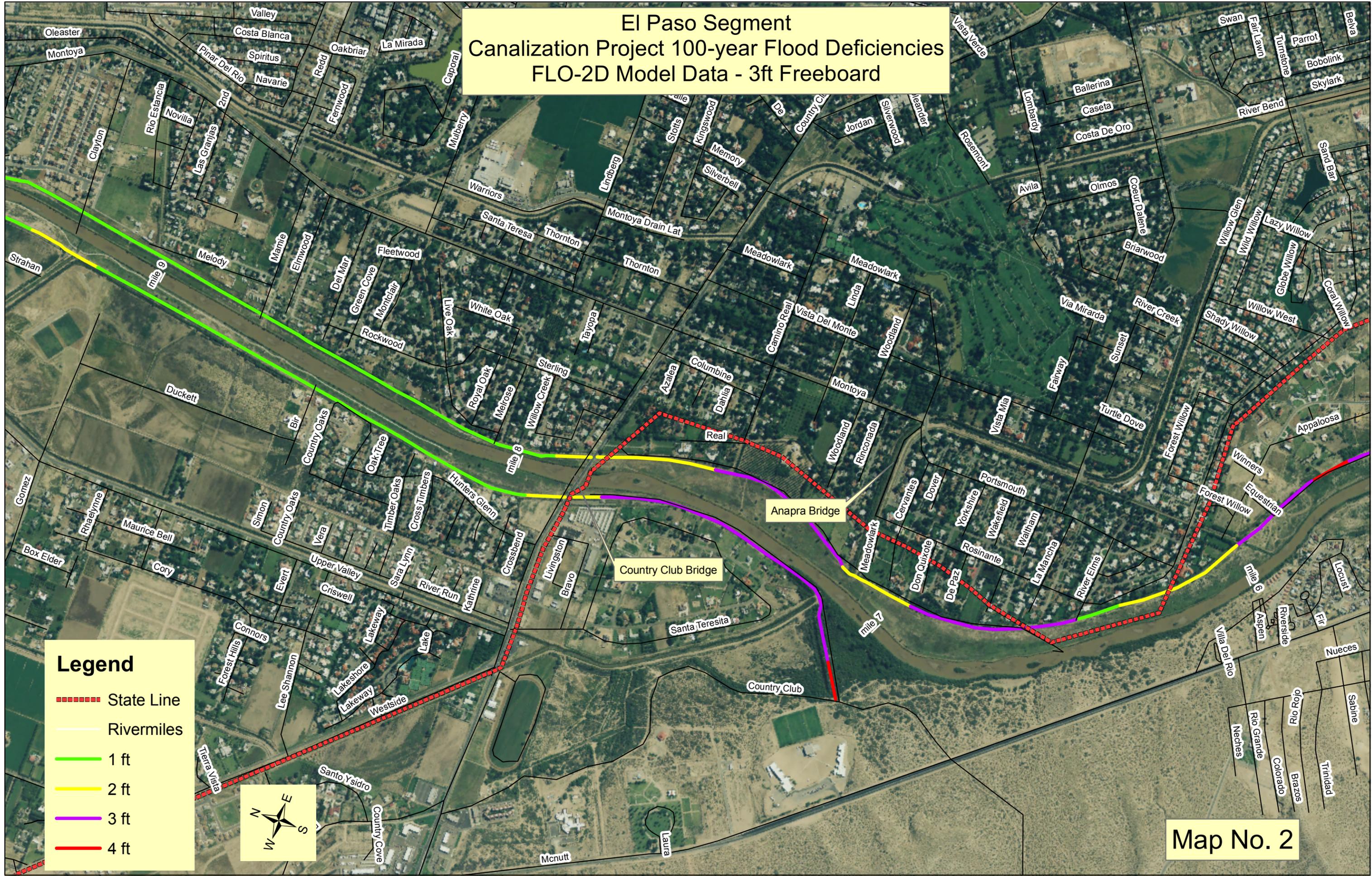


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- 1 ft
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- 3 ft
- 4 ft

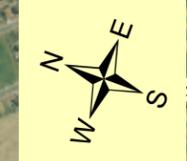


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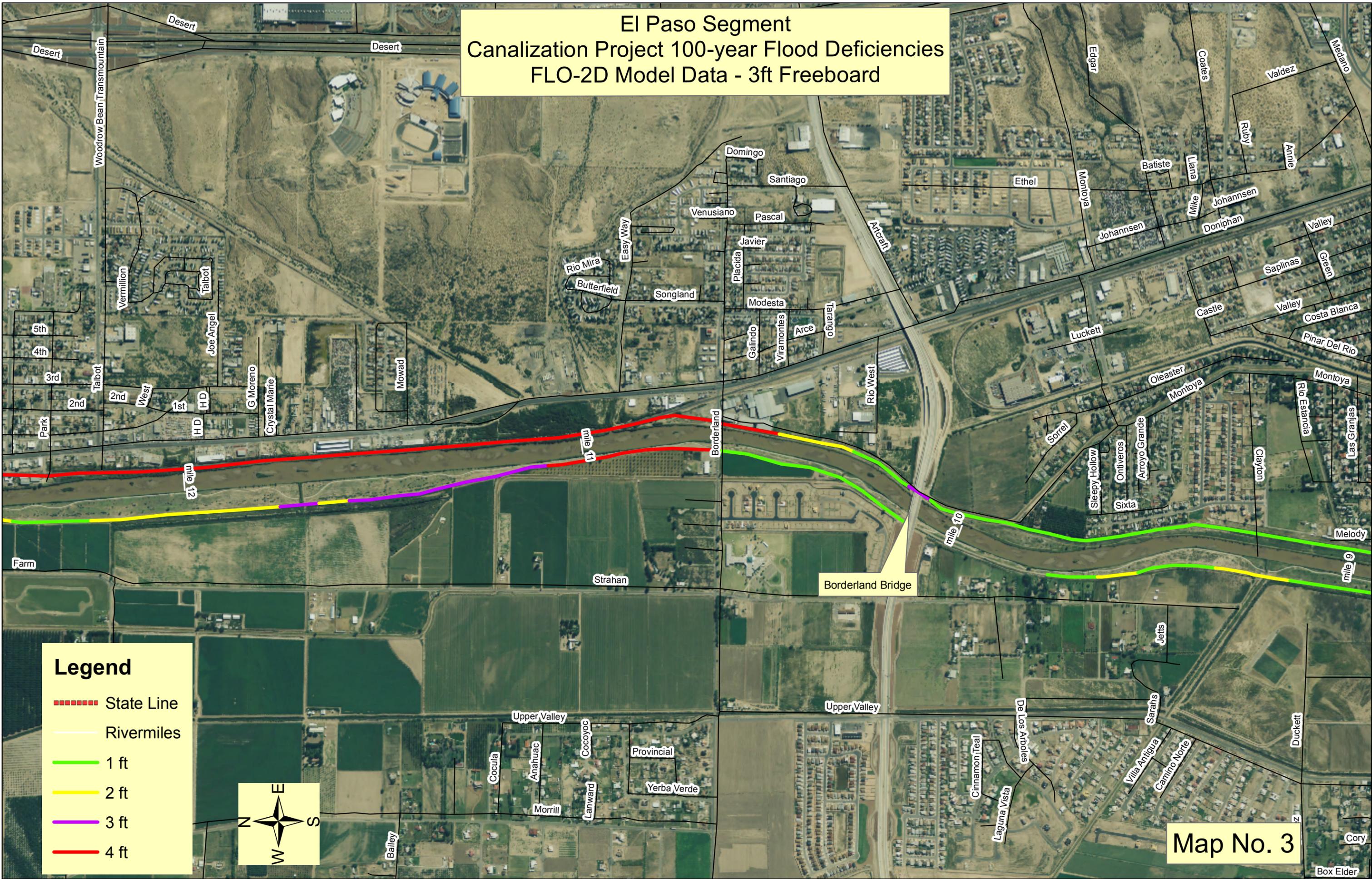


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- 3 ft
- 4 ft



El Paso Segment
Canalization Project 100-year Flood Deficiencies
FLO-2D Model Data - 3ft Freeboard



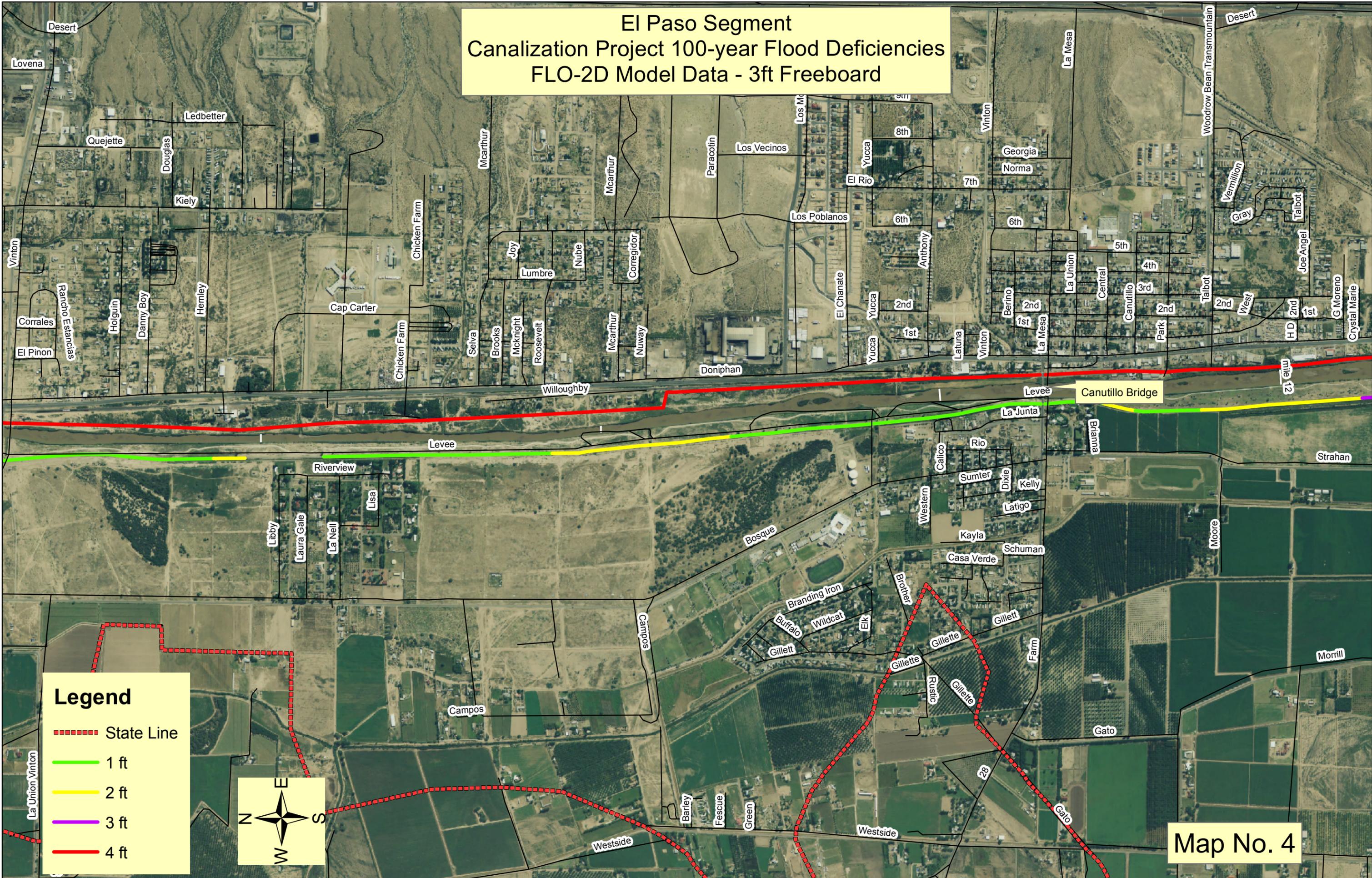
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- 3 ft
- 4 ft



Map No. 3

El Paso Segment
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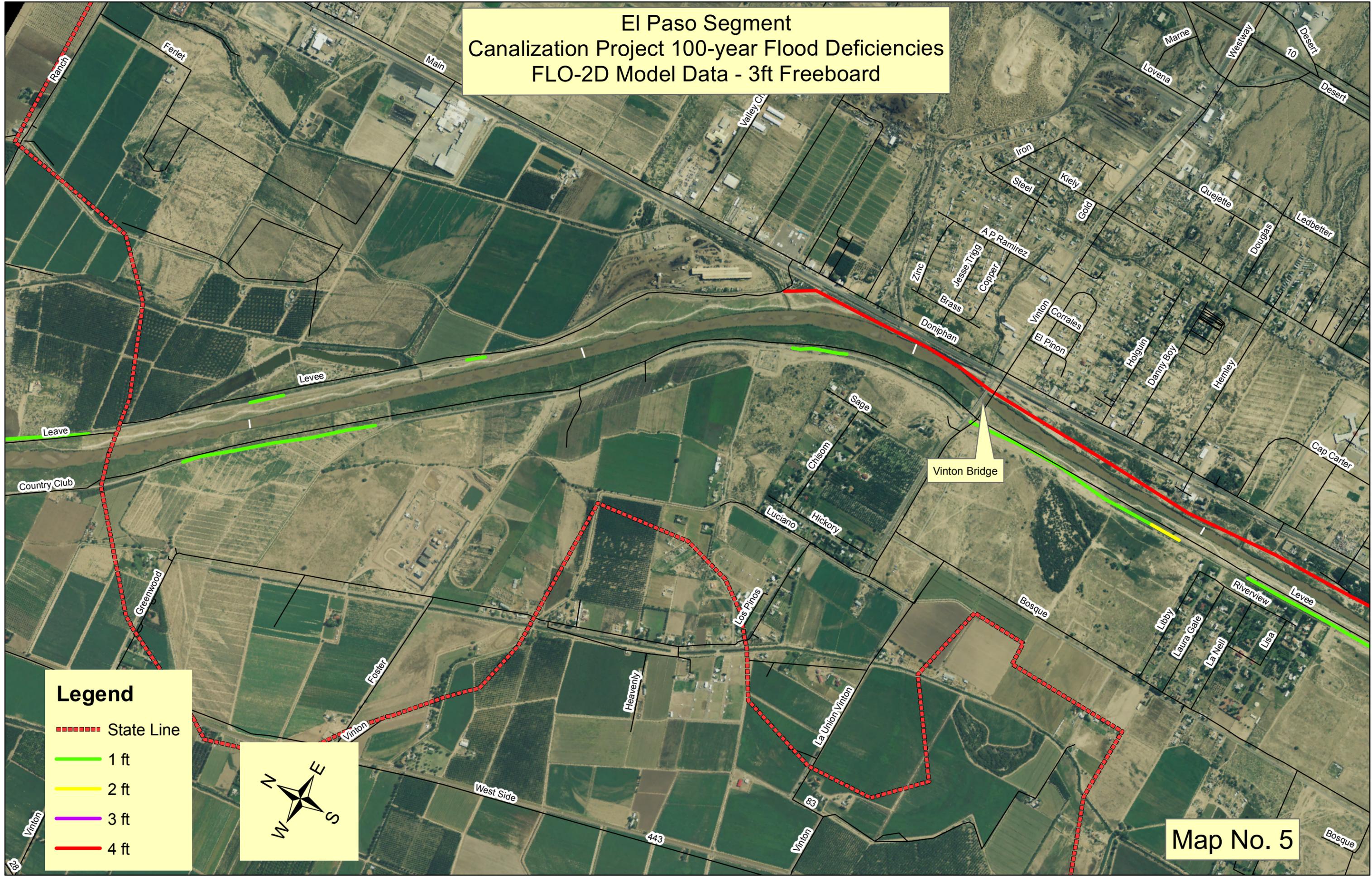


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- 4 ft



El Paso Segment
Canalization Project 100-year Flood Deficiencies
FLO-2D Model Data - 3ft Freeboard



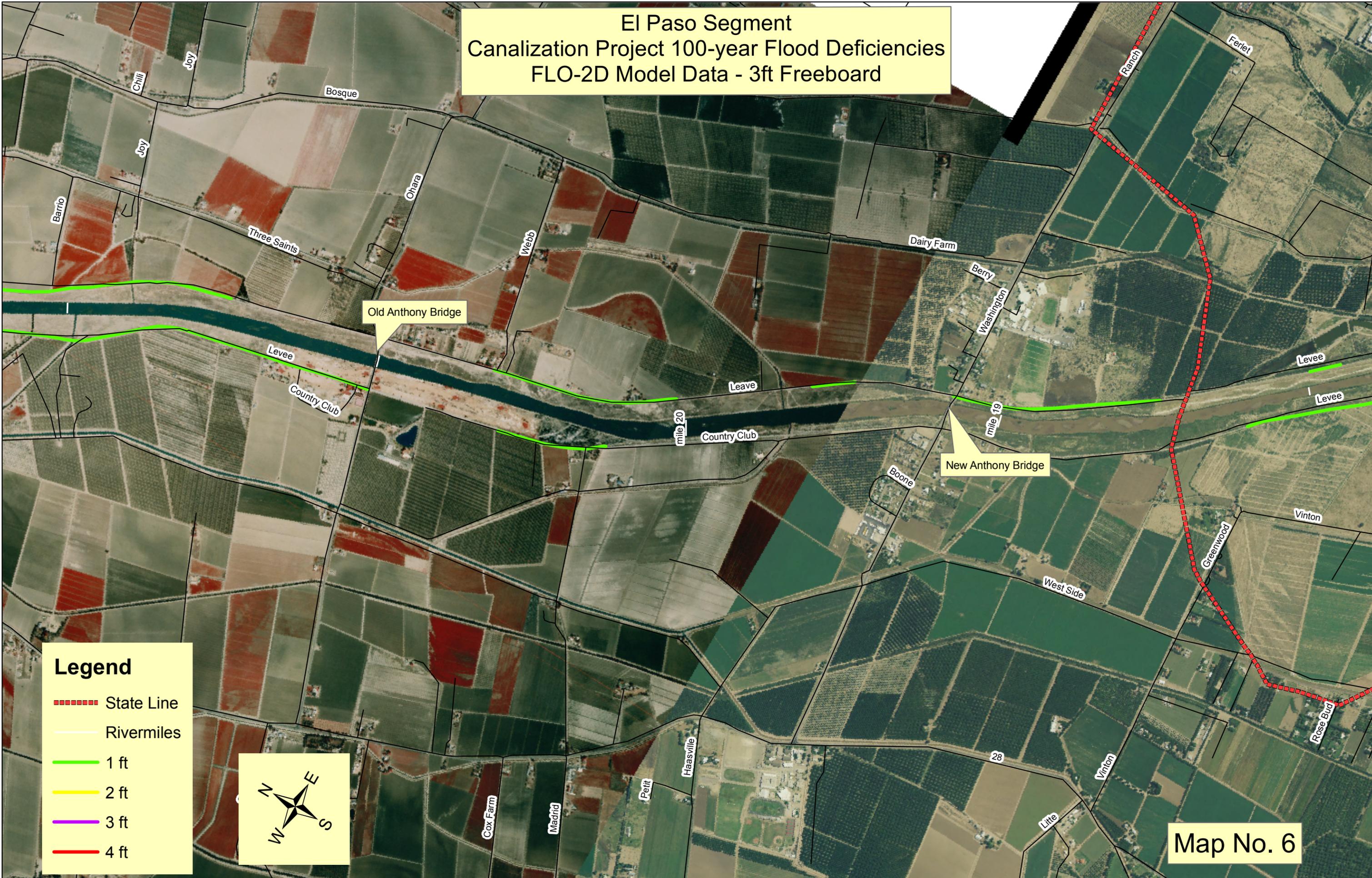
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- 3 ft
- 4 ft



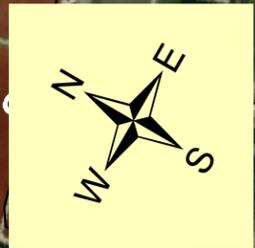
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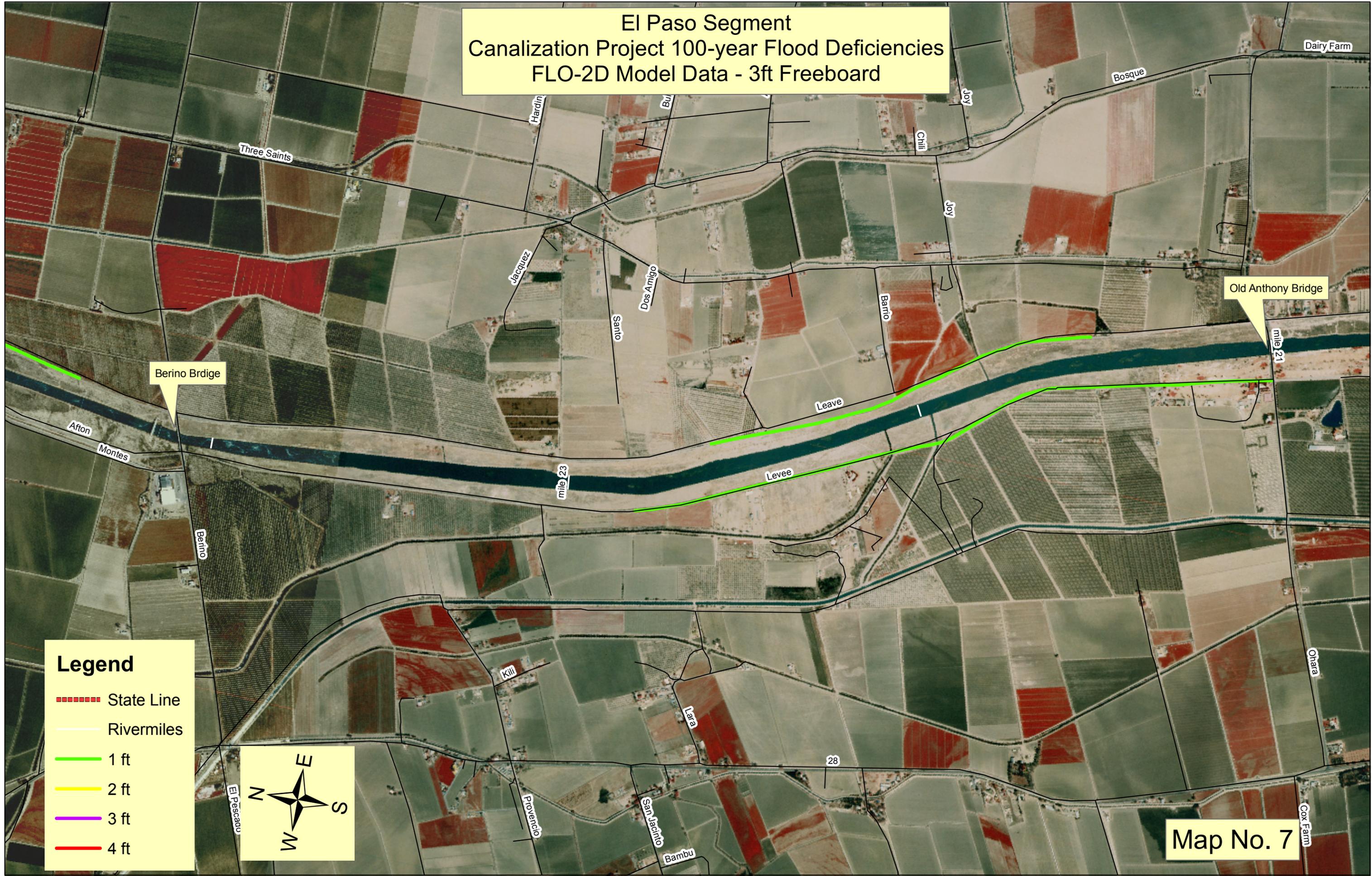


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- 3 ft
- 4 ft

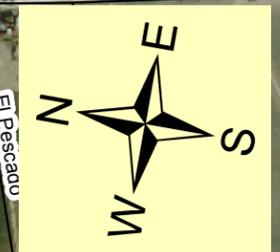


El Paso Segment
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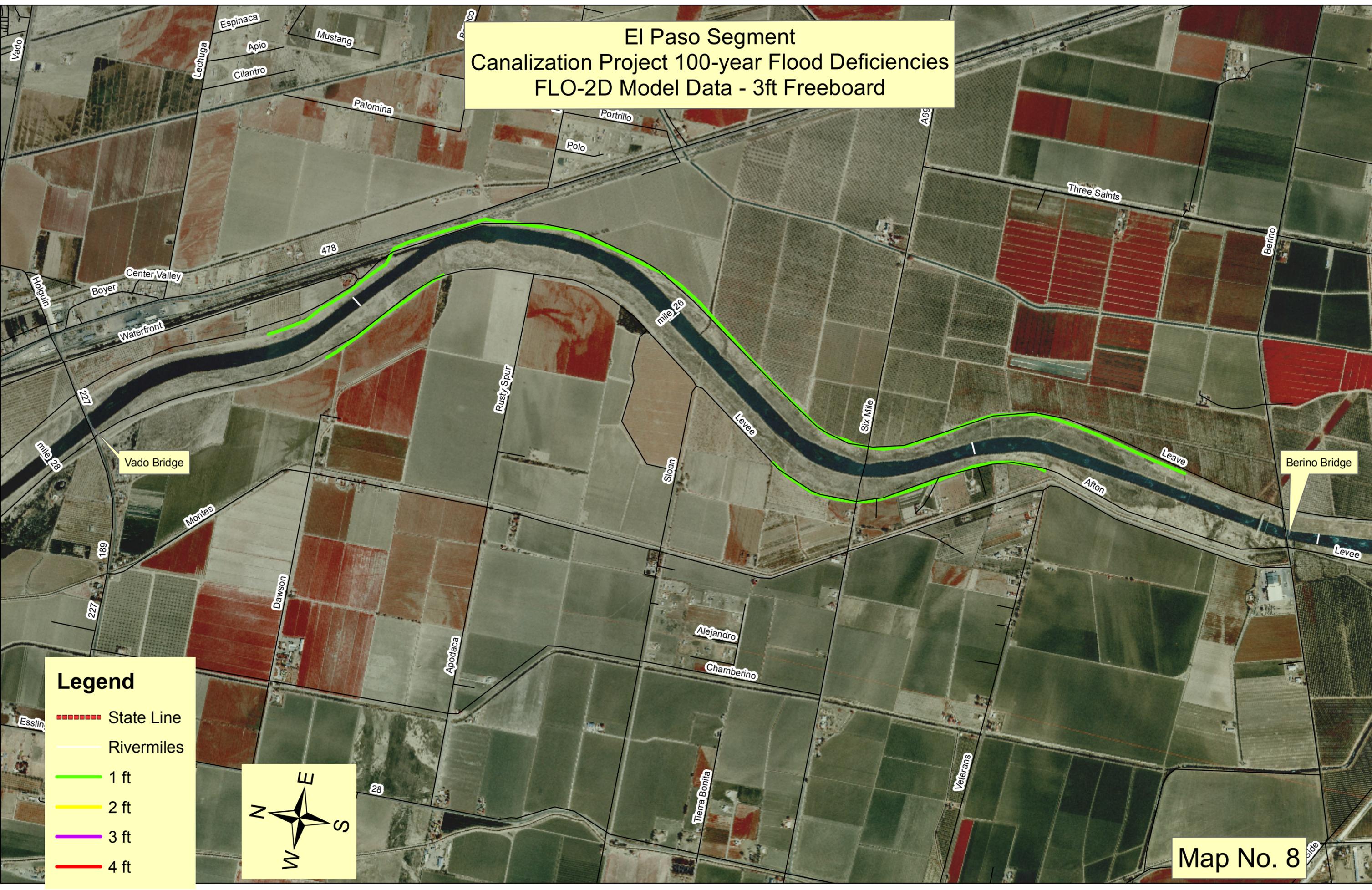


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- 2 ft
- 3 ft
- 4 ft

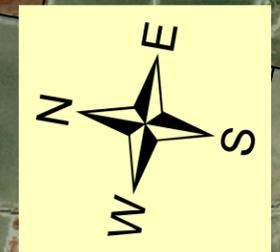


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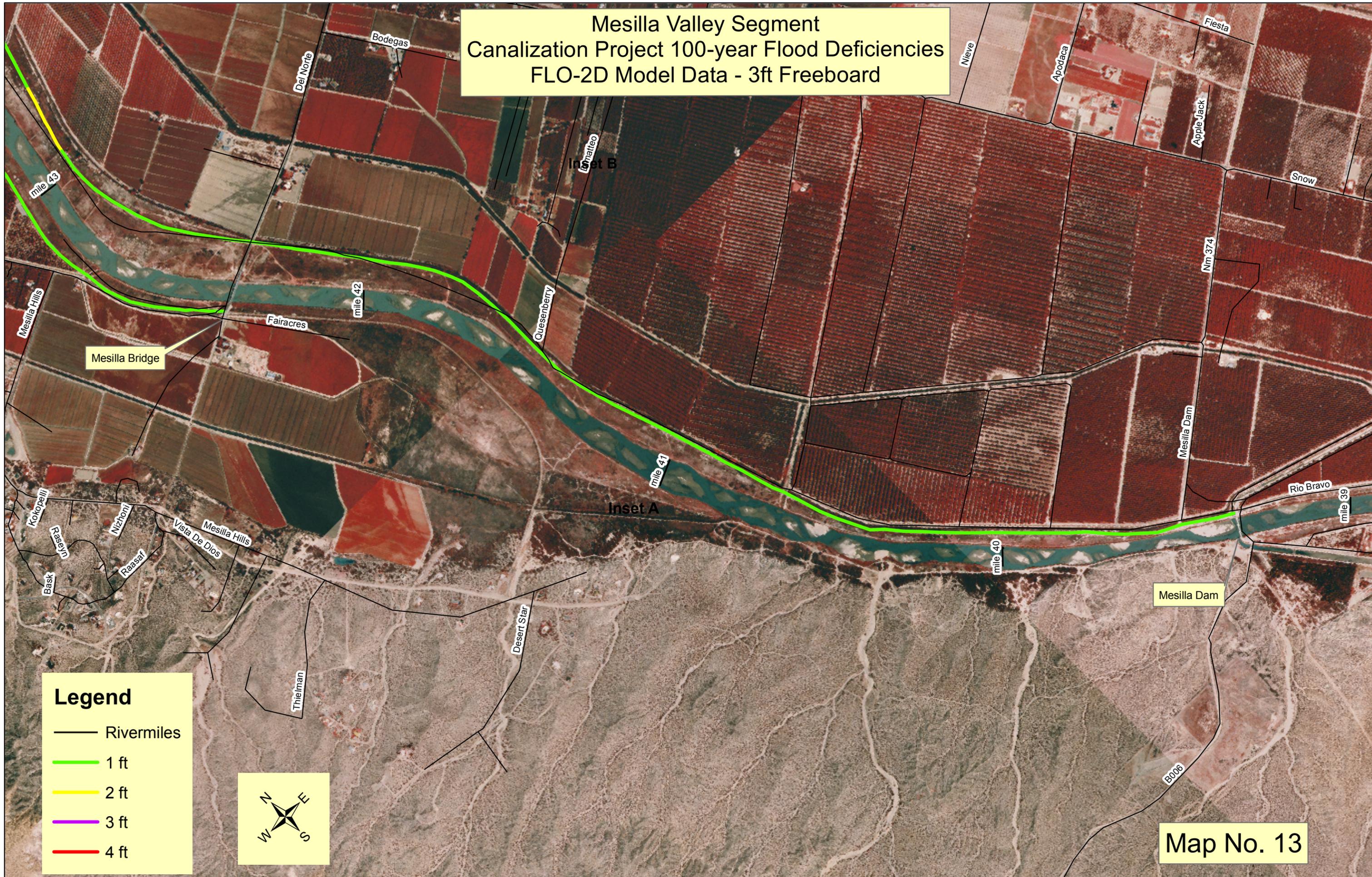


Legend

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- 2 ft
- 3 ft
- 4 ft



Mesilla Valley Segment
Canalization Project 100-year Flood Deficiencies
FLO-2D Model Data - 3ft Freeboard

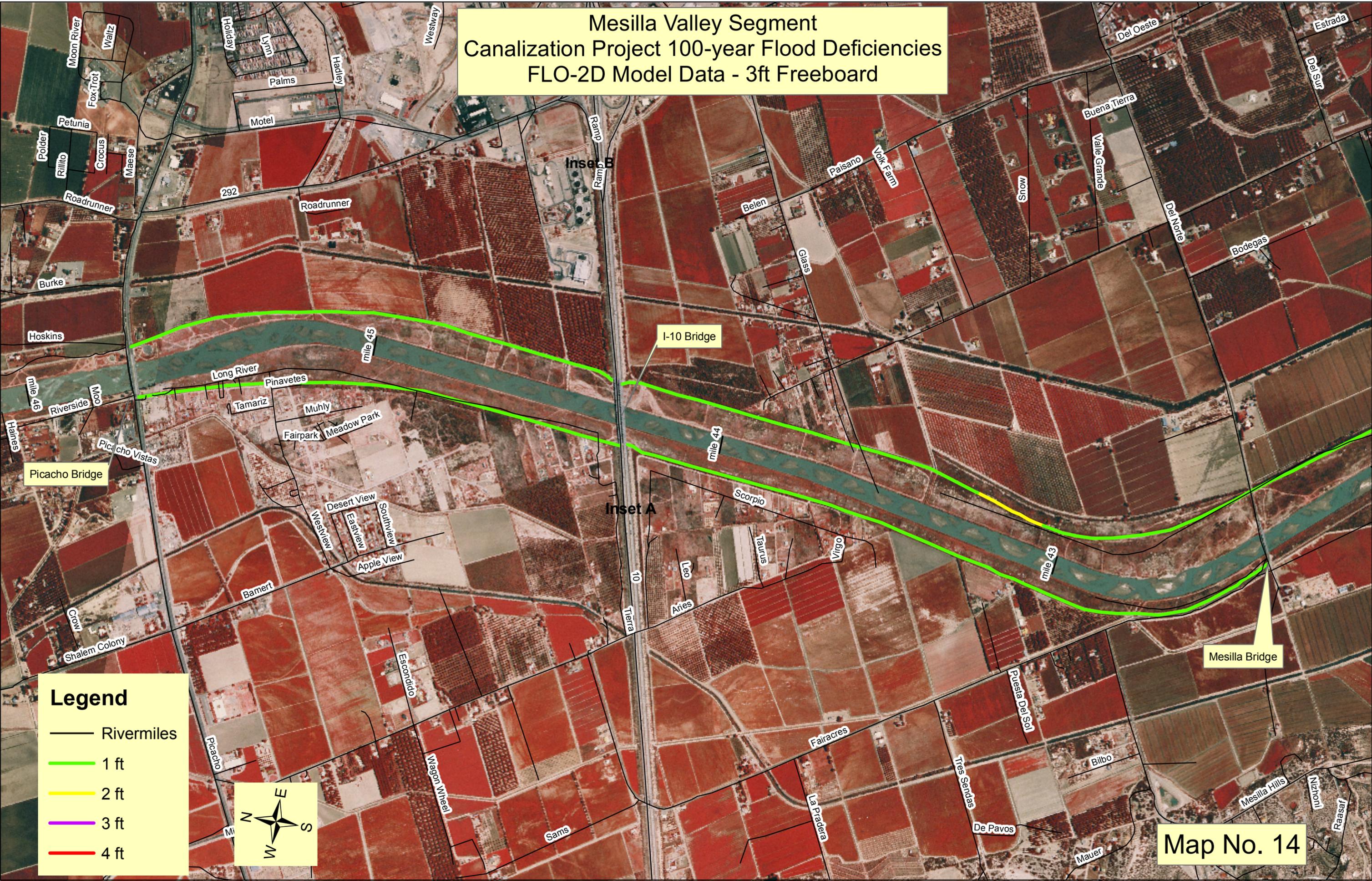


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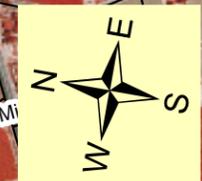


Mesilla Valley Segment
Canalization Project 100-year Flood Deficiencies
FLO-2D Model Data - 3ft Freeboard

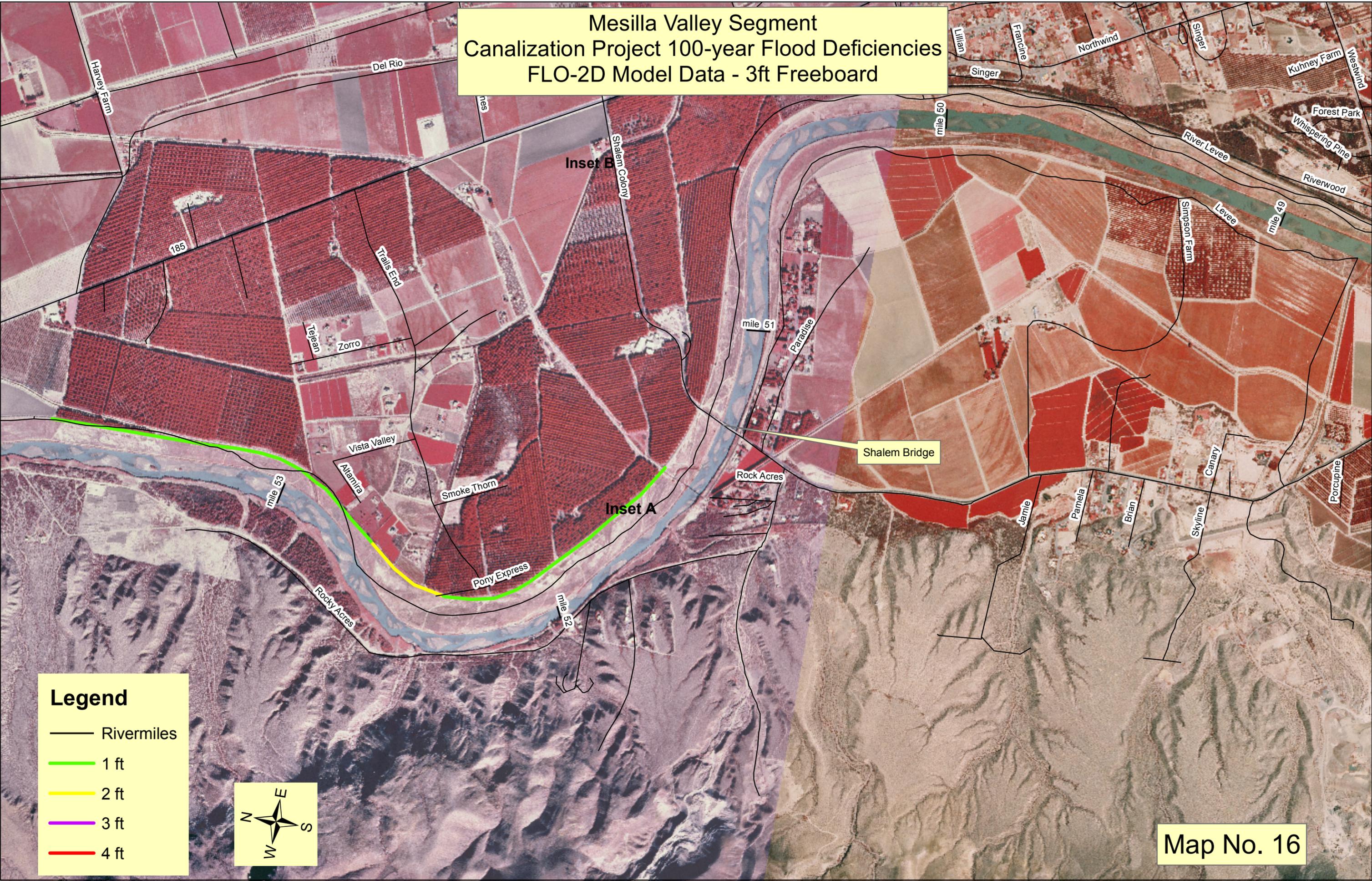


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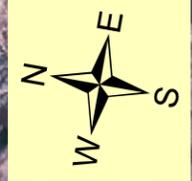


Mesilla Valley Segment
Canalization Project 100-year Flood Deficiencies
FLO-2D Model Data - 3ft Freeboard



Legend

- Rivermiles
- 1 ft
- 2 ft
- 3 ft
- 4 ft



Hatch Segment
Canalization Project 100-year Flood Deficiencies
FLO-2D Model Data - 3ft Freeboard

Rincon Drain

Toñuco Intercepting Drain

mile 73

185

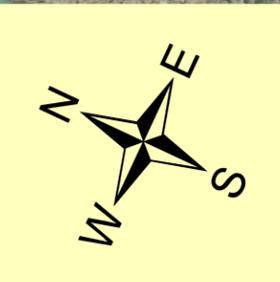
mile 72

mile 71

Desert

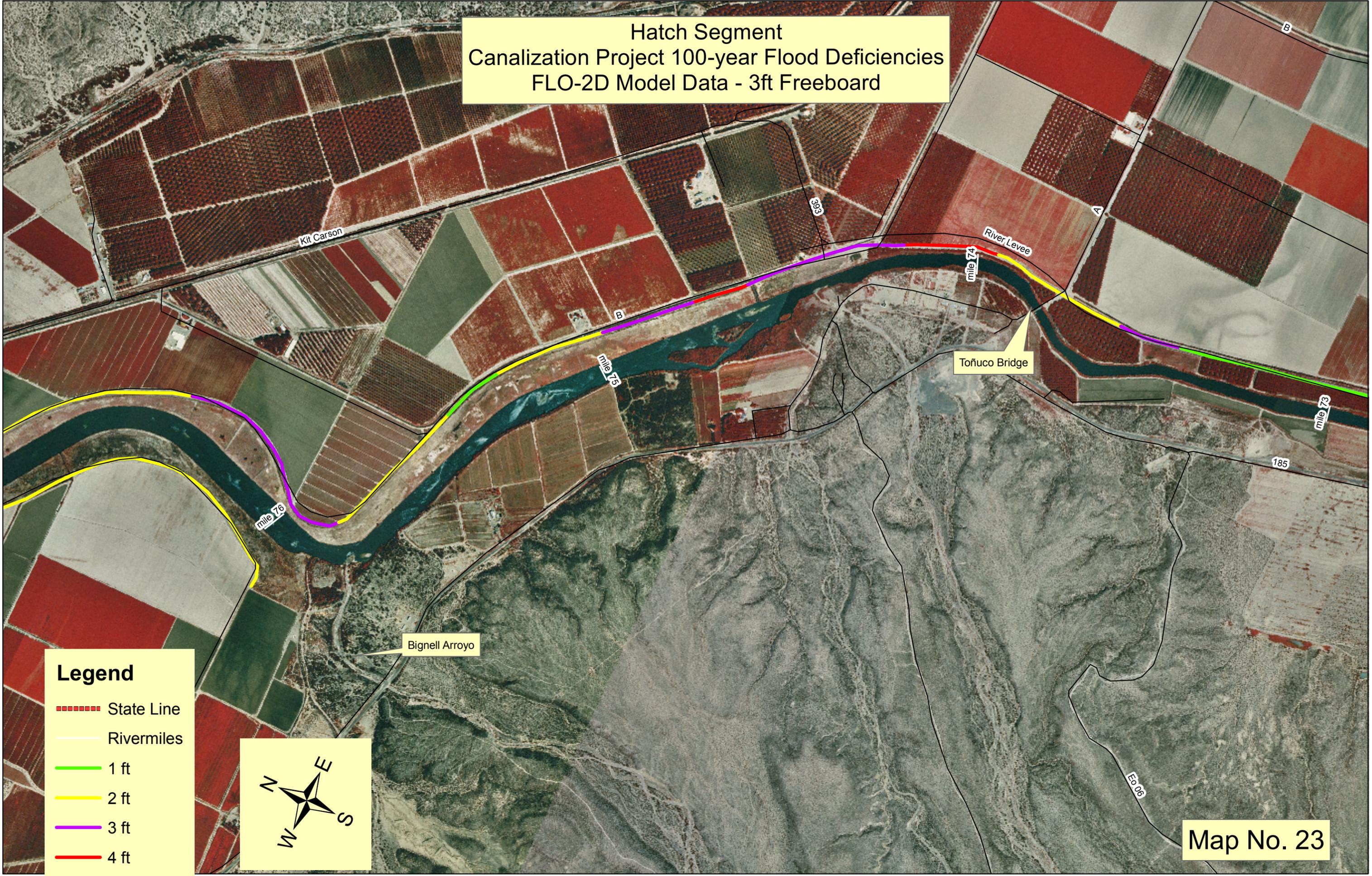
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- 3 ft
- 4 ft



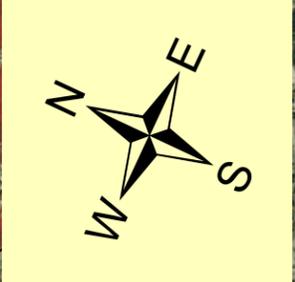
Map No. 22

Hatch Segment
Canalization Project 100-year Flood Deficiencies
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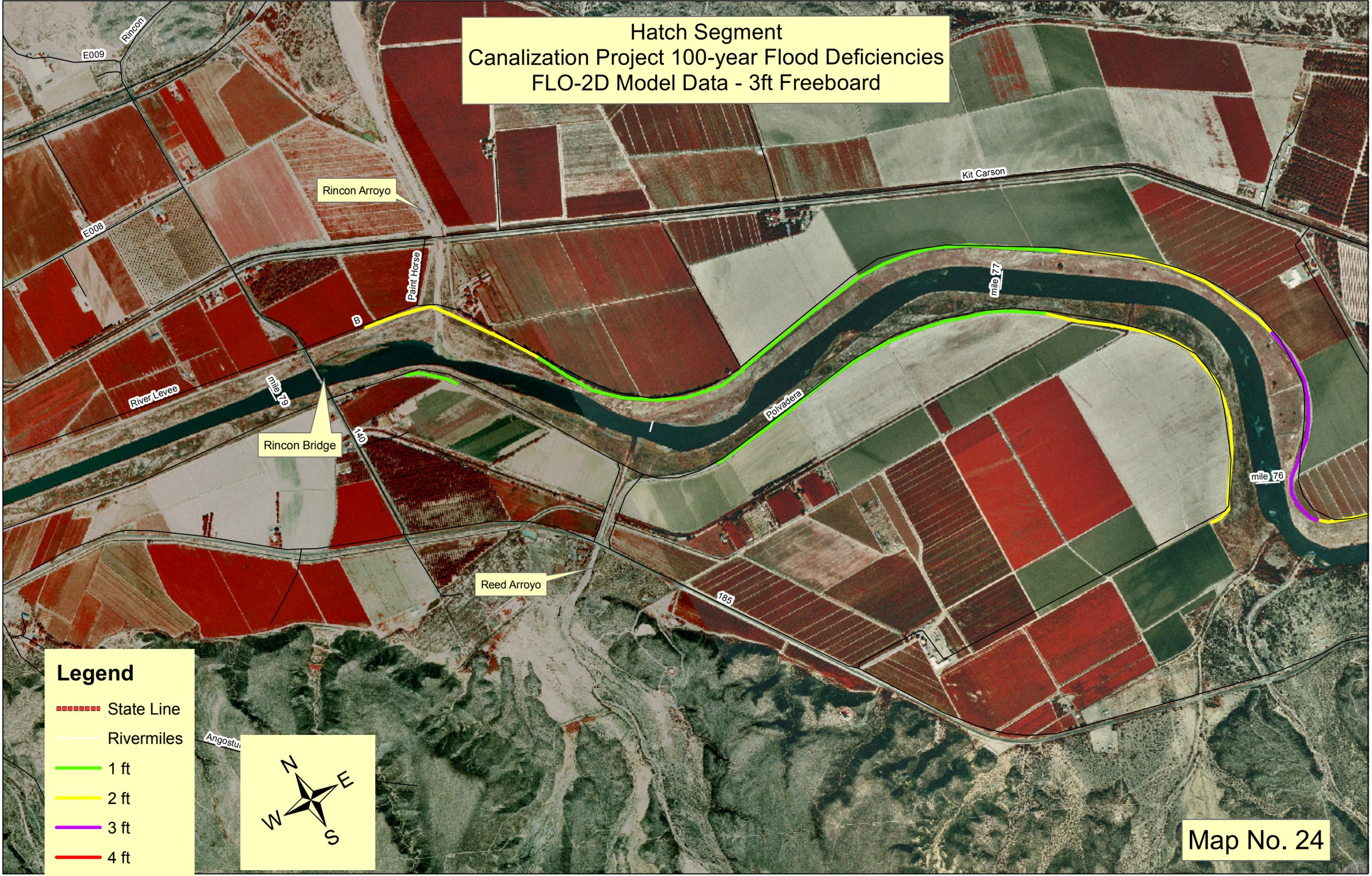


Legend

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- 4 ft

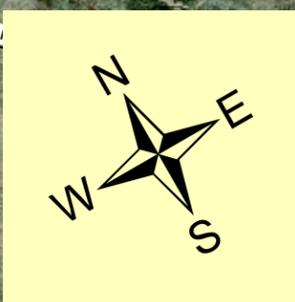


Hatch Segment
Canalization Project 100-year Flood Deficiencies
FLO-2D Model Data - 3ft Freeboard

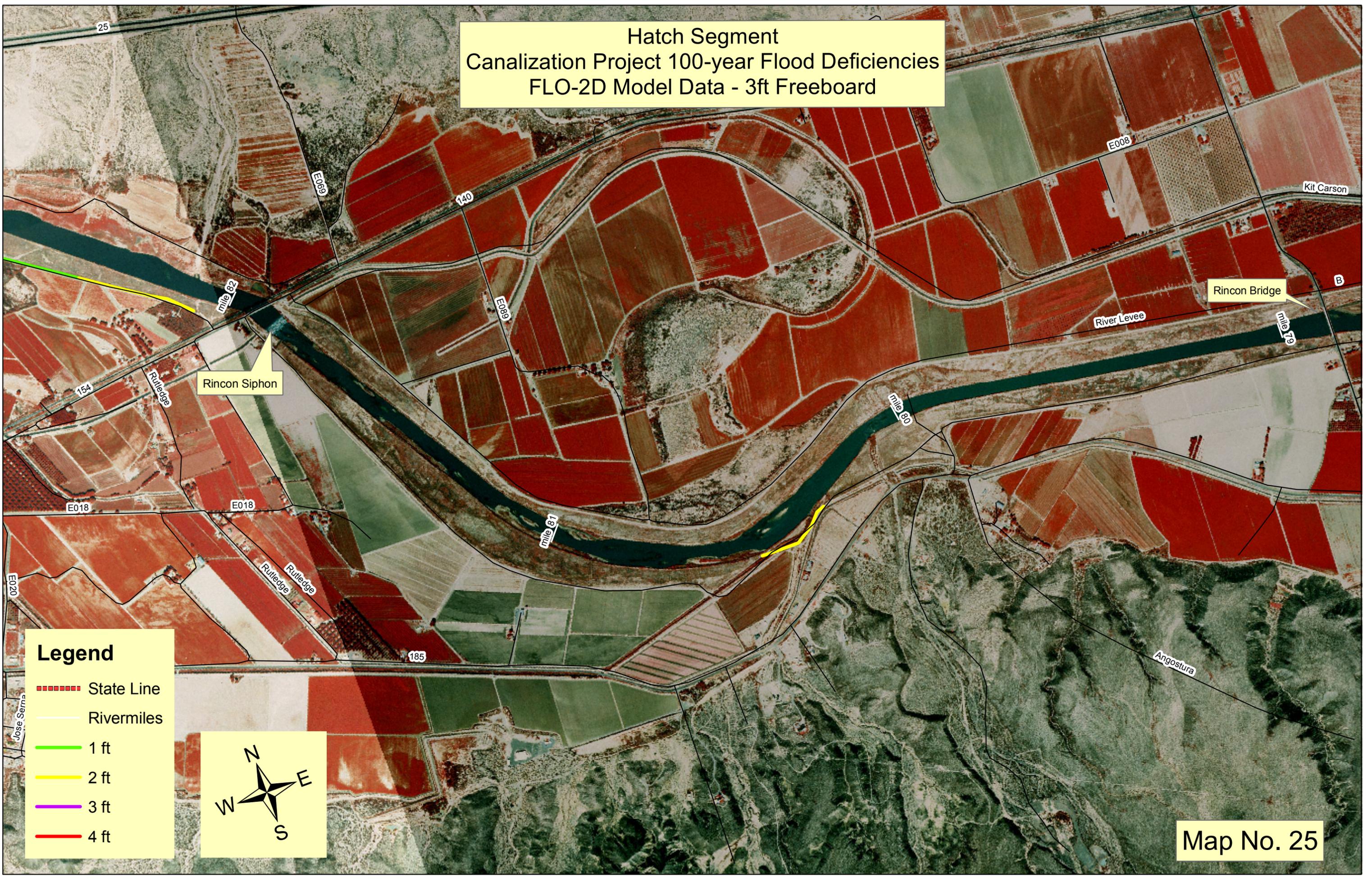


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- 3 ft
- 4 ft

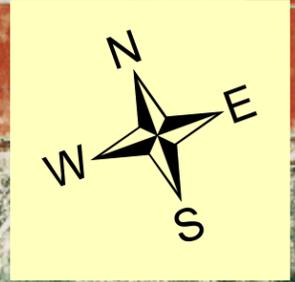


Hatch Segment
Canalization Project 100-year Flood Deficiencies
FLO-2D Model Data - 3ft Freeboard

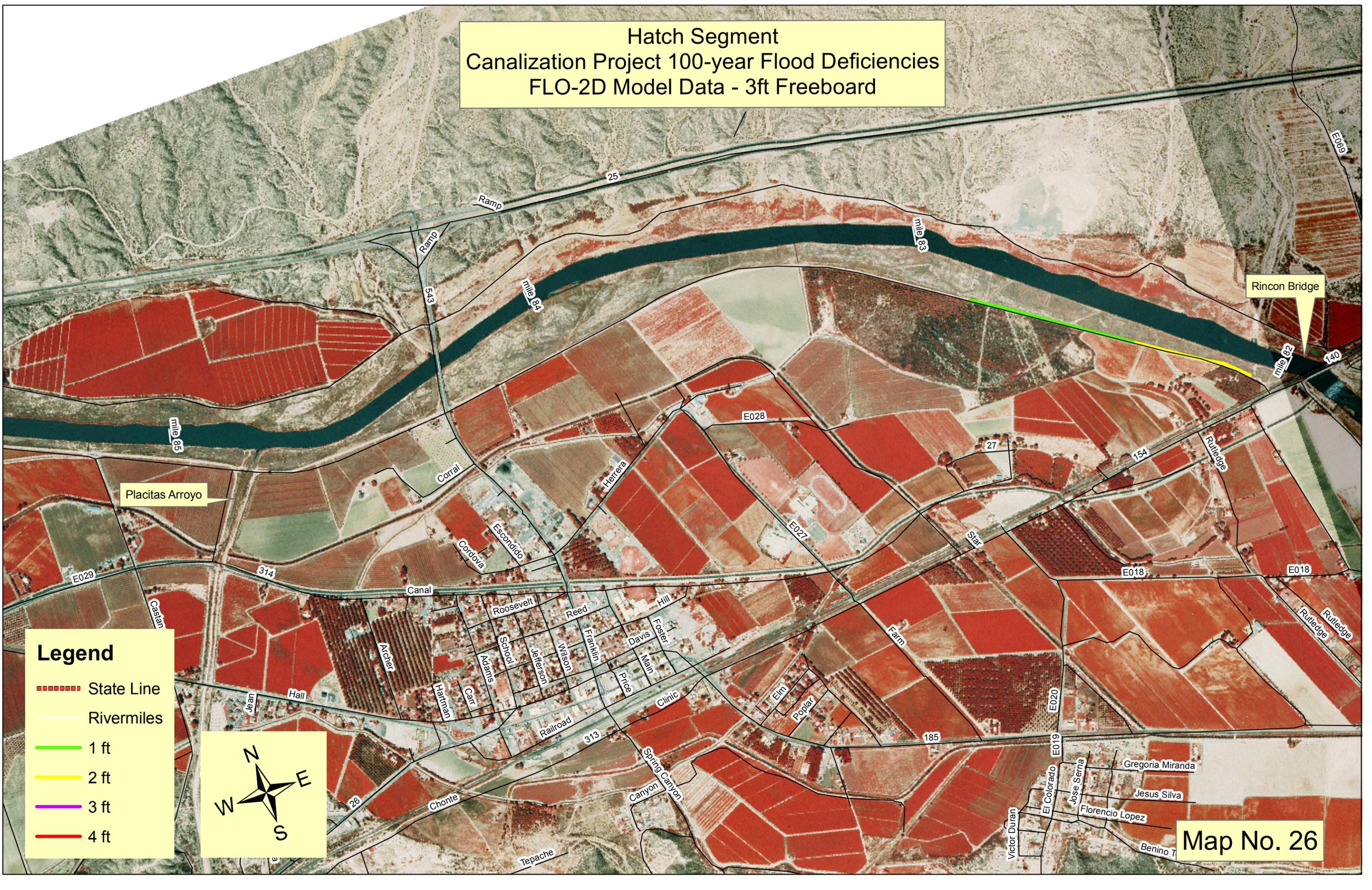


Legend

- State Line
- Rivermiles
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- 2 ft
- 3 ft
- 4 ft

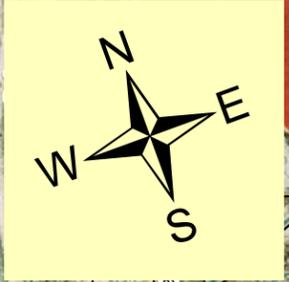


Hatch Segment
Canalization Project 100-year Flood Deficiencies
FLO-2D Model Data - 3ft Freeboard



Legend

- State Line
- Rivermiles
- 1 ft
- 2 ft
- 3 ft
- 4 ft



Map No. 26

Rincon Bridge

Placitas Arroyo

Gregoria Miranda

Jesus Silva

Florencio Lopez

Benino T

Victor Duran

Jose Serna

El Colorado

Farm

Poplar

Elm

Spring Canyon

Canyon

Clinic

Price

Main

Davis

Foster

Hill

Reed

Roosevelt

Canal

Archer

Herrera

Escondido

Cordia

Corral

Star

Rutledge

Rutledge

140

154

27

E028

E027

E029

E018

E018

E020

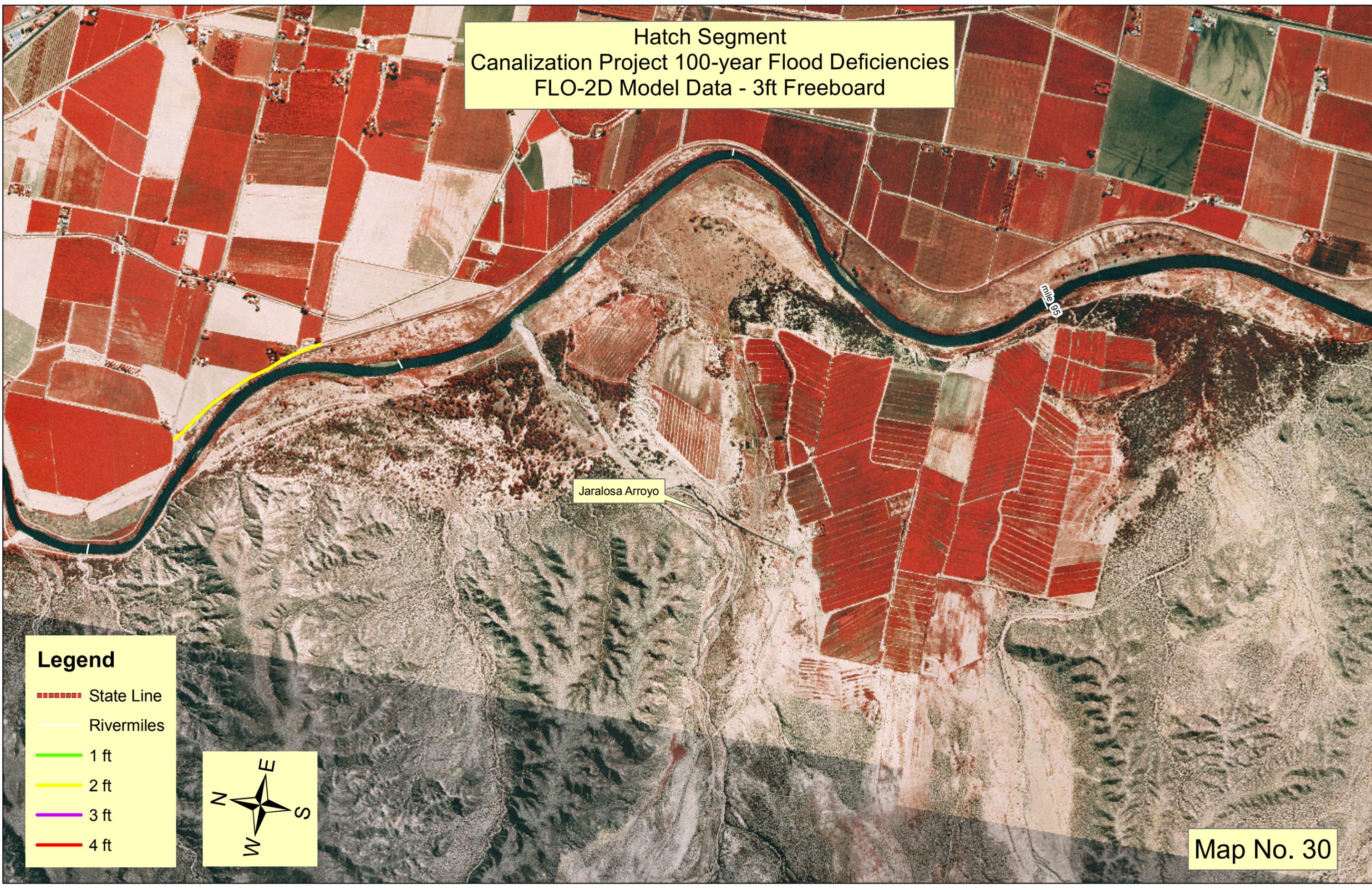
E019

E020

E019

E018

Hatch Segment
Canalization Project 100-year Flood Deficiencies
FLO-2D Model Data - 3ft Freeboard

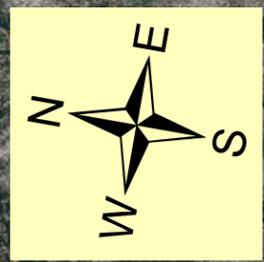


Jaralosa Arroyo

mile 96

Legend

- State Line
- Rivermiles
- 1 ft
- 2 ft
- 3 ft
- 4 ft



Map No. 30

APPENDIX B
LIST OF FEDERAL AND STATE
THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Federal and State Threatened and Endangered Species in El Paso County, Texas; Sierra and Doña Ana Counties, New Mexico.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal	Texas	New Mexico
Bat, Spotted	<i>Euderma maculatum</i>			Threatened
Black-Hawk, Common	<i>Buteogallus anthracinus anthracinus</i>			Threatened
Black Bear	<i>Ursus americanus</i>	Threatened	Threatened	
Bunting, Varied	<i>Passerina versicolor versicolor</i> ; <i>dickeyae</i>			Threatened
Cactus, Sneed's Pincushion	<i>Escobaria sneedii</i> var <i>sneedii</i>		Threatened	
Chipmunk, Colorado, Organ Mtns.	<i>Neotamias quadrivittatus australis</i>			Threatened
Cormorant, Neotropic	<i>Phalacrocorax brasilianus</i>			Threatened
Crane, Whooping	<i>Grus Americana</i>	Endangered	Endangered	
Cuckoo, Yellow-billed	<i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i>	Candidate		
Eagle, Bald	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus alascanus</i>			Threatened
Falcon, Aplomado	<i>Falco femoralis septentrionalis</i>	Endangered	Endangered	Endangered
Falcon, Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>		Endangered	Threatened
Falcon, Peregrine, Arctic	<i>Falco peregrinus tundrius</i>		Threatened	Threatened
Ferret, Black-footed	<i>Mustela nigripes</i>	Endangered	Endangered	
Flycatcher, Willow, SW.	<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	Endangered Critical Habitat Designated	Endangered	Endangered
Frog, Leopard, Chiricahua	<i>Rana chiricahuensis</i>	Threatened		
Ground-dove, Common	<i>Columbina passerina pallescens</i>			Endangered
Hummingbird, Broad-billed	<i>Cyanthus latirostris magicus</i>			Threatened
Hummingbird, Costa's	<i>Calypte costae</i>			Threatened
Hummingbird, Lucifer	<i>Calothorax Lucifer</i>			Threatened
Hummingbird, Violet-crowned	<i>Amazilia violiceps ellioti</i>			Threatened

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal	Texas	New Mexico
Kingbird, Thick-billed	<i>Tyrannus crassirostris</i>			Endangered
Lizard, Mountain Short-Horned	<i>Phrynosoma hernandesi</i>		Threatened	
Lizard, Texas Horned	<i>Phrynosoma cornutum</i>		Threatened	
Minnow, Rio Grande Silvery	<i>Hybognathus amarus</i>	Endangered	Endangered	Endangered
Mountain snail, Mineral Creek	<i>Oreohelix pilsbryi</i>			Threatened
Nightjar, Buff-collared	<i>Caprimulgus ridgwayi ridgwayi</i>			Endangered
Owl, Spotted, Mexican	<i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>	Threatened Critical Habitat Designated	Threatened	
Pelican, Brown	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis carolinensis</i>			Endangered
Plover, Piping	<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	Threatened	Threatened	
Pupfish, White Sands	<i>Cyprinodon tularosa</i>			Threatened
Sheep, Bighorn, Desert	<i>Ovis canadensis mexicana</i> (endangered populations)			Endangered
Shiner, Bluntnose	<i>Notropis simus</i>		Threatened	
Snake, Chihuahuan Desert Lyre	<i>Trimorphodon vilkinsonii</i>		Threatened	
Sparrow, Baird's	<i>Ammodramus bairdii</i>			Threatened
Talussnail, Dona Ana	<i>Sonorella todseni</i>			Threatened
Tern, Least	<i>Sterna antillarum athalassos</i>	Endangered	Endangered	Endangered
Trogon, Elegant	<i>Trogon elegans canescens</i>			Endangered
Trout, Gila	<i>Oncorhynchus gilae</i>	Threatened		Threatened
Vireo, Bell's	<i>Vireo bellii arizonae; medius</i>			Threatened
Vireo, Gray	<i>Vireo vicinior</i>			Threatened
Wolf, Gray, Mexican	<i>Canis lupus baileyi</i>	Endangered	Endangered	Endangered

1. New Mexico data obtained from the Biota Information System of New Mexico (BISON).
2. Texas data obtained from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 2007.

APPENDIX C
PHOTOLOG OF PROJECT AREA

Rio Grande Canalization Project Photolog taken during field survey of the RGCP Levee System.

Hatch/Tonuco/Rincon Area



Upper reach of levee deficient segment in Sierra County.



Typical levee segment in the upper reach of the RGCP.

Mesilla Valley Area



Levee deficient segment in the upper part of the of the Mesilla Valley reach.



Typical levee segment in the Mesilla Valley Reach, note Pecan orchard adjacent to levee.



View looking upstream towards I-10 Highway bridge.

El Paso/Upper Valley Area



Typical view of levee segment in the upper end of the El Paso Reach. Note levee slopes are not clearly defined.



West levee downstream of Vinton Bridge. Note river trail.



Upstream of Borderland Bridge, no levee present. Railroad embankment serves as levee in this reach.



Upstream of Borderland Bridge on east side of river.
River water back flowing into drain structure.



East levee downstream of Country Club Bridge.



East levee upstream of new Sunland Park Bridge.

APPENDIX D
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
REVIEW COMMENTS

October 30, 2007

Kevin von Finger
4117 La Adelita
El Paso Texas 79922

Kevin Bixby
Executive Director
Southwest Environmental Center
275 N. Downtown Mall
Las Cruces, NM 88001

Mr. Daniel Borunda
Environmental Protection Specialist,
Environmental Management Division,
United States Section, International Boundary and
Water Commission

Dear Mr. Borunda:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Flood Control Improvements to the Rio Grande Canalization Project Levee System in El Paso County, Texas and Dona Ana and Sierra Counties, NM. The following comments are submitted on behalf of the authors and the 2000 members of the Southwest Environmental Center.

1. Analysis needs to be more site-specific rather than describing the entire project area as a single mowed community. The EA describes affected vegetation communities in extremely general terms and refers to forb-grass communities, but fails to mention riparian woody vegetation, for example and in particular the regenerating bosque in the "no mow" area upsteam from Anapra bride at the end of Frontera (Sunland Park), the cottonwoods planted in the past by the IBWC staff, and the trees planted upstream of Picacho Bridge. Given the extreme degree of loss sustained by the Rio Grande riparian woody vegetation communities over the previous century, and the tiny remnant of such still surviving relative to the original extent, it can be argued that any further loss would likely meet the definition of "significance" as used in 40 CFR 1500-1508 and the thresholds established by Nepa case law. A Finding of No Significant Impact may not be suitable in such a case. Will these vegetation types, in particular cottonwood and other riparian trees and regenerating stands of this habitat type receive impacts, or can the IBWC stipulate avoidance of such vegetation as a mitigation measure? What specific oversight and controls on the contractor will be implemented to assure no impacts to these areas during construction? Impacts appear easily avoidable through requirements that would be stipulated in the contract scope of work and diligent on-site monitoring by IBWC personnel. This should be specified in the document as part of the project to ensure it is carried out and funded, if funding is necessary.

2. There is no mention made of the existing river trail in El Paso County nor the proposed New Mexico trail from Albuquerque to the Texas state line. Will the project potentially foreclose options to trail placement and alignment? When the levee is raised it appears that the levee will extend close to woody riparian habitat in some areas, such as the groves of native riparian trees at the end of Frontera noted above. An unintended consequence of the project could be the partial destruction and elimination of regenerating native cottonwoods and other native woody riparian species. As an example, at the Frontera location at least, levee raising will widen the levee base to the point that there will be little room for trail construction between the levee and river unless the trail is driven right through the recovering habitat. Recommend that the EA incorporate into the project the option to allow the proposed River Park Trail to use the levee road wherever desirable. This can reduce funding required for the trail and perhaps allow trail funds to harden the levee surface, benefiting both the flood control mission and the trail users. There is an environmental justice consideration here, as the low income and minority community of Sunland Park would otherwise have to choose between constructing a trail or protecting a remnant bosque. It is our understanding that the IBWC has partnered with trail proponents in the lower Rio Grande Valley and permitted the trail to be sited on top of the levee. This would be a win-win situation for everyone, and good PR for IBWC. This is also a mitigation measure that should be applied throughout the project area that may help to avoid foreclosing options to re-establishing woody riparian habitat and restoring hydrologic functions through bank shave downs and water cut outs that might arise from conflicts with future trail placements due to narrowing of the floodway resulting from widening the levee footprint.

3. Request that Section 5, Mitigation, clearly state plans and procedures to avoid construction impacts to regenerating bosques woody riparian vegetation communities, and include options to allow river park trail to occupy the levee along segments to avoid trail placement conflict with bosque habitat & foreclosing options to restore river function and habitat restoration. Request that these measures be incorporated as part of the project description. While Best Management Practices are great, these are not stated in the EA, so the public has no idea what these are or whether they will be effective or satisfy the public's concerns. Nor do they carry the force of commitment that a mitigation measure does when clearly stated and incorporated as a part of the project.

4. P 3-11 para. 3.4 Land Use states that "The USIBWC is currently exploring alternatives to address the levee deficiencies in this [Canutillo] area". What alternatives are being considered, and why aren't they being considered for other areas in lieu of levee raising? For example, didn't the EIS look at alternative that included acquiring land along the floodplain that could act as a sump during floods, store excess flood waters until such could be released back into the river? The land could be acquired by direct purchase or through conservation easements entered into with the land owners. Request alternatives be developed and analyzed for other areas in addition to just the Canutillo area. This is warranted by the fact that several non-profit environmental and land preservation organizations have advocated for this approach, in addition to such alternative(s) being noted as reasonable in the EIS that this EA is tiered from.

5. Section 1.1 speaks of “implementing environmental Enhancements” and implies such will be part of this project, however Section 4 page 4-12 states that these will not be implemented at this time. Please clarify. Will levee raising foreclose any options for these enhancements? If so this should be analyzed in the impact section. For example, in the aerial photos there appears to be a remnant meander just north (upstream) of the Rincon bridge, on the west side of the river. Will levee work affect options for restoring this area, or will construction or fill excavation have any impact on this and other such areas?

6. Will drains be impacted where they enter the floodway/river? These locations have been identified as potential places for wetland restoration.

7. There is a wetland at the intersection of arroyo 41 and the river under the railroad bridge just north of Borderland. Will this be impacted?

8. EA states that impacts to plant communities would occur “through clearing, excavation and fill activities”. Does the clearing refer only to the levee, or the flood plain also? What excavation will occur and where? Would any remnant riparian habitat be impacted by contractor fill borrowing activities, outside or inside of the floodway? If there is potential for such impact, this should be discussed as this would be an indirect but potentially significant impact (see comment 1); mitigation would be required in the form of stipulation in the scope of work as to areas to avoid for fill, and stated in the mitigation section of the EA.

9. Where will the fill come from that will be used to raise levees? Does IBWC intend to dredge any portion of the river to obtain fill material? If so, will this be covered by the current nationwide 404 permit, or will additional permitting be required? What mitigation will be done to compensate for the loss of aquatic habitat caused by river dredging?

10. Has IBWC considered implementing habitat restoration projects concomitantly with levee raising? For example, fill material could be obtained from within the floodway by excavating sloughs and wetlands that connect to the river. This would provide much needed fish spawning and nursery habitat. The outfall of drains and wasteways would be good locations to target, but such projects would be valuable anywhere. We suggest that you work with biologists and other wetland experts to design such projects. We would be glad to assist in any way possible.

Thank you.

Kevin von Finger
Kevin Bixby



FEMA

September 27, 2007

Carlos Pena, Jr., P.E.
IBWC of U.S. & New Mexico
The Commons, Bldg. C, Suite 310
4171 N. Mesa Street
El Paso, TX 79902

Re: Rio Grande Canalization Project

Dear Mr. Pena:

We have received your letter dated September 10, 2007. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above-proposed project.

The concerns of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are directed toward the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and the possible negative impact upon identified special flood hazard areas within the outlined project boundaries.

El Paso, Dona Ana and Sierra Counties are participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Therefore, any development that takes place within these Counties must be reviewed and appropriate permits issued to ensure compliance with their adopted Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. Our records show that the following individuals are the floodplain administrators and should be contacted concerning this project:

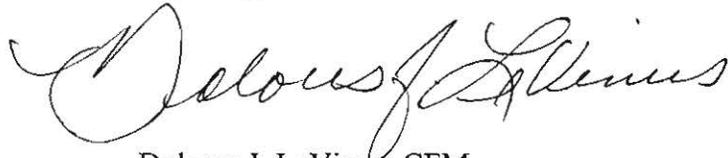
Robert Rivera, El Paso County – 915-546-2015
Orlando Fierro – Dona Ana County – 505-647-7256
Eloy Armijo – Sierra County – 505-894-6215

Also, please review proposed development to assure that all necessary permits have been received from those governmental agencies from which approval is required by Federal or State Law, including Section 404 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, 33 U.S.C. 1334.

Carlos Pena, Jr., P.E.
September 27, 2007
Page 2

Coordination with the Floodplain Administrator for the Counties can ensure that this project is in compliance with the counties' Flood Damage Prevention Ordinances and any county regulations/requirements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Dolores J. LeVinus". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Dolores J. LeVinus, CFM
Natural Hazards
Program Specialist

GOVERNOR
Bill Richardson



DIRECTOR AND SECRETARY
TO THE COMMISSION

Bruce C. Thompson, Ph.D.

Robert S. Jenks, Deputy Director

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
DEPARTMENT OF GAME & FISH

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Fax: (505) 476-8124

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Hobbs, NM

October 4, 2007

Mr. Carlos Pena, Division Engineer
International Boundary and Water Commission
The Commons, Building C, Suite 310
4171 N. Mesa Street
El Paso, TX 79902

Re: Environmental Assessment for Flood Control Improvements to the Rio Grande Canalization Project located in Dona Ana and Sierra Counties, New Mexico
NMGF No. 11721

Dear Mr. Pena,

In response to your letter dated September 10, 2007, regarding the Environmental Assessment for Flood Control Improvements to the Rio Grande Canalization Project located in Dona Ana and Sierra Counties, New Mexico, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (Department) is providing you with information regarding the presence of State listed species likely to occur within the footprint of levees that require lateral extension. The State-Threatened Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*) occurs in saltcedars and willows adjacent to the Rio Grande in the project area. The Department recommends that surveys for Bell's Vireo be conducted prior to construction in the vicinity of those project sites where the footprint of the levee would be widened. If Bell's Vireos were found near a project site, the Department recommends that levee construction activities be scheduled after the nesting season for the vireo (May 1 through late September) in those locations.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this EA. If you have any questions, please contact Randy Floyd, Aquatic Habitat Specialist, at (505) 476-8091 or randy.floyd@state.nm.us.

Sincerely,

Matt Wunder, Chief
Conservation Services Division

MW/rif

cc: Luis Rios, SW Area Operations Chief, NMGF
Pat Mathis, SW Area Habitat Specialist, NMGF
Hira Walker, Ornithologist, NMGF



Texas Department of Transportation

13301 GATEWAY BLVD. WEST • EL PASO, TEXAS 79928-5410 • (915) 790-4200

November 1, 2007

Mr. Carlos Peña, Jr., P.E.
United States Section,
International Boundary and Water Commission
4171 N. Mesa, Suite C-100
El Paso, Texas 79902

RE: Environmental Assessment (EA) for Flood Control Improvements to the Rio Grande Canalization Project located in El Paso, County, Texas and Doña Ana and Sierra Counties, New Mexico

Dear Mr. Peña:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is in receipt of your letter dated September 10, 2007, regarding the Environmental Assessment for Flood Control Improvements to the Rio Grande Canalization Project.

Information regarding state and federal species is available from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Wetland locations should be available from the National Wetland Inventory maps. Sources for historic structures and resources are available from the City of El Paso's Historic Preservation of Historic Places (Department of the Interior).

Detailed are TxDOT's planned projects in the area:

- Rio Grande Trail Park (City of El Paso's Enhancement Project)
- Border Highway West Extension from US 54 to SH 20 (Mesa Street), which will follow the Rio Grande and go through the Rio Grande floodplain around US 85 (Paisano Drive) at the Union Depot.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mary Telles-Goins at (915) 790-4324.

Sincerely,

Mark Longenbaugh, P.E.
Director of Planning & Development

Daniel Borunda - levee work needed at MVBSP

From: "Cary, Steve, EMNRD"
To: "Daniel Borunda"
Date: 10/19/2007 8:34 AM
Subject: levee work needed at MVBSP
CC: "Hechler, Rolf, EMNRD" , "Ellis, Stan, EMNRD" , "Gatterman, David, EMNRD"

Dan,

Thanks for taking time yesterday to explain how IBWC intends to conduct its levee maintenance activities and to alleviate our concerns about IBWC's proposed levee alterations in Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park.

Based on our conversation, the only issue we need to bring to your attention is the levee breach where the levee ties into the sandhills west of where it crosses the Picacho Drain. The levee ties in to the valley side just north of where a major arroyo meets the valley floor. Basically, arroyo flows have deposited sufficient sediment south (downstream) of the levee to bring the local alluvial fan up to levee height. Then (no later than August 2006), this fan did what alluvial fans do, and flows were diverted to the north (upstream) side of the levee. Because there was no fan on the north side (Harris Farms property, for which we own a conservation easement), the arroyo initially cut down and back up through the levee, entrenching a new channel. Since then, arroyos flows have been depositing sediment and building a fan on the north side of the levee.

I will forward a couple photos in follow-up e-mails.

This situation poses a couple of major concerns for us. First, the fan building up on the north side of the levee is damaging wet meadow lands that the park was created to protect. Second, if it continues indefinitely, emplacement of sediment north of the levee will eventually cause flows to reach and breach the Picacho Drain, operated by EBID. Emplacement of sediment in the Picacho Drain creates risk for plugging the Drain; if the Drain were to be plugged, our new visitor center east of the Drain could be flooded.

We bring these concerns to your attention with the hope that levee work scheduled in this area can include needed repairs to this structure.

In addition, we offer for IBWC use the sediments in the alluvial fan at the base of this arroyo. Such sediments cove a large acreage south of the levee and are a major management headache for us. We invite IBWC to visit the site to determine if this material is suitable for your needs. If it is, please work with Park Superintendent Stan Ellis to make arrangements for transporting the material out of the park in a manner consistent with park needs.

Please consider this as an official comment from New Mexico State Parks for IBWC's proposed EA for levee alterations along the Rio Grande in southern NM. Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Steve Cary

Mr. Daniel Borunda
Environmental Protection Specialist,
Environmental Management Division,
International Boundary and Water Commission

Dear Mr. Borunda,

The following are the Community of Sunland Park's comments to the Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Flood Control Improvements to the Rio Grande Canalization Project Levee System in El Paso County, Texas and Dona Ana and Sierra Counties, NM.

1. The EA doesn't mention the proposed river trail in Dona Ana County along Sunland Park. Sunland Park is a low income and minority community. We wish to continue the river trail and connect to the existing segments in El Paso Texas. However, we also want to preserve the riparian trees, the cottonwoods, willow, and screwbean mesquite, that are now regenerating along the river north of Anapra Bridge. Levee raising will widen the levee base to the point that there will be little room for trail construction between the levee and river unless the trail is driven right through the recovering habitat, causing destruction of this significant resource. This would force the Community of Sunland Park to choose between constructing a trail or protecting a remnant Bosque, an either or situation we want to avoid. This is a significant environmental justice consideration if trail project construction causes us to lose the trees or the trail. We understand that that the IBWC has partnered with trail proponents in the lower Rio Grande Valley and permitted the trail to be sited on top of the levee. Request that the EA incorporate into the project the option to allow the proposed River Park Trail to use the levee road wherever desirable. This can reduce funding required for the trail and perhaps allow trail funds to harden the levee surface, benefiting both the flood control mission and the trail users. This would be a win-win situation for the community and the IBWC!

2. We request that construction and heavy equipment operation be done in a manner that the adjacent regenerating riparian trees along these areas are not harmed. Request this be incorporated into the project and stated as a mitigation measure.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. We look forward to working closely with the IBWC to protect and enhance our natural legacies.

Robert Ardovino
Chair Planning and Zoning
Chair River trail Committee



United States Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services - LRGV SubOffice
Phone: (956) 784-7560 Fax: (956) 787-0547
Rt. 2 Box 202-A
Alamo, TX 78516
October 9, 2007

Mr. Daniel Borunda
U.S International Boundary and Water Commission
The Commons Building C, Suite 100
4171 N. Mesa Street
El Paso, Texas 79902

Consultation No. 21410-2008-TA-0408

Dear Mr. Borunda:

This responds to a letter received on September 10 and October 9, 2007 regarding the effects of the proposed Flood Control Improvements to the Rio Grande Canalization Project on species federally listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered occurring within El Paso County, Texas. In addition, your project was evaluated with respect to wetlands and other important fish and wildlife resources.

It's Service's understanding that the U.S International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) is preparing a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed action of flood control improvements along approximately 52 miles of the RGCP in EL Paso County, Texas, and Doña Ana and Sierra Counties, New Mexico. This office will only review the Texas portion of the project. Please coordinate with the NM Ecological Service Office for the project in NM. Flood control improvements were identified in the USIBWC 2004 Final EIS and subsequent hydraulic modeling utilizing FLO-2D. Improvements consist of levee raising, new levee segments, and floodwalls throughout the RGCP. These improvements are needed in order to meet the USIBWC 100-year design criteria for flood protection while at the same time meeting FEMA levee certification requirements.

The some locations, up to 2 feet of fill material would be placed on top of the levee, extending levee footprint up to a maximum of 12 feet from the current toe of the levee. Any project specific locations (PSL's) to get fill material outside of the project area will have to have T&E surveys. This expansion would take place along the approximately 20 feet service corridor currently utilized for levee maintenance, inside the maintained floodway, and entirely within the flood control project right-of-way. In some instances, adjustment in levee slope would be made to eliminate the need for levee footprint expansion, when required due to engineering considerations or for protection of biological or cultural resources. The need for excavation outside the levee structure is not anticipated.

The Proposed Action would increase flood containment capacity of the RGCP levee system by raising the elevation of a number of levee segments. Fill material would be added to the existing levee to bring the height to its original design specifications, or to meet the 3-foot freeboard design criterion for flood protection. Typical height increases needed in the improvement areas range from

foot up to 4 feet. Improvements greater than 2 feet in height will require additional engineering design and may extend the existing levee footprint. Improvements greater than 2 feet in height will be subject to availability of funds. The maximum levee height increases of 4 feet will extend the levee footprint up to a maximum of 24 feet from the current toe of the levee. The existing USIBWC ROW will dictate the footprint expansion, centered or offset. Centered expansion is the preferred method of levee expansion within the existing ROW. In some locations, where ROW is limited the placement of fill material could potentially extend the levee footprint to either the landside or riverside. For a typical levee cross-section with limited ROW on the landside, a 2-foot increase in levee height would result in a maximum 12-foot increase in the footprint toward the riverside. The need for excavation outside the levee structure is not anticipated.

For planning purposes, improvements have been divided into 3 Phases.

Phase 2 Flood Control Improvements in Texas:

Upper Valley Area-Raise 13.10 miles of existing levee upstream from American Dam to the New Mexico State Line.

Phase 3 Flood Control Improvements in Texas:

Canutillo Area- Construct a new flood control structure approximately 5.8 miles beginning upstream of the Vinton Bridge downstream to the Borderland Bridge.

American Dam to Courchesne Bridge- Construct a new flood control structure (levee or floodwall) for approximately 1.5 miles on the east bank of the Rio Grande in this reach.

Improvements to the levee corridor would affect plant communities through clearing, excavation and fill activities. The impacts would occur on the levee slope where fill would be added, and in some instances within the expanded levee footprint area at the toe of the levee. The vegetation communities impacted along the levee slopes are primarily low quality plants dominated by invasive plants including Bermuda grass, Russian thistle, Kochina, Silverleaf nightshade, and London rocket. Short-term impact on vegetation communities along the system corridor would occur. Work will be scheduled to occur outside of the bird-breeding season, which is generally March through August. If work continues into the bird breeding season, the areas proposed for disturbance will be surveyed in order to avoid the inadvertent destruction of nests and eggs; a biological monitor should be present during this time especially to make sure that there is no nesting of interior least tern or southwestern willow flycatcher along the project area.

In preparation of the 2004 EIS, biological surveys were conducted along the RGCP. A Biological Assessment was prepared to identify T&E species potentially occurring within the RGCP (Parsons 2001). Biological surveys for the interior least tern and southwestern willow flycatcher should be conducted prior to construction beginning, since nesting sites could change.

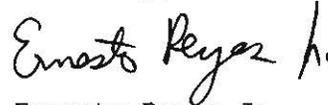
You have stated that No T&E species within the levee corridor would be adversely affected by levee raising activities. All work will occur on the existing levee footprint corridor. The herbaceous plant communities present along the levee corridor are dominated by invasive plants and grasses and provide little suitable habitat for T&E species. T&E species potentially occurring will not be impacted during the levee raising activities, as potential habitat is located within the river channel away from the levee corridor.

river channel away from the levee corridor.

The Service recommends any revegetation efforts within the project area should be with native grasses and forbs. We appreciate the opportunity to provide pre-planning information and look forward to providing any further assistance.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact Ernesto Reyes at the above letterhead and telephone number.

Sincerely,



Ernesto Reyes Jr.
Senior Fish & Wildlife Biologist
For
Allan M. Strand
Field Supervisor

cc:

Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Corpus Christi, TX



INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION
UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

082543

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
UNITED STATES SECTION

October 1, 2007



Mr. Phil Young
Department of Cultural Affairs
Historic Preservation Division
Bataan Memorial Building
407 Galisteo Street, Suite 236
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Mr. Young:

The United States Section, International Boundary Water Commission (USIBWC) requests your comments on the attached Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for Flood Control Improvements to the Rio Grande Canalization Project (RGCP) located within El Paso County, Texas and Doña Ana and Sierra Counties, New Mexico. The need for improvements to the RGCP levee system were identified in the *2004 Final Environmental Impact Statement, River Management Alternatives for the Rio Grande Canalization Project*. The USIBWC in coordination with the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District evaluated the RGCP flood containment capacity in 1996 and subsequently in 2005. These studies identified a number of potential levee deficiencies along the RGCP on the basis of hydraulic modeling of the 100-year storm. The modeling indicated that increases from 1 to 4 feet at various locations would be required to meet design criteria for flood protection. The studies also identified the need to construct a new flood control system along the east bank of the Rio Grande at two locations: the Anapra area upstream from American Dam to Courchesne Bridge; and the Canutillo area upstream from the Borderland Bridge to just upstream of the Vinton Bridge.

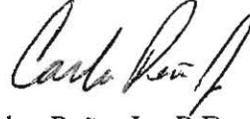
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) certification of RGCP levees in El Paso County, Texas and Doña Ana and Sierra Counties, New Mexico cannot occur until the existing levees are rehabilitated. The flood control improvements will allow the USIBWC to certify that the RGCP levee system meets the design criteria for flood protection. Recent preliminary Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps released by FEMA increased the newly designated Special Flood Hazard areas along the Rio Grande. The proposed action will enable the USIBWC to partially certify specific levee segments along the RGCP that meet the 3-foot freeboard design criterion for flood protection.

The Draft EA is available on the USIBWC webpage at www.ibwc.state.gov. Please submit your written comments before October 30, 2007, to the attention of:

Mr. Daniel Borunda
United States Section,
International Boundary and Water Commission
4171 N. Mesa, Suite C-100
El Paso, TX 79902
danielborunda@ibwc.state.gov

Thank you in advance, for your assistance in evaluating potential impacts of the proposed flood control improvement project. Your assistance in the evaluation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Carlos Peña, Jr., P.E.
Division Engineer
Environmental Management Division

Attachments:
As Stated

*Receipt acknowledged
Rebecca Porter
for SHPO
10/22/2007*

October 30, 2007

Mr. Daniel Borunda
Environmental Protection Specialist
US International Boundary and Water Commission
El Paso, Texas

Dear Mr. Borunda,

The Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID) submits the following comments on the October 1, 2007 EA on the proposed reconstruction of much of the river levee from Hatch, N.M. downstream to El Paso, Texas.

1. The photographs in the appendix are excellent --- they clearly show a concern that EBID has voiced on many occasions in the past --- there are islands after islands of sediment in the river channel. For flood control safety, this material must be dredged from the channel.
2. The EA states that "water Quality" will not be affected. We believe that the potential for water quality impacts exists. The EA is silent on the nature and source of the fill material to be used in raising the levees. There are no specifications for the materials to be used, no testing requirements, and no directions for the manner of placement. If used as fill, the sediments in the salt-grass covered flood-plane could leach salts into river-water during rain storm events. As you know, the City of El Paso has been concerned in the past about high salinity levels. The same is true about E. coli associated with organic matter in the flood-plane sediments. We have seen USGS data on sediment samples collected from the Rio Grande at El Paso that indicate organic content of 10 to 15% by dry weight. Bacterial re-growth can occur when sediments bearing old cow-manure are excavated and exposed to oxygen. As you know, the river in the canalization reach is in non-compliance with the New Mexico stream standards for E. coli. All of us should make every effort to insure that we do not add to the bacterial load of the river. We suggest that IBWC draft specifications for the salinity and bacterial content for the fill materials used and that testing of the fill materials at various construction sites be a part of the IBWC work-plan. Perhaps using the sediment now in the river channel will be preferable to excavating more permanent materials out of the flood-plane.

I would appreciate hearing your comments on these EBID concerns. EBID strongly supports the concept of adding to the levees to prevent flooding.

Sincerely,

Gary Esslinger, Manager
Elephant Butte Irrigation District