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Newsline— Issue 8

A Message from U.S. Commissioner Drusina



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The International Boundary and Water Commission marked some noteworthy activities over the summer. We celebrated the Commission's history with an exhibit at the University of Texas at El Paso's Centennial Museum, *Maps, Minutes, and Monuments: History of the Boundary Line, 1848-2012*. The exhibit, versions of which have previously been shown at the Instituto Cultural de Mexico in San Antonio, Texas and the Organization of American States in Washington, DC, traces the history of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, dating back to the early boundary surveys across little-known territory. It was great seeing so many staff and Commission friends at the exhibit opening. It brings a great sense of pride to follow in the footsteps of those who worked under extraordinarily difficult circumstances in the 1800s to survey and mark the U.S.-Mexico border.

The Commission also continues to make progress on implementation of Minute No. 319, the landmark Colorado River agreement we signed in late 2012. As you will read in this issue of Newsline, the Commission and its partners have been hard at work developing infrastructure projects, planting trees at habitat restoration sites, and performing technical work to help us manage limited water resources more effectively now and into the future. A recent Colorado River Symposium devoted two panels to Minute No. 319. I had the pleasure of joining Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon and Reclamation Commissioner Michael Connor for one of those panels. The Minute continues to generate significant stakeholder interest and involvement.

We continue to face many challenges with ongoing drought in the border region. A Reclamation announcement in August paints a grim picture for the Colorado River water supply. Next year, the release of water from Lake Powell will be the lowest since the lake filled in the 1960s as the basin has experienced its worst 14-year drought period in the last hundred years. Fortunately, Minute No. 319 provides some tools to mitigate drought impacts somewhat.

In the Rio Grande basin, summer rains provided some relief for drought conditions but water supply challenges remain as many reservoirs remain at low levels. The International Boundary and Water Commission continues to work diligently to address water deliveries to the Rio Grande under the 1944 Water Treaty. Fortunately, we have made progress in recent months to stabilize and reduce the deficit that had grown through the first half of the year and we have seen Mexico's water deliveries to the United States increase since July. We are committed to identifying strategies to improve the reliability of water supply planning, to ensure compliance with treaty obligations, and meet users' water needs.

Minute 319 Implementation Activities

Commission staff has continued their efforts over the past 9 months to implement the provisions of Minute No. 319, titled “Interim International Cooperative Measures in the Colorado River Basin through 2017 and Extension of Minute 318 Cooperative Measures to Address the Continued Effects of the April 2010 Earthquake in the Mexicali Valley, Baja California” and have made significant progress these recent weeks to accomplish the Minute goals

For the environmental measures identified in the Minute, the work groups are working towards implementing several restoration projects and designing the environmental flow and monitoring plans to provide water to the lower reaches of the Colorado River. Work on the environmental delivery plan continues with the team of scientists and experts meeting in late September to refine the draft delivery plan. Additionally, the scientists and experts are working on their recommendations for the environmental monitoring aspect that will take place during and after the environmental pulse flow to monitor and evaluate the ecological response from the pulse flow. With this critical step complete, the environmental team will work to have the delivery plan approved by the Commission for implementation in 2014.

Considerable work has also been started on the international projects contemplated in the Minute. Contracts have been awarded by the Mexican Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission for a study to design an approximately 568 acre-foot regulating reservoir in Mexico using the old Alamo Canal, located just south of the Northerly International Boundary. This structure will provide additional operational system flexibility for both the U.S. and Mexico and help insure constant and steady flow delivery to Mexican users.

A number of other work groups have also started recently. A binational hydrology and basin conditions team was formed in early September to analyze and understand the hydrology of the Colorado River Basin and to work towards correlating a drought indicator with elevations at Lake Mead, the primary dam on the lower Colorado River Basin. A binational team to assess the effects of Minute 319 actions on system operations and track the water accounting provisions of the Minute has also started, with their first task being to review and assess the feasibility of the environmental delivery plan within the operational capacity and constraints of the Colorado River system.

Moving forward the binational teams will be focusing on implementing the delivery of the environmental waters and analyzing the effects of the pulse flow on the local ecology. Additionally, it is expected the design phase of several canal lining projects will begin using the funds contributed by the U.S. for these works.

Environmental restoration at Laguna Grande

The International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) has begun implementing Minute 319, which was signed in November, 2012. The Minute opens up opportunities to share water, infrastructure and environmental responsibilities along the Lower Colorado River. This Minute is an international, multi-agency, and nongovernmental organization (NGO) effort that combines the resources of Mexico and the United States. As part of the environmental measures identified in Minute 319, “Laguna Grande Restoration Project: Phase I” is working towards restoring habitat in the lower reaches of the Colorado River. This is currently under construction with 30% of the work completed as of July. Over a four-month period, Pronatura Noroeste and the Sonoran Institute have produced 60,000 trees for future planting on-site and have physically planted 8,182 trees by hand on a 7.5-acre area of the project site. In total 11.6 acres have been reforested which constitutes about a third of the total project area. While work on the Phase I project continues, the USIBWC recently received a proposal for Phase II which is projected to restore an additional 54 acres at the Laguna Grande Site.



Reforestation activities
at the Laguna Grande
site.

Both the Mexican and United States Sections of IBWC and the Bureau of Reclamation with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation have provided the funding needed for NGOs Pronatura Noroeste and the Sonoran Institute to restore sections of this vital flyway. The southward route of migratory land birds of the Pacific Flyway that leave the United States in winter extends through the interior of California to the mouth of the Colorado River and on to winter quarters principally in western Mexico. Once a two million acre riparian forest, or bosque, in the middle of a desert, the lack of steady water over the last five decades has left this area a barren corridor waiting for the water to return. Through the binational efforts of these agencies and NGOs, this area shows a strong propensity to return to its original vigorous state.

Lower Rio Grande Water Quality Initiative

The Binational Technical Committee for the Lower Rio Grande Water Quality Initiative (LRGWQI) met in Austin, TX from July 15-19, 2013. The LRGWQI is a multi-agency funded binational project which includes federal and state, U.S. and Mexican agencies, universities and organizations. This project's goal is to address impairments on the Rio Grande with a binational watershed protection plan. The meeting consisted of training on the use of LA-QUAL, a water quality modeling program; discussions on data needs for the model; presentations on the historical data available; selecting sampling locations and plans; and continuous water quality monitoring. Also, binational Terms of Reference and a LRGWQI proposal were signed earlier this month in Mexico. Future meetings will cover additional data needs and action items.



IBWC Principal Engineers John Merino (r) and Luis Antonio Rascon (l) signing LRGWQI documents

U.S. delegation meets at Mexico's Foreign Ministry to discuss water deliveries under the 1944 Treaty



U.S. and Mexican delegation meeting at SRE

IBWC staff met in Mexico City on July 29 with Anthony Wayne, U.S. Ambassador, Sergio Alcocer, Undersecretary for North America in Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE), along with personnel from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and Mexico's National Water Commission (Conagua) to discuss Mexico's Rio Grande water deliveries to the United States under the 1944 Treaty. The goal of the meeting was to discuss short, medium and long term solutions to meet municipal and agricultural uses for both the U.S. and Mexico. Under the Treaty, Mexico delivers Rio Grande water to the United States from six Mexican tributaries.

IBWC exhibit at UTEP

The International Boundary and Water Commission displayed at the Centennial Museum at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), from May 16 to July 20, 2013, the exhibit entitled MAPS, MINUTES, and MONUMENTS: History of the Boundary Line, 1848-2012. The exhibit included pictures, artifacts and dioramas as well as historical measuring equipment and videos.



**USIBWC Commissioner
Edward Drusina and
Maribel Villalva,
Centennial Museum
Director**

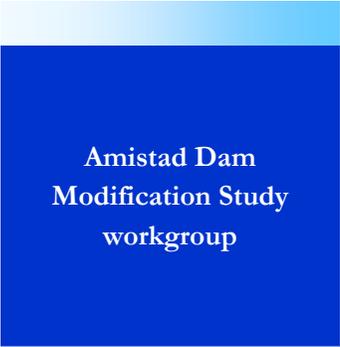
**IBWC Commissioners
and their spouses, with
UTEP President Diana
Natalicio**



**IBWC Exhibit
at UTEP**

IBWC participates in the Binational Alternative Formulation meeting for the Amistad Dam Safety Modification Study

For several years, the International Boundary and Water Commission and its technical experts have been working to address dam safety concerns resulting from naturally-occurring sinkholes near Amistad Dam, a Commission dam on the Rio Grande located near Del Rio, Texas-Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila. The Amistad Dam Safety Modification Study group met in Mexico City on July 8 through 12. The objective of this study is to identify and recommend an alternative risk management plan that supports the expeditious and cost effective reduction of risk of the dam. The intent is to achieve a complete remediation of potential individual failure mode(s) addressed by the plan to support the ultimate goal of having an adequately safe dam. At this meeting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) design team members met to present revised proposed alternatives based on the last Amistad meeting, to suggest alternatives that should be eliminated, and to conduct a risk analysis to evaluate the remaining alternatives for the Amistad Dam Safety Modification. Following this meeting, the participants decided to schedule a Joint Expert Panel Meeting and site visit to view current cut-off wall construction at the Center Hill Dam in Tennessee to help inform decisions about Amistad Dam.



USIBWC hosted a visit on July 2 from U.S. Consulate-Ciudad Juarez staff

Mr. Jack Doutrich, Political and Economic Chief and Mr. Azar Williams, Political and Economic officer at the U.S. Consulate in Ciudad Juarez visited the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission on July 2. Highlights from this visit included discussions on regional water issues under the Convention of 1906 and 1944 Water Treaty and a tour of American Dam and International Dam. These diversion dams allow for the delivery of waters to be utilized by urban and agricultural stakeholders in the El Paso/Juarez area.

Commission meeting held June 27 in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua



American Dam

The IBWC held a meeting of the Commission in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua on June 27, 2013. Topics discussed included updating the Rio Grande Water Accounting, Rio Grande water deliveries to Mexico under the Convention of 1906 (which are released from American Dam shown above), and water deliveries to the U.S. under the 1944 Water Treaty. Also covered was the Mulato Diversion Dam Modification Project which will modify a spillway at Mulato Dam that will automatically divide Rio Grande flow between the two countries during low-flow conditions. The Commission also discussed the bathymetric survey of Anzalduas Dam as well as confirmation of available funding for Wellton-Mohawk Drain maintenance, to include the removal of cattails, which can obstruct drain flow.

For the future, the Mexican government currently has funding to proceed with bathymetric surveys of Falcon and Amistad Reservoirs in 2013 and 2014.

Also mentioned during the meeting was that the Commission received a letter of congratulations from the City of Imperial Beach for its work to improve environmental conditions in the Tijuana River Valley.

International Visitors

The USIBWC Foreign Affairs Office periodically receives visitors who are invited to the United States under the auspices of the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. Their program is arranged by the Institute of International Education (IIE). Locally these groups are coordinated by the El Paso Council for International Visitors.

Delegation from Central Asia visits USIBWC Headquarters

A group of international visitors from Central Asia visited the U.S. Section Headquarters on July 18. The program for these visitors included participation by both Sections of the Commission. The group's objective was to learn about this region's water resource management and included members of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, from the Republic of Kazakhstan; of the Department for Water Resources Balance and Development of Water Saving Technologies, in Uzbekistan; as well as experts from the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan.



BWC Secretaries with
the Central Asian
delegation

Japanese graduate student interviews Foreign Affairs Secretary

In August, USIBWC Foreign Affairs Secretary, Sally Spener, was interviewed by a Japanese graduate student about Minute 319 and how the IBWC promotes U.S.-Mexico cooperation in transboundary water resources management. Mr. Jo Toriyabe is a Ph.D. candidate in the Graduate School of Law and Politics, Osaka University whose dissertation focuses on institutional models for transboundary water management.

Kazakhstan delegation in San Diego, CA

The U.S. Department of State coordinated an International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) project entitled "Transboundary Water Management Issues" for Kazakhstan. This delegation met with IBWC staff in Washington, D.C. and in San Diego, CA the last two weeks in August. This group was interested in transboundary water resource management, and cross-border collaborative efforts that have improved water supplies, resources, and environmental stability. They were also able to tour the USIBWC's South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant in San Diego, CA.

IBWC Newsline



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