

Spring 2014

Newsline- Issue 9

## *A Message from U.S. Commissioner Drusina*



The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC), looks forward to a productive year in 2014 as we address many opportunities and challenges.

Drought conditions continue to pose a challenge, particularly for farmers in southern New Mexico and downstream at El Paso, Texas-Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. Under the Convention of 1906, the United States delivers Rio Grande water for Mexican farmers in the Juarez Valley. Last year, drought conditions forced severe cutbacks in deliveries and a shortened irrigation season. Although reservoir conditions have improved somewhat, farmers in both countries continue to prepare for potential shortfalls this year.

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By the end of last year, thanks to the hard work of both Sections of the Commission, Mexico's deficit in Rio Grande deliveries to the United States under the 1944 Water Treaty, had been reduced significantly. Nonetheless, both U.S. and Mexican conservation capacity at Amistad and Falcon International Reservoirs, remains below 50%, meaning another potentially challenging year for water users. The two Sections of the Commission remain engaged in technical and policy work to identify strategies for water deliveries in 2014. An early success in this effort was delivery to the United States in January and February of excess flows from the San Juan River, a Mexican tributary to the Rio Grande which, under the 1944 Water Treaty, is usually dedicated to Mexico. Use of excess water from this source, consistent with the treaty, was identified by the two Sections of the Commission as a deficit-reduction strategy during meetings last year.

Turning to the western boundary, the Commission remains focused on implementing Minute No. 319, the Commission agreement signed in November 2012 to enhance cooperation on the Colorado River. We are currently working on implementation activities related to environmental restoration and water conservation infrastructure projects. We continue to undertake these activities with the support and participation of our partners from other federal agencies, environmental organizations, state agencies, and water managers from both countries.

In January, we joined with those partners at an event in Washington, DC where U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell presented a Partners in Conservation Award for Minute No. 319. It was very rewarding to join with U.S. Ambassador to Mexico E. Anthony Wayne, Undersecretary Sergio Alcocer of Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Relations, Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon of the IBWC, and other leaders who accepted the award.

The Partners in Conservation Award has special significance to me because it supports the slogan I have instituted during my tenure at the U.S. Section: *Excellence through teamwork*. I hope this approach to the important work of the Commission will inspire us again in 2014.

## *Secretary Jewell presents the International Boundary and Water Commission with the 2013 Partners in Conservation Award*

On January 16, the International Boundary and Water Commission received the Department of the Interior’s 2013 Partners in Conservation Award from U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell. These awards are for achievements recognized in public/private partnerships that promote conservation, protect natural and cultural resources, use innovative approaches for resource management, and engage youth and diverse entities in accomplishing the Department's mission. The IBWC was recognized during the award ceremony as part of the Minute 319 Binational Partnership. This Partnership was hailed as a “historic agreement on the Colorado River between Mexico and the United States.” The Minute 319 Binational Partnership addresses environmental and water supply concerns over the Colorado River that have been the subjects of controversy, dispute, and litigation along the U.S.-Mexico border. Minute 319 is one of the most innovative negotiated agreements between nations to include environmental river flows.

Signed in November 2012, this Minute was only possible with the partnership of the Colorado River Basin states, water users and environmental organizations in both countries, and it provides a unique example of cooperation for other basins worldwide.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
**PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION**  
 AWARDS CEREMONY




Photo courtesy of the Center for Earth & Security

The Secretary of the Interior invites you to celebrate and recognize this year's award winning Conservation Partnerships

**Thursday, January 16, 2014**  
**11:00 a.m.**

Sidney R. Yates Auditorium  
 Stewart Lee Udall Main Interior Building

Minute 319 also includes a pilot program to provide water for the environment in the Colorado River delta, identifying water for a pulse flow, as well as for base flow, to help establish native plant species in a part of the river where upstream dams and diversions have disrupted the flow for decades.

## *Partners in Conservation Award continued...*



**U.S. Ambassador to Mexico E. Anthony Wayne (L) and Undersecretary Sergio Alcocer of Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Relations (4th from left) with the IBWC Commissioners and other staff at the ceremony**



**Minute 319 Binational Partnership**



**USIBWC Foreign Affairs Secretary Sally Spener (L), Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, and USIBWC Commissioner Edward Drusina (R)**

## *Good Neighbor Environmental Board Advice Letter*

The Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB) is an independent federal advisory committee. Its mission is to advise the President and Congress on good neighbor practices along the U.S. border with Mexico. Its recommendations are focused on environmental infrastructure needs within this border area. U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina of the IBWC is a GNEB member, and as such participated in the drafting of an advice letter sent on December 18, 2013 from the GNEB to President Barack Obama. This letter identified issues for immediate action, among them:

-All U.S. federal agencies working in the U.S.-Mexico border region should increase interagency collaboration regarding ecological restoration and by June 2014 should draft a blueprint for action, including goals, metrics and protocols for achieving short-, medium- and long-term progress.

-The U.S. federal natural resource agencies and the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC), in collaboration with U.S. state agencies and U.S. tribal nations in the border region, should develop metrics, standards and models for environmental flows for use in water planning. They should identify lessons learned for potential use in border watersheds, which should incorporate the recognition of the sovereignty of U.S. states and tribal nations regarding water rights. Needed information includes analysis of the range of flow characteristics such as peak flow and monthly flow variation, as well as base flows, to support planning for allocations, wildlife needs, recreation and treatment capacity.

-U.S. federal agencies, such as the U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and IBWC, as well as U.S. state and Mexican stakeholders and tribal partners, should participate in U.S. state environmental flow reviews as permitted by state law. Where no U.S. state environmental flow review or process is occurring, these federal agencies should convene basin-wide analyses of environmental flows that are developed with Mexican, state and tribal partners to help identify the quantity, timing and quality of flows, as well as beneficiaries of these ecosystem services, within the framework of existing governing agreements and treaties. These analyses should be shared with U.S. states undertaking environmental flow reviews when and if they occur. Federal agencies should apply lessons learned from the Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study when conducting these analyses.



# *Land Boundary Monument Restoration*

The International Boundary and Water Commission during the early 1890s carried out a resurvey expedition to demarcate the international boundary, during which stone and iron monuments were erected. The structures currently total 276, which the IBWC maintains and re-builds on a continual basis.

On November 9, 2013 the restoration work for Monuments 142A and 145 at the Arizona-Sonora border was completed.

**Monument 145  
restoration project**



**Monument 142 A**



# Regional Commission Meeting in Rio Rico, Arizona

In November, the International Boundary and Water Commission met at the U.S. Section office at the Nogales International Wastewater Treatment Plant (NIWTP) in Rio Rico, Arizona to discuss Commission issues related to the Nogales area. Regarding the NIWTP, topics included the status of pretreatment in Mexico, monitoring of influent and effluent water quality, and status of sludge disposal costs. Also discussed was the proposed rehabilitation of the International Outfall Interceptor (IOI), the pipe that conveys sewage from the international boundary to the NIWTP. This multi-day event also reviewed the status of Nogales, Sonora sanitation and flood control projects, maintenance and repair of the international boundary monuments, and a GPS survey of the monuments.



**IBWC personnel toured the Nogales International Wastewater Treatment Plant**



**They also toured wastewater infrastructure in Nogales, Sonora, including the Los Alisos Wastewater Treatment Plant**

## IBWC Newsline

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