



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
February 18, 2009

EL PASO STORMWATER SYSTEM, RIO GRANDE FLOOD CONTROL IMPROVEMENTS, AND LEVEE ACCESS ON AGENDA FOR MARCH 3 PUBLIC MEETING

Flood control projects for the El Paso area will be discussed at the next public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens' Forum (RGCF), an outreach program of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC). The meeting will take place Tuesday, March 3, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at USIBWC Headquarters, 4171 N. Mesa Street, Building C, El Paso, Texas.

Gonzalo Cedillos and Michael Cortez of the El Paso Public Service Board (PSB), will discuss the El Paso stormwater system. Since the City asked the PSB to manage the Stormwater Utility almost one year ago, crews have completed over 1,100 maintenance projects to clear debris and vegetation from conduits, channels, ponds, and dams to keep the stormwater system working efficiently. The Stormwater Community Advisory Committee has also made progress over the last year. They provided input and recently approved a master plan that includes several multi-million dollar capital improvement projects to be completed over the next three years. The master plan will be presented to the PSB and then the City Council for approval in March.

The Stormwater Utility has been able to accomplish all of this because of the dedicated funding that has been available since it has been managed by the PSB. On May 9, voters will be asked to consider a request to give control of the Stormwater Utility back to the City. This means the collection of stormwater fees would stop for an undetermined amount of time.

Another key component of stormwater management in the region is the Rio Grande flood control system of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC). Work is

currently underway in El Paso County, Texas and Doña Ana County, New Mexico to raise and rehabilitate Rio Grande flood control levees. With passage of the federal economic stimulus package, the USIBWC anticipates spending millions in additional funds to improve Rio Grande flood control levees in the region. USIBWC Operations Support Specialist Gabriel Duran will give an update on the work currently underway and plans for future improvements.

The USIBWC will also address community concerns about public access to the flood control project. General Counsel Robert McCarthy will discuss USIBWC policy regarding levee access, which generally permits the public to engage in non-intrusive activities such as jogging, walking, fishing, and horseback riding. Prohibited uses include activities such as hunting and use of motorized vehicles that may threaten the integrity of the levees or pose a threat to the safety of the public or to law enforcement. The USIBWC is planning to replace “No Trespassing” signs along the river in the Upper Valley with signs that would advise of prohibited activities without barring all access. The USIBWC cooperates with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, which may access the levees as necessary to prevent unauthorized use and other illegal activities such as dumping and vandalism.

The Rio Grande Citizens' Forum was established by the USIBWC 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.

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the two countries and settling differences that arise in their application.

For more information:

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RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM
Tuesday, March 3, 2009
6:30 - 8:30 P.M.
USIBWC Headquarters
4171 N. Mesa St., The Commons, Building C
El Paso, TX 79902

AGENDA

- Welcome & Introductions – Al Riera, USIBWC, Citizens' Forum Co-Chair
- El Paso Stormwater System – Gonzalo Cedillos and Michael Cortez, El Paso Public Service Board
- Rio Grande Flood Control Levee Improvements – Gabriel Duran, Operations Support Specialist, USIBWC
- USIBWC Policy and Legal Issues Regarding Public Access to the Flood Control Project – Robert McCarthy, General Counsel/Legal Advisor, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion, Suggested Future Agenda Items

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 sallyspener@ibwc.gov