



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section



For immediate release  
July 10, 2012

### **EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS FOR DAMS, LEVEE CONSTRUCTION, AND RIO GRANDE ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION ON AGENDA FOR JULY 19 PUBLIC MEETING IN LAS CRUCES**

Development of Emergency Action Plans for dams, construction of Rio Grande flood control levee improvements, and efforts to improve habitat along the Rio Grande will be discussed at the next public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens Forum sponsored by the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC). The meeting will take place on Thursday, July 19, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Elephant Butte Irrigation District Board Room, 530 S. Melendres Street, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

James R. Covey with the Elephant Butte Irrigation District will discuss development of Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) for high-hazard dams in accordance with federal law and state administrative code. There are 13 high-hazard dams in Doña Ana County that are sponsored by the Elephant Butte Irrigation District. This presentation will provide a brief overview of the history leading to the EAP requirement, when EAPs are required, what a high-hazard classification means, and the required content of EAPs. The presentation is applicable to all dams that require the generation of EAPs but will use data from the Apache Brazito Mesquite, Site #1 for illustration purposes. This site is on the Apache Arroyo about four miles north of Mesquite, New Mexico. The steps required to generate the EAPs and specific issues on a typical EAP will be addressed.

USIBWC Civil Engineer Andrea Glover will give an update on Rio Grande levee construction in El Paso County, Texas and in Hatch, the Mesilla Valley, and Sunland Park, New Mexico. The work is intended to comply with levee standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency

(FEMA). Communities protected by levee systems accredited by FEMA benefit not only from the enhanced flood protection but from better rates on flood insurance. Property owners with federally-backed mortgages in areas not protected by accredited levees could face a mandate to purchase flood insurance. The work is being carried out with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. 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 in New Mexico and Texas have already created or preserved an estimated 2687 jobs.

USIBWC Natural Resources Specialist Elizabeth Verdecchia will give a presentation about river restoration activities in the Rio Grande Canalization Project. In 2009, the USIBWC signed the Record of Decision (ROD) for the River Management Alternatives for the Rio Grande Canalization Project after a lengthy consultation process with agencies, organizations, and citizens. The ROD committed the USIBWC to change management practices of the river and floodplain, and included the planned restoration of 30 sites to improve aquatic and riparian habitat. The USIBWC is currently working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement five pilot restoration projects which include restoring habitat for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher. Ms. Verdecchia will discuss the current and future restoration activities in this stretch of the river.

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. A complete meeting agenda follows.

For more information, members of the public may contact Sandra Camacho, 915-832-4105, [sandra.camacho@ibwc.gov](mailto:sandra.camacho@ibwc.gov).

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**RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM**  
**Thursday, July 19, 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.**  
**Elephant Butte Irrigation District Board Room**  
**530 S. Melendres Street**  
**Las Cruces, NM 88005**

**AGENDA**

- Welcome and Introductions – Conrad Keyes, Jr., Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- Emergency Action Plans, Elephant Butte Irrigation District's Experience – James R. Covey, Ph.D, P.E. Civil Engineer, Elephant Butte Irrigation District
- Construction Update of Levee Projects in Doña Ana County and El Paso County – Andrea Glover, Civil Engineer, USIBWC
- River Restoration Activities in the Rio Grande Canalization Flood Control Project – Elizabeth Verdecchia, Natural Resources Specialist, 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 915-832-4105 or e-mail [sandra.camacho@ibwc.gov](mailto:sandra.camacho@ibwc.gov)