



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release

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GEOTECHNICAL ANALYSIS UNDERWAY ON RIO GRANDE FLOOD CONTROL LEVEE

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has hired experts from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to conduct geotechnical investigations on the U.S. Rio Grande flood control levee near Brownsville, Texas. The USIBWC requested the work after cracks were detected this spring in a part of the levee located 80-100 feet from the Rio Grande. The cracks pose no immediate flood risk at current river levels and are considered safe under conditions similar to the 2010 flood. During that flood, the worst in 43 years, floodwaters did not reach the affected levee segment.

The cracks, which are primarily located at or near the top part of the levee, run generally parallel to the river within an 800 foot segment near the Gateway International Bridge. The deep cracks are several inches wide in some locations. USIBWC discovered the cracks during a routine levee inspection. Other cracks have been noted in the floodplain along the river and on a nearby service road.

USACE personnel conducted an initial site visit June 30 – July 3 and began detailed geotechnical investigations at the end of July. The investigations are intended to determine the cause of the cracking and, if necessary, develop possible repair solutions. The USACE is scheduled to complete its investigations and make preliminary recommendations by October.

A rapid drop in river levels earlier this year due to the drought could have affected the levee. The USACE identified other possible triggers for the cracks such as instability from river bank erosion, leaks from nearby water lines or storm drains, and water level fluctuations in the Fort Brown Resaca. The USACE will also look at levee design and construction activities as possible contributing factors.

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