



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
September 15, 2011

LOWER RIO GRANDE LEVEE CONSTRUCTION ON AGENDA FOR SEPTEMBER 27 PUBLIC MEETING IN MERCEDES

The ongoing effort to raise and rehabilitate United States levees in the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project will be discussed at the September 27 public meeting of the Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum (LRGCF). The LRGCF was established by the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) to facilitate the exchange of information between the USIBWC and members of the public about Commission activities and related issues in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The meeting will be held Tuesday, September 27, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m., at the USIBWC office at 325 Golf Course Road in Mercedes, Texas.

USIBWC Civil Engineer Tom Garduno will discuss the status of ongoing U.S. levee construction projects in the Commission's Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project, which covers 180 river miles from Peñitas to the Gulf of Mexico and the interior floodway system. Commission contractors are working on levee projects along the Rio Grande and in the Main Floodway, North Floodway, and Arroyo Colorado. In some areas, construction of the earthen levees has been completed although work is still underway on structures that pass through the levees. The work is being undertaken so the levees can be certified as compliant with standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Representatives from the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) will give a presentation about Mexican sanitation projects that are improving water quality in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. BECC and its sister agency, the North American Development Bank, have

supported development of wastewater infrastructure projects in Mexico to help reduce the discharge of untreated wastewater into the Rio Grande. The presentation will cover projects that have been completed or are planned.

In other business, USIBWC Principal Engineer Carlos Peña will give an update on efforts to maintain the flood conveyance capacity of the Arroyo Colorado, an important flood control channel through the Valley that, if not properly maintained, could lead to flooding in Harlingen. An analysis of water surface elevations in the Arroyo Colorado during last year's flood coupled with additional studies by the USIBWC indicate that plants and debris in the Arroyo Colorado have restricted the flow of water, leading to higher water levels when the stream is in flood conditions. Commission personnel have removed and trimmed some dead trees and debris along the Arroyo in easily-accessible areas. Work is currently on hold so the agency's environmental monitor can coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify appropriate paths for cleaning additional debris in less accessible areas.

The Commission will also recognize board members who are completing their two years of volunteer service to the Citizens Forum. Application forms will be available for those interested in applying to serve on the board for the next two years.

A complete meeting agenda follows. Members of the public who would like more information about the meeting may contact the USIBWC's Lower Rio Grande Project Office at 956-565-3150 or the Public Affairs Office at sally.spener@ibwc.gov.

For more information:

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LOWER RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM

Tuesday, September 27, 2011

4:00 - 6:00 P.M.

USIBWC Conference Room

325 Golf Course Road*

Mercedes, TX 78570

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions – Bill Lewis, Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- Status of Mexican Sanitation Projects in the Lower Rio Grande Valley – Renata Manning-Gbogbo or Temis Alvarez, Border Environment Cooperation Commission
- U.S. Levee Construction in the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project – Tom Garduno, Civil Engineer, USIBWC
- Update on Arroyo Colorado Cleaning to Reduce Flood Risk – Carlos Peña, Principal Engineer, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Recognition of Board Members
- 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 956-565-3150.

***Directions:** From Expressway 83, exit Mile 2 W. Travel south for approximately 1.5 miles to Golf Course Road. Turn left. The USIBWC is the first building on your left.