

For immediate release  
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## RIO GRANDE FLOOD CONTROL LEVEES, RIO GRANDE WATER QUALITY, AND EL PASO DESALINATION PLANT ON AGENDA FOR AUGUST 9 MEETING

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) announces a public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens' Forum at 6:30 p.m. on August 9 at USIBWC Headquarters, 4171 N. Mesa Street, Building C, El Paso, Texas. The purpose of the forum is to promote the exchange of information between the USIBWC and the community about the Commission's projects and related activities in the Paso del Norte region.

USIBWC Acting Principal Engineer Steve Smullen will give an update on work on Rio Grande flood control levees in the El Paso-Las Cruces area. The presentation will provide an overview of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) levee certification requirements, an update on recent local actions by FEMA to map areas at risk of flooding, and a description of current and proposed USIBWC levee-raising efforts to improve flood protection in areas where Rio Grande levees do not meet FEMA requirements. Smullen will also discuss habitat considerations within the flood control project.

Nancy Hanks, USIBWC Environmental Protection Specialist, will present Clean Rivers Program Updates for 2007. The presentation will provide tips on accessing Clean Rivers Program (CRP) data about water quality in the upper Rio Grande basin, including where and how these data are collected and analyzed. She will also discuss upcoming and ongoing projects with which the CRP is involved. Some of the projects include analyzing salinity loadings in the Pecos River and Rio Grande, past and future projects to analyze metals contamination, and the CRP study to analyze pesticides and herbicides in the Rio Grande.

Bill Hutchison, Water Resources Manager for El Paso Water Utilities, will give a presentation about El Paso's new desalination plant. El Paso has relied on the Hueco Bolson aquifer as a major water supply source since 1903. As a result of high pumping, groundwater levels have declined and brackish

groundwater has intruded into areas that historically yielded fresh groundwater. El Paso Water Utilities began reducing its Hueco pumping in 1989. This action was made possible by a variety of water management initiatives, including increased water conservation, increased surface water diversions, and increased reclaimed water use. The reduction in pumping has resulted in stabilized groundwater levels in many areas. However, brackish groundwater intrusion remains an issue.

A 27.5 million gallon per day desalination plant has been completed that will increase the community's potable water supply, reduce brackish groundwater intrusion, and allow EPWU to better utilize its fresh groundwater wells during droughts. The location of the pumping wells will provide an opportunity to intercept the brackish groundwater before it intrudes into historically fresh groundwater areas. This approach is a component of EPWU's overall groundwater management of the Hueco Bolson.

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**

**Thursday, August 9, 2007**

**6:30 - 8:30 P.M.**

International Boundary and Water Commission  
4171 N. Mesa Street, The Commons, Building C  
(just south of Executive Center Boulevard)  
El Paso, TX

### **Agenda**

- Welcome - Citizens' Forum Co-Chair
- El Paso Desalination Plant - Bill Hutchison, Water Resources Manager, El Paso Water Utilities
- Rio Grande Clean Rivers Program Updates for 2007 - Nancy Hanks, Environmental Protection Specialist, USIBWC
- The FEMA Mandate: USIBWC Levee-Raising Activities in the El Paso-Las Cruces Area - Steve Smullen, Acting Principal Engineer, 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.state.gov](mailto:sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov)