

**Statement of C.W. "Bill" Ruth
United States Commissioner**

**International Boundary and Water Commission
United States and Mexico**

**Before the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
November 4, 2009**

Chairman Oberstar, Ranking Member Mica, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to update you on the progress made by the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) toward implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act). We have made significant progress since submitting our previous testimony presented for the Committee's July 31 hearing.

The Recovery Act appropriated \$220 million to USIBWC's construction account for the Rio Grande Flood Control project to fund immediate infrastructure upgrades along 506 miles of flood control levees maintained by the USIBWC along the Upper and Lower Rio Grande. Of that amount, up to \$2 million may be transferred to our salaries and expenses account in support of this activity and we project that a total of \$1 million will be expended for salaries and expenses toward Recovery Act implementation through September 2010.

The Recovery Act funding will allow rehabilitation of over 200 miles of deficient levees, including Rio Grande levees and levees in the interior floodways in the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project. Since bids have been received under government estimates, the USIBWC will be able to undertake more miles of levee rehabilitation with Recovery Act funding than originally anticipated. This work will be done in Dona Ana County, New Mexico and El Paso, Hudspeth, Hidalgo, and Cameron Counties, Texas. In doing so, we will enhance the protection of lives and property of over two million border residents and bring our levee system into compliance with standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for a 100-year flood event. Reducing the risk of flooding along the Upper and Lower Rio Grande by rehabilitating deficient portions of these levee systems will provide increased safety to border residents and to business communities and encourage future economic growth and development.

At the close of Fiscal Year 2009, we had obligated \$44.4 million in construction funding and anticipate obligating additional construction funds in the amount of \$148 million between October and the end of this calendar year. We expect to obligate \$24.5 million in the second quarter of FY 2010 the remaining balance of \$2.5 million in construction funds in the third quarter of 2010, thereby expending all of the Recovery Act funding appropriated to our construction account ahead of the September 30, 2010 deadline.

We awarded our first construction contract in the amount of \$951,000 on July 24, 2009 for repair work along three miles of the Banker Floodway North Levee in Hidalgo County, Texas. We anticipate that construction on this segment will be completed by February 2010. The contract was awarded in accordance with a federal program targeting qualified small businesses located in distressed areas. On August 31 we awarded a \$19 million contract to construct levee improvements along a 43-mile reach of the Main Floodway in Hidalgo County, Texas. The project will provide enhanced flood protection for the communities of McAllen, Hidalgo, Pharr, San Juan, Alamo, Donna, and Weslaco, Texas. On October 19, we awarded a contract in the amount of \$21 million to construct 48 miles of levee improvements along the North Floodway and Arroyo Colorado in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties, Texas. The work will provide enhanced flood protection for the communities of Weslaco, Mercedes, La Villa, and La Feria. We expect to continue to award construction contracts through the remainder of this year and plan to have all construction contracts for levee improvements in the Lower Rio Grande Valley awarded by the end of December 2009, except for one segment that we anticipate awarding in April 2010. Several construction contracts will be awarded for levee rehabilitation in the Upper Rio Grande Valley during the first three months of 2010. All planned construction to be undertaken with Recovery Act funding is expected to be completed by April 2011.

As noted in my previous testimony, USIBWC's progress is being reported weekly on the Recovery web site, www.Recovery.gov, and on the Department of State Recovery web site, www.state.gov/recovery. Additional details on the scope of our project and our project schedule can be located at <http://www.ibwc.gov/Recovery/Index.html>. All contracting actions are being posted on <http://www.fedbizops.com> and are being reported in the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS). We are also providing data to this Committee on a monthly basis.

USIBWC continues to be proud of the progress we have made to date and pleased to be contributing to this important effort to bring about economic recovery, while at the same time providing long-term public benefits and infrastructure improvements to the U.S.-Mexico border.

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