

For immediate release
March 9, 2004

MEXICO'S WATER DEFICIT, HOMELAND SECURITY ISSUES, LOWER RIO GRANDE AUTHORITY ON AGENDA FOR MARCH 23 PUBLIC MEETING

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has scheduled a public meeting of its Lower Rio Grande Citizens' Forum (LRGCF) on March 23 at 4:00 p.m. in the Hoblitzelle Auditorium of the Texas A & M Agricultural Research and Extension Center, 2415 E. Highway 83 in Weslaco, Texas. The purpose of the LRGCF is to facilitate the exchange of information between the USIBWC and members of the public about Commission activities in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

USIBWC Deputy Commissioner Carlos Marin will provide briefings on two issues of local concern - Mexico's deficit in delivery of water to the United States in the Rio Grande basin and homeland security issues related to international dams and related infrastructure on the U.S.-Mexico border.

In accordance with the 1944 Water Treaty, Mexico delivers water to the United States from six of its tributaries to the Rio Grande. However, since 1992, Mexico has incurred a deficit in those deliveries, creating hardship in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas which relies on Mexico's treaty deliveries to meet water demand. Deputy Commissioner Marin will discuss Mexico's deliveries to date during the current water year as well as diplomatic efforts seeking additional deficit reduction this year.

Marin will also give a briefing on the Commission's homeland security activities related to the Mexico-United States Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) Framework for Cooperation. Through this program, both nations agreed to conduct vulnerability assessments of trans-border infrastructure and take protective measures. The U.S. and Mexican Sections of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) are the lead agencies for the Water and Dams Working Group. Through this group, the IBWC has compiled an inventory of water infrastructure on the border and proposed security enhancements. The U.S. Section has also proposed a multi-year program to institute a Homeland/Border Security Program at its installations boundarywide.

The Forum will also hear from Frank "Jo Jo" White, Board Member of the Lower Rio Grande Authority (LRGA). He will discuss the LRGA and its plans for the future. The LRGA, comprised of irrigation districts in Hidalgo, Willacy, and Cameron Counties, is currently focused on issues such as the ongoing drought and obtaining funding for long-term water conservation projects. A complete meeting agenda appears below.

Members of the public who would like more information can contact the USIBWC's Lower Rio Grande Project Office at (956) 565-3150 or Public Affairs Officer Sally Spener at (915) 832-4175 or sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov.

For more information:

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LOWER RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

4:00 - 6:00 P.M.

Hoblitzelle Auditorium

Texas A & M Agricultural Research and Extension Center

2415 E. Highway 83

Weslaco, Texas

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions - Forum Board Co-Chair Carlos Marin, Deputy Commissioner, USIBWC
- Lower Rio Grande Authority - Frank "Jo Jo" White, Board Member, Lower Rio Grande Authority
- Critical Infrastructure Protection - Carlos Marin, Deputy Commissioner, USIBWC
- Update on Water Supply Discussions with Mexico - Carlos Marin, Deputy Commissioner, 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 956-565-3150 or e-mail sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov.