

For immediate release
April 5, 2004

COMMISSIONER DURAN, RIO GRANDE MANAGEMENT ON AGENDA FOR APRIL 20 PUBLIC MEETING

U.S. Commissioner Arturo Q. Duran of the International Boundary and Water Commission will be the featured speaker at the April 20 meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens' Forum. The meeting takes place at 6:30 p.m. at Las Cruces City Hall, 200 North Church Street in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Duran was appointed U.S. Commissioner by President George W. Bush, replacing Carlos M. Ramirez who resigned for health reasons. Duran, former General Manager of the Lower Valley Water District in Clint, Texas, assumed his duties as Commissioner in January of this year. The April 20th event marks Commissioner Duran's first appearance at a Citizens' Forum meeting. The U.S. Section of the IBWC (USIBWC) has five Citizens' Forum boards in the U.S.-Mexico border region. Duran will discuss his vision for the Commission.

Also on the agenda, Dr. Carlos Victoria-Rueda and Dr. R.C. Wooten will present additional information about the four management alternatives under consideration by the USIBWC for the Rio Grande Canalization Project – a water delivery and flood control project from El Paso, Texas upstream 105 miles to Percha Dam, New Mexico. The two presenters work for Parsons, the USIBWC contractor preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which analyzes the alternatives. The alternatives include flood control improvements as well as environmental enhancements. A potential increase in water use is associated with a number of measures included in the alternatives such as native bosque development and managed grasslands within the USIBWC right-of-way. The presentation will discuss potential water use for each measure under consideration, anticipated effects on regional water resources, and water conservation strategies to address potential increases in water use.

Commissioner Duran has received numerous letters commenting on the Draft EIS and he has invited the commentators to attend the April 20 meeting. A formal public hearing on the Draft EIS was held in late January in El Paso.

"I appreciate the community's interest in the Commission's activities and I look forward to a meaningful exchange with the public at the Citizens' Forum meeting," said Commissioner Duran.

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.

Members of the Rio Grande Citizens' Forum Board, who serve as unpaid volunteers, represent a variety of interests along the Rio Grande in west Texas and southern New Mexico. The group is co-chaired by Carlos Marin, Deputy Commissioner with the USIBWC, and Kevin Bixby, Director of the Southwest Environmental Center in Las Cruces. All board terms are expiring and the USIBWC is accepting applications through April 23 from members of the public who would like to serve on the board.

The meeting agenda follows. For more information about the meeting or to obtain an application for the Citizens' Forum board, call 915-832-4175 or go to the USIBWC web page at <http://www.ibwc.state.gov>.

For more information:

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RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM

Tuesday, April 20, 2004

6:30 - 8:30 P.M.

Las Cruces City Hall
200 North Church Street
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions - Kevin Bixby, Citizens' Forum Co-Chair, Southwest Environmental Center
- U.S. Commissioner Arturo Q. Duran, International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico
- Potential Water Use by Canalization Project Management Alternatives - Carlos Victoria-Rueda and R.C. Wooten, Parsons
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion, Suggested Future Agenda Items

Next Meeting: July 28, USIBWC Headquarters, 4171 N. Mesa, Bldng C, El Paso, 6:30 p.m.

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