

For immediate release
July 14, 2004

USIBWC SELECTS RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM BOARD MEMBERS; RIO GRANDE WATER SUPPLY AND WATER QUALITY ON AGENDA FOR JULY 28 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 July 28 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 issues in the area.

This will be the first meeting for new board members who were recently appointed to two-year terms by USIBWC Commissioner Arturo Q. Duran. The new board members are:

- Alexandro Lozano, El Paso City Council
- Lupe Garcia, Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers of America, Inc. (Ed Provencio, alternate)
- Alisa Jorgensen, Save the Valley Neighborhood Association
- Denise McWilliams, New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service
- Sal Quintanilla, Texas Master Naturalists, Rio Bosque Wetlands Park (Ed Dominguez, alternate)
- Jesus "Chuy" Reyes, El Paso County Water Improvement District #1
- Irene Tejeda, Paso del Norte Water Task Force
- Chris Yarnes, fisherman and bird watcher

Additionally, the USIBWC renewed the appointments of the following incumbent board members:

- Kevin Bixby, Southwest Environmental Center
- Chris Brown, New Mexico State Univ. Dept. of Geography, Paso del Norte Watershed Council
- Michael Fahy, El Paso Water Utilities
- Joe Groff, League of Women Voters, Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue
- Keith Landreth, Fort Bliss Directorate of Environment
- Rudy Provencio, Elephant Butte Irrigation District (Henry Magallanez, alternate)

Issues related to the Rio Grande water supply and water quality will be a focus of the meeting. Wayne Treers of the United States Bureau of Reclamation will provide the latest information about Rio Grande Project water supply and allocation. Due to the drought and low storage at Elephant Butte and Caballo reservoirs, allocations to water users in New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico have been reduced this year.

Michael P. Fahy of El Paso Water Utilities (EPWU) will discuss present and future water supplies to meet El Paso demands. Texas state law requires all water providers, including EPWU, to balance future water supplies with projected customer demands to the year 2060. Water demand for EPWU in 2060 is expected to be double the current water demand of 120,000 acre-feet per year. EPWU will meet demand through various water supply management strategies, including the use of fresh ground water, treated surface water, conservation, desalination of local brackish ground water, increased use of

reclaimed wastewater, and eventual importation of fresh and desalinated brackish ground water.

EPWU projects currently underway include installation of reverse osmosis wellhead treatment units at brackish wells and installation of new wells. Additionally, treatment plants are under construction in order to meet the new arsenic standard for water. EPWU also expects the Joint Fort Bliss-EPWU Desalination Facility to come on line in 2006.

Wayne Belzer, Environmental Protection Specialist with the USIBWC's Clean Rivers Program, will summarize water quality issues in the Rio Grande in Texas. He will also discuss projects that were completed during the past year, future projects, research within the basin, and new programs. There will also be an opportunity for input into the program from community members.

Environmental Protection Specialist Doug Echlin will discuss the Rio Grande Canalization Project Final Environmental Impact Statement, which was recently released. The study analyzes alternatives for managing the project, covering 105 river miles from Percha Dam, NM to El Paso, TX. The agency selected the Integrated USIBWC Land Management Alternative as the preferred approach for long-term management of the project as it provides the best balance of flood control, water delivery and habitat enhancement.

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, NM and Fort Quitman, TX. 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.

A complete meeting agenda appears below.

For more information:

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RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM

Wednesday, July 28, 2004

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 and Introductions
- Recognition of Board Members - Sally Spener, USIBWC
- Rio Grande Project Water Supply and Allocation for 2004 - Wayne Treers, Hydraulic Engineer, United States Bureau of Reclamation
- Present and Future Water Supplies to Meet El Paso Demands - Michael P. Fahy, El Paso Water Utilities
- Summary of Rio Grande Water Quality and Clean Rivers Program Projects - Wayne Belzer, Environmental Protection Specialist, USIBWC Clean Rivers Program
- Rio Grande Canalization Project Environmental Impact Statement - Doug Echlin, Environmental Protection Specialist, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion, Suggested Future Agenda Items

The next meeting will be November 4 in Las Cruces.

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.