



THE BOUNDARY MARKER

The newsletter of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission

Winter 2003/2004

OPTIONS STUDIED FOR COLORADO RIVER PROJECT

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) is currently preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Lower Colorado River Boundary and Capacity Preservation Project. The EIS analyzes various alternatives for implementing the project, looking at factors such as endangered and threatened species impacts, cultural resources, and air quality.

The purposes of the project are to maintain the conveyance capacity of the river and to preserve the international boundary in the 24-mile river segment that forms the U.S.-Mexico border. In recent decades, changing conditions, including a shifting river channel, sediment accumulation, and vegetation growth have made it difficult to define the boundary line in the river channel. These changes have also affected the flood control features of the river so the project seeks to ensure that the river channel, floodways, and levees can safely handle the volume of floodwaters for which the project was originally designed.

Alternatives currently being analyzed include following the existing river channel, restoring the channel to its alignment of 30 years ago, establishing a new alignment to maximize the efficiency of the flood control project, and establishing a new alignment that seeks to minimize disturbance of certain areas of native vegetation.

The project has been discussed at various public meetings conducted by the USIBWC -- most

recently at a November 19 meeting in Yuma, Arizona attended by about 50 people, including representatives of local and state agencies, environmental organizations, and tribes. Additional public meetings are planned for next year.

The Draft EIS is scheduled to be released for public comment in the summer of 2004. Some months later, the

USIBWC, in consultation with Mexico, will select an alternative and then seek an appropriation from Congress to implement that selection.



Colorado River near Yuma, Arizona



PRESIDENT ANNOUNCES INTENT TO APPOINT DURAN TO HEAD USIBWC

Just as *The Boundary Marker* was going to press in December, President George W. Bush announced that he intends to appoint Arturo Duran to be Commissioner of the United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission. Duran previously served as General Manager for the Lower Valley Water District in Clint, Texas. In February 2003, he was appointed to be a member of the Joint Public Advisory Committee of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation. Mr. Duran previously served as an Environmental Coordinator for the Environmental Protection Agency in El Paso, Texas.

Mr. Duran was raised in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico and came to the United States after graduating from high school. He attended New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico where he received his bachelors and masters degrees in Chemical Engineering.

As General Manager of the Lower Valley Water District in El Paso County, he was responsible for providing potable water, sewer, solid waste, parks and recreation, and flood control services to several communities.

IBWC SALUTES COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ

In November, Carlos M. Ramirez, Commissioner of the United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC), resigned for medical reasons following two years of distinguished service to the Commission. Ramirez, former Mayor of El Paso, Texas, was appointed to the Commission post by President George W. Bush in 2001.

During his tenure at the USIBWC, Commissioner Ramirez addressed one of the most vexing issues in the U.S.-Mexico relationship – that of Mexico's deficit in delivery of water to the United States in the Rio Grande. Commissioner Ramirez and his Mexican counterpart, Commissioner Arturo Herrera, concluded two agreements on the subject – Minutes 308 and 309 – which laid the groundwork for improved binational planning for the Rio Grande to ensure sustainable basin management.

Internally, Commissioner Ramirez brought positive change to the U.S. Section by establishing the Program and Project Management Division (PPMD). Using existing staff and resources,

PPMD offers a more efficient means of cradle-to-grave project management to coordinate projects effectively among different USIBWC offices and divisions.

Commissioner Ramirez also moved the agency toward greater public participation. During his tenure, the number of Citizens' Forum boards expanded from one to five. These community boards conduct regular public meetings in various border cities to promote the exchange of information between the USIBWC and the public about Commission activities and related projects.

On behalf of the staff at the USIBWC, Acting Commissioner Debra J. Little said, "Commissioner Ramirez taught us so much during his time at the USIBWC, particularly about accountability to the public. He never shied from public outreach, whether by meeting with the press or promoting the Citizens' Forum program. He greatly increased the visibility of the Commission in the communities where we work."



Com. Ramirez (r) received the *Christiaan Petrus Fox Citizen of the Year 2001* award from Ft. Bliss Commanding General Stanley E. Green

He greatly increased the visibility of the Commission in the communities where we work."



RIO GRANDE IRRIGATION PROJECTS ADVANCE

The USIBWC is making progress in shoring up three irrigation structures located in the Canalization Project. These structures -- the Hatch Siphon, Rincon Siphon, and Picacho Flume -- are an important part of the irrigation conveyance system for the Elephant Butte Irrigation District in Southern New Mexico.

USIBWC Upper Rio Grande Project Manager Hector Maynes gave an update on the projects at the October 27 meeting of the Commission's Rio Grande Citizens' Forum in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Maynes noted that the two siphons were built between 1917 and 1919 to convey irrigation water beneath the Rio Grande from one side of the river to water crops on the other side of the river.

"Although the structures are sound," Maynes told the audience, "field inspections of the siphons have revealed minor leakage in some of the vertical joints."



Work is underway on the Hatch Siphon

Maynes also pointed out that beginning in the 1960s, scour holes began developing in the bed of the river downstream of the siphons. The scour holes were temporarily repaired by placing large boulders in the holes.

With the cooperation of the Elephant Butte Irrigation District, the USIBWC has undertaken a program to protect the siphons. Work on the Erosion Protective Works for the Hatch Siphon should be completed this winter. The work consists of installing sheet piling across the river near the siphon and approximately 300 feet downstream of the siphon and placing layers of rock in the bed of the river between the sheet pilings. During the 2004 non-irrigation season, similar work will be done at the Rincon Siphon.

The USIBWC is also expected to start construction in 2004 to rehabilitate the Picacho Flume. Built in the 1920s, the flume is a bridge structure that carries irrigation water over the river.

MEXICAN WATER DELIVERIES INCREASE IN 2003

Delivery of water by Mexico to the United States has been on the rise. Under the 1944 Water Treaty, Mexico is to deliver to the U.S. an annual average of 350,000 acre-feet of water to the Rio Grande from six of its tributaries. Since 1992, Mexico has incurred a deficit in those deliveries of 1.3 million acre-feet.

During the water delivery year that concluded in October, Mexico delivered 399,964 acre-feet, based on an agreement reached with the United States early in 2003. In the first two months of the current water year, Mexico has already provided more than 100,000 acre-feet, thanks to abundant rainfall in the basin. The USIBWC is urging Mexico to significantly increase deliveries in 2004.

For the past several years, the International

Boundary and Water Commission has engaged in extensive negotiations about the deficit. Although some progress has been made in securing short-term deliveries, a long-term approach to tackle the water debt remains under discussion.

The issue continues to receive high-level attention. In November, Texas Governor Rick Perry and Agriculture Commissioner Susan Combs broached the subject with Mexican President Vicente Fox during a meeting in Austin. The issue has also come up during meetings between Secretary of State Colin Powell and Mexican Foreign Affairs Minister Luis Ernesto Derbez. Officials from the Fox administration have indicated that they do not want the deficit to increase on their watch.

International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

United States Section

4171 N. Mesa Street
Suite C-100
El Paso, TX 79902-1441
Phone: (915) 832-4100
Fax: (915) 832-4190
<http://www.ibwc.state.gov>

Acting Commissioner.....Debra J. Little
Deputy Commissioner.....Carlos Marin
Executive Engineer.....Robert Ortega
Secretary.....Carlos Peña

Mexican Section

Av. Universidad No. 2180
Zona de El Chamizal
A.P. 1612-D C.P. 32310
Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua
Phone: (011-52-656) 613-7363
Fax: (011-52-656) 613-9943
<http://www.sre.gob.mx/cila/>

Commissioner.....J. Arturo Herrera
Principal Engineer.....L. Antonio Rascón
Principal Engineer.....Gilberto Elizalde
Secretary.....Jesús Luévano



International Boundary and Water Commission
United States Section
4171 N. Mesa Street, Suite C-100
El Paso, TX 79902-1441