



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
January 7, 2008

U.S. COMMISSIONER TO DISCUSS LOWER RIO GRANDE PROJECTS AT JANUARY 16 PUBLIC MEETING

Commissioner Carlos Marin of the United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) will discuss the agency's priorities for 2008 at the next public meeting of the Lower Rio Grande Citizens' Forum (LRGCF). The meeting will take place January 16, 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. at the USIBWC office, 325 Golf Course Road in Mercedes, 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.

The USIBWC is working to implement a number of projects in the region, including a major effort to raise and rehabilitate Rio Grande flood control levees in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties. USIBWC studies have identified levee segments that need to be raised in order to provide adequate protection for the 100-year flood. During 2008, the USIBWC expects to work on levee segments in Brownsville, Hidalgo, and Pharr.

Another focus of activity relates to the border fence project being undertaken by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The USIBWC has been coordinating with DHS to discuss issues related to fence design and location to ensure that fencing does not interfere with the USIBWC's responsibilities related to flood control and maintenance of the international boundary.

The Commission will also work in 2008 to follow up on recommendations from dam safety inspections of Amistad and Falcon Dams – two international reservoirs on the Rio Grande that store water and provide flood protection for the Valley. Of particular concern is the need to gather additional technical information related to naturally-occurring sinkholes at Amistad Dam.

In other business, Chris Hathcock from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will discuss the Ditch-Stabilization Demonstration Project at Estero Llano Grande State Park. Texas Parks and Wildlife is currently seeking funding for a project to use plants in drainage ditches to control bank erosion, improve water quality, and provide wildlife habitat. Drainage districts tasked with maintaining open channels for quick conveyance of excess water during flood events regularly mow and remove vegetation growing within and along drainage ditches. In many cases, banks are so steep that only sparse amounts of vegetation can be supported and the ditch must be routinely dredged. This project investigates techniques for and benefits of using selected native plant species in local drainage ditches and other waterways and the degree to which each species restricts water flow. A scope of work for this project was developed by Alan Plummer Associates, Inc., an environmental and water resources engineering firm.

A complete meeting agenda follows. Members of the public who would like more information can contact the USIBWC's Lower Rio Grande Project Office at 956-565-3150 or the Public Affairs Office at sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov.

For more information:

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LOWER RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM

Wednesday, January 16, 2008

4:00 - 6:00 P.M.

USIBWC Conference Room

325 Golf Course Road

Mercedes, TX 78570

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions - Rick Reyes, Citizens' Forum Co-Chair
- Lower Rio Grande Projects and Priorities for 2008 - Carlos Marin, Commissioner, USIBWC
- Ditch Stabilization Demonstration Project at Estero Llano Grande State Park, Weslaco - Chris Hathcock, Habitat Restoration Coordinator, Texas Parks and Wildlife
- 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