

# Final Environmental Assessment for Avian Hunting in the Rio Grande Canalization Project

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# Background

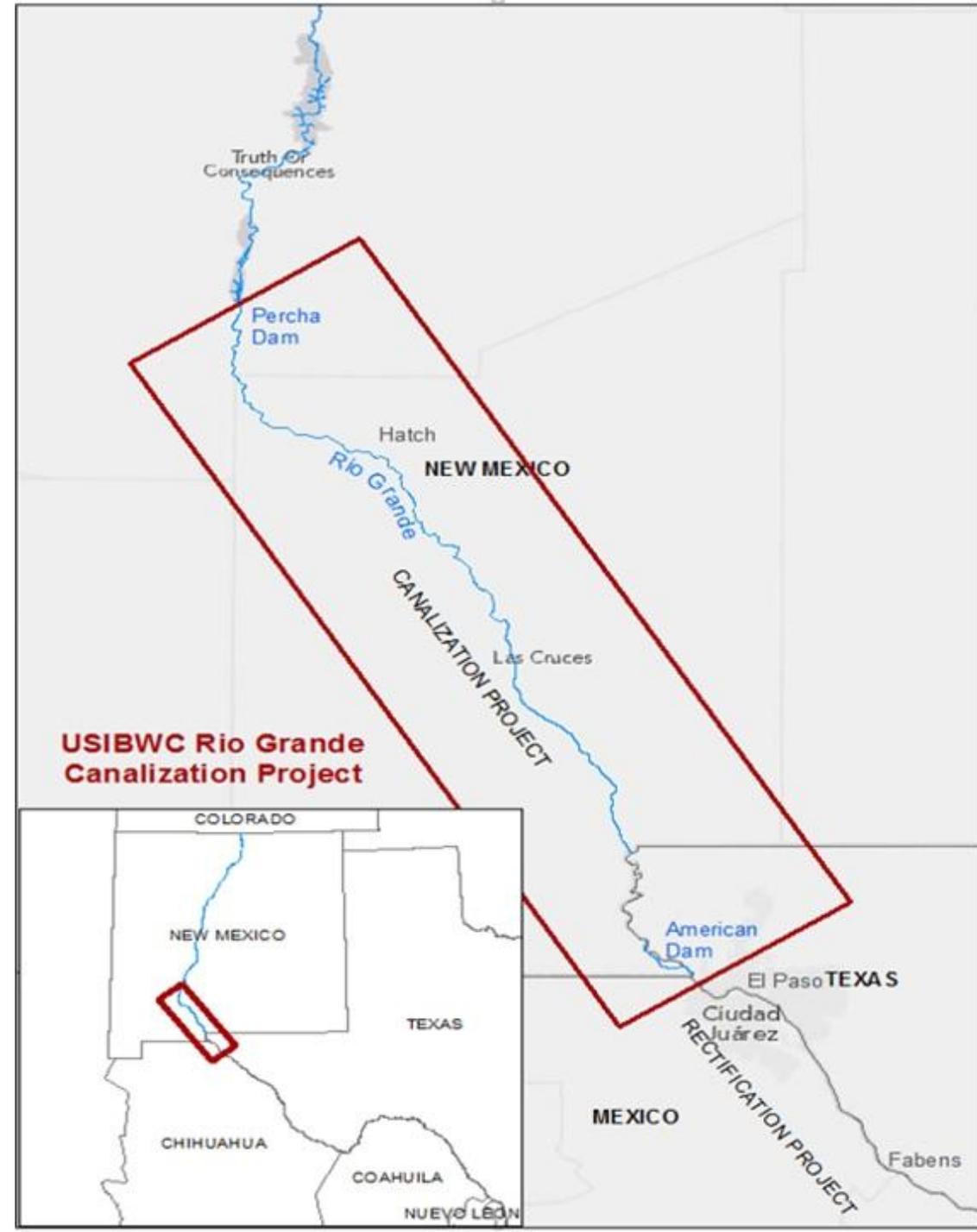
▶ USIBWC began allowing dove hunting in the Rio Grande Rectification Project (El Paso and Hudspeth Counties) several years ago

▶ USIBWC has not allowed hunting in the New Mexico portion of the Rio Grande



# Background

- ▶ New Mexico Game and Fish Department approached USIBWC to consider allowing hunting on USIBWC lands along the Rio Grande in New Mexico as well
- ▶ USIBWC began to evaluate allowing hunting in the Rio Grande Canalization Project in New Mexico, via a Draft Environmental Assessment in summer 2013



# Draft Environmental Assessment

- ▶ Notice of Availability of the Draft EA was published in the Federal Register in July 2013
- ▶ The Draft EA contemplated two alternatives:
  - ▶ No Action (leaving current hunting prohibitions)
  - ▶ Allowing avian hunting on 3 designated areas totaling 55 miles
- ▶ USIBWC did not have a preferred alternative

# Environmental Impacts

- ▶ Agency evaluated biological, cultural, water, and community resources; land use; environmental health issues
- ▶ Overall, the hunting alternative was determined to have only minimal impacts
- ▶ Possible adverse impacts include
  - ▶ localized noise pollution affecting residents and wildlife (both target and non-target)
  - ▶ Unofficial recreation areas used less often for non-hunting recreation
  - ▶ The State Historic Preservation Office felt there could be potential adverse impacts to cultural resources (ex: looting or trampling of archaeological sites)



# Public Comments

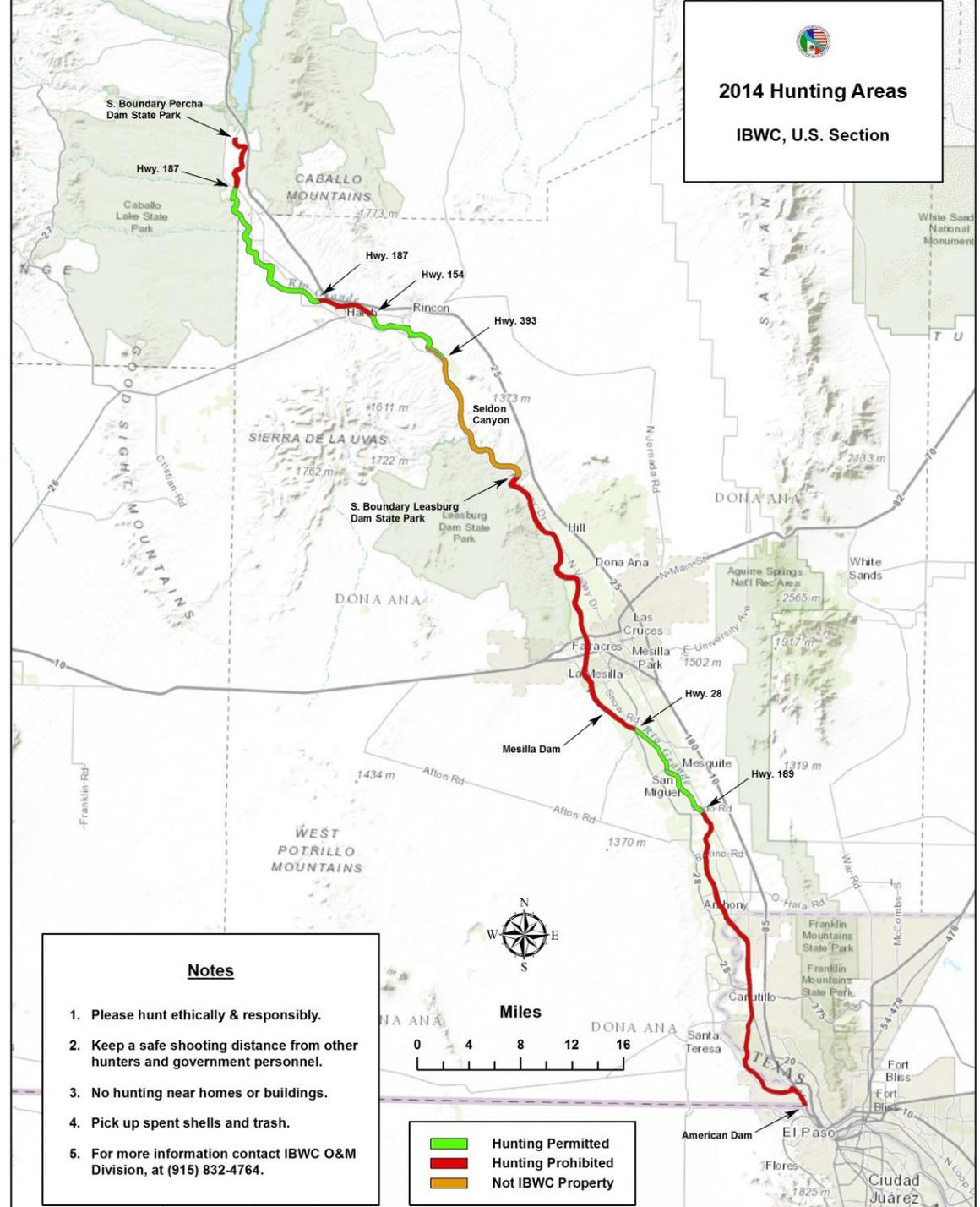
- ▶ 30-day public comment period from July to August 2013
- ▶ About 200 comments were received
- ▶ Many comments were strongly in favor of the hunting alternative; however,
- ▶ Many comments were strongly in opposition to the hunting alternative, and residents voiced concern for specific designated hunting areas (ex: Shalem Colony area)
- ▶ The final decision/Final EA was originally anticipated for fall of 2013, but USIBWC delayed the decision due to sequestration and the volume of public comments

# Final Environmental Assessment

- ▶ USIBWC modified the hunting alternative to address public concerns. The designated areas were shortened or cut to remove more populated areas (Hatch, Mesilla, Shalem Colony, and Vado)
- ▶ The final EA will authorize 30 miles of hunting in 3 designated areas.
- ▶ Placement of trash receptacles at bridges was removed from the proposed action
- ▶ USIBWC feels that the Final EA is a compromise, attempts to address most of the concerns voiced by the public, and considers the recreational interests of multiple kinds of recreation (hunting and non hunting) as well as public safety concerns



**2014 Hunting Areas**  
**IBWC, U.S. Section**



**Notes**

1. Please hunt ethically & responsibly.
2. Keep a safe shooting distance from other hunters and government personnel.
3. No hunting near homes or buildings.
4. Pick up spent shells and trash.
5. For more information contact IBWC O&M Division, at (915) 832-4764.

	Hunting Permitted
	Hunting Prohibited
	Not IBWC Property

# Hunting

- ▶ Avian hunting of migratory birds under NMAC 19.31.6
- ▶ Avian hunting of some upland game (pheasants and quail) under NMAC 19.31.5

# Enforcement

- ▶ All USFWS and NMDGF regulations apply, including:
  - ▶ Distance to dwellings
  - ▶ Species
  - ▶ Season dates
  - ▶ Bag limits
  - ▶ Firearm and ammunition type (shot)
- ▶ USIBWC is coordinating with local law enforcement entities on enforcement

# Final EA schedule

- ▶ USIBWC intends to publish the Notice of Availability of the Final EA in the Federal Register by August 1 and on the USIBWC website on or before August 1
- ▶ The Final EA needs to be published in the Federal Register for 30 days prior to the action occurring
- ▶ Hunting will be authorized 30 days after publication
- ▶ USIBWC will post updated signs in August



# Parting Advice

- ▶ Please hunt ethically and responsibly
- ▶ Keep a safe shooting distance from other people and government personnel
- ▶ No hunting within 150 yards of buildings
- ▶ Pick up spent shells and trash
- ▶ Do not block access on levee roads or floodways
- ▶ Hunt at your own risk
- ▶ For more information contact IBWC at (915) 832-4764