



**International Boundary and Water Commission  
United States Section**

For immediate release  
January 7, 2016

**EL NIÑO IMPACT ON RIO GRANDE BASIN, FEMA LEVEE  
ACCREDITATION TOPICS OF JAN. 21 PUBLIC MEETING OF  
RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM**

The El Niño weather phenomenon is upon us and the effects are now being felt in the Southwest and the Rio Grande basin.

A public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens Forum of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) will feature Mike Hardimon, meteorologist for the National Weather Service in the El Paso-Las Cruces area, who will explain the medium and longer range weather outlook for the region, including current status and forecast of El Niño and its impact on the Rio Grande basin. El Niño and La Niña are the warm and cool phases of the "El Niño Southern Oscillation," a phenomenon that involves changes in ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific, which has major impacts on weather patterns. Strong El Niño phases typically bring an increase in precipitation to the region.

Lead Hydraulic Engineer for USIBWC Apurba K. Borah, Ph.D., PMP, will give a status update that will focus on the Rio Grande flood control levee certification packages that USIBWC has submitted to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for review and the status of addressing draft review comments received from FEMA. Once a levee segment is accredited as meeting certain requirements related to design, embankment stability, interior drainage,

maintenance, and other aspects, the updated floodplain maps will reflect the flood protection provided by the levees. The USIBWC has rehabilitated various parts of the Rio Grande levee system in recent years. Communities protected by levee systems accredited by FEMA benefit from both enhanced flood protection and better rates on flood insurance.

Another topic related to FEMA levee certification requirements is the 2012 installation of a floodgate at the Country Club Road Bridge. Heavy flow of car and truck traffic across the bridge damaged some of the floodgate's aluminum panels, causing them to come loose and create vibration noise when vehicles pass over them. Borah will explain the temporary solution that was adopted by the USIBWC to eliminate this noise.

The USIBWC established the Rio Grande Citizens Forum 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. A complete meeting agenda follows.

For more information:

Mario A. Montes  
915-832-4794  
mario.montes@ibwc.gov

**RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM**  
**Thursday, January 21, 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.**  
**USIBWC First Floor Conference Room**  
**4171 N. Mesa, Bldg. C-100**  
**El Paso, TX 79902**

- Welcome and Introductions – Carlos Peña, Citizens Forum Co-Chair, USIBWC.
- **Impact of El Niño on the Rio Grande Basin:** Mike Hardiman, meteorologist for the National Weather Service, will give a presentation on the medium and longer range weather outlook for the region, including current status and forecast of "El Niño" and its impact on the Rio Grande basin.
- **Update on FEMA Levee Accreditation and Status Update on Country Club Road Floodgate:** Lead Hydraulic Engineer for USIBWC Apurba K. Borah, PhD, will give a presentation on the levee segment packages that have been submitted for review to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Borah will also give a status update on the temporary repair done to the Country Club Road floodgate to eliminate noise from traffic going over the floodgate's loose plates.
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion
- Suggested Future Agenda Items

**\*Directions:** From I-10 exit at Executive Center Boulevard and head east toward Mesa St. Turn right on Mesa. USIBWC Headquarters building is in the Commons business complex to your right. Please arrive at least 30 minutes early because all visitors and employees must pass through security screenings.

*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 915-832-4794 or e-mail [mario.montes@ibwc.gov](mailto:mario.montes@ibwc.gov).*