



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release  
January 26, 2015

### **WATER SUPPLY AND FLOOD CONTROL PROJECTS ON AGENDA FOR FEBRUARY 12 PUBLIC MEETING IN EL PASO**

A planned facility to provide drinking water for El Paso and the status of Rio Grande flood control improvements will be discussed at the next public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens Forum, an outreach program of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC). The meeting will take place Thursday, February 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at USIBWC Headquarters, 4171 N. Mesa Street, Building C, El Paso, Texas. This is the same agenda as the meeting originally scheduled for January 22 that was canceled due to a winter storm.

Alan Shubert, Vice President of Operations and Technical Services for the El Paso Water Utilities (EPWU), will give a presentation about the Advanced Purified Water Treatment Plant, which is expected to be operational in 2017. Advanced water purification transforms highly-treated wastewater into fresh drinking water that is purer than tap water.

Currently, upstream communities discharge treated wastewater into the Rio Grande, and El Paso uses that river water for drinking water supplies. After the water is used in homes and businesses, it is treated and reused for irrigation and industrial processes but some of the water is discharged into the river and used again downstream. Once the Advanced Purified Water Treatment Plant is in operation, EPWU will be able to use the water rather than send it downstream for other users.

EPWU balances water resources by using river water, water from underground aquifers, and treated water from wastewater plants. When drought reduces Rio Grande flows, EPWU pumps more water from the aquifers. However, this accelerated groundwater pumping is not sustainable for prolonged periods of time. According to EPWU, purified water is a sustainable, cost-effective resource that can

provide long-term relief for El Paso, especially as continued drought reduces El Paso's river water allocations.

In other business, USIBWC Supervisory Civil Engineer Padinare Unnikrishna will discuss the agency's work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to accredit the region's Rio Grande flood control levees. The USIBWC has rehabilitated various parts of the Rio Grande levee system in recent years. The presentation will focus on the levee segment packages that USIBWC has submitted to 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. Communities protected by levee systems accredited by FEMA benefit from both enhanced flood protection and better rates on flood insurance.

As part of the levee improvements already completed, the USIBWC installed floodgates on Country Club Bridge in the Upper Valley. The presentation will cover the recent installation of sound reduction panels on the floodgates in response to residents' concerns over noise generated when vehicles drive over the floodgates.

Dr. Unnikrishna will also give an update on the USIBWC's budget for additional levee work. For the current fiscal year, the USIBWC has a total of \$18 million for work in the greater El Paso-Las Cruces region and in South Texas.

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:

Sally Spener  
915-832-4175  
sally.spener@ibwc.gov

**RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM**  
**Thursday, February 12, 2015**  
**6:30 - 8:30 P.M.**  
**USIBWC Headquarters**  
**4171 N. Mesa St., The Commons, Building C\***  
**El Paso, TX 79902**

**Agenda**

- Welcome and Introductions – Miguel Teran, Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- Advanced Purified Water Treatment Plant – Alan Shubert, Vice President of Operations and Technical Services, El Paso Water Utilities
- Status Updates on FEMA Accreditation of Rio Grande Flood Control Levees, FY 2015 Levee Budget, and Installation of Sound Insulation Panels at Country Club Bridge Floodgates – Padinare Unnikrishna, Ph.D., P.E., CFM, Supervisory Civil Engineer, Engineering Services Division, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion
- Suggested Future Agenda Items

**\*Directions:** From I-10, exit Executive Center Blvd. Go east to Mesa Street. Turn right on Mesa. The Commons office buildings are on the right.

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 [sally.spener@ibwc.gov](mailto:sally.spener@ibwc.gov)