



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section



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USIBWC CERTIFIES REHABILITATED LEVEES

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has certified 32.6 miles of flood control levees in the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project as meeting standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In late 2011 and early 2012, the USIBWC submitted certification packages to FEMA for various segments of U.S. flood control levees in Hidalgo County, Texas. The USIBWC documents certify that the levees are high enough and strong enough to pass the 100-year flood in accordance with FEMA standards.

The segments were constructed and funded by Hidalgo County in accordance with agreements with USIBWC and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The certified segments include 20 miles of the levee-wall – a structure that provides flood protection and border security. The USIBWC reviewed the plans and specifications for the work performed by Hidalgo County, provided an inspector to oversee construction, and participated in the final inspections of the various segments. Other construction currently in progress is being paid for by the USIBWC with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The certified segments cover 11.6 miles of Rio Grande levee from near Peñitas to Anzalduas Park south of Mission, approximately 2 miles along each side of the interior floodway from Anzalduas Park to Granjeno, nearly 4 miles of levee protecting the City of Hidalgo, approximately 4 miles near the Donna-Rio Bravo International Bridge, and 6 miles near the Progreso-Nuevo Progreso International Bridge.

These are the first levee segments USIBWC has certified to FEMA in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. As construction is completed on additional segments, the USIBWC will begin preparing the

certification packages for submission to FEMA. The USIBWC previously certified 15 miles of levees in El Paso, Texas.

With Recovery Act funding, the USIBWC has awarded construction contracts covering more than 100 miles of levee improvements in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The USIBWC received \$220 million in Recovery Act funding for levee projects in New Mexico and Texas. The purpose of the Recovery Act is to create and save jobs, promote economic recovery, and invest in infrastructure that will provide long-term economic benefits. USIBWC Recovery Act expenditures have already preserved or created an estimated 2500 jobs.

"We are in the final stages of construction for many levee segments," said U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina. "The levees provided outstanding protection during the 2010 flood thanks to the work that was already completed at that time. We look forward to certifying additional levees in 2012. What would have taken over 20 years to accomplish under previous appropriation levels will be accomplished in approximately three years, protecting hundreds of millions of dollars in property."

The USIBWC certification is one part of the process to accredit the Lower Rio Grande Valley's flood control system. Local communities are responsible for certifying the management of stormwater on the land side of the USIBWC levees. FEMA considers the certification packages that are submitted and will determine whether to accredit the Valley's flood control system as being in compliance with FEMA standards. Communities protected by systems accredited by FEMA benefit not only from the enhanced flood protection but from better rates on flood insurance. Property owners with federally-backed mortgages in areas not protected by accredited levees could face a mandate to purchase flood insurance.

For more information:

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