



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

For immediate release  
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### **AGENCY COMPLETES EL PASO CANAL PROJECT**

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) recently completed the reconstruction of a segment of the American Canal in El Paso, Texas.

The American Dam and American Canal were constructed more than 80 years ago to divert Rio Grande water for irrigation and domestic use for El Paso area farmers and the City of El Paso, and to ensure the equitable division of Rio Grande water with Mexico.

The concrete-lined canal was demolished, and a new concrete canal lining was constructed to replace the old, damaged canal. The canal capacity was increased by 28% and modern safety equipment was installed to reduce canal drownings and increase worker safety.

The reconstructed segment starts at the American Dam, near the intersection of Executive Center Boulevard and Paisano Drive and continues downstream for 2,269 feet. The work was performed by Meridian Contracting, Inc., which was awarded the \$21 million contract in 2017. In future years, the USIBWC plans to replace the remaining unenclosed parts of the old canal located farther downstream.

“We at El Paso County Water Improvement District would like to thank the USIBWC and its staff for a job well done in the reconstruction of the very important American Canal,” said Jesus “Chuy” Reyes, General Manager, El Paso County Water Improvement District 1. “Our

farmers and the City of El Paso rely on this canal to irrigate 55,000 acres of farmland and deliver water to three El Paso treatment plants that is then used as potable water by El Paso citizens.”

In addition to replacing the canal, USIBWC undertook remediation of soils and groundwater contaminated with lead and arsenic from the former ASARCO copper smelter. To meet EPA standards, USIBWC processed the water from the site through a portable treatment plant then discharged it into the Rio Grande. The environmental remediation costs in the amount of \$12 million were covered by ASARCO funds received by USIBWC to settle the agency’s environmental claim against the former smelter.

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the two countries and settling differences that arise in the application of the treaties.



Cutline:

Contractors and USIBWC employees inspect the 24-foot-wide by 12-foot-high newly reconstructed portion of the American Canal. The canal, originally completed in 1938, diverts Rio Grande water for irrigation and domestic use for El Paso area farmers and the City of El Paso, and to ensure the equitable division of Rio Grande water with Mexico. Farmers produce crops on more than 56,000 acres in the El Paso Valley with water from the American Canal.

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