



International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

For immediate release
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ACTION NEEDED TO COMPLY WITH WATER TREATY

U.S. Commissioner Jayne Harkins of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, today requested the Government of Mexico to take immediate action to deliver Rio Grande water to the United States to comply with the bilateral 1944 Water Treaty. Under the treaty, Rio Grande water is allotted to the United States based on cycles of five years. The current cycle ends on October 24, 2020. To meet its international obligations, Mexico must deliver an additional 432,360 acre-feet (533.3 million cubic meters [mcm]) to the United States between now and the end of the cycle.

“Farmers and cities in South Texas rely on this water to get them through the summer. Some irrigation districts will run out of water this year and municipal water districts are having to expend large sums of money to purchase additional water. To comply with the treaty, Mexico must increase its water deliveries,” said Commissioner Harkins.

Pursuant to the 1944 Water Treaty, during a five-year cycle, Mexico must deliver to the United States a minimum of 1,750,000 acre-feet (2,158.6 mcm) of water from six Mexican tributaries to the Rio Grande of which the Conchos River in Chihuahua is the largest. As of June 27, 2020, with fewer than four months remaining in the current cycle, Mexico has only delivered 1,317,640 acre-feet (1,625 mcm). The remaining volume yet to be delivered exceeds the 350,000 acre-feet (431.7 mcm) minimum average volume the 1944 Water Treaty requires over an entire year, demonstrating that immediate action is required.

On October 24, 2015, the previous cycle ended in a debt, which was paid in early 2016. In accordance with Minute 234, a 1969 agreement of the International Boundary and Water Commission, when a cycle ends in debt, “the deficiency shall be made up in the following five-year cycle, together with any quantity of water which is needed to avoid a deficiency in the aforesaid following cycle...” Therefore, Mexico must assure its deliveries meet the minimum treaty requirement by October 24, 2020.

Under the 1944 Water Treaty, Mexico delivers Rio Grande water to the United States while the United States delivers Colorado River water to Mexico. The United States continues to meet its obligations to deliver Colorado River water and expects Mexico to fulfill its Rio Grande obligations to the United States. The U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission asks Mexico to start releasing more water now to meet the treaty requirements.

For more information:

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