



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
July 30, 2015

CARRIZO CANE ERADICATION PROGRAM AND FLOOD CONTROL IMPROVEMENTS ON AGENDA FOR AUGUST 12 PUBLIC MEETING IN MERCEDES

A program to eradicate an invasive plant known as carrizo cane and efforts to improve flood control and drainage in the Lower Rio Grande Valley will be discussed at the next meeting of the Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum (LRGCF) of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC). The meeting takes place Wednesday, August 12, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m., at the USIBWC office at 325 Golf Course Road in Mercedes, Texas.

In order to help meet the Governor's border security priorities, the Texas Legislature in 2015 directed the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) through Senate Bill 1734 to develop and implement a program to eradicate carrizo cane (*Arundo donax*) along the Rio Grande. Large dense stands of the non-native plant now occupy the banks and floodplains of the Rio Grande, concealing criminal activity, impeding law enforcement, and impairing the ecological function and biodiversity of the Rio Grande. Carrizo cane is an exceptionally fast growing plant, growing about 4 inches per day and reaching a mature height of over 25 feet in about 12 months. These stands of invasive riparian weeds present considerable obstacles for the protection of the international border by law enforcement and agricultural inspectors, by both significantly reducing visibility within enforcement areas, and by providing favorable habitat for agriculturally-damaging cattle ticks. Carrizo cane also consumes precious water resources and poses a threat to the health of riparian ecosystems. It does not provide any food source or nesting habitat for native species.

Aaron Wendt, Natural Resources Specialist with the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, will describe the eradication program that is intended to reduce carrizo cane along the Rio Grande, improve border access for law enforcement officers, improve visibility to allow better detection of illegal activities,

restore ecological function and biological diversity of the Rio Grande, reduce sediment and potential for flooding, and increase water savings due to reduced use by the cane.

In other business, Hidalgo County Drainage District No. 1 General Manager Raul Sesin will discuss the District's 2012 Bond Projects. The mission of the Hidalgo County Drainage District No. 1 is to reduce the risk of catastrophic flooding events by developing flood reduction plans, implementing and constructing new facilities, and maintaining the drainage system.

Finally, Rodolfo Montero, USIBWC Area Operations Manager, will give an update on efforts to improve the flood conveyance capacity of the Arroyo Colorado, part of the USIBWC's Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project. During Rio Grande flood conditions, some of the floodwaters are diverted off the river into interior floodway channels in Mexico and the United States, including the Arroyo Colorado in Harlingen. Recent studies indicate that growth of dense vegetation and accumulation of sediment along the Arroyo Colorado have greatly reduced the channel's ability to convey flood flows, thereby increasing flood risk for the community. Earlier this year, USIBWC crews removed brush and trees from critical areas along the Arroyo Colorado. The USIBWC is currently making plans to hire a contractor to remove additional vegetation later this year, taking into account the need to maintain wildlife habitat. The contractor will cut back brush and trees then will remove or mulch the cut plants. In most areas, the vegetation will be cut back for 50 feet on both sides of the arroyo. To provide a corridor for wildlife, crews will leave a 5-foot buffer of tall grasses along the banks.

The USIBWC established the LRGCF to facilitate the exchange of information between the USIBWC and members of the public about Commission activities and related issues in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

A complete meeting agenda follows. Members of the public who would like more information about the meeting may contact the USIBWC's Lower Rio Grande Project Office at 956-565-3150 or sally.spener@ibwc.gov.

For more information:

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LOWER RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM

Wednesday, August 12, 2015

3:00 - 5:00 P.M.

USIBWC Conference Room

325 Golf Course Road

Mercedes, TX 78570

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions – Rodolfo Montero, Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- Senate Bill 1734 Rio Grande Carrizo Cane Eradication Program – Aaron Wendt, Natural Resources Specialist, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board
- Hidalgo County Drainage District No. 1, 2012 Bond Projects – Raul Sesin, P.E., CFM, General Manager, Hidalgo County Drainage District #1
- Restoring Flood Conveyance Capacity for the Arroyo Colorado – Rodolfo Montero, Area Operations Manager, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion
- Suggested Future Agenda Items

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 956-565-3150.