



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section



For immediate release
October 29, 2013

RIO GRANDE WATER QUALITY ON AGENDA FOR NOVEMBER 6 PUBLIC MEETING IN EL PASO

Rio Grande water quality will be the focus of 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 Wednesday, November 6, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at USIBWC Headquarters, 4171 N. Mesa Street, Building C, El Paso, Texas. The meeting had originally been announced for October 8 but was postponed due to the federal government shutdown.

Lisa Ramirez and Leslie Grijalva with the USIBWC's Texas Clean Rivers Program (CRP) for the Rio Grande will present the water quality update. The CRP is a state-funded program with the goal to identify and evaluate water quality issues, establish priorities for corrective actions, and work to implement actions. Through various partner entities throughout the Rio Grande Basin, the CRP works to monitor water quality at various sites and provide data for overall assessment of the basin by various stakeholders and agencies including the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

There are eight main water quality issues facing the Rio Grande Basin, which will be discussed in detail: bacteria, nutrients, salts, depressed dissolved oxygen levels, fish kills, illegal discharges, trash and exotic species. In addition, staff will discuss Texas State Water Quality Standards and the latest TCEQ assessment, which covers river segments that are impaired for failing to meet water quality standards. The presentation will also include an update on existing outreach programs, such as Adopt-A-River, a trash cleanup program, and will introduce new programs. Staff will be available to answer questions and take feedback.

In other business, USIBWC Hydraulic Engineer Padinare Unnikrishna will discuss a study to evaluate the water budget along the Rio Grande Canalization Project, the USIBWC's water delivery and

flood control project in southern New Mexico and western El Paso County, Texas. The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of how water inflows, such as precipitation and upstream irrigation inflows, are partitioned between the various components of the water budget such as channel seepage, irrigation diversions, irrigation return flows, and evapotranspiration. Through an understanding of the relative importance of each water budget component, the study is intended to help stakeholders manage normal or delayed irrigation release timings and volumes during years of water scarcity.

The study report, which is nearly complete, discusses the differences in channel seepage resulting from normal and delayed irrigation releases as compared to the release that actually occurred in 2012. The relative magnitude of the water budget components as compared to the upstream irrigation release will be discussed. The final report will also include recommendations on best water management practice to be followed for Rio Grande water releases from upstream dams, suggested water management improvements (water pump monitoring), and recommendations and suggestions for further study.

Finally, USIBWC staff will give an update on Rio Grande flood control levee construction and design projects. The levee work is being carried out, in part, with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. 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 in New Mexico and Texas have already created or preserved an estimated 3145 jobs.

The Rio Grande Citizens Forum was established by the USIBWC 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
Wednesday, November 6, 2013
6:30 - 8:30 P.M.
USIBWC Headquarters
4171 N. Mesa St., The Commons, Building C*
El Paso, TX 79902

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions – Carlos Peña, USIBWC, Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- Annual Update on Water Quality for the Rio Grande and the Clean Rivers Program (CRP) – Lisa Ramirez, P.E., LEED AP, USIBWC CRP Program Manager, and Leslie Grijalva, CRP Quality Assurance Officer
- Water Budget Study for the Rio Grande Canalization Project – Dr. Padinara Unnikrishna, Hydraulic Engineer, USIBWC
- Update on Rio Grande Flood Control Levee Construction and Design Schedule – USIBWC Staff
- Recognition of Outgoing Citizens Forum Board Members and Recruitment of New Board Members– Sally Spener, Secretary, 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.

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