# RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM
# July 14, 2016
# USIBWC Headquarters - El Paso, TX
# *Tentative Meeting Notes

**Board Members in Attendance**:
Ray Spears, Captain Game Warden, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
John Balliew, President/CEO, El Paso Water Utilities
Daniel Chavez, General Manager, Hudspeth County Conservation & Reclamation District No. 1
John Cornell, Doña Ana County Associated Sportsmen
Yvonne Curry, American Society of Civil Engineers
Francine Jefferson, Community Volunteer
Leticia Jimenez, property owner along Rio Grande
Travis Johnson, attorney, former County Judge
Conrad Keyes, Jr., Chair, Paso del Norte Watershed Council, New Mexico State University Emeritus Department Head and Professor of Civil Engineering
Walton Low, U.S. Geological Survey hydrologist (retired), Lower Rio Grande Regional Water Plan Technical Advisory Group
Sal Masoud, Del Rio Engineering, El Paso Association of Builders Board of Directors
Gill Sorg, City of Las Cruces City Council, President of Friends of the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks, Board Member of Mesilla Valley Audubon Society
Ryan Ward, Policy Analyst, New Mexico Department of Agriculture

**USIBWC Staff in Attendance**:
Carlos Pena, USIBWC
Tony Solo, USIBWC Area Operations Manager
Diana Forti, USIBWC
Jose A. Nunez, USIBWC
Shellie Munoz, USIBWC

**Members of the Public in Attendance**:
Annabelle Johnson, Citizen
Carolyna Casillas, Citizen
R. Kimpel, Citizen
Delbert Humberson, USGS
Javier Perea, City of Sunland Park
John Sparks, Arcadis
Joe Baca, Arcadis
Earl F. Burkholder, Citizen
Joan Woodward
Jacki Mariscal, Citizen
Ben Stewart, MWH
Bruce Jordan, US Army
B. Bader, SWCA
Sandra Hernandez, PSC
Richard Teschner, CRNM Institute

Steve Ainsa, AECOM
Audree Reynolds, Citizen
R.K. Reynolds, Citizen
Dr. Ken Waldrup, Texas Department of State Health Services
Zack Libbin, Elephant Butte Irrigation District
Martin Contreras, PSC
Carlos Rincon, USEPA
Hermelinda Vazquez, City of Sunland Park
Dwaine Solana, City of Sunland Park

**Welcoming Remarks**:
At 6:30pm Carlos Pena convened the Citizens Forum meeting by welcoming the board and citizens to and then introduced and turned the meeting over to Co-Chair Walter Low. Mr. Low gave a brief introduction on his career and his interests for joining the board, and then asked board to introduce themselves and interest in being a board member. Board introductions were followed by public introductions

Walter Low introduced and turned the meeting over to the first presenter Dr. Kenneth Waldrup

**Presentation One: Concerns Regarding Feral Swine - Dr. Kenneth Waldrup, Regional Zoonosis Control Veterinarian, Texas Department of State Health Services**:
Dr. Kenneth Waldrup began the presentation, explaining characteristics of Feral Swine- Feral swine are NOT javelinas, they cannot cross breed but feral swine are prolific, sows can have 2 litters per year. Feral swine are very destructive and dig up roots. No one particular group controls feral swine; they're the landowner's problem. They are not native game animals because they are not a domestic pig. If feral pigs are on your property, you have to deal with them. Texas Wildlife Services will do a one-time population reduction for crop depredation upon request and priority. Feral swine are found in West Texas near the Rio Grande.

Dr. Waldrup went on to discuss two categories, diseases and agricultural damage.

Swine Brucellosis: Brucella suis is the actual bacterium involved. This bacterial species can infect a number of other animals besides swine, including man. In swine, it causes abortion and stillborn piglets. In cattle, it can mimic Brucella abortus infection. In man, it can cause a chronic flu-like illness and can cause a painful orchitis. Transmission of B. suis can be by direct contact, contact with blood or infected tissues (including meat) or by fluids. You have to be very carful and dress appropriately when dressing feral swine (long gloves are definitely recommended), and cook the meat to an internal temperature of 165° F. You cannot eat medium rare pork!

Psuedorabies (Aujeskey's Disease): This viral disease does not affect humans, but it can cause problems with domestic swine and other animals, particularly dogs ("mad itch"). In domestic swine, the infection usually causes abortion and stillbirth. If a dog becomes infected, the disease is usually fatal. Transmission is by bite, and there is no vaccine for dogs. Many pig hunters use dogs to track, trail and/or hold the pigs at bay but feral pigs will also attack a dog that bothers them, especially sows with young.

Trichinosis (Trichinella): This nematode worm parasite is found in many carnivorous mammals and also pigs. The immature (larval) worms coil up and encyst in the muscles. Transmission is by ingestion of these larvae in undercooked meat. When a person consumes undercooked, infected pork, the encysted larvae hatch and become small adult worms in the person's intestines. These adult worms produce many larval worms that then burrow into that person's muscles and encyst. The encysted larvae can be treated, but diagnosis can be difficult.
Symptoms include:

- Peri-orbital edema (swelling around the eye)
- Swelling of extremities
- Severe muscle pain
- High blood eosinophil counts

Influenza Virus: The recent influenza infection in humans (H1N1) was NOT a zoonotic infection. It was a HUMAN infection. Swine are susceptible to both human and avian influenza viruses. Pigs can become ill with influenza, but the fatality rate varies. Influenza viruses have already been recovered from feral swine in Texas, primarily H3N2, but only a few of these have been identified from human infections. Potential transmission of influenza virus from pigs to humans would probably be from aerosol transmission, not meat (provided proper cooking).

Esherichia coli Contamination: Feral swine have been indicated as the source for E. coli contamination of packaged fresh vegetables in California. Pig feces with the bacteria contaminated the fields, and the plants absorbed the bacteria. So the vegetables were contaminated on the inside, not surface contamination.

Agricultural Damage: Surface ground damage, is done by extensive rooting and digging. This disrupts the surface and increases evaporation. Crop depredation – feral swine are fond of nuts, tubers, legumes and vegetables. They can also cause tree damage. As far as animal predation, feral swine will prey on ground nesting birds like quail, they will also prey on deer fawns, sheep lambs and goats kids.

Dr. Walrup ended the presentation with public questions and comments.

Questions: Can you kill feral hogs and leave it there, what do you do with them?
Answer: They don't contaminate soil. Once the feral pig dies, the diseases are gone.

Question: How did they get to America?
Answer: 50 years ago they were considered a domestic pig. The didn't cause a problem until late 1970s, this was an East Texas problem. They were also brought here, but we're not sure from where.

Question: Did it take a lot of research to determine the diseases related to feral swine?
Answer: Yes, it took a lot of research especially irrigation.

**Presentation Two – Overview of the USIBWC Annual Budget Process– Diana Forti, Chief Administrative Officer, USIBWC**

Diana Forti began by explaining what types of activities the USIBWC budget supports. USIBWC looks at existing obligations and initiates the annual budget planning process 2 years in advance consistent with guidance received from the President's Office and then communicates requirements

and priorities to the President's Office. Items must be within our agency mission/charter and have both statutory authority and approved funding.
Initiatives must demonstrate mitigation of an adverse impact to agency mission, lives and property.
USIBWC receives its appropriations from Congress. In FY 2016, Congress appropriated the USIBWC:

- $45.3 Million of Salaries and Expenses Funding
- $28.4 Million of Construction Funding
- $73.7 Million in Total Funding

The *Salaries and Expenses (S&E) Appropriation* funds are allocated to daily operations of structures (dams) and facilities (wastewater treatment plants, buildings, etc.):

- Maintenance and repair of land, structures, and facilities;
- Administrative, engineering, and operations support.

The *Construction Appropriation* is funds allocated to capital improvements: expansion or upgrade of existing structures and facilities:

- Replacement or rehabilitation of structures and facilities;
- Construction of new structures and facilities.

USIBWC has nine field offices with primary functions:

**San Diego Office**

- Capture and treatment of transboundary sewage flows at the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP).
- Tijuana River Flood Control

**Yuma Office:**

- Delivery of Colorado River waters to Mexico per Treaty.
- Maintenance of international land boundary demarcation monuments.

**Nogales Office:**

- Capture and treatment of transboundary sewage flows at the Nogales International Wastewater Treatment Plant (NIWTP).
- Maintenance of international land boundary demarcation monuments.

**Headquarters:**

- Diplomatic coordination and resolution of binational boundary and water treaty issues.
- Accounting and allocation of transboundary river waters per Treaty.
- Administrative, engineering, and construction support for field office operations.

**Upper Rio Grande Office (incl. satellite offices):**

- Measurement of Rio Grande waters delivered per Treaty.
- Operation of diversion dam.
- Maintenance of flood control system.

**Presidio Office:**

- Measurement of Rio Grande waters (incl. tributaries) per Treaty.
- Maintenance of flood control system.

**Amistad Dam and Falcon Dam Offices:**

- Storage dam operations and maintenance.
- Flood control thru controlled water releases.
- Accounting of International waters per Treaty.

**Laredo Office:**

- Coordination of Rio Grande water quality issues.
- Oversight of the Nuevo Laredo International Wastewater Treatment Plant (NLIWTP) operations and maintenance in Mexico.

**Lower Rio Grande Office:**

- Rio Grande Flood Control (includes interior floodways).
- Measurement of Rio Grande waters delivered per Treaty.
- Operation of Retamal and Anzalduas Diversion Dams.
- Maintenance of flood control system.

USIBWC is responsible for maintaining over 2,000 miles along the border and we have 270 employees along the border. The work the USIBWC employees have done is impressive.

The presentation ended with questions and comments.

Question: Is USIBWC a part of the State Department, where are the budgets located?
Answer: We receive our appropriation under the State and Foreign operation, which is under the Department of State. Congress appropriates specifically under that bill.

Questions: What would it take to modify the charter of things you are responsible for?
Answer: Identify a problem or activity and acknowledge that the action is necessary and we can't operate without it. Once that's established someone has to make that case to Mexico that it's needed. We are the US Section of the Commission and things have to be approved by Congress. We are partners with Mexico.

**Presentation Three – Update on Construction Projects within the Upper Rio Grande Flood Control Project and Status of FEMA Levee Accreditation- Isela F. Canava, Lead Civil Engineer, USIBWC**:

Isela Canava began with presenting current projects, the Rehabilitation of Vado East Levee was awarded in September 2015 - $10.7 Million to Meridian Contracting, Inc. The notice to proceed issued on October 27, 2015 and is 95% Complete and expect substantial completion July 2016. Ongoing constructions include the American Canal Lower Reach Replacement, awarded in September 2014 ($17.8 Million) but were terminated for convenience on March 15, 2016. Design to be revised taking into account record drawings and re-solicited for construction. The overchute at College Arroyo was built.

Projects to be awarded in FY 2016 include the American Canal Upper Segment Replacement, Wasteways #1 & #2 Flood Control Improvements, and the Sunland Park Levee Silt Fence Removal. In FY 2017/FY 2018, tentatively planned, subject to funding, are the Courchesne Phase 1A Flood Control Improvements, Courchesne Phase 1B Flood Control Improvements, American Canal Lower Reach Replacement and the Operational Improvements of American Dam and Canal Gates. In FY 2018/FY 2019, tentatively planned, subject to funding, the American Canal Middle Reach Replacement is scheduled to be awarded.

The American Canal Upper Reach Improvements project includes the replacement of the upper segment of American Canal with open channel sections. This project extends nearly 0.5 mile and will involve remediation of contaminated soil and/or groundwater. It is expected to cost more than $10,000,000, located in El Paso, TX and planned for FY 2016. The solicitation package is currently being prepared.

The Wasteways 1 and 2 Improvements involved reconstruction of existing wasteway structures crossing the Rio Grande levee with new gated structures. The cost is estimated between $1,000,000 and $5,000,000, located in Socorro, TX and San Elizario, TX- planned for FY 2016.

The removal of the silt fence that remained after the construction of the Sunland Park Levee project is between $50,000 and $250,000, located in El Paso County, Texas and Dona Ana County, New Mexico. The current status is that the proposals have been received and are under review. The Courchesne Phase 1A Flood Control Improvements include construction of levee embankment and foundation improvements on the west bank of the Rio Grande totaling 1.2 miles with an estimated cost between $5,000,000 and $10,000,000, located in Sunland Park, NM and El Paso, TX. This project is planned for FY 2017 and is in the final design phase.

The Courchesne Phase 1B Flood Control Improvements of levee embankment and foundation improvements on east bank of river totaling 0.8 mile with magnitude between $5,000,000 and $10,000,000 and located in El Paso, TX. This project is planned for FY 2017/FY 2018 and is currently in the final design phase and preparing permitting documents.

Ms. Canava went on to give an update on the status of FEMA Levee Accreditation Upper Rio Grande Project. The USIBWC's Rio Grande Canalization Project (RGCP) is the segment of the Rio Grande from Percha Dam to American Dam, 105.4 miles in length. The Rio Grande Rectification reach is from American Dam to Little Box Canyon, a distance of 93.6 miles. USIBWC has rehabilitated several sections of the Rio Grande Canalization Project and Rectification Project levees. Initial funding was from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009). USIBWC continues to fund levee projects with annual funding allotted for construction of such projects. The USIBWC has completed the submittals of several packages representing rehabilitated levee segments to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for levee accreditation. The FEMA accredited levee system is a levee system that meets the requirements of Title 44, Chapter 1, Section 65.10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (44 CFR 65.10) Mapping of Areas Protected by Levee Systems. Such a levee system is shown on the Federal Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) as providing protection from the 1-percent-annual chance flood (100-year flood). FEMA Levee Accreditation must meet 44 CFR 65.10 standards. These include:

- Hydraulic Models to Determine Water Surface Elevations (WSEL) and Establish Minimum Top of Levee Elevations (TOLE) – with Freeboard
- Geotechnical Analysis
- Embankment Stability
- Interior Drainage Analysis
- Operations & Maintenance (O&M) Plans

FEMA Levee Accreditation-Submittals to FEMA include:

**Canalization Project**

- Canutillo Phase I, Doña Ana County
- Hatch West Levee, Doña Ana County
- Mesilla Phase I, Doña Ana County
- Mesilla Phase II, Doña Ana County

**Rectification Project**

- International Dam to Riverside Weir, El Paso County

FEMA Levee Accreditation Submittals comments were received and addressed for the Canalization and Rectification Projects in December 2015 on all reaches except Mesilla Phase II. Comments for Mesilla Phase II are under review by FEMA. USIBWC continues to provide ongoing response to FEMA comments on levee submittals

The presentation concluded with Ms. Canvan explaining LAMP = Levee Analysis and Mapping Procedure for Non-Accredited Levees. Non-accredited levee systems are levee systems that do not meet all the requirements outlined in Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations Section 65.10 along the entire length of the levee system. FEMA recognizes that levee systems that do not fully meet the requirements set forth in 44 CFR 65.10 may still provide a measure of flood risk reduction; for that reason, the agency has developed a suite of procedures for providing a more refined depiction of flood risk. LAMP takes into account that non-accredited levees may still provide a measure of flood protection.

FEMA will eventually shift their focus and begin focusing on levees in this area. If levees are not accredited at that point, FEMA will be using LAMP to analyze the levees in the Upper Rio Grande Flood Control Project. In prior meetings, FEMA has suggested the importance of starting a levee district to aid in the levee accreditation process. One entity is required to submit all items for accreditation to FEMA to include the interior drainage.

The presentation ended with questions and comments.

Question: Does FEMA provide funding for accreditation?
Answer: No, it's not funded.

**Suggested future agenda items:**

- Presentation on sediment removal by Tony Solo, USIBWC
- Presentation on how projects are funded, developed and approved
- What it takes to put in a sediment Dam/Trap- presentation on Sediment projects

- Commission processes to develop new construction projects;
- History of US Bureau of Reclamation Elephant Butte Reservoir and Dam;
- Commission plans to remediate accumulated stream sediment impacting irrigation drainage.

**Official Public Meeting was adjourned at 8:25PM**

*Meeting notes are tentative and summarize in draft the contents and discussion of Citizens Forum Meetings. While these notes are intended to provide a general overview of Citizens Forum Meetings, they may not necessarily be accurate or complete, and may not be representative of USIBWC policy or positions.