

1 UNITED STATES SECTION  
2 INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION  
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5  
6 DRAFT  
7 PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
8 RIO GRANDE FLOOD CONTROL PROJECTS  
9

10  
11 Presidio Chamber of Commerce  
12 Wednesday, August 22, 2007  
13 202 West Orielly Street  
14 Presidio, Texas 79845  
15

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17 REPORTED BY: Rachel Simons, CSR  
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24 **ORIGINAL**  
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1 MR. BORUNDA: I just want to welcome  
2 everyone. My name is Daniel Borunda, I am with the U.S.  
3 International Boundary and Water Commission. I am in  
4 the environmental management division, and I'm the  
5 project manager for this Programmatic EIS. I'd like to  
6 welcome you tonight to tonight's public hearing on the  
7 Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for  
8 improvements to the USIBWC Rio Grande Flood Control  
9 Projects along the Texas-Mexico border.

10 And for the record, I would just like to  
11 state that this public hearing is now being convened at  
12 6:12 p.m. on Wednesday, August the 22nd, 2007 in the  
13 Presidio Chamber of the Commerce building, located 202  
14 West Orielly Street. I also want to let you know that  
15 the entire proceedings of this hearing are being  
16 recorded by a court reporter, and that an official  
17 transcript will be prepared and posted on the USIBWC's  
18 web site within a few weeks following this meeting. We  
19 have other public hearings that are taking place, so as  
20 soon as those are complete we'll go ahead and compile  
21 the transcripts. Again, thank you for taking the time  
22 to come here tonight. I will be the meeting moderator.  
23 If you haven't done so, before the end of the meeting,  
24 if I could ask everyone to please sign in.

25 Okay. The purpose of this meeting, this

1 public hearing, is that it's another step in the NEPA  
2 process. As Patt mentioned, many of you may remember  
3 that we were here back in January of 2005 to discuss the  
4 beginning of this project. And tonight this is a public  
5 hearing, which is a form that provides an opportunity  
6 for the community to provide comments on the Draft  
7 Programmatic EIS. The Draft Programmatic EIS was  
8 officially released for public review following the  
9 Federal Register Notice that was accomplished on August  
10 the 10th. And tonight we would like to seek input from  
11 the community on the Draft Programmatic EIS.

12 All along the tables we have folders with  
13 copies of the presentation, maps, written comment  
14 sheets, and we also -- I believe we also have some  
15 electronic copies of the Programmatic EIS, if anybody  
16 would like CD copies. Come on in.

17 MS. SIMS: So this way we'll get the real  
18 experience.

19 MR. BORUNDA: Yes, that contains the entire  
20 Draft EIS.

21 MS. SIMS: Now, we can make comments  
22 through e-mail, right?

23 MR. BORUNDA: You can make comments through  
24 e-mail. You can make comments here tonight. You can  
25 submit written comments up until September 24th, and

1 I'll get into that later on.

2 I'll go ahead and continue. As I was  
3 saying, on the tables there's a packet of information  
4 for you-all to submit written comments today or at a  
5 later date. And you will have -- there's also a speaker  
6 card, if you would like to get up and make comments  
7 tonight as well.

8 The environmental review process is  
9 mandated by the National Environmental Policy Act,  
10 commonly referred to as NEPA. Your input and comments  
11 are beneficial to our environmental review. The USIBWC  
12 is interested in hearing the community's views,  
13 opinions, recommendations, and concerns regarding the  
14 Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. I do  
15 want to clarify that this a public hearing, and the  
16 purpose of this meeting is to provide the community, and  
17 members of the community with the opportunity to present  
18 their views.

19 Comments will be addressed -- your comments  
20 will be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement.  
21 And tonight we will not be formally responding to any  
22 comments or concerns, we just want to seek input;  
23 however, we will clarify -- to the extent that there's  
24 factual or clarifying questions regarding this  
25 Programmatic EIS, we will provide a response. And we

1 will have an open comment session later in our  
2 presentation.

3           The next slide please. The U.S. section of  
4 the International Boundary and Water Commission is the  
5 lead federal agency for this project. The U.S. Bureau  
6 of Reclamation, El Paso field office; the U.S. Fish and  
7 Wildlife, Corpus Christi field office, and the U.S. Army  
8 Corps of Engineers, Galveston district, are cooperating  
9 agencies for this project. And several members of the  
10 project team are here tonight, and I would like to  
11 introduce them. From the USIBWC Mr. Carlos Peña, he is  
12 my supervisor. He's is the division engineer for the  
13 Environmental Management Division. Most of you know  
14 Mr. Hector Hernandez, he's the project manager here for  
15 the Presidio field office, and Parsons is the consulting  
16 firm that is assisting us in technical preparation of  
17 this document. And from Parsons we have Carlos  
18 Victoria, he is the project manager; and we have  
19 Mr. James Hinson, he's the lead biologist for this  
20 project.

21           The meeting is going to be organized in the  
22 following way, after my brief comments I will be turning  
23 over the podium to Carlos Victoria to provide an  
24 overview of the issues -- or an overview of the project.  
25 Following his presentation, I will go ahead and open up

1 the meeting for public input. So we will be taking  
2 comments then, either in written or in oral form, if you  
3 would like. So if you would like to make oral comments,  
4 please sign the speaker form and hand it over to either  
5 myself or any one of the staff members here.

6 If the court reporter cannot hear you or  
7 understand something that you say, Rachel may interrupt  
8 you and ask for clarification. And please don't be  
9 offended by that. And I also ask that when a person is  
10 making a public statement, please respect them and do  
11 not interrupt or talk amongst yourself during that time.  
12 And at this time I would like to go ahead and turn over  
13 the program to Mr. Carlos Victoria so that he can go  
14 over the project components.

15 MR. VICTORIA: Thank you, Daniel. Well,  
16 good evening. Carlos Victoria with Parsons. What I'd  
17 like to do today to start the presentation is to give  
18 you some important issues in the development of the  
19 Programmatic EIS, and we're going to go over three  
20 general areas. First, it's going to be an overview of  
21 the three Rio Grande Flood Control Projects that the  
22 USIBWC maintains and operates along the Texas-Mexico  
23 border. Following that we will describe the process  
24 that was done to select the alternatives to be evaluated  
25 in the Programmatic EIS. I will give you some examples,

1 measures and the consideration. And finally we will  
2 talk a little bit about the evaluation of potential  
3 impacts for each alternative with a note that it was  
4 done at a programmatic level. This is important, I'm  
5 going to go back to it. So let me just start with the  
6 project description.

7               This diagram illustrates the location of  
8 the three projects along the Rio Grande. The size of  
9 the boxes actually give you an idea, the actual extent  
10 of those projects. The longest one, of course, is the  
11 one by the Lower Rio Grande, the Rectification is  
12 somewhat longer than the Presidio. So those are our  
13 three projects. The rectification starts downstream  
14 from the City of El Paso, and Presidio, you're very  
15 familiar with it, and the Lower Rio Grande starts  
16 downstream from McAllen. Since the maps are not really  
17 very clear, what we did was give you handouts so that  
18 you have better views of the projects.

19               The reason the three projects are being  
20 evaluated at the same time is that they do share a  
21 number of features among them. All projects share the  
22 objective for which they were built. The first one is  
23 to protect flooding of urban agricultural land on both  
24 sides of the border. The second is that they are also  
25 built to ensure that the water delivery is sufficient,

1 both for agriculture and municipal use. And third, they  
2 are intended to maintain the international boundary  
3 along the river as it has been established by  
4 international treaties.

5 A second common feature for this project is  
6 that the floodway is very narrow and it is enclosed by  
7 levees on both river margins. The third effecting drama  
8 is that vegetation control is required in the floodway,  
9 and this is done typically by mowing, to prevent the  
10 disruption of the floodwaters when they go over the  
11 floodway. A fourth common feature is the need to  
12 maintain the stream channel to remove obstruction, in  
13 some of them dredging is required on an occasional  
14 basis, and that is to ensure that the water deliveries  
15 are efficient. And finally, which is very familiar is  
16 this one, the stream flow has wide seasonal changes, but  
17 that's common for all of them.

18 So with those common features in mind,  
19 let's go quickly over the three projects. And the one  
20 farther upstream is the Rectification Project. The  
21 length is approximately 86 river miles starting from  
22 just downstream from the American Diversion Dam in El  
23 Paso extending to Fort Quitman. Most of the extent of  
24 that project has levees with a typical height of 7 to  
25 10 feet. The floodway is narrow with an average width



1 of about 600 feet on the U.S. side.

2 And one important item to emphasize is that  
3 for that particular project, as well as the Presidio,  
4 the entire floodway maintenance and control is directed  
5 by the USIBWC. This is going to be different for the  
6 Lower Rio Grande Project. The stream channel is about  
7 100 feet in width and because it's located below  
8 diversion dams, the flow is really low most of the year  
9 especially in the upper region of the Rectification  
10 Project. So in general, throughout the Rio Grande the  
11 flow is largely controlled by diversion and storage  
12 reservoirs in upstream New Mexico and in Texas.  
13 Downstream of the Rectification Project we have -- the  
14 one that we're interested in particularly here, the  
15 Presidio Project, which is the smaller of the three.  
16 Also fully maintained and operated by the IBWC and the  
17 floodway maintained by the Commission.

18 The levee system is relatively large  
19 compared to the other two projects. The levees are  
20 typically between 12 and 35 feet in height. The levees  
21 increase downstream higher once you get around the Rio  
22 Chonco, constant to the project that -- a large increase  
23 in flow, so the levees go higher. As you're familiar,  
24 the floodway's narrow and becomes more constrained as  
25 you go downstream because you're going into more steep

1 terrain.

2           The final project is the Lower Rio Grande  
3 Flood Control Project extending 186 miles from Penitas,  
4 that's near McAllen, all the way to the Gulf of Mexico  
5 to the City of Brownsville. About 106 miles of levee,  
6 and the height is lower than the one you have here in  
7 Presidio, it's up to 15 feet. And here the floodway  
8 changes. It has a real extensive floodway between the  
9 levees, but here the jurisdiction of the Commission is  
10 really limited. It's really mostly two narrow  
11 corridors, one that runs along the stream bank and the  
12 other one along the levee system. For most of the  
13 floodway it's really under the control of agriculture --  
14 it's for agriculture use, private or conservation areas,  
15 by the Fish and Wildlife service and some organizations.  
16 So that's the part I'm going to discuss because those  
17 explain to a large extent what measures can be done by  
18 the Commission on their own initiative.

19           Another unique feature for this Lower  
20 Valley Flood Control Project is that they are along the  
21 flow of two flood diversion dams. And what they do is  
22 they route most of the floodwater into your floodways,  
23 one in Texas and the other one in northern New Mexico.  
24 So to summarize this unique feature of the project,  
25 differ the scale from 13 to 186 miles. And this is

1 important because the scale extent of the floodway  
2 really dictates to a large extent the potential for  
3 multipurpose use for the floodway. As I mentioned, it's  
4 directly controlled by the Commission. And third, the  
5 floods are very different in the three regions of the  
6 project in how steady or intermittent they are. And  
7 another difference is that on the project, especially on  
8 the Lower Rio Grande Project, there is a number of  
9 initiatives already in place for having improvements for  
10 water conservation down in Horizon. What I believe for  
11 the Presidio, and for Rectification, there's really not  
12 that many in place. There have been some suggestions  
13 and some support, but it's not really a key feature.

14               Once we see the three projects.-- let me  
15 move to where the alternatives come into this process.  
16 That diagram, it shows how -- for those scoping meetings  
17 held about a year and a half ago, the Commission  
18 developed a series of alternatives to be evaluated in  
19 the Programmatic EIS, and on those alternatives and  
20 measures included in them, addressed those comments that  
21 we received during the scoping process, both from the  
22 general public and from agencies. And one was found to  
23 be applicable and was incorporated into these  
24 alternatives. That report was completed in final form  
25 in February, last February.

1           Let's now consider the alternatives for the  
2 development process. It was really researched forward  
3 in three steps. First, the potential measures were  
4 identified from the scoping process. Once we have those  
5 improvement -- potential improvements, then those that  
6 were feasible for implementation were selected for each  
7 project taking into account those special unique  
8 features and those drains that they have in each  
9 particular case.

10           And finally, and as a final step, those  
11 measures were organizing the alternatives for  
12 improvement of the flood control project. A key  
13 criteria that was needed to emphasize all along is that  
14 whatever alternative and whatever measure is  
15 incorporated must be compatible with the core mission of  
16 this project in terms of flood control, water delivery,  
17 and boundary stabilization. It cannot be a conflict  
18 with the project mission. The alternative that's  
19 evaluated in the PEIS is the No Action Alternative, and  
20 the action alternative that we named, Enhanced Operation  
21 and Maintenance, Integrated Water Resources Management  
22 and the Multipurpose Management of the project.

23           The first alternative is the No Action  
24 Alternative. In the NEPA process they require you to  
25 have the alternative, it's just for comparison. And

1 even though it sounds like no action, it really means  
2 continuation of the practices that are currently used  
3 and anticipated to be used in the future. It's a  
4 reference point that really is an action that is under  
5 consideration.

6           The No Action Alternative covers really  
7 four management areas. The first one is the maintenance  
8 of the levee system itself. The second one is the  
9 management of the floodway, which we mentioned, this is  
10 conducted by seasonal mowing and is needed to prevent  
11 disruption of the floodwater flow. Third, the stream  
12 channel must be maintained, and that includes the stream  
13 bank stabilization and any removal of major channel  
14 obstructions. And the fourth category of management is  
15 the sediment removal or disposal, which is conducted on  
16 an as needed basis, it can happen through several years  
17 in many regions where the project is being conducted or  
18 hasn't been conducted for a long time.

19           The first option to change the current  
20 practices is one that goes to the core purpose of the  
21 project, so that's why it's called Enhanced Operation  
22 and Maintenance. In terms of potential changes to the  
23 levee system, there is the obvious choice of increasing  
24 the height to make it more efficient to control floods;  
25 and that's the process that has been evaluated by the

1 Commission and being implemented at this point. There  
2 can be options to modify, to some extent, the  
3 maintenance of the floodway of the street channel.  
4 Those changes could be, you know, removal of vegetation  
5 could be changed in the extent where it's done or the  
6 timing when it is done, or allow some vegetation to grow  
7 in certain sections. By the same token, sediment  
8 removal could also be modified right after -- to the  
9 current situation.

10           The next alternative is add more features  
11 to the functionality of the project, besides the ones we  
12 mentioned in the previous alternative, includes all  
13 those improvements in the four management categories  
14 that we have, but you would add also certain measures  
15 for efficient water use. You would take into  
16 consideration water conservation measures, which include  
17 salt cedar removal control, which is a plant that takes  
18 a lot of water; and then water quality improvements  
19 along the stream is to also be emphasized on this  
20 alternative. For the most part any action, as I stated  
21 with these alternatives, is conducted within the project  
22 right-of-way. And finally we have the Multipurpose  
23 Project Management, which states all measures from the  
24 previous two action alternatives and adds some  
25 measurements to them in two general categories.

1 First, those that would apply to the  
2 jurisdictional floodway that is controlled directly by  
3 the USIBWC, and a good example of that is the potential  
4 use for recreational areas or trails. And, again, the  
5 invasive species control -- species control to be part  
6 of it. And then you have measurements to be implemented  
7 outside the project area itself, and this would be  
8 really conducted in support of a system of proposed  
9 regional initiatives, that would be conducted under the  
10 cooperative agreement. So the Commission is willing to  
11 participate and to already organize and define regional  
12 initiatives.

13 Three examples that we have there, as  
14 opposed to just dredging sediments in some regions, it  
15 could be upstream control of the sediment. It could be  
16 in the tributary habitation dams for the sediment, there  
17 could be several, also for wildlife habitat  
18 improvements. And since the river is relatively  
19 homogeneous throughout the skirts, the rectification of  
20 aquatic habitat is also a consideration.

21 The next is simply a table, great copy of  
22 what we just went through. The three alternative in the  
23 columns to towards the right, and the three closest by  
24 rows are the three objectives of official alternatives.  
25 First one, improve the functionality. The second one,

1 the water resources management, and finally a  
2 multipurpose management with a subcategory that we  
3 talked about before. So it simply emphasizes that all  
4 of the -- ensured, the improvement and functionality.  
5 The second and third have the water resources and  
6 multipurpose management incorporated into them, and only  
7 the last one would have those additional features.

8 The first step in the Programmatic EIS  
9 preparation is the -- do you mind going one back?

10 MR. HINSON: (Nonverbal response.)

11 MR. VICTORIA: Go ahead. Concerning  
12 environmental evaluations, let me talk about three  
13 points important here. The one that we mentioned is on  
14 a programmatic level, the evaluation of feedback. And  
15 that is not done very often. Typically you have a very  
16 specific engineering project that is defined that you  
17 can quantify, that you know where the features are, and  
18 the impact can put a specific quantity to it.

19 In this case we're looking at really  
20 potential measurements. Some projects are already  
21 defined in general terms, especially engineering  
22 projects, but all the measures and the consideration are  
23 more conceptual. They are feasible measures, but  
24 they're not really, at this point in time, intended to  
25 be implemented, but they won't be taken into



1 consideration because in the long term this Programmatic  
2 EIS is going to facilitate production of the subsequent  
3 environmental document. You have smaller, specific  
4 environmental documents following environmental  
5 assessments every time a specific project is defined and  
6 plans are in place for it. So that's the benefit of  
7 making more expeditious the Programmatic EIS, and then  
8 having the big picture of all the projects and ones with  
9 common information to be worked in terms impact  
10 evaluation.

11 The evaluation, this has been programmatic  
12 evaluating impacts for each project separately, and  
13 association was given to multiple resource areas. The  
14 general categories that we have, they are water  
15 resources, biological resources, that would include  
16 wildlife habitat, endangered species, and vegetation.  
17 Another category are the historic and archaeological  
18 resources. Land use could be changes in terms of the  
19 land use within the floodway or adjacent areas. We  
20 evaluated socioeconomic aspects, and then those issues  
21 are associated with environmental health such as air  
22 quality and noise.

23 Potential impacts varying with each  
24 project, but in general really are common features for  
25 all of them. The first one is that there's a potential

1 to impact -- or to improve wildlife habitat and aquatic  
2 ecosystems. The engineering part of it is likely to  
3 have some impact on natural resources; of course, the  
4 measures intended to improve habitat by definition.  
5 Cultural resources could be effected. And what has been  
6 found is that there's really a likely situation, if it  
7 occurs, it will be along the expansion areas. But when  
8 you increase the levee height, it's not just the height  
9 that is increasing, it's the width, the footprint of the  
10 levee also expands, so it would go 60-, 100 feet pass  
11 the current the toll -- the levees. So that's the areas  
12 where the potential is greater for impact in  
13 archaeological resources.

14           There weren't found any potential impact  
15 for land scale changes in land use. And the reason for  
16 that is because the three projects are already in place  
17 and operating for decades. So even the changes that are  
18 done in the future, they're not anticipated to be large  
19 in terms of land use. And they're going to be impacts  
20 on regional economics and air quality, and they are  
21 really thought to be minor or temporary. Air quality is  
22 effected during the construction, that will be the only  
23 time when it happens. And in terms of economics, the  
24 construction of these projects or improvements means  
25 influx of federal funds into the local communities, but

1 when you look at the scale of -- the county scale,  
2 that's really not very significant. So they are there,  
3 but small as a core result of these potential  
4 improvements.

5 As we look through a review of all the  
6 potential impacts, there was a number of issues that  
7 came up for consideration. These are just some of them,  
8 and they are the need for increased flood containment  
9 capacity, which is the core action that the Commission  
10 is looking at at this point; has to be the first prime  
11 consideration, and that dictates a number of things that  
12 can be done. The second one is something that we  
13 touched on before in the sense that use of the  
14 jurisdictional floodway is really controlled by the  
15 needs of -- of flood control really dictates the use of  
16 the jurisdictional floodway to a large extent. The  
17 water availability, as you're very familiar, that's  
18 always a key point along the Rio Grande. If you want to  
19 make improvements or propose improvements it does serve  
20 the environmental initiatives. You also have to answer,  
21 Okay. Where is the water coming from? Who are you  
22 going to acquire it from? Are the water rights already  
23 allocated? So that's a key issue that's coming over and  
24 over back to the table. And a fourth point, is that the  
25 floodway has been used for years by the Border Patrol

1 operations, it's not been new, but as we know it's  
2 increasing, the operation that is happening. And to a  
3 large extent, it's happening quickly, and those  
4 operations have specific requirements. In many cases  
5 it's in direct conflict with extensive vegetation of the  
6 floodway, which from the point of view of environmental  
7 and restoration, habitat will be desirable. It really  
8 goes against the need of the Border Patrol, and more  
9 importantly it goes against the need of the flood  
10 control as a potential obstruction.

11 As you go over the document you will be  
12 able to see more details of which measures and how they  
13 were evaluated point by point, but hopefully -- this is  
14 an old review. And if you have questions afterwards,  
15 some clarification, I'll be glad to address them. So at  
16 this point I would like to return the podium to Daniel  
17 Borunda.

18 MR. BORUNDA: Thank you, Carlos. As part  
19 of the this environmental analysis we're now asking for  
20 public input. And we're interested in hearing from each  
21 and every one of you on any concerns, questions,  
22 comments that you may have regarding this Programmatic  
23 EIS and this project.

24 I would like to state that if you do not  
25 provide comments tonight, we will be accepting written

1 comments up until September the 24th. And I'll go ahead  
2 and now start the second part of tonight's meeting where  
3 you can -- we would like to seek input from you folks.  
4 And so if anybody has signed up on the speaker card, I  
5 would like to go ahead and address you at that time.

6 And if you'd like either to come up to the  
7 podium, or we're a small group, so I think you can --  
8 I'll go ahead and take them in the order that Carlos  
9 handed them to me. At this time Mr. Nieto if you would  
10 like to...

11 MR. NIETO: I have three comments to make.  
12 One, I'm encouraged by the fact that you have water  
13 qualities out there. You cannot assume that water  
14 quality is not effected and will not effect the  
15 community present, past, and future of Presidio. I hope  
16 you monitor water carefully, very, very carefully.

17 The concern that I have for you has to do  
18 with -- not only chemical, I think you've addressed that  
19 to some extent, contamination through waste products  
20 through Mexico. I think you've addressed that, and we  
21 appreciate that, but the quality I'm referring to is the  
22 allowance of salinated water through the -- also the new  
23 farmlands in Mexico to be leached into the Rio Grande,  
24 which has posed a very difficult problem for farmers.

25 As you are well aware our current farmers

1 are basically harvesting, and I'm exaggerating at this  
2 point, but the point needs to be made, tumble weeds.  
3 We've gone from raising cantaloupes and onions to  
4 basically pasture-type crops. We are aware of the labor  
5 shortages that have led to the demise of those crops,  
6 but we are now anticipating an economic development in  
7 the future of Presidio. We need to be able to depend on  
8 quality water systems, not salinated water systems that  
9 are going to kill any future crops.

10 The crops we're looking at are perhaps --  
11 they're crops that our state and our country value, and  
12 some have to do with the development of energy, others  
13 have to do with specific types of crops that are grown  
14 in this particular area. Due to the heat and elevations  
15 of Presidio, our prime for very critical crops, our  
16 farmers are looking to bail themselves out what they  
17 find now. They have very little, if any, control over  
18 the quality of water, you do. We need your help in  
19 intervening with our Mexican authority, they need to  
20 stop the leeching and leeching into the Rio Grande,  
21 which deteriorates the quality no matter what crops we  
22 dream of planting, Presidio's economic future, from a  
23 farming standpoint, they are going to be killed with  
24 salinated water, point one.

25 Point two has to do with something that I'm

1 going to generalize, and not to be terribly specific,  
2 but I'm sure our Mexican counterparts are aware of this.  
3 I have a friend that happens to be on a water network  
4 system across the border in Ojinaga. Short of -- not  
5 too long ago, he shared some information with  
6 Mr. Hernandez on some rechanneling projects that they're  
7 working on. My concern is, can our levees and waterways  
8 handle the level of volume that they're going to be  
9 attempting to dismiss through the Rio Grande Channel?  
10 And there's some projects on the way in Ojinaga and  
11 rechanneling, and I guess there's some concerns.

12           If we're not ready for it, and they start  
13 opening the gates, the worse case scenario is we're  
14 going to flood some people, we may hurt some lives, and  
15 there's concern there. I hope that we're working in  
16 sync, but I'm not sure that we are. So that issue on  
17 rechanneling and how it impacts our river channel is --  
18 from a public health standpoint, public safety  
19 standpoint, is a great concern. By far the greatest  
20 episodes that have ever hit Presidio in the history of  
21 Presidio has been major flooding events, at which time  
22 little recourse. And I just don't want to lose any  
23 lives or properties if we can prevent and apprehend them  
24 by working carefully with our counterparts across the  
25 border.

1                   The third point has to do with more of a  
2 question, but if I don't ask you, I don't know who to  
3 ask. And it has to do with, what is boundary's  
4 responsibility for old river channels where the river  
5 has moved that now have become tremendous mosquito  
6 habitats and public health concerns? And we have one  
7 such concern right in our backyard of the high school.  
8 An old river channel which has -- over time has been  
9 blocked, and we've got -- and I've dealt with Miguel  
10 Escobedo when he was the director of quality health for  
11 region 9 and 10. We get big lagunas near or adjacent to  
12 our high school. Do we have to lose any lives? Do we  
13 have to effect anyone because we got stagnated water on  
14 old river channels that have been blocked and are being  
15 blocked? What's the government's responsibilities of  
16 resource to help us clear those? Eventually that water  
17 will already end up in the river, but it's not -- it's  
18 creating mosquito habitats. Quite frankly gentlemen, I  
19 know you protect the environment, a lot of interest, but  
20 it's time to start putting a higher priority on  
21 protecting human lives and livestock. At the expense of  
22 these mosquitos and I think the City of Presidio has  
23 gone through expense with the county on trying to  
24 fumigate, but even that is not enough. We get basically  
25 fly-size mosquitoes in that area that are going to hurt



1 some people.

2 That's what I have, and I'm glad to see,  
3 for the fourth point, the salt cedar project because I  
4 believe if it was the federal government through the  
5 Boundary Commission that brought salt cedar to control  
6 erosion. And I believe that's a project that came  
7 originally from France that created some tremendous  
8 problems for us here. You know, I know, they're  
9 everywhere, and we need your help. And we know it's  
10 going to take time so continue your work on the salt  
11 cedar because it's here. It's done quite a bit of  
12 damage, and it sure is consuming -- they're water  
13 guzzlers, at a time when we ought to be finding ways to  
14 conserve water, our most precious commodity.

15 The future of Presidio lies in the quality  
16 of the water, not only for irrigation, but for human  
17 consumption and we need your help. We may be small, we  
18 may be isolated, but we cannot and ought not be  
19 forgotten. And we're in close contact with Congressman  
20 Rodriguez, and we'll be addressing some of these issues,  
21 so this is the appropriate time to land them on you.  
22 Thank you.

23 MR. BORUNDA: Thank you, Mr. Nieto. The  
24 next person is Mr. Lorenzo Hernandez.

25 MR. LORENZO HERNANDEZ: My question is like

1 Mr. Nieto was saying, I don't know who to ask. My  
2 concern -- we're talking about flood control. My  
3 concern is not only the levees, but -- and again, I  
4 don't know if I should be addressing this with you, the  
5 Cibolo Creek. What can the government do, what can you  
6 guys do to help us prevent some type of flooding? I've  
7 talked to Commissioner Aranda yesterday. We went and  
8 saw -- I talked to our city administrator about it,  
9 nobody seems to know how much danger we're in, and  
10 nobody seems to care until, I feel, it's going to be  
11 late.

12           The creek comes directly into the city.  
13 And if you pass by the old bridge, if the levee busts  
14 right there, we're going to be flooded and that highway  
15 that was built by TxDOT, instead of helping us out it's  
16 going to hurt us, I'm talking about the town. So my  
17 question to you is, what can we do as a city, or maybe  
18 as a county, or who can we get involved so that they can  
19 help us divert? What I wish that could be done is to  
20 divert the water more up north near the mountain and --  
21 instead of it coming directly into the city.

22           And my next question is concerning the  
23 Cibolo Creek. And I don't think it's going to take too  
24 much work or too much money and at the same time, I  
25 think it would prevent loss of property and lives, if it

1 really happens. Like I said, nobody worries about it,  
2 nobody sees it until it's too late, and that's what I'm  
3 afraid of.

4 My second point with the salt cedar is,  
5 there's been a lot of talk with -- I don't know what the  
6 agency is called. Ms. Sims, you might could help me  
7 out.

8 MS. SIMS: I think it's the Department of  
9 Agriculture.

10 MR. LORENZO HERNANDEZ: I've talked to  
11 those people, like, twice already and we've had  
12 meetings, but it seems to me that nothing's come up out  
13 of those meetings. And like I said, maybe it's a slow  
14 process, and if it is, I would like for it to continue  
15 because we do have a problem here. I'm a landowner and  
16 I've got salt cedar on my property, and those are  
17 nothing but trouble.

18 MS. SIMS: Excuse me, Lorenzo. I think in  
19 last week's paper there was a whole article about  
20 releasing a bug or a beetle to do the same.

21 MR. BORUNDA: Yes, I was going to mention  
22 that.

23 MS. SIMS: So technically it's going to be  
24 doing the same process --

25 MR. LORENZO HERNANDEZ: I mean, is it --

1 MS. SIMS: -- to follow any process --

2 MR. BORUNDA: Okay. But this is a  
3 process --

4 MS. SIMS: Salt cedar is the target, and  
5 they didn't follow any process, we don't want to make  
6 the same mistake.

7 MR. BORUNDA: Okay.

8 MR. LORENZO HERNANDEZ: Like I said, I  
9 don't know if I should be addressing Cibolo Creek with  
10 you, maybe, I don't know, but it needs to be addressed.  
11 Thank you.

12 MR. BORUNDA: Okay. Thank you,  
13 Mr. Hernandez. The next person that has signed up for  
14 oral comments is Ms. Sims.

15 MS. SIMS: I am just basically seeking  
16 clarification. Basically, what's involved in this  
17 project is adding height to levees, and that might  
18 increase in width of floods? The project in Presidio.

19 MR. BORUNDA: That is a common feature for  
20 all the flood control projects. We did some hydraulic  
21 modeling back in 2003 with the Corps of Engineers, and  
22 we were finding that some of our levees are deficient in  
23 levee height. And then, of course, following Katrina,  
24 and I guess --

25 MS. SIMS: Suddenly it's a issue.

1 MR. BORUNDA: -- suddenly it's a top  
2 priority. And so, yes, that is one feature, and it's  
3 one that is pending. As a matter of fact, tonight, this  
4 evening in El Paso, FEMA is releasing the new flood  
5 insurance rate maps for El Paso County, and that is a  
6 humongous issue there because what FEMA has done is that  
7 they've -- those flood insurance maps were developed in  
8 a strange way because there are deficiencies in the  
9 levee, FEMA then developed their maps as if there were  
10 no levees present. And so all they did was when they  
11 modeled, they just ran the water surface elevation out  
12 into the flood plain, as far as the water would go, and  
13 that has become the new flood zone. And so that is real  
14 critical. We're trying to avoid that as much as  
15 possible, but, you know, FEMA's on their schedule and  
16 we're on ours, and we can't receive, you know,  
17 congressional appropriation to raise our levees and  
18 whatnot, but --

19 MS. SIMS: But that's basically what I  
20 just --

21 MR. VICTORIA: Yes, we just wanted to --

22 MR. BORUNDA: Yes, that is one of the main  
23 features. On top of that we also have -- in other -- in  
24 flood control projects, like in El Paso and in New  
25 Mexico. New Mexico --

1 MS. SIMS: Not here.

2 MR. BORUNDA: -- was not included in this.  
3 We have other initiatives like river trail projects.  
4 And so in order for us to allow river trail projects to  
5 occur, we need to have some type of environmental  
6 documentation so that we can justify allowing, you know,  
7 river trail projects, restoration projects, and things  
8 to occur, so that's another feature as well. We just  
9 have to have the documentation in place, and if other  
10 projects come into play we do cite specific -- or  
11 project specific environmental documentation for those.  
12 This Programmatic EIS is more of an umbrella  
13 environmental document that we will then tier off of for  
14 future projects.

15 Okay. Are there any other persons wishing  
16 to make comments?

17 MR. McENTIRE: I have one question.

18 MR. BORUNDA: Yes, sir.

19 THE REPORTER: Name, please?

20 MR. McENTIRE: Dennis McEntire. Are there  
21 any hidden agendas in this project that we're probably  
22 looking at, just right straight out and not seeing  
23 because we're not aware of them? Is there any  
24 additional water use by the municipality or anything  
25 that's part of this thing? I noticed that it said more

1 efficient use of water resources, and in that kind --  
2 when I see wording like that, it just bothers me in  
3 terms of hidden agenda. I just want to make it  
4 transparent. I mean, maybe this is as transparent as it  
5 needs to be. I'm just kind of worried about that kind  
6 of stuff.

7 MR. BORUNDA: Regarding water usage, the  
8 Boundary Commission has no water rights. And so we  
9 can't -- you know, our main mission is flood control,  
10 boundary stabilization, and that's pretty much our main  
11 issue as Carlos mentioned.

12 MR. McENTIRE: Could you clarify what more  
13 efficient water use means?

14 MR. VICTORIA: It really falls more in the  
15 area of regional initiatives, in the sense, it's really  
16 up to McAllister habitat in New Mexico, there are  
17 programs to support the farmers into proper changes to  
18 program us in access of water. But those are really --  
19 it's for the National Resources Conservation Service or  
20 other agents can bring to the table, or the farmers  
21 themselves as a way to improve the use of water. Really  
22 the Commission doesn't have any. You just have heard in  
23 scope meetings some ideas, I don't think -- as said with  
24 this Presidio Project, I don't think we have that  
25 particular problem.

1                   MR. BORUNDA: I would say that part of it  
2 is salt cedar control. I mean, just controlling salt  
3 cedar would actually increase some water efficiencies  
4 there. And to answer Mr. Hernandez's question earlier,  
5 up in the upper reach of the Presidio Project, they did  
6 release the salt cedar beetle, or something species.  
7 It's actually -- it's a nonnative insect, but it  
8 actually attacks salt cedar from where salt cedar is  
9 from. And so they've released some experimental plots  
10 and they hope to get some results. The project was  
11 delayed a bit because we had to coordinate with Mexico  
12 from an international point of view, because a beetle  
13 released in the U.S. is going to make its way across the  
14 river. And so Mexico had some concerns, but those  
15 concerns were finally cleared up and there's going  
16 to be --

17                   MR. LORENZO HERNANDEZ: And how do those  
18 beetles work?

19                   MR. BORUNDA: They eat the leaves on the  
20 salt cedar, and so infestate[sic] the tree, and then  
21 they just move onto other trees eating the leaves. And  
22 it's not a magic bullet or anything, it takes -- through  
23 time, you won't start seeing results till two to  
24 three years down the road. So that's -- I could try to  
25 get you some information on that if --



1 MR. LORENZO HERNANDEZ: What about the  
2 Cibolo Creek?

3 MR. BORUNDA: Cibolo Creek?

4 MR. LORENZO HERNANDEZ: Yes.

5 MR. BORUNDA: To be honest with you, I'm  
6 not aware of the jurisdiction that those levee on Cibolo  
7 Creek are. I mean, maybe Hector --

8 MR. NIETO: Corps of Engineers.

9 MR. HECTOR HERNANDEZ: It's the Corps of  
10 Engineers and the county.

11 MR. BORUNDA: And the county?

12 MR. HECTOR HERNANDEZ: (Nonverbal  
13 response.)

14 MR. BORUNDA: Yeah, because I think our  
15 jurisdiction is down by the river. And maybe voicing  
16 your concerns to the county or TxDot --

17 MR. HECTOR HERNANDEZ: I know at one time  
18 the county, they did some work.

19 MR. LORENZO HERNANDEZ: They did some work  
20 on it, but I just don't think it was good enough. I  
21 don't think it's good enough. I mean, it helped, but I  
22 don't think it was good enough.

23 MS. SIMS: And historically if the river  
24 floods, Cibolo floods, Presidio floods.

25 MR. HERNANDEZ: And I'm more afraid of

1 Cibolo --

2 MS. SIMS: Right.

3 MR. LORENZO HERNANDEZ: -- really than the  
4 river.

5 MS. SIMS: The Cibolo is more in the area  
6 of Presidio --

7 MR. LORENZO HERNANDEZ: Right, so that --

8 MS. SIMS: -- is working on and the river.

9 MR. LORENZO HERNANDEZ: Right.

10 MR. BORUNDA: Okay. So any other comments,  
11 anybody else has signed up?

12 MR. NIETO: One last comment. I spoke to  
13 the issue of water quality on the salination, and the  
14 other is water quantity, the volume of water. We've  
15 gone through a lot of hard years here in drought and not  
16 only was the water contaminated, salinated, but very  
17 little water flow. At times it was difficult for  
18 farmers to be able to depend on the water source. So  
19 when we talk about efficiency, what efficiency if  
20 there's no water?

21 So efficiency in management of how they  
22 drain the dams in Mexico to get them flowing through  
23 here, and the American, whatever water, dams, or drains  
24 that allow water to flow through the Rio Grande need to  
25 be looked at closer because, again, our farmers and

1 their future crops depend on, not on the quality of  
2 water, but the quantity of water; at least enough to  
3 irrigate. And that's the times it's been fallen short.

4 MR. BORUNDA: Yes, sir. I know the water  
5 depth was a big issue for quite some time. And, you  
6 know, hopefully we're out of a drought situation, it's a  
7 mother nature thing as well. Added to that, you know,  
8 the way it's managed. So hopefully we're out of the dry  
9 area.

10 MR. NIETO: How do we plan for economic  
11 development in the area of agriculture and farming if  
12 the water source is not a dependable commodity in  
13 quantity and quality? And farmers have gone through  
14 that, that's why most of them are broke. That's why you  
15 see tumble weeds. It's not a pretty sight. And it's  
16 not a sight we want to leave permanent, and to that end,  
17 we're going to be asking for help.

18 MR. BORUNDA: Okay. As a final reminder,  
19 you can also provide your input via written comments,  
20 and please submit your comments no later than  
21 September 24th. And I guess at this time we'll go ahead  
22 and conclude the public hearing. And so for the record  
23 the time is now 7:06 p.m., and this public hearing is  
24 now formally concluded. And thank you again for taking  
25 time to join us tonight.


(Hearing concluded at 7:06 p.m.)

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**CERTIFICATE**

State of Texas       )  
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County of El Paso    )

I, Rachel Simons, a Certified Shorthand  
Reporter, in and for the State of Texas, do hereby  
certify that this transcript is a true record, and that  
said transcription is done to the best of my ability.

Given under my hand and seal of office on  
this 10<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2007.

  
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**A**

**ability** 36:7  
**able** 20:12 22:7  
 34:18  
**accepting** 20:25  
**access** 31:18  
**accomplished** 3:9  
**account** 12:7  
**acquire** 19:22  
**Act** 4:9  
**action** 12:19,20,23  
 13:1,4,6 14:20,24  
 19:9  
**actual** 7:9  
**add** 14:10,14  
**Added** 35:7  
**adding** 28:17  
**additional** 16:7  
 30:24  
**address** 20:15 21:5  
**addressed** 4:19,20  
 11:20 21:18,20  
 28:10  
**addressing** 25:20  
 26:4 28:9  
**adds** 14:24  
**adjacent** 17:19  
 24:11  
**administrator** 26:8  
**afraid** 27:3 33:25  
**agencies** 5:9 11:22  
**agency** 5:5 27:6  
**agenda** 31:3  
**agendas** 30:21  
**agents** 31:20  
**ago** 11:17 23:5  
**agreement** 15:10  
**agricultural** 7:23  
**agriculture** 8:1  
 10:13,14 27:9  
 35:11  
**ahead** 2:20 4:2  
 5:25 6:12 16:11  
 21:1,5,8 35:21  
**air** 17:21 18:20,21  
**allocated** 19:23  
**allow** 14:6 30:4  
 34:24  
**allowance** 21:22

**allowing** 30:6  
**alternative** 7:3  
 12:14,18,19,20  
 12:23,24,25 13:6  
 14:10,12,20  
 15:22  
**alternatives** 6:24  
 11:15,18,19,24  
 12:1,11 14:21,24  
 15:24  
**American** 8:22  
 34:23  
**analysis** 20:19  
**answer** 19:20 32:4  
**anticipated** 13:3  
 18:18  
**anticipating** 22:6  
**anybody** 3:15 21:4  
 34:11  
**applicable** 11:23  
**apply** 15:1  
**appreciate** 21:21  
**apprehend** 23:23  
**appropriate** 25:21  
**appropriation**  
 29:17  
**approximately**  
 8:21  
**aquatic** 15:20 18:1  
**Aranda** 26:7  
**archaeological**  
 17:17 18:13  
**area** 15:7 22:14  
 24:25 31:15 34:5  
 35:9,11  
**areas** 6:20 10:14  
 13:7 15:4 17:13  
 17:19 18:7,11  
**Army** 5:7  
**article** 27:19  
**asking** 20:19 35:17  
**aspects** 17:20  
**assessments** 17:5  
**assisting** 5:16  
**associated** 17:21  
**association** 17:13  
**assume** 21:13  
**attacks** 32:8  
**attempting** 23:9

**August** 1:12 2:12  
 3:9  
**authority** 22:19  
**availability** 19:17  
**average** 8:25  
**avoid** 29:14  
**aware** 21:25 22:4  
 23:2 30:23 33:6

**B**

**back** 3:3 7:5 16:9  
 19:24 28:21  
**backyard** 24:7  
**bail** 22:16  
**bank** 10:11 13:13  
**basically** 22:1,4  
 24:24 28:15,16  
 29:19  
**basis** 8:14 13:16  
**beetle** 27:20 32:6  
 32:12  
**beetles** 32:18  
**beginning** 3:4  
**believe** 3:14 11:10  
 25:4,6  
**beneficial** 4:11  
**benefit** 17:6  
**best** 36:7  
**better** 7:18  
**big** 17:8 24:11 35:5  
**biological** 17:15  
**biologist** 5:19  
**bit** 7:2 25:11 32:11  
**blocked** 24:9,14,15  
**border** 2:9 6:23  
 7:24 19:25 20:8  
 23:4,25  
**Borunda** 2:1,2  
 3:19,23 20:17,18  
 25:23 27:21 28:2  
 28:7,12,19 29:1  
 29:22 30:2,18  
 31:7 32:1,19 33:3  
 33:5,11,14 34:10  
 35:4,18  
**bothers** 31:2  
**boundary** 1:2 2:3  
 5:4 8:2 12:17  
 25:5 31:8,10

**boundary's** 24:3  
**boxes** 7:9  
**bridge** 26:13  
**brief** 5:22  
**bring** 31:20  
**broke** 35:14  
**brought** 25:5  
**Brownsville** 10:5  
**bug** 27:20  
**building** 2:13  
**built** 7:22,25 26:15  
**bullet** 32:22  
**Bureau** 5:5  
**busts** 26:13

**C**

**called** 13:21 27:6  
**cantaloupes** 22:3  
**capacity** 19:9  
**card** 4:6 21:4  
**care** 26:10  
**carefully** 21:16,16  
 23:24  
**Carlos** 5:11,17,23  
 6:13,16 20:18  
 21:8 31:11  
**case** 12:9 16:19  
 23:13  
**cases** 20:4  
**categories** 14:13  
 14:25 17:14  
**category** 13:14  
 17:17  
**CD** 3:16  
**cedar** 14:17 25:3,5  
 25:11 27:4,16  
 28:4 32:2,3,6,8,8  
 32:20  
**certain** 14:7,14  
**CERTIFICATE**  
 36:1  
**Certified** 36:4  
**certify** 36:6  
**Chamber** 1:11  
 2:13  
**change** 13:19  
**changed** 14:5  
**changes** 8:16 10:8  
 13:22 14:4 17:18

18:15,17 31:17  
**channel** 8:12 9:6  
 13:12,13 14:3  
 23:9,17 24:8  
**channels** 24:4,14  
**chemical** 21:18  
**choice** 13:23  
**Chonco** 9:22  
**Christi** 5:7  
**Cibolo** 26:5,23  
 28:9 33:2,3,6,24  
 34:1,5  
**cite** 30:10  
**city** 7:14 10:5  
 24:22 26:8,12,17  
 26:21  
**clarification** 6:8  
 20:15 28:16  
**clarify** 4:15,23  
 31:12  
**clarifying** 4:24  
**clear** 7:17 24:16  
**cleared** 32:15  
**close** 25:19  
**closer** 34:25  
**closest** 15:23  
**columns** 15:23  
**come** 2:22 3:16  
 11:15 21:6 27:12  
 30:10  
**comes** 26:12  
**coming** 19:21,23  
 26:21  
**comment** 3:13 5:1  
 34:12  
**comments** 3:6,21  
 3:23,24,25 4:4,6  
 4:10,19,19,22  
 5:22 6:2,3 11:20  
 20:22,25 21:1,11  
 28:14 30:16  
 34:10 35:19,20  
**Commerce** 1:11  
 2:13  
**Commission** 1:2  
 2:3 5:4 9:17 10:9  
 10:18 11:4,17  
 14:1 15:10 19:9  
 25:5 31:8,22

<b>Commissioner</b> 26:7 <b>commodity</b> 25:14 35:12 <b>common</b> 8:5,11,17 8:18 17:9,24 28:19 <b>commonly</b> 4:10 <b>communities</b> 18:25 <b>community</b> 3:6,11 4:16,17 21:15 <b>community's</b> 4:12 <b>compared</b> 9:19 <b>comparison</b> 12:25 <b>compatible</b> 12:15 <b>compile</b> 2:20 <b>complete</b> 2:20 <b>completed</b> 11:24 <b>components</b> 6:14 <b>conceptual</b> 16:23 <b>concern</b> 21:17 23:7 23:15,19 24:7 26:2,3 <b>concerning</b> 16:11 26:22 <b>concerns</b> 4:13,22 20:21 23:11 24:6 32:14,15 33:16 <b>conclude</b> 35:22 <b>concluded</b> 35:24 35:25 <b>conducted</b> 13:10 13:15,17,18 14:21 15:8,9 <b>conflict</b> 12:17 20:5 <b>congressional</b> 29:17 <b>Congressman</b> 25:19 <b>conservation</b> 10:14 11:10 14:16 31:19 <b>conserve</b> 25:14 <b>consider</b> 12:1 <b>consideration</b> 7:1 13:5 14:16 15:20 16:22 17:1 19:7 19:11 <b>constant</b> 9:22	<b>constrained</b> 9:24 <b>construction</b> 18:22 18:24 <b>consulting</b> 5:15 <b>consuming</b> 25:12 <b>consumption</b> 25:17 <b>contact</b> 25:19 <b>containment</b> 19:8 <b>contains</b> 3:19 <b>contaminated</b> 34:16 <b>contamination</b> 21:19 <b>continuation</b> 13:2 <b>continue</b> 4:2 25:10 27:14 <b>control</b> 1:8 2:8 6:21 8:8 9:4 10:3 10:13,20 12:12 12:16 13:24 14:17 15:5,5,15 19:15 20:10 22:17 25:5 26:2 28:20 29:24 31:9 32:2 <b>controlled</b> 9:11 11:4 15:2 19:14 <b>controlling</b> 32:2 <b>convened</b> 2:11 <b>cooperating</b> 5:8 <b>cooperative</b> 15:10 <b>coordinate</b> 32:11 <b>copies</b> 3:13,15,16 <b>copy</b> 15:21 <b>core</b> 12:15 13:20 19:3,9 <b>Corps</b> 5:8 28:21 33:8,9 <b>Corpus</b> 5:7 <b>corridors</b> 10:11 <b>counterparts</b> 23:2 23:24 <b>country</b> 22:11 <b>county</b> 19:1 24:23 26:18 29:5 33:10 33:11,16,18 36:2 <b>course</b> 7:10 18:3 28:23	<b>court</b> 2:16 6:6 <b>covers</b> 13:6 <b>created</b> 25:7 <b>creating</b> 24:18 <b>creek</b> 26:5,12,23 28:9 33:2,3,7 <b>criteria</b> 12:13 <b>critical</b> 22:15 29:14 <b>crops</b> 22:4,5,9,10 22:11,13,15,21 35:1 <b>CSR</b> 1:17 36:14 <b>Cultural</b> 18:5 <b>current</b> 13:19 14:9 18:11 21:25 <b>currently</b> 13:2	<b>desirable</b> 20:7 <b>details</b> 20:12 <b>deteriorates</b> 22:21 <b>developed</b> 11:18 29:7,9 <b>development</b> 6:18 12:2 22:6,12 35:11 <b>diagram</b> 7:7 11:16 <b>dictates</b> 11:2 19:11 19:15 <b>differ</b> 10:25 <b>difference</b> 11:7 <b>different</b> 9:5 11:5 <b>difficult</b> 21:24 34:17 <b>direct</b> 20:5 <b>directed</b> 9:4 <b>directly</b> 11:4 15:2 26:12,21 <b>director</b> 24:10 <b>discuss</b> 3:3 10:16 <b>dismiss</b> 23:9 <b>disposal</b> 13:15 <b>disruption</b> 8:10 13:11 <b>district</b> 5:8 <b>diversion</b> 8:22 9:8 9:11 10:21 <b>divert</b> 26:19,20 <b>division</b> 2:4 5:12 5:13 <b>document</b> 5:17 17:3 20:11 30:13 <b>documentation</b> 30:6,9,11 <b>documents</b> 17:4 <b>doing</b> 27:24 <b>downstream</b> 7:13 7:16 8:22 9:13,21 9:25 <b>Draft</b> 1:6 2:7 3:6,7 3:11,20 4:14 <b>drain</b> 34:22 <b>drains</b> 12:8 34:23 <b>drama</b> 8:7 <b>dream</b> 22:22 <b>dredging</b> 8:13 15:14	<b>drought</b> 34:15 35:6 <b>dry</b> 35:8 <b>Due</b> 22:14
<b>E</b>				
<b>E</b> 36:15 <b>earlier</b> 32:4 <b>eat</b> 32:19 <b>eating</b> 32:21 <b>economic</b> 22:6,22 35:10 <b>economics</b> 18:20 18:23 <b>ecosystems</b> 18:2 <b>effect</b> 21:14 24:13 <b>effected</b> 18:5,22 21:14 <b>effecting</b> 8:7 <b>efficiencies</b> 32:3 <b>efficiency</b> 34:19,19 34:21 <b>efficient</b> 8:15 13:24 14:15 31:1 31:13 <b>EIS</b> 2:5 3:7,7,11,15 3:20 4:25 6:19,25 11:19 16:8 17:2,7 20:23 30:12 <b>either</b> 6:2,4 21:6 <b>El</b> 5:6 7:14 8:22 29:4,5,24 36:2,16 <b>electronic</b> 3:15 <b>elevation</b> 29:11 <b>elevations</b> 22:14 <b>emphasize</b> 9:2 12:13 <b>emphasized</b> 14:19 <b>emphasizes</b> 16:3 <b>enclosed</b> 8:6 <b>encouraged</b> 21:12 <b>endangered</b> 17:16 <b>energy</b> 22:12 <b>engineer</b> 5:12 <b>engineering</b> 16:16 16:21 18:2 <b>Engineers</b> 5:8 28:21 33:8,10 <b>Enhanced</b> 12:20				

13:21  
**ensure** 7:25 8:14  
**ensured** 16:4  
**entire** 2:15 3:19  
 9:4  
**environromental**  
 20:6  
**environment** 24:19  
**environmental** 1:7  
 2:4,7 4:8,9,11,14  
 4:20 5:13 16:12  
 17:3,4,4,21 19:20  
 20:19 30:5,11,13  
**episodes** 23:20  
**erosion** 25:6  
**Escobedo** 24:10  
**especially** 9:9 11:7  
 16:21  
**established** 8:3  
**evaluated** 6:24  
 7:20 11:18 12:19  
 13:25 17:20  
 20:13  
**evaluating** 17:12  
**evaluation** 7:2  
 16:14 17:10,11  
**evaluations** 16:12  
**evening** 6:16 29:4  
**events** 23:21  
**Eventually** 24:16  
**exaggerating** 22:1  
**example** 15:3  
**examples** 6:25  
 15:13  
**Excuse** 27:18  
**expands** 18:10  
**expansion** 18:7  
**expeditious** 17:7  
**expense** 24:21,23  
**experience** 3:18  
**experimental** 32:9  
**Expiration** 36:14  
**explain** 10:17  
**extending** 8:23  
 10:3  
**extensive** 10:8 20:5  
**extent** 4:23 7:9  
 8:23 10:17 11:1,2  
 14:2,5 19:16 20:3

21:19  
**e-mail** 3:22,24  


---

**F**  
**facilitate** 17:2  
**fact** 21:12 29:3  
**factual** 4:24  
**fallen** 35:3  
**falls** 31:14  
**familiar** 7:15 8:15  
 9:23 19:17  
**far** 23:19 29:12  
**farmers** 21:24,25  
 22:16 31:17,20  
 34:18,25 35:13  
**farming** 22:23  
 35:11  
**farmlands** 21:23  
**farther** 8:20  
**feasible** 12:6 16:23  
**feature** 8:5,11  
 10:19,24 11:13  
 28:19 29:2 30:8  
**features** 7:21 8:18  
 12:8 14:10 16:7  
 16:17 17:24  
 29:23  
**February** 11:25,25  
**federal** 3:9 5:5  
 18:25 25:4  
**feedback** 16:14  
**feel** 26:10  
**feet** 8:25 9:1,7,20  
 10:7 18:10  
**FEMA** 29:4,6,9  
**FEMA's** 29:15  
**field** 5:6,7,15  
**final** 10:2 11:24  
 12:10 35:18  
**finally** 7:1 8:15  
 12:10 14:22 16:1  
 32:15  
**find** 22:17  
**finding** 25:13  
 28:22  
**firm** 5:16 36:15  
**first** 6:20 7:22 12:3  
 12:23 13:7,19  
 15:1,25 16:8

17:25 19:10  
**Fish** 5:6 10:15  
**flood** 1:8 2:8 6:21  
 10:3,20,21 12:12  
 12:16 19:8,15  
 20:9 23:14 26:2  
 28:20 29:4,7,12  
 29:13,24 31:9  
**flooded** 26:14  
**flooding** 7:23  
 23:21 26:6  
**floods** 11:5 13:24  
 28:18 33:24,24  
 33:24  
**floodwater** 10:22  
 13:11  
**floodwaters** 8:10  
**floodway** 8:6,8,11  
 8:25 9:4,17 10:7  
 10:8,13 11:1,3  
 13:9 14:3 15:2  
 17:19 19:14,16  
 19:25 20:6  
**floodways** 10:22  
**floodway's** 9:24  
**flow** 8:16 9:8,11,23  
 10:21 13:11  
 34:17,24  
**flowing** 34:22  
**fly-size** 24:25  
**folders** 3:12  
**folks** 21:3  
**follow** 28:1,5  
**following** 2:18 3:8  
 5:22,25 6:23 17:4  
 28:23  
**footprint** 18:9  
**forgotten** 25:19  
**form** 3:5 6:2,4  
 11:24  
**formally** 4:21  
 35:24  
**Fort** 8:23  
**forward** 12:2  
**found** 11:22 18:6  
 18:14  
**four** 13:7 14:13  
**fourth** 8:11 13:14  
 19:24 25:3

**France** 25:7  
**frankly** 24:18  
**friend** 23:3  
**fully** 9:16  
**fumigate** 24:24  
**functionality**  
 14:11 15:25 16:4  
**funds** 18:25  
**future** 13:3 18:18  
 21:15 22:7,9,22  
 25:15 30:14 35:1

---

**G**


---

**Galveston** 5:8  
**gates** 23:13  
**general** 6:20 9:10  
 11:22 14:25  
 16:21 17:14,24  
**generalize** 23:1  
**gentlemen** 24:18  
**give** 6:17,25 7:9,17  
**given** 17:13 36:9  
**glad** 20:15 25:2  
**go** 2:20 4:2 5:25  
 6:12,13,19 7:5  
 8:10,19 9:23,25  
 16:11 18:10  
 20:11 21:1,5,8  
 29:12 35:21  
**goes** 13:20 20:8,9  
**going** 5:21 6:19,20  
 7:5 9:5,25 10:16  
 16:9 17:2 18:19  
 19:22 22:9,23  
 23:1,8,14 24:25  
 25:10 26:10,14  
 26:16,23 27:21  
 27:23 32:13,15  
 35:17  
**good** 6:16 15:3  
 33:20,21,22  
**government** 25:4  
 26:5  
**government's**  
 24:15  
**Grande** 1:8 2:8  
 6:21 7:8,11,15  
 9:6,10 10:2 11:8  
 19:18 21:23

22:20 23:9 34:24  
**great** 15:21 23:19  
**greater** 18:12  
**greatest** 23:19  
**group** 21:7  
**grow** 14:6  
**grown** 22:13  
**guess** 23:11 28:24  
 35:21  
**Gulf** 10:4  
**guys** 26:6  
**guzzlers** 25:13

---

**H**


---

**habitat** 15:17,20  
 17:16 18:1,4 20:7  
 31:16  
**habitation** 15:16  
**habitats** 24:6,18  
**half** 11:17  
**hand** 6:4 36:9  
**handed** 21:9  
**handle** 23:8  
**handouts** 7:17  
**happen** 13:16  
**happening** 20:2,3  
**happens** 18:23  
 23:3 27:1  
**hard** 34:15  
**harvesting** 22:1  
**health** 17:21 23:18  
 24:6,10  
**hear** 6:6  
**heard** 31:22  
**hearing** 2:6,11,15  
 3:1,5 4:12,15  
 20:20 35:22,23  
 35:25  
**hearings** 2:19  
**heat** 22:14  
**Hector** 5:14 33:7,9  
 33:12,17  
**height** 8:24 9:20  
 10:6 13:24 18:8,8  
 28:17,23  
**held** 11:17  
**help** 22:18 24:16  
 25:9,17 26:6,19  
 27:6 35:17

**helped** 33:21  
**helping** 26:15  
**Hernandez** 5:14  
 23:6 25:24,25  
 27:10,25 28:8,13  
 32:17 33:1,4,9,12  
 33:17,19,25 34:3  
 34:7,9  
**Hernandez's** 32:4  
**hidden** 30:21 31:3  
**high** 24:7,12  
**higher** 9:21,23  
 24:20  
**highway** 26:14  
**Hinson** 5:19 16:10  
**historic** 17:17  
**historically** 33:23  
**history** 23:20  
**hit** 23:20  
**homogeneous**  
 15:19  
**honest** 33:5  
**hope** 21:15 23:15  
 32:10  
**hopefully** 20:13  
 35:6,8  
**Horizon** 11:10  
**human** 24:21  
 25:16  
**humongous** 29:6  
**hurt** 23:14 24:25  
 26:16  
**hydraulic** 28:20

---

**I**


---

**IBWC** 9:16  
**idea** 7:9  
**ideas** 31:23  
**identified** 12:4  
**illustrates** 7:7  
**impact** 1:7 2:7  
 4:14,20 16:18  
 17:9 18:1,3,12,14  
**impacts** 7:3 17:12  
 17:23 18:19 19:6  
 23:17  
**implementation**  
 12:6  
**implemented** 14:1

15:6 16:25  
**important** 6:18 7:4  
 9:2 11:1 16:13  
**importantly** 20:9  
**improve** 15:25  
 18:1,4 31:21  
**improvement** 12:5  
 12:12 16:4  
**improvements** 2:8  
 11:9 12:5 14:13  
 14:18 15:18  
 18:24 19:4,19,19  
**include** 14:16  
 17:15  
**included** 11:20  
 30:2  
**includes** 13:12  
 14:12  
**incorporated**  
 11:23 12:15 16:6  
**increase** 9:21,22  
 18:8 28:18 32:3  
**increased** 19:8  
**increasing** 13:23  
 18:9 20:2  
**infestate[sic]** 32:20  
**influx** 18:25  
**information** 4:3  
 17:9 23:5 32:25  
**initiative** 10:18  
**initiatives** 11:9  
 15:9,12 19:20  
 30:3 31:15  
**input** 3:10 4:10,22  
 6:1 20:20 21:3  
 35:19  
**insect** 32:7  
**insurance** 29:5,7  
**Integrated** 12:21  
**intended** 8:2 16:24  
 18:4  
**interest** 24:19  
**interested** 4:12  
 9:14 20:20  
**intermittent** 11:6  
**international** 1:2  
 2:3 5:4 8:2,4  
 32:12  
**interrupt** 6:7,11

**intervening** 22:19  
**introduce** 5:11  
**invasive** 15:5  
**involved** 26:18  
 28:16  
**irrigate** 35:3  
**irrigation** 25:16  
**isolated** 25:18  
**issue** 19:23 23:16  
 28:25 29:6 31:11  
 34:13 35:5  
**issues** 5:24 6:18  
 17:20 19:6 25:20  
**item** 9:2

---

**J**


---

**James** 5:19  
**January** 3:3  
**join** 35:25  
**jurisdiction** 10:9  
 33:6,15  
**jurisdictional** 15:2  
 19:14,16  
**justify** 30:6

---

**K**


---

**Katrina** 28:23  
**key** 11:13 12:12  
 19:18,23  
**kill** 22:9  
**killed** 22:23  
**kind** 31:1,5,5  
**know** 2:14 5:13  
 14:4 16:17 20:1  
 24:2,19 25:8,8,9  
 26:1,4,9 27:5  
 28:9,10 29:15,16  
 30:6 31:9 33:17  
 35:4,6,7

---

**L**


---

**labor** 22:4  
**lagunas** 24:11  
**land** 7:23 17:18,19  
 18:15,15,19  
 25:21  
**landowner** 27:15  
**large** 9:18,22 10:17  
 11:2 18:18 19:16

20:3  
**largely** 9:11  
**late** 26:11 27:2  
**lead** 5:5,19  
**leave** 35:16  
**leaves** 32:19,21  
**led** 22:5  
**leached** 21:23  
**leeching** 22:20,20  
**length** 8:21  
**let's** 8:19 12:1  
**levee** 9:18 10:5,12  
 13:8,23 18:8,10  
 26:13 28:23 29:9  
 33:6  
**levees** 8:7,24 9:19  
 9:20,23 10:9  
 18:11 23:7 26:3  
 28:17,22 29:10  
 29:17  
**level** 7:4 16:14  
 23:8  
**lies** 25:15  
**limited** 10:10  
**little** 7:2 22:17  
 23:22 34:17  
**lives** 23:14,23  
 24:12,21 26:25  
**livestock** 24:21  
**local** 18:25  
**located** 2:13 9:7  
**location** 7:7  
**long** 13:18 17:1  
 23:5  
**longer** 7:12  
**longest** 7:10  
**look** 19:1,5  
**looked** 34:25  
**looking** 16:19  
 19:10 22:10,16  
 30:22  
**Lorenzo** 25:24,25  
 27:10,18,25 28:8  
 32:17 33:1,4,19  
 34:3,7,9  
**lose** 23:22 24:12  
**loss** 26:25  
**lot** 14:18 24:19  
 27:5 34:15

**low** 9:8  
**lower** 7:11,15 9:6  
 10:2,6,19 11:8

---

**M**


---

**magic** 32:22  
**main** 29:22 31:9,10  
 36:15  
**maintain** 8:2,12  
**maintained** 9:16  
 9:17 13:12  
**maintains** 6:22  
**maintenance** 9:4  
 12:21 13:7,22  
 14:3  
**major** 13:13 23:21  
**making** 6:10 17:7  
**managed** 35:8  
**management** 2:4  
 5:13 12:21,22  
 13:7,9,14 14:13  
 14:23 16:1,2,6  
 34:21  
**manager** 2:5 5:14  
 5:18  
**mandated** 4:9  
**maps** 3:13 7:16  
 29:5,7,9  
**margins** 8:7  
**matter** 22:21 29:3  
**McAllen** 7:16 10:4  
**McAllister** 31:16  
**McENTIRE** 30:17  
 30:20,20 31:12  
**mean** 27:25 31:4  
 32:2 33:7,21  
**means** 13:1 18:24  
 31:13  
**measure** 12:14  
**measurements**  
 14:25 15:6 16:20  
**measures** 7:1  
 10:17 11:20 12:3  
 12:11 14:14,16  
 14:23 16:22,23  
 18:4 20:12  
**meeting** 2:18,22,23  
 2:25 4:16 5:21  
 6:1 21:2



meetings 11:16  
27:12,13 31:23  
members 4:17 5:9  
6:5  
mention 27:21  
mentioned 3:2  
11:3 13:9 14:12  
16:13 31:11  
Mexican 22:19  
23:2  
Mexico 9:12 10:4  
10:23 21:20,23  
29:25,25 31:16  
32:11,14 34:22  
Miguel 24:9  
miles 8:21 10:3,5  
10:25  
mind 8:18 16:9  
minor 18:21  
mission 12:15,18  
31:9  
mistake 28:6  
modeled 29:11  
modeling 28:21  
moderator 2:22  
modified 14:8  
modify 14:2  
money 26:24  
monitor 21:16  
mosquito 24:5,18  
mosquitoes 24:25  
mosquitos 24:22  
mother 35:7  
mountain 26:20  
move 11:15 32:21  
moved 24:5  
mowing 8:9 13:10  
multiple 17:13  
multipurpose 11:3  
12:22 14:22 16:2  
16:6  
municipal 8:1  
municipality 30:24

---

### N

name 2:2 30:19  
named 12:20  
narrow 8:6,25 9:24  
10:10

National 4:9 31:19  
natural 18:3  
nature 35:7  
near 10:4 24:11  
26:20  
need 8:11 19:8  
20:8,9 22:7,18,19  
25:9,17 30:5  
34:24  
needed 12:13  
13:10,16  
needs 19:15 22:2  
28:10 31:5  
NEPA 3:1 4:10  
12:24  
network 23:3  
new 9:12 10:23  
20:1 21:22 29:4  
29:13,24,25  
31:16  
Nieto 21:9,11  
25:23 26:1 33:8  
34:12 35:10  
noise 17:22  
nonnative 32:7  
Nonverbal 16:10  
33:12  
north 26:20  
northern 10:23  
note 7:3  
nothing's 27:12  
Notice 3:9  
noticed 30:25  
number 7:21 11:8  
19:6,11

---

### O

objective 7:22  
objectives 15:24  
obstruction 8:12  
20:10  
obstructions 13:14  
obvious 13:23  
occasional 8:13  
occur 30:5,8  
occurs 18:7  
offended 6:9  
office 5:6,7,15 36:9  
official 2:16 15:24

officially 3:8  
Ojinaga 23:4,10  
Okay 2:25 19:21  
28:2,7,12 30:15  
34:10 35:18  
old 20:14 24:4,8,14  
26:13  
once 9:21 11:14  
12:4  
ones 14:11 17:8  
onions 22:3  
open 5:1,25  
opening 23:13  
operated 9:16  
operates 6:22  
operating 18:17  
operation 12:20  
13:21 20:2  
operations 20:1,4  
opinions 4:13  
opportunity 3:5  
4:17  
opposed 15:14  
option 13:19  
options 14:2  
oral 6:2,3 28:14  
order 21:8 30:4  
organizations  
10:15  
organize 15:11  
organized 5:21  
organizing 12:11  
Orielly 1:13 2:14  
originally 25:7  
ought 25:13,18  
outside 15:7  
overview 5:24,24  
6:20

---

### P

packet 4:3  
paper 27:19  
Parsons 5:15,17  
6:16  
part 10:16 14:20  
15:5 18:2 20:18  
21:2 30:25 32:1  
participate 15:11  
particular 9:3 12:9

22:14 31:25  
particularly 9:14  
Paso 5:6 7:14 8:23  
29:4,5,24 36:2,16  
pass 18:10 26:13  
pasture-type 22:4  
Patrol 19:25 20:8  
Patt 3:2  
PEIS 12:19  
pending 29:3  
Penitas 10:3  
people 23:14 25:1  
27:11  
permanent 35:16  
person 6:9 25:24  
28:13  
persons 30:15  
Peña 5:11  
picture 17:8  
place 2:19 11:9,12  
17:6 18:16 30:9  
plain 29:12  
plan 35:10  
plans 17:6  
plant 14:17  
planting 22:22  
play 30:10  
please 2:24 5:3 6:4  
6:8,10 30:19  
35:20  
plots 32:9  
podium 5:23 20:16  
21:7  
point 13:4 14:1  
16:24 19:10,18  
19:24 20:6,13,13  
20:16 22:2,2,24  
22:25 24:1 25:3  
27:4 32:12  
points 16:13  
Policy 4:9  
posed 21:24  
possible 29:15  
posted 2:17  
potential 7:2 11:2  
12:3,5 13:22 15:3  
16:20 17:23,25  
18:12,14 19:3,6  
20:10

practices 13:2,20  
precious 25:14  
preparation 5:16  
16:9  
prepared 2:17  
present 4:17 21:15  
29:10  
presentation 3:13  
5:2,25 6:17  
Presidio 1:11,14  
2:13 5:15 7:12,14  
9:3,15 10:7 11:11  
21:15 22:7,15  
23:20,21 24:22  
25:15 28:18  
31:24 32:5 33:24  
34:6  
Presidio's 22:22  
pretty 31:10 35:15  
prevent 8:9 13:10  
23:23 26:6,25  
previous 14:12,24  
prime 19:10 22:15  
priority 24:20 29:2  
private 10:14  
probably 30:21  
problem 21:24  
27:15 31:25  
problems 25:8  
proceedings 2:15  
process 3:2 4:8  
6:23 11:15,21  
12:2,4,24 13:25  
27:14,24 28:1,3,5  
production 17:2  
products 21:19  
program 6:13  
31:18  
programmatically 1:7  
2:5,7 3:7,7,11,15  
4:14,25 6:19,25  
7:4 11:19 16:8,14  
17:1,7,11 20:22  
30:12  
programs 31:17  
project 2:5 3:4 5:5  
5:9,10,14,18,20  
5:24 6:14 7:6 8:5  
8:20,24 9:3,6,10

9:13,15,22 10:2,3  
10:20,24 11:6,7,8  
12:7,12,16,18,22  
13:17,21 14:11  
14:21,23 15:7  
16:16 17:5,12,24  
20:23 25:3,6  
28:17,18 30:11  
30:21 31:24 32:5  
32:10

**projects** 1:8 2:9  
6:21 7:8,10,13,18  
7:19,21 8:19 9:19  
11:14 16:20,22  
17:8 18:16,24  
23:6,10 28:20  
29:24 30:3,4,7,7  
30:10,14  
**proper** 31:17  
**properties** 23:23  
**property** 26:25  
27:16  
**propose** 19:19  
**proposed** 15:8  
**protect** 7:23 24:19  
**protecting** 24:21  
**provide** 3:6 4:16  
4:25 5:23 20:25  
35:19  
**provides** 3:5  
**public** 2:6,11,19  
3:1,4,8 4:15 6:1  
6:10 11:22 20:20  
23:18,18 24:6  
35:22,23  
**purpose** 2:25 4:16  
13:20  
**put** 16:18  
**putting** 24:20  
**p.m** 2:12 35:23,25

## Q

**qualities** 21:13  
**quality** 14:18  
17:22 18:20,21  
21:14,21 22:8,18  
22:21 24:10  
25:15 34:13 35:1  
35:13

**quantify** 16:17  
**quantity** 16:18  
34:14 35:2,13  
**question** 24:2  
25:25 26:17,22  
30:17 32:4  
**questions** 4:24  
20:14,21  
**quickly** 8:19 20:3  
**quite** 24:18 25:11  
35:5

**Quitman** 8:23

## R

**Rachel** 1:17 6:7  
36:4,14  
**raise** 29:17  
**raising** 22:3  
**ran** 29:11  
**rate** 29:5  
**reach** 32:5  
**ready** 23:12  
**real** 3:17 10:8  
29:13  
**really** 7:16 9:8  
10:10,10,13 11:2  
11:11,13 12:2  
13:1,4,6 15:8  
16:19,24 17:24  
18:6,21 19:2,14  
19:15 20:7 27:1  
31:14,15,18,21  
34:3  
**reason** 7:19 18:15  
**receive** 29:16  
**received** 11:21  
**rechanneling** 23:6  
23:11,17  
**Reclamation** 5:6  
**recommendations**  
4:13  
**record** 2:10 35:22  
36:6  
**recorded** 2:16  
**recourse** 23:22  
**recreational** 15:4  
**rectification** 7:11  
7:13 8:20 9:9,13  
11:11 15:19

**reference** 13:4  
**referred** 4:10  
**referring** 21:21  
**regarding** 4:13,24  
20:22 31:7  
**region** 9:9 24:11  
**regional** 15:9,11  
18:20 31:15  
**regions** 11:5 13:17  
15:14  
**Register** 3:9  
**Registration** 36:15  
**relatively** 9:18  
15:18  
**release** 32:6  
**released** 3:8 32:9  
32:13  
**releasing** 27:20  
29:4  
**remember** 3:2  
**reminder** 35:18  
**removal** 13:13,15  
14:4,8,17  
**remove** 8:12  
**report** 11:24  
**REPORTED** 1:17  
**reporter** 2:16 6:6  
30:19 36:5  
**require** 12:24  
**required** 8:8,13  
**requirements** 20:4  
**researched** 12:2  
**reservoirs** 9:12  
**resource** 17:13  
24:16  
**resources** 12:21  
16:1,5 17:15,15  
17:18 18:3,5,13  
31:1,19  
**respect** 6:10  
**responding** 4:21  
**response** 4:25  
16:10 33:13  
**responsibilities**  
24:15  
**responsibility** 24:4  
**restoration** 20:7  
30:7  
**result** 19:3

**results** 32:10,23  
**return** 20:16  
**review** 3:8 4:8,11  
19:5 20:14  
**right** 3:22 14:8  
15:23 24:7 26:14  
30:22 34:2,7,9  
**rights** 19:22 31:8  
**right-of-way** 14:22  
**Rio** 1:8 2:8 6:21  
7:8,11,15 9:6,10  
9:21 10:2 11:8  
19:18 21:23  
22:20 23:9 34:24  
**river** 8:3,7,21  
15:18 23:17 24:4  
24:4,8,14,17 30:3  
30:4,7 32:14  
33:15,23 34:4,8  
**road** 32:24  
**Rodriguez** 25:20  
**route** 10:22  
**rows** 15:24  
**runs** 10:11

## S

**safety** 23:18  
**salinated** 21:22  
22:8,24 34:16  
**salination** 34:13  
**salt** 14:17 25:3,5  
25:10 27:4,16  
28:4 32:2,2,6,8,8  
32:20  
**saw** 26:8  
**saying** 4:3 26:1  
**scale** 10:25 11:1  
18:15 19:1,1  
**scenario** 23:13  
**schedule** 29:15  
**school** 24:7,12  
**scope** 31:23  
**scoping** 11:16,21  
12:4  
**seal** 36:9  
**seasonal** 8:16  
13:10  
**second** 7:24 8:5  
13:8 15:25 16:5  
19:12 21:2 27:4  
**section** 1:1 5:3  
**sections** 14:7  
**sediment** 13:15  
14:7 15:15,16  
**sediments** 15:14  
**see** 11:14 20:12  
25:2 31:2 35:15  
**seeing** 30:22 32:23  
**seek** 3:10 4:22 21:3  
**seeking** 28:15  
**sees** 27:2  
**select** 6:24  
**selected** 12:6  
**sense** 19:13 31:15  
**separately** 17:12  
**September** 3:25  
21:1 35:21  
**series** 11:18  
**serve** 19:19  
**service** 10:15  
31:19  
**session** 5:1  
**share** 7:20,21  
**shared** 23:5  
**sheets** 3:14  
**short** 23:4 35:3  
**shortages** 22:5  
**Shorthand** 36:4  
**shows** 11:16  
**side** 9:1  
**sides** 7:24  
**sight** 35:15,16  
**sign** 2:24 6:4  
**signed** 21:4 28:13  
34:11  
**significant** 19:2  
**Simons** 1:17 36:4  
36:14  
**simply** 15:21 16:3  
**Sims** 3:17,21 27:6  
27:8,18,23 28:1,4  
28:14,15,25  
29:19 30:1 33:23  
34:2,5,8  
**sir** 30:18 35:4  
**site** 2:18  
**situation** 14:9 18:6  
35:6

size 7:8  
 skirts 15:19  
 slide 5:3  
 slow 27:13  
 small 19:3 21:7  
 25:17  
 smaller 9:15 17:3  
 socioeconomics  
 17:20  
 somewhat 7:12  
 soon 2:20  
 sounds 13:1  
 source 34:18 35:12  
 speaker 4:5 6:4  
 21:4  
 special 12:7  
 species 15:5,5  
 17:16 32:6  
 specific 16:16,18  
 17:3,5 20:4 22:13  
 23:1 30:10,11  
 spoke 34:12  
 stabilization 12:17  
 13:13 31:10  
 staff 6:5  
 stagnated 24:13  
 standpoint 22:23  
 23:18,19  
 start 6:17 7:5 21:2  
 23:12 24:20  
 32:23  
 starting 8:21  
 starts 7:13,15  
 state 2:11 20:24  
 22:11 36:1,5  
 stated 14:20  
 statement 1:7 2:7  
 4:14,20 6:10  
 states 1:1 14:23  
 steady 11:6  
 steep 9:25  
 step 3:1 12:10 16:8  
 steps 12:3  
 stop 22:20  
 storage 9:11  
 straight 30:22  
 strange 29:8  
 stream 8:12,16 9:6  
 10:11 13:11,12

14:19  
 street 1:13 2:14  
 14:3  
 stuff 31:6  
 subcategory 16:2  
 submit 3:25 4:4  
 35:20  
 subsequent 17:2  
 suddenly 28:25  
 29:1  
 sufficient 7:25  
 suggestions 11:12  
 Suite 36:15  
 summarize 10:24  
 supervisor 5:12  
 support 11:13 15:8  
 31:17  
 sure 23:2,16 25:12  
 surface 29:11  
 sync 23:16  
 system 9:18 10:12  
 13:8,23 15:8 23:4  
 systems 22:8,8

### T

table 15:21 19:24  
 31:20  
 tables 3:12 4:3  
 take 14:15 21:8  
 25:10 26:23  
 taken 16:25  
 takes 14:17 32:22  
 talk 6:11 7:2 16:12  
 27:5 34:19  
 talked 16:3 26:7,8  
 27:10  
 talking 26:2,16  
 target 28:4  
 team 5:10  
 technical 5:16  
 technically 27:23  
 temporary 18:21  
 term 17:1  
 terms 12:16 13:22  
 16:21 17:9,18  
 18:19,23 31:3  
 terrain 10:1  
 terribly 23:1  
 Texas 1:14 9:12

10:23 36:1,5,14  
 36:16  
 Texas-Mexico 2:9  
 6:22  
 thank 2:21 6:15  
 20:18 25:22,23  
 28:11,12 35:24  
 thing 30:25 35:7  
 things 19:11 30:7  
 think 21:7,18,20  
 24:22 26:23,25  
 27:8,18 31:23,24  
 33:14,20,21,22  
 third 8:1,7 11:4  
 13:11 16:5 24:1  
 thought 18:21  
 three 6:19,21 7:8  
 7:13,19 8:19 9:15  
 11:5,14 12:3  
 15:13,22,23,24  
 16:12 18:16  
 21:11 32:24  
 tier 30:13  
 till 32:23  
 time 2:21 6:11,12  
 7:20 13:18 16:24  
 17:5 18:23 21:5,9  
 23:21 24:8,20  
 25:10,13,21  
 26:24 32:23  
 33:17 35:5,21,23  
 35:25  
 times 34:17 35:3  
 timing 14:6  
 today 4:4 6:17  
 token 14:7  
 toll 18:11  
 tonight 2:6,22 3:4  
 3:10,24 4:7,21  
 5:10 20:25 29:3  
 35:25  
 tonight's 2:6 21:2  
 top 29:1,23  
 touched 19:13  
 town 26:16  
 trail 30:3,4,7  
 trails 15:4  
 transcript 2:17  
 36:6

transcription 36:7  
 transcripts 2:21  
 transparent 31:4,4  
 treaties 8:4  
 tree 32:20  
 trees 32:21  
 tremendous 24:5  
 25:7  
 tributary 15:16  
 trouble 27:17  
 true 36:6  
 try 32:24  
 trying 24:23 29:14  
 tumble 22:2 35:15  
 turn 6:12  
 turning 5:22  
 twice 27:11  
 two 9:19 10:10,21  
 14:24,25 22:25  
 32:23  
 TxDOT 26:15  
 33:16  
 type 26:6 30:5  
 types 22:13  
 typical 8:24  
 typically 8:9 9:20  
 16:15

### U

umbrella 30:12  
 understand 6:7  
 unique 10:19,24  
 12:7  
 UNITED 1:1  
 upper 9:9 32:5  
 upstream 8:20  
 9:12 15:15  
 urban 7:23  
 usage 31:7  
 use 8:1 10:14 11:3  
 14:15 15:4 17:18  
 17:19 18:15,19  
 19:13,15 30:24  
 31:1,13,21  
 USIBWC 2:8 4:11  
 5:11 6:22 9:5  
 15:3  
 USIBWC's 2:17  
 U.S 2:2 5:3,5,6,7

9:1 32:13

### V

Valley 10:20  
 value 22:11  
 varying 17:23  
 vegetation 8:8 14:4  
 14:6 17:16 20:5  
 Victoria 5:18,23  
 6:13,15,16 16:11  
 29:21 31:14  
 view 20:6 32:12  
 views 4:12,18 7:18  
 voicing 33:15  
 volume 23:8 34:14

### W

want 2:1,14 4:15  
 4:22 19:18 23:22  
 28:5 31:3 35:16  
 wanted 29:21  
 waste 21:19  
 water 1:2 2:3 5:4  
 7:25 8:14 11:10  
 12:16,21 14:15  
 14:16,18,18 16:1  
 16:5 17:14 19:17  
 19:21,22 21:12  
 21:13,16,22 22:8  
 22:8,18,24 23:3  
 24:13,16 25:12  
 25:14,16 26:20  
 29:11,12 30:24  
 31:1,7,8,13,18,21  
 32:3 34:13,14,14  
 34:16,17,18,20  
 34:23,24 35:2,2,4  
 35:12  
 waterways 23:7  
 way 3:17 5:22 10:4  
 23:10 29:8 31:21  
 32:13 35:8  
 ways 25:13  
 web 2:18  
 Wednesday 1:12  
 2:12  
 weeds 22:2 35:15  
 weeks 2:18  
 week's 27:19

**welcome** 2:1,6  
**went** 15:22 26:7  
**weren't** 18:14  
**West** 1:13 2:14  
**we'll** 2:20 3:17  
     25:20 35:21  
**we're** 6:19 9:14  
     16:19 20:19,20  
     21:7 22:10 23:12  
     23:13,15 25:19  
     26:2,9,14 29:14  
     29:16 30:21,23  
     35:6,8,17  
**we've** 22:3 24:9  
     27:11 34:14  
**whatnot** 29:18  
**wide** 8:16  
**width** 8:25 9:7  
     18:9 28:18  
**wildlife** 5:7 10:15  
     15:17 17:16 18:1  
**willing** 15:10  
**wish** 26:19  
**wishing** 30:15  
**wording** 31:2  
**work** 25:10 26:24  
     32:18 33:18,19  
**worked** 17:9  
**working** 23:7,15  
     23:24 34:8  
**worried** 31:5  
**worries** 27:1  
**worse** 23:13  
**written** 3:13,25 4:4  
     6:2 20:25 35:19

---

**Y**


---

**Yeah** 33:14  
**year** 9:8 11:17  
**years** 13:16 19:25  
     32:24 34:15  
**yesterday** 26:7  
**you-all** 4:4

---

**Z**


---

**zone** 29:13

---

**#**


---

**#384** 36:15

**#8247** 36:14

---

**1**


---

**10** 8:25 24:11  
**10th** 3:10  
**100** 9:7 18:10  
**1024** 36:15  
**106** 10:5  
**12** 9:20  
**12/31/07** 36:14  
**13** 10:25  
**15** 10:7  
**186** 10:3,25

---

**2**


---

**2003** 28:21  
**2005** 3:3  
**2007** 1:12 2:12  
     36:10  
**202** 1:13 2:13  
**22** 1:12  
**22nd** 2:12  
**24th** 3:25 21:1  
     35:21

---

**3**


---

**300** 36:15  
**35** 9:20

---

**5**


---

**533-1199** 36:16

---

**6**


---

**6:12** 2:12  
**60** 18:10  
**600** 9:1

---

**7**


---

**7** 8:24  
**7:06** 35:23,25  
**79845** 1:14  
**79901** 36:16

---

**8**


---

**86** 8:21

---

**9**


---

**9** 24:11  
**915** 36:16