



THE BOUNDARY MARKER

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RECOVERY ACT BOOSTS USIBWC LEVEE PROJECTS

Bolstered by \$220 million in funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has embarked on a major effort to rehabilitate its aging Rio Grande levees. The USIBWC work includes levee projects in the Upper and Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Projects in Doña Ana County in New Mexico, and El Paso, Hudspeth, and Hidalgo Counties in Texas.

The USIBWC has identified the need to raise levee height and make structural repairs to ensure the levees provide adequate protection during the 100-year flood, a flood that has a 1% chance of occurring in any given year. The levee rehabilitation is intended to meet standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). U.S. Section hydraulic modeling and geotechnical analysis have identified levee segments where there are height deficiencies or structural weaknesses that could lead to levee failure during a flood. The USIBWC has also undertaken required environmental studies.

The Recovery Act funding will allow rehabilitation of approximately 170 miles of levees, including Rio Grande levees and levees in the interior floodways in the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project.

“With this funding, we will be able to rehabilitate most of our deficient levees in just two years,” said U.S. Commissioner C.W. “Bill” Ruth. “At previous funding levels, we were looking at a 20-year project to complete the work.”

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is an unprecedented effort to jumpstart the economy, provide or save millions of jobs, and put a down payment on long-neglected challenges.

Commissioner Ruth added, “The USIBWC has already seen hundreds of new jobs created for our contractors and at our agency. As we issue construction contracts in the coming months, we will be putting even more people back to work.”

Prior to the injection of Recovery Act funds, the USIBWC had already

begun levee work using in-house crews. An effort to raise and rehabilitate levees in Doña Ana County, New Mexico began in 2008 with work ongoing. In early 2009, Commission personnel started rehabilitating levees in the Upper Valley of El Paso, Texas.

These efforts complement levee projects previously completed by the USIBWC in El Paso and Cameron County and by Hidalgo County in partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and USIBWC.



Levee construction is underway in El Paso.



COMMISSION CELEBRATES 120th ANNIVERSARY

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC) celebrated its 120th anniversary this spring with commemorations in El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua.

The Commission was established as the International Boundary Commission in the Treaty of March 1, 1889. At that time, the Commission's main responsibility was to resolve issues regarding the location of the international boundary when the two rivers that form part of the boundary changed course.

The 1944 Water Treaty expanded the Commission's mission and changed its name to the International Boundary and Water Commission to reflect a greater role in such issues as distribution of the waters of the Rio Grande and Colorado River between the two countries, flood control, and sanitation. During the 20th century, the Commission evolved into an influential agency that addressed myriad water infrastructure challenges along the U.S.-Mexico border.

"The Commission has demonstrated how two countries can resolve water issues peacefully," said U.S. Commissioner C.W. "Bill" Ruth. "Managers from international river basins around the world turn to us to learn how they can better manage their systems."

"Over its 120-year history, the Commission has become a model for other international commissions worldwide," said Interim Mexican Commissioner Luis Antonio Rascon. "Being an organization headed by engineers allows Commission issues to be addressed from a technical perspective, making it possible for practical engineering-based solutions to be presented to the two governments."

The U.S. Section hosted a celebration at its Headquarters in March attended by Commission personnel and U.S. Section retirees. At the ceremony, a permanent memorial to late U.S. Commissioner Carlos Marin, who died in the line of duty in 2008, was unveiled in the lobby by his widow, Rosa, and Commissioner Ruth.

The Mexican Section hosted an event in Ciudad Juarez in April attended by former Mexican Commissioners and other dignitaries who spoke about Commission history.

The Commission is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the two countries and settling differences that arise in their application. Currently, the IBWC is working with authorities from both countries on projects and planning for the Rio Grande and Colorado River to ensure that water supplies and infrastructure in these basins are able to meet the needs of both nations well into the future.



Rosa Marin and Commissioner Ruth unveil the Carlos Marin memorial.

The IBWC will continue to maintain and upgrade its border water infrastructure, strengthening its position as a premier border institution in service to the United States and Mexico.



MEXICO NAMES A NEW COMMISSIONER

The Mexican government has appointed Roberto F. Salmon Castelo as Mexican Commissioner of the International Boundary and Water Commission. He succeeds Arturo Herrera Solis who, along with U.S. Commissioner Carlos Marin, died in a 2008 plane crash while surveying flood conditions on the Conchos River and Rio Grande.

Prior to his appointment, Commissioner Salmon worked for Mexico's National Water Commission (Conagua) in Hermosillo, Sonora for seven years where he held posts as General Director for the Northwest Basin Organization and Northwest Regional Director. He has also held positions at the University of Sonora, as Director of Planning and Special Projects at the Center for Research and Development of Natural Resources of the State of Sonora, and as a private sector consultant on hydrologic basin planning, engineering finance, and other subjects.

He is a graduate of the University of Arizona in Tucson where he earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in agricultural economics and studied water resource management at the doctoral level.

Salmon was formally introduced as the new Commissioner at a May 23 ceremony at Mexican



Commissioner Salmon

Section Headquarters in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua attended by various dignitaries, including U.S. Commissioner C.W. "Bill" Ruth.

PRESIDIO LEVEE REPAIR PROJECT ADVANCES

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has completed emergency repairs to one segment of the Rio Grande flood control levee at Presidio, Texas and has begun construction on another segment. The levees were damaged during the 2008 flood.

Emergency repairs were completed April 16 by USIBWC contractor Grimmitt Brothers, Inc. of Snyder, Texas along a 2-mile segment of the levee from Cibolo Creek to the railroad bed adjacent to the developed part of Presidio. This portion of the levee system is critical for protecting the town from future Rio Grande floods. To repair erosion from last year's flood, the contractor placed and compacted embankment material on the levee. Work was completed more than one month ahead of schedule.

Work on another levee segment upstream

from the international bridge began in May. A contract for repair of the 3000-foot segment was awarded on April 29 to Menendez-Donnell & Assoc., Inc. of Houston, Texas. The project consists of construction of a slurry trench, an underground wall to prevent water seepage from undermining the levee. During the 2008 flood, seepage of floodwaters to the land side of the levee was a significant problem. Work is scheduled to be completed in June 2009.

"Our goal has always been to complete emergency repairs prior to the start of the flood season," said U.S. Commissioner C.W. "Bill" Ruth. "We are well on our way to achieving that goal."

The USIBWC is also coordinating with the Mexican Section of the Commission for long-term improvements to the flood control project that protects both Presidio and its sister city of Ojinaga, Chihuahua. Levees in both cities suffered significant damage during the 2008 flood.

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