



INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION

COMISIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE LÍMITES Y AGUAS

# Overview of Commission History, Mission, and Projects



Sally Spener  
U.S. Secretary  
International Boundary and Water Commission  
March 5, 2014

# MISSION OF THE IBWC

*The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the two countries and settling differences that arise in their application.*



# IBWC STRUCTURE

## TREATY OFFICERS

### U.S. SECTION

- Commissioner
- Secretary
- 2 Principal Engineers

### MEXICAN SECTION

- Commissioner
- Secretary
- 2 Principal Engineers



# IBWC STRUCTURE

- ◆ **International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC, the Commission)**
- ◆ **Comisión Internacional de Límites y Aguas entre México y los Estados Unidos (CILA, la Comisión)**
- ◆ **United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC or U.S. Section)**
- ◆ **Sección estadounidense de la Comisión Internacional de Límites y Aguas (Sección estadounidense, CILA EU)**
- ◆ **Mexican Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (Mexican Section or MxIBWC)**
- ◆ **Sección mexicana de la Comisión Internacional de Límites y Aguas (Sección mexicana or CILA MEX )**



# COMMISSIONERS



## ◆ 2 Commissioners

- ▶ Roberto Salmon of Mexico
- ▶ Edward Drusina of the United States



# BOUNDARY TREATIES

- ◆ **Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848)** – peace treaty that established new territorial limits
- ◆ **Gadsden Treaty (1853)** - US purchased additional territory for railroad route
- ◆ **Convention of July 29, 1882** – established a temporary Commission to survey and mark the boundary
- ◆ **Convention of Nov. 12, 1884** – Means to address boundary disputes when river channel shifts
- ◆ **Convention of March 1, 1889** – Established International Boundary Commission to apply 1884 treaty



**Boundary Monument**



# BOUNDARY TREATIES

## ◆ Convention of 1933

- ▶ Stabilized the international boundary in El Paso-Juarez Valley
- ▶ Authorized the Rio Grande Rectification Project
- ▶ Straightened the river channel
- ▶ Provided for construction of flood control levees on both sides



**Rectified channel and levees**



# BOUNDARY TREATIES

## ◆ Chamizal Treaty (1963)

- ▶ Resolved a century-old boundary dispute in central El Paso-Juarez
- ▶ Relocated the Rio Grande to a concrete-lined channel
- ▶ 630 acres transferred to Mexico
- ▶ 193 acres transferred to US
- ▶ 6 bridges constructed/replaced



International Cordova –  
Bridge of the Americas



# BOUNDARY TREATIES

## ◆ 1970 Boundary Treaty

- ▶ Resolved pending boundary disputes
- ▶ Authorized the Commission to relocate the river channel
- ▶ Prevents construction of works that would obstruct or deflect normal or flood flows
- ▶ Border defined as middle of the river channel with greatest average width over its length
- ▶ IBWC to demarcate the boundary on maps



**Colorado River at SIB**



# RIO GRANDE BASIN



El Paso-Juarez  
Convention of 1906

international dams

1944 Water Treaty



# CONVENTION OF 1906

- ◆ Distribution between Mexico and the US of the waters of the Rio Grande in El Paso-Juarez
- ◆ U.S. to deliver 60 kaf/year
- ◆ In case of extraordinary drought, water deliveries to both countries are reduced by the same percentage; various reductions have occurred
- ◆ Water stored in Reclamation's Elephant Butte and Caballo Dams in New Mexico



American Dam



# 1944 WATER TREATY

## RIO GRANDE

- ◆ Mexico delivers water to the US from Ft. Quitman to Gulf
- ◆ US receives 1/3 of water from 6 Mexican tributaries
- ◆ 1/3 shall not be less, as an average amount in cycles of 5 consecutive years, than 350 kaf annually
- ◆ Some cycles have ended in deficit



*Rio Grande gaging station*



# 1944 WATER TREATY

## RIO GRANDE

- ◆ In the event of extraordinary drought or serious accident, Mexico may make up any deficit in the next 5-year cycle
- ◆ Treaty authorized construction of up to 3 international dams; only 2 were built
- ◆ Cycle ends early if U.S. conservation capacity fills at both dams



***Conchos River is a major tributary***



# 1944 WATER TREATY

## International Storage Dams

- ◆ Two international storage dams on the Rio Grande
- ◆ Reservoirs store water for use by both countries and provide flood control
- ◆ Each country has hydroelectric power plants
- ◆ Power is generated equally regardless of national ownership of water releases



*Amistad Dam Mx Power Plant*



# 1944 WATER TREATY

## International Storage Dams

### ◆ Amistad Dam

- ▶ Built in 1969
- ▶ Del Rio, TX – Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila

### ◆ Falcon Dam

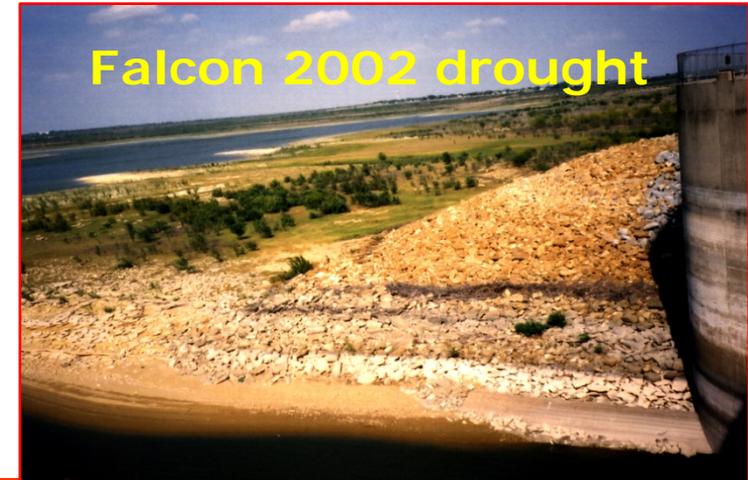
- ▶ Built in 1954
- ▶ Falcon Heights, TX -Nueva Ciudad Guerrero, Tamaulipas

- ◆ Combined conservation capacity over 5 maf

Amistad 2010 flood release



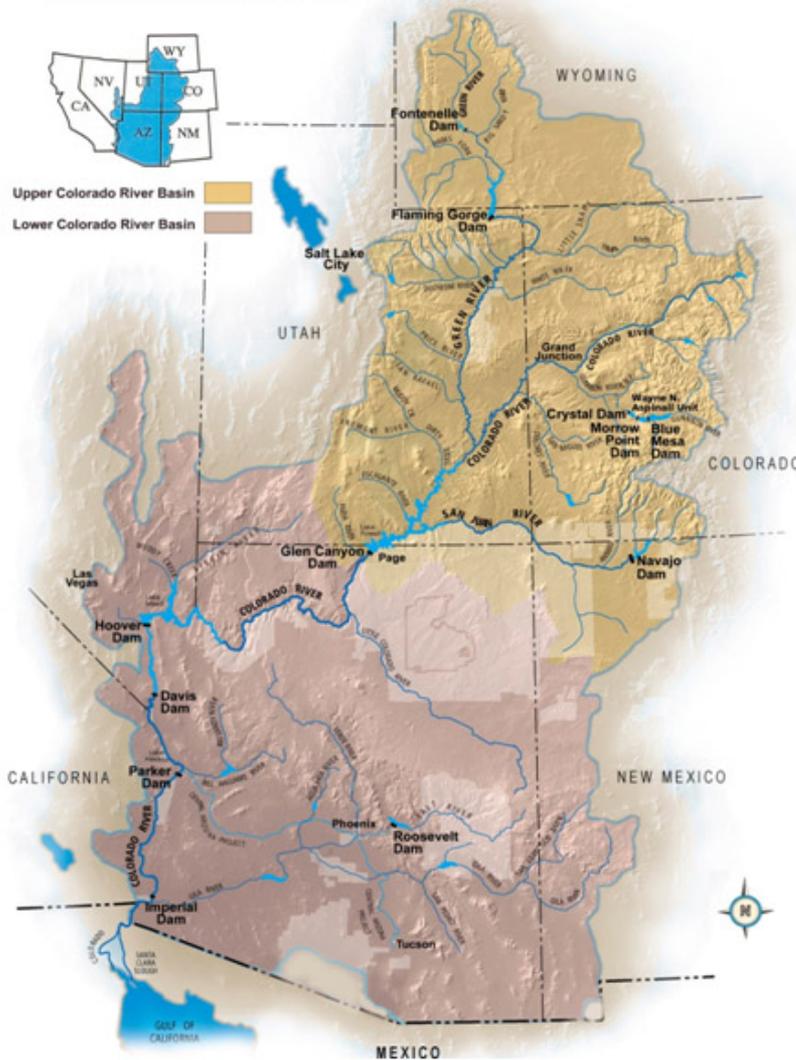
Falcon 2002 drought



# 1944 WATER TREATY

## COLORADO RIVER

### Colorado River Basin

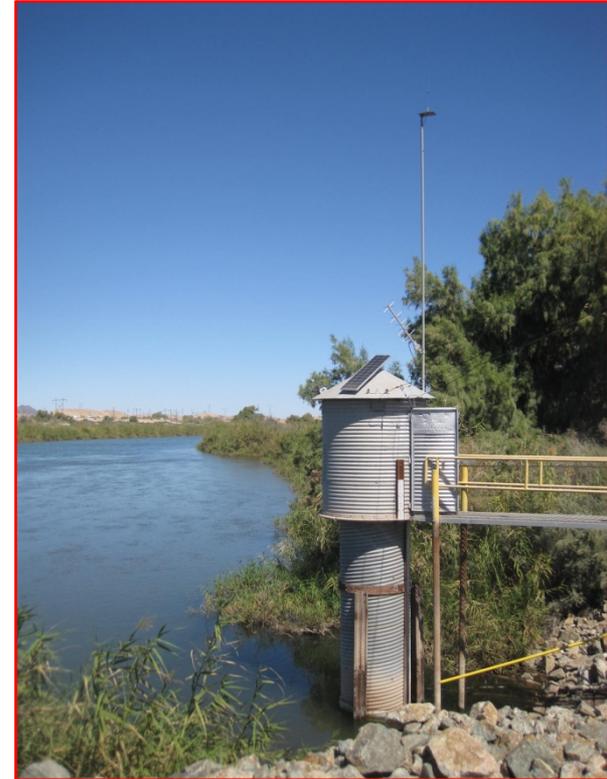


Map of US portion of the Colorado River basin



# 1944 WATER TREATY COLORADO RIVER

- ◆ US to deliver to Mexico a volume of 1.5 maf/year
- ◆ When there are surplus waters, Mexico may receive an additional 200 kaf
- ◆ In extraordinary drought, Mexico reduced in proportion to U.S.
- ◆ US has always met its delivery obligation



**Northerly International Boundary**



# 1944 WATER TREATY

## Flood Control

- ◆ Treaty authorized flood control works
- ◆ US and Mexico constructed flood control levees
- ◆ Flood control policies are determined jointly
- ◆ Each country may discharge flood waters into the international rivers but should advise the other country in advance



**Rio Grande flood 2008 (Presidio)**



# 1944 WATER TREATY

## Flood Control

- ◆ 4 flood control projects
  - ▶ Tijuana River – 2 miles
  - ▶ Upper Rio Grande (NM, TX) – 200 miles
  - ▶ Presidio, TX – 15 miles
  - ▶ Lower Rio Grande, TX – 180 miles



**Rio Grande flood 2010**



# 1944 WATER TREATY

## Sanitation

- ◆ Treaty authorizes Commission to give preferential attention to solution of border sanitation problems
- ◆ 3 international wastewater treatment plants
  - ▶ Rio Rico, AZ
  - ▶ Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas
  - ▶ San Diego, CA



**Nuevo Laredo plant**



# IBWC MINUTES

- ◆ Per 1944 Treaty, decisions of the Commission are recorded in the form of Minutes
- ◆ Legally binding
- ◆ Take effect when signed by the Commission and approved by the two governments
- ◆ Minutes provide a means to implement treaty
- ◆ 319 minutes to date



**Minute 319 signing**



# MINUTE 319

- ◆ Signed Nov. 20, 2012
- ◆ 5-year agreement thru 2017
- ◆ 7 Sections
  - ▶ Extension of Minute 318
  - ▶ Water sharing during high reservoirs
  - ▶ Shortage sharing
  - ▶ Salinity Management
  - ▶ Projects
  - ▶ Intentionally Created Mexican Allocation (ICMA)
  - ▶ Water for Environment and ICMA/ICS exchange pilot



**Minute 319 signing ceremony**



# CURRENT ACTIVITIES

- ◆ Account for national ownership of waters
- ◆ Review projects in the floodplains
- ◆ Planning and studies
- ◆ Construction and rehabilitation of levees
- ◆ Sanitation and water quality
- ◆ Safety of Dams work
- ◆ Min. 319 implementation
- ◆ Operate and/or maintain:
  - ▶ Flood control levees
  - ▶ Dams and Power Plants
  - ▶ Wastewater Treatment Plants
  - ▶ Boundary monuments/  
boundary demarcation

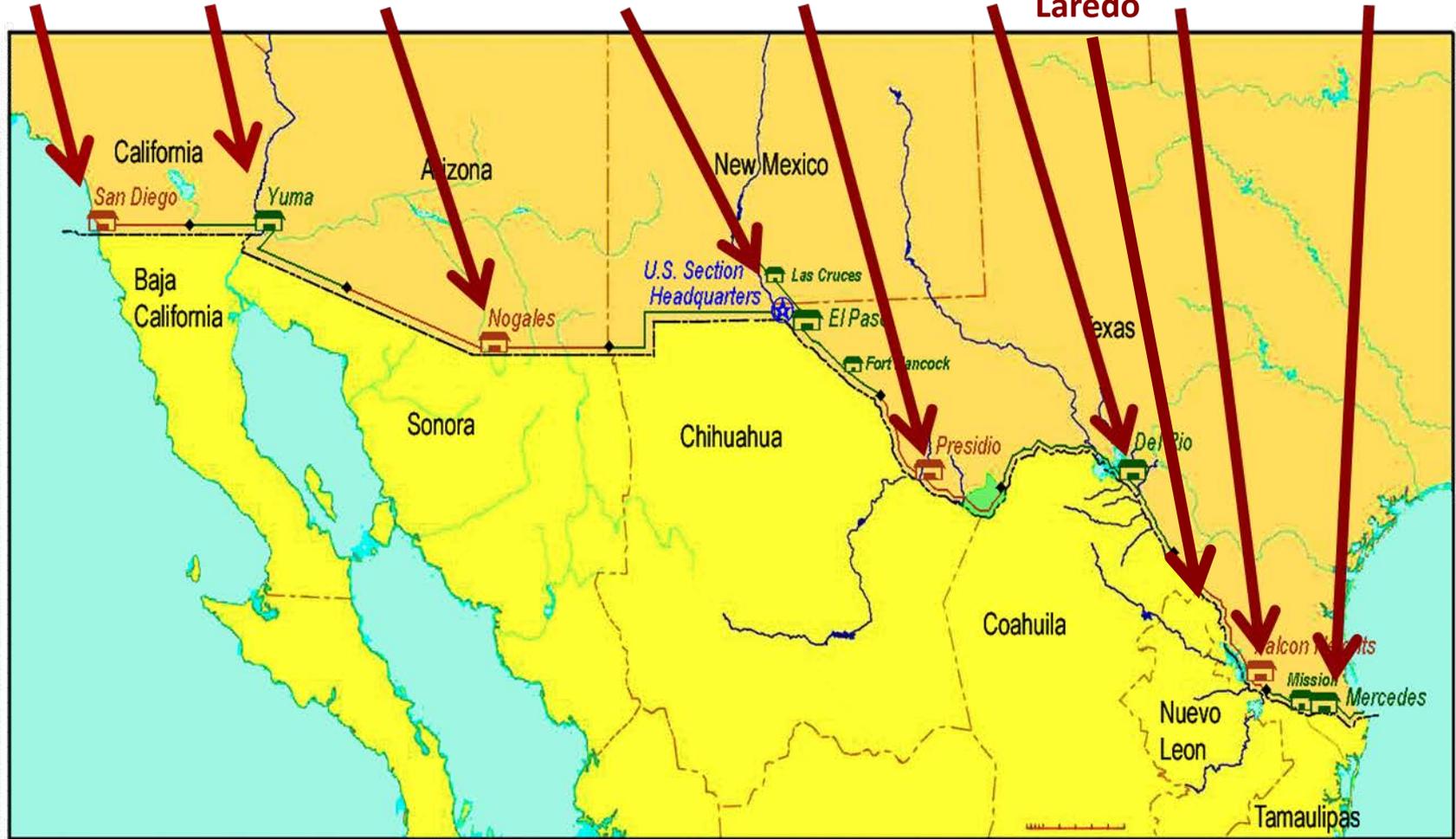


**Rio Grande levee rehabilitation**



# CURRENT ACTIVITIES

San Diego Yuma Nogales Up. Rio Grande Presidio Amistad Falcon L. Rio Grande  
Laredo





INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION

COMISION INTERNACIONAL DE LIMITES Y AGUAS

## HEADQUARTERS

U.S. SECTION  
El Paso, Texas  
[www.ibwc.gov](http://www.ibwc.gov)

MEXICAN SECTION  
Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua  
[www.sre.gob.mx/cilanorte/](http://www.sre.gob.mx/cilanorte/)