

# INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION

## *Rio Grande Water Deliveries under the 1944 Water Treaty*

Sally Spener, U.S. Secretary

April 10, 2013

Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum Meeting

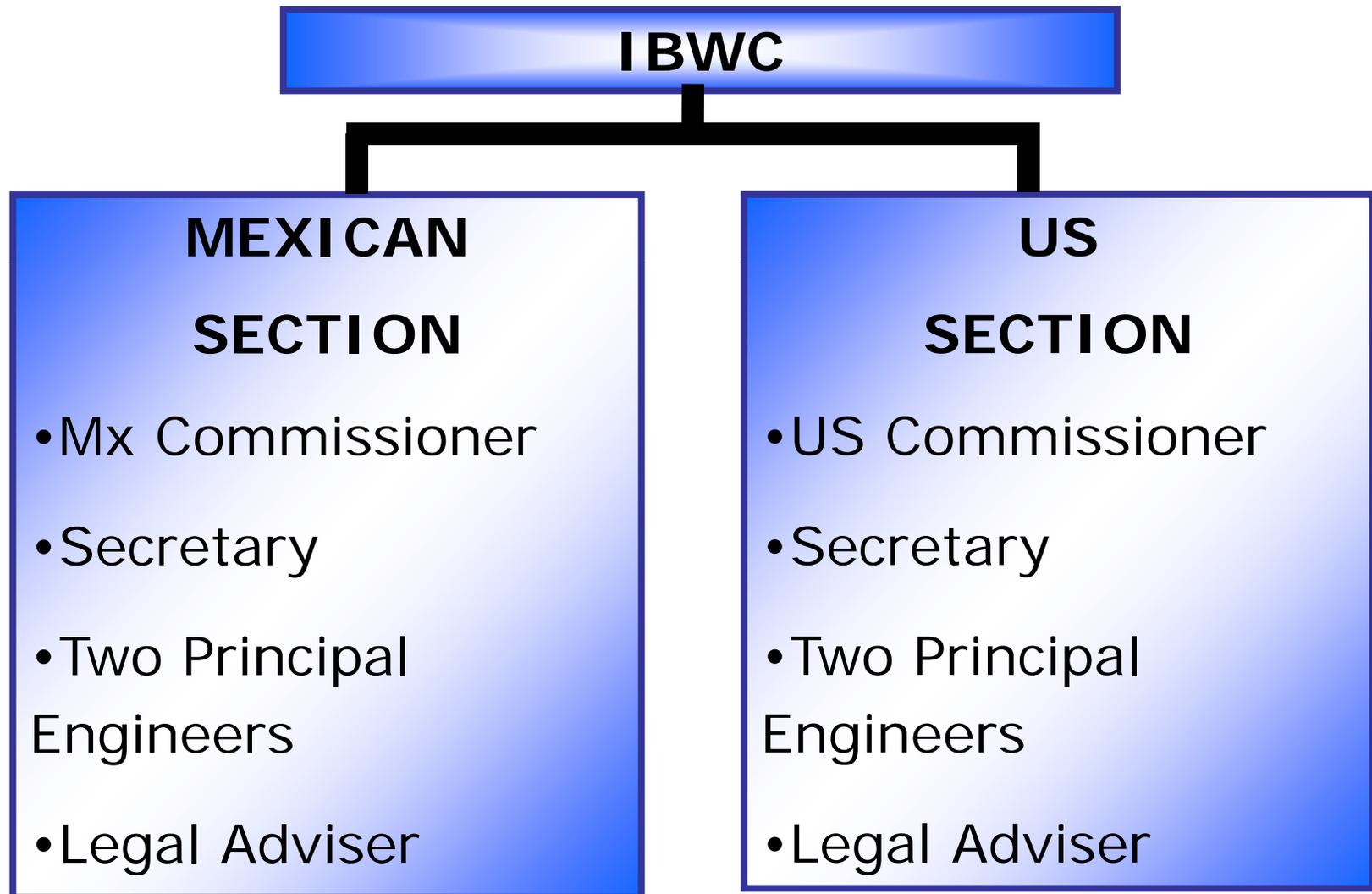


# INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION

*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.*



# INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION



# CONVENTION OF 1906

- ◆ Distribution between Mexico and the U.S. of the waters of the Rio Grande in El Paso-Juarez
- ◆ Waters released from U.S. reservoirs in NM
- ◆ U.S. to deliver 60 kaf/year
- ◆ Proportional reduction in case of extraordinary drought



**Elephant Butte Reservoir**



# CONVENTION OF 1906

- ◆ Reductions to Mexico have occurred 31% of the time in 1939-2013
- ◆ 2011 – 43% of full
- ◆ 2012 – 20% of full
- ◆ 2013 – significant reduction forecast
- ◆ Treaty does not require the US to pay back any deficit



**Dry Rio Grande channel at El Paso**



# 1944 WATER TREATY

- ◆ Covers Rio Grande from Ft. Quitman to the Gulf
- ◆ Mexico delivers water to the US from 6 tributaries
- ◆ US receives 1/3 of flows arriving in the Rio Grande from the 6 tributaries
- ◆ 1/3 shall not be less, as an average amount in cycles of 5 consecutive years, than 350,000 acre-feet annually



**Rio Grande at Ft. Quitman**



# 1944 WATER TREATY



**Amistad Dam**



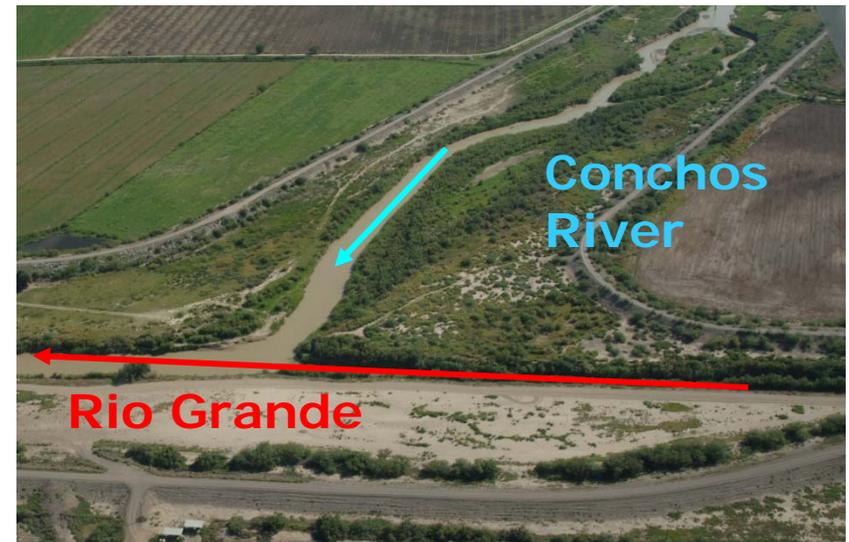
**Falcon Dam**

- ◆ Waters for both countries are stored at the 2 international reservoirs
  - ▶ Falcon Dam – near Falcon Heights, TX
  - ▶ Amistad Dam – at Del Rio-Ciudad Acuña



# 1944 WATER TREATY

- ◆ Mx tributaries allotted 1/3 to US, 2/3 to Mx:
  - ▶ Conchos, Arroyo las Vacas, San Rodrigo, Escondido, Salado, San Diego
- ◆ Mx tributaries allotted 100% to Mx
  - ▶ Alamo, San Juan
- ◆ All major US tributaries allotted 100% to US
- ◆ Historically, 70% of water originates in Mexico but 50% is allotted to US

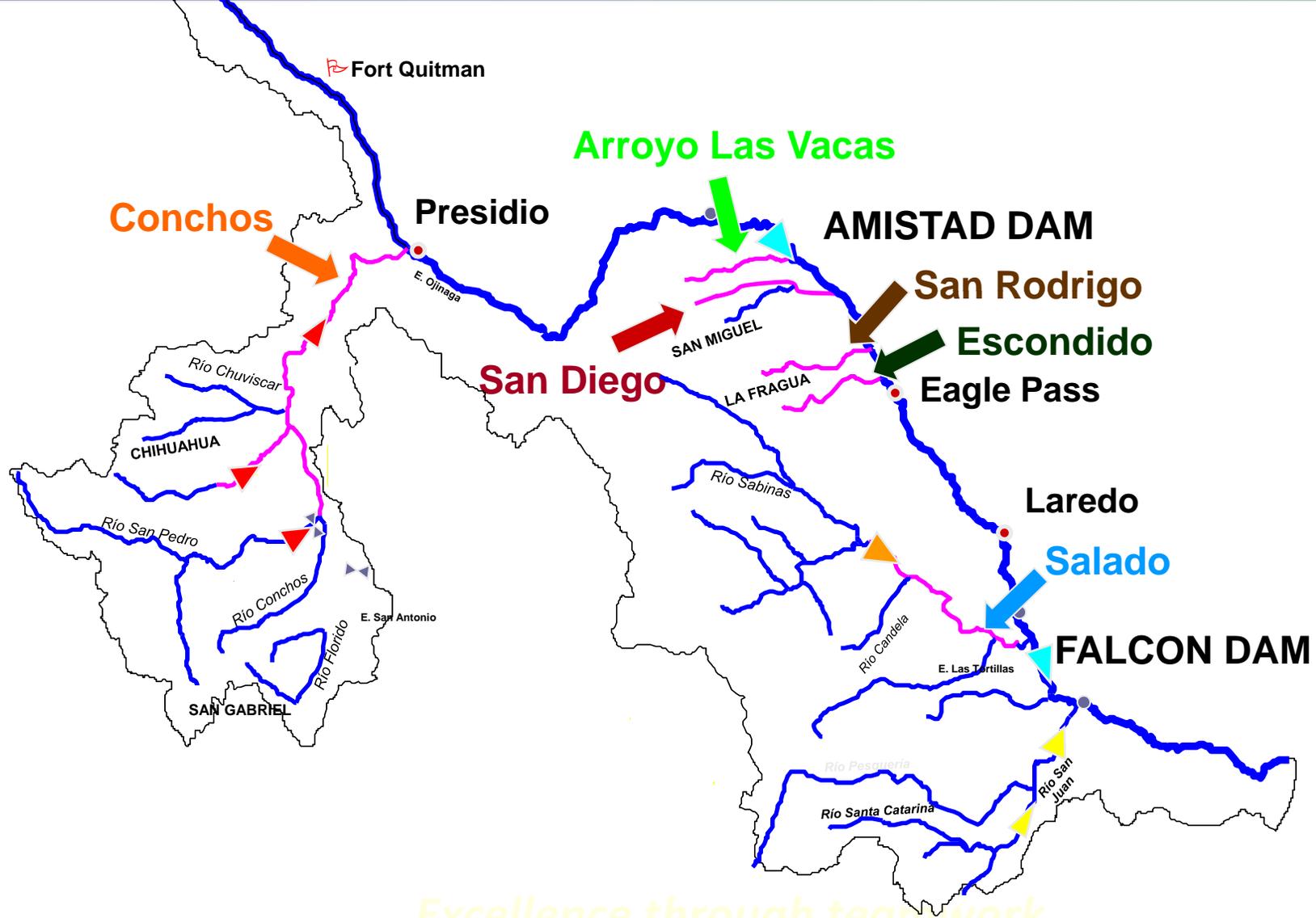


Conchos-Rio Grande confluence



# 1944 WATER TREATY

## MEXICO'S TREATY TRIBUTARIES



*Excellence through teamwork.*



# 1944 WATER TREATY

- ◆ Current 5-year cycle began 10/25/10
- ◆ Mexico has until 10/24/15 to deliver 1.75 maf
- ◆ Exceptions:
  - ▶ Extraordinary drought
  - ▶ Serious accident
  - ▶ When US conservation capacity fills in the reservoirs, all debts are canceled and a new cycle begins
- ◆ If a cycle ends in deficit, Mx repays in next cycle



**Rio Grande upstream from Anzalduas Dam**



# 1944 WATER TREATY

- ◆ Mexico has delivered 406,381 a/f halfway through the current cycle
- ◆ Volume delivered is half what would be expected if monthly deliveries were uniform for 5 years
- ◆ Most deliveries typically occur during the rainy season
- ◆ As envisioned by Treaty authors, wet years make up for dry years during a 5-year cycle



**USIBWC Mercedes Office, 2010 flood**



# 1944 WATER TREATY

- ◆ Mexican deliveries to the US are continuous
- ◆ USIBWC always receives 1/3 of the flow arriving from the 6 Mexican tributaries



**2008 Rio Grande flood conditions at Presidio, TX were caused by inflows from the Conchos River.**



# MINUTE 234 (1969)



**Per Minute 234, Mexico could transfer water at Falcon Dam**

- ◆ 1969 IBWC agreement
- ◆ Describes the means for Mexico to make up a deficiency after a 5-year cycle ends in deficit
  - ▶ 1/3 U.S. share from the 6 tributaries
  - ▶ Allot to the US part of Mexico's 2/3 share
  - ▶ Transfer of water from Mexican ownership to U.S. ownership at Falcon and Amistad reservoirs



# CURRENT CONDITIONS

- ◆ Amistad – 31% of normal conservation capacity
- ◆ Falcon – 21% of normal
- ◆ Combined storage at Amistad and Falcon
  - ▶ US – 35%
  - ▶ Mexico – 20%
- ◆ Mx reservoirs on the 6 treaty tributaries – 35% (1.5 maf)
- ◆ Other Mx reservoirs–32% (500 kaf)



**Falcon dropped below 10% in 2002**



# TREATY COMPLIANCE

- ◆ Commission has been meeting regularly since last fall to address the deficit
- ◆ Working to implement short- and long-term strategies
- ◆ Some TX irrigation districts projected to run out of water in less than 60 days
- ◆ Municipalities need to secure other “push water”
- ◆ Mexico is aware of this critical situation



Commission meeting in  
Mercedes, TX



# TREATY COMPLIANCE

- ◆ Increased releases from Mexican Dams
  - ▶ Releases from La Fragua Dam on the San Rodrigo River
  - ▶ Increased releases from Conchos River have been requested by US and Tamaulipas
  - ▶ Per treaty, US entitled to 1/3 of flows reaching the Rio Grande from these sources



**Falcon Dam spillway during non-irrigation season**



# TREATY COMPLIANCE

- ◆ Allow the US to utilize excess Mexican flows
  - ▶ Consistent with Article 9 of the 1944 Water Treaty
  - ▶ Water would otherwise flow to Gulf of Mexico unused
  - ▶ Flows increase during rainy season
  - ▶ Option only viable when US can put the water to beneficial use



**Lower Rio Grande**



# DATA

- ◆ Data available on USIBWC web page:
  - ▶ US and Mx reservoir storage and release
  - ▶ Stream gage data
  - ▶ Mx deliveries
  - ▶ National ownership of reservoir waters



**Rio Grande Gaging Station**



# INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION

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