

Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum
January 11, 2012
El Paso, TX
Meeting Notes*

Board Members in attendance:

Patty Alexander, Cameron County (Grant Writer)
Sofia Benavides, Cameron County Commissioner
Carl Boyd, National Active and Retired Federal Employees
Hudson DeYoe, UTPA/Biology and Aquatic Plants
John Goolsby, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Julia Jorgensen, Lower Rio Grande Valley Sierra Club
Ramon Navarro, City of Mc Allen Engineer
Louie Sanchez, Chief of Staff for State Senator Lucio
Donnie Valdez, Minority Agriculture Producers
John Wood, Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority

USIBWC staff in attendance:

Juanita Elfrink
Rodolfo Montero
Francisco Martinez
Sally Spener

Members of the public in attendance:

Juan Bernal, Texas Department of Transportation
Evan Roberts, Texas Department of Transportation
Herman Settemeyer, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Ricky Anderson, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Chris Hathcock, United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Erasmio Yarrito, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Jaime Flores, Texas Water Resource Institute
Vickers, (AUS)
Jodie Foster, United States Army Corps of Engineers
David Ramirez, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Javier Santiago
Judy Davila

IBWC History, Mission, and Projects

Ms. Sally Spener, USIBWC Public Affairs Officer gave an introduction of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC). She gave the IBWC HISTORY, MISSION PROJECTS PowerPoint presentation (available at http://www.ibwc.gov/Files/CF_LRG_Hist_Miss_Proj_011912.pdf) which went over the relationship and responsibilities between the US and Mexican Sections of the International Boundary and Water Commission.

Overview of the Responsibilities and Activities of the USIBWC Lower Rio Grande Office

Mr. Rodolfo Montero, USIBWC Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project (LRGFCP) Area Operations Manager gave a Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project (LRGFCP) PowerPoint presentation (available at: http://www.ibwc.gov/Citizens_Forum/CF_Lower_RG.html) regarding USIBWC local activities, projects, concerns and issues.

Julia Jorgensen- How much water goes through Morillo Drain?

Rodolfo Montero- It has a maximum capacity of 3 cubic meters/second. The canals are currently undergoing repairs. The effects are negligible due to current high flows in the Rio Grande.

Question - What is the status of the proposed Mexican pipeline project?

Rodolfo Montero - The Falcon to Matamoros pipeline project is on standby due to Mexican elections this year. We do not depend on Mexican water and that proposed water project does not affect the United States.

Julia Jorgensen- Are there any Cameron County Projects?

Rodolfo Montero- We are working on the design for Rio Grande levee improvements from the Donna Bridge to the end of the levee system. There are 5 Reaches. Reach 5 was just awarded.

New Board Member Orientation and Discussion

Ms. Sally Spener, USIBWC Public Affairs Officer gave the New Board Member Orientation commencing with a Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum (LRGCF) Board Member Orientation PowerPoint presentation (presentation is available at: http://www.ibwc.gov/Files/CF_LRG_Forum_Orient_011912.pdf). The presentation reviewed the History of and Mission for the Citizens Forum. She advised of the duties, responsibilities, etc. of each board member.

Other pertinent details discussed were the meetings. It was decided that meetings would be quarterly, every second Wednesday of the applicable month (April, July, October). The next one is scheduled for 4/18/12. The location would be USIBWC, Mercedes Field Office unless otherwise changed due to that particular Agenda. The time will be 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM unless otherwise changed due to Agenda/Participants.

Selection of a Co-Chair was discussed. Several options were offered on how to select the individual. It was decided to have all those interested individuals write a brief bio and e-mail to Ms. Spener. She would group e-mail so they could make their selection. Mr. Donnie Valdez expressed interest even though he had not done so before. He was advised he could still run.

Board Discussion/Suggested Future Agenda Items

Ms. Alexander- Update on use of beetles for biological mitigation of invasive species.

Mr. Navarro- Requests a talk about Dam Safety: Review of dam safety reports, including Anzalduas and Retamal Dams.

Ms. Jorgensen- Update on Border Wall/DHS even if still in discussions with Mexican Section.

Ms. Spener- Commissioner is impressed by the members of this Citizens Forum and would like to meet with you.

John Goolsby- Water Storage concerns with heavy water release and future droughts.

Mr. Yarrito- Presentation/Terminology of agency.

Ms. Benavides- Would like to take a tour/field trip for members preferably in Cameron County. (Group agreed to tour on 2/22/12 from 9AM – 12PM @ IBWC/Mercedes).

Mr. Valdez- Visit areas of discussion/topics.

Mr. Montero- We are currently planning to remove the invasive species of Brazilian Pepper Trees. We are getting the public involved to help us identify the trees on site so that we can cut and shred them.

John Wood- Salt Cedar control and local issues associated with FEMA.

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