Commission Mission, History, and Activities

March 14, 2013

Sally Spener, Secretary

IBWC Mission

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.

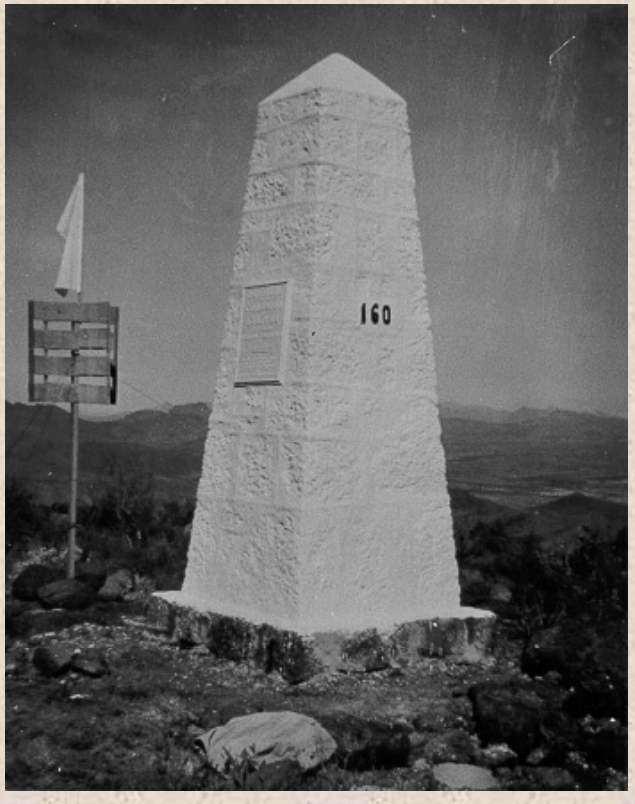
USIBWC Mission Statement

Provide binational solutions to issues that arise during the application of United States-Mexico treaties regarding boundary demarcation, national ownership of waters, sanitation, water quality, and flood control in the border region.

Excellence through teamwork.

Early History of the IBWC

- **19th century treaties**
  - Focused on establishing and demarcating the international boundary
  - Established rules for resolving boundary disputes due to shifting boundary rivers
  - Established temporary commissions to demarcate and resolve boundary disputes
  - Permanent commission established in 1889



Boundary Monument

Convention of 1906

- Distribution between Mexico and the U.S. of the waters of the Rio Grande in El Paso-Juarez
- U.S. to deliver 60 kaf/yr
- Proportional reduction in deliveries in case of extraordinary drought
- Water stored in New Mexico reservoirs
- Water diverted by Mexico at International Dam

International Dam

Convention of 1933

- Rio Grande Rectification Project
- Stabilized the boundary in the El Paso-Juarez Valley
- Rectified/straightened the river channel
- Flood control levees in US and Mexico

The meandering river channel was straightened.

1944 Water Treaty – Rio Grande

- Mexico delivers water to the U.S., Ft. Quitman to Gulf
- U.S. receives 1/3 of the waters arriving in the Rio Grande from 6 Mexican tributaries
- Minimum of 1.75 maf in 5-year cycle
- Treaty authorized construction of three storage dams; 2 were built

Rio Grande at Gulf of Mexico

1944 Water Treaty – Colorado River

- U.S. to deliver to Mexico a volume of 1.5 maf/yr
- When there are surplus waters, U.S. to deliver to Mexico a total volume of up to 1.7 maf/yr
- In extraordinary drought, Mexico reduced in proportion to U.S.

Colorado River at Mexican diversion dam during high flow

Chamizal Convention (1963)

- Relocated the Rio Grande in a concrete-lined channel through central El Paso-Juarez
- Resolved a century-long boundary dispute

President Adolfo Lopez Mateos Channel

1970 Boundary Treaty

- IBWC maintains the Colorado River and Rio Grande boundary
- Boundary is middle of the channel or middle of the widest channel during normal flow
- IBWC develops maps demarcating the boundary
- IBWC may stabilize or rectify the channel if it moves
- Prohibits construction of works that would obstruct or deflect normal or flood flows

IBWC Minutes

- Treaty provides for Commission Minutes
- Minutes are binding agreements of the IBWC intended to implement treaty
- Over 300 Minutes
- They take effect once approved by the U.S. Department of State and Mexico's Foreign Affairs Ministry

IBWC Commissioners and Secretaries sign Min. 319

Excellence through teamwork.

IBWC Structure

TREATY OFFICERS

United States Section

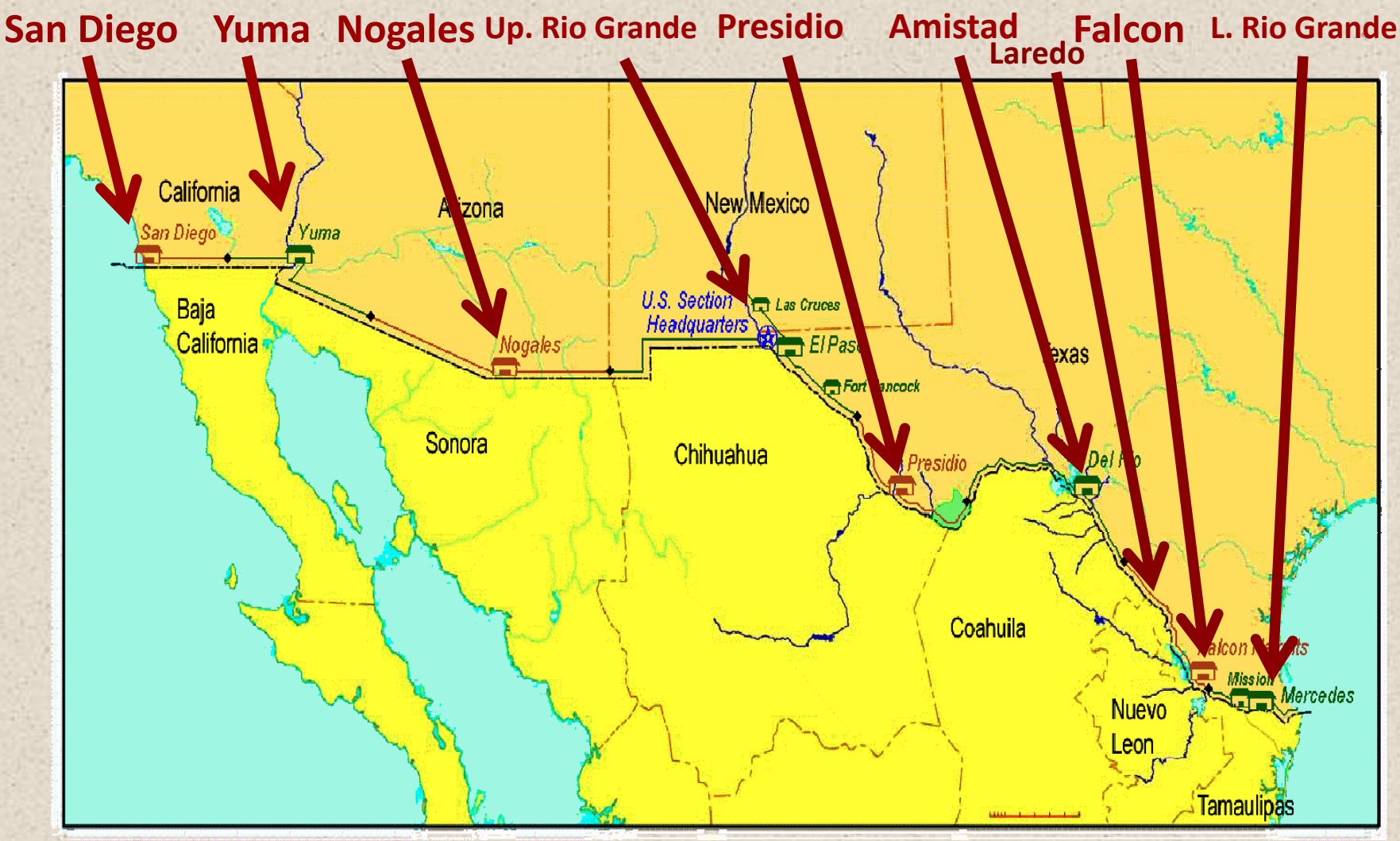
- United States Commissioner
- Secretary
- Principal Engineers (two)
- Legal Adviser

Mexican Section

- Mexican Commissioner
- Secretary
- Principal Engineers (two)
- Legal Adviser

Excellence through teamwork.

Field Offices



CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Excellence through teamwork.

Boundary Demarcation

- U.S. and Mexican Sections of IBWC jointly determine location of the boundary
- 258 principal monuments demarcate the land boundary
- Hundreds of intermediate boundary markers
- Plaques and traffic buttons mark the border at ports of entry/international bridges
- IBWC maintains the monuments

Boundary Demarcation

Monument No. 122, Nogales

Boundary demarcation at Port of Entry

Excellence through teamwork.

International Bridges

- IBWC maintains 3 international bridges
  - Cordova International-Bridge of the Americas (El Paso-Juarez)
  - Tornillo, TX-Guadalupe, Chih. “Fabens Bridge”
  - Ft. Hancock, TX-El Porvenir, Chih.

Cordova International-Bridge of the Americas

Sanitation

- Per Treaty, IBWC to give "preferential attention to the solution of all border sanitation problems"
- 3 international wastewater treatment plants
  - Nogales (Rio Rico, AZ) – treats U.S. and Mx sewage
  - South Bay (CA) – treats Mx sewage
  - Nuevo Laredo (Tamaulipas) – treats Mx sewage

Nuevo Laredo IWTP

Excellence through teamwork.

Water Quality

- No international water quality standard in treaties
- IBWC conducts binational water quality studies with partners from both countries
- Working on binational water quality database and data exchange
- IBWC facilitates US-Mx cooperation on water quality issues

Reservoirs

- IBWC has 2 international storage dams on the Rio Grande
- Dams are used for:
  - Water storage
  - Flood control
  - Hydroelectric power
  - Recreation
- Jointly operated by US and Mexico

Falcon Dam Powerplant

Reservoirs

- Amistad Dam
  - Built in 1969
  - Located at Del Rio, TX-Cd. Acuña, Coahuila
- Falcon Dam
  - Built in 1954
  - Located at Falcon Heights, TX-Nva. Cd. Guerrero, Coah.
- Combined conservation capacity of over 5 maf

Amistad Dam

Falcon Dam

Flood Control

- 4 USIBWC Flood Control Projects
  - **Tijuana River** – San Diego, CA
  - **Upper Rio Grande** – Southern New Mexico and West Texas
  - **Presidio** – Big Bend area of Texas
  - **Lower Rio Grande** – near McAllen, Harlingen, Brownsville

Rio Grande flood at El Paso-Cd. Juarez
9/4/2006

Minute 319

- Signed Nov. 20, 2012
- 5-year agreement
- 7 sections
  - Delayed water delivery to Mexico until it repairs earthquake damage
  - Surplus sharing
  - Shortage sharing
  - Deferred delivery of Mexican water (storage in US)
  - Salinity management
  - Pilot Project for water for the environment and U.S. investment in conservation projects in Mexico

Minute 319 ceremony in San Diego

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION, UNITED STATES AND MEXICO
UNITED STATES SECTION

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