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Issue 5

A Message from U.S. Commissioner Drusina



Summer has arrived at the boundary, creating a host of challenges and opportunities. Drought conditions have affected both the Rio Grande and Colorado River, putting additional stress on the region’s water resources. In the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez region, that means water users are only getting about one-third of their normal allocations from the Rio Grande. Downstream, Falcon and Amistad Reservoirs, which were full at the end of 2010, continue to decline as both countries release Rio Grande water to downstream farmers and cities faster than this year’s scant rainfall can replenish it. Reservoirs in the Colorado River basin, which provides water for seven states in the United States and two in Mexico, are also dropping following an unusually dry winter and spring.

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Fortunately, the water treaties between the United States and Mexico provide mechanisms for the International Boundary and Water Commission to use when allocating water between the two countries during drought. These mechanisms ensure that both countries have access to water, even during times of scarcity.

The drought also reminds us of the importance of the work we are undertaking to try to reach a comprehensive agreement between the United States and Mexico related to the Colorado River. Our discussions have addressed water management during shortage and surplus conditions, salinity, environmental needs, and potential joint investment in water infrastructure projects.

Summer is also the flood season along the U.S.-Mexico border. Earlier in the summer we held our annual Rio Grande flood workshop with Mexico, ensuring Commission personnel are fully prepared for potential flood operations at the international reservoirs and Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project. Rio Grande levee construction is also wrapping up in many locations this summer as we complete levee upgrades funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.



Nuevo Laredo International Wastewater Treatment Plant Tour

**US and Mexican
Officials at the NLIWTP
Offices**

Personnel from the U.S. and Mexican Sections of the IBWC, including U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina and Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon, on April 18 toured the Nuevo Laredo International Wastewater Treatment Plant in Tamaulipas with the Mayors of Laredo, Texas, Raul Salinas, and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Benjamín Galván Gómez. The NLIWTP was constructed in 1997 in accordance with IBWC Minutes to treat wastewater from Nuevo Laredo before discharging treated effluent to the Rio Grande.



Visitors observed that the treatment plant continues to provide a high level of treatment. The plant tour included briefings by the Mayor of Nuevo Laredo and personnel from the Mexican Section of the Commission and the Nuevo Laredo water utility. Mexican officials discussed ongoing improvements to the wastewater collection and treatment system in Nuevo Laredo with the goal of capturing and treating wastewater before it reaches the Rio Grande.



**Commissioner Drusina
touring the NLIWTP**



USIBWC Outreach in Laredo

The USIBWC hosted a public meeting in Laredo, Texas on April 17 to inform the public about Commission activities in the region related to Rio Grande water quality and flood control. USIBWC personnel gave a presentation about the 2010 Rio Grande flood during which the Commission withheld floodwaters upstream at Amistad Dam, thereby limiting flooding at Laredo-Nuevo Laredo that otherwise could have been worse.

Also, Clean Rivers personnel presented on a special investigation that the Clean Rivers Program conducted in 2011 to identify possible causes of the high bacteria in the Rio Grande in the Laredo-Nuevo Laredo area. The study included intensive bacteria monitoring of the river as well as a survey of structures, drains, trash piles, and tributaries along both banks of the river. The study found that bacteria increased upstream of the international bridges near downtown Laredo-Nuevo Laredo, and the study documented a handful of drains that are likely the cause of the bacteria. Work is underway to reduce bacteria discharges for drains through a program funded in part by the North American Development Bank/Border Environment Cooperation Commission.

**USIBWC staff
presenting at the
Laredo Public Meeting**



Reopening USIBWC office in Laredo, Texas

At the public meeting held in Laredo, Texas on April 17, U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina announced the planned reopening of the USIBWC Office in Laredo with full-time staff. The reopening will allow closer cooperation with the elected officials, emergency managers, nongovernmental organizations and others in the Laredo-Nuevo Laredo area prior to the 2012 flood season. Additionally, water quality initiatives will be addressed on a local level. This office will be headed by Mr. Adolfo Mata, former U.S. Section Foreign Affairs Secretary.



USIBWC's Laredo office is in a historic building on the Laredo Community College Campus



Mr. Adolfo Mata with Commissioner Drusina

International Boundary and Water Commission Exhibit at Organization of American States

IBWC Commissioners Drusina and Salmón inaugurated an exhibit, *Maps, Minutes and Monuments: History of the Boundary Line, 1848-2011*, depicting the Commission’s history and accomplishments, at the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington, D.C. on Tuesday, May 9, 2012. The show was put together by our own Michael Tarabulski who drew the pieces on display from an earlier exhibit prepared for the IBWC’s Border Sanitation and Water Quality Summit held in San Antonio, Texas in March 2011. The exhibit was on display at the headquarters building of the OAS over a two week period.

The Department of State’s Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Roberta Jacobson, offered remarks on the occasion as did Mexico’s Ambassador to the United States, Arturo Sarukhan, as well as the U.S. and Mexican Permanent Representatives to the OAS, Ambassadors Carmen Lomellin and Joel Hernández. Some 70 friends of the Commission representing several U.S. Government departments, diplomatic missions in Washington, nongovernmental organizations, and academic institutions attended the opening.

OAS officials reported that the exhibit was viewed by hundreds of visitors who had occasion to pass through the building during the fortnight during which the display was on view, aided by press notes prepared by the Department of State, the Mexican Embassy and the Mexican Permanent Mission to the OAS.

The inauguration was catered by a local “binational” taco restaurant, the Mexican and U.S. owners of which (Osiris Hoil and Marc Wallace) flank Ambassador Sarukhan in the photo at far right.

Images of the IBWC exhibit



IBWC Public Safety Officer Training

The USIBWC's Special Operations Division recently recruited, hired and trained a new security force comprised of the newly designated Public Safety Officer positions. During the month of May, in coordination with the Bureau of Reclamation and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, two 80 hour training sessions were held at Falcon Dam from April 30 - May 11 and the training at Amistad Dam was from May 14 - 25. Training topics included: officer safety, firearms training, defensive tactics, collapsible baton, pepper spray, patrol techniques, individual and team tactics, and communication and customer service skills. Awards were given to Top Shooter at Amistad, Roman Estrada, Top Shooter at Falcon, Luise Martinez as well as Most Wanted, designated by their peers as the person they would most want to be teamed up with, Jessie Hernandez at Amistad and Luise Martinez at Falcon.



**USIBWC staff training
new Public Safety
Officers**



International Visitors

The IBWC Foreign Affairs Office periodically receives visitors who are invited to the United States under the auspices of the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. Their program is arranged by the Institute of International Education (IIE). Locally these groups are coordinated by the El Paso Council for International Visitors.

Nile Delegation

This delegation visited El Paso on May 30 in an effort to gain a better understanding of issues in shared management of trans-boundary rivers, including cooperative development of riparian resources and impact assessments, to learn about various models and institutional and policy approaches taken to manage transboundary rivers, and to discuss hydropower development and impact assessment, in particular assessment of downstream impacts.



Nile Delegation hears presentation on IBWC history and tours American Dam



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