BACKGROUND

The Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project Office is located in Mercedes, Texas in the Lower Rio Grande Valley with a satellite office at Anzalduas Dam near McAllen. The Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project covers 180 miles of river from Penitas, Texas to the Gulf of Mexico.

Major responsibilities of the staff of the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project include maintaining flood control levees, removing obstructions from the floodway, maintaining and operating diversion dams, maintaining drainage and irrigation structures, and measuring flows in the Rio Grande. The project provides flood protection to an estimated 920,000 residents of the United States.

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION

In 1889, the U.S. and Mexican governments signed a convention agreeing to establish the International Boundary Commission. Under the Water Treaty of 1944, the Commission was reconstituted and designated the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC). The IBWC is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the United States and Mexico.

The IBWC consists of a U.S. Section and a Mexican Section. Each section is headed by a commissioner appointed by his respective president. The USIBWC receives foreign policy guidance from the U.S. Department of State.

The IBWC works on many issues including flood control, boundary demarcation, border sanitation, operation of diversion dams and international storage reservoirs, and the division and use of international waters.

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LOWER RIO GRANDE FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT
TEXAS

High water at Anzalduas Diversion Dam

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION

United States Section

THE LOWER RIO GRANDE PROJECTS

ANZALDUAS DAM

LOCATION: Near the City of McAllen, Texas in Hidalgo County 11 miles upstream of the Hidalgo-Reynosa International Bridge.

PURPOSE: To assure the diversion of the U.S. share of floodwaters to the interior floodway, to enable diversion of water to Mexico's main irrigation canal, and to effect releases for downstream water users in both countries.

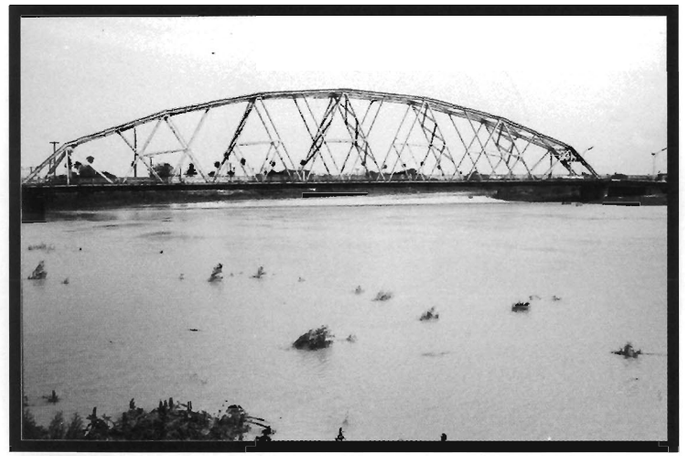
FACILITIES: Constructed between 1956 and 1960, Anzalduas Dam is a concrete-gated structure flanked by earthen dikes. The dam is 524 feet long and has six cylindrical or roller-type gates. Each of the six gates is 75 feet wide. The earthen dikes have a total length of 6,600 feet, 5,400 feet of which are in the United States. Operators are on duty 24 hours a day and staff from the United States and Mexico share a single control room.

LOWER RIO GRANDE FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT

LOCATION: Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties in Texas and the State of Tamaulipas, Mexico covering 180 miles of river from Penitas, Texas to the Gulf of Mexico.

PURPOSE: Flood protection for residents, businesses, and farms in the United States and Mexico.

FACILITIES: Originally built as a system of floodways and levees in the 1930s, improvements were made in the 1950s and 1960s. After Hurricane Beulah struck the Lower Rio Grande Valley in 1967, causing serious damage to Harlingen, the McAllen Airport, and other urban and agricultural lands in Texas and Mexico, the IBWC decided to build Retamal Diversion Dam to enable diversions to a new Mexican floodway. Additionally, levees were raised and floodways modified. From 1968 to 1977, $29 million was invested in project improvements. The U.S. portion has 270 miles of levee, 30,000 acres of interior floodway, 420 drain structures, 180 irrigation structures, and 6 bridges. Recent studies have indicated a need to raise and rehabilitate portions of the levee system in order to meet the project's flood control objectives. The USIBWC will design and construct these improvements as funds become available.



1966 flood at Gateway Bridge in Brownsville, TX

MORILLO DRAIN PROJECT

LOCATION: Extending for 75 miles through Tamaulipas, Mexico from eight miles above Anzalduas Dam to the Gulf of Mexico.

PURPOSE: To reduce the salinity of the Lower Rio Grande by conveying directly to the Gulf of Mexico the highly saline irrigation return flows from the San Juan Irrigation Project in Mexico.

Morillo Drain

FACILITIES: Constructed by Mexico from 1966-1969, the project has a conveyance channel, pumping plant, and diversion structure. Construction, operation, and maintenance costs are shared between the United States and Mexico with the U.S. portion of costs divided between the federal government and Lower Rio Grande Valley water users.

RETAMAL DAM

LOCATION: 38 miles downstream of Anzalduas Dam and 16 miles southeast of the City of McAllen, Texas.

PURPOSE: To limit flood flows at Brownsville-Matamoros and to enable Mexico to divert to its interior floodway its share of Rio Grande floodwaters.

FACILITIES: Constructed from 1971-1975, Retamal Dam is 200 feet long with three gates and a control house at the center of the dam. The dam is operated and maintained jointly by the United States and Mexico.