

RECORD OF DECISION
FOR THE
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FLOOD CONTROL IMPROVEMENTS AND PARTIAL LEVEE RELOCATION
PRESIDIO FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT
PRESIDIO, TEXAS

Approved by:



Edward Drusina, P.E.
Commissioner

3/30/2010

Date

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

Final Environmental Impact Statement, Flood Control Improvements and Partial Levee Relocation, USIBWC Presidio Flood Control Project, Presidio, Texas

AGENCY: United States Section, International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC)

ACTION: Issuance of Record of Decision

SUMMARY: This notice is provided in accordance with 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) parts 1500-1508 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and USIBWC procedures for implementing NEPA. The USIBWC anticipates the need to improve existing levees in the Presidio Flood Control Project (FCP) or to relocate portions of the Presidio FCP levees.

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared to evaluate potential consequences of each action alternative in reference to flood control improvements. Following the evaluation of each alternative in the EIS, the USIBWC selected Alternative 2 (rehabilitation of existing levee to provide 25-year flood protection) as the preferred alternative, and will use the EIS as a guide in developing construction plans.

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background and Alternatives Considered in EIS:

The Presidio FCP lies within the Presidio-Ojinaga Valley, in southern Presidio County, Texas. It extends approximately 13.1 river miles along the Rio Grande Texas-Mexico border. The length of the levee system in the United States (north levee of the Presidio FCP) is approximately 15.3 miles, and includes the downstream section of Cibolo Creek, a tributary of the Rio Grande north of the City of Presidio.

During September 2008, the Presidio FCP experienced severe flooding conditions due to water releases from the Luis Leon Reservoir on Rio Conchos in Mexico. The flooding caused

substantial damage to the Presidio FCP, including levee breaches, overtopping, piping/sand boils, under-seepage, and severe surface and slope erosion. The flooding also potentially compromised the integrity of the levee foundation within several levee segments, primarily at locations of old resacas (river meanders). Emergency responses during the flooding event included filling over 25,000 sand bags and placing the bags on the existing levee to add support, and using Department of Defense helicopters to fill bridge openings with larger sand bags in existing railroad right-of-ways to create secondary levees. The sandbags and secondary levees prevented the City of Presidio from experiencing more extensive flooding.

In response to the September 2008 flooding damage, the USIBWC developed engineering alternatives for long-term improvement of the Presidio FCP flood containment capacity. The EIS evaluates a No Action Alternative and six Action Alternatives for levee rehabilitation or relocation that would allow USIBWC to minimize potential environmental impacts and fulfill the project goal of flood protection. These alternatives were formulated to achieve the following goals relative to the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1):

- Rehabilitate the levee system along the current alignment as needed to repair structural damages and to ensure the original 25-year design criteria is met along the entire levee system (Alternative 2).
- Raise the levee system along the entire Presidio FCP to provide protection from a 100-year flood event. Increasing levee height along the existing alignment and a partial downstream realignment are under consideration (Alternatives 3 and 4, respectively).
- Raise the upstream section of the levee system to provide a 100-year flood protection to the City of Presidio, while retaining the 25-year flood protection of agricultural lands in the downstream section. To connect the raised, upstream section of the levee to elevated terrain south of the City of Presidio, a spur levee would be constructed. Three spur levee alignments are under consideration (Alternatives 5, 6, and 7).

USIBWC Decision:

Based on engineering, economic, and environmental considerations, the USIBWC has selected Alternative 2 (repair and raise the levee to provide 25-year flood protection) as the preferred option for implementation. This alternative was identified in the EIS as the environmentally preferred alternative. Implementation of Alternative 2 will provide flood protection to the City of Presidio and the adjacent agricultural lands from a 25-year flood event.

Basis for Decision and Issue Evaluated:

In the selection of a preferred alternative, the USIBWC considered potential environmental consequences identified in the EIS. The decision-making process also took into consideration comments and recommendations from agencies, individuals, and public and private organizations. The EIS evaluated the effects of each action alternative on the following resource areas: biological resources (including vegetation, terrestrial wildlife, aquatic wildlife, threatened

and endangered species); cultural resources (including archaeological resources, architectural resources, and Native American resources); water resources (including flood control, surface water quality, and groundwater); land use (including residential, agricultural and other land uses); socioeconomic and transportation resources (including regional economics, environmental justice and transportation); environmental health resources (including air quality, noise, and public health and environmental hazards). Based on the evaluation in the EIS, for Alternative 2, there are potentially moderate impacts to biological resources, cultural resources, and socioeconomic resources.

Biological Resources: Small-scale changes in the vegetation on the levee slopes and at the toe of the levee may occur when sections of the levee are raised to provide the design 25-year flood protection. These impacts are expected to be temporary during the construction period.

Cultural Resources: One known archaeological site in the area of Alternative 2 may be adversely affected by construction activities, and vibration associated with raising and repairing the levee may adversely affect the site.

Socioeconomic Resources: During the construction activities associated with Alternative 2, there will be a moderate, but temporary, beneficial economic impact to the community.

Indirect and Cumulative Impacts: The U.S. Border Patrol has planned construction of tactical infrastructure to improve border security operations in the Presidio area. Construction of tactical infrastructure may, or may not, utilize existing levees, roads, and previously disturbed areas for construction access and staging areas. Current plans by the U.S. Border Patrol for the Presidio area are on indefinite hold.

Downstream of the Presidio FCP, there is a dense growth of salt cedar that hinders river flow during high water events. Removal of the salt cedar growth and associated sediment will be evaluated as a joint agreement between the United States Section and Mexican Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission.

The Texas Department of Transportation has proposed expansion of the existing international bridge between Presidio and Ojinaga, Chihuahua, Mexico, and expansion of inspection facilities in Presidio, and restoration of the existing rail bridge and rail lines between Mexico and the United States in the Presidio area. The environmental consequences of these actions would be evaluated separately as plans are developed.

Presidio County owns and maintains levees along Cibolo Creek, outside the USIBWC Presidio FCP jurisdiction. The process of defining the need for repair and rehabilitation of the Cibolo Creek levees has been initiated, and appropriations and analysis processes are underway. The environmental consequences of Cibolo Creek levee repairs would be evaluated separately as plans are developed.

Finding: Because of the damage to the existing levee during the September 2008 flooding (including severe erosion, levee breaches, and levee under-seepage), the existing levee is insufficient to contain a 25-year design flood. Therefore, under Alternative 2, the existing levee would be repaired, and sections of the existing levee would be raised, as needed, to provide the 25-year design flood protection. This would improve the functionality of the existing levee and provide protection to the City of Presidio and adjacent agricultural areas from a 25-year design flood.