



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

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USIBWC STARTS CONSTRUCTION ON UPPER VALLEY FLOOD CONTROL LEVEE

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has begun construction of Rio Grande flood control levee improvements in the Upper Valley of El Paso County, Texas and adjacent areas of New Mexico. The work will address structural deficiencies and raise levee height to meet Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) criteria.

The project is being carried out using \$2.7 million in federal funding provided to the USIBWC. Construction has begun on the east river levee approximately 1 mile upstream from the Country Club Bridge. Work on the east levee will extend downstream 6 miles to the Sunland Park Bridge. On the west levee, improvements will be made for a reach approximately 1 mile upstream and downstream from the Country Club Bridge. Construction is expected to be completed before year's end.

The USIBWC is raising the levee to provide 3.5 feet of freeboard during the 100-year flood to ensure compliance with FEMA standards. Freeboard refers to the distance between the water surface elevation and the top of the levee. Most of the Upper Valley levee segments will be raised by 1 to 4 feet. A geotechnical analysis completed in 2008 has also shown that the levees, which were constructed between 1938 and 1943, have a high sand content, which could lead to seepage and erosion. To repair this structural deficiency, the levees are being plated with

engineered material containing clay. All construction work is being performed by USIBWC staff, including 7 additional workers hired specifically for this project.

“Our levees were built decades ago and need to be rehabilitated to meet current FEMA standards,” said C.W. “Bill” Ruth, U.S. Commissioner. “I am committed to bringing the levees up to standard.”

In 2007, the USIBWC completed a Rio Grande levee-raising project to provide flood protection for the urban portion of El Paso in the river reach from Asarco to just downstream from the Ysleta-Zaragoza International Bridge.

In the Mesilla Valley in Doña Ana County, New Mexico, work continues on levee improvements begun in June 2008. Levee raising and plating have already been completed on the east levee for approximately 3 miles between the Mesilla Dam and Mesilla Bridge. Work will continue upstream on the east levee and for a portion of the west levee near the Mesilla Valley Bosque Park.

Additional improvements will be made to levees in both El Paso and Doña Ana Counties as funding becomes available in the future.

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