



**International Boundary and Water Commission
United States Section**



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**RIO GRANDE WATER QUALITY AND
LEVEE REHABILITATION ON AGENDA FOR
SEPTEMBER 15 PUBLIC MEETING IN EL PASO**

Rio Grande water quality and levee rehabilitation will be discussed at the next public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens Forum, an outreach program of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC). The meeting will take place Wednesday, September 15, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at USIBWC Headquarters, 4171 N. Mesa Street, Building C, El Paso, Texas.

Brian Hanson of the New Mexico Department of Agriculture and Chris Canavan from the New Mexico Environment Department will discuss work to improve water quality in the Rio Grande for the lower 100 miles of the river in New Mexico and for part of Texas. The Paso del Norte Watershed Council has received a 319 (h) grant from the Environmental Protection Agency through the New Mexico Environment Department to address levels of *E. coli* bacteria that exceed state water quality standards. The Watershed Council previously completed a Watershed Restoration Action Strategy and, in this second phase, will develop a plan that will document where concentrations of *E. coli* bacteria exist in the Rio Grande and propose best management practices to reduce their concentrations.

USIBWC staff from the Texas Clean Rivers Program for the Rio Grande (CRP) will talk about water quality issues in the Rio Grande in Texas, explaining what the CRP is and what it is doing to monitor Rio Grande water quality. CRP staff will also discuss the 2010 assessment of Texas water bodies, the 2010 revisions to the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards, and data identifying segments of the Rio Grande where water quality standards are not met. CRP will also cover projects that address specific water quality issues in the region, such as a metals study in the El Paso region, the Paso del Norte Watershed Council's Watershed Plan to address bacteria, and the Texas Commission on Environmental

Quality's Aquatic Ecoregion Project for Least Disturbed Streams.

How can the public get involved in watershed activities? CRP will discuss the USIBWC Adopt-a-River program, river cleanups, and watershed outreach projects such as the upcoming Día del Rio. CRP is also collaborating with El Paso Community College's Service Learning Program to provide hands-on science and water learning experiences for students. CRP staff will be available at the meeting to discuss any issues and questions the public has related to Rio Grande water quality and public involvement in the health of the watershed. Copies of the CRP's 2010 *Basin Highlights Report*, with detailed water quality information, as well as copies of the *2011 Rio Grande Basin Calendar*, will also be available.

In other business, Gabriel Duran, an Engineer Planner with the Commission, will give an update on Rio Grande levee construction being undertaken in Doña Ana County, New Mexico and El Paso and Hudspeth Counties, Texas with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act). The USIBWC recently awarded a contract for levee rehabilitation at Fabens and Ft. Hancock, Texas. Contracts will soon be awarded for levee work in the Mesilla Valley and along the river through part of El Paso's Upper Valley and Sunland Park, New Mexico. The levees are being raised and rehabilitated to reduce flood risk and to comply with criteria established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The purpose of the Recovery Act is to create and save jobs, promote economic recovery, and invest in infrastructure that will provide long-term economic benefits.

The Rio Grande Citizens Forum was established by the USIBWC in 1999 to facilitate the exchange of information regarding USIBWC activities on the Rio Grande between Percha Dam, New Mexico and Fort Quitman, Texas. It is designed to bring together community members, enabling the early and continued two-way flow of information, concerns, values, and needs between USIBWC and the general public, environmentalists, irrigation districts, municipalities, and others interested in the river. A complete meeting agenda is enclosed.

For more information:

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RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM
Wednesday, September 15, 2010
6:30 - 8:30 P.M.
USIBWC Headquarters
4171 N. Mesa St., The Commons, Building C*
El Paso, TX 79902

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions – Louis Irwin, Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- Water Quality in the Lower Rio Grande in New Mexico – Brian Hanson, Watershed Coordinator, 319 (h) Grant, New Mexico Department of Agriculture, New Mexico State University, and Chris Canavan, New Mexico Environment Department
- How's the Water Quality? Upper Rio Grande Basin Advisory Meeting and Clean Rivers Program Update – Elizabeth Verdecchia and Leslie Grijalva, Environmental Protection Specialists, USIBWC's Texas Clean Rivers Program for the Rio Grande Basin
- Update on Recovery Act Levee Construction Projects in El Paso and Doña Ana Counties – Gabriel Duran, Engineer Planner, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion
- Suggested Future Agenda Items

If you have a disability that you wish to self-identify confidentially that requires accommodation, please advise us ahead of time. For more information, call 915-832-4175 or e-mail sally.spener@ibwc.gov