



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
September 16, 2009

FEMA FLOOD INSURANCE RATE MAPS, RIO GRANDE ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION AND WATER QUALITY ON AGENDA FOR SEPTEMBER 29 PUBLIC MEETING

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will discuss flood insurance requirements for El Paso and Doña Ana Counties 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 Tuesday, September 29, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at USIBWC Headquarters, 4171 N. Mesa Street, Building C, El Paso, Texas.

Senior Engineer Gary Zimmerer and Flood Insurance Specialist Linda Delamare from FEMA's regional office in Denton, Texas will discuss the current effort to update Flood Insurance Rate Maps. The maps will be used to determine flood risk, applicable flood insurance requirements, and flood insurance rates for property owners. The USIBWC is currently undertaking a project to rehabilitate the Rio Grande flood control levees in accordance with FEMA standards.

In other business, Environmental Protection Specialists Elizabeth Verdecchia and Leslie Grijalva of the USIBWC's Texas Clean Rivers Program for the Rio Grande (CRP) will provide a brief overview of CRP and recent outreach activities, including summer river cleanups. They will also discuss the USIBWC Adopt-a-River program and how local volunteer groups can get involved. CRP-funded projects related to Rio Grande education or water quality will also be discussed, including the El Paso Community College Early College students who are studying salinity in the river and the plants that grow on its banks. There will also be updates on the status of water quality in the region and special projects planned to address water quality issues. For example, this coming year CRP will work with the Texas

Commission on Environmental Quality to analyze total and dissolved metals at five stations in the El Paso region. CRP staff will be available at the meeting to discuss any issues and questions the public has related to Rio Grande water quality. Copies of the CRP's 2009 Basin Highlights Report, with detailed water quality information, will also be available.

USIBWC Environmental Protection Specialist Daniel Borunda will also present information about the Commission's recent Record of Decision providing for environmental restoration along the Rio Grande Canalization Project between Percha Dam, NM and El Paso, TX. Environmental improvements include erosion control, restoration of native vegetation, and reconfiguration of the river channel at arroyo mouths to enhance aquatic habitat. To ensure efficient water delivery, the selected alternative allows for maintenance of the river channel and dredging when necessary. Key features of the plan include establishing restoration sites to promote native riparian vegetation and ecological improvements along the river. Floodway vegetation that is currently mowed will be managed and modified to promote native grass development in combination with efforts to control salt cedar, a non-native species.

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 follows.

For more information:

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RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM
Tuesday, September 29, 2009
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
- FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps for El Paso and Doña Ana Counties – Gary Zimmerer, Senior Engineer, and Linda Delamare, Flood Insurance Specialist, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Upper Rio Grande Basin Advisory Meeting and Clean Rivers Program Update – Elizabeth Verdecchia and Leslie Grijalva, Environmental Protection Specialists, Texas Clean Rivers Program for the Rio Grande Basin, USIBWC
- Record of Decision for Environmental Enhancements in the Rio Grande Canalization Project – Daniel Borunda, Environmental Protection Specialist, 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 sallyspener@ibwc.gov