



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
July 11, 2012

BIOLOGICAL CONTROLS FOR INVASIVE PLANTS, ARROYO COLORADO FLOOD CONTROL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL FLOWS ON AGENDA FOR JULY 18 PUBLIC MEETING IN MERCEDES

A proposed biological control program for invasive plants, efforts to enhance flood protection along the Arroyo Colorado in Harlingen, and a report on environmental flows will be discussed at a public meeting of the Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum (LRGCF), an outreach program of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC). The LRGCF was established to facilitate the exchange of information between the USIBWC and members of the public about Commission activities and related issues in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The meeting will be held Wednesday, July 18, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. at the USIBWC office at 325 Golf Course Road in Mercedes, Texas.

John Goolsby, Research Entomologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, will discuss the potential for biological control of salt cedar and Carrizo cane on the Rio Grande. These two exotic plants have invaded the Rio Grande Basin causing extensive ecological and economic damage. Both plants are targeted by biological control programs using specialist insects from the native range of these plants in Mediterranean Europe. The salt cedar beetle, *Diorhabda elongata*, has been released and established in the Big Bend area of Texas where it has served to control this invasive tree. An alliance of state and federal agencies is proposing release of this beetle in the Lower Rio Grande Valley to ameliorate the impacts of salt cedar, which has now spread throughout the watershed and floodways following the 2010 flood. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the lead agency for the proposed salt cedar biological control program.

Carrizo cane, also known as giant reed or arundo, is also widespread in the Rio Grande Basin. A binational biological control program led by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service and Mexico's Institute of Water Technology (IMTA) to rear and release two specialist insects for control of this invasive plant is in progress. The goal of the program is to reduce the dominance of Carrizo cane thereby allowing the transition of the riverbank back to native vegetation. Native river vegetation uses less water, allows for increased visibility of the border for law enforcement, and reduces spread of cattle fever tick.

In other business, USIBWC Area Operations Manager Rodolfo Montero will discuss efforts to enhance flood protection along the Arroyo Colorado in Harlingen. He will discuss the methods used in the Phase I initiatives and discuss the subsequent steps to improve the flood capacity of the Arroyo Colorado through the Harlingen area.

Additionally, Hudson DeYoe, Director of the Center for Subtropical Studies, will discuss Analysis of Fresh Water Inflows to Coastal Environments. Senate Bill 3 of the 80th Texas Legislature established a process for the development and implementation of environmental flow standards applicable to major river basins and estuarine systems of Texas. An Environmental Flows Recommendations Report has been prepared by the Lower Rio Grande Basin and Bay Expert Science Team (Lower Rio Grande BBEST). The highlights of the BBEST report will be presented.

A complete meeting agenda follows. Members of the public who would like more information about the meeting may contact the USIBWC's Lower Rio Grande Project Office at 956-565-3150 or sandra.camacho@ibwc.gov.

For media inquiries:

Sally Spener
915-832-4175
sally.spener@ibwc.gov

LOWER RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM

Wednesday, July 18, 2012

3:00 - 5:00 P.M.

USIBWC Conference Room

325 Golf Course Road*

Mercedes, TX 78570

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions – Donnie Valdez, Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- Potential for Biological Control of Salt Cedar and Giant Reed - John Goolsby, Research Entomologist, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Update of the Arroyo Colorado Flood Control Enhancement Project in the Harlingen Area - Rodolfo Montero, Area Operations Manager, USIBWC
- Analysis of Fresh Water Inflows to Coastal Environments - Hudson DeYoe, Director of Center for Subtropical Studies
- 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 956-565-3150.