



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

For immediate release  
October 21, 2011

### **NOVEMBER 9 PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS FALCON DAM OPERATIONS AND RIO GRANDE WATER QUALITY**

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) invites the public to an informational meeting on Wednesday, November 9, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Roma Community Center, 502 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Roma, TX. The purpose of the meeting is to inform the public about Commission activities in the region, including those related to operation of Falcon Dam.

The Commission is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the United States and Mexico. Among other activities, Commission personnel operate Falcon Dam for water storage, flood control, and hydroelectric power generation, perform water quality monitoring, ensure that each country receives its share of Rio Grande water in accordance with the 1944 Water Treaty, and demarcate the international boundary at the international bridges, among other responsibilities.

At the public meeting, Sheryl Franklin, USIBWC Operations and Maintenance Division Chief, will provide an overview of Falcon Dam operations during the 2010 flood -- the first flood releases since 1992. The water level at Falcon Reservoir set a new record of 309.3 feet on July 17, 2010, more than a foot greater than the previous record set in 1958. The volume of water at Falcon Reservoir nearly doubled in just three weeks. The dam functioned as designed during flood operations with no dam safety problems experienced. Ms. Franklin will discuss the lessons learned during 2010 and planned investigations to enhance operations in the future.

In a related presentation, Ms. Franklin will discuss the status of dam safety investigations and planned actions over the next few years. In 2007, technical advisors from the United States and Mexico

inspected Falcon Dam and rated it at Dam Safety Action Class III – High Priority (Conditionally Unsafe). The rating is based largely on engineering judgment of the technical advisors and the high risk in terms of the combination of potential loss of life and economic damages. The Commission has convened an expert panel to identify potential failure modes, part of a process that will lead to development of recommendations for corrective actions.

Mario Gomez, USIBWC Area Operations Manager at Falcon Dam, will brief the community about upcoming projects affecting the dam, including installation of new water measurement equipment, a significant increase in the dam's security force, and improvements to the international boundary markers on Falcon Lake.

USIBWC Environmental Protection Specialist Elizabeth Verdecchia will discuss water quality in the Rio Grande below Falcon Dam. The USIBWC Texas Clean Rivers Program collects water quality information throughout the basin, and data show that bacteria levels are increasing in the river near urban areas downstream of the dam. Ms. Verdecchia will provide information for recreational users of the river and discuss other water quality issues in the area such as salinity levels in the river water used for irrigation.

There will also be an opportunity for the public to ask questions about Commission operations and plans.

A complete meeting agenda follows. The event is free and the public is encouraged to attend. Refreshments will be served. Members of the public who would like more information may call 956-848-5211 or e-mail [sally.spener@ibwc.gov](mailto:sally.spener@ibwc.gov).

For media inquiries:

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PUBLIC OUTREACH MEETING  
ROMA COMMUNITY CENTER  
502 6<sup>th</sup> STREET  
ROMA, TX 78584  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2011  
5:30 – 7:30 P.M.

AGENDA

1. Mission of the International Boundary and Water Commission – Sally Spener, Public Affairs Officer
2. Water Quality Overview – Elizabeth Verdecchia, Environmental Protection Specialist, Texas Clean Rivers Program for the Rio Grande
3. Report on the 2010 Flood – Sheryl Franklin, Chief of the Operations and Maintenance Division
4. Dam Safety – Sheryl Franklin, Chief of the Operations and Maintenance Division
5. Upcoming Projects – Mario Gomez, Area Operations Manager
6. Identification and Discussion of Topics of Interest to the Public - All

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 956-848-5211.