



THE BOUNDARY MARKER

Fall 2011

PUBLIC MEETINGS HELD FOR AMISTAD AND FALCON DAMS

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) conducted public outreach meetings in November for residents who live near the Commission's Amistad and Falcon Dams. On November 8, Commission personnel hosted a public meeting in Del Rio, Texas to discuss Amistad Dam issues, followed the next evening with a meeting in Roma, Texas to share information about Falcon Dam. The meetings reflect the USIBWC's commitment to transparency and community involvement.

The meetings were well attended by local elected officials, state, local, and federal government agencies, water user groups, and the general public. Representatives from the Mexican Section of the Commission also attended both meetings. The public expressed interest in future meetings with the USIBWC and indicated they would like more information about reservoir operations and water quality, among other topics of interest.

One purpose of the meetings was to familiarize the public with the Commission and

to highlight some activities that directly affect the communities near Amistad and Falcon Dams. The agenda consisted of a general overview of the Commission's history and projects by Public Affairs Officer Sally Spener, a water quality report by Elizabeth Verdecchia of the Clean Rivers Program, a

review of 2010 flood operations and the status of dam safety studies by Operations and Maintenance Division Chief Sheryl Franklin, and an overview of new projects and upcoming employment opportunities by Area Operations Managers Pablo Garza (Amistad) and Mario Gomez (Falcon).

Students from the LBJ School for

Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin videotaped portions of the Roma meeting and interviewed Elizabeth Verdecchia for a documentary.

The Del Rio and Roma meetings are only the latest in a series of some 20 public meetings organized by the USIBWC this year in border communities. The USIBWC is planning a public meeting in Laredo next year to discuss water quality and flood control issues.



USIBWC staff conducted a public meeting about Falcon Dam at the Roma Community Center.



USIBWC CERTIFIES LEVEE SEGMENTS TO FEMA

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) in November certified three levee segments covering 9.5 miles in Hidalgo County, Texas as meeting standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The USIBWC documents submitted to FEMA certify that the levees are high enough and strong enough to pass the 100-year flood in compliance with FEMA requirements.

The three segments were constructed and funded by Hidalgo County in accordance with agreements with USIBWC and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The segments include 4.3 miles of the levee-wall – a structure that provides flood protection and border security.



Levee-wall segment in Hidalgo County, TX.

These are the first levee segments USIBWC has certified in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The USIBWC previously certified 15 miles along the Rio Grande in El Paso, TX. As construction is completed on additional segments, the USIBWC will begin preparing the certification packages for

submission to FEMA.

With \$220 million in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the USIBWC has awarded construction contracts covering hundreds of miles of levee



Levee construction in El Paso County, TX.

improvements in New Mexico and Texas. 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. USIBWC Recovery Act expenditures have already preserved or created an estimated 2320 jobs.

“We are in the final stages of construction for many levee segments,” said U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina. “We look forward to certifying additional levees in 2012.”

Communities protected by levee systems accredited by FEMA benefit not only from the enhanced flood protection but from better rates on flood insurance. Property owners with federally-backed mortgages in areas not protected by accredited levees could face a mandate to purchase flood insurance.



U.S. AND MEXICAN MANAGERS MEET TO DISCUSS BORDER PROJECTS

Thirty-five managers from the U.S. and Mexican Sections of the International Boundary and Water Commission representing offices all along the border convened in El Paso, TX on October 28 to discuss plans and issues affecting the Commission. It was the first such meeting in a number of years although regional meetings between U.S. and Mexican managers are held regularly at various locations along the international boundary.

The meeting was convened by U.S.

Commissioner Edward Drusina and Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon. Management officials reported on accomplishments and challenges in their respective areas of responsibility and discussed the means to enhance international cooperation and effectiveness within the Commission.

Agenda items included maintenance of the international boundary line at bridges and border crossings, joint inspections of the international boundary line and the Rio Grande channel, water quality data exchange, mechanisms for presenting projects that are in the Rio Grande floodplain, Commission management of binational projects, flood control coordination, protocols for emergency situations, and review

of current issues at all of the Commission's field offices in the United States and Mexico.

The U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission has its Headquarters in El Paso, TX while the Mexican Section Headquarters is across the Rio Grande in Ciudad Juarez, Chih. The Commission maintains offices all along the boundary, usually in sister city pairs where staff from both countries work together closely on a routine basis. The Commission has field offices at San



Managers from the United States and Mexico met to discuss Commission activities along the entire U.S.-Mexico border.

Diego, CA-Tijuana, BC; Yuma, AZ-Mexicali, BC; Nogales, AZ-Nogales, Son.; Las Cruces, NM; El Paso, TX; Ft. Hancock, TX; Presidio, TX-Ojinaga, Chih.; Del Rio, TX-Cd. Acuña, Coah.; Nuevo Laredo, Tamps.; Falcon Heights, TX-Nueva Ciudad Guerrero, Tamps.; and Mercedes, TX-Reynosa, Tamps. The U.S. Section also has an office in the U.S. Department of State in Washington, DC.

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