Mexico’s Rio Grande Water Deliveries to the United States

Sally Spener, U.S. Secretary
International Boundary and Water Commission
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1944 WATER TREATY

- Covers Rio Grande from Ft. Quitman to the Gulf
- Mexico delivers water to US from 6 tributaries
- US receives 1/3 of flow arriving in the Rio Grande from the 6 tributaries
- 1/3 shall not be less, as an average amount in cycles of 5 years, than 350,000 acre-feet annually (1.75 maf in 5 yrs.)
Mexican tributaries allotted 1/3 to US, 2/3 to Mx:
- Conchos, Arroyo las Vacas, San Rodrigo, Escondido, Salado, San Diego

Mexican tributaries allotted 100% to Mx
- Alamo, San Juan

All major US tributaries allotted 100% to US

Historically 70% of water originates in Mexico but 50% allotted to US
Waters for both countries are stored at the 2 international reservoirs:

- Falcon Dam near Falcon Hts, TX – Nva. Cd. Guerrero, Tamaulipas
- Amistad Dam near Del Rio, TX - Cd. Acuña, Coahuila

Official data on national ownership:
www.ibwc.gov/wad/storage.htm
If a 5-year cycle ends in deficit, Mexico repays in next cycle
Cannot end 2 consecutive cycles in debt
2010-2015 cycle’s debt of 263,250 af was paid in early 2016
10/25/15-10/24/20 cycle just ended

Rio Grande near Brownsville
“In the event of a deficiency in a cycle of five consecutive years in the minimum amount of water allotted to the United States from the said tributaries, the deficiency shall be made up in the following five-year cycle, together with any quantity of water which is needed to avoid a deficiency in the aforesaid following cycle, by one or a combination of the following means:”

a. Deliver more water from the 6 tributaries
b. Deliver to US some of Mexico’s share of water from 6 tributaries
c. Transfer of Mx water at the international reservoirs
Rio Grande River Basin
Estimated Volumes Allotted to the United States by Mexico from Six Named Mexican Tributaries and Other Accepted Sources under the 1944 Water Treaty
(October 25, 2015 thru October 24, 2020)

- 350,000 Acre-Feet Minimum Average Annual Commitment - Linear Target Delivery Rate
- U.S. Accumulated Five-Year Cycle Deliveries - 1,750,003 AF (2,159 MCM) as of October 24, 2020
- Minimum Annual Commitment with the Pattern of Historical Runoff (1953-2015)

Data Final Through October 24, 2020
Deliveries got behind in 2nd half of 2019

IBWC and technical advisors met to discuss strategies to assure compliance

In December 2019, Mexico presented a plan
  - Endorsed by Mexico’s President
  - Endorsed by Mexico’s Governors in the Rio Grande Basin
December 2019 plan to address a shortfall of approx. 177,000 af by releasing water from Mx dams Dec. 2019 – Feb. 2020

- Boquilla and Luis Leon Dams on the Conchos River
- Venustiano Carranza Dam on the Salado River
- 1/3 U.S. share from these releases est. 180,000 af
Plan faced months of protests in Chihuahua

- Conagua vehicles burned and toppled
- Arson at government offices
- Railroads, highways, international bridge blocked
- Toll booths occupied
- 1 person died

National Guard sent in to guard the dams

After confrontation with the guard, protesters seized control of Boquilla Dam in September, preventing releases
Alternate U.S. proposals

- Allot greater than 1/3 share to US from 6 Mx tributaries
- Release water from other interior reservoirs in Mexico
- Allot some of Mexico’s unmeasured tributary flow to US
- Transfers at Amistad and Falcon Reservoirs
Alternate Mexican proposals

► Allot greater than 1/3 share to US from 6 Mx tributaries

► Starting in July, deliver San Juan River water to US for beneficial use:
  ■ US & State of Texas have previously embraced this source
  ■ More wet water to US. Mexico receives credit for 1/2 of the water delivered, providing water in excess of treaty minimum with no conveyance losses

► Unwavering commitment to end without a debt

San Juan River water could be delivered to US at Anzalduas Dam
2015-2020 CYCLE

Key parties in negotiations:

- USIBWC
- MxIBWC
- U.S. Department of State
- Mexico’s Secretariat of Foreign Relations (SRE)
- State of Texas as technical advisor (TCEQ lead)
- Mexico’s National Water Commission (CONAGUA)
Mexican Actions Jan. – Sept. 2020

- Releases from V. Carranza Dam (Salado River)
- Releases from Madero and Luis Leon Dams (Conchos River)
- Increased share to US starting 5/28/20:
  - 100% of Conchos River flows
  - 2/3 of other tributaries
- 100% of all Mx tributary flow to US starting 9/1/20
- Small transfers at Falcon and Amistad
Signed 10/21/20

Binding US-Mexico agreement

Transfer of Mexican water to US at Amistad and Falcon Reservoirs at end of cycle

Assures cycle ends with no debt
Establishes technical and policy work groups to develop tools to improve predictability and reliability of Rio Grande deliveries

Sets expectation of a new Minute by December 2023 to adopt work group recommendations

Min. 325 assures continued US-Mx water talks, like this 2019 policy meeting in Mexico City
Potential temporary use of U.S. water to meet Mexico’s drinking water needs; no water loan is expected

Enhanced data exchange

Affirms 2 back-to-back cycles cannot end in debt

Commissioners Marengo and Harkins at Min. 325 ceremony at Monument # 1 at Sunland Park, NM-Cd. Juarez, Chih.
2015-2020 CYCLE

◆ Annual Deliveries
  ▶ Year 1: 219,077 af (+263,250 af for previous cycle’s debt)
  ▶ Year 2: 567,238 af
  ▶ Year 3: 235,097 af
  ▶ Year 4: 218,097 af
  ▶ Year 5: 510,494 af

◆ Cycle Total: 1,750,003 af

Rio Grande water sampling at Presidio, TX
CURRENT RESERVOIR STATUS

- Storage in International Reservoirs (11/07/20)
  - Amistad
    - Mexico: 32,000 af
    - US: 1.189 million af
  - Falcon
    - Mexico: 52,000 af
    - US: 494,000 af

- National Ownership in International Reservoirs
  - Mexico: 3% of Mx Conservation Capacity
  - US: 50% of US Conservation Capacity

Falcon Dam, 2010 flood