

Southeast Arizona Citizens Forum
Douglas City Hall
Douglas, Arizona
September 19, 2013
Tentative Meeting Notes

Board Members in Attendance:**

Jackson Jenkins, Pima County
John Kozma, Green Valley Council
Ben Lomeli, Friends of the Santa Cruz River, Bureau of Land Management
Amanda Stone, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
Luis Greer, City of Douglas

USIBWC Staff in Attendance:

Gabe Duran

Members of the Public in Attendance:

Tricia Gerradette, Huachuca Audubon
Joseph Brunner, Freeport McMoRan
Ann English, Cochise County
Lauren Ortega, City of Douglas
Mitch Lindemann, City of Douglas
Shay Saucedo, Office of Congressman Ron Barber
Gerry Gonzalez, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Lambert Chee, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Danny Ortega, City of Douglas
Agent Ondrejack, Douglas Border Patrol
Agent Evenseller, Border Patrol
Oscar Holguin, Mexican Consulate in Douglas
Christian Ramos, Mexican Consulate in Douglas
Lucinda Earven, Hereford NRCD
Dusty Glidewell, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Bill Odle, citizen
John Ladd, Ladd Ranch
Trisha Maldonado, Douglas Dispatch
Damen Modzelewski, University of Arizona
Rafael Aguirre, Agua Prieta City Hall
Vicky Merritt, 4H/Edward Jones
Faby Gonzalez, Office of U.S. Senator Jeff Flake
Sergio Aguirre Borquel, Proteccion Civil
Jesus Galvez Enriquez, Desarrollo Urbano y Obras Publicas

Ben Lomeli, Co-Chair for the Citizens Forum Board, provided the introductions.

Border Flooding Issues in the Douglas-Agua Prieta Region

Gerry R. Gonzalez, District Conservationist, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, gave a presentation on this topic as summarized below:

International flooding issues are a major concern for the communities of Douglas, Arizona and Agua Prieta, Sonora. There are two areas of concern, sub-watersheds east and west of Douglas. Both areas cause flooding in Agua Prieta. Sixty five percent (65%) of the east sub-watershed is in the United States. The west sub-watershed (also known as Whitewater Draw) is much, much larger, with the great majority of the watershed located in the United States. The general fall of the topography is in the direction of Mexico. Exacerbating the flooding condition is the border fence, Mr. Gonzalez said. He added that the fence catches debris and spreads the floodwaters outside the normal channels of the watersheds. The border fence is causing erosion in Mexico due to the spreading of the flow under and through the fence on the south side of the border fence, Mr. Gonzalez stated. Recent storms in 2012 and 2013 caused the destruction of homes and businesses in Agua Prieta. Flows as low as a two-year event cause damage in Mexico. In Mexico, this water spreading effect caused 550 acres of farmland to be ruined this past summer. Another problem is stagnant water. Two deaths occurred during a 2013 storm because of a lack of storm warning systems.

Possible solutions include construction of small reservoirs. For the east sub-watershed, a small dike could be built in the United States to attenuate these flows. Flow in Whitewater Draw could be attenuated with a small dam. This small dam could be located in the U.S. between two huge slag deposits. These slag deposits would act as buttresses. The land associated with Whitewater Draw is owned by Freeport McMoRan. Benefits of building these small dams would be:

- Replenish aquifer
- Improve flood control
- Provide recreational potential
- Improve landscape
- Improve wildlife
- Improve flooding conditions in Mexico
- Improve relations with Agua Prieta, Sonora

Other Areas of Concern - Border fence in other areas along the boundary have been removed because of flooding. Recommended that Hydrologic studies be conducted. Engineers and geologists are needed to study the watershed by the County, City, and other officials. Landowner Freeport McMoRan is a major player. Funding will be a major issue.

Comment by John Ladd, rancher: The Boundary Commission has a lot of responsibility for work on the land boundary. DHS fence is causing more flooding conditions. He expressed concern that more attention is focused on the Rio Grande while the land boundary is ignored.

The Arizona Border Trash Program; partnerships to clean up Arizona's borderlands

Amanda Stone, Director, Southern Regional Office, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, gave a presentation on this topic.

Migrants leave trash in routes used by them. Ranchers are complaining because cows eat the discarded plastic, the cows get sick then die. This trash issue is having effects on people's livelihood. It is estimated that 123,000 people are passing through Arizona leaving 6-8 lbs of waste for each person crossing illegally and using these routes.

The State of Arizona, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) is addressing the problem by organizing volunteer groups to pick up the trash. The first cleanup netted 10,000 lbs of waste. Four hundred (400) cleanups have been conducted so far since 2007 netting 227,000 lbs of trash collected over the years.

End of Presentation

Comment- Mayor of Agua Prieta wants to help in some manner. She proposes that Mexican Volunteers help on the US side. It was noted that this would require coordination with Border Patrol.

Comment from member of audience- Clean up does not address the root of the problem, which is immigration reform.

Agua Prieta Civil Protection

A representative from Civil Protection of Agua Prieta showed photos of damage from recent storms. Agua Prieta built temporary dikes to protect homes and businesses, families were transferred to shelters. A main thoroughfare (Los Alamos Road) was blocked by flooding, isolating families for two days. There was so much water coming out of the United States it was going over bridges. 24 hrs after the storm there was still high water in channels. The next day families that were isolated had health problems such as diarrhea and stomach aches. Downtown businesses of Agua Prieta were flooded.

Board Discussion

The Board wants to write a letter to the USIBWC Commissioner regarding future plans for Nogales International Outfall Interceptor issues.

Public Comment

Mexico will host a Mexican Consulate offices meeting in San Antonio October 3, 2013. Border problems will be discussed. Ambassadors from the United States and Mexico will attend. It was suggested that the IBWC Commissioners consider attending.

Meeting adjourned.

Meeting notes are tentative and summarize in draft the contents and discussions of Citizen Forum Meetings. While these notes are intended to provide a general overview of Citizen Forum meetings, they may not necessarily be accurate or complete and may not be representative of USIBWC policy or position

**Other board members may have attended but their names did not appear on the sign-in sheet.
