



International Boundary and Water Commission  
United States Section

# Rio Grande Citizens Forum Orientation



October 6, 2011  
Sally Spener, Public Affairs Officer



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

### IBWC Mission

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*The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the two countries and settling differences that arise in their application.*

*Excellence through teamwork.*



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# Early History of the IBWC

- **19<sup>th</sup> century treaties**
  - Focused on establishing and demarcating the international boundary
  - Established rules for resolving boundary disputes due to shifting boundary rivers
  - Established temporary commissions to demarcate and resolve boundary disputes
  - Permanent commission established in 1889



*Excellence through teamwork.*





# International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

## Convention of 1906

- Distribution between Mexico and the U.S. of the waters of the Rio Grande in El Paso-Juarez
- U.S. to deliver 60 kaf/yr
- Proportional reduction in deliveries in case of extraordinary drought
- Water stored in Elephant Butte Dam, NM
- Water diverted by Mexico at International Dam



*International Dam*

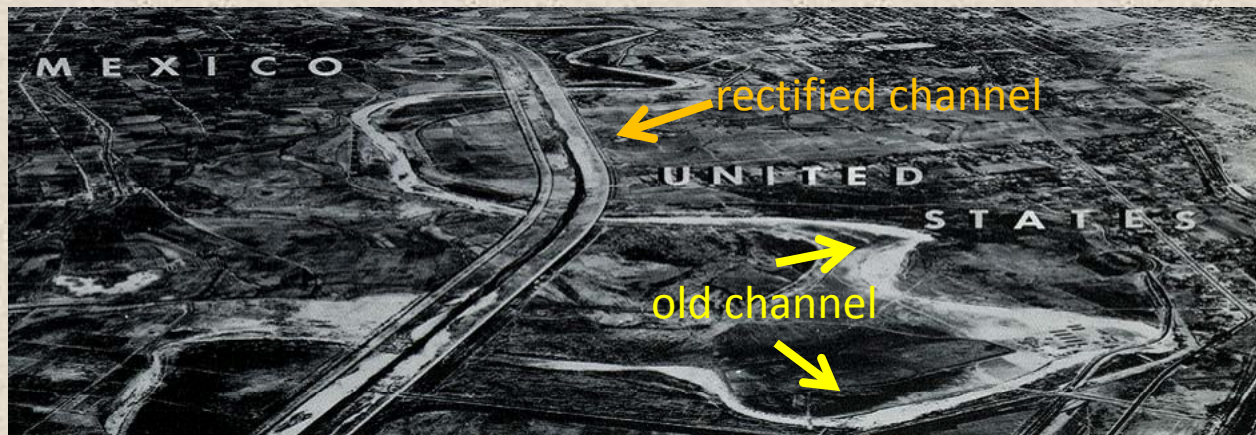
*Excellence through teamwork.*



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

### Convention of 1933

- Stabilized the boundary in the El Paso-Juarez Valley
- Straightened the river channel
- Flood control levees in both countries
- Rio Grande Rectification Project



*The meandering river channel was straightened.*

*Excellence through teamwork.*





# International Boundary and Water Commission

## United States Section

### IBWC Minutes

- Decisions of the Commission are recorded in the form of Minutes
- Minutes are binding agreements of the IBWC intended to implement treaty.
- They take effect once approved by the U.S. Department of State and Mexico's Foreign Affairs Ministry



***IBWC Minute***

***Excellence through teamwork.***



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# 1944 Water Treaty – Rio Grande

- Mexico delivers water to the U.S., Ft. Quitman to Gulf
- U.S. receives 1/3 of the waters arriving in the Rio Grande from 6 Mexican tributaries
- Minimum annual average of 350 kaf in cycles of 5 yrs
- Mexico incurred a deficit in deliveries in the 1990s
- Treaty authorized construction of up to three storage dams on Rio Grande; only 2 were built

*Excellence through teamwork.*





## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# 1944 Water Treaty – Colorado River

- U.S. to deliver to Mexico a volume of 1.5 maf/yr
- When there are surplus waters, U.S. to deliver to Mexico a total volume of up to 1.7 maf/yr
- In extraordinary drought, Mexico reduced in proportion to U.S.



*Colorado River at NIB*

*Excellence through teamwork.*





## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# Chamizal Convention (1963)

- Relocated the Rio Grande in a concrete-lined channel through central El Paso-Juarez
- Resolved a century-long boundary dispute



*President Adolfo Lopez  
Mateos Channel*

*Excellence through teamwork.*



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

### 1970 Boundary Treaty

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- IBWC to maintain the Rio Grande and Colorado River as the international boundary
- Boundary is middle of the channel occupied by normal flow or middle of the channel which in normal flows has the greatest average width over its length
- IBWC to delineate the boundary on maps
- IBWC may stabilize or rectify the channel (numerous rectifications carried out)
- Prohibits construction of works that would obstruct or deflect normal or flood flows

*Excellence through teamwork.*



## STRUCTURE PER 1944 TREATY

### INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION (IBWC)

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graph TD; IBWC[INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION (IBWC)] --> Mexican[MEXICAN SECTION]; IBWC --> US[US SECTION]; Mexican --> MC[Mexican Commissioner]; Mexican --> S1[Secretary]; Mexican --> TPE1[Two Principal Engineers]; Mexican --> LA1[Legal Adviser]; US --> USC[US Commissioner]; US --> S2[Secretary]; US --> TPE2[Two Principal Engineers]; US --> LA2[Legal Adviser];
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#### MEXICAN SECTION

- Mexican Commissioner
- Secretary
- Two Principal Engineers
- Legal Adviser

#### US SECTION

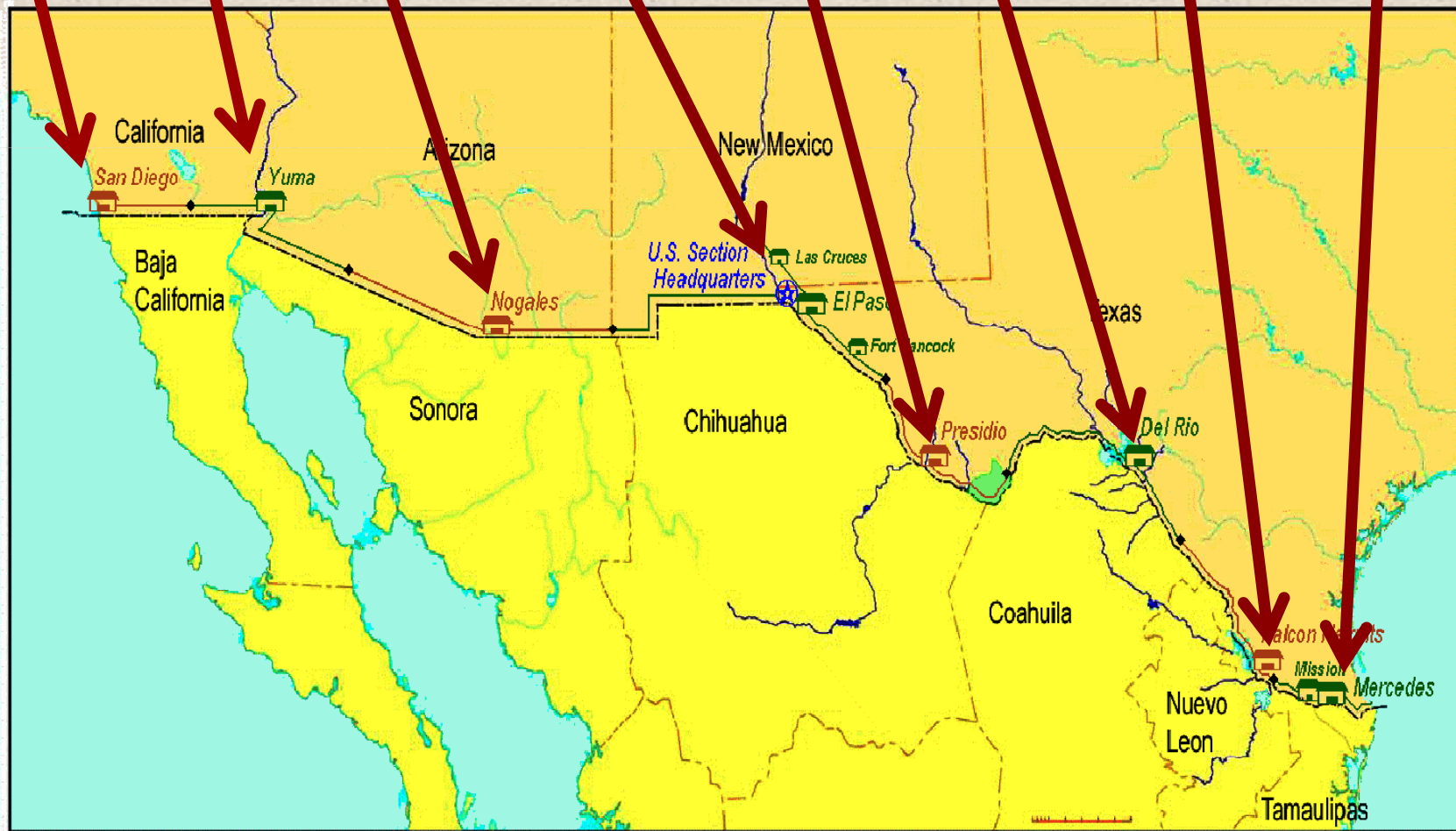
- US Commissioner
- Secretary
- Two Principal Engineers
- Legal Adviser



# International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

## Field Offices

**San Diego Yuma Nogales Up. Rio Grande Presidio Amistad Falcon L. Rio Grande**







## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

### Boundary Demarcation

- U.S. and Mexican Sections of IBWC jointly determine location of the boundary and demarcate the boundary
- 258 principal monuments between El Paso, TX-Cd. Juarez, Chih. and the Pacific Ocean
- Hundreds of intermediate boundary markers
- Boundary demarcation plaques at ports of entry/international bridges
- IBWC responsible for maintaining the monuments

*Excellence through teamwork.*

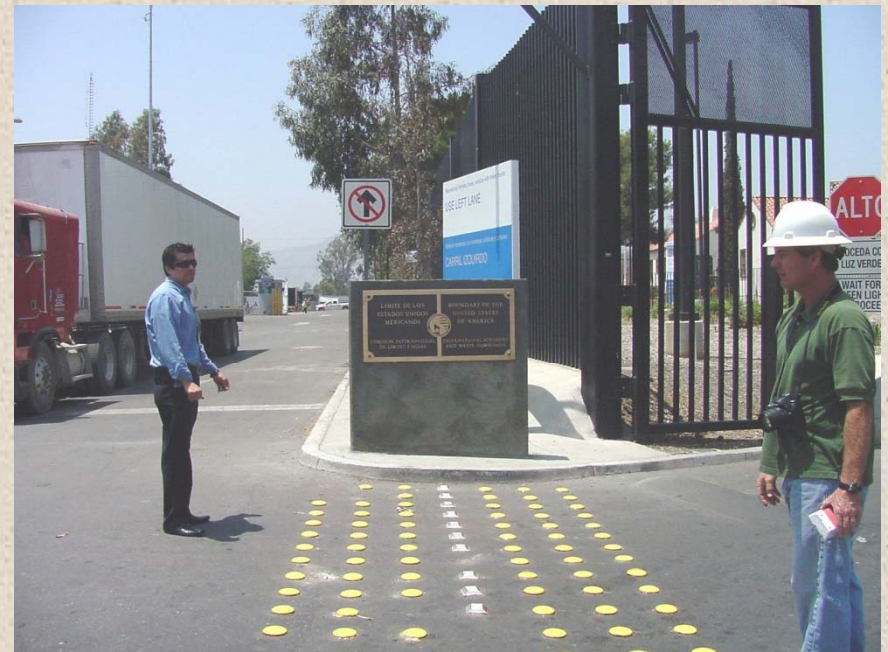


# International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

## Boundary Demarcation



***Monument No. 123, Nogales***



***Boundary demarcation at  
Tecate Port of Entry***

***Excellence through teamwork.***





## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# Sanitation

- 1944 Treaty authorizes Commission to give “preferential attention to the solution of all border sanitation problems”
- 3 international wastewater treatment plants
  - Nogales (Arizona)
  - South Bay (California)
  - Nuevo Laredo (Tamaulipas)



*Nogales IWTP*

*Excellence through teamwork.*



# International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

## Water Quality

- Treaties do not regulate water quality
- IBWC has conducted binational water quality studies with partners from both countries
- Working on binational water quality database
- Texas Clean Rivers Program for the Rio Grande conducts regular monitoring and publishes reports



*Excellence through teamwork.*





## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# Groundwater

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- Transboundary Aquifer Assessment Act (TAAP)
  - 2006 U.S. legislation to study U.S.-Mexico transboundary groundwater
  - Led by USGS in partnership with IBWC, state Water Resource Research Institutes, and Mexican agencies and universities
- 2009 Joint Report of the Principal Engineers outlines process for U.S.-Mexico cooperation
- 3 priority aquifers:
  - Mesilla Bolson/Conejos Medanos (NM-Chih.)
  - San Pedro (AZ-Son.)
  - Santa Cruz (AZ-Son.)

*Excellence through teamwork.*



# International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

## Reservoirs

- Two international storage dams on the Rio Grande
- Reservoirs store water for use by both countries and provide flood control
- Each country has hydroelectric power plants
- Power is generated equally regardless of national ownership of water releases



*Falcon Dam Powerplant*

*Excellence through teamwork.*





# International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

## Reservoirs

- Amistad Dam
  - Built in 1969
  - Located at Del Rio, TX-  
Cd. Acuña, Coahuila
- Falcon Dam
  - Built in 1954
  - Located at Falcon Heights, TX-  
Nva. Cd. Guerrero, Coah.
- Combined conservation capacity of over 5 maf



*Amistad Dam*



*Falcon Dam*

*Excellence through teamwork.*



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# Water Delivery – Colorado River

- U.S. delivers water to Mexico on the Colorado River near Yuma-Mexicali
- Deliveries effected through Reclamation-IBWC cooperation
- Mexico diverts most of its allotment at Morelos Dam
- U.S. must comply with Minute 242 salinity differential



*Morelos Dam*

*Excellence through teamwork.*





# International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

## Flood Control

- 4 USIBWC Flood Control Projects
  - **Tijuana River** – San Diego, CA
  - **Upper Rio Grande** – Southern New Mexico and West Texas
  - **Presidio** – Big Bend area of Texas
  - **Lower Rio Grande** – near McAllen, Harlingen, Brownsville

Rio Grande flood at El Paso-Cd. Juarez  
9/4/2006



*Excellence through teamwork.*



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# Lower Rio Grande Flood Control

- Covers 180 river miles from Peñitas to the Gulf of Mexico
- 2 diversion dams
  - Anzalduas Dam – diverts water into U.S. interior floodway
  - Retamal Dam – diverts water into Mexico's interior floodway
- Hundreds of miles of levees on Rio Grande and interior floodways



*North Floodway (2010)*

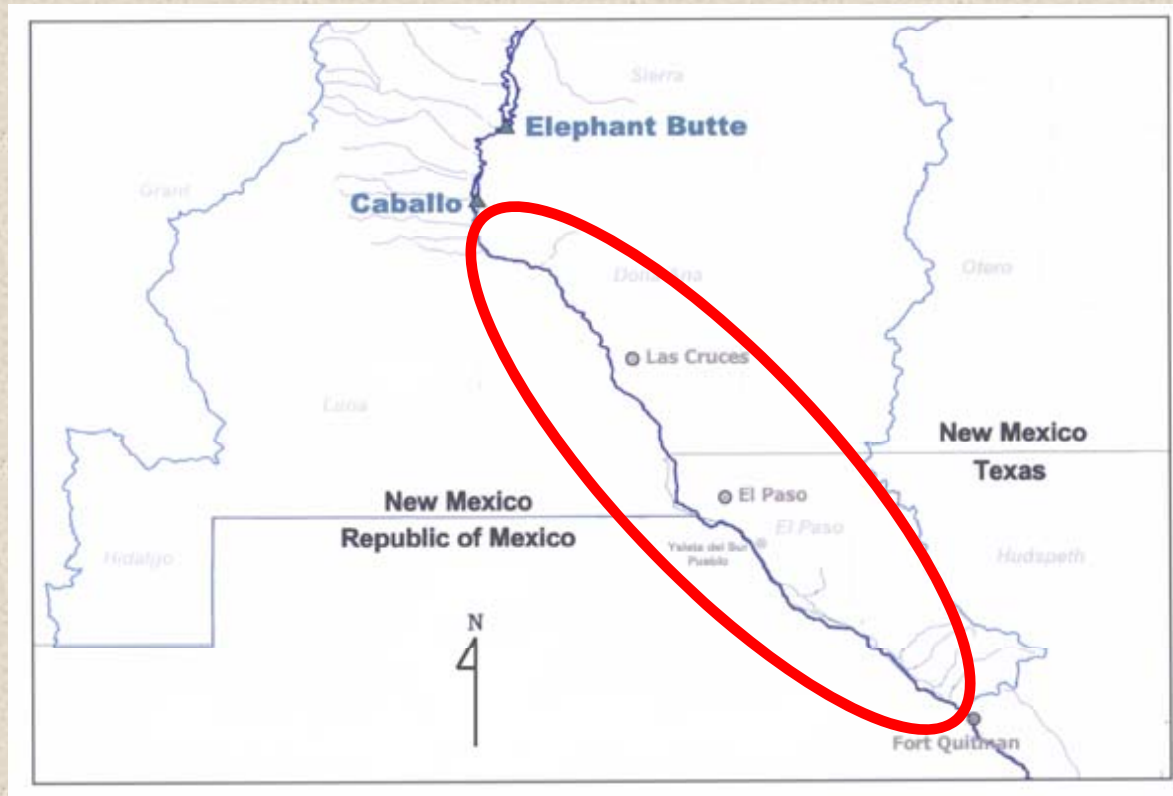
*Excellence through teamwork.*





## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# UPPER RIO GRANDE PROJECTS



**Project area: Percha Dam, NM to Ft. Quitman, TX**

*Excellence through teamwork.*



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# International Bridges

- IBWC maintains 3 international bridges
  - Cordova International-Bridge of the Americas (El Paso-Juarez)
  - Tornillo, TX-Guadalupe, Chih. “Fabens Bridge”
  - Ft. Hancock, TX-El Porvenir, Chih.



*Fabens Bridge*

*Excellence through teamwork.*





## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# Water Delivery – Rio Grande

- U.S. delivers Rio Grande water to Mexico at El Paso-Juarez
- Water delivered per Convention of 1906
- Water is released through American Dam and diverted for Mexico at International Dam



*American Dam*

*Excellence through teamwork.*



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# Upper Rio Grande Flood Control

- USIBWC Upper Rio Grande Projects cover 200 river miles
- Levees and floodway maintained by staff in 3 offices:
  - Las Cruces, NM
  - El Paso, TX (American Dam/Carlos Marin Field Office)
  - Ft. Hancock, TX (Zacarias Dominguez Field Office)



*Rio Grande levee*

*Excellence through teamwork.*





## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# Rio Grande Rectification Project

- El Paso to Ft. Quitman, TX
- Constructed 1934-1938
- Flood protection and boundary stabilization
- 85 miles of U.S. levees
- Mexico constructed and maintains levees on its side



*Levee near Ysleta-Zaragoza Bridge*

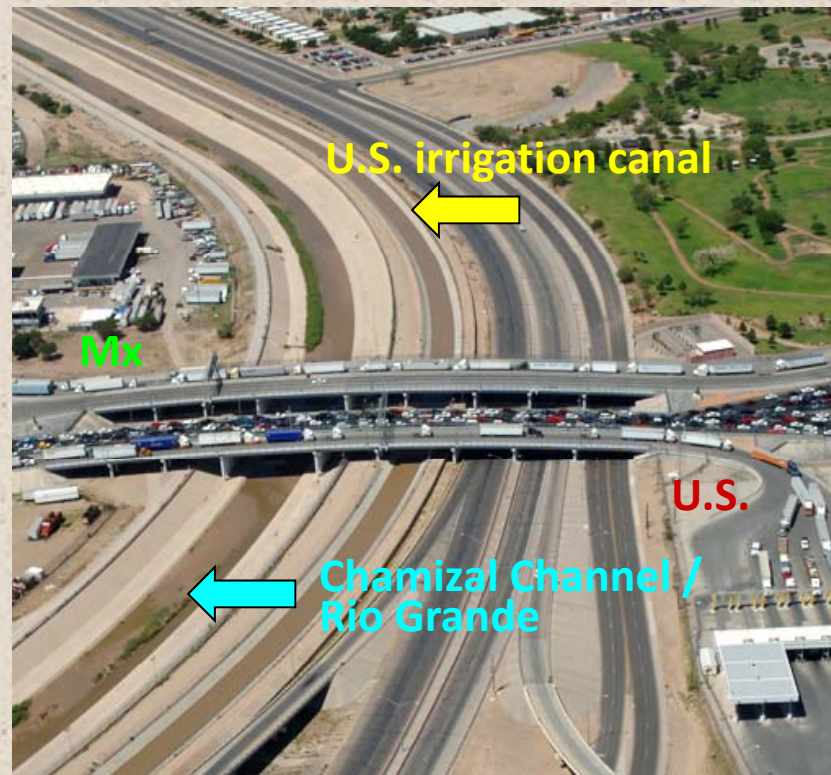
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## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

### Chamizal Project

- Located at El Paso, TX-Cd. Juarez, Chih.
- 4-mile long concrete-lined river channel



*Excellence through teamwork.*





## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# Rio Grande Canalization Project

- Water delivery and flood control project
- Constructed 1938-1943
- 106 river miles from Percha Dam to American Dam
- 130 miles of flood control levees
- Sediment control dams on arroyos



***Rio Grande at Artcraft Rd.***

***Excellence through teamwork.***



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# Upper Rio Grande Restoration

- USIBWC working on environmental enhancements for Canalization Project:
  - Erosion control
  - Restoration of native vegetation
  - Phasing out of grazing leases
  - Channel reconfiguration to improve aquatic habitat
  - Establishment of restoration sites



Restoration involves  
controlling invasive salt cedar.

*Excellence through teamwork.*





## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

# Asarco Settlement

- USIBWC received \$22 M in Asarco bankruptcy settlement
- Settlement funds to be used for remediation of soil and groundwater contamination:
  - on USIBWC lands
  - associated with reconstruction of the American Canal



American Dam

*Excellence through teamwork.*



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

### Citizens Forum History

- Program started in 1999 in Upper Rio Grande
- Expanded to other regions in 2000s
- Citizens Forum Boards
  - Upper Rio Grande (TX & NM)
  - Lower Rio Grande (TX)
  - Colorado River (CA & AZ)
  - Southeast Arizona
  - San Diego, CA



Colorado River Citizens Forum Meeting

*Excellence through teamwork.*





# International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

## Citizens Forum Purpose

- To facilitate the exchange of information between the USIBWC and the local community regarding ongoing and future USIBWC projects and related issues between Percha Dam, NM and Ft. Quitman, TX.



USIBWC water quality presentation

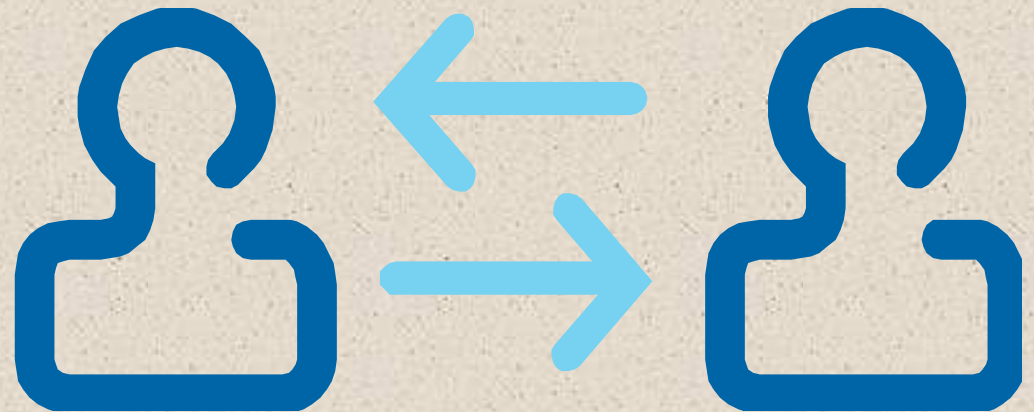
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## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

### Citizens Forum Purpose

- The Citizens Forum is intended to bring together community members, enabling the early and continued two-way flow of information, concerns, values, and needs between the USIBWC and the general public, environmentalists, water managers, irrigators, government agencies, etc.



*Excellence through teamwork.*



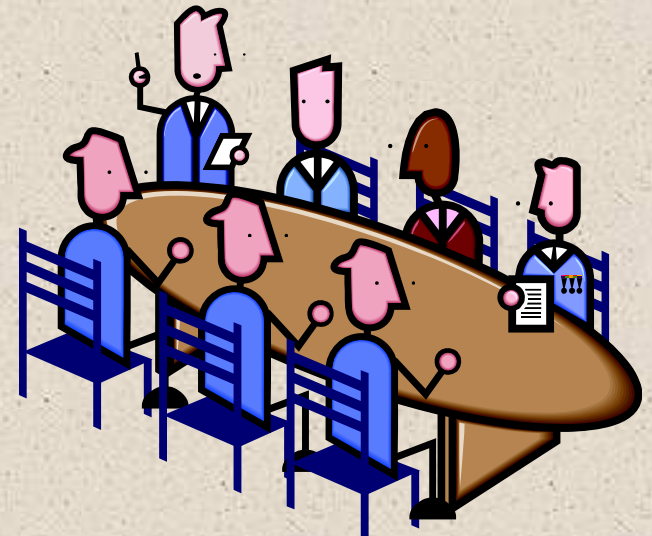


# International Boundary and Water Commission

## United States Section

### Board Member Duties

- Attend public meetings four times per year
- Meetings to be held in greater El Paso-Las Cruces region
- Board term is for two years
- Board members are expected to be available to the public to facilitate the exchange of information



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# International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

## Board Member Duties

- Review and comment on documents and activities
- Discuss plans and issues related to USIBWC projects
- The Citizens Forum is not a federal advisory committee; goal is to exchange information and to include a diversity of viewpoints
- Volunteer service with no expense reimbursement







## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

### Citizens Forum Information

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- All meetings are open to the public
- Regular communication with board via e-mail
- Meeting notices, notes/minutes, and presentations are available online at:

[www.ibwc.state.gov/Citizens\\_Forums/CF\\_URG.html](http://www.ibwc.state.gov/Citizens_Forums/CF_URG.html)

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## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

### Citizens Forum Leadership

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- Two Co-Chairs
- USIBWC Co-Chair
  - Principal Engineer Carlos Peña
- Community Co-Chair
  - Selected by the board



*Excellence through teamwork.*





## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

### Citizens Forum Discussion Items

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- Selection of a co-chair
- Meeting Logistics
  - Days of the week
  - Time of day
  - Locations
- Tours or field trips

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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION,  
UNITED STATES AND MEXICO  
UNITED STATES SECTION



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