

Winter 2017
 Newsline– Issue 11

A Message from the U.S. Commissioner



The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC), looks forward to a productive year in 2017 as we address many opportunities and challenges.

The U.S. Section has achieved new heights in our relationship with Mexico regarding our many water and boundary issues. From San Diego, Yuma, Nogales, Las Cruces, El Paso, Fort Hancock, Presidio, Amistad, Laredo, Falcon and Mercedes, we are getting the job done in an unprecedented fashion. Added to the extraordinary job we are doing in Operations and Maintenance, the U.S. Section is excelling at managing our Engineering, Administrative, Foreign Affairs, Human Resources, Legal, and EEO duties and responsibilities. We are few but we are mighty!

May God Continue to Bless the United States of America!

Edward Drusina

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Managers from the U.S. and Mexican Sections of the Commission had a productive meeting in Mercedes, Texas to discuss regional challenges.

Promoting Colorado River Cooperation

The United States and Mexico, through the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), have worked over the last decade to enhance cooperation in the Colorado River Basin through a series of agreements known as Minutes. The most recent of these Colorado River agreements, IBWC Minute No. 319, was signed November 20, 2012. It focuses on minimizing the impact of Colorado River shortage conditions through shared reservoir management, sharing water during high reservoir conditions, enhancing water conservation, and providing for environmental habitat restoration, among other provisions. Minute 319 was adopted on a five-year basis and will expire December 31, 2017. Its text envisions a successor Minute that could extend or replace its substantive provisions. Given persistent drought that worsened over the first four years of the Minute, stakeholders are interested in longer-term commitments in a new Minute to enhance cooperation and minimize future conflict.

The IBWC has been coordinating with a broad range of interested parties, including representatives from the seven U.S. states and two Mexican states that comprise the basin, the U.S. Department of the Interior, including the Bureau of Reclamation, Mexico's National Water Commission (CONAGUA), irrigation districts, water utilities, and environmental organizations, among others. The IBWC's work has been informed by stakeholder involvement in various binational work groups, addressing such aspects as water conservation projects, habitat restoration, and salinity management.

Discussions have led to general agreement that a new Minute should be based on Minute 319 with appropriate updates. A new concept that has been discussed is how the new Minute could incorporate additional binational actions that would complement efforts in the United States under a proposed U.S. Drought Contingency Plan, recognizing that more proactive actions by both countries could help prevent catastrophically low reservoir elevations in the future. As envisioned by Minute 319, a proposed successor Minute would extend through 2026.



May 2016 meeting at Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Relations in Mexico City.

Promoting Colorado River Cooperation (continued)

Commission personnel
discussed work on the
Minute with U.S.
Secretary of the Interior
Sally Jewell (center) .



Minute Negotiating
Group in San Diego, CA.



Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony Held for LEED Building at San Diego Office

On September 23, 2016, the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new administration building at the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP). Construction of the \$2.6 million facility began September 21, 2015 as part of a design-build contract awarded to Abide International, Inc. for a building that will attain a LEED Gold designation for its reduced use of water and energy, generation of solar power with 36 panels, and improved indoor environmental quality through use of environmentally-friendly materials and improved air filtration. The new building is 4,250 square feet with six offices, a reception area, a records room, library, break room, and conference room. It replaces a manufactured modular building located on Dairy Mart Road that had served as the USIBWC's office since 1995.



USIBWC's new administration building in San Diego, CA was built with the environment in mind.

History of the SBIWTP: For decades, untreated sewage reached the Tijuana River, which flows north from Mexico to San Diego. The river transported the sewage to the coast at Imperial Beach, California, creating a nuisance and public health risk in the United States. To address the problem, the International Boundary and Water Commission in 1990 developed a plan to treat wastewater from Tijuana, Mexico at a plant located at the border in the United States. Construction began in 1994. In 1997, the South Bay plant began providing advanced primary treatment for 25 million gallons of sewage per day. Discharge of the treated water to the Pacific Ocean through a new ocean outfall began in 1999. Construction of a plant upgrade to secondary treatment standards was completed in 2011.

Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony (continued)



Ribbon Cutting by Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon and U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina (right).



U.S. and Mexican stakeholders, including elected officials and USIBWC Citizens Forum board members, attended the ceremony.



U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina gave remarks at the ceremony.

Commission Reviews Lower Rio Grande Operations

In 2016, the International Boundary and Water Commission met at the U.S. Section Field Office in Mercedes, Texas to discuss Commission issues along the Rio Grande from Laredo-Nuevo Laredo to the Gulf of Mexico. Topics included the Lower Rio Grande Water Quality Initiative, the Nuevo Laredo International Wastewater Treatment Plant Capital Improvement Plan, Border Sanitation, Report on the Annual Flood Workshop, Floodway Obstructions, Retamal Dam Upgrades, Dam Inspections, and Sediment Removal. During the multi-day event, IBWC managers also reviewed the status of Mexico’s Rio Grande water deliveries to the U.S., rehabilitation of the Morillo Drain salinity control infrastructure, and conducted site visits to the Commission’s Anzalduas and Retamal diversion dams.



IBWC personnel toured the Anzalduas and Retamal Dams.



At the Anzalduas Dam control room (left) and the U.S. Section Field Office in Mercedes, Texas.

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