



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
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CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN ON HIDALGO COUNTY LEVEE IMPROVEMENTS

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has authorized construction to proceed on Rio Grande flood control levee improvements in Hidalgo County, Texas. The USIBWC has awarded a \$9.4 million contract to Ballenger Construction Company to raise a 3.3-mile levee segment near the Hidalgo-Reynosa Bridge and has authorized the Hidalgo County Drainage District #1 (HCDD1) to proceed with work on the levee in Mission. The work by HCDD1 is being carried in accordance with a legally-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the USIBWC.

USIBWC expects Ballenger Construction Company to begin levee construction in April 2008. The project, covering a levee segment from the Banker Floodway to the Hidalgo-Reynosa Bridge, is expected to be completed in 8 months. Crews will raise the levee by an average of 6.7 feet to ensure adequate protection during the 100-year flood. As additional funding becomes available, the USIBWC will proceed with levee improvements in other downstream locations.

The USIBWC has authorized HCDD1 to proceed with work to raise a 3.7-mile levee segment from the Banker Weir to the west end of the Mission Inlet Closure. Construction is expected to begin in May 2008 and be completed in 6 months. Under the MOU, the drainage district may construct other levee segments in the reach between Peñitas and Mission if

authorized by USIBWC. The USIBWC is currently reviewing, and expects to approve in the near future, plans for additional work by HCDD1.

USIBWC studies have identified various reaches of Rio Grande levees in Hidalgo County that do not meet Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requirements for protection from the 100-year flood. In some areas, levees would be overtopped; in other reaches, levees lack sufficient freeboard (FEMA requires freeboard of three feet, the distance between the water surface elevation and the top of the levee that gives an extra margin of safety). USIBWC has developed a plan to raise and rehabilitate deficient levee segments, subject to the availability of federal appropriations.

The USIBWC continues its discussions with HCDD1 and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding potential construction of a combined levee-border wall in other areas.

In nearby Cameron County, USIBWC crews have already completed work on a 5-mile levee segment. Additional levee improvements in Cameron County will be completed this year.

For more information:

Sally Spener
915-832-4175
sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov