



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

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IBWC UNDERTAKES WORKS FOR RIO GRANDE FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT IN EL PASO-CIUDAD JUAREZ

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, has identified works it will be undertaking during the current year to maintain the Rio Grande flood control project and stabilize the international river boundary in the area of El Paso, Texas-Cd. Juarez, Chihuahua. The works are being carried out in conformance with Minute No. 313, Maintenance in the Rectified Channel of the Rio Grande, a Commission agreement concluded earlier this year. Minute No. 313 makes recommendations for works in critical locations where the Rio Grande channel has problems conveying normal and flood flows as a result of sediment, vegetation growth, and levees in poor condition.

“This agreement will enable the Commission to undertake critical work to remove sediment caused by the 2006 flood,” said U.S. Commissioner Carlos Marin.

Mexican Commissioner Arturo Herrera stated, “This Minute helps to address the problem by establishing a clear mechanism for distribution of maintenance works in the Rio Grande channel between both countries for this region.”

The agreement covers a 91-mile (146.5 km) reach of the river from El Paso, Texas-Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua downstream to Fort Quitman, TX. In accordance with the agreement, each country will be responsible for removing sediment from specific river reaches totaling 45.5 miles (73.23 km) each. The works will be carried out by personnel or contractors from the U.S. Section and the Mexican Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission. Each Section will also be responsible for maintaining the floodway and levees in its own country.

Minute No. 313 identifies priority sites affected by flood flows during storms in August 2006. The priority works include sediment removal and levee repairs in both countries. Both Sections began

work at priority sites in 2007. The U.S. Section has already restored the U.S. river levee from near Asarco to the Zaragoza International Bridge. The Mexican Section, using funds provided by the U.S. Section, removed sediment from a portion of the concrete-lined Chamizal Project channel through central El Paso-Ciudad Juarez. The Mexican Section, in cooperation with Mexico's National Water Commission, also removed sediment from critical reaches of the river channel in the Juarez Valley and did vegetation removal and clearing along the Mexican levee in the same area.

In accordance with Minute No. 313, the U.S. Section Work Plan for 2008 includes stabilization of the river bank for 200 feet (60 m) downstream of International Dam, which has already been completed, silt removal and channel realignment between International Dam and the Chamizal Project, and environmental permitting to realign the river in future years at the Guayuco and Diablo Arroyos in Hudspeth County (the river alignment has changed due to the impact of the arroyos).

This year, Mexico will be removing sediment along the river channel between American Dam and International Dam, with work expected to be undertaken from June through October, and at three other segments totaling 11 miles (18.4 km) between the Zaragoza International Bridge and Ft. Hancock, TX-El Porvenir, Chih. The Mexican Section will also be doing work on its levees.

The Commissioners observed that prior to Minute No. 313, there was not a clear understanding of the responsibilities to be undertaken by each Section, making it difficult to schedule and arrange necessary maintenance work on an ongoing basis. Failure to remove silt and attend to other maintenance tasks presents a risk of municipal flooding and could result in a change in the river's course, altering the international boundary. Minute No. 313 also allows each country to better plan and allocate funding.

The International Boundary and Water Commission is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the United States and Mexico, including treaties related to Rio Grande flood control.

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