



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
October 8, 2008

RIO GRANDE STILL IN FLOOD AT PRESIDIO

Although river levels have dropped considerably, the Rio Grande remains several feet above flood stage at Presidio, Texas-Ojinaga, Chihuahua and flood conditions are expected to persist into mid-October. On October 7, Rio Grande flow was approximately 425 cubic meters per second (15,000 cubic feet per second). Although the river remains in flood, levels are well below the peak of 1500 cubic meters per second (53,000 cubic feet per second), which occurred September 16, 2008.

Due to the ongoing flood conditions, the Rio Grande continues to affect the U.S. flood control levee. Although the water surface is well below the top of the levee, structural problems such as levee seepage and sand boils persist. Crews from the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) continue to monitor the levee 24 hours per day to respond to problems as they arise.

USIBWC experts expect areas of standing water near the City of Presidio to persist as long as the river remains in flood. Ongoing seepage due to saturated conditions means that water continues to pond on the land side of the river levee. USIBWC crews continue to pump standing water near the urban area of Presidio; this pumping has stabilized the amount of water on the land side of the levee. USIBWC engineers are evaluating other options for reducing standing water.

Luis Leon Dam in Mexico remains in flood operations with releases at 500 cubic meters per second (17,657 cubic feet per second). Releases at this rate are expected to continue until approximately October 13 or until the dam returns to normal conservation capacity. However, conditions could change if there is additional precipitation or if a tropical weather system currently in the Pacific Ocean moves into the area. Luis Leon Dam is located on the Conchos River, a tributary that enters the Rio Grande at Presidio-Ojinaga.

The USIBWC operates and maintains 15 miles of Rio Grande flood control levees in the Presidio area. The U.S. levees range in height from 6 to 14 feet and protect the river reach between Haciendita and Alamito Creek. The downstream portion of the levee failed in September due to the high flows, inundating farmland and a golf course downstream of the urban area of Presidio. To shore up the rest of the U.S. levee system, USIBWC crews conducted extensive sandbagging operations and covered a portion of the levee with plastic sheeting. Failure of the Mexican levee also caused widespread flooding in Ojinaga.

Once flood conditions subside and conditions permit, the USIBWC will undertake emergency repairs on the levee segments that failed during the flood. During the current fiscal year, design will also begin on long-term improvements to the Presidio Flood Control Project.

Flood conditions also exist at Amistad Dam at Del Rio, Texas-Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila, a dam and reservoir operated jointly by the U.S. and Mexican Sections of the International Boundary and Water Commission. Due to Rio Grande inflows traveling downstream from Presidio, reservoir storage increased to slightly above conservation capacity, prompting the Commission to go into flood operations at the dam in late September. Releases remain stable at 500 cubic meters per second (17,657 cubic feet per second). The USIBWC has advised the community that releases of this volume cause flooding of Vega Verde Road downstream of the dam. On average, releases of this magnitude occur every three to five years.

Farther downstream at the Commission's Falcon Dam at Falcon Heights, Texas-Nueva Ciudad Guerrero, Tamaulipas, storage was at 74% of conservation capacity.

Residents concerned about Rio Grande flood conditions should continue to monitor National Weather Service forecasts and any announcements from local emergency managers.

For more information:

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