



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
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USIBWC BEGINS HABITAT RESTORATION WORK IN EL PASO AND SUNLAND PARK RIVER TRAIL: CAUTION TO PEDESTRIANS WHILE WORK IS UNDERWAY

The International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC), has begun work at several habitat restoration sites along the Rio Grande within the cities of El Paso, Texas and Sunland Park, New Mexico. USIBWC requests visitors to take precaution, heed safety warning signs, and stay on trails and levees during construction.

Three sites are along recreational hike and bike trails. Two sites go through the Sunland Park trail (Anapra and Sunland Park Restoration sites), and the third site goes through the river portion of Valley Creek Park/Mary Frances Keisling Park in El Paso's Upper Valley (Valley Creek Restoration Site). A fourth site south of the Country Club Bridge is not along a trail. Sites are shown in the attached map. As a safety precaution during planting and site preparation, USIBWC contractor IDEALS-AGEISS will have temporary rolling closures of the paved hike and bike trail, in which pedestrians and cyclists should stay on levees and heed signs. Closures will take place only in small segments of a couple hundred feet at a time in the immediate vicinity of heavy machinery. All site prep and planting work is expected to be completed by March 30, 2018, with most work in the trail areas completed by March 1, 2018.

USIBWC contractors are using heavy machinery to remove non-native vegetation, particularly saltcedar bushes. Contractors will also be mitigating mistletoe damage on existing large native cottonwood trees, which may include pruning infected branches of large trees. At the

Country Club East site south of Country Club Bridge, crews will be excavating the floodplain to create channel cuts and other areas for plantings. After the site preparation is complete, USIBWC contractors will be planting approximately 20,000 native trees and shrubs across the sites, including willows and cottonwoods. Some of the plantings will be transplants from vegetated islands that USIBWC will excavate from the Rio Grande channel as part of its routine maintenance program.

In addition, USIBWC has other active restoration sites in Vinton, Texas, and Shalem Colony, NM with similar work, although these sites are not located in designated trail areas. These sites will also have several thousand trees and shrubs planted.

The principal objectives of the restoration are to enhance the connection of the river and the floodplain; reduce exotic vegetation; restore endangered species habitat; and reestablish riparian habitat. Additional information about the USIBWC's habitat restoration can be found at https://www.ibwc.gov/EMD/canalization_eis.html.

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USIBWC Active Restoration Sites El Paso, TX and Sunland Park, NM

