



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release  
May 30, 2017

### **NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR RIO GRANDE FLOOD CONTROL IMPROVEMENTS IN VINTON AND CANUTILLO, TEXAS**

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) announces the availability of the *Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) for Flood Control Improvements to the Rio Grande Canalization Project from Vinton to Canutillo, El Paso County, Texas (Canutillo Phase II)*. In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the draft SEA is available for public comment for 30 days through June 30, 2017.

The USIBWC is considering constructing a flood control improvement project along the Rio Grande River located within a portion of the Rio Grande Canalization Project (RGCP) protective levee system in El Paso County, Texas along approximately 5.6 miles on the east bank north of Vinton Road Bridge, south through the Canutillo area, and downstream to Borderland Bridge.

The purpose is to construct a flood control structure with the following objectives:

- 1) Eliminate levee deficiencies within the Vinton to Canutillo reach and provide flood protection to withstand the 100-year flood with a minimum of 2 feet of freeboard;
- 2) Maintain the design flood capacity of the RGCP;
- 3) Enable the USIBWC to certify levees through the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

In the *Final Environmental Assessment on Flood Control Improvements to the Rio Grande Canalization Project*, dated December 2007, the USIBWC proposed to conduct flood control improvements along approximately 52-miles of east and west levees within the RGCP. The proposed action included the construction of a new flood control structure in the Canutillo area; however, details of the proposed structure were not available and were not analyzed in the 2007 Environmental Assessment.

The Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment evaluates potential environmental impacts of the No Action Alternative and the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative calls for the construction of a combination of 3 miles of new earthen levees and 2.6 miles of concrete floodwall where limited right of way or physical space exists between the river and the railroad. The Preferred Alternative would also require the construction of a floodgate at the Canutillo Bridge and 11 drainage structures on ephemeral streams with bank stabilization (including modification of one existing drainage structure and construction of 10 new drainage structures). Scour protection blankets would be required on some sections of the earthen levee that are close to the river bank. Permits would be required from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad for work within the railroad right of way. An Individual Permit would be required from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for dredge and fill of Waters of the United States, per the Clean Water Act Sections 404 and 401. Six additional alternatives were considered and evaluated in previous analyses but were either found to not meet the purpose and need or were impractical.

Potential impacts on natural, cultural, and other resources were evaluated in the Draft SEA. The USIBWC has proposed mitigation to restore over 35 acres of native riparian habitat on the floodplain to offset the Preferred Alternative's adverse impacts to riparian vegetation, Waters

of the United States, and access to the river for recreation. Mitigation would be part of required permits for construction. A Mitigated Finding of No Significant Impact has been prepared for the Preferred Alternative based on a review of the facts and analyses contained in the SEA. An environmental impact statement will not be prepared unless additional information which may affect this decision is brought to our attention within public comment period.

The Draft SEA is available on the USIBWC website at [http://www.ibwc.gov/EMD/EIS\\_EA\\_Public\\_Comment.html](http://www.ibwc.gov/EMD/EIS_EA_Public_Comment.html). The Notice of Availability of the Draft SEA is expected to be published in the Federal Register by May 31, 2017. Written public comments are due by **June 30, 2017** and should be submitted to Elizabeth Verdecchia, Natural Resources Specialist, via email [Elizabeth.Verdecchia@ibwc.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Verdecchia@ibwc.gov) or via mail at 4171 N. Mesa C-100, El Paso, Texas 79902. Request for public hearings or requests for hardcopies of the Draft SEA should also be submitted to Ms. Verdecchia.

News Media Contact:

Lori Kuczanski  
915-832-4106  
[lori.kuczanski@ibwc.gov](mailto:lori.kuczanski@ibwc.gov)