



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
July 26, 2017

50-YEAR HISTORY OF HURRICANE BEULAH, TROPICAL STORM PREDICTIONS, AND VEHICULAR GATES INSTALLED ON LEVEES TO BE DISCUSSED AT AUGUST 9 PUBLIC MEETING IN MERCEDES

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has scheduled a public meeting of the Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum (LRGCF) for **Wednesday, August 9 at 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. at the USIBWC office at 325 Golf Course Road in Mercedes, Texas.** The purpose of the forum is to promote the exchange of information between the USIBWC and the community regarding Commission projects and related activities.

Barry Goldsmith, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, National Weather Service, Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley, Texas, will discuss the 50-year history of Hurricane Beulah, which struck the Rio Grande Valley in late September 1967. Water flows along the Rio Grande and through the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project caused devastating damage where portions of the levee failed, including parts of McAllen and most notably south Harlingen. Since 1967, the region's population has increased four-fold, and land use has changed dramatically with urbanization and a more than billion-dollar agriculture industry covering areas which were once natural wetlands.

The Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project has improved, but has urban drainage kept up with population growth? Is today's building stock able to handle hurricane-force winds?

Are individuals and communities ready to evacuate or shelter-in-place? Goldsmith's presentation will describe the changes since 1967, and offer suggestions and sources for how communities can best be prepared should the next Beulah come this year or in the years to come. He will also present on projected hurricanes and tropical storms in the valley.

The Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum will also hear from Lori Kuczanski, Public Affairs Officer, USIBWC, on vehicular gates being installed on U.S. Rio Grande flood control levees, including signs in English and Spanish, for the restricted area. The purpose of the gates is to prevent access by unauthorized personnel, levee damage, and illegal dumping. Vehicular gates have already been installed from the City of Peñitas to Alamo Road and Alamo Road to FM 493. Future work will be performed at various locations in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties. The USIBWC has teamed up with the Constable's Office to monitor the area, and anyone caught on the levees or dumping illegally is subject to arrest and/or a fine.

A complete meeting agenda follows. Members of the public who would like more information about the meeting may contact 956-565-3150 or the Public Affairs Office at Lori.Kuczanski@ibwc.gov.

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LOWER RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM

Wednesday, August 9, 2017

3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

USIBWC Conference Room

325 Golf Course Road

Mercedes, TX 78570

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions – Juan Uribe, Area Operations Manager, USIBWC, and Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- Hurricane Beulah, Then and Now: Is the Valley Ready, 50 Years Later? – Barry Goldsmith, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, National Weather Service Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley
- Vehicular gates installed on levees – Lori Kuczanski, Public Affairs Officer, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion
- Suggested Future Agenda Items

Directions: From Expressway 83, exit Mile 2 W. Travel south for approx. 1.5 miles to Golf Course Rd. Turn left. The USIBWC is the first building on your left.

If you have a disability that you wish to self-identify confidentially that requires accommodation, please advise us ahead of time. For more information, call 956-565-3150 or email Lori.Kuczanski@ibwc.gov