



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
October 21, 2011

NOVEMBER 8 PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS AMISTAD DAM OPERATIONS AND RIO GRANDE WATER QUALITY

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) invites the public to an informational meeting on Tuesday, November 8, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the Del Rio Civic Center, Mesquite Room, 1915 Veterans Blvd., Del Rio, TX. The purpose of the meeting is to inform the public about Commission activities in the region, including those related to operation of Amistad Dam.

The Commission is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the United States and Mexico. Among other activities, Commission personnel operate Amistad Dam for water storage, flood control, and hydroelectric power generation, perform water quality monitoring, ensure that each country receives its share of Rio Grande water in accordance with the 1944 Water Treaty, and demarcate the international boundary at the international bridges, among other responsibilities.

At the public meeting, Sheryl Franklin, USIBWC Operations and Maintenance Division Chief, will provide an overview of Amistad Dam operations during the 2010 flood. Amistad Dam went into flood operations on July 5, 2010, days after Hurricane Alex inundated the Rio Grande Basin with heavy rainfall. Releases peaked in July at 35,000 cubic feet per second, the highest releases from the dam since 1974 and twice the rate of release as during 2008 flood operations. Flood releases continued off and on until the end of October. Downstream residents in the floodplain in Val Verde County, Texas and Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila were affected by the high flow coming out of the dam. The dam functioned as designed during flood operations with no dam safety problems experienced. Ms. Franklin will discuss the lessons learned during 2010 and planned investigations to enhance operations in the future.

In a related presentation, Ms. Franklin will discuss the status of dam safety investigations and planned actions over the next few years. In 2007, technical advisors from the United States and Mexico inspected Amistad Dam and rated it at Dam Safety Action Class II – Urgent (potentially unsafe). The rating is based largely on engineering judgment of the technical advisors regarding the impact of seepage from naturally-occurring sinkholes and the high risk in terms of the combination of potential loss of life and economic damages. The Commission convened an expert panel to develop a report on the condition of the dam, identify potential failure modes, perform a risk analysis, and develop recommendations for corrective actions.

Pablo Garza, USIBWC Area Operations Manager at Amistad Dam, will brief the community about the economic, recreational, and educational contributions of the dam and USIBWC's Field Office. He will also discuss upcoming projects affecting the dam, including a proposal to install an additional turbine to be able to generate electricity during low-release conditions, anticipated USIBWC job openings, and the ongoing construction of a new Port of Entry scheduled for completion next summer, which will move Customs operations off the dam.

USIBWC Environmental Protection Specialist Elizabeth Verdecchia will discuss water quality in the Rio Grande below Amistad Dam. The USIBWC Texas Clean Rivers Program collects water quality information throughout the basin, and data show that high bacteria levels in the river in Del Rio and Eagle Pass do not meet state standards for contact recreation. Ms. Verdecchia will provide information for recreational users of the river and discuss other water quality issues in the area.

There will also be an opportunity for the public to ask questions about Commission operations and plans.

A complete meeting agenda follows. The event is free and the public is encouraged to attend. Refreshments will be served. Members of the public who would like more information may call 830-775-2437 or e-mail sally.spener@ibwc.gov.

For media inquiries:

Sally Spener
915-832-4175
sally.spener@ibwc.gov

PUBLIC OUTREACH MEETING
DEL RIO CIVIC CENTER
MESQUITE ROOM
1915 VETERANS BOULEVARD
DEL RIO, TEXAS
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2011
6:30 – 8:30 P.M.

AGENDA

1. Mission of the International Boundary and Water Commission – Sally Spener, Public Affairs Officer
2. Water Quality Overview – Elizabeth Verdecchia, Environmental Protection Specialist, Texas Clean Rivers Program for the Rio Grande
3. Report on the 2010 Flood – Sheryl Franklin, Chief of the Operations and Maintenance Division
4. Dam Safety – Sheryl Franklin, Chief of the Operations and Maintenance Division
5. Upcoming Projects – Pablo Garza, Area Operations Manager
6. Identification and Discussion of Topics of Interest to the Public - All

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 830-775-2437.