



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
December 27, 2019

EL PASO STORMWATER PROJECTS, RIO GRANDE SEDIMENT REMOVAL AND BORDER SECURITY ISSUES ON AGENDA FOR JANUARY 9 PUBLIC MEETING IN EL PASO

The Rio Grande Citizens Forum (RGCF) of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) will discuss Rio Grande sediment removal, issues related to border security projects, and El Paso stormwater projects at an upcoming public meeting. The meeting will take place on **Thursday, January 9, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at USIBWC Headquarters, 4191 N. Mesa Street, El Paso, TX 79902.** The Rio Grande Citizens Forum was established to facilitate the exchange of information with the public about Commission activities and related matters.

Alan Shubert, Vice President of Operations and Technical Services, El Paso Water (EPW), will discuss the \$1.6 million invested to complete Phase 1 of improvements to the Pico Norte Stormwater Pond in 2016. El Paso Water increased the pond's capacity to contain a 100-year runoff event. With the improvements completed by EPW, the City of El Paso was able to complete a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) application with FEMA. As a result, over 1,100 properties were recently removed from the FEMA flood zone. In 2018, 5,000 Northeast properties were also removed from the floodplain as a result of EPW's improvements to Northeast Channel #2. Both of these projects reduced the areas at risk of flooding.

Jaime Castillo, Special Operations Supervisor, U.S. Border Patrol, and Sergio Soto, Supervisory Border Patrol Agent, U.S. Border Patrol, will discuss border activity and trends in fiscal year 2019 (FY19) in the El Paso Sector. The U.S. Border Patrol, El Paso Sector, experienced record numbers of Central American families and children crossing our borders in FY19 which created a humanitarian and border security crisis on our border. Several efforts were deployed by Customs and Border Protection

(CBP) to address this crisis, to include construction of temporary soft sided facilities, expanding medical services contracts, re-deployment of CBP officers and agents from the northern border and coastal areas to the southwest region, and the expansion of a border wall. CBP is committed to the protection of the environment and the nation's natural and cultural resources when planning for and building infrastructure in order to minimize or eliminate impacts to the environment. The invaluable support from our community and stakeholders has been key in tackling all the challenges that FY19 presented in order to keep our community safe.

Kevin Bixby, Executive Director, Southwest Environmental Center, will give an overview of border wall construction since 2006-2016, including locations and designs, followed by a summary of completed, current and planned border wall projects since 2016. Mr. Bixby will share environmentalists' perspectives on the effects of the border wall, including impacts on drainage, wildlife, and groundwater.

Xochitl Aranda, Operations and Maintenance Division Chief, USIBWC, will discuss the five contracts USIBWC awarded to small businesses to perform sediment removal from Percha Dam, New Mexico, to Little Box Canyon in Hudspeth County, Texas. Four of the contracts commenced in November and are scheduled for completion in January, February, and March of 2020. Sediment removal in Hudspeth County is scheduled to begin in February 2020 and is scheduled to be completed in August of 2020. More than 400,000 cubic yards of sediment is expected to be removed from this location. The sediment is available to private landowners through a no-cost agreement.

A complete meeting agenda follows. Members of the public who would like more information about the meeting may contact 915-832-4106 or the Public Affairs Office at lori.kuczanski@ibwc.gov.

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RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM

Thursday, January 9, 2020

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

USIBWC Headquarters

4191 N. Mesa Street*

El Paso, Texas 79902

Agenda

- **Welcome and Introductions** – Rosie Montes, Area Operations Manager, Upper Rio Grande Field Office, USIBWC, and Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- **Northeast and Pico Norte Area Letters of Map Revision** – Alan Shubert, Vice President of Operations and Technical Services, El Paso Water
- **Border Activity and Trends FY19 in El Paso Sector**—Jaime Castillo, Special Operations Supervisor and Sergio Soto, Supervisory Border Patrol Agent, U.S. Border Patrol
- **Environmental Perspectives on the Border Wall** – Kevin Bixby, Executive Director, Southwest Environmental Center
- **Sediment Removal Contracts Along the Rio Grande River** – Xochitl Aranda, Operations and Maintenance Division Chief, USIBWC
- **Public Comment**
- **Board Discussion**
- **Suggested Future Agenda Items**

***Directions:** Exit I-10 at Executive Center Boulevard and head east towards Mesa Street. Turn right onto Mesa Street and the first driveway is USIBWC Headquarters. Park and proceed to the pedestrian gate and ring the bell. The guard will grant access.

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 915- 832-4106 or e-mail lori.kuczmanski@ibwc.gov