



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release  
February 10, 2023

### **RIO GRANDE HABITAT RESTORATION AND SEDIMENT CONCERNS ON AGENDA FOR FEBRUARY 23 PUBLIC MEETING**

The United States Section of the [International Boundary and Water Commission](#) (USIBWC) has scheduled a public meeting of the [Rio Grande Citizens Forum](#) (RGCF) on **Thursday, February 23, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. MST via webinar** to discuss habitat restoration efforts underway along the Rio Grande, regional sediment concerns, and the effectiveness of *No Trespassing* signage along the levees. The purpose of the Rio Grande Citizens Forum is to promote the exchange of information between the USIBWC and the community about Commission activities and related projects in the greater El Paso, TX – Las Cruces, NM region.

Elizabeth Verdecchia, USIBWC Natural Resource Specialist, will give an update on USIBWC's activities to implement riparian and aquatic habitat restoration projects along the Rio Grande in southern New Mexico and west Texas over the last several years. USIBWC has implemented over 508 acres of riparian restoration on 22 sites and is planning for several aquatic habitat sites. Removal of invasive species along the areas of the floodplain will also be discussed.

Xochitl Aranda, USIBWC Chief of the Operations and Maintenance Division, will present on the effectiveness of *No Trespassing* signage on levees. In January 2021, signs were installed at levee access ramps and habitat restoration sites along the Rio Grande to notify the public of designated use areas, such as for walking and cycling. Motorized vehicles, open fires, and camping are never allowed. With the support of the Doña Ana County Sheriff's Office, the USIBWC has seen a reduction in prohibited activities.

Ms. Aranda will also discuss the agency's response to flooding concerns in Hudspeth County, Texas. For many years, landowners along the Rio Grande in Hudspeth County experienced year-round flooding on their lands adjacent to the river. This is due to the sediment carried by the river and building up at Little Box Canyon, creating a plug in the river, causing the flow to back up. In 2020, the USIBWC hired a contractor to remove the sediment plug and, since then, USIBWC personnel have maintained the river's flow by preventing sediment from flowing downstream into Little Box Canyon so adjacent properties don't experience flooding.

In other business, John Sproul, Program Coordinator and Manager of [Rio Bosque Wetlands Park](#) for the University of Texas at El Paso Center for Environmental Resource Management, will present on how the Rio Bosque Wetlands Park is integrated into water management in the Rio Grande valley. The Rio Bosque Wetlands Park is a 372-acre area next to the Rio Grande that is the site of a long-term ecological restoration project. Wetland and

riparian habitats are the centerpiece of this restoration effort, and both depend on reliable availability of water. The park receives water from three sources: groundwater, Rio Grande Project irrigation water, and treated water from the Roberto Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant, which is the main source. The presentation will cover delivery of water to the park, its distribution within the park, and where it goes when it leaves the park.

USIBWC Commissioner Maria-Elena Giner will also attend to share information with the Citizens Forum about Commission initiatives.

To join our Teams Meeting, go to: <https://bit.ly/RGCitForum> and click on the “Join” button. If you do not have Teams installed on the device you will use to attend the meeting, it will work through any internet browser. If possible, it may be helpful for you to test connectivity on your own prior to the meeting by clicking on the “Join” link and ensuring your camera and microphone are functioning. Or join by phone: (872) 240-1286 | Conference ID: 362229793#

For those on mobile devices, the presentations will be available before the start of the meeting. Go to <https://bit.ly/RGCitForum>. Look for the links for the 2/23/2023 meeting. If you would like to speak during public comment, please sign up ahead of time by contacting Sumner Corbett at [sumnercorbett@rational360.com](mailto:sumnercorbett@rational360.com) or (434) 466-2266 by noon on February 23.

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**RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM**  
**Thursday, February 23, 2023**  
**6:30 – 8:30 p.m. MST**  
**Teams Webinar**

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**Agenda**

- **Welcome and Introductions** — Citizens Forum Co-Chair
- **Remarks from U.S. Commissioner Maria-Elena Giner**
- **USIBWC Habitat Restoration Activities Update** — Elizabeth Verdecchia, Environmental Protection Specialist, USIBWC
- **Effectiveness of *No Trespassing* Signs along Levees** — Xochitl Aranda, Chief, Operations and Maintenance Division. USIBWC
- **Channel Maintenance and Hudspeth County Flooding Due to Sediment Accumulation** — Xochitl Aranda, Chief, Operations and Maintenance Division, USIBWC
- **Wastewater Diversion from Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant to Rio Bosque Wetlands Park** — John Sproul, Rio Bosque Wetlands Park Program Coordinator and Manager at the University of Texas at El Paso Center for Environmental Resource Management
- **Public Comment**
- **Board Discussion**
- **Suggested Future Agenda Items**

*If you have a disability that you wish to self-identify confidentially that requires accommodation, please advise us ahead of time. For information, call 434-466-2266 or email [sumnercorbett@rational360.com](mailto:sumnercorbett@rational360.com)*