

## **LOWER RIO GRANDE CITIZENS FORUM**

**July 28, 2021**

**Webinar Meeting**

**\*Tentative Meeting Notes\***

### **Board Members in Attendance:**

Eric Davila, Hidalgo County Regional Mobility Authority

Laura De La Garza, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Joel Espinoza, Community Volunteer

Melisa Gonzales, City of Alamo

John Goolsby, US Dept. of Agriculture

Carlos Lastra, Cameron County Engineering

Armando Ocana, Mayor, City of Mission TX

Kim Poyer, Resort Manager, Llano Grande Resort

Rogelio Rodriguez, Landowner near the Rio Grande in Cameron County

Diane Roman-Goldsberry, South Texas Border Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists

Carlos A. Sanchez, City of Harlingen

Raul E. Sesin, Hidalgo County Drainage District No. 1

### **USIBWC Staff in Attendance:**

Daniel Avila, Acting Commissioner

Xochitl Aranda, Acting Principal Engineer of Operations

Gilbert Anaya, Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist Engineering

Kelly Blough, Environmental Protection Specialist Engineering

Lindsey G. Aguayo, Supervisory Administrative Specialist

Ramon Macias, Supervisory Civil Engineer

Sally Spener, Foreign Affairs Officer

Zenon Mora, Supervisory IT Specialist

Juan Uribe, FO Area Operations Manager

Joel Saldivar, Civil Engineer Technician

Jose Rodriguez, Secretary

Daniel Ramirez, IT Specialist

Lori Kuczanski, Public Affairs Officer

### **Members of the Public in Attendance:**

There were approximately 48 members of the public in attendance.

### **Welcoming Remarks:**

At 3:00 pm, Melissa Gonzalez convened the Citizens Forum meeting and called the meeting to order.

### **Introduction of Acting Commissioner Avila**

Mr. Avila is the acting Commissioner as of February 8. He began with an update of the Lower Rio Grande Valley projects. The first project is desilting and it's going well. It's going upstream from King Ranch to Weslaco. They are also inspecting more than 550 irrigation drainage structures. The Field Office is doing work around the floodgates to make sure they are

functioning properly. They have performed minor repairs in preparation of hurricane season. The Rio Grande Field office maintains 90 miles of river levee and 180 miles of interior levees and that's a huge job for only 38 employees. That's definitely hard work so I just wanted to thank the Field Office.

Tonight's meeting will include a presentation by Eric Davila, P.E, Chief Development Engineer, Hidalgo County Regional Mobility Authority; Leslie Grijalva, Environmental Protection Specialist, Texas Clean Rivers Program for the Rio Grande Basin, USIBWC; Joel Saldivar, Civil Engineering Technician, USIBWC; and Ramon Macias III, P.E., Principal Engineer of Engineering, USIBWC.

**Presentation #1 Report on Hidalgo County Regional Mobility Authority Capital Projects**

**Presenter's name:** Eric Davila

**Phone number:** 956-402-4762

**Email address:** [contact@hcrma.net](mailto:contact@hcrma.net)

**Presentation #2 Water Quality in the Lower Rio Grande: Annual Water Quality Update and Basin Advisory Meeting:**

**Presenter's name:** Leslie Grijalva

**Phone number:** 915-832-4770

**Email address:** [Leslie.Grijalva@ibwc.gov](mailto:Leslie.Grijalva@ibwc.gov)

**Presentation #3 Update on the Arroyo Colorado Vegetation Management Project to Improve Flood Protection:**

**Presenter's name:** Joel Saldivar

**Phone number:** 956-825-0003

**Email address:** [joel.saldivar@ibwc.gov](mailto:joel.saldivar@ibwc.gov)

**Questions/Answers:**

Q: Melissa – What are the plans for land erosion or loss of land along the Arroyo after removal off the banks?

A: Joel – According to the 2016 plan, no vegetation will be removed on the steep slope of Arroyo. Only in the 15 and 100 ft floodplain.

Q: Melissa – What about the ocelots and other wildlife in the stretch of land?

A: Joel – That's an excellent question. That is the purpose to leave the 15 ft wildlife corridor so they can transverse back and forth, in a couple of months that area that was cleared would be thick again.

Q: Melissa – What is the maintenance plan in the future, so the area does not impede flow?

A: Joel – Since then IBWC has purchased a lightweight mulcher, that is going to be introduced in the area. We will continue with the 2016 Vegetation Management plan.

Q: Melissa – What's a tentative completion date what are we looking at?

A: Joel – The tentative completion date is the spring/summer of 2022.

Q: Chat – Besides ocelots, there is several other protected species that live in the area. Did you get clearance from Texas Dept of Wildlife?

A: Chat – Yes, we did coordinate with them and received clearance from Tx. Dept. of Wildlife.

**Presentation #4 Update on Levee Restoration Work in the Rio Grande Valley:**

**Presenter's name:** Ramon Macias III

**Phone number:** 915-832-4749

**Email address:** [ramon.macias@ibwc.gov](mailto:ramon.macias@ibwc.gov)

**Public Comment:**

No public comments.

**Board Discussion/Suggested Future Agenda Items:**

The next Lower Rio Grande Citizens Forum will be on Nov 24, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. It will be a virtual meeting.

Melissa – The Nov. meeting is the week of Thanksgiving. I would like to propose we move meeting to Nov 17, 2021 at 3 p.m.; Laura agrees, Lori will email update.

Melissa –An update from Commissioner Fuentes because he has secured lots of funding so would like update on his projects.

Yvonne – An update on vegetation removal and would like to know about challenges and progress.

Perhaps an update from Ramon or Joel

*Meeting adjourned.*

**\*\* Meeting notes are tentative and summarize in draft the contents and discussion of Citizen Forum meetings. While these notes are intended to provide a general overview of Citizen's Forum Meetings, they may not necessarily be accurate or complete, and may not be representative of USIBWC policy or positions.**