

Paso del Norte Watershed Council

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Chair: Susan Watts, Ecologist
 Assistant Chair: Julie Maitland,
 NMDA
 Secretary: Valerie Provencio,
 EPWU
 Treasurer: Ari Michelsen,
 TAMU/AREC

Member Organizations:
 Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife
 Rescue
 El Paso Water Utilities
 El Paso League of Women
 Voters
 Environmental Defense
 International Boundary and
 Water Commission,
 U.S. Section
 Keystone Heritage Park, Inc.
 New Mexico Department of
 Agriculture
 New Mexico State University
 New Mexico Water Resources
 Research Institute
 Rio Grande Restoration
 Southwest Environmental
 Center
 Texas Agricultural Experiment
 Station, Texas A&M
 University
 Texas Water Research
 Institute
 Universidad Autónoma de
 Ciudad Juárez
 University of Texas at El Paso
 U. S. Army - Fort Bliss
 Directorate of Environment
 U. S. Bureau of Reclamation
 U. S. Fish & Wildlife
 World Wildlife Fund
 Ysleta del Sur Pueblo

May 19, 2005

Commissioner Arturo Duran
 United States International Boundary & Water Commission
 El Paso, TX

Re: *Stakeholder Discussions of the IBWC Rio Grande Canalization Project*

Dear Commissioner Duran:

At the January 7, 2005, meeting of the Paso del Norte Watershed Council (Council) you reported to us that there has been no new dialogue between U.S. International Boundary & Water Commission (IBWC) and regional stakeholders about the Rio Grande Canalization Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) since August 2004, when the issuance of the final Record of Decision (ROD) was delayed. We understand that Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico asked the IBWC to delay issuance of the ROD for a period of one year while discussions took place among the stakeholders (principally Elephant Butte Irrigation District, World Wildlife Fund, and Environmental Defense). We also understand that Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico asked the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to work with the stakeholders to assess river restoration opportunities.

Since the official EIS comment periods have passed, has a mechanism been identified for accommodating new discussions and input? For a resolution to this situation it is crucial that a line of communication be established. To this end, the Council offers its assistance in helping to coordinate this process. Such support fits squarely within the Council's purpose and objectives to encourage and support communication, collaboration, and innovative thinking among the stakeholders of our sub-basin of the Rio Grande.

The Council is an alliance of watershed stakeholders including representatives for private citizens, non-governmental organizations, federal and state agencies, water utilities, municipal governments, and academic institutions. We are dedicated to providing an integrated vision for watershed management in our region.

Please let us know how we can assist in moving this process forward. The Council Co-Chairs can be reached directly via e-mail at susan.watts@ttuhsc.edu and jmaitland@nmda.nmsu.edu or through Nancy Hanks, Council Program Coordinator, at 915-859-9111, x229.

Sincerely,

 Sue Watts, Chair

 Julie Maitland, Co-Chair

cc: Gov. Bill Richardson
 Sen. Jeff Bingaman
 Elephant Butte Irrigation District
 Environmental Defense
 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 U.S. Fish & Wildlife
 World Wildlife Fund

For information contact the
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