

International Boundary and Water Commission

United States and Mexico

MINUTE NO. 289

November 13, 1992
El Paso, Texas

OBSERVATION OF THE QUALITY OF THE WATERS

ALONG THE United States and Mexico BORDER

The International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) met the Offices of the United States Section at 8:00 p.m. in El Paso, Texas on November 13, 1992 to consider the recommendations of United States Section Principal Engineer Conrad G. Keyes, Jr. and Mexican Section Principal Engineer Luis Antonio Rascon Mendoza regarding a proposed program of sampling and analyses of the waters of the Rio Grande in the international reach from El Paso, Texas - Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua to the Gulf of Mexico with the objective of determining the presence of toxic substances, in the context of agreements and understandings between the United States and Mexico for the observation of the quality of the waters along the United States/Mexico border. The Commissioners observed that a United States - Mexico program for observation of the quality of the waters of the Rio Grande and the Colorado River, which form the international boundary, and of those streams that cross the international boundary are contemplated in the Joint Memorandum of IBWC Engineers entitled "Recommendation of an Initial International Program for Observation of the Quality of the International Waters of the United States and Mexico," dated July 5, 1977, approved by the IBWC in the U.S. Commissioner's letter of July 9, 1977 and the Mexican commissioner's letter of July 14, 1977. Further, the commissioners observed the stipulations in Minute No. 261 entitled "Recommendations for the Solution to the Border Sanitation Problems," dated September 24, 1979 regarding identification and solution of border sanitation problems in the waters that flow in the boundary rivers or cross the border, including coastal waters. The Commissioners also noted the specific monitoring program in Minute No. 264 "Recommendations for Solution of the New River Border Sanitation Problem at Calexico, California - Mexicali, Baja California Norte," dated August 26, 1980. Finally, the Commissioners alluded to the requirement in Minute No. 279 entitled "Joint Measures to Improve the Quality of the Waters of the Rio Grande at Laredo, Texas/Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas," dated August 28, 1989 to continue an intensive water quality monitoring program for the Rio Grande. The Commissioners made note of the increased cooperation between the United States and Mexico on water quality matters reflected in the Integrated Border Environment Plan (IBEP) approved by United States President George W. Bush and Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari on February 25, 1992. Specifically, in the IBEP, is the understanding that in cooperation with the responsible agencies of both countries, the IBWC will develop an appropriate monitoring program and data base for the observation of the quality of the surface and ground waters along the United States/Mexico border. In the United States, those agencies are the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the National Park Service (NPS), the Texas Water Commission (TWC), the Texas Department of Health, (TDH) and the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife (TDPW). In Mexico, those agencies are the Secretariat of Social Development (SEDESOL), the National Water Commission (CNA), and the state and municipal agencies responsible for water management in the states bordering the United States. The Commissioners then reviewed the "Joint Report of the Principal Engineers Relative to Determination of Presence of Toxic Substances in the Waters of the Rio Grande in its International Boundary Reach," signed on November 11, 1992 by Principal Engineers Conrad G. Keyes, Jr. and Luis Antonio Rascon Mendoza, of the United States and Mexican Sections, respectively, and concluded that the joint sampling sites, parameters, sampling processing, laboratory analyses, control of results in a computerized international data bank, and a schedule for undertaking the program satisfy the intensive water quality observation needs for the waters of the Rio Grande stipulated partly in Minute No. 279 and partly in the water quality monitoring program and database understandings in the IBES. Based on the foregoing, the Commissioners submit the following recommendations for the approval of the two Governments.:

1. The "Joint Report of the Principal Engineers Relative to Determination of Presence of Toxic Substances in the Water. of the Rio Grande in its International Boundary Reach," signed on November 11, 1992 by Principal Engineers Conrad G. Keys, Jr. and Luis Antonio Rascon Mendoza, of the United States and Mexican Sections, respectively, which forms a part of this Minute is approved.
2. The IBWC, within six months from the date of the results of the program in referenced joint report, in order to satisfy the understanding in the Integrated Border Environment Plan, referenced in this minute, will recommend to the two Governments, in a Minute, improvements to the Joint Memorandum the IBWC Engineers entitled Recommendation of an Initial International Program for Observation of the Quality of the

International Waters of the United states and Mexico,' dated July 5, 1977, approved by the IBWC in the U.S. commissioners letter of July 9, 1977 and the Mexican Commissioner's letter of July 14, 1977, giving special attention to the Rio Grande and Colorado River.