Political and Institutional Aspects of Rio Grande/ Río Bravo Basin Management

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Institutional overview

- Rio Grande/ Río Bravo Basin is multi-layered/multi-scaled institutional landscape
  - Two national governments
  - 3 US States (Colorado, New Mexico, & Texas)
  - 5 Mexican States (Chihuahua, Durango, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas)
  - 6 binational twin cities directly on the river
  - Numerous other municipal governments along the various tributaries
Large scale management

- International Boundary and Water Commission/La Comisión Internacional de Limites y Agua (IBWC/CILA) are primary agencies for international management
- Río Grande Compact and Rio Grande Compact Commission deal with domestic US management
- Comisión Nacional del Agua leads management of all waters in Mexico
IBWC role and tools

- **1944 Water Treaty for the Utilization of Waters of the Colorado & Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande** is overarching tool
  - Established IBWC/CILA as prime agency
  - Divides the water below Ft. Quitman, Texas between the US and Mexico
  - Authorized the construction and operation of dams on the main stem of the river
  - Charged the IBWC/CILA with management of border sanitation issues
IBWC role and tools

- **1906 Convention on Equitable Distribution of Waters of the Rio Grande**
  - Developed to reduce conflict on water management in the Paso del Norte region
  - Established 60,000 acre feet allocation to Mexico
  - Established point of diversion (Acequia Madre) and use of water (irrigation)
  - Established a schedule for Mexican deliveries
Rio Grande Compact

- Goal = manage waters above Ft. Quitman
- Established Rio Grande Compact Commission
  - Defined stream monitoring network
  - Established interstate delivery requirements
  - Defined system for managing credits/debits
  - Set storage limits at Elephant Butte Dam
Irrigation Districts

- Majority of river is used for irrigation, managed by irrigation districts (ID)
  - New Mexico – Elephant Butte ID, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy Districts, Carlsbad ID
  - Texas – Numerous lower (n=29) and upper Rio Grande IDs exist to manage irrigation
  - Mexico – Distrito Riegos manage irrigation, in conjunction with CNA; select Distritos include Juarez, Delicias, and Lower Río Conchos, Bravo, and San Juan
Urban uses

- Rapidly urbanizing areas in all parts of the basin are looking to Rio Grande/ Río Bravo for water supply
  - Albuquerque, NM looks to San Juan-Chama Diversion Project water (Colorado River)
  - El Paso Water Utilities use of Rio Grande Project water through contracts with EP#1
  - Las Cruces area utilities looking to convert agricultural water through Special Water Users Associations
San Juan-Chama Diversion Project
(City of Albuquerque 2006)
Interesting Institutional Innovations

➢ US-Mexico Border Environmental Programs
  - Border 2012 is current management tool
  - Regional Workgroups & Task Forces exist

➢ Range of Non-governmental and quasi-governmental institutions also exist
  - New Mexico Texas Water Commission
  - Paso del Norte Watershed Council
  - Paso del Norte Water Task Force
NMTWC emerged from “water war” occurring in the 1980’s between New Mexico & Texas
Commission = result of a U.S. court action
- Court action mandated the parties form a Settlement Commission towards regional cooperation on meeting water demand
- Agriculture and urban water providers came together in an open forum that generated the Regional Sustainable Water Project
Paso del Norte Watershed Council

- Council was convened by the NMTWC in 2001 as a formal institution to guide restoration work related to Sustainable Project
- Formal charge is “to investigate, develop, and recommend options for watershed planning and management and to explore how water-related resources can best be balanced to benefit the Rio Grande ecosystem and the interests of all watershed stakeholders”
Paso del Norte Water Task Force

- Tri-regional, binational advisory group designed to explore water resource issues
  - Major funding of Hewlett Foundation to explore region building in Paso del Norte
  - Representing urban water utilities, agriculture, research universities, business sector, and non-governmental stakeholders
  - Parity in representation across West Texas, Southern New Mexico, & Northern Chihuahua
Next steps and new ideas?

- Size and nature of the basin and complexity of regional hydrology and institutional milieu argue for multi-scale and integrated approach
  - Current work on hydrology offers much insight
  - Use of GIS tools and technologies play important role
- Outcomes of this GEF workshop will offer much insight