

RGRWA

RIO GRANDE REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY

El Morillo Drain

HISTORY:

Fifty years ago, the Rio Grande was inundated with high salinity levels that threatened community drinking water as well as the local agricultural economy. The salty water was coming from land run-off in Mexico. The United States and Mexican governments devised a solution to build a drain, or canal, system to prevent the salty water from reaching the Rio Grande. This effort would eventually be known as the El Morillo Drain.

Construction on the drain began in 1967 and ended in 1969. Through the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), both the United States and Mexican governments agreed to divide the costs equally. Located in the state of

Tamaulipas, Mexico, the El Morillo Drain consists of a pumping station with four pumps, and 75 miles of canal that empty the salt water into the Gulf of Mexico south of Texas. The El Morillo drain diverts approximately 300,000 tons of salt each year, helping protect agricultural production in the Rio Grande Valley.

The United States' original 50 percent was half federally funded by the IBWC, with the other half funded by the Lower Rio Grande Water Committee (LRGWC) and Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy counties. In late 2008, the LRGWC Board of Directors relinquished all maintenance responsibilities of the El Morillo Drain to the Rio Grande Regional Water Authority (RGRWA).



PLANS FOR THE FUTURE:

The RGRWA's planned improvements include installing a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system to help monitor salinity levels of water moving through the pumping stations. However, RGRWA must first negotiate terms with the Mexican government.

Although El Morillo Drain is often overlooked by the public, it has an exceptionally positive impact on the Rio Grande Valley. It helps keep our \$3.6 billion agricultural industry safe from hazardous water, so it remains fruitful and prosperous. It also helps reduce the amount of water treatment needed by the utilities that provide drinking water to our fast-growing cities in the Rio Grande Valley.



For more information visit www.RGRWA.org or contact
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