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Report Details Progress in Colorado River Delta Restoration

Minute 323 implementation report documents substantial progress, positive outcomes in Colorado River Delta region

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

(May 7, 2020) – The initial report documenting the implementation of the environmental component of binational agreement **Minute 323** demonstrates the ongoing cooperation between the U.S. and Mexico governments in support of a more secure water future for the region. Included in the Minute 323 agreement are specific commitments to the environment to sustain and restore habitat in the Colorado River Delta.

On May 7, 2020, the International Boundary Water Commission (IBWC) released the "**Minute 323 Environmental Work Group 2018 Implementation Report for the Colorado River Limitrophe and Delta**", published on April 27, 2020. It details the substantial progress achieved in the first year of Minute 323 implementation, 2018.

“Our ‘Raise the River’ coalition continues to work closely with the governments of Mexico and the United States to achieve gains for water security in the region, while also demonstrating the Colorado River Delta’s tremendous resilience,”

-- Jennifer Pitt, National Audubon Society’, Colorado River Project Director; Co-Chair, Raise the River Steering Committee

Minute 323 assigns a total of \$9 million dollars to restoration projects in the Colorado River Delta region in Mexico. The governments of the United States and Mexico, and a binational coalition of NGOs each contribute one third of the total funding for these projects over the term of the Minute.

The **Environmental Work Group (EWG)**, which is comprised of representatives from federal and state agencies from the United States and Mexico, together with non-governmental organizations and universities, meets on an average of four times per year to study the outcomes and impacts on the environment from activities related to Minute 319 and Minute 323. The diverse composition of the group proves the power of collaboration across borders for achieving environmental gains.

Highlights

Included within the Report are the following facts demonstrating the substantial progress made:

- Delivery of nearly 7,000 acre-feet (8.5 mcm) of water toward the commitments contained in Minute 323.
- More than 60,000 native trees were cultivated in nurseries and planted at restoration sites in Mexico.
- Restoration and maintenance of a cumulative total of 1,102 acres (446 hectares) of natural river habitat in the Colorado River Delta (including habitat restored under the preceding binational agreement, Minute 319). Restored sites are comprised of cottonwood and willow groves, mesquite forests, marshlands, and open water.
- The dredging of a channel more than a mile long (1.8km) in the estuary to enhance connectivity between the river and the sea, enabling the mixing of fresh and tidal waters.
- Investment of close to \$800,000 in monitoring and science to better understand, and improve, the ecosystem and social response to restoration activities.

The activities detailed above represent an investment of more than \$3 million during 2018.

“Native vegetation is sustaining a great diversity of life in these sites thanks to a combination of limited water deliveries and on-the-ground work to restore natural habitat.”

Dr. Francisco Zamora, Senior Director, Water and Ecosystem Restoration, Sonoran Institute México

The Minute mandates the delivery of 210,000 acre-feet (259 mcm) of water from the United States, Mexico, and a binational coalition of NGOs, each responsible for 1/3 of the total volume over the term of the Minute.

“Minute 323 represents a model for managing shared watersheds in response to declining water supplies or long-term drought. We are proud to be working on such an important initiative not only for our region, but as a standard for water management globally.”

Dra. Yamilett Carrillo, Director, Restauramos el Colorado

During the term of this Minute, the two governments will cooperate with the binational coalition of NGOs to identify additional funding, water supply sources, and to advance water conservation projects to meet the targets for environmental water and restoration recommended by the binational EWG.

“Together with the restoration of nature, we are also observing a renewal of the community relationships and engagement that promote long-term stewardship of the river.”

Gabriela Caloca, Coordinator, Water and Wetlands Program, Pronatura Noroeste

In addition to documenting the implementation of commitments made under Minute 323, the report also informs future bi-national cooperation efforts on behalf of the river. Minute 323, as well as its predecessor Minute 319, are establishing a standard for global water-sharing agreements.

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Official Report from the IBWC – Minute 323 Environmental Work Group 2018 Implementation Report; April 27, 2020: https://www.ibwc.gov/Files/2018_EWG_Implementation_Report_FINAL.pdf

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About Raise the River

Raise the River is a unique partnership of six U.S. and Mexican non-governmental organizations working to revive the Colorado River Delta through activities that support environmental restoration for the benefit of the people and the enhancement of wildlife in the Delta. Members include the [National Audubon Society](#), [Pronatura Noroeste](#), Restaremos el Colorado, A.C., [Sonoran Institute](#), [The Nature Conservancy](#), and the [Redford Center](#). The coalition has worked with policymakers, water agencies and governmental representatives from the U.S. and Mexico since 2012 to cooperatively create historic change for the Colorado River Delta.

To learn more about Raise the River, visit www.raisetheriver.org.

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