

April 30, 2002

Jody Garner, Subcommittee Clerk
Subcommittee on Water and Power of the
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Resources
C/o Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz
3505 Boca Chica Blvd, Suite 200
Brownsville, TX 78520

Dear Ms Gardner:

In compliance with Rule 4(b) of the Committee on Resources, and clause g(4) of Rule XI of the House of Representatives, and Chairman Calvert's letter of April 23, 2002, attached please find my written statement of proposed testimony for the hearing on Friday, May 3, 2002.

Sincerely,

Frank E. Feild
President & CEO

Encl

DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENT
Required by House Rule XI, clause 2(g)
and Rules of the Committee on Resources

A. All Witnesses

1. Name: **Frank E. Feild**
2. Business Address: **1600 East Elizabeth Street
Brownsville, TX 78520**
3. Business Phone Number: **(956) 542-4341**
4. Organization Represented: **Brownsville Chamber of Commerce**
5. Training or educational certificates, diplomas or degree or other educational experiences which add to

qualifications to testify on or knowledge of the subject matter of the hearing:

BA – History – Texas A&I University, Kingsville – 1968
EdM – Human Resource Development Education – Boston University – 1989
U.S. Army Command & General Staff College – 1983
U.S. Army War College – 1989
U.S. Chamber of Commerce Institute for Organizational Management - 2001

6. Professional licenses, certifications, or affiliations held which are relevant to qualifications to testify on or knowledge of the subject matter of the hearing:

N/A

7. Any employment, occupation, ownership in a firm or business, or work-related experiences which relate to qualifications to testify on or knowledge of the subject matter of the hearing:

U.S. Army Logistical Task Force – Restoration of Kuwait City - 1991

8. Any offices, elected positions, or representational capacity held in the organizations on whose behalf testifying:

President & CEO, Brownsville Chamber of Commerce – 1999 to present

Vice President, Cross Border Institute for Regional Development - Texas Regional Advisory Council (CBIRD-TRAC) – 2001 to present

B. Nongovernmental Witnesses

1. Any federal grants or contracts received since October 1, 1999:

N/A

2. Any federal grants or contracts received by the organizations represented at this hearing:

N/A

3. Any other information which might aid the members of the Committee to better understand the context of the testimony:

Witness was raised in Brownsville, TX and helped operate consumer-owned Central Avenue Water Line Company. Participated in Hurricane Beulah relief in Brownsville and Rio Grande City in 1967. Experiences in U.S. Army included provision of water to deployed military and indigenous populations in many countries; including relief and restoration of Kuwait City in 1991 following the liberation. Chamber involvement in Rio Grande Valley water issues since 1999 has included meeting with Mexican water officials; participating in water issues conferences; testifying at water hearings; providing background

materials to State Department officials on border water concerns; increasing public awareness through media interviews and publications; and supporting the Brownsville Public Utilities Board water strategies and projects.

Testimony of Frank E. Feild, President & CEO of the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce, before the Subcommittee on Water and Power of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Resources in Brownsville, Texas on May 3, 2002.

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Welcome to the end of the river.

Thank you for taking time from your families and busy schedules to visit us.

Water issues in our area are extremely complicated. There are a lot of agencies and players involved. Many claim to be in charge, while few want to accept responsibility. Our water source is an international boundary, and anything we do requires agreement with Mexico...who has the same problem with their own agencies, players, and responsibility.

Brownsville's National Weather Bureau Chief says we are in the 3rd or 4th year of a 7 to 9 year drought. Our water reserves are dangerously low. In Brownsville, we pray for hurricanes...since their rains will fill our reservoirs.

Mexican farmers in the Rio Conchos Basin are using water that belongs to Rio Grande Valley farmers; and then using their increasing wealth and political muscle to keep Mexico from releasing our water in compliance with the 1944 treaty. What water we do have coming down the river is blocked by aquatic plants; requiring the watermaster to use our farmers' water just to push the municipal water downstream. This aggravates an already desperate situation. When the water reaches municipalities, particularly on the Mexican side of the river, they don't have reservoirs for storing the excess; so we watch as millions of gallons rush past us toward the ocean every day. Finally, the mouth of the Rio Grande river has been plugged by a sandbar for most of the last 15 months; obscuring the international boundary and causing unimaginable environmental consequences.

I wish I could offer you a package of silver bullets to fix these problems. What I can offer is the assurance that we are not going to just whine about our lot in life, but do all we can to insure we have a reliable, cost efficient, quality water supply for municipal, industrial and agricultural use. If we fail, not only will our crops and landscape dry up and blow away, but so will our economy.

But, at the end of the river, we are blessed with creative leadership in this time of crisis. Brownsville's Public Utility Board has spent years developing strategies to efficiently use water and move away from reliance on the river. I have provided Fact Sheets on four of their key programs. The Brownsville Weir and Reservoir Project is an in-river reservoir to catch and hold excess water. Our brackish groundwater desalination plant will provide nearly half of the City's daily water needs when it becomes operational. The resaca restoration project will give us additional water storage capacity and protection from flooding during future hurricanes. The water reclamation project will use treated effluent for landscaping and agriculture. Congressman Solomon Ortiz is intimately familiar with each of these critical projects and will be asking for your help to move them along. Please support our congressman and you will be helping this community.

We also need to modernize our agricultural water delivery systems, which currently use 85 percent of the water taken from the river. Even modest savings here could equal more water than municipalities use. We support the 2990 legislation.

Experts tell us the solution of choice for the aquatic plant blockages is chemicals. However, the Mexicans are afraid their water processing plants can't filter out the chemicals. We may have to assist them with technical and financial support to upgrade their capabilities, or even begin selling them treated water. Another alternative might be a major Corps of Engineers dredging operation to remove aquatic plants from the river.

Our problems are mild compared to what the 600,000 (+) inhabitants of our sister city, Matamoros, Mexico are facing. They are trying to run an antiquated water

processing and distribution system for a population that is growing by leaps and bounds. They are also victims of the Mexican agriculturalists in the Rio Conchos Basin who are withholding water. But, Matamoros is our neighbor and we have a moral obligation to help them if we can.

The Cross Border Institute for Regional Development, known by the acronym CBIRD, is a bi-national, public-private initiative to promote regional partnerships, introduce new technologies and encourage strategic regionaleconomic development visions. It was conceived by Dr. George Kozmetsky, architect of Silicone Valley and the Austin Telecommunications Corridor. CBIRD recognizes that unless we solve the water and telecommunications problems in our region, we will never move forward. CBIRD is currently developing a bi-national, regional conceptual program to address our water issues. This is not just another agency trying to take charge, but an honest broker and facilitator who can pull diverse players on both sides of the river together to communicate, cooperate, collaborate, coordinate and integrate.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.