1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20229

U.S. Customs and Border Protection

January 20, 2022

RE: Notice of Scoping: Environmental Assessment
Rio Grande Valley Border Barrier and Related System Elements

To Whom it May Concern:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is seeking input on potential environmental impacts and project alternatives for the proposed construction, operation, and maintenance of border barrier and related system elements in the United States Border Patrol (USBP) Rio Grande Valley Sector in Starr, Cameron, and Hidalgo counties, Texas. The information provided will inform the development of an Environmental Assessment (EA).

In fiscal years 2018 and 2019, Congress appropriated funds for the construction of border barrier in the USBP Rio Grande Valley Sector. Pub. L. 115-141, Div. F, Tit. II, § 230 (March 23, 2018); Pub. L. 116-6, Div. A, Tit. II, § 230 (February 15, 2019). The Biden-Harris Administration has requested that Congress permanently cancel this funding. While the funds remain appropriated, and consistent with the *DHS Border Wall Plan Pursuant to Presidential Proclamation 10142* (June 11, 2021), CBP is conducting environmental planning concerning the proposed construction. The development of the EA will not involve any construction of new border barrier or permanent land acquisition.

The environmental planning effort will include the preparation of an EA consistent with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The action to be analyzed is the proposed construction of up to approximately 86 miles of new border barrier and related system elements such as roads, lighting, enforcement cameras, and other detection technology within the USBP Rio Grande Valley Sector. More information about the proposed action and maps of the areas of proposed action are included in an attachment to this letter. These materials are also available online in English and Spanish: https://cbp.gov/document/environmental-assessments/border-barrier-environmental-planning-starr-county-hidalgo-county.

Los materiales en español están disponibles en línea en: https://cbp.gov/document/environmental-assessments/border-barrier-environmental-planning-starr-county-hidalgo-county.

CBP is seeking public input and comments on the proposed action and alternatives, and environmental issues to be addressed in the EA. The most helpful comments are those that include data or information that could help inform CBP's analysis of potential impacts.

Per DHS Directive 023-01, Revision Number 01 (Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act), CBP will post a copy of the Draft EA for review and comment on CBP.gov.

CBP will be accepting comments until March 7, 2022. Comments can be emailed to CBP at RGVComments@cbp.dhs.gov. Please include "Rio Grande Valley Environmental Planning" in the subject of your email. Comments received in response to this letter, including names and addresses of those who comment, will become a part of the public record.

You may also provide comments, questions, or concerns by calling 1-800-514-4781 or by mail:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
U.S. Border Patrol Headquarters
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. 6.5E Mail Stop 1039
Washington, D.C. 20229-1100

We appreciate your feedback and help with evaluating the potential impacts of this project.

Sincerely,

Paul Enriquez
Real Estate and Environmental Director
Infrastructure Portfolio
Program Management Office Directorate
U.S. Border Patrol

Enclosures:
Rio Grande Valley Border Barrier Description of the Proposed Action

U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Rio Grande Valley Border Barrier

Description of the Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would include the construction, operation, and maintenance of a new border barrier in the United States Border Patrol Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Sector in Starr, Hidalgo, and Cameron Counties, Texas. The project would consist of approximately 86 miles of new border barrier system. The enclosed maps provide an overview of the locations of the proposed new border barrier and related system elements.

The primary goal of the border barrier and associated border security elements is to gain operational control of the border. The barrier provides persistent impedance of illegal cross-border activity, which offers Border Patrol agents sufficient time to respond to and resolve threats.

The design of the border barrier could include 30-foot high, six-inch square steel bollards spaced approximately four inches apart and fitted with a five-foot anti-climb plate. Other components of the proposed border barrier system could include the following:

- **Up to 150-foot wide enforcement zone.** On the river side of the barrier, an enforcement zone up to 150-feet wide could accommodate a Functional Class-2 (FC-2) patrol road, linear ground detection systems (LGDS), and vegetation clearing. The enforcement zone could include removal of structures and obstructions, vegetation clearing, earth retaining systems, erosion control, and drainage improvements required to construct the barrier and associated border security elements.

- **Up to 50-foot wide maintenance road.** The easement to the land side of the barrier wall would include an FC-2 maintenance road, lights with cameras, vegetation clearing, remote video surveillance systems (RVSS) towers, and utility corridor with communications fiber and electrical systems.

- **Lighting.** All luminaires would be LED, 4000K CCT (+- 300 CCT), 70+ CRI. The lighting could provide 3-foot candles (fc) average along the enforcement zone. Light trespass beyond the specified illuminated area shall be no more than 0.1fc at ground level at a distance equal to the enforcement zone width on both sides of the enforcement zone. Shielding may be installed to control spillage of light beyond the enforcement zone. All light poles shall be mounted on reinforced concrete pedestals at a minimum height of 3 feet above finished grade. The minimum diameter of the pedestal shall be 18 inches and shall be rigidly connected to the light pole foundation. The light poles shall be a minimum of 6 inches in diameter at the base of the pole and shall be coated or painted black to resist corrosion. Light would be powered by grid power connected through underground conduit.

- **RVSS towers.** RVSS towers would be 120-feet tall and spaced based on viewshed requirements set by each RGV Sector.

- **Gates.** The barrier could include automated slide gates for access to the southside of the barrier. Within RGV Sector, the barrier could include automated vertical lift gates where necessary to mitigate Rio Grande flood water impacts. The gates would be operated by U.S. Border Patrol.

- **Cameras.** Cameras could be affixed to light poles and spaced based on viewshed requirements set by U.S. Border Patrol. A Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) feed would be delivered to the nearest border patrol or shelters along the border barrier alignment.

- **Shelters.** Shelters are needed to house LGDS and CCTV equipment. Shelter dimensions are 14 x 14 ft. Height is approximately 10-ft. The shelters would be built approximately 28 feet perpendicular to the border barrier on the maintenance road. Two shelters are anticipated to be needed in RGV Sector. Placement of the shelters would be within 50 miles of a port of entry.

- **Levee.** In areas where there is existing earthen levee, the barrier would be supported by a concrete levee formed into the front face of the existing earthen levee.

- **Erosion control and drainage.** Earth retaining systems and erosion control may be needed to control grades and could include items such as concrete or block walls, erosion control mats and/or riprap. Drainage improvements are anticipated to include, but not be limited to, concrete low water crossings, reinforced concrete pipe culverts, reinforced concrete box culverts, bridges drainage gates and associated scour protection that may include concrete slope protection, grouted rip rap, and sheet piles.

- **Access Roads.** The projects would include improvements to available access roads to FC-2 access road standards.

A preliminary conceptual site layout of the proposed border barrier system is depicted in **Figure 1** below.

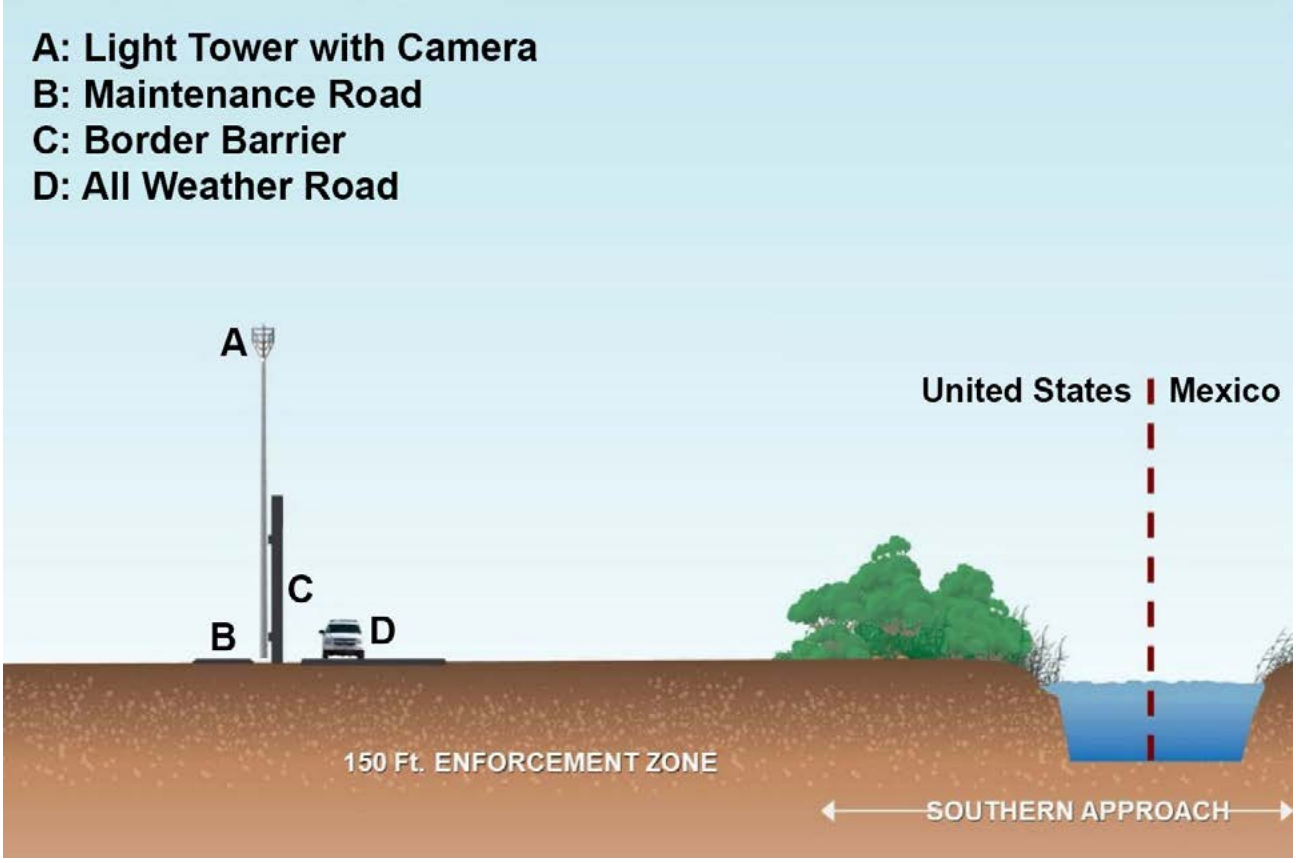
Additionally, road improvements would be constructed based on state and local requirements.

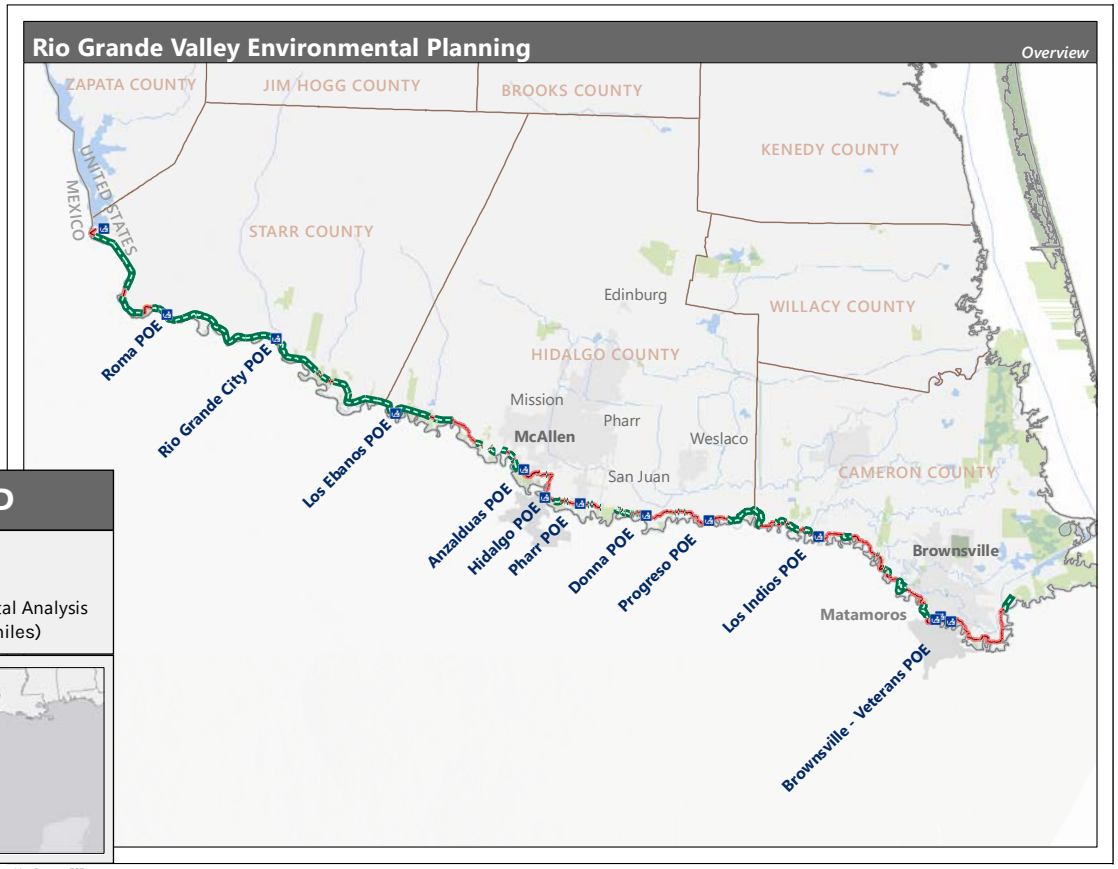
Water is anticipated to be needed for construction and dust suppression in order to maintain air quality. Water is expected to be permitted with local irrigation districts or local landowners with water rights.

Laydown yards would be used to stage materials and for temporary concrete batch plants and aggregate sorting operations. In addition, laydown yards would include temporary work trailers for the contractors that have temporary utility hookups. Locations of laydown yards would be determined by the construction contractor and are anticipated to be required every five miles.

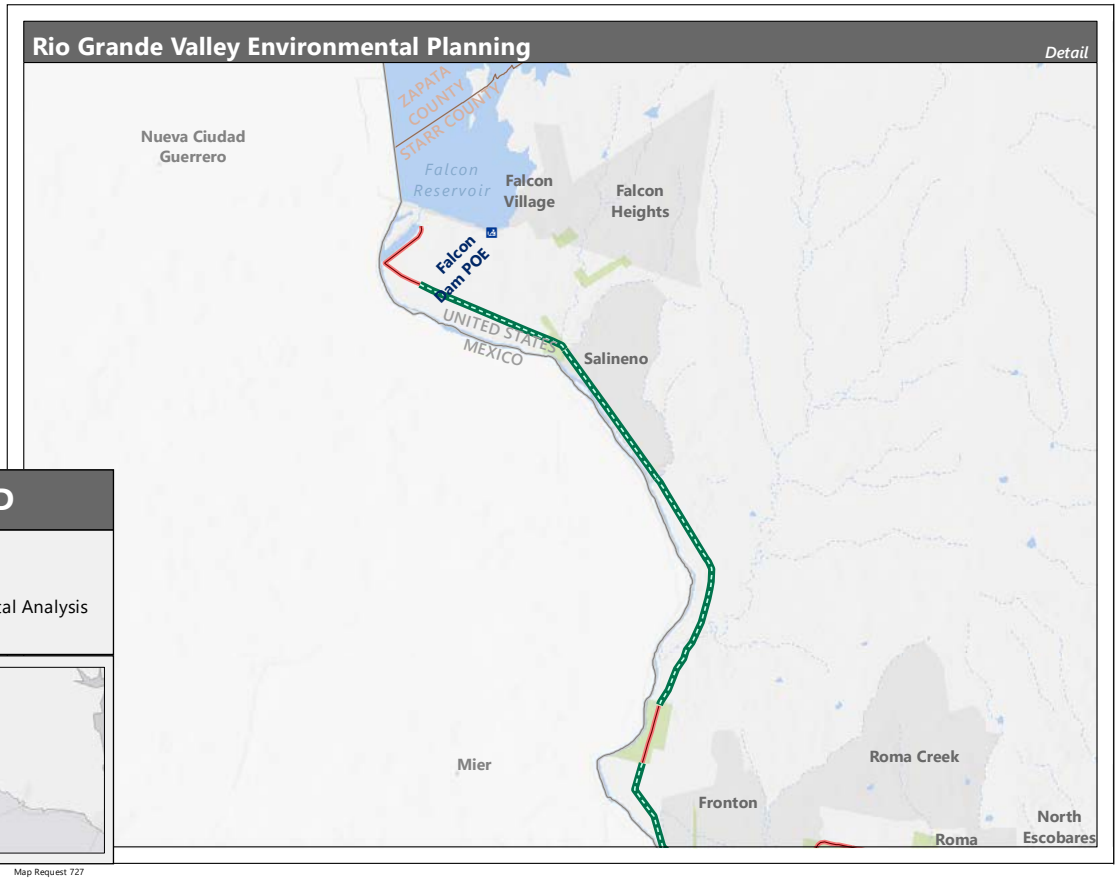
Construction of the proposed new border barrier system would be expected to take up to five years. Maintenance to the proposed border barrier system would be expected upon completion of construction. Maintenance activities could include routine upgrade, clearing of debris from the barrier, opening flood gates, repair, and maintenance of the patrol road and barrier that would not result in a change in their functional use (e.g., resurfacing a road or replacing a gate component or lock). ✪

Figure 1. Preliminary Conceptual Site Layout of Proposed Border Barrier System





Map Request 727



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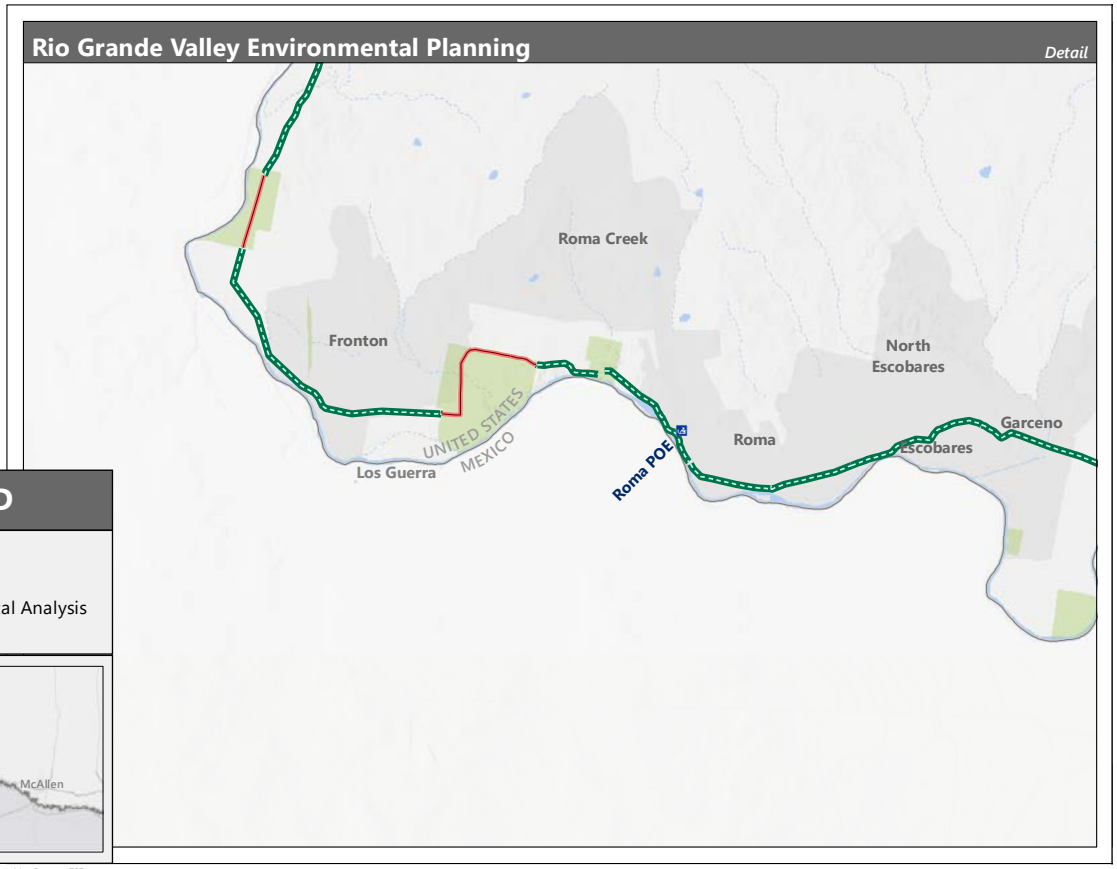
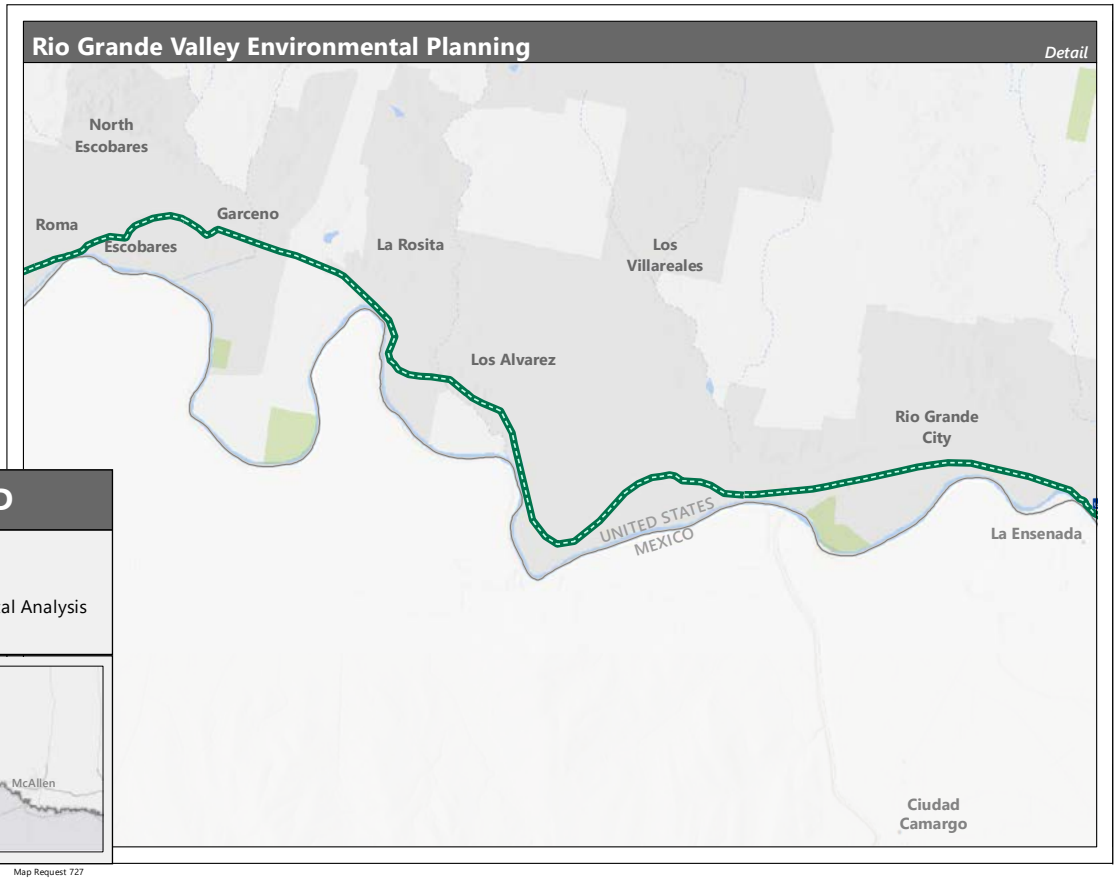

Rio Grande Valley Environmental Planning
Detail
Roma Creek
Fronton
North Escobares
Garceno
Escobares
Roma
Roma POE
UNITED STATES
MEXICO
Los Guerra
LEGEND
Existing Barrier
Areas of Environmental Analysis (10.06 miles)
MEXICO
McAllen
AREA ENLARGED
Map Request 727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North Escobares
Roma
Escobares
Garceno
La Rosita
Los Villareales
Los Alvarez
Rio Grande City
UNITED STATES
MEXICO
La Ensenada
Ciudad Camargo
LEGEND
Existing Barrier
Areas of Environmental Analysis (8.28 miles)
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McAllen
AREA ENLARGED
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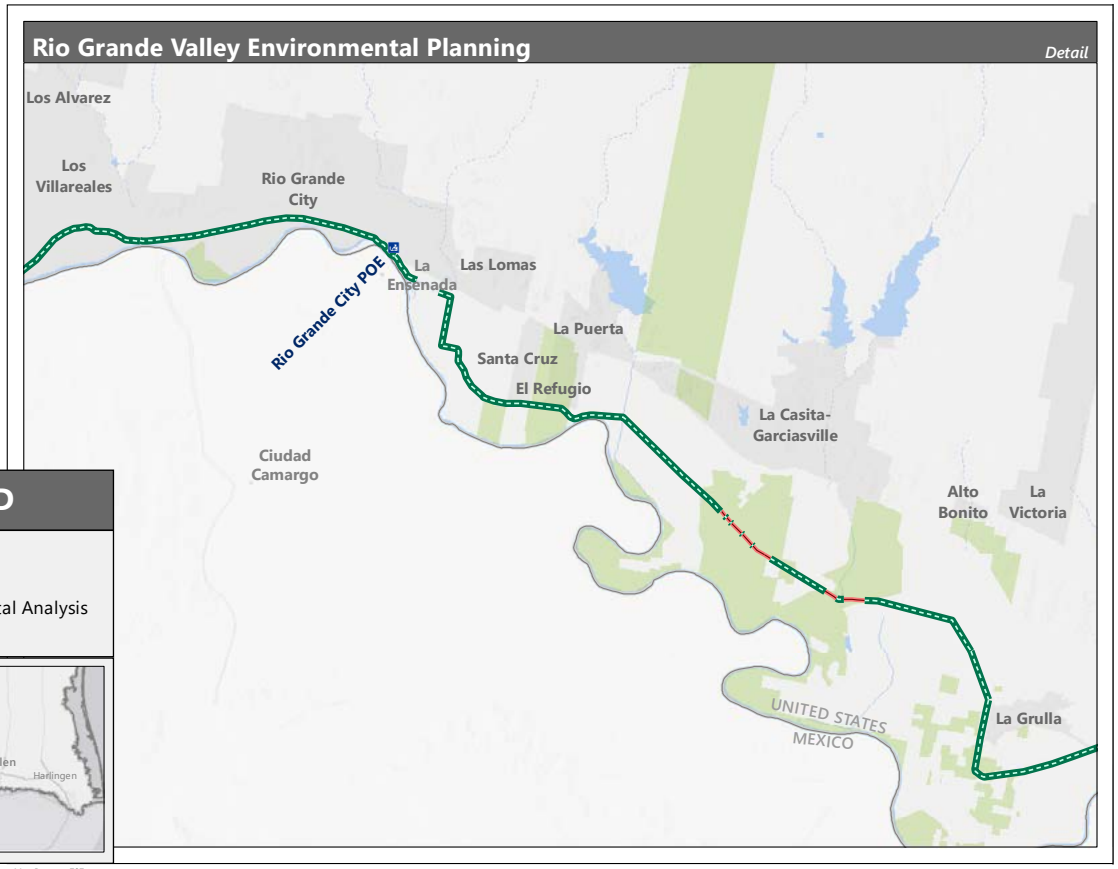
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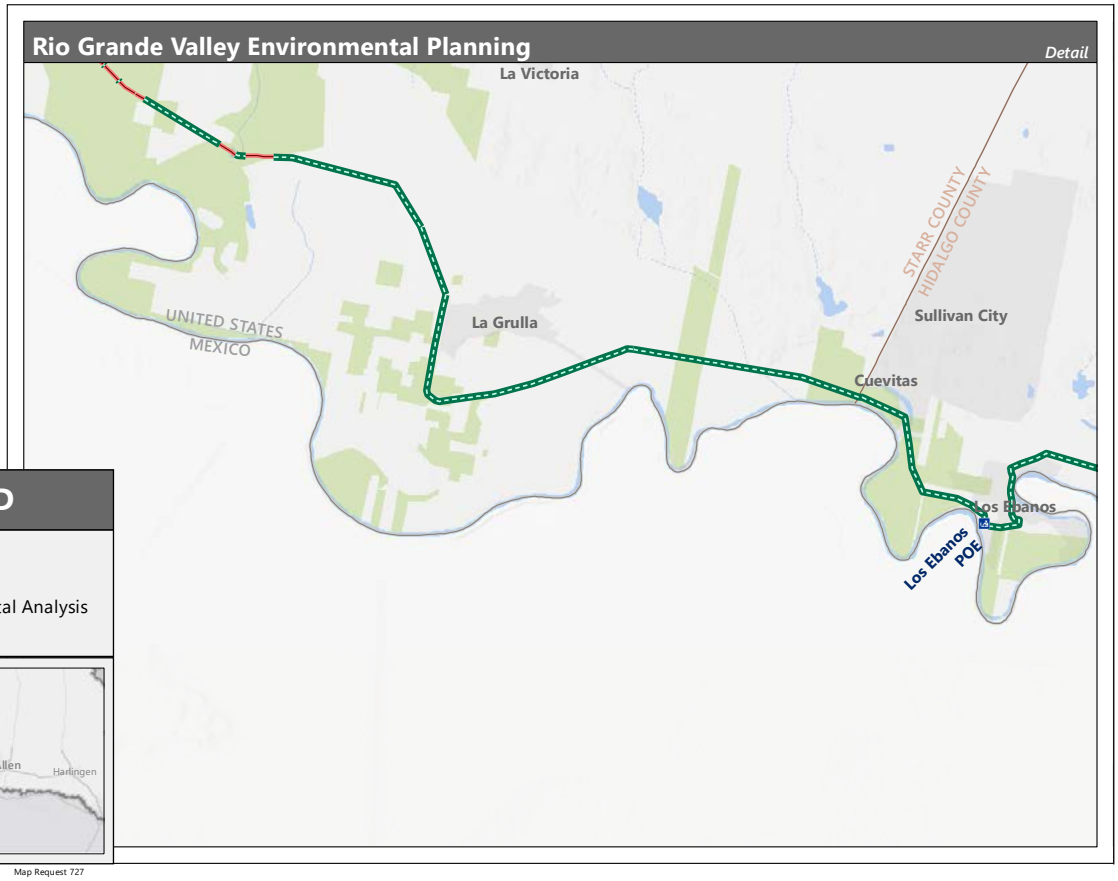
Los Alvarez
Los Villareales
Rio Grande City
La Ensenada
Las Lomas
Rio Grande City POE
La Puerta
Santa Cruz
El Refugio
La Casita-Garciasville
Ciudad Camargo
Alto Bonito
La Victoria
UNITED STATES
MEXICO
La Grulla
LEGEND
Existing Barrier
Areas of Environmental Analysis (11.92 miles)
McAllen
Harlingen
MEXICO
Monterrey
AREA ENLARGED
Map Request 727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La Victoria
STARR COUNTY
HIDALGO COUNTY
UNITED STATES
MEXICO
La Grulla
Sullivan City
Cuevitas
Los Ebanos
Los Ebanos POE
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Harlingen
MEXICO
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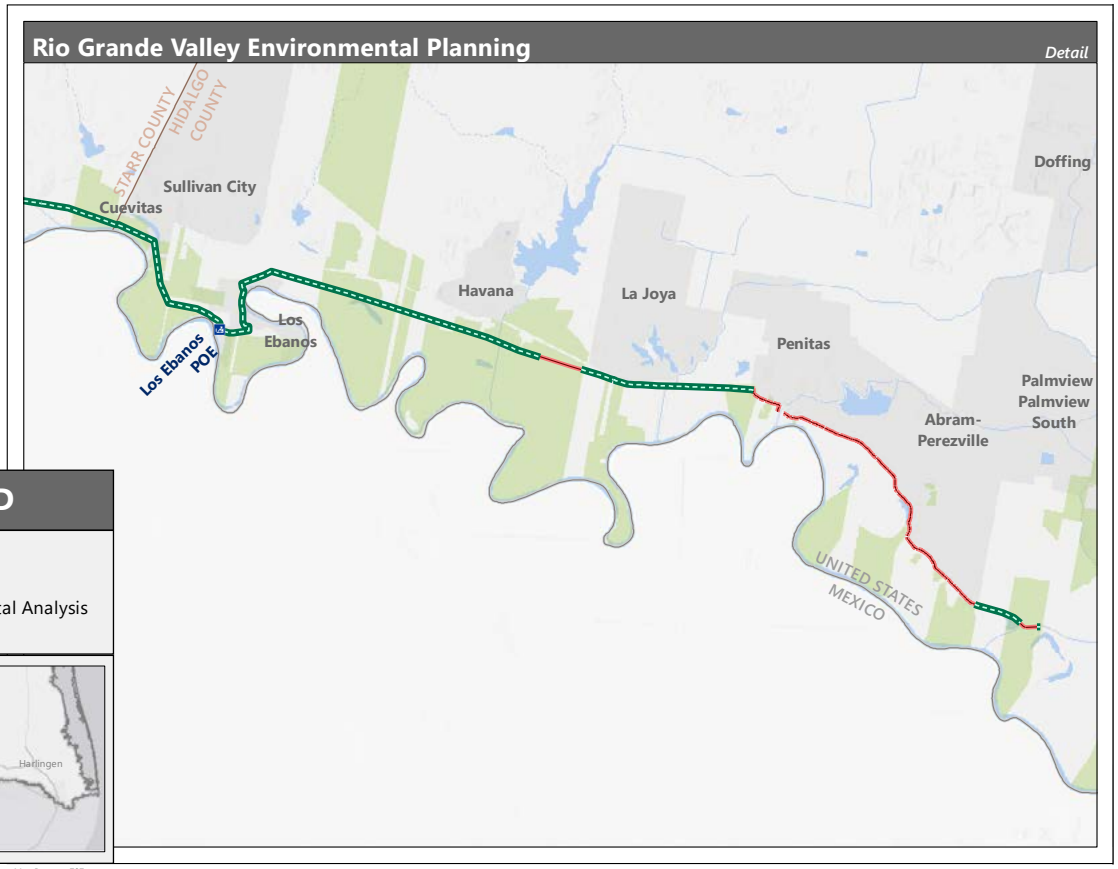

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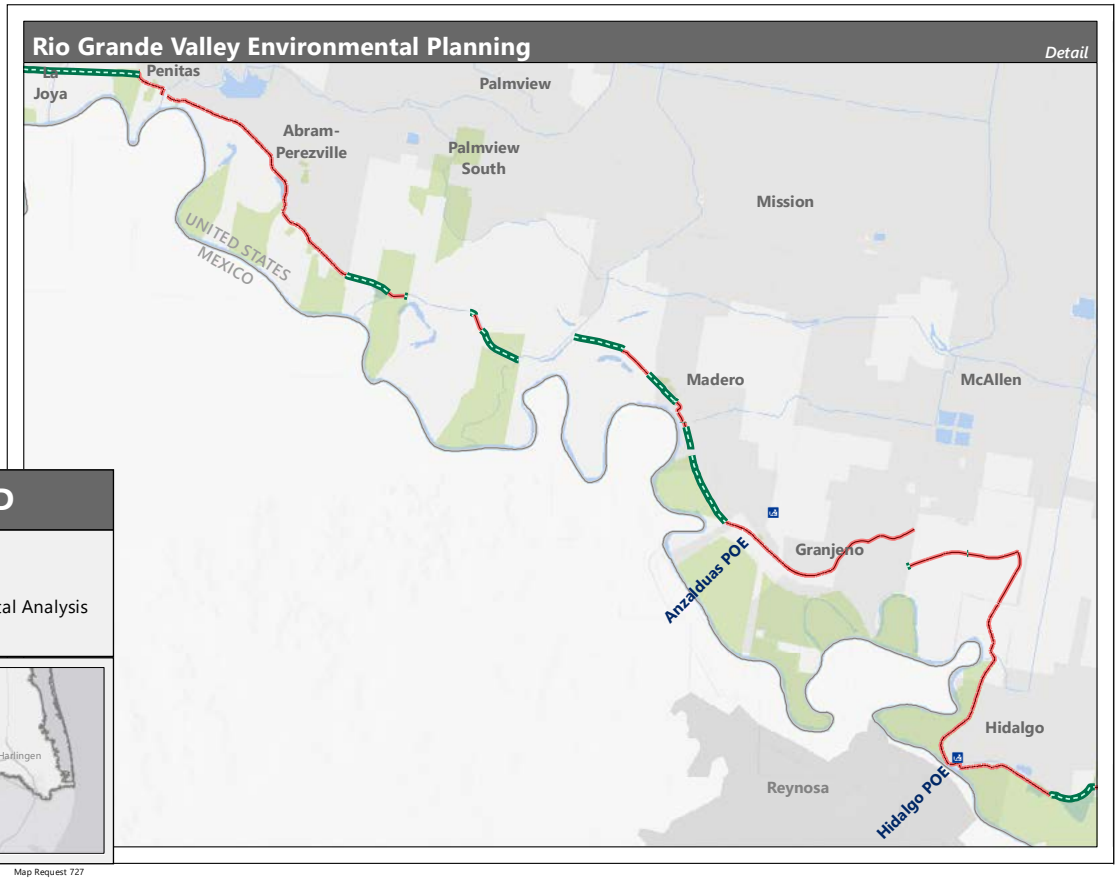

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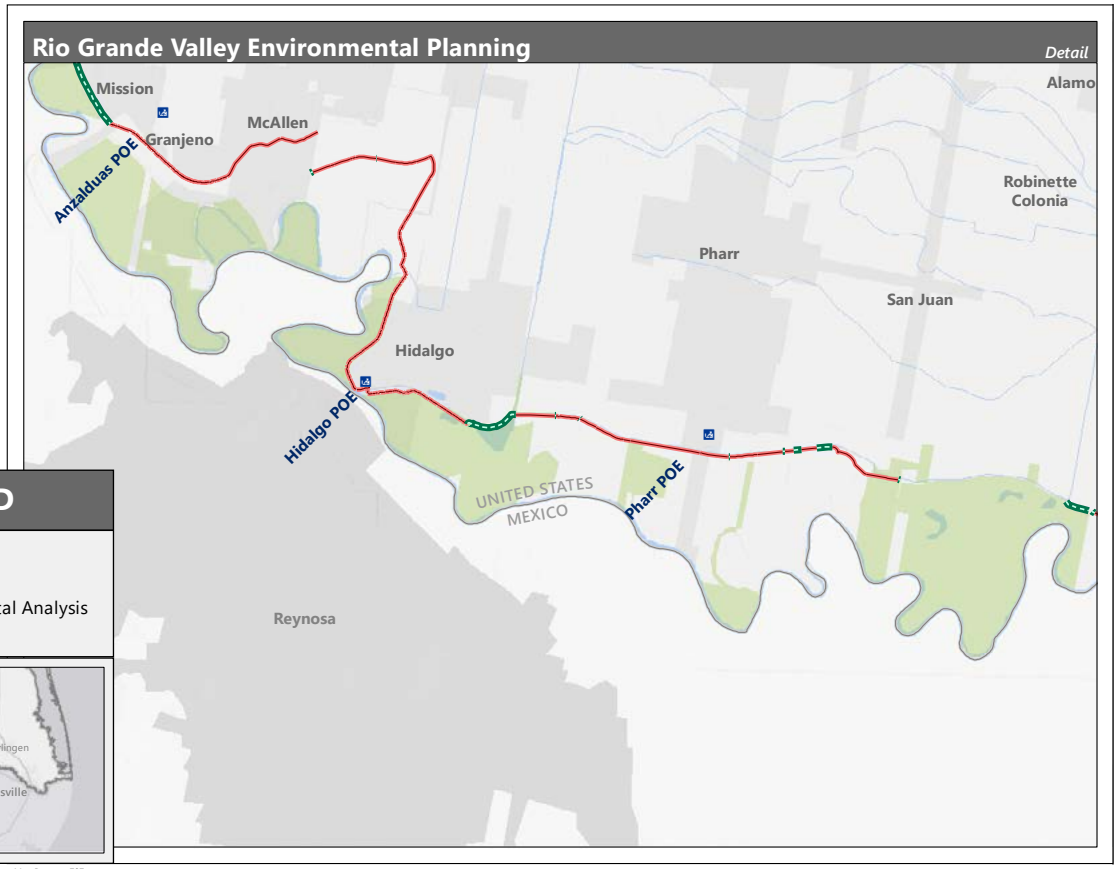
Rio Grande Valley Environmental Planning
Detail
Mission
Granjeno
McAllen
Anzalduas POE
Alamo
Robinette Colonia
Pharr
San Juan
Hidalgo
Hidalgo POE
Pharr POE
UNITED STATES
MEXICO
Reynosa
LEGEND
Existing Barrier
Areas of Environmental Analysis (1.02 miles)
McAllen
Harlingen
MEXICO
Brownsville
AREA ENLARGED
Map Request 727

Rio Grande Valley Environmental Planning
Detail
Scissors
Weslaco
San Juan
Runn
UNITED STATES
MEXICO
Donna POE
LEGEND
Existing Barrier
Areas of Environmental Analysis (1.7 miles)
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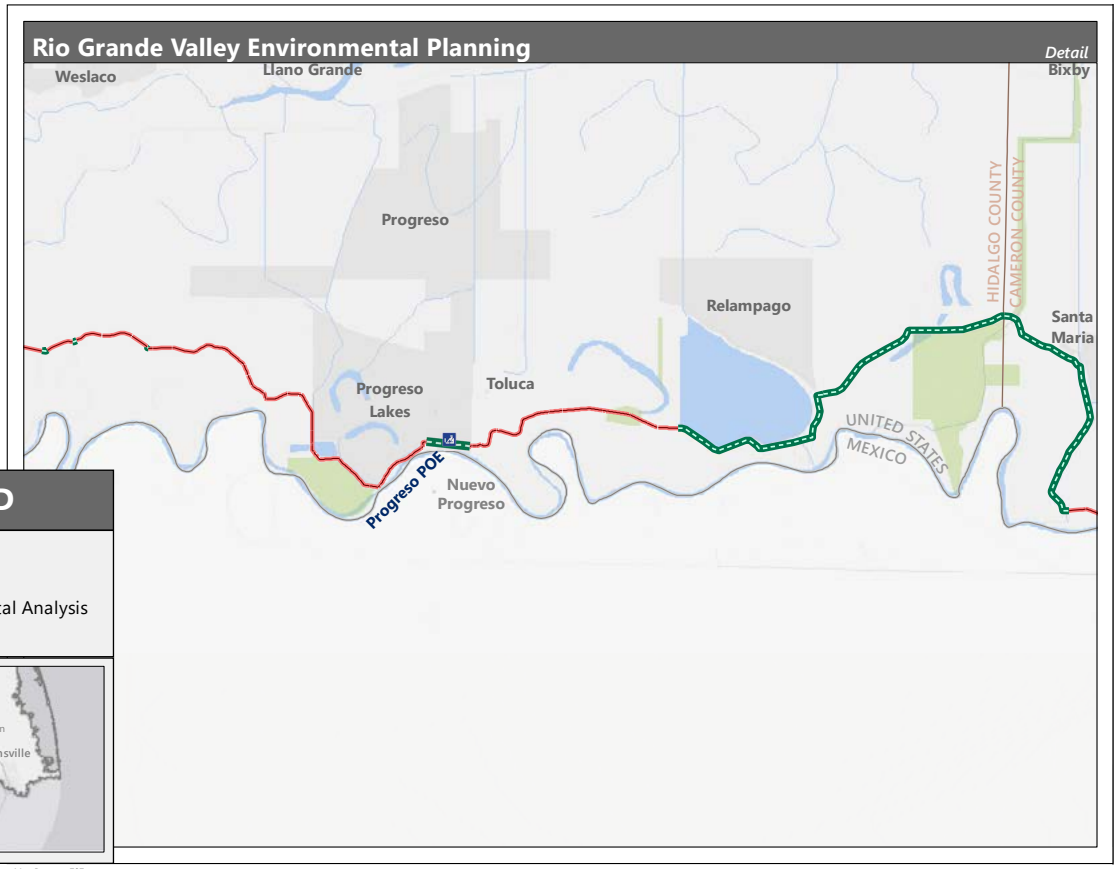
Harlingen
Brownsville
MEXICO
AREA ENLARGED
Map Request 727



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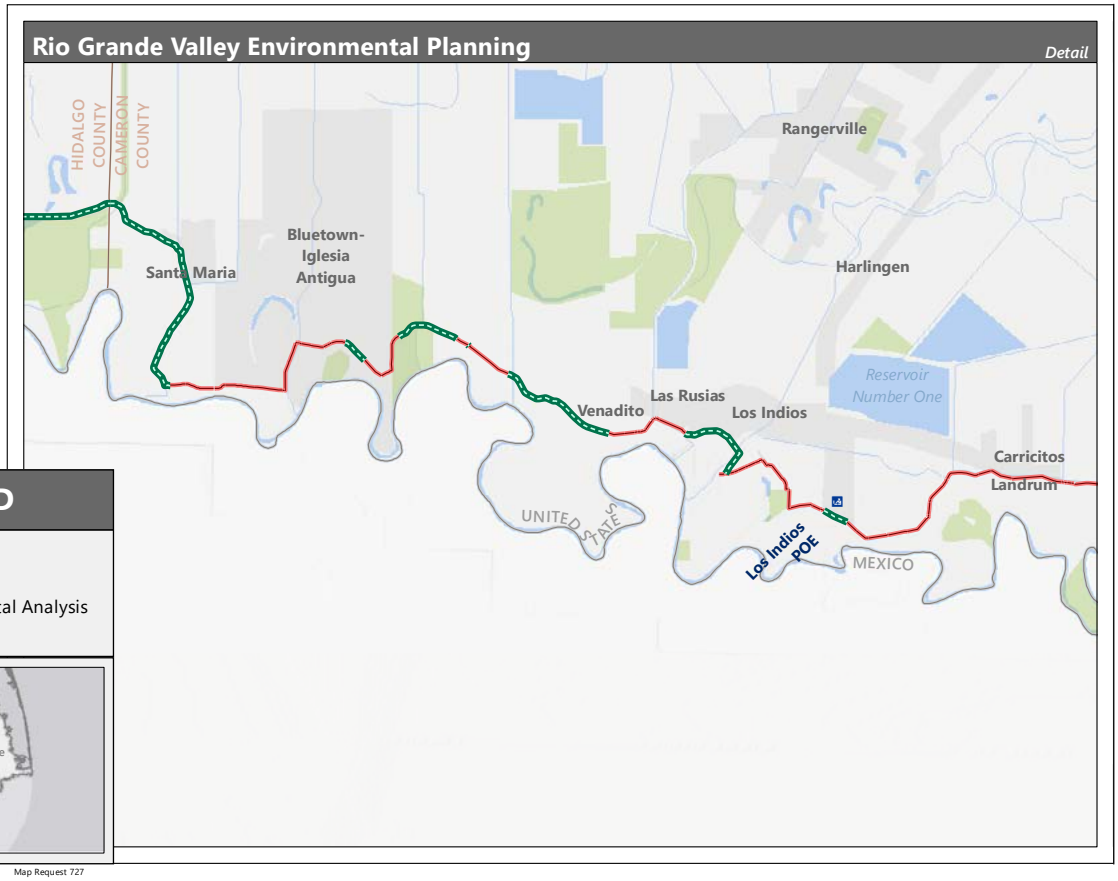

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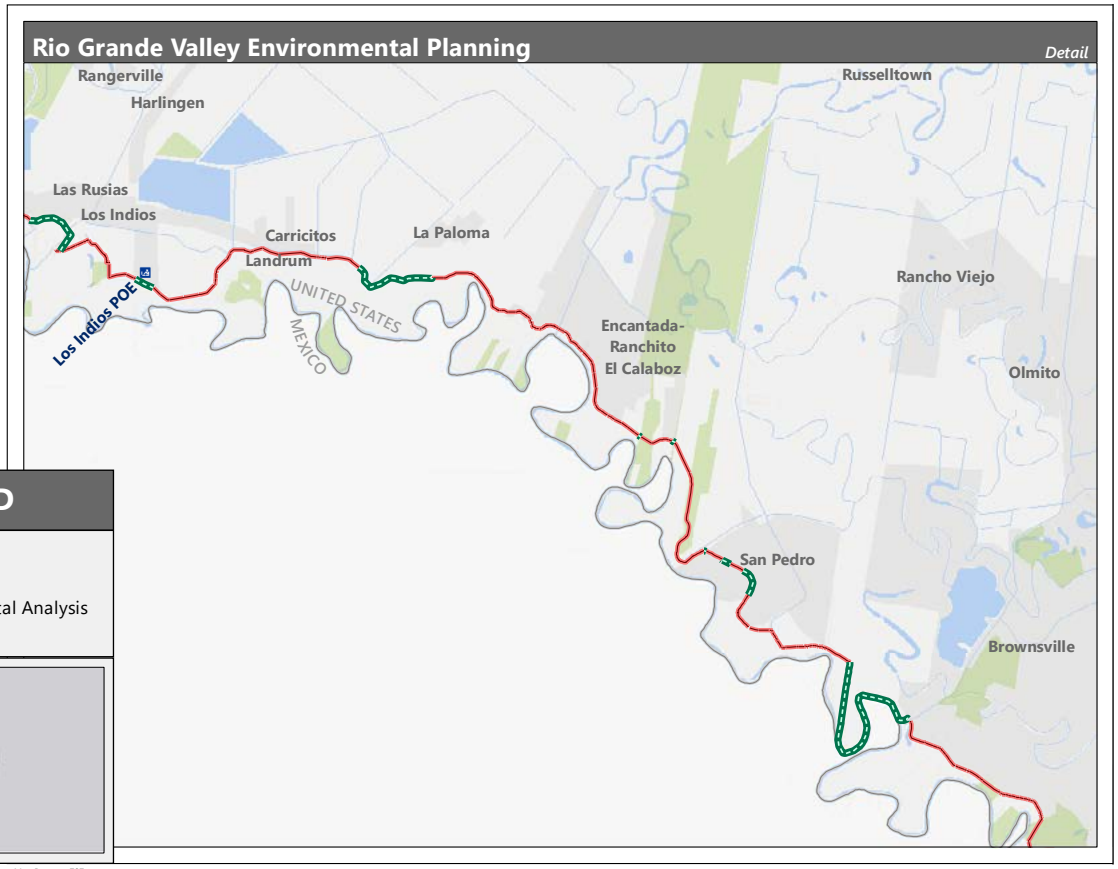

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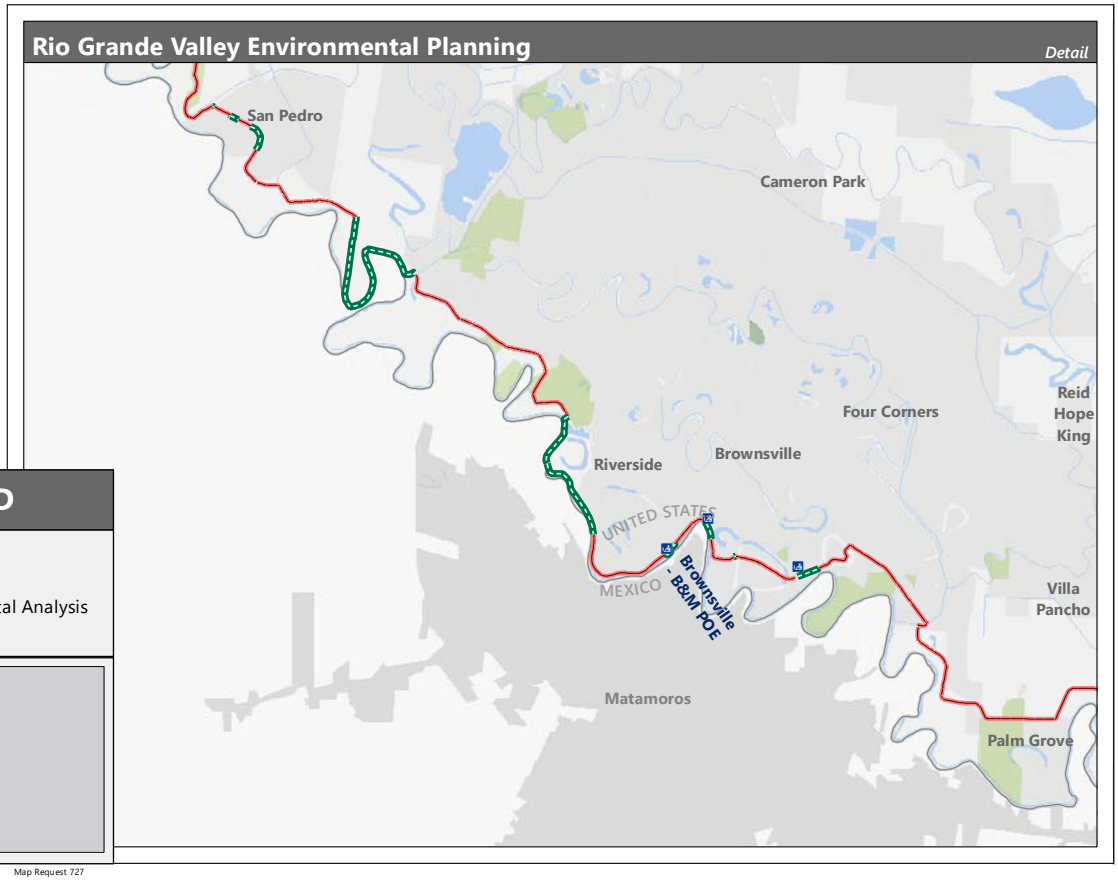

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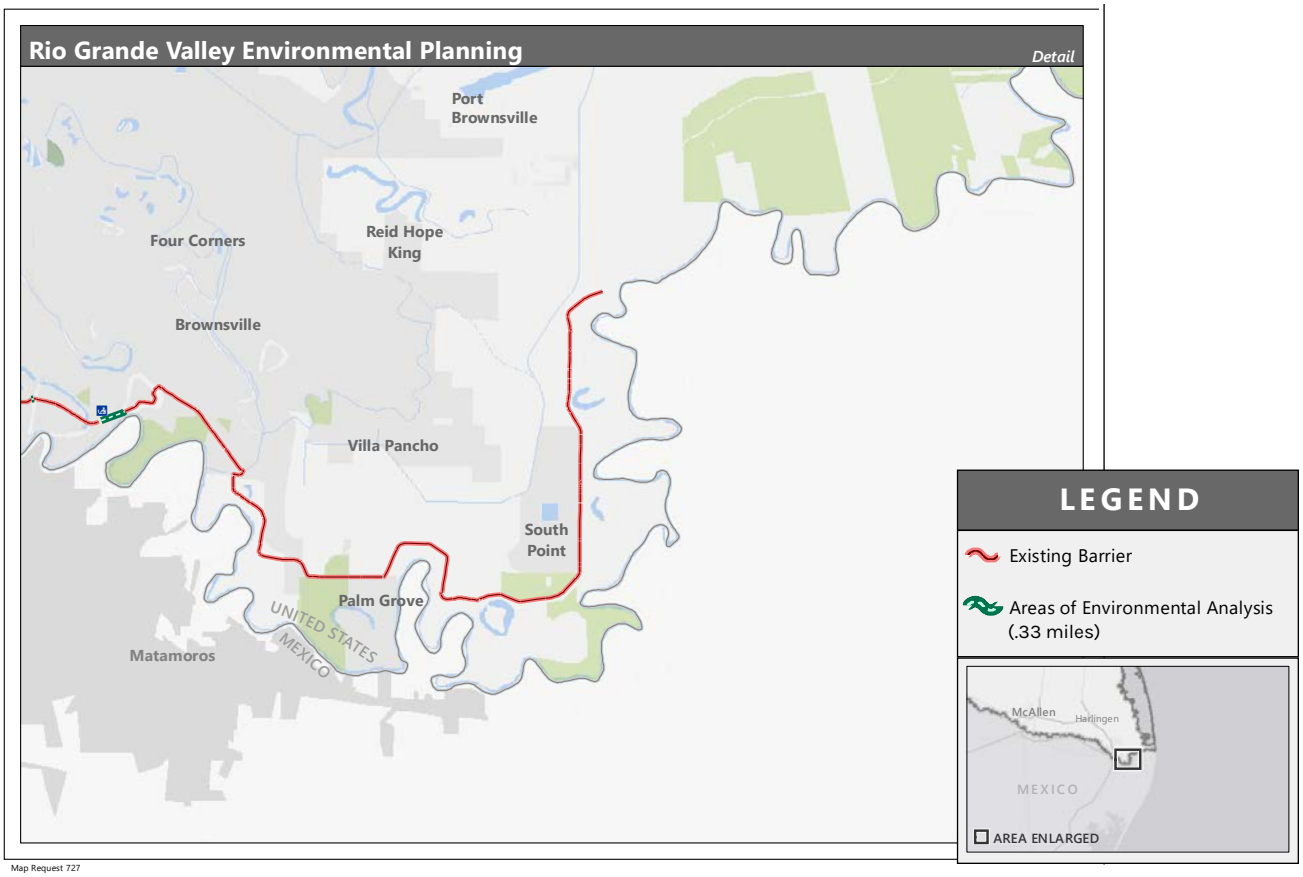

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