

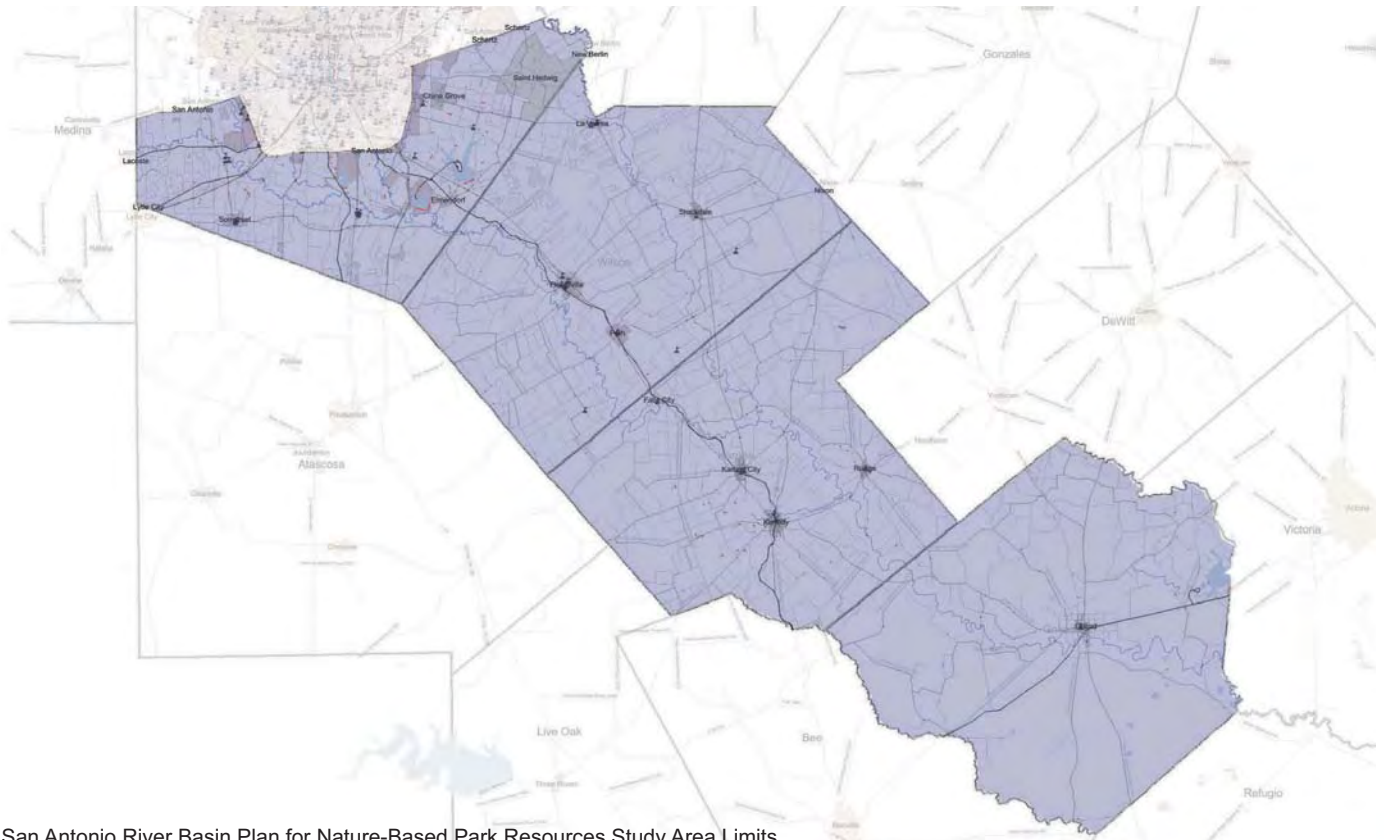


PROJECT OVERVIEW

Many communities located in the counties of Bexar, Wilson, Karnes, and Goliad face challenges in conserving natural resources, preserving history and overall identity of the region as well as providing adequate outdoor recreation. As more and more people visit and move into the area to take advantage of the rural lifestyle, it will become critical to establish a mechanism that meets the population's needs for recreational open space, while preserving the unique historical and cultural character of the area. ***The San Antonio River Basin Plan for Nature-Based Park Resources*** can serve as a community-based, regionally coordinated guide within the San Antonio River Basin for the next 20 years. The study area encompasses southern Bexar County (south of IH-10, US 90, and IH-410); and all of Wilson, Karnes, and Goliad Counties.



This plan supports current local planning initiatives, while providing a framework for regional cooperation and partnerships among communities within the study area. This collaboration will strengthen future park project initiatives, especially those utilizing shared resources, and will enhance the local communities' ability to obtain grant funds.



San Antonio River Basin Plan for Nature-Based Park Resources Study Area Limits

The framework of this study is set up to guide the public through the planning process in order to fully understand how the study area works as a region, as well as how each individual community fits into that region. This study was completed over two years, and involved the help of many individuals within each community. The ultimate success of the overall vision will depend on the support of individuals within all four counties, and their integration into the region.

In addition to the valuable support of citizens throughout the region, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) established a group that would help inform and guide the four-county study area by representing the local needs while understanding the impact on the entire region. The Regional Park Planning Advisory Committee (RPPAC) was established in 2003 and is comprised of three citizens from each county. The work of the RPPAC was integral to guiding and shaping the vision set forth in this document.

PURPOSE

The *San Antonio River Basin Plan for Nature-Based Park Resources* (The Plan) is a community-based plan, which identifies each community's nature-based resources and weaves them together to create a regional system. The goals of the nature-based park resources plan have been established to encourage recreational, educational, and economic development; to promote public awareness of those opportunities; and to support stewardship of local resources through the use of sustainable materials and maintenance practices. This plan also provides an opportunity to connect to, and focus on, the San Antonio River and its major tributaries. Themes and concepts presented in the regional plan were developed to adhere to those goals, and are the

tools by which the vision will be realized.



Conquista Crossing; Falls City, TX; Credit: HNTB

Through its oversight and approval, the RPPAC has established a concept plan for the study area. This concept plan is the guide for creating an interconnected system of parks, trails, and natural areas. The concept presented in this document lays the groundwork for partnerships which can strengthen implementation strategies.



Jackson Nature Park; Wilson County, TX; Credit: HNTB

The plan utilizes current local park planning initiatives as a catalyst for regional development. Local residents, as well as visitors to the area are able to take advantage of single-day and multi-day opportunities. Local projects (such as the Floresville Hike and Bike Trail or the Goliad Canoe Trail) can

form the basis for this regional recreational system using the rivers, roadways, and abandoned rail lines.

Existing cultural, natural, and historic resources provide nodes and destinations throughout the area. Cultural centers provide local and regional users with the amenities and comforts they need, while the natural and historic resources draw users to destinations throughout the four-county system. Throughout the plan, the river is a focal area to be explored and celebrated.



Nativity of Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church; Panna Maria, TX
Credit: HNTB

This document begins to establish a coordinated interjurisdictional plan for nature-based park resources within the San Antonio River Basin, and formulates overall strategies for funding and implementation. The public and private partnerships suggested by this plan provide communities within the study area the first and greatest opportunity for successful implementation. There are a number of local, state, and federal sources that are explored within this plan.

The plan provides a comprehensive look at significant parks, trails, and resources within southern Bexar, Wilson, Karnes, and Goliad Counties and begins to address the needs of the general public by setting forth a vision, a set of goals, and an implementation strategy.

Individually, cities and counties may not be able to provide comprehensive parks and all the recreational resources their residents desire. Through partnerships, however, the pieces of this plan can become a reality for current and future generations.



Abandoned Railroad Corridor; Floresville, TX; Credit: HNTB

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This master plan is intended to be used as a tool for the planning, funding and implementation of projects on two levels: regional and local. Throughout the following pages are avenues by which multiple groups or entities can collaborate as well as opportunities for individual communities to capitalize on available grants.

Regional Plan

Much of the information presented in the study pertains to a wide range of communities. In approaching an area of this magnitude (of size

and complexity), there is a fundamental need to understand “how it all works together”. In order to address the needs of the local community, we must first understand how each of those communities act as parts of a region.

The regional approach links seemingly unrelated facilities and ideas. It erases the political and physical boundaries to treat the opportunities as a “system”. In that capacity, the region will need to operate as a unified entity and strive to manage it as such.

The creation of an entity to guide the implementation of this plan will be key to its success. Partnerships and cooperation throughout the region will become paramount as the system depends on it. The regional approach allows for potentially stronger, longer-lasting partnerships, and a means by which the group can more easily be heard.

The plan begins with information gathered at the regional level. Goals, existing conditions, guiding principles, concepts, and public input at this level assist in capturing the differing nuances in a large area.

Local Planning

What does this mean for the local communities?

The efforts at the local level (community, neighborhood) are the driving force behind the overall regional concept. The current and future projects within each community are the catalyst for the entire system. Efforts at the local level need to continue as they will become the fundamental elements and links that provide the foundation of the regional entity.

Local projects may also be easier “wins” for the whole plan. Those “wins” may not be realized immediately in the region, but will be vital as the plan matures. This document gives the tools to assess and update a community’s situation: inventory of existing resources, analysis of the community needs, methods of prioritization and avenues of implementation. Existing and proposed projects can be evaluated by those tools to suggest a community’s direction, and better position them for partnerships and coordination.



Mission Nuestra Señora del Espíritu Santo de Zuñiga; Goliad, TX;
Credit: HNTB

Workbook

In addition to the exhaustive amount of data provided in this study, many of the tools are available for use in future endeavors. Those tools will give groups the ability to update their inventory, prioritize projects in their community, and identify potential funding strategies. The workbook is intended to be a dynamic document that is constantly updated as trends, facilities, and needs change.