



## Media Release

For Immediate Release  
September 7, 2006

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### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Report Progress on Much Anticipated Mission Reach Project**

San Antonio –At a press conference today near the confluence of San Pedro Creek and the San Antonio River, the Honorable John Paul Woodley, Jr. Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), expressed satisfaction in the progress of the Mission Reach Ecosystem Restoration and Recreation Project and eagerness for construction and improvements to begin on the eight-mile stretch between Lone Star Boulevard to south of Mission Espada. Illustration of the project’s progress was demonstrated in a trio of unveiled artists’ renderings depicting the completed future work.

Emphasizing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer’s (USACE) growing environmental mission and the San Antonio River Improvements Project as a model for river restoration in an urbanized setting, Woodley said, “The Corps’ flood control engineers, biologists, environmental scientists and historians are working together to design a project that will transform the river from the drainage channel you see today into a healthy, sustainable ecosystem teaming with fish and wildlife that will once again be enjoyed and appreciated by the residents of San Antonio and that will continue to serve a vital flood control function for this growing city.”

Woodley reported the completion of all technical requirements for the Corps which recently culminated in his approval of the project’s General Reevaluation Report, known as the GRR. Signifying that the project meets the Corps mission and objectives as well as benefit to the nation, the approval allowed the Corps and the local sponsor, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) to execute the Project Cooperation Agreement which was fully executed in August and advances the project to the construction phase.

Citing the projects restoration of 24,000 native trees, 56-acres of native grasses, 113-acres of aquatic habitat and 320 acres of riparian habitat, Woodley explained the renewal will restore two river remnants near San Juan and Espada missions. The project also encompasses the augmentation of the Mission Trails system with 10-miles of restored and new hike and bike trails.

Also speaking at the conference, Bexar County Judge Nelson W. Wolff, addressed the required federal funding for the Mission Reach project and his mission to secure monies. "It is our job to make sure that our congressmen and senators are clear on how important funding is for this project is to our community." The project, said Wolff represents a major public commitment to the river including more than \$60 million in identified investment by the USACE, \$32 million from the County and \$15 million from the City.

County Commissioner Sergio (Chico) Rodriguez spoke of the collaborative efforts between the County and SARA to support passage of the Water Resource Development Act of 2006. The Act could be a tool of expedition for the project explained Rodriguez, "The comprehensive piece of water legislation for the nation, includes a provision to allow the project to maximize use of available local funding to the project without jeopardizing the potential of future federal funding."

San Antonio River Oversight Committee co-chair Lila Cockrell, addressed the significant accomplishments made over the last eight years. The committee completed a community vision for 13-miles of the river, as well as a restoration of the river from Houston Street to Lexington Street along the River Walk. Cockrell reported that restoration of the river upstream in the Eagleland Reach was nearing completion and soon the construction bid process on the Museum Reach will begin with construction slated to begin in December. Cockrell acknowledged the complexity of the project, the number of partners and challenging work on the river that the community can be proud of. Cockrell praised the technical staff on the project, the Ft. Worth District Corps of Engineers, SARA and the architectural team lead by Carter Burgess.

Cockrell and Jim Johnson SARA board member invited the public to participate in two **upcoming community meetings** to view the proposed transformation and restoration vision of the river south of downtown. The meetings with identical agendas are slated for **Monday, September 18, 2006, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. in the Connell Middle School Cafeteria, 400 Hot Wells Boulevard and Tuesday, September 19, 2006, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at St. PJ's Valero Recreational Therapy and Education Center, 919 Mission Road.** Illustrations and information can be viewed on the [www.sanantonioriver.org](http://www.sanantonioriver.org) website.

The San Antonio River Improvements Project is a \$198.7 million on-going investment by the City of San Antonio, Bexar County, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the San Antonio River Foundation in flood damage reduction, amenities, ecosystem restoration and recreational improvements along 13 miles of the San Antonio River from Josephine Street south to Loop 410 South. The projected completion date for the project is 2012 with a local budget of \$124.8 million.

Mission Reach improvements will focus on ecosystem restoration using a technique known as fluvial geomorphology. This technique will transform the straightened river to a more natural replication of the original river flow, Enhance flood damage reduction, reduce erosion, reintroduce native vegetation and create an environment more suitable for recreation and wildlife.

Benefits of the Mission Reach Ecosystem Restoration and Recreation Project also include a restored ecosystem and natural river system that was damaged through a USACE channelization project which will reestablish bird, fish and wildlife habitat, reinstatement of historic and cultural connections between the river and the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, improvement of quality of life and recreational access to and enjoyment of the river with trails, footbridges and picnic areas.