WORLD HERITAGE INSCRIPTION
Highlights Partnership Efforts

Managing Feral Hog Population

EDUCATE AND INSPIRE STUDENTS

✓ Sock Puppets
✓ Online Resources
✓ Movies
Vision
Inspiring Actions for Healthy Creeks and Rivers

Mission
Protect and Enhance Our Creeks and Rivers Through Service, Leadership and Expertise

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Goals of the Watershed

By Rudy Farias, Finance Project and Planning Supervisor

The San Antonio River Authority (SARA) kicked-off the new fiscal year on July 1. The new year brings SARA a new long-term vision of inspiring actions for healthy creeks and rivers. To support this vision, SARA established annual objectives within the goals of watershed health and safety, community appreciation and recreation, and watershed solutions. Below is a summary of SARA’s goals and objectives that will be measured this fiscal year:

Watershed Health and Safety
• The development of bacteria source tracking capabilities
• Obtaining accreditation for metals in sediment testing from the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) Institute

Community Appreciation and Recreation
• Increasing attendance and park programming at SARA Nature Parks
• Improving and expanding SARA parks and paddling trail infrastructure

Watershed Solution
• Increasing community awareness for Low Impact Development and Natural Channel Design principles
• Implementing agricultural and wildlife water quality best management practices

Through the achievement of these SARA objectives, capabilities for analyzing water quality will increase allowing for additional water quality solutions to be developed. Additionally, through increasing park programming and expanding opportunities within the SARA Nature Parks, such as camping and canoeing, awareness for our natural resources may inspire actions to increase the health and safety of our creeks and rivers. These actions include changes in land planning and development. Low Impact Development is sustainable land planning and engineering design approach to managing stormwater runoff as close as possible to the source. By managing stormwater runoff, fewer pollutants will enter our creeks and rivers, and will decrease sediment and water velocities.

By accomplishing the outlined goals and objectives and with your assistance, together, we will inspire actions for healthy creeks and rivers.

Employee Highlight

By Kim Garcia, IGCR Technician

The San Antonio River Authority (SARA) is delighted to introduce you to Yolanda Cabrera, Accounting Technician II, within SARA’s Finance Department. As an Accounting Technician, Yolanda handles SARA’s account payables where she reviews vendor account statements and insures they are paid out accurately and on time. Often times you will find Yolanda in the office processing checks, preparing and processing the end of year 1099s, keeping payable retention files up-to-date and managing SARA’s petty cash. In addition to keeping SARA’s books in order, Yolanda is SARA’s Postmaster as she receives, sorts and distributes SARA’s incoming and outgoing mail.

Prior to joining the SARA team, Yolanda’s employment history consisted of retail experience, working as a talented photographer, a receptionist, file clerk and auditor. Yolanda’s previous work history and talents are what helped to prepare her to be an integral part of the SARA team.

Yolanda was born and lived in San Antonio, but at the age of two she moved with her family to Houston, Texas. She lived in Houston until she was 18, then decided it was time for her to return back to her original home, the Alamo City. In her spare time, Yolanda enjoys caring for and spending time with her mother and her two cats Soloman, an orange Tabby cat and Cleopatra, a Calico. On the weekends Yolanda enjoys hanging out with her friends, going to the movies, shopping and dancing as well as spending time in her garden where she enjoys the sweet aroma of her growing herbs, fruit trees and roses.

Yolanda is excited to pursue her education in the spring. We are looking forward to seeing where Yolanda’s career takes her and are grateful for the work she provides to the SARA team. Thank you Yolanda for all you do for SARA!
This summer has been full of excitement as we celebrated the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) Inscription of the San Antonio Missions as a World Heritage Site. It took nearly 10 years of hard work and dedication from many public and private entities to obtain this honor and the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) is extremely proud of this accomplishment.

One of the determining factors that helped in the final decision for this designation was the expansion of the San Antonio River Walk south of downtown with the Mission Reach Ecosystem Restoration and Recreation Project. The project not only serves as a connector to four of the Missions, it also helps create a buffer to help protect and preserve these Missions from future development. Buffer zones are one of the requirements UNESCO considers when selecting potential sites for World Heritage Inscription and as project manager for the Mission Reach, it gives us great pride to know that the project played an integral role in this designation. SARA will continue to work hard to maintain this project so that local residents and tourists take in the full experience of visiting the newest World Heritage site in the country and the first in our state.

If you haven’t had a chance to visit the Missions or if it’s been a while since you last visited, SARA invites you to join in the celebration through a series of free events leading up to the official World Heritage Celebration Weekend from October 16-18. Several of these events will take place along the Mission Reach including guided nature hikes on October 16 and 17 and a paddling event on October 18 (see page 5 for more info). Come to the river and share in the excitement of this designation!

Confluence Park will transform a former Southside industrial laydown yard into a unique, interactive learning and recreational space. The park will include an educational pavilion, a large scale water catchment system, ecotype demonstration quadrants and an inviting gateway to hiking and biking trails along the Mission Reach. The entire park is envisioned as a life-sized, interactive teaching tool that will inspire a greater understanding of Texas ecotypes and their relationships with one another, encouraging students and adults alike to become more involved with the preservation and stewardship of our waterways.

Designed by the acclaimed team comprised of Lake | Flato Architects, Matsys and Rialto Studio, new renderings, released in May 2015, revealed the spectacular scope and presence of this innovative project. Programmatic elements and educational features shown in these images include a multi-purpose space that has a green roof providing thermal mass for passive heating and cooling. The building’s lowered elevation will appear to emerge from the ground and gradually grow out of the earth, becoming a fluid part of the landscape.

Another newly revealed feature is the primary pavilion. Constructed of large concrete forms that together create a geometry that collects and funnels rainwater; this lofty pavilion will provide shade and shelter while at the same time allowing visitors to understand the cycle of water at Confluence Park and how this cycle relates directly to the San Antonio River Watershed. The pavilion will speak to the interaction of water systems and is oriented to point directly toward the confluence of the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek.

As a landmark project where art and science meet, Confluence Park will be a living example and outdoor learning laboratory that illustrates the promise of our beautiful river.
World Heritage Inscription Highlights Partnership Efforts

By Yviand Serbones, Community Relations Coordinator

On July 5, 2015, San Antonio’s five Spanish colonial missions: Mission Concepción, San Jose, San Juan, Espada, and the Alamo were inscribed as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The designation was confirmed at the 39th annual session of the World Heritage Convention in Bonn, Germany by a committee made up of representatives from 21 countries. A delegation from San Antonio and the U.S. travelled to Germany to witness this historic occasion. Members of the delegation included the U.S. Ambassador to UNESCO, Crystal Nix-Hines, as well as Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff, Mayor Ivy Taylor, District 3 Councilwoman Rebecca Viagran, San Antonio River Authority’s (SARA) General Manager Suzanne Scott and representatives from the National Park Service, the Archdiocese of San Antonio, Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, The University of Texas College of Architecture, Construction and Planning and the National Park Foundation.

The San Antonio Missions are now the first World Heritage Site in Texas and the 23rd in the nation. The nomination process began in 2006 at the initiation of the San Antonio Conservation Society and included the restoration of the Missions churches, the expansion of the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park and the Mission Reach Ecosystem Restoration and Recreation Project. SARA served as the project manager for the construction of the Mission Reach, which played a role in the designation process as the trail system serves as a connector and buffer zone to the Missions that are located south of downtown San Antonio.

“A ceremony took place on July 7 in front of the Alamo where officials that included members of the delegation that represented San Antonio in Germany spoke to hundreds of community members in attendance about the importance of this World Heritage Inscription on a local, state, national and international level. Additional events have been scheduled leading up to the official celebration weekend, which will take place October 16-18. For more information, please visit the official Missions of San Antonio website, www.missionsofsanantonio.org.

“The San Antonio River has been an integral connector in the establishment of the San Antonio Missions,” said Suzanne Scott, General Manager of SARA. “Today, the restored Mission Reach is once again that important connector serving as a gateway for visitors to access the missions and continues to represent the role of water in the life of the missionary settlements.”
The San Antonio River Authority (SARA) firmly supports the health and quality of life benefits of nature-based recreation. Nature-based parks increase quality of life in the watershed and foster a greater awareness and appreciation for the river and the natural resources it provides.

Earlier this year, SARA held a public contest to help name three SARA-owned and operated public parks, which included two paddling access sites. The winning entries are:

- River Crossing Park on the San Antonio River
- Graytown Park on the San Antonio River
- Mann’s Crossing Park on the Medina River

Special thanks to Gene Maeckle, with the Wilson County Historical Society, for his work on providing the historical background that supported the selection of these names.

River Crossing Park on the San Antonio River

River Crossing Park on the San Antonio River is located on E. 1604 in Bexar County. The park offers a natural trail system, picnic area, a pavilion and also serves as the put-in access point of the Saspamco Paddling Trail. In the colonial times, when travelling to San Antonio or Goliad, the established trail route crossed over the San Antonio River at the site of the park via the La Bahia Trail. Other historical trails intersecting here included the famous Chisholm Trail as well as minor cattle trails like the San Patricio Trail and Maldonado Crossing.
Graytown Park on the San Antonio River

Graytown Park on the San Antonio River is located on County Road 125 in Wilson County. The park is known for serving as the alternate mid-point of the Saspamco Paddling Trail and also offers a natural area and picnic site. The park was named after one of the earliest settled areas in Wilson County, which was named after the surveyor and developer of the site, James Gray. Graytown, being located in the midst of thriving ranches, became a gathering place for cowboys and ranchers who generally were descendants of the first settlers of the Bexar area and was a crossroads of travel route from San Antonio, La Bahia, San Patricio, Matamoras and Laredo.

Mann’s Crossing Park on the Medina River

Mann’s Crossing Park on the Medina River is one of SARA’s future park developments located in Bexar County. Named after the Mann family who immigrated to Texas from Alsace-Lorraine as part of the original Henri Castro Colony on the upper Medina River. The family operated a ferry at Mann’s Crossing as late as the 1880s. The property was also the site of a post office in the late 1880s, and the house was also used by Texas Rangers and federal agents to hold prisoners at various times.

For more information on the paddling trails and public parks along San Antonio River, visit the River Recreation page at www.sara-tx.org.
New Projects Heading to Southern Basin

By James Fuller, SARA Board Member, Goliad County

The San Antonio River Authority’s (SARA) 2015-2016 fiscal year started in July. This fiscal year, several new projects were added to the “to-do” list. Two projects expected to have a significant impact on SARA’s southern basin communities include the Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and Feral Hog Management.

Under RCPP, a U.S. Department of Agriculture program, SARA will work with local Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) staff to identify landowners who may be eligible to receive an incentive for implementing stream restoration practices on their land. Landowners will be able to sign up for RCPP using the same 1200 application form that is used for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Additional efforts will include technical assistance and public outreach.

Under the Feral Hog Management project, SARA will team up with the Texas Wildlife Services to actively manage feral hog populations in concert with cooperating landowners in Bexar, Wilson, Karnes and Goliad counties. SARA will also partner with Texas AgriLife to create education material and host workshops for landowners interested in learning more about feral hog management. See page 9 for more information about the Feral Hog Management Project.

In Texas, feral hogs are estimated to cause $52 million dollars in damage annually to the agricultural industry. They destroy crops and rangeland, erode fragile soils and riverbanks and disrupt ground-nesting birds. The hogs are quickly becoming an urban problem as well, as they damage lawns, golf courses and parks.

Projects like RCPP and Feral Hog Management strengthen communities working towards common goals. By preserving and protecting our soil and water, life throughout the watershed is enhanced.

South Texas Natives

Neotropic Cormorant – *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

By Minna Paul, Education Coordinator

Exploring the banks of the San Antonio River rarely fails to present an opportunity to sight new and unique creatures in nature. One such creature is a majestic, dark, migratory water bird which perches proudly against the sun, drying its feathers while completely unperturbed by the hustle-bustle of a city that has a population of about 1.5 million people.

The star of this story is a Neotropic Cormorant. There are six species of Cormorants found in North America, the Neotropic Cormorant is the southernmost species. Although San Antonio is home to two Cormorant species, this one particularly catches the human eye because of a unique v-shaped white border around its bill, making this adult bird look as though it is smiling at the world around it. This unique feature, along with its smaller size and longer tail feathers are what differentiates the Neotrophic Cormorant slightly from the larger Double-Crested Cormorant. A third bird with a snake-like long neck and body, called the Anhinga, may also visit during springtime, making it challenging to tell them apart. These are the three musketeers of the San Antonio River!

You may see the Neotropic Cormorant plunge-diving for fish in the river. Once they have caught unsuspecting fish, it is fascinating to watch them come up to the surface of the water with their prize and gulp it down, head first. Sometimes they even partake in a little teamwork by fishing communally. These intelligent creatures will sit in a line, startle the fish and then as a team they pursue their prey. These water birds can be seen paddling through the water with only their s-shaped neck sticking out.

The Neotropic Cormorants could also be considered modern day masonry who make colonies of stick nests in trees by using bat guano to cement their collection of sticks.

Hunting these elegant birds is unlawful. Their diet, which consists of small fish makes them an important link in the ecological food web that keeps everything in balance.
Managing Feral Hog Population

By Yliana Flores, Intergovernmental Relations Coordinator

The San Antonio River Authority (SARA) has teamed up with Texas A&M AgriLife and Texas Wildlife Services to promote feral hog education and management strategies to landowners in SARA’s four-county jurisdiction.

Feral hogs are non-native, highly adaptable animals that can cause significant ecological and economical damage to urban and rural areas. In Texas, it is estimated that feral hogs cause approximately $52 million of damage annually to the agricultural industry. Feral hogs also cause damage to riparian areas along streams, increasing erosion and levels of bacteria in creeks and rivers. Because feral hogs have the highest reproductive capability of any hoofed animal, controlling or reducing the population is extremely difficult.

The project will address education and provide technical support to landowners interested in controlling the feral hog population. With the help of Texas Wildlife Services, this program will actively manage the feral hog population in specific regions of the watershed. The goal of The Texas Wildlife Services is to protect the State’s agricultural, industrial and natural resources as well as the public’s health, safety and property from damage caused by wildlife.

In addition to population management, SARA will also collaborate with Texas A&M AgriLife to develop outreach and education materials that are specific to the ecology and land uses within SARA’s four-county jurisdiction. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is a unique education agency with a statewide network of professional educators, trained volunteers and county offices. SARA and AgriLife Extension will also work together to host feral hog management workshops for landowners.

The goal of the Feral Hog Management Program is to connect landowners to local and state agencies with experience in this issue and help minimize feral hog damage in the region. Managing the feral hog population in the four-county region will help to protect public and private lands as well as enhance the water quality within the creeks and rivers in the San Antonio River Watershed. For more information, please contact Yliana Flores at 1-866-345-7272 ext. 3228 or by emailing yflores@sara-tx.org.

“In Texas, it is estimated that feral hogs cause approximately $52 million of damage annually to the agricultural industry.”
Regional Conservation Partnership Program

By Yliana Flores, Intergovernmental Relations Coordinator

The San Antonio River Authority (SARA) has partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Resource Institute (RI) on a project called the Texas Gulf Coast Initiative (TGCI). TGCI is a program that will provide incentives to landowners to implement stream restoration practices on their property to improve river and stream stability as well as water quality.

The mission of this program is to restore and protect stream and wetland systems within the Texas Gulf Coast Region and improve the overall quality of these critical ecosystems. TGCI is a 5-year project funded under the U.S. Department of Agriculture Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Landowners who meet specific criteria will be able to apply to enroll in the TGCI program through the same NRCS 1200 form used for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

As part of the partnership agreement, SARA will work to identify and collaborate with potential landowners, assist with public outreach activities as needed, assist in identifying potential projects, provide technical Natural Channel Design assistance and support and collaborate with additional partners to develop project activities.

Currently, TGCI is in early stages of development. SARA is working with the RI and NRCS to develop a timeline for project implementation. Over the course of the year, landowners can expect to receive more information through workshops and the agencies.

Projects like the TGCI are important because they offer landowners and agricultural producers an opportunity to implement specific conservation practices that might otherwise have gone undone. These conservation practices are important to SARA because they help to preserve riverine and stream ecosystems and improve water quality in the San Antonio River Watershed. For more information, please contact Yliana Flores at 1-866-345-7272 ext. 3228 or by emailing yflores@sara-tx.org.

Program Criteria May Include

- Sites having a defined channel bed and bank along most of the reach of land
- Preference for at least 1,500 feet long (can be reached with multiple landowners as long as the channel is contiguous)
- Obvious bank erosion issues

Environmental Advisory Committee Welcomes New Members

By Clarissa Perez, Community Relations Coordinator

On December 21, 2005, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) Board of Directors approved the creation of the San Antonio River Basin Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC). The EAC was established to serve as a comprehensive public participation group that reviews and provides input on environmental studies and programs at SARA. In addition to developing an educated constituent base, the committee will advise SARA’s departments about environmental issues within the basin. The EAC also acts as SARA’s Clean Rivers Program (CRP) Steering Committee, providing guidance and feedback on SARA’s annual monitoring schedule.

The EAC can have a maximum of 13 members, including co-chairs. Geographical representation of the EAC is similar to that of the SARA Board of Directors with six EAC members from Bexar County and two each from Wilson, Karnes and Goliad Counties. The 13th EAC member may be from outside SARA’s political district as a representative of the bay and estuaries.

Members represent diverse professions such as academia, agriculture, bay and estuary, recreation, business and industry and environmental. Committee members serve staggered three-year terms. The new EAC members were approved by SARA’s Board of Directors at the August monthly meeting and they will be given a thorough orientation by SARA staff prior to the September regular EAC meeting. The EAC meets four times a year; September in Wilson County, November in Goliad County, March in Karnes County, and June in Bexar County.

You can learn more about the EAC and their meeting locations by visiting www.sara-tx.org.
This year, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) unveiled a unique set of lessons and activities that provided Goliad 3rd grade students with a hands-on approach to understanding the dynamics of the San Antonio Bay and estuary ecosystem. Classrooms studied how human activity, even 240 miles away, affects these environments. Through lessons, students explored and evaluated ways to bring positive and innovative practices to the sustainability of the bay and estuary’s ecosystem.

Armed with 30 homemade whooping crane sock puppets, SARA’s education team developed lessons that allowed teachers and students to interactively model the changing conditions and consequences for organisms living in the estuary.

SARA worked with the International Crane Foundation (ICF) to expand SARA’s online education resources to encompass bay and estuary lessons and activities. Resources included an educational module, *Estuaries in the Balance: The Texas Coastal Bend*. This multi-media learning adventure provided students and teachers an interactive journey that followed four key species of the San Antonio Bay area – whooping cranes, blue crabs, oysters and redfish. Bay and estuary education even took place outside of the classroom at the Goliad Elementary School Water Festival. Third grade students learned hands-on from the experts at ICF, the San Antonio Bay Partnership and SARA about the organisms around the San Antonio Bay and how the river and citizens play an important role in balancing a healthy bay environment.

SARA feels that it is essential to bring the river, estuary and bay environment into the classrooms of students that may not necessarily have the opportunity to see the area first hand.

With this in mind, the SARA educational team produced a video entitled, *Clams to Computers: Water Quality Tools for the San Antonio River and Estuary*. The video examined interactions that the freshwaters of the San Antonio River have on organisms, such as the whooping crane, in the saline waters of the bay. Also featured were three key scientific research projects with biologists in action which helped demonstrate to students the role that science plays in helping to inform citizens’ decisions.

It’s apparent that teachers and students throughout the San Antonio River Watershed are eager to learn about the river’s water and how they are personally linked to the organisms and resources in and around it. Whatever approach teachers take to educate their students about the critical relationships between the river and bay, students are listening and are ready to head home to teach and inspire others about how to conserve and sustain a vital resource. Find the video and other resources online at [www.sara-tx.org](http://www.sara-tx.org).

“At SARA, we feel it is essential to bring the river, estuary and bay environment into the classrooms of students that may not necessarily have the opportunity to see the area first hand.”
I was honored this past July to represent the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) on the official delegation from San Antonio to the 39th Session of the World Heritage Committee in Bonn, Germany for the inscription of the San Antonio Missions as a World Heritage Site. The World Heritage committee is comprised of 21 member countries who deliberate on the Outstanding Universal Value of sites proposed for inscription by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The World Heritage Committee meeting was amazing and I learned about natural landscapes and cultural treasures from throughout the world that are truly spectacular. Experiencing the deliberations regarding the protection and preservation of these sites by countries from around the world really brought home how significant the World Heritage Inscription is to San Antonio and Floresville. Our missions are now recognized among the most elite sites in the world. That means that our San Antonio River is even more emblazoned on the world stage. Thousands more visitors from throughout the world will come in contact with our river, beyond downtown San Antonio!

The San Antonio River has been an integral natural resource in the establishment of the San Antonio Missions (including the Alamo, the four missions along the Mission Reach and the Rancho de las Cabras near Floresville in Wilson County). The river’s water served as the lifeblood for the operation of acequia and aqueduct systems that irrigated the farms and ranches of the Spanish Colonial-era missions. Today, the river is once again an important natural and recreational resource serving as a gateway for visitors to access the missions and continues to demonstrate the role of water in the life of the missionary settlements.

It was a long arduous road to secure this prestigious designation. There have been numerous people and organizations involved for nearly a decade in shepherding the missions to World Heritage Inscription. SARA will continue to stay involved and will work to maximize the benefit the designation will bring to the river basin. Many events are planned over the summer to encourage proud Texans and visitors to enjoy the San Antonio Missions all culminating in a community-wide celebration in mid-October. To learn more about upcoming events, please visit www.missionsofsanantonio.org.

If you are interested in learning more about the other World Heritage Sites approved during the meeting in Bonn, visit www.whc.unesco.org there is a list of the newly inscribed locations from around the world.

Witnessing Our History

By Suzanne Scott, General Manager