Commemorating 75 Years 1937 - 2012
The San Antonio River Authority (SARA) created the San Antonio River Foundation in 2003 to help SARA ensure sustainable enhancements and management of the San Antonio River Watershed to benefit quality of life and the environment through fundraising, education and advocacy. Since 2003, the San Antonio River Foundation has been a tremendous supporter of SARA’s projects; of particular note are the art enhancements to the San Antonio River Improvements Project that were funded and installed by the San Antonio River Foundation. As part of SARA’s 75th anniversary, the San Antonio River Foundation helped to support SARA’S 75th Anniversary Reception, held on June 20th, and they are also supporting the special archeological exhibit on display at the Witte Museum (see page 5).

We would like to thank the San Antonio River Foundation for their support of SARA’s projects and our 75th anniversary activities. We look forward to many more years of collaboration for the benefit of the San Antonio River Watershed.
When the Texas Legislature created the San Antonio River Canal and Conservancy District in 1937, they sought the benefits of a shipping canal to San Antonio. However, when the canal was deemed not feasible for numerous reasons, the legislature in the early 1950s reorganized the agency to create the San Antonio River Authority (SARA). This reorganization gave SARA a primary responsibility of flood management, which resulted in the development of flood mitigation projects throughout the basin, including the lower basin counties. For example, thirteen flood-water detention dams were built in the Escondido Creek Watershed in Karnes County beginning in 1953, which SARA continues to operate and maintain to this day.

In 1961, SARA was reorganized again to include all of Wilson, Karnes and Goliad Counties in its jurisdiction along with Bexar County and elected directors for all four counties. SARA was also given taxing authority. Revenue from the new taxing authority enabled SARA to begin a basin-wide water quality monitoring program and develop sewage treatment projects among other projects. SARA still monitors water quality today, and our scientists continue to engage in related studies in the lower basin, such as an instream flows study and aquatic wildlife surveys. Today, SARA’s knowledgeable wastewater staff also provides wastewater services to various communities in the lower basin.

SARA continues its commitment, which began so long ago, to flood protection, water quality, conservation, restoration and recreation. This commitment can be seen in the holistic watershed master plans that are currently under development throughout the basin, including for the lower basin. These master plans seek to coordinate local and regional partners, leverage funding sources and plan for future growth throughout the watershed. SARA’s commitment to recreation is also visible throughout the basin, particularly through the development of paddling trails and river parks in Wilson and Goliad Counties.

In celebration of SARA’s 75th anniversary, SARA has planned archive collection events in each of the downstream counties. Staff will accept copies of personal stories and photos related to the river from citizens of the lower basin to add to SARA’s archives housed at the University of Texas at San Antonio. You can read more about SARA’s archives on page 13 or at www.sara-tx.org.
This year marks the San Antonio River Authority’s (SARA) 75th anniversary. In May 1937, the Texas legislature granted the agency ownership of the bed and banks of the San Antonio River. In 1961, the legislature expanded SARA’s role to include jurisdiction throughout Bexar, Wilson, Karnes and Goliad Counties. SARA’s 75-year history tells an interesting story of man’s recent relationship with the San Antonio River and how it has evolved over time.

Flood protection has been an enduring goal of the agency over the past 75 years. The San Antonio Channel Improvement Project, initiated by Congress in 1954, provided flood improvements on the San Antonio River and tributary creeks west of downtown San Antonio. The flood control portion of the project was completed with the construction of the San Pedro Creek and San Antonio River tunnels, which proved their worth during floods in 1998 and 2002. Subsequently, the San Antonio River Improvements Project, still in progress, is transforming the river into a more riverine ecosystem with native vegetation. The project also features 15 miles of hike and bike trails that connect the downtown River Walk and more than 2,000 acres of public land. In addition to improvements on the river, 27 flood detention dams were constructed in Bexar County since the 1950s.

Assuring and advocating for improved water quality has been another major objective. SARA maintains a comprehensive water quality testing lab and operates award-winning sewage treatment facilities in northeastern Bexar County. SARA was also instrumental in compelling the City of San Antonio to construct the award-winning Dos Rios sewage treatment plant near the confluence of the San Antonio and Medina Rivers.

To celebrate our 75 years of service to the community, SARA is sponsoring an exhibit at the Witte Museum this summer that tells the history of the interaction between man and the river. Included in this exciting exhibit will be 12,000-year-old artifacts unearthed from the banks of the San Antonio River, as well as maps and other items from the SARA archive now under the care of the University of Texas at San Antonio. We invite all to see our water-related exhibit at the Witte this summer. For more information about this exhibit, see the article on page 5.

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**Commemorating 75 Years of Service**

*By Sheba Sam*

In celebration of our 75th anniversary, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) will host and participate in several events over the next six months. Mark your calendars and join us! More information about these and other SARA events can be found by visiting www.sara-tx.org.

- **June - August** - *If the River Could Talk: 12,000 Years of Life on the San Antonio River* exhibit at the Witte Museum
- **July - August** - Museum Reach Bat Talk every Tuesday evening in July and August at 7:30 p.m. on river level near the intersection of Camden and Newell Streets on the Museum Reach segment of the River Walk. Talks done in partnership with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and Bat Conservation International (BCI). BCI docents will be out during weekends from July to September.
- **July 21** - SARA Archive and Watershed History Event in Wilson County: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at the Wilson County Library

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In 1954, Congress authorized construction of the San Antonio Channel Improvement Project (SACIP), on which SARA served as local sponsor with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ (USACE).

By 1959, nine dams along Calaveras Creek in Bexar County and eleven along Escondido Creek in Karnes County were completed.

In 1961, SARA was reorganized once again, adding all of Wilson, Karnes and Goliad Counties to SARA’s jurisdiction, changing the Board of Directors to 12 members elected by the people (unique to Texas river authorities) and authorizing the levy and collection of an ad valorem tax capped at two cents per $100 of property valuation.
For 12,000 years, people have used the San Antonio River as a source of life; for drinking its clean water, for hunting along its lush riparian habitat, for fishing from its plentiful waters, for camping along its banks and for bathing in its clear water. Colonial settlers later built sophisticated acequia irrigation systems, dams and other waterworks to harness the river’s potential for agricultural fields, ranching and industry in the rapidly expanding frontier. Today, the San Antonio River flows through the seventh-largest city in the United States and serves as one of the city’s largest economic generators. On June 16, the exhibit If the River Could Talk: 12,000 Years of Life on the San Antonio River opened at the Witte Museum to commemorate the San Antonio River and all those who have called it home. This exhibit was funded by the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) as part of SARA’s 75th anniversary activities and features artifacts recovered by the Center for Archeological Research at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) during the construction of the San Antonio River Improvements Project. The exhibit also includes primary source artwork from the Witte Museum’s collection and other archeological finds from sites near the San Antonio River. Many of the exhibit’s pieces are on public display for the first time, including a 122-year-old message in a bottle and rare artifacts, fossils and tools dating back over 12,000 years. For more information, please visit the Witte Museum’s website at www.wittemuseum.org.

Additionally, a traveling image display of the exhibit will be brought to a series of receptions SARA is hosting in Wilson, Karnes and Goliad Counties. SARA is holding these receptions as part of the 75th anniversary celebrations with the intent to collect historical photos, stories and items related to the history of the San Antonio River from the citizens of the Lower San Antonio River Watershed. Copies of the collected items will become a permanent part of SARA’s archives, which are housed by UTSA. The reception dates and locations are available on the events page of SARA’s website at www.sara-tx.org.

SARA began the basin stream monitoring and surveillance program in 1962. The San Antonio River Basin Pollution Prevention Study, the first of its kind in the State, was completed in 1964. The Salatrillo Creek Sewerage System was constructed and went into service in 1966. Braunig Lake Park, which was operated by SARA, opened in 1967. The Upper Martinez Creek Sewerage System started operating in 1970.
It is important to remember our history, as we have done with many of the articles in this special edition of the River Reach. However, while we honor our past, we must not lose sight of where we are today or of future opportunities. Maintaining clean and healthy water in our rivers and creeks is an essential element of environmental sustainability. How we care for our watershed now will determine the health of rivers and creeks for future generations to enjoy.

The San Antonio River Authority (SARA) will continue to be a leader in promoting sustainability throughout our District. Some of the sustainability projects to be conducted by SARA beginning in 2012 include:

- two sustainable projects — a rain garden and an erosion control project — at SARA’s Environmental Center;
- the development of a new maintenance facility to be constructed in support of the Mission Reach Project using low impact development (LID) and best management practices (BMPs);
- the offering of sustainability training for both in-house and external audiences;
- the creation of a LID competition to promote this type of development throughout the San Antonio community; and
- the development of a LID and Green Infrastructure (GI) design manual for the San Antonio region.

Science, be it environmentally-based or engineering-based, is the foundation of service that SARA provides the community, and that will continue into the future. Conducting water quality monitoring, laboratory

(continued on next page)
and field activities and environmental investigations will continue. Developing and maintaining holistic watershed master plans, completing and implementing flood warning and response systems and continuing SARA’s partnership with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be a significant part of SARA’s future. Providing award-winning service at our wastewater treatment plants will continue, as well as providing wastewater assistance to the communities throughout our District. Growing nature-based recreational opportunities will also continue to be a focus for SARA. Of course, completing the San Antonio River Improvements Project in 2013, finishing the tree plantings along the Mission Reach by 2015 and continuing to maintain the Museum Reach, Eagleland and Mission Reach segments of the San Antonio River Walk will be an ongoing priority for SARA. Moving the Westside Creeks project forward from vision, through planning and into construction will be a SARA focus for years to come.

This is just a snap shot of where SARA is today and the direction we are moving. SARA’s core values of stewardship, integrity and excellence permeate all our efforts. We will continue to base our decisions on prudent financial management and sound scientific and engineering principles and practices. It has been a pleasure to serve the citizens of Bexar, Wilson, Karnes and Goliad Counties for the past 75 years, and we look forward to providing great and responsible service for years to come. For more information about SARA, please visit www.sara-tx.org.
| Gaylon Oehlke • Board Chairman  
| Karnes County | I am honored to serve on the Board of Directors of the San Antonio River Authority. As a retired farm and ranch lender, a current rancher and a SARA board member, the conservation of our natural resources continues to be a high priority for me. SARA has served the needs of the San Antonio River Basin for 75 years. With our highly professional staff and dedicated board, we are committed to continue to serve these needs as they relate to water issues. |
| Terry E. Baiamonte • Board Treasurer  
| Goliad County | The San Antonio River is a shared water resource. The SARA board, representing four counties, with varied interests, continues to manage this resource from a holistic and cooperative approach. Our staff is professional and dedicated. I am very honored to serve Goliad county, the entire watershed and the people of the state of Texas, to whom this resource belongs. |
| Sally Buchanan • Board Vice-Chair  
| Bexar County At-large | As a Bexar County board member, it is a pleasure to be connected with the San Antonio River Authority, an enlightened public agency that takes pride in doing excellent work. I have enjoyed the small part I have played in SARA’s role in the spectacular San Antonio River Improvements Project. By late summer of 2013, citizens and visitors will be able to use paths bordering the San Antonio River from Hildebrand down to Mission Espada—a distance of over 15 miles—surrounded by native plantings and growing trees. This project, with a river running through it, will connect over 2,000 acres of public lands—city, county, SARA and National Park Service. I expect SARA to continue its excellent work maintaining the River Improvements Project and developing enhancements to San Pedro Creek, as well as the work in flood risk management planning and encouraging all to do their part in improving the water quality of the river. |
| Darrell T. Brownlow, Ph.D. • Wilson County | South Texas is a great place to live, but with that comes a responsibility to keep it that way. Maintaining and improving the quality of our environment, including our lakes, rivers and streams is ultimately everyone’s duty, not just the River Authority’s. However, it’s more than just “the environment,” as management of the river involves crucial infrastructure issues like flood management and waste water handling. As this region continues to grow in population, these issues become even more critical. This is where having an experienced, talented and efficient staff of scientists, engineers, managers and support personnel will insure the River Authority is meeting the challenges of today and those which lay ahead. |
| Roberto G. Rodríguez • Board Secretary  
| Bexar County, District 2 | I am proud to be a part of the board as we celebrate 75 years of service. I am honored to have served during the completion of the River Improvements Project and now the beginning of the Westside Creeks Project. It is gratifying to see the community come together and encourage our elected officials to make changes in these creeks. The partnerships that we are building through this project are strong. History is being made in the Westside Creeks, and I am happy to know that SARA sees the potential and is willing to manage this project. |
| John J. Flieller • Wilson County | It continues to be an honor and a privilege to be a SARA Board member. I feel that I have been charged with directing and molding the future of the entire San Antonio River Basin, from the health of the headwaters to the whooping crane in the bays and estuaries. Through the development of paddle trails and continued work on programs to mitigate the severity of flood events, I am proud to be a part of the continued healthy development of the San Antonio River and all its tributaries. |


**Views From the Board of Directors**

**Mike Lackey, P.E. • Bexar County, District 3**

When it comes to the San Antonio River, I can truly say that I am standing on the shoulders of giants. It is definitely my good fortune to serve on the River Authority board at a time when the fruits of 20-plus years of other visionaries’ labors are being harvested, as in the San Antonio River Improvements Project. There is no more historic place, feature or story in Texas history than that of the San Antonio River. I feel humble to be a keeper of that history, if even for a short while. I am extremely proud to be a part of the historic redevelopment of our downtown, as the river plays such a critical role. With all our sophistication and advancement, we are once again learning the importance of the river, like our ancestors did so long before us.

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**H.B. “Trip” Ruckman, III • Karnes County**

I have been privileged to serve as a SARA board member representing Karnes County for over 20 years through the service of three general managers. I have followed my father’s legacy as a Karnes County representative and appreciate how much SARA has done for Karnes County, San Antonio and South Texas. Few people realize the major role SARA has played in protecting both the environment and our lives and property through their flood management efforts. From the numerous water detention dams in Bexar and Karnes Counties to the two huge tunnels under San Antonio, SARA has gotten it done for years. I’m very proud to have been associated with such a professional and effective organization. Currently, the River Improvements Project is expanding the amenities that are available along the southern portions of the river along the Mission Reach to create an environment that supports recreation and economic development that will benefit not only San Antonio but the whole area.

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**Hector Morales • Bexar County At-large**

As a second-term member on the Board of Directors for the San Antonio River Authority, it has been and continues to be an honor and a privilege to serve with such distinguished and notable colleagues. As an avid lover of topography and geography, I have always been interested in maps that show how and where places are depicted, especially the origins of rivers, streams and creeks that meander mile after mile in search of a bay, a gulf or an ocean. Although our river is not comparable in size to the Mississippi, Columbia or Rio Grande, it still holds an abundance of wealth. This wealth can only be measured and defined by our interest in protecting and preserving the ecological and environmental structure of the river itself.

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**Adair Sutherland • Goliad County**

SARA has enriched my life in so many ways. Representing Goliad County has been a privilege and honor. It has also allowed me to take part in and influence many worthwhile projects. Getting central water systems to Berclair, Fannin and La Bahia, establishing one of Texas’ first canoe trails and creating and maintaining the Branch River Park property are just a few projects, and there are still more to come.

As a member of the only elected River Authority board in Texas, I feel a deep responsibility to represent my county to the best of my ability. The SARA staff is exceptional, professional and dedicated and always strives to do better. I am proud to be part of the SARA team.

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**Nárizite Rubén Pérez • Bexar County, District 1**

Serving as a Board Member for the San Antonio River Authority has been a wonderful opportunity for me. I joined as a member to support the growth of SARA with the intention of encouraging the agency’s forward movement and with the hopes that our endeavors will continue to influence the political counterparts of our community.

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**Thomas G. Weaver • Bexar County, District 4**

I am honored to have been elected as a River Authority Director, now serving in my third term in office. I am very proud of the SARA staff and of the good work that has been accomplished during the years I have been on the Board. After a career as a military officer, I consider it a privilege to be able to continue to serve with such a fine organization as the San Antonio River Authority.

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The multi-purpose Nueva Street Bridge, Dam and Marina Project was completed by SARA in 1987.

SARA was awarded the 1995 EPA Region 6 Regional Administrator’s Environmental Excellence Award for Operation and Maintenance at the Martinez II Wastewater Treatment Plant.

SARA received the EPA National Award for Operation and Maintenance and the EPA Regional Administrator’s Environmental Excellence Award in 1996 for SARA’s wastewater services.
Past Board Members

Mr. D.F. Youngblood .............. created the district
Mr. C. Baumberger .......... served from 6/1937-6/1939
Mr. P. D. Mathis ............... served from 6/1937- 02/1948
Mr. E. H. Kifer ................ served from 6/1937-06/1948
Mr. Reagan Houston ........ served from 7/1939-9/1949
Mr. W. B. Tuttle .............. served from 6/1937-9/1954
Mr. John Weber .............. served from 5/1939-11/1955
Mr. B. B. McGimsey .......... served from 6/1937-11/1958
Mr. M. L. Roark ............... served from 6/1937-1960
Mr. A. B. Schroeter .......... served from 5/1939-3/1961
Mr. Frank T. Drought .......... served from 7/1949-10/1961
Mr. Melrose Holmgreen ....... served from 9/1949-10/1961
Mr. John C. Merchant ........ served from 5/1939-11/1961
Mr. Charles Albidress, Jr. .... served from 10/1961-2/1963
Mr. E. E. Voigt ................ served from 10/1954-10/1964
Mr. Paul N. Howell .......... served from 10/1964-1/1965
Mr. Arthur C. Anderson ...... served from 10/1961-2/1965
Mr. John F. Lott, Jr. .......... served from 7/1961-9/1965
Mr. Don Marshall ............. served from 1/1963-2/1966
Mr. George Casseb .......... served from 5/1965-1/1967
Mr. Joseph A. Potts ......... served from 3/1966-1/1967
Mr. George De La Garza ...... served from 1/1967-12/1968
Mr. J.W. “Bill” Perry ......... served from 1/1967-8/1969
Mr. C. W. Millikin, Jr. ....... served from 11/1962-6/1970
Mr. E. W. Schneider ......... served from 6/1961-12/1970
Mr. Ernest Wohlschlegel .... served from 1/1965- 12/1970
Mr. Curtis C. Gunn, Sr. ....... served from 10/1969-6/1971
Mr. Woodward W. Altgelt, Jr. served from 5/1965-12/1972
Mr. Thomas Drought .......... served from 10/1969-12/1972
Mr. Thomas F. Gallagher ...... served from 1/1969-8/1973
Mr. M. C. Giesecke .......... served from 2/1948-2/1977
Mr. Lawrence L. Reasoner .... served from 10/1961-2/1977
Mr. William E. Hayman ...... served from 1/1971-2/1977
Mr. W. G. McCampbell, Jr. ... served from 12/1965-3/1977
Mr. Reynolds N. Cate ....... served from 1/1973-1/1979

The San Antonio River Tunnel Project was completed in December 1997.
The San Antonio River Improvements Project (SARIP) began in 1998.
SARA was asked to serve as the administrative agency for Regional Water Planning Group for Region L in 1998.
The downtown portion of SARIP was completed in 2002.
### Past Board Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Term of Service</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Hugh Halff, Jr.</td>
<td>10/1973-1/1981</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. L. H. Von Dohlen</td>
<td>6/1961-2/1983</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Hugh C. Ruckman, Jr.</td>
<td>6/1961-8/1986</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. David Evans</td>
<td>1/1973-1/1987</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Walter W. McAllister, III</td>
<td>2/1977-1/1989</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. W. G. McCampbell, Jr.</td>
<td>5/1977-1/1991</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Allan B. Polunsky</td>
<td>2/1981-1/1993</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Jesse Oviedo</td>
<td>2/1989-1/1995</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Paul K. Herder</td>
<td>8/1971-1/1997</td>
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<td>Mr. Cecil W. Bain</td>
<td>2/1979-1/1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Ottis L. Walker</td>
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<td>Mr. R.H. Ramsey, Jr.</td>
<td>2/1983-1/2000</td>
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<td>Mrs. Martha Clifton McNeel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Ruben Espronceda</td>
<td>1/1995-1/2001</td>
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<td>Mr. Roger V. Gary</td>
<td>1/1993-1999</td>
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<td>Mr. Truett Hunt</td>
<td>2/1977-9/2002</td>
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<td>Mr. Leo J. Gleinser</td>
<td>1/1997-2/2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Nancy Steves</td>
<td>2/1987-1/2005</td>
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<td>Mr. J.C. Turner</td>
<td>2/1985-12/2005</td>
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<td>Mr. Jim Johnson</td>
<td>1/2001-10/2007</td>
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<td>Mr. Louis E. Rowe</td>
<td>1/1997-12/2007</td>
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<td>Mr. Jeff Neathery</td>
<td>5/2008-10/2009</td>
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<td>Mr. Hugh B. Ruckman, III</td>
<td>1/1987-present</td>
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<td>Mr. Thomas G. Weaver</td>
<td>1/1997-present</td>
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<td>Mr. A.D. Kollodziej, Jr.</td>
<td>11/1998-7/2011</td>
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<td>Mrs. Sally Buchanan</td>
<td>2/1999-present</td>
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<td>Mrs. Adair R. Sutherland</td>
<td>4/2000-present</td>
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<td>Mr. Roberto Rodriguez</td>
<td>1/2001-present</td>
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<td>Mrs. Terry E. Baiamonte</td>
<td>2/2003-present</td>
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<td>Mr. Gaylon Oehlke</td>
<td>6/2003-present</td>
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<td>Mr. Hector Morales</td>
<td>1/2005-present</td>
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<td>Mr. Názirite Rubén Pérez</td>
<td>10/2007-present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. John Flieller</td>
<td>5/2008-present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Michael W. Lackey, P.E.</td>
<td>11/2009-present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Darrell T. Brownlow</td>
<td>7/2011-present</td>
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SARA re instituted the ad valorem tax on property within the four county river basin beginning in the tax year 2002.

The Bexar Regional Watershed Management (BRWM) partnership was created in 2002.

The final dam within the Salado Creek Watershed Project was completed in 2004.

By 2005, SARA began to take steps to purchase water rights to help ensure adequate environmental flows in the river.
Recording Our History

By Steven Schauer and Sheba Sam

A recurring article in each issue of the River Reach is the employee highlight. For this special 75th anniversary edition of the River Reach, rather than just featuring one employee, we thought it would be better to provide a brief selection of quotes from SARA staff picked from SARA’s oral history archives (see article on the next page to learn more about SARA’s archive collection). We hope you enjoy this look at SARA’s history.

Michael (Mike) Gonzales (Deputy Director Of Technical Services), speaking about the Clean Rivers Program and SARA’s Environmental Sciences Department:

“So now we’re truly a regional entity; we serve beyond those four counties...We’re organized not only in Bexar County, but under the Clean Rivers Program, we’re organized across the watershed. We got to the point where now we’ve got a very sophisticated field staff...Jacques Cousteau would be impressed with the equipment that we have.”

“Special note: Mike passed away this June, 2012. SARA lost a true leader and passionate expert on watershed issues. Our thoughts go out to his family.

Steve Graham, P.E. (Assistant General Manager), speaking about SARA’s role in the community:

“I think our role is one of doing it in a holistic fashion where we look at the entire picture. So not discretely making decisions about parks or discretely making a decision about water quality or flood control, but doing all the decision-making in totality and having the bigger picture, the larger vision. I think we have the ability to be more holistic, larger scale and more focused on a longer term than many entities.”

Steve Raabe, P.E. (Director Of Technical Services) speaking about SARA’s involvement in the Lower Basin:

“We provide technical assistance on drainage issues, wastewater treatment plants and collection systems. We want to provide any assistance we can to let them know that they can turn to us for help when needed.”

Mark Sorenson, P.E. (Senior Supervisor Engineer) speaking about the San Antonio River Improvements Project:

“But it’s still cool to be involved from an engineering aspect in reducing the floodplain, making sure that happens, get the locks in place, which is a big deal from an engineering standpoint. So it’s still—for me, nice to be involved in it.” ★
SARA PARTNERS WITH UTSA ON ARCHIVES

By Gloria Rodriguez

In the Fall of 2009, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) began discussions with the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) about officially archiving SARA’s historical documents. In January of 2010, SARA received a National Endowment for the Humanities Act grant with the “We the People” designation to support the purchase of storage furniture and preservation supplies to enable the consolidation and care of the agency’s historical records. SARA entered into a contract with UTSA in February 2010 to start the collection of archives and house them temporarily at the Institute of Texan Cultures. Recently, the majority of archive materials were moved to their permanent location at the North Campus of UTSA at the Special Collections of the UTSA Libraries. Some archives are kept on hand at SARA’s home office.

Materials in SARA’s archives include initial planning reports and blueprints for development of the River Walk area as well as early 20th-century photographs of housing conditions and flood control efforts in San Antonio’s Mexican Quarter. Additional historical research materials in the collection include photographs and documentation of the flood of 1921, as well as reports, project materials, correspondence, maps, surveys, minutes, photographs, newspaper clippings and publications including SARA newsletters, magazines and brochures. SARA’s oral history collection is also housed within the archives at UTSA. The oral history collection is made up of over 30 recordings made by SARA board and staff, as well as key stakeholders, sharing their institutional knowledge about specific past and present SARA projects. SARA’s archive program is continuous and is updated every six months, coinciding with the end of SARA’s fiscal year.

For more information about SARA’s archives and our 75th Anniversary, and to view online archives such as publications, audio-visual files and oral histories, visit www.sara-tx.org.
Phases 1 and 2 of the Mission Reach opened in 2011.

The Guadalupe, San Antonio, Mission and Aransas Rivers and Mission, Opopo, Aransas and San Antonio Bays Basin and Bay Expert Science Team (BBEST) and Basin and Bays Area Stakeholder Committee (BBASC) submitted their recommendation reports in 2011.

In 2011, SARA opened the Branch River Park in Goliad.

In 2012, SARA opened the initial phase of the Helton San Antonio River Nature Park in Wilson County and the Saspamco Paddling Trail running from southern Bexar County into Wilson County.

San Antonio Channel Improvement Project c. 1960s (below)

P.H. Fagan Bridge Goliad, TX (above)

SARA operated Wastewater Treatment Plant (above)

Whooping Cranes (Grus americana) in San Antonio Bay (left)
SARA took on the role of Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) Delegation Partner with FEMA in 2012.

In 2012, the Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program stakeholders submitted a plan for approval to the Fish and Wildlife Service, and SARA’s role in the EARIP process expanded as SARA took on the responsibility to acquire 40,000 acre-feet of water rights in support of the EARIP plan.

The Mission Reach Project, along with the Museum Reach north of downtown, will be completed in 2013.
Water-related challenges are nothing new to Texas and certainly not within the San Antonio River Basin. From the San Antonio River Authority’s (SARA) creation in May 1937 as the San Antonio River Canal and Conservancy District, through today, SARA’s 75-year history shows our tenacity in addressing big challenges.

In 1937, Colonel W.B. Tuttle, SARA’s first leader, had the daunting task to assess the feasibility of the San Antonio River serving as a commercial barge canal connecting the Texas coast to San Antonio. After years of study, many technical and environmental reasons showed commercial barge traffic would not be feasible along the San Antonio River. Colonel Tuttle refocused SARA’s efforts towards flood protection following the 1946 flood. Tuttle’s work established SARA’s legacy to seek solutions to water-related challenges facing the basin. These solutions have not been accomplished by SARA alone. As Tuttle saw decades ago, working effectively with public and private partners and citizens, much more can be accomplished.

Our focus on flood management has spanned decades and has resulted in innovative, collaborative solutions. Two underground tunnels protect downtown San Antonio from flooding and 40 water detention dams provide flood protection for growing areas of Bexar and Karnes Counties. Major improvements to the San Antonio River and its tributaries reduced flood damage to neighborhoods. More recently, SARA’s use of state-of-the-art flood mapping and flood response technologies is providing important data that promote public safety.

With development, SARA expanded its focus to public health challenges to protect water quality and the river’s ecosystem. When the river carried sewage from San Antonio downstream, SARA challenged the city to improve its wastewater treatment, which resulted in significant improvements to water quality. Today, SARA’s water quality monitoring and laboratory services identify and track sources of contaminants in our waterways and analyze solutions to remove or reduce these sources. Improved engineering techniques make some solutions much more possible today than in Tuttle’s time. From the river’s headwaters to the bay and estuary, SARA’s knowledge and expertise supports informed decisions on the regional management of the river. Our engineers have evolved from planning traditional dams and channelization to more sustainable solutions, such as ecosystem restoration, natural channel design and low impact development.

Seventy-five years ago, the river was viewed as an unpredictable threat to life and property. Over the decades, the river has become an important economic driver and more recently a recreational resource. Although the challenges may be different, the tenacity to address this important water resource is no different today than in Colonel Tuttle’s time. SARA will continue to explore innovative and collaborative solutions that seek to maximize the benefits of the natural resource in an ever-changing, dynamic watershed.