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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The San Antonio River Authority’s (SARA) technical expertise has been inspiring actions for healthy creeks and rivers since our inception. In 1937, SARA was created to operate, maintain and conserve the San Antonio River and its tributaries for the State of Texas. For the past 80 years, SARA has been leading important issues such as water quality, stormwater and flood management.

In 1961, SARA was given property taxing authority for use in planning, operations and maintenance activities. This tax enabled the development of water quality monitoring programs, among other projects. Today, our scientists continue to provide service to our constituents by studying and monitoring water quality with our award winning state of the art laboratory.

In the 1970s, SARA began providing wastewater services to a number of communities in northeastern Bexar County and into the lower basin. In the 90s, SARA created and continues to develop watershed masterplans that address flooding, water quality and recreational solutions. Our stormwater experts continue to search for ways to treat the stormwater runoff before it enters our creeks and rivers. Additionally, they provide training to developers and professional engineers in an effort to keep stormwater quantity and quality top of mind from the start of any new development.

As leaders in water quality and as an enhancement to the enjoyment of our river, SARA has incorporated operations and maintenance of several parks in our jurisdiction. From the Museum and Mission Reach segments of the San Antonio River Walk to Branch River Nature Park in Goliad County, SARA’s experts work diligently to keep parks clean, safe and enjoyable for outdoor enthusiasts. Recent expansions include the addition of paddling trails on the San Antonio River providing new recreational opportunities connecting communities in new ways. Without good water quality, our constituents couldn’t enjoy our great river.

SARA will continue to provide exceptional service, and develop new programs to support our mission, for years to come. We hope our work inspires others to become active in our respective communities to help protect and enjoy our precious resource, its tributaries and the land surrounding it.

San Antonio River Authority Adopts $241.7 Million Budget

Each year, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) undertakes a comprehensive strategic planning and budget development process. The process involves a thorough assessment of the goals and opportunities emerging within each department and program at SARA. For Fiscal Year 2017/18, working in concert with SARA’s Board of Directors, SARA’s executives, managers and program leaders worked meticulously to identify and prioritize strategic opportunities to leverage resources that provide the highest benefit for communities throughout the river basin.

This year’s process resulted in appropriations totaling $241.7 million. To pay for this, SARA’s funding sources extend well beyond simple property tax dollars. The vast majority of SARA’s operating revenues come from sources other than property tax revenue including intergovernmental projects and charges for services. In fact, of this projected amount, the actual revenue generated from property taxes is estimated to be $27,062,143 or roughly 14% of SARA’s total budgeted revenue. However, while this may seem like a relatively small percentage, it is a fundamentally critical part of how SARA is able to accomplish its core objectives. There are many factors influencing the budget, and because SARA has established itself as an effective and reputable project manager for major capital improvements throughout the San Antonio River basin, SARA relies on the activities and funding capabilities of our public sector partners. This funding changes from year to year as projects are completed and new projects begin. Current improvement projects that are partner funded and SARA-managed include the San Pedro Creek Improvements Project, continued enhancements to the City of San Antonio linear creek greenway projects along the Westside Creeks, Brooks City Base trails and development of Escondido Park in Karnes County.

At SARA, we pride ourselves in our dedication to the highest level of customer satisfaction both to the communities we serve and to our partners. It is our mission to protect and enhance the creeks and rivers throughout the basin by providing excellent service, leadership and expertise. In this way, we strive to deliver an invaluable public service, accountable to our constituents, while exemplifying good fiscal stewardship of the public resources with which we are entrusted.
Since 1937, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) has provided leadership and expertise to protect and enhance the San Antonio River and its tributaries throughout its district of Bexar, Wilson, Karnes and Goliad counties. Through the knowledge and skill of professional and technical staff, SARA continues to develop and sustain the expertise needed to fulfill our vision of inspiring actions for healthy creeks and rivers. In recognition of SARA’s 80th Anniversary, the following information is a chronological look at SARA’s history, from its inception in 1937 to the present day.

THE EARLY YEARS (1937-1950)

On May 5, 1937, the 45th Legislature of Texas created the San Antonio River Canal and Conservancy District. The original members of the Board of Directors were all from Bexar County and they met for the first time on June 11, 1937. The focus of the newly created District was to plan a barge canal for commercial transportation of goods and materials by barge between San Antonio and the Texas coast. The lack of feasibility for the canal project combined with a devastating flood in San Antonio in 1946 changed the emphasis of the District from navigation to flood control. A San Antonio River Watershed Study was completed in 1952 which recommended the construction of approximately 85 dams throughout the basin.

THE 1950s

With a new focus on flood control, the District was renamed the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) in 1953. The dams in the Calaveras Creek (Bexar County) and Escondido Creek (Karnes County) watersheds were two of only four such flood control projects funded in the entire State of Texas in 1953. In 1954, Congress authorized construction of the San Antonio Channel Improvements Project (SACIP), on which SARA served as local sponsor for the project with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Construction began on the SACIP in 1958. By 1959, nine dams along Calaveras Creek and eleven along Escondido Creek were completed and plans were underway for additional dams along Martinez Creek and Salado Creek (both in Bexar County).
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 valuation. The additional tax revenue allowed SARA to initiate several new programs including the basin stream monitoring and surveillance program in 1962 - SARA stream monitoring is still going today. Construction of the SACIP remained the focal point of SARA throughout the 1960s. A severe flood in 1965 led to the project boundary being expanded in 1967. In 1968, the King William section of the SACIP was completed, which garnered the Chief of Engineers’ 1971 National Award of Merit for General Landscape Development. By the end of the decade, SARA had advanced over half of the construction on the SACIP, constructed fifteen dams of the Salado Creek Watershed Project, completed the San Antonio River Basin Pollution Prevention Study (the first of its kind in the state), opened two wastewater treatment facilities and further expanded its mission by including recreation with an agreement to operate Braunig Lake and Calaveras Lake Parks.

Throughout the 1970s, SARA continued construction on the SACIP, with a focus on Alazan, Martinez, San Pedro, Apache and Six Mile Creeks. Additionally, SARA increased water quality activities to include not only efforts to protect surface water, but also to protect the Edwards Aquifer. In 1973, the San Antonio River Corridor Study was completed, providing a conceptual plan for improvements along the San Antonio River from Hildebrand to I.H. 10 through downtown San Antonio. SARA led an engineering study of the structural integrity and adequacy of Olmos Dam in 1974, and by 1979 headed construction of the dam modifications which were completed in 1982. SARA staff moved into their new main office and laboratory facility at 100 E. Guenther in San Antonio in 1975 - this building still houses SARA’s main office. SARA constructed infrastructure and amenities for both Braunig Lake and Calaveras Lake Parks, and advanced additional parks and recreation activities. For example, in 1979, SARA cooperated with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to add public facilities to Goliad State Park and supported the initiation of planning by the National Park Service for the San Antonio Missions National Historic Park.
The SACIP continued into the 1980s with a focus on the development of by-pass tunnels to provide further flood control to downtown San Antonio – the concept was advanced in 1982 and preliminary designs were completed in 1985. While planning for the flood tunnels progressed throughout the 1980s, the multi-purpose Nueva Street Bridge, Dam and Marina Project was completed by SARA in 1987, which still serves today as a critical part of the flood control and operations of the San Antonio River Walk. SARA’s regional water quality laboratory expanded services in the 1980s, as did SARA’s wastewater treatment plants. By the end of the decade, four additional dams were added to the Salado Creek Watershed Project, bringing the total number of dams operated and maintained by SARA to thirteen in Karnes County and twenty-five in Bexar County. SARA continued its support of the San Antonio Missions National Historic Park by conveying to the park several parcels of land adjacent to the San Antonio River to expand and enhance the newly created National Park. Recreational use, primarily fishing, at Braunig Lake and Calaveras Lake Parks also continued to increase throughout the 1980s.

The SACIP continued with the construction of the San Antonio River Tunnel Project, which was initiated in 1993 and completed in December 1997. Ten months later, on October 17-18, 1998, south central Texas experienced record-breaking rainfall, and the tunnels performed as designed, sparing downtown San Antonio from a devastating flood. Throughout the 1990s, SACIP work also continued on San Pedro, Alazan, Martinez and Apache Creeks. An additional dam was completed as part of the Salado Creek Watershed Project in 1996, and the final dam to be built within Salado Creek Watershed began construction 1998. The mid-1990s also saw SARA complete several water quality activities, including: a water quality study in the River Loop area; a multi-year partnership to fund water quality and stream flow monitoring stations; a non-point source pollution pilot study and regional water quality studies; a Total Maximum Daily Load assessment on Salado Creek; and a biological study in the vicinity of Kelly Air Force Base. In 1998, SARA was asked to serve as the administrative agency for Region L – a responsibility SARA continues to have today. Activities pertaining to parks and recreation in the 1990s included: leasing SARA property at dam sites for recreational development and supporting the Mission Trails Project.
In 2000, SARA successfully obtained Congressional approval for environmental restoration and recreation as project purposes for the SACIP which opened the door for the development of the Mission Reach Project. SARA formed the San Antonio River Foundation in 2003, a non-profit whose purpose is to raise private money to bring artistic, recreational, environmental and educational enhancements to the River. An increase in water quality programs and tasks developed in the 1990s and expanded in the 2000s placed a significant load on SARA’s existing laboratory, which experienced not only expansion but investment in state-of-the-art equipment during the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2007, SARA gained national accreditation for its laboratory. SARA opened the Goliad Paddling Trail in 2007, its first officially designated paddling trail. In 2008, SARA amicably ended its 40 year relationship with CPS Energy to operate Braunig Lake and Calaveras Lake Parks in order to pursue other types of recreational properties throughout the basin. Construction of the Museum Reach began in 2007 and was completed in 2009. In 2009, SARA started several projects and community-wide advocacy focusing on best management practices (BMPs) such as Low Impact Development (LID), Green Infrastructure and Natural Channel Design (NCD).

### 2010 to Present

SARA created new digital flood insurance rate maps (DFIRMs) for its entire district, which resulted in some of the most detailed DFIRMs in the nation becoming official in 2010. In 2011, the Branch River Park opened in Goliad followed by the opening in 2012 of the John William Helton-San Antonio River Nature Park in Wilson County and the Saspamco Paddling Trail running from southern Bexar County into Wilson County. Also in 2012, SARA began the Escondido Creek Parkway Project in Kenedy. Working with state agencies, SARA conducted instream flow studies which became the basis for the environmental flow standards for the San Antonio River adopted in 2012 by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Construction on the $271.4 million Mission Reach Ecosystem Restoration and Recreation Project began in June 2008 and was completed in October 2013. In 2015, UNESCO inscribed the San Antonio Missions as a World Heritage Site thus recognizing their worldwide significance and the historical and cultural importance of the San Antonio River. In 2016, construction on the $125 million San Pedro Creek Improvements Project began. During the 2010s, SARA has been able to influence the inclusion of non-structural BMPs and/or NCD techniques into 11 local Capital Improvement Projects.
Information Technology (IT) and Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

SARA’s Information Technology (IT) Department is responsible for ensuring that SARA offers and utilizes the latest techniques in technology including: Geographic Information Systems (GIS) project management, web development, open data, support for key enterprise software and integration of the most innovative systems in the industry. One example of how SARA’s IT Department inspires action is through data collection. Sensors placed throughout the basin are monitored to generate dynamic and detailed data sets, models and maps that become vital communication tools for analysis and interpretation. SARA’s IT staff strive to provide the agency, its partners, and its constituents with high quality products and services.

Support Services (SS)

SARA takes great pride in making information and activities transparent to constituents and partners. The Support Services (SS) Department leads by example in this regard by making SARA’s financial and procurement information available online at www.sara-tx.org in a user-friendly, easily accessible manner. Serving all departments, projects and activities allows Support Services to take a strategic approach and perspective to help further SARA’s mission and vision. The Support Services Department helps SARA to provide excellent service to constituents by ensuring resources and solutions are in place to meet our responsibilities as an agency.

Intergovernmental and Community Relations (IGCR)

SARA’s Intergovernmental and Community Relations (IGCR) team acts as the liaison between the needs of the residents and projects that SARA undertakes to protect the San Antonio River watershed. The IGCR team works to tell the story of the San Antonio River and inspires the constituents of Bexar, Wilson, Karnes, and Goliad counties to take action in stewardship of the river through engagement, policy-making, education and volunteerism. In addition, the IGCR team provides community members with learning opportunities through field trips, presentations and festivals. This team collaborates with partner agencies, facilitates responsible decisions to protect the river and adjacent communities, as well as unites communities to create usable spaces for the constituents to experience and enjoy their river.

Watershed and Park Operations (WPO)

SARA’s Watershed and Park Operations (WPO) Department strives to inspire the community through their actions of managing, maintaining and protecting the San Antonio River and its tributaries. WPO staff actively engage with the community by offering stewardship opportunities as well as working to instill community appreciation and understanding of the natural environment. SARA’s WPO team hope constituents and visitors alike will visit, recreate, enjoy and ultimately join in protecting the San Antonio River. From keeping the river free from litter and debris to offering environmental and educational programs and events, SARA’s WPO team is working to inspire.
SARA's Human Resources (HR) Department, works to connect SARA's four-county jurisdiction by recruiting highly passionate individuals to join SARA's team of inspirers. At SARA, we work to develop dedicated leaders who find inspiration in the purposeful work they do to keep the San Antonio River safe, clean and enjoyable.

Watershed Engineering (WSE)

Often behind the scenes, SARA's Watershed Engineering (WSE) staff provides technical support and project management for capital improvement projects and master planning. This department builds opportunities for recreation, while keeping the community safe from flooding. WSE prides itself in being a pillar of expertise and good stewardship for the San Antonio River basin and its constituents. The department provides quality engineering services, project management, and technical support services for a diverse range of SARA initiatives and existing operations. SARA's engineers are passionate about the work they do and it shines through in their community outreach efforts.

Real Estate (RE)

As a small but mighty team, SARA's Real Estate (RE) team works to acquire land rights for parks, paddling trails, utilities, environmental efforts and various other projects that support SARA's role of promoting and inspiring actions for healthy creeks and rivers.

Environmental Sciences Department (ESD)

The Environmental Sciences Department (ESD) is enhancing watershed health through scientific expertise and strategic solutions. The department unites communities through innovative technologies to inspire environmental awareness. The team researches, analyzes and provides scientific information to make informed decisions and policy recommendations throughout the San Antonio River Basin. ESD provides water quality and environmental monitoring, laboratory analysis and stormwater monitoring. The department strives to be a full service resource for SARA, partnering agencies and businesses to comply with environmental and public health regulations. Through the services provided by ESD, citizens in the basin become more aware of the need for improved water quality, ecosystem health and optimum management of water resources.

Utilities

SARA began providing wastewater utility services in 1966. Today, SARA's Utilities team manages and maintains several wastewater treatment plants. The team inspires actions by protecting public health, supporting a thriving ecosystem, educating the public and practicing resourceful tactics to provide the most cost-effective solutions. As a team, the department strives to produce the highest quality effluent possible to protect public safety and improve the quality of the tributaries that lead to the San Antonio River. As public education advocates, the Utilities Department encouraging better waste disposal through the Fats, Oils and Grease (FOG) program and tours of the wastewater treatment facilities.

“...unites communities through innovative technologies to inspire environmental awareness.”
On June 21, 2017, the Board of Directors of the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) adopted a $241.7 million budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017/18 that funds the operations and a variety of projects and programs that support the vision of Inspiring Actions for Healthy Creeks and Rivers. Of the $241.7, $41.1 million makes up the General Fund portion which is supported by the collection of property tax at a proposed rate of $0.01729 per $100 of valuation, a rate unchanged from the previous two fiscal years. The adopted budget took effect on July 1, 2017.

A main objective in the development of the annual budget is to target activities that contribute to planning and execution of SARA’s strategic plan and organization priorities. For FY 2017/18, several areas of focus were established through the efforts of staff and the Board of Directors. The San Pedro Creek Improvement Project, one of this year’s most visible projects, accounts for nearly $44 million in the adopted budget. In addition, investments in technology, replacement of aging assets, and staff and equipment for ongoing and new operation and maintenance activities – including San Pedro Creek – within our Watershed and Park Operations department are some of the highlights within the upcoming annual budget.

For FY 2017/18, SARA has allocated an additional $2.9 million in General Fund revenues to support 50 new and ongoing projects across six programs tied to the strategic mission of the agency. In total, including projects funded from sources other than the General Fund, there are 69 authorized projects in the adopted budget that will assist in advancing SARA’s mission and support partner funded projects.

The approved FY 2017/18 budget is larger than the FY 2016/17 budget due to partner funding provided to SARA for management of major capital improvement projects, primarily the San Pedro Creek Improvements Project, which accounts for nearly $44 million in the adopted budget. All other major revenues and expenditures remain relatively flat in the upcoming fiscal year. The FY 2017/18 budget consists of the following major areas of activity: Capital Improvements, $118.3 million; General Fund, $41.1 million; Utility Operations, $17.9 million; Grants, $6.5 million; and Debt Service, $5.4 million.

The proposed tax rate of $0.01729 is unchanged for the third consecutive year and equates to an estimated $29.32 to be paid annually by the average homeowner. SARA is authorized by the State Legislature to collect an ad valorem tax at a maximum of $0.02 per $100 of assessed value. The tax rate must be set at the same rate throughout SARA’s four-county district including Bexar, Wilson, Karnes and Goliad counties and may only be used for planning and operations and maintenance activities. The SARA Board of Directors will take action on the final tax rate in September after receipt of the final property valuations in July. A public hearing will be held prior to adoption of the tax rate.

Additional highlights and organization narratives can be found within the budget document posted at www.sara-tx.org.
In the words of the poet Elizabeth Andrew, ‘volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.’ Our Watershed Wise Warriors have definitely shown their passion for protecting and preserving our watershed through their dedication, commitment and hard work.

As part of San Antonio River Authority’s (SARA) 80th anniversary, we want to dedicate this Watershed Wise Spotlight to celebrate the milestones of our volunteers over the years.

Watershed Wise Warriors serve as community defenders of the flora and fauna of the waterways giving of their time and energy to advance the sustainability of the watershed. Since its launch in 2014, participants in the Watershed Wise Warriors program have dedicated thousands of volunteer hours to actively make an impact within the San Antonio River watershed. Over 600 registered Watershed Wise Warriors have helped support SARA’s mission and vision by picking up trash and planting trees to collecting and recording citizen science data.

This year, SARA launched two additional volunteer programs under the Watershed Wise Warriors:

- The Watershed Wise Volunteer Gardeners
- The Watershed Wise Paddling Corps

Our inaugural class of the Watershed Wise Volunteer Gardeners successfully completed their training this past spring. These trained individuals will now conduct independent landscape maintenance on areas along the San Antonio River managed by SARA with the support of our Sustainable Landscape Maintenance team.

This summer, SARA will begin to recruit active paddlers to join the Watershed Wise Paddling Corps. Once registered, these volunteers will be asked to independently paddle the San Antonio River – Mission Reach Paddling Trail to participate in cleanups and report obstructions and issues to SARA staff in an effort to assist in maintaining the paddling trails.

In addition to these two new programs, SARA will continue to work with internal departments and community partners to offer Watershed Wise Warrior opportunities throughout Bexar, Wilson, Karnes and Goliad counties. These opportunities will be sent monthly via email to registered Watershed Wise Warrior participants.

Join us in our efforts by visiting www.sara-tx.org. Click on the Watershed Wise icon to learn about all the ways individuals, businesses and organizations can join us in our vision of Inspiring Actions for healthy creeks and rivers.
Escondido Creek Parkway

Kristen Hansen, Watershed Park & Operations Manager

Escondido Creek stretches 1.25 miles through the City of Kenedy before joining with the San Antonio River. For the past few years, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) and the City of Kenedy have worked together to acquire property along Escondido Creek for the purpose of creating a public park for its citizens.

In September 2016, the Kenedy Chamber of Commerce and 4B Community Development Corporation announced a $1.2 million dollar investment to support the Escondido Creek Parkway Project. The donated funds will be utilized towards the design and development of the project, which is being managed by SARA. In 2016, SARA held a series of public meetings for the Escondido Creek Parkway Project to establish a vision of what the park could look like. That vision includes a trail system, playground and other recreational amenities along the creek.

This past year, SARA established the Escondido Creek Oversight Committee (EOC). This committee consists of representatives from the City of Kenedy, the 4B Corporation, the Chamber of Commerce, the Kenedy School Board, Kenedy Parks and Recreation Board, the San Antonio River Foundation and the San Antonio River Authority. The purpose of the committee is to be ambassadors offering feedback to ensure the community is represented throughout the Escondido Creek Parkway Project.

The total project is estimated to cost $3.5 million. The project has received funding from the 4B Corporation, the Kenedy City Council and the Chamber of Commerce amongst other groups.

Confluence Park Update

How Our Past and Present Can Lead San Antonio into the Future

Robert Amerman, Executive Director, San Antonio River Foundation

From the west bank of the San Antonio River, just north of San Pedro Creek’s inflow, one can witness the Past, Present, and Future winding through the creation of Confluence Park.

The ‘Past’ can be measured in many ways: geologically, historically, culturally; the possibilities are endless. Over time, the park’s three-acre site embodied a host of signatures: ancient ocean floor, meandering riverbank, place of sustenance, industrial laydown yard, meadow, parking lot and river access point, to name a few.

The site’s ‘Present’ is represented by a construction site on-track for completion of the new park in December 2017. Perhaps more importantly, the park’s design and construction processes embody present and future collaboration: embrace of its neighbors, support of its local businesses and an expansion of opportunity.

The Park’s ‘Future’ represents the sharing of the perspectives of educators, researchers and engaged citizens with students of all ages. Our future will demand dialogues surrounding issues of water, conservation, drought and change in the American West. Our coming generations will require a clear understanding of how they fit into increasingly complex resource-related puzzles. Confluence Park and SARA’s educational programming will provide our children with the tools they’ll need to understand these issues and to thrive. Our kids will learn that the future holds limitless possibilities when challenges are solved creatively.

We are so proud that this modest site on San Antonio’s south side will play an important role in celebrating our past, evolving our present, and enabling our future. Our small park’s mission is designed to illuminate a bright future for San Antonio, our region, and our world.
San Pedro Creek: Celebrating Arts And Culture

Bridget Hinze Weber, Executive Offices Administrator

San Pedro Creek is the true birthplace of the San Antonio community, yet today it is a mistreated, ignored drainage ditch. That’s why Bexar County and San Antonio River Authority (SARA) leaders have acted on an opportunity to reclaim a natural amenity rooted in history and culture; and turning the vision for San Pedro Creek into a reality. In 2013, the Bexar County Commissioners Court approved an initial investment of $125 million in the San Pedro Creek Improvements Project, and soon after entered into an agreement with SARA to manage the project. Construction of the large-scale project kicked off in January of 2017; the first phase from the tunnel inlet near Fox Tech High School to Houston Street will be completed by May 2018. The San Pedro Creek Culture Park will be unveiled at San Antonio’s Tricentennial celebration.

The linear park will stretch two miles through the west side of downtown, flowing by historical and cultural sites including the Christopher Columbus Italian Society, the historic Alameda Theater, the Spanish Governor’s Place, the Navarro House and the soon-to-be Ruby City at the Linda Pace Foundation. SARA’s collaboration with Bexar County and the City of San Antonio will replace the concrete-lined draining ditch with a vibrant public space that links these cultural sites, while improving water quality and stormwater management.

SARA will operate the park ensuring not only a high quality of park maintenance, but also dynamic programming experiences. The programming will be arts and culture focused inviting people to reconnect with a place of great historical and cultural significance through the arts. Activation of the park will be through various types of art and programming including temporary and changing works of arts; performance, music, dance, and poetry; permanent or integrated works of art; and word art and signage. The park will be a place that celebrates and sustains arts and culture experiences by encouraging authentic and varied works and performances.

Visit www.spcproject.org to learn more about the project and arts programming, or to sign up for a construction tour.

Envisioning and Connecting the Westside

Therese Kenner, Intergovernmental Relations Coordinator

Elmendorf Lake Park Improvements Project

The City of San Antonio, Bexar County, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA), and Our Lady of the Lake University joined community leaders and residents on January 21, 2017 to celebrate the re-opening of a $15.4 million investment to restore Elmendorf Lake Park. Elmendorf Lake Park has been transformed into a beautifully reimagined destination park that boasts many Low Impact Development (LID) features such as rain gardens, wetlands, and bio-filtration swales to restore water quality. Play areas, expanded bus stops, pedestrian bridges, a fishing pier, picnic areas, and hike and bike trails also enhance this neighborhood park which draws families to recreate. The intricate tile benching along the Lake Plaza showcases the community’s culture making it a great place for the Westside.

Westside Creeks

The City of San Antonio (City) invested $6.7 million and expanded the Howard W. Peak Greenway Trails System to the Alazán, Martinez and Apache/San Pedro Creekways through the City Parks Development and Expansion Venue Project. The City and the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) worked together to design, construct and improve trails along the Westside Creeks. Recently, Alazan and Martinez Creeks received additional funding and the community is excited about the additional improvements to the trail segments. The additional trails will give residents living in the Woodlawn Lake area (Alazan Creek), Deco District and Beacon Hill Neighborhoods (Martinez Creek) access to approximately 12 miles of Westside Creeks hike and bike trails connecting to area parks, local businesses, schools, downtown and to the San Antonio River.
The Future of the San Antonio River from a Child’s Perspective

Carrie Merson, Education Specialist

Our San Antonio River Authority (SARA) educators, notated futuristic thoughts from San Antonio’s Northside Independent School Districts elementary students during a field trip on the banks of the San Antonio River.

“It would be cool to have robots built with healthy mindsets to clean the river. But for now we have to keep it clean ourselves.” - Luis

“I hope in the future people will be allowed to swim in the San Antonio River. But people need to keep it clean.” - Christian

“When I’m grown up, I want to bring my kids to the river and hope they will be able to swim. We love this place.” - Alyssa

“I think we’ll see more wild animals, like deer and foxes, around the river in 20 years. Especially if we keep the litter out of it.” - Serenity
Commemorating 80 Years of Service

**Steven Schauer, Director of Government and Public Affairs**

It is a pleasure to serve the citizens of Bexar, Wilson, Karnes and Goliad counties. In recognition of the San Antonio River Authority’s (SARA) 80th anniversary, SARA will be making contributions to the communities we serve.

SARA’s 80th anniversary commemorative donations include contributing fifteen benches to be installed in community parks and/or public locations. Wilson County and the cities of Floresville, Stockdale, La Vernia and Poth will each receive a bench for their communities as well as Karnes County and the cities of Karnes City, Kenedy, Runge and Falls City. Goliad County and the City of Goliad will receive five benches to be installed at various county and city locations.

In Bexar County, fifteen tables and fifty chairs will be donated to support the education center at Confluence Park, which is funded, and is currently under construction by the San Antonio River Foundation. When Confluence Park opens in January 2018, SARA and the San Antonio River Foundation will utilize the park as a destination for learning and recreation, inspiring visitors while teaching environmental science and sustainability to children and adults from across the region.

Additionally, SARA is developing a new recreational basin map. The San Antonio River Basin Guide will provide valuable information about many of the nature-, history- and cultural-based recreational parks and locations found throughout the San Antonio River Watershed. The recreational basin map will soon be online at www.sara-tx.org. As a small token of appreciation during SARA’s 80th anniversary, the basin guide will be mailed to those signed up to receive the quarterly *River Reach Newsletter*.

As SARA commemorates 80 years of service, we remain committed to making decisions addressing watershed issues and priorities based on prudent financial management and sound scientific and engineering principles. We look forward to providing collaborative, adaptive, strategic and responsible service for years to come.

Learn more about SARA’s parks, recreation and events by visiting www.sara-tx.org or these popular social media sites.
Balancing the Changing Dynamics of the San Antonio River Basin for 80 Years

Suzanne Scott, General Manager

For the past eight decades, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) has responded to the changing environment within a growing region. Strong economic development and population growth within the basin has brought with it additional flooding challenges, water quality threats and demands for water and wastewater services. During this same period, our creeks, rivers, bays and estuaries have become more desirable for recreational use, tourism and to support an enhanced quality of life. Although these pressures on the resources of the basin might seem in conflict, the board, management and staff at SARA continue to work toward solutions that balance these watershed demands for the benefit of our communities.

As stewards of rivers, creeks and tributaries within the San Antonio River Basin, we have spent most of our 80 years reacting to the impacts of increased development by building dams, engineering rivers and creeks to convey flood waters and adding wastewater infrastructure to respond to growing communities. Since the 1990s, SARA has had more opportunity to focus on planning with a view toward holistic management of these resources. Through the San Antonio River Improvements Project, for example, SARA led the effort to plan a unique set of improvements along the river in San Antonio that now serve to catalyze economic development while providing more appreciation and enjoyment along a healthier riverine ecosystem. Additionally, we have completed watershed master plans that model the hydraulics and hydrology of creeks and rivers to identify approaches that mitigate flooding and reduce the impact of stormwater pollution. Our scientists and engineers stay current on all the latest techniques to ensure that recommended projects can produce the desired results.

Our history is also marked by strong partnerships. The basin’s rivers and creeks are safer and more enjoyable because of our relationships with Bexar, Wilson, Karnes and Goliad counties and the numerous municipalities throughout our district. By working with local communities, we have established development standards, addressed threats to the watershed and improved quality of life. Going forward, these long-standing partnerships will benefit SARA’s mission as we work to influence policy decisions that impact the watershed. Through sound science, engineering and leadership, you can be assured that our dedication and stewardship will serve the public for decades to come.