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News Release

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NON-NATIVE NUTRIA POPULATION TO BE HUMANELY REMOVED ALONG THE MISSION REACH

Invasive Species Damaging the Ecosystem Restoration Project

SAN ANTONIO, TX – The San Antonio River Authority (SARA) is contracting with wildlife management specialists to provide assistance in managing the non-native nutria population that have been burrowing into the banks and causing erosion issues along the Mission Reach segment of the San Antonio River Walk. As the nutria population continues increasing, wildlife management specialists will be installing a total of 40 visible trapping mechanisms along an 8-mile stretch of the Mission Reach. The traps will assist in managing this non-native species and will be placed off the trails along the banks of the San Antonio River. For the safety of the community, SARA is advising caution and encouraging community members not to come in contact with these traps.

As seen in previous years, nutria have damaged the San Antonio River banks and have destroyed significant portions of the restored native emergent plants within the Mission Reach segment. The removal of this non-native species is to protect restored ecosystems from further damage. Nutria eat the soft succulent parts of the vegetation near the base of plants and the roots. Besides their destructive appetite, nutria also damage the environment by burrowing into the soft soil in the banks of the river producing excess erosion which causes banks to collapse and fail.

Nutria are large, brown, stocky rodents that are very similar in size to beavers. Instead of the beaver's famous broad flat tail, nutria have long round scaly tails with bristles. Breeding up to two times per year with up to nine offspring per litter, nutria populations can increase rapidly. These semi-aquatic rodents prefer to live in marshes and riverbanks where they forage on 2.5-3.5 pounds of vegetation daily. They arrived in North America in the 1930s as a fur bearing species and since then, they have spread to cover the eastern two-thirds of Texas as well as many other states.

“As the nutria population continues to increase along the Mission Reach, their feeding and burrowing habits are degrading the thriving riparian ecosystem restoration along that segment of the San Antonio River. As the managing agency responsible, we must look at options to assist in the non-native species control effort,” said SARA’s Watershed & Park Operations Manager Kristen Hansen. “We’ve worked with local and national agricultural services to find a viable solution to the damage caused by the nutria population and will continue every effort we can to preserve the ecosystem and the health of the San Antonio River.”

The wildlife management specialist contract to remove these rodents is for 70 days and is in accordance with the guidelines of the United States Department of Agriculture’s Wildlife Services. If the community has any questions, they can contact SARA at (210) 227-1373.

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The San Antonio River Authority (SARA) was created by the 45th Texas Legislature on May 5, 1937 and reorganized in 1961 to plan, manage and implement water-related programs and projects within the San Antonio River Watershed. The State of Texas empowered SARA to preserve, protect and manage the resources and the ecology of the San Antonio River and its tributaries. To learn more about the SARA, visit our website at www.sara-tx.org.