

THE SAN ANTONIO  RIVER AUTHORITY

River Reach

THE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN ANTONIO RIVER AUTHORITY **SPRING 2021**



To harmonize the needs of people and nature through our stewardship of rivers and land.

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Vision

INSPIRING ACTIONS FOR HEALTHY CREEKS AND RIVERS

Mission

COMMITTED TO SAFE, CLEAN, ENJOYABLE CREEKS AND RIVERS

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Welcome Our New General Manager

STEPHEN T. GRAHAM, P.E., CFM, INTERIM GENERAL MANAGER

On Wednesday, March 17th, the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) Board of Directors named Derek Boese as the agency's new General Manager following a national search to replace Suzanne B. Scott who retired in October 2020. During the March 17th board meeting, River Authority Board Chairman Darrell Brownlow thanked Lehman Associates of Austin, Texas for helping to conduct the executive search for the River Authority and commended the thorough selection process that took place to find qualified candidates.

Chairman Brownlow went on to say, "I'm confident that Derek will continue to build on the great foundation of engineering project management, scientific services, and environmental stewardship the River Authority has become known for."

Our new General Manager has an extensive professional background that includes a career in the U.S. Army, where he served in Iraq as an Engineering and Construction Program Manager leading a combat unit based at the 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Texas. Following his successful military career, Derek took a position as an Associate Vice-President at Atkins North America where he was selected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to serve as the first Chief of Staff for the Hurricane Protection Office, which was created

following Hurricane Katrina. His career also includes service as Vice President of Professional Service Industries in Jefferson, LA and as Executive Director of the East Jefferson Levee District in Elmwood, LA. Derek is finishing up his service as the Chief Administrative Officer for the Flood Protection Authority – East, a regional agency based in New Orleans where he oversees a \$4 billion regional flood risk management system.

Addressing the board on March 17th, Derek said, "I look forward to meeting the River Authority team and getting to know the elected officials and community leaders of Bexar, Wilson, Karnes, and Goliad counties. My experience in flood risk reduction, ecosystem restoration, and recreation management fits well into the River Authority's mission being committed to safe, clean, and enjoyable creeks and rivers. I'm ready to get to work!"

Derek's first day will be May 3rd, so my time as Interim General Manager will soon be coming to an end. It's been a great pleasure to serve in this capacity but I'm not going anywhere and will resume my duties as the Assistant General Manager. I look forward to helping Derek transition into his role here as General Manager.

Pictured: Dr. Darrell Brownlow, Ph.D., Board Chairman (left) and Derek Boese, JD, PMP, LEED-AP (right)



2020 Fall Hazardous Waste Pick Up Events

ALICIA LOTT COWLEY, BOARD MEMBER, GOLIAD COUNTY



For over a decade, the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) has organized single day events to help recycle and safely dispose of Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) for the residents of Wilson, Karnes, and Goliad counties. Due to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, the Spring 2020 events in all three counties

were cancelled. River Authority staff regrouped for the Fall 2020 HHW events. Following the guidance of elected officials and public health professionals, participants were required to remain in their vehicles and staff and vendors wore masks and other personal protection equipment. The special precautions were utilized to ensure the health and safety of staff, participating vendors, and the participating public, and as a result, the River Authority was able to safely hold HHW events in Goliad and Karnes counties.

In Goliad, River Authority staff worked with the Goliad County Sheriff's office, City of Goliad Public Works Staff, a couple of local volunteers, and both the Household

Hazardous Waste and Electronics Waste vendors to hold an HHW event on December 5, 2020. Despite the pandemic, or maybe because of, there was a 45% increase in participating vehicles from the year before. As expected, the increased number of participants resulted in more waste collected this year compared to what was collected in Goliad in 2019, including an additional 3.5 tons of HHW, 1,500 more pounds of electronics, and 300 more tires.

At the community's request and due to increasing participation, Goliad was scheduled to have two HHW collection events in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic threw a wrench into those plans, but the River Authority is again aiming to hold two events in Goliad this year. The River Authority is also planning to hold the traditional spring and fall HHW collection events in Karnes and Wilson counties this year as well. Be on the lookout for event notices in your mailbox and local newspapers for specific dates, times, and locations of upcoming events.

For more information about HHW Events, please visit the events page at sariverauthority.org.

New Recreational Video Series Provides Answers to Popular Questions

YVIAND SERBONES-HERNANDEZ, BRAND & PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR II

As part of our commitment to safe, clean, enjoyable creeks and rivers, the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) offers free park programming throughout our four-county service district in an effort to promote our parks and trails and forge meaningful connections to area creeks and rivers.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the River Authority's parks and trails have remained open, providing important recreational opportunities along the San Antonio River. Our Recreation and Park Programming staff has produced a video series to provide answers to their most popular recreation questions received from the public. The first video of the series featuring our recommendations for fishing on the San Antonio River Walk premiered this past February on the River Authority's YouTube channel.

The series will touch on popular topics that include kayaking on the San Antonio River Walk, the SASPAMCO Paddling Trail, Goliad Paddling Trail, and Seadrift Paddling Trail as well as birdwatching and guided nature walks along some of our operated parks along the San Antonio River.

The videos are scheduled to be published over the course of the year and they will all be available to the public in English and Spanish. We will also be promoting the premiere of each of the videos on our blog so make sure to visit our website at sariverauthority.org to view our current entries and sign up to receive new post alerts!



Can Ordering Take Out Food Be More Sustainable?

MICHELLE E. GARZA, STORMWATER ANALYST

Have you found yourself with a lot of extra plastic cups, food containers, cutlery, and napkins from ordering takeout? Here are some sustainable actions you can take to reduce take out waste and put your stockpile to good use. When ordering by phone or in person, ask your server to hold the cutlery, condiments, napkins, and anything you may not need. If ordering online, add a note or check the box to indicate what you do or don't need in your order. This saves the restaurant money too, so they may even thank you.

Now, what to do with everything you've already collected? Some options are to keep cutlery and napkin packs for picnics, camping, or other events, or you can donate them. Another is to reuse food containers for leftovers or other projects around the house. Whatever you decide to do with your stockpile, please help keep it out of the environment. All too often these items become litter, which is picked up by stormwater runoff, and they end up in area creeks and rivers. This impacts not only the native wildlife that depends on that ecosystem to be healthy, but humans too. Trash in

the environment is unsightly and it costs our community thousands of dollars annually to clean up. Research has also found that plastics in our environment break down into microscopic pieces that end up in fish, turtles, birds, and other animals, which results in plastic making its way into our food systems.

It is imperative we do our part to keep waste out of the environment by remembering to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Reduce by not taking unneeded items. Reuse items you already have, and if you can't reuse the item, before throwing it in the trash, ask yourself if it can be recycled or donated. If you aren't sure, check your local recycling vendor's guidelines. These seemingly small actions add up! Together we can keep creeks and rivers safe, clean, and enjoyable for each other and future generations. Thank you for doing your part!

To learn other ways to show your river pride, visit the Be River Proud page at sariverauthority.org.





RIVER CLICKS

PHOTO CONTEST

JEANETTE GONZALEZ, COMMUNITY RELATIONS COORDINATOR I

The 4th annual River Clicks Photo Contest is currently underway, and we're looking for your most unique and creative photos that showcase the San Antonio River! The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) encourages the community to participate in this annual photo contest that includes outdoor recreation prize packages for the winners.

This year's special category is the John William Helton-San Antonio River Nature Park in Wilson county! Helton Nature Park is celebrating its 10th year of operation and has provided a great outdoor space to the local communities of Floresville and surrounding areas. Visitors of the park can enjoy year-round primitive camping with access to the San Antonio River for paddling adventures. A pavilion, playground, and sports activities are also available for guests of all ages to enjoy.

The Seasonal Variation category was introduced in 2020 and is back in the lineup to showcase the seasonal changes of the San Antonio River Basin.

Judge's will select winning photographs from the following categories:

- 1- **Creeks & Rivers** - Images that have a focal point of a creek or river within the River Authority's four-county jurisdiction.
- 2- **Recreation** - Images capturing the use and enjoyment of creeks or rivers within the San Antonio River Basin, including, but not limited to, paddling; walking, running, or cycling on a trail; fishing; picnicking; or camping.

- 3- **Animals** - Images capturing native wildlife in their habitat.
- 4- **Plants** - Images capturing plant life or pollinators and insects.
- 5- **Seasonal Variation** - season related variation of the San Antonio River.
- 6- **Special Category** - Helton Nature Park in Wilson County.
- 7- **Students** - Images capturing any of the above categories but submitted by a contestant under the age of 18. *Parent or guardian consent is required, and a waiver must be submitted at the time of entry.

Your submission may also be considered for Judges' Choice for Best Photograph from Bexar, Wilson, Karnes, or Goliad counties.

People's Choice will open to the public for voting once the judges have selected the finalists. Upon conclusion of the contest, the winners will be announced and awarded outdoor recreation prize packages valued up to \$500 and up to \$1,000 for the special category. Winners will be recognized through various promotional activities throughout the year.

Photo contest submissions are accepted February 26 – May 9. To learn more about the River Clicks Photo Contest, please visit sariverauthority.org or you can go directly to riverclicks.org to enter.



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For more information, please visit sariverauthority.org or follow [@sanantonioriver](https://twitter.com/sanantonioriver) on these social media platforms.



South Texas Natives

CARRIE MERSON, BRAND & PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

The San Antonio River Basin is no stranger to the Texas bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*). The colorful vistas the State Flower of Texas help to create in the Spring can be just as captivating as a close-up observation of its intricate form can be.


While enjoying your family portrait or picnic amongst the bluebonnets, be sure to take a closer peek at the plant. The bluebonnet is not one singular flower, but rather a cluster of anywhere between 10 and 50 individual flowers, varying in tones of rich blues with a touch of white.

Pollinators notice this uniquely colorful flower. You might spot a hairstreak butterfly (*Subfamily Theclinae*) fluttering along bluebonnet patches looking for a place to lay their eggs. The caterpillars will then devour the leaves to grow and prepare for metamorphosis. Texas native bee and honeybee populations look to the bluebonnet for nectar. Of course, this is a win-win for the plant which becomes pollinated in the process. The resulting seedpods share characteristics with green beans and peanuts because bluebonnets are in the pea

family (*Fabaceae*)! Don't eat them though, because its seeds and other plant parts are toxic.

An equally important contribution of the bluebonnet to a thriving ecosystem is what is happening underground. The roots of the plant have a symbiotic relationship with a species of bacteria, called *Rhizobium*, that lives on its roots. The bacteria fixes nitrogen from the air producing a usable form of nitrogen that the bluebonnet needs. Therefore, no extra fertilizer is needed to keep the plant healthy! In turn, the bacteria benefits with life support from the bluebonnet. At the end of its lifecycle, the plant decomposes and returns this usable nitrogen to the soil, fertilizing the land around it.

Beyond the good vibes that its beauty brings in the spring, the bluebonnet is important to a healthy San Antonio River Basin, contributing to a harmonious balance of healthy soils and pollinator support. By planting more native plants, like the bluebonnet, we can help create that harmonious spring vision and grow the support of a safe, clean, and enjoyable San Antonio River, too.



FLOWER FACT: TEXAS HAS 5 STATE FLOWERS! THERE ARE 5 DISTINCT SPECIES OF BLUEBONNET ACROSS TEXAS. EACH SPECIES IS STILL CONSIDERED TO BE STATE FLOWER OF TEXAS.

Salado Creek Oversight Committee

JIM CAMPBELL, BOARD VICE-CHAIR, BEXAR COUNTY, DISTRICT 4



Residents have enjoyed the well-established Salado Creek portion of the Howard W. Peak Greenway Trail system, a beloved natural resource on the east and southeast part of Bexar County. Due to its great importance to our community, the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) has identified the restoration

of Salado Creek as a potential project in the Bexar County River and Creeks Program. The project will improve the stability of the creek and protect its banks by addressing erosion, establishing riparian buffer areas, removing rubble and debris, and reestablishing native vegetation in specific target areas. The project will also enhance pedestrian access and enjoyment of the creek while promoting opportunities for economic development.

To ensure that the community guides this project, Commissioner Tommy Calvert, the Bexar County Commissioners Court, and the River Authority have partnered to establish the Salado Creek Restoration Oversight Committee (SCROC). The committee's purpose is to create a community-based "vision" for the restoration of Salado Creek. The committee's members comprise a variety of local community stakeholders that have met monthly since December 2020 to initiate this vision plan. Upon completion, the plan will identify community concerns

and preferences for the Salado Creek Corridor and create a community-driven vision to guide subsequent enhancements along the corridor.

Bexar County and the River Authority are committed to funding the conceptual design plan for the creek. Currently, the River Authority is working with a consultant team that is facilitating and documenting the voice and vision of the community, with input from the SCROC, in a conceptual plan that will go forward to the River Authority Board of Directors, as well as the Bexar County Commissioners Court, for additional design and construction funding guidance. The completed plan will showcase the great potential for Salado Creek, particularly as it pertains to restoration and recreational opportunities for our community.



SALADO CREEK AT SOUTHTON RD.

Employee Highlight

JOE LUIS MARTINEZ JR., CHIEF OPERATOR I, OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT



I still remember the day that I applied for a Utilities Crewman opening here at the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority). I was very nervous when I submitted my application in December 2012, but a couple of weeks later I received a call from HR requesting an interview. That day was one of the happiest days of my life. During the interview, I shared my past experiences as

we proceeded with the interview, and once it concluded, I thanked everyone, and I asked how the process worked. I was instructed on how the process would go for them to decide on their new hire; I said, "Well, I hope I am the one you pick to fill the position." On January 10, 2013, I received a call from my Superintendent, Sterling Lee, congratulating me on being the one they picked for the Utilities Crewman position. On January 28, 2013, I officially began my career in

the wastewater treatment business with the River Authority. I did not know about wastewater treatment before, but as I began to learn and study the biological process, I realized that what we do is extremely important. I just completed my 8th year here at the River Authority and I have applied myself to every opportunity to grow and to become one of the best treatment operators. Every operator that I work with are not only my coworkers, but also my family. We take pride in what we do, and we work hard from start to finish at each of our wastewater treatment plants to continue to stay in compliance with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Most importantly, our culture in the Utilities Department is to produce the highest quality effluent in the state of Texas. We will continue to be the very best at producing the highest quality effluent for aquatic life, wildlife, and for recreational use. Our goal and mission is to always to protect and serve our communities in every way possible through our commitment to excellence in our wastewater treatment process.

Celebrating History at San Pedro Creek Culture Park

CARRIE BROWN, PUBLIC ART CURATOR

San Pedro Creek Culture Park is an innovative way to provide flood control while revitalizing a once-sacred site with inspired artwork, splendid walkways, places of respite, and cultural reflections. The original vision for the segment of the park between Houston St. and Commerce St. was to create large gathering spaces for the public, encourage interaction with the creek, and program a variety of cultural celebrations – the entertainment plaza at Houston St. and Camaron St. played a key role in this vision.

As construction of the entertainment plaza began in early 2020, the original foundation structure of the St. James African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church was discovered, along with remnants of the Alamo Ice Factory and Beer Brewery and the Klemcke/Menger Soap Factory.

Following the site's discovery, construction in this area was halted to allow for further research and documentation. The AME Church and the Klemcke/Menger Soap Factory were identified as being eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and as a State Antiquities Landmark. Archaeological investigation yielded that the foundations of

the Alamo Ice Factory and Beer Brewery were too degraded to qualify for preservation. As such, most of the re-design concepts focused on preservation of some or all of the remaining AME Church and Soap Factory foundations.

Community members recently had the opportunity to weigh in on the re-design concepts through a 45-day public comment period issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) promoted this feedback opportunity through a website resource page, direct mail, email blasts, social media promotion, fence banners, media contacts, and two virtual public meetings.

Now that the public comment period has closed, the River Authority awaits direction from the USACE who has final approval of the design of this flood control project. Regardless of the chosen design option, celebrating the history of the AME Church and the Klemcke/Menger Soap Factory will be a key element of future programming at the park. For more information about San Pedro Creek Culture Park, please visit spcculturepark.com.

10 Watershed Wise Rebate Recipient Highlight

MICHELLE E. GARZA, STORMWATER ANALYST

The San Antonio River Authority's (River Authority) Watershed Wise Rebate Program rebates construction of on-site stormwater best management practices (BMPs) to either new construction or a retrofit of existing property. In this article we are highlighting a recent recipient of a rebate, architect firm, LPA, Inc. LPA is also a member of the SA 2030 District, which is a private-sector-led initiative intended to transform San Antonio's urban core by supporting building owners and occupants in their efforts to reduce waste and increase building performance. The River Authority supports and is also a member of the SA 2030 District.

LPA transformed the property at 1811 South Alamo Street into a showpiece of sustainable innovation earning Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum by repurposing an existing building and components, adding solar panels to offset energy needed from the grid, and sustainably capturing rainfall to water its landscape. This retrofit mitigates over 44,000 gallons of stormwater runoff by capturing and treating it on-site during an average rain event. This was accomplished using a combination of cisterns to capture rooftop runoff and bioretention areas to capture and treat parking lot runoff.



BIORETENTION FEATURE AT LPA OFFICES

LPA was awarded a Watershed Wise Rebate to offset the cost of the green infrastructure BMP features that capture and treat over 335,500 gallons of stormwater runoff annually.

For more information about green infrastructure and sustainability, please visit sariverauthority.org/sustainability. To learn more about the River Authority's Watershed Wise Rebate program, visit sariverauthority.org/rebate.

BE RIVER PROUD ADVENTURERS

JANINE GARCIA, EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR I

Recently, you may have noticed bright blue flowers popping up along roadsides and in open fields. This can only mean one thing – bluebonnet season is here! The bluebonnet is the state flower of Texas and heralds the arrival of spring. This magnificent flower plays a vital role in the San Antonio River Basin as it provides food for pollinators and birds. The bluebonnet is also the host plant for the gray hairstreak butterfly. What this means is adult gray hairstreak butterflies lay their eggs on the bluebonnet, giving their young a readily available source of food when they hatch. These caterpillars are picky eaters and rely on the bluebonnet to meet their specific dietary requirements.



Celebrate Bluebonnets with Bluebonnet Bingo!

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Take a selfie in a patch of bluebonnets | Watch the San Antonio River Authority's River Camp! Nature Diaries Texas Bluebonnets video on YouTube | Take a family portrait in a field of bluebonnets |
| Plant bluebonnet seeds in your yard | Sketch a bluebonnet in your nature journal | Take a close-up picture of an insect landing on a bluebonnet flower |
| Upload a picture of a bluebonnet to the Seek or iNaturalist app | Pick up litter near a patch of bluebonnets | Take a hike in Jackson Nature Park to see the bluebonnets along the trail |



North American Friendship Garden

STEVEN SCHAUER, DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The North American Friendship Garden, which will have its grand opening at Confluence Park in May 2021, is a collaborative effort by the Consulate General of Canada in Texas and the Consulate General of Mexico in San Antonio, the City of San Antonio, San Antonio River Authority, and San Antonio River Foundation. The inspiration came from the intrepid Monarch Butterfly and trilateral conversations involving UNESCO Creative Cities, San Antonio City of Gastronomy, and the City of San Antonio being named the first Monarch Butterfly Champion City in the world. This pollinator garden is in alignment with several international Sustainable Development Goals and it provides a sanctuary for Monarch Butterflies during their international migration, as well as crucial habitat for myriad other pollinators and migratory species. This trilateral effort symbolizes the close ties between the peoples of Canada, Mexico, and the San Antonio community.

The importance of the North American Friendship Garden goes well beyond a symbolic gesture of trilateral good will. This 2,500 square foot garden enhances the existing ecosystem restoration benefits found nearby on the Mission Reach of the San Antonio River Walk by adding native grasses, wildflowers, trees, and shrubs that provide year-round opportunities for Monarch Butterflies and other pollinators, as well as resident and migratory birds. The North American Friendship Garden is located within important migratory flyways, including the Texas Funnel,

which supports Monarch Butterflies as they travel through this area each year using San Antonio as a rest stop while heading north towards Canada in the spring and south towards Mexico in the fall.

In addition to the plantings in this pollinator garden, artistic features, including art benches and a bug hotel, add locations for thoughtful contemplation and environmental education. As the Monarch Butterfly and other migrating species travel between Canada, Mexico, and San Antonio, the North American Friendship Garden reminds visitors that through respect, dialogue, and a true spirit of collaboration, all communities can be nurtured and thrive.

