Contents

SPRING 2020

3 The River Authority’s Responses to Corona Virus
   SUZANNE B. SCOTT, General Manager

4 Brackenridge Park Cultural Landscape Report
   DEB BOLNER PROST, Board Member, Bexar County, At-Large

4 Don’t Feed the Wildlife
   GLORIA CARMONA, Brand & Communications Officer

5 From the Diaries of Our Volunteers
   MINNA PAUL, Education & Engagement Coordinator II

6 Sustainability at the San Antonio River Authority
   MICHELLE E. GARZA, Stormwater Analyst

8 South Texas Natives
   CARRIE MERSON, Education & Engagement Specialist

9 Paddling Through Goliad
   JAMES FULLER, M.D., Board Member, Goliad County

9 Employee Highlight
   EMILY HANSEN, Purchasing Coordinator

10 RIVER CLICKS
   JEANETTE GONZALEZ, Community Relations Coordinator I

10 BE RIVER PROUD ADVENTURERS
   JULIE GARDNER, Education & Engagement Coordinator I

12 Thoughtful Growth for Our Watershed
   SUZANNE B. SCOTT, General Manager

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The COVID-19 pandemic caused all of us to dramatically alter our daily life and caused the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) to alter its regular business operations.

The River Authority has closely monitored the updates and recommendations regarding the COVID-19 virus from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), City of San Antonio Metro Health, Bexar County, and the State of Texas. Following CDC recommendations and guidance for social distancing, the River Authority staff began working remotely on March 17. Additionally, the River Authority cancelled public and community meetings and events through the spring, also per CDC guidance.

The River Authority staff has remained very active and engaged while working remotely. Staff continues responding to calls and emails; holding meetings through tele- and video-conference technology; meeting deadlines; and processing all the regular business functions of the agency. The essential community function provided by our wastewater treatment plants also continues uninterrupted.

In alignment with actions taken by local city and county officials, River Authority park trails, bathrooms, and green spaces currently remain open as an outdoor resource for the community to use while still practicing social distancing. However, River Authority park amenities such as playgrounds, basketball courts, and pavilions will remain closed until further notice.

I want to assure you that the River Authority is being informed by the best advice from health care and infectious disease specialists on actions we should take to keep the residents we serve and our family of employees safe while remaining diligent in our public service mission.

The health, safety, and well-being of our constituents and staff is of paramount importance.

We ask for your understanding during this time. We will continue to communicate with you about any decisions made in response to the virus and its impact on the River Authority. Please continue to follow us via our social media channels and visit our website for updates at sara-tx.org.

We appreciate your trust, and we are committed to the public services we provide to the communities of the San Antonio River Basin. Please be safe, be healthy, and Be River Proud.
Brackenridge Park
Cultural Landscape Report

DEB BOLNER PROST, BOARD MEMBER, BEXAR COUNTY, AT-LARGE

Brackenridge Park is undeniably the most recognized park in the City of San Antonio. Spanning 344 acres and located four miles north of downtown, Brackenridge Park is well-loved and used by locals and visitors alike. The park’s most defining feature is the San Antonio River, flowing from its headwaters just north of the park for 1.2 miles through its entirety. On any given day, the banks of the San Antonio River at Brackenridge Park can be found teeming with wildlife and parkgoers.

The love and admiration for the park is clear. However, aside from a park masterplan, the next steps towards conservation of the park were not as apparent. In the last few years, the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) and the Brackenridge Park Conservancy have partnered to get the ball moving on next steps for this historic park. With additional support from the City of San Antonio, multiple foundations, and donors, a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) was conducted for the park to officially outline how best to protect the ecological, cultural, and historic resources within the park.

The report, published in December of 2019, documented and analyzed the park’s history, development, and current conditions. From that analysis, recommendations floated to the surface including significant repairs to the river and riparian corridor. In conjunction with the Brackenridge Conservancy, the River Authority has begun to develop two pilot projects to address these issues. The projects will include the establishment of a riparian buffer and pollinator habitat with integrated public access points along the banks of the river and similar additions of native plantings and pollinator habitat to address erosion around existing facilities in the park. These pilot projects aim to show how ecological restoration can be used to create connections throughout the park, restore natural habitat, and draw people back to its lifeblood, the San Antonio River.

DON’T FEED THE WILDLIFE
GLORIA CARMONA, BRAND & COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Spring is fast approaching, and we are all ready to get out and enjoy the parks and trails. We want to be surrounded by fresh air, sunlight, and a thriving ecosystem. The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) wants to remind you to help keep our wildlife safe and protect water quality when you are visiting their home.

One way to protect wildlife such as ducks and geese is to keep human food out of their reach. Wildlife need a natural diet to be healthy. Human food, like bread or chips, do more harm than good. Feeding this to our feathery friends may seem generous, but it disrupts their natural habitat and may cause disease, injury, or even death to the animals.

When we feed human food to wildlife, they begin to rely on us as their sole food source rather than foraging for nutritional food in their natural environment as intended. It can also cause unsanitary conditions that provide an environment for diseases like salmonella to spread between species. Eventually, this can result in starvation or ill-stricken animals. This can become a safety risk to park and trail users as well because the animals may become aggressive when they are desperate for the human food they have come to rely upon.

Feeding human food to the wildlife also impacts our water quality. Because poor nutrition is harmful to their digestive systems, the waste from the animals can result in increased bacteria levels in our creeks and rivers. Any uneaten bread left behind can also cause algae blooms and allow bacteria to breed.

While it may seem as though you are helping the animals by providing them food, it could be jeopardizing their health, human health, and the health of our waterways. Please help the River Authority keep a healthy and balanced ecosystem; please, do not feed the wildlife.
From the Diaries of Our Volunteers

MINNA PAUL, EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR II

At the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority), we firmly believe that with scientific research, innovative solutions, and the community’s support and commitment, we can achieve our mission of creating safe, clean, and enjoyable creeks and rivers. We greatly appreciate the help of our volunteers and other community groups who consistently dedicate their precious time and energy to support our mission and vision. Read about some of their experiences below.

“I have been working with the River Authority for many years and have always loved the jovial comradery that meets us during ‘workdays.’ The River Authority staff are very passionate and knowledgeable about the river and getting the river restored to native flora and fauna. This river is beneficial to my soul and to be playing so hard, in the sunshine, in the dirt...it keeps me healthy.”
- Jim Funk

“I feel proud to know I had a hand in helping plant trees and shrubs that will be instrumental in bringing the river back to a natural state. I have also been glad to help clean up the waterways after major rains have washed trash down river. I’m very grateful to be able to play a small part in the beautification of this lovely city.”
- Laura Harris

“I loved volunteering at Confluence Park! It brings me joy knowing that the milkweed I planted would become a home to the pollinators that travel through Texas and that the grass seed I sowed would prevent water erosion and help the hard working grounds keepers and what other volunteers did to return the river to what it was. That I could help erase a small price of the pollution that we have created made a great impact on me. Thank you for the opportunity.”
- Savannah Bernal

“The San Antonio River has been the foundation of the community here for thousands of years. We now know that this river reflects the health of our entire ecosystem and how important it is to protect. It’s amazing to see and be a part of what can be accomplished in just a few hours with the River Authority staff and volunteers. On one morning in January, our volunteer group planted close to 500 native trees on the Mission Reach. These included bald cypress, pecan, and Mexican buckeye seedlings. It was such a fun, active way to spend a Saturday morning, meeting new people, and doing some good. I do believe the parents who brought their families out there are teaching the next generation the importance of appreciating and protecting the land we share, as well all living things we share it with.”
- Amanda Love

“The River Authority is very organized and runs their projects smoothly. Everyone is engaged in very worthwhile projects. The work is extremely satisfying!”
- Jarvis Brown

If the words of some of our wonderful volunteers stirred an interest to work and play with us, please sign up to be a volunteer at sara-tx.org/volunteer.
The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) has had a team of staff members focused on internal green initiatives for several years. Recently, this internal team has updated its name to the Sustainability Action Team and revamped its goal to drive innovation and implementation of sustainable practices in all aspects of business at the River Authority. We’re doing this to help achieve the agency’s vision to inspire actions for healthy creeks and rivers.

The River Authority defines “sustainability” as the best business decision considering economics (cost), the environment, and impacts to people (staff and community). Decision-making that focuses on People, Profit, and Planet is also known as the Triple Bottom Line. The Sustainable Action Team is working to increase the River Authority’s Triple Bottom Line by providing education and promotion of Sustainable Leadership principles throughout the River Authority. This work includes:

- Analyzing the Triple Bottom Line of River Authority operations, projects, and efforts
- Encouraging River Authority staff at all levels to play an active role in making sustainable recommendations
- Enhancing the quality of life for our employees and community
- Reducing the costs of doing business
- Minimizing our impact on natural resources
- Protecting and enhancing native lands and green spaces
- Expanding composting, recycling, and other waste stream diversion opportunities

The River Authority is working to ensure we are recycling all items that can be recycled. We have blue bins at our parks, events, and offices with accepted/not accepted materials lists posted on the bins whenever feasible. We have also started collecting composting materials at the office and mulching in appropriate facility locations. The Sustainability Action Team is continuing to work to add more waste diversion opportunities throughout the agency. Here are some additional sustainable practices already implemented by the River Authority:

- Reusable dinnerware (mugs, glasses, plates, utensils) in break rooms
- Transitioned from purchasing plastic water bottles to other methods to offer water at meeting and events
- Residential Rain Garden Club (employees volunteer at each other’s home to build rain gardens and other stormwater management techniques)
- Last Plastic Straw Campaign (metal straws given to all employees pledging to not use a plastic straw)
- Battery Recycling Program and Recharging Station
- Hazardous Waste Guide for Bexar, Wilson, Karnes, and Goliad
- Energy Use, Water Use, and Stormwater Runoff reduction tracking for our buildings within the SA 2030 District
- Fishing line (monofilament) collection stations at River Authority Parks
- Idea Submittal Portal for new sustainability ideas
- Sustainable Events Best Practices Guide
- Sustainability tips regularly distributed to staff throughout the agency
The River Authority is continually looking for additional ways to drive sustainable practices at our offices and throughout the community – and we need your help!

WAYS YOU CAN BE MORE SUSTAINABLE

By participating in sustainable efforts, you are not only supporting the River Authority in its mission, you are also helping to make a difference for our environment and community.

Here are some ways you can contribute:

- Participate in the practices at your home and work, and share your knowledge with others
- Remember the 3 R’s, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, for landfill waste reduction: Reduce your use of single-use plastics (carry reusables), Reuse an item before recycling/trashing it, and lastly, Recycle when you can no longer reuse the item.

To help keep creeks and rivers clean, please ensure trash as well as recyclable and compostable materials are properly sorted and placed into their proper bins and kept out of the environment. Did you know that every time it rains, trash, recyclable, and compostable materials littered on streets flows into storm drains and into the river? The River Authority works to remove all that waste from the river after every storm. When you help pick up trash, you are ensuring it doesn’t get washed down streets, into storm drains, and ultimately into the river. Just remember clean land equals clean river (and environment). So, every little bit helps!

It is also important to recycle those items that can be recycled. When you pick up items like plastic bottles or cans, make sure they are placed into the proper recycling (blue) bin. When in doubt, check with your city’s provider for a list of acceptable recyclable items. In general, clean, dry, loose plastic, paper/cardboard, and metal cans (aluminum and steel) are typically accepted. It is also important that compostable materials are placed into the proper (green) bin. Things like branches, food scraps, leaves, and grass clippings can be turned into compost and fertilizer for use again. Grass clippings and leaves may also be left on your lawn to break down and improve your soil.

Together we can ensure that area creeks and rivers are safe, clean, and enjoyable. Please visit our website (sara-tx.org) for more sustainability tips and to learn about sustainable development techniques that can be implemented throughout the community.

For more information on how you can be sustainable, please visit sara-tx.org or follow @sanantonioriver on these social media platforms.
Imagine that you are playing disc golf at Graytown Park on the San Antonio River, when you notice someone’s disc in the water. As you walk towards the river to get a closer look, you realize that it is not a disc at all – it is a Guadalupe Spiny Softshell Turtle!

Guadalupe Spiny Softshell Turtles (Apalone spinifera guadalupensis), native to the San Antonio River, are small enough to fit into the palm of your hand once hatched and can grow to be as long as 19 inches. Their flat carapace, or shell, is freckled with white spots and is olive green or brown in color, enabling them to blend in with the river’s naturally turbid waters. Unlike most turtles who rely on a hard shell to protect them from predators, these creatures have a soft, flexible shell that allows them to move quickly and easily away from predators both on land and in the water. Turtles remain inconspicuous because their long snout enables the nostrils to stay above the water while the rest of its body is submerged.

Guadalupe Spiny Softshell Turtles prefer the naturally muddy bottom of the San Antonio River, under which they burrow during the winter months. Remarkably, these turtles can take in oxygen through their skin when under water! During the spring, you will find them feeding on tasty aquatic insects and minnows. Sandbars provide necessary nesting habitat but are also vulnerable locations where unhatched eggs are preyed upon by raccoons and skunks. Once hatched, young turtles must avoid predation by alligators, large fish, wading birds, and bald eagles.

What can you do to help Guadalupe Spiny Softshell Turtles? Keep the river clean, of course! The quality of their habitat and diet is directly related to the water quality of the river in which they live. So, the next time you are playing disc golf at Graytown Park on the San Antonio River, remember that flat, circular floating creature is an important part of our ecosystem.
The 6.5-mile stretch that makes up the Goliad Paddling Trail offers visitors a lush gallery of woodlands and wildlife where paddlers can enjoy between 2 to 4 hours of floating on the San Antonio River. The trail was the first officially designated Texas Inland Paddling Trail on the San Antonio River. The 2007 official paddling trail designation was a result of collaboration between the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority), Canoe Trail Goliad (CTG), Goliad County, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and Texas Department of Transportation.

The paddling trail begins under US Highway 59 in Goliad County with an additional access point approximately 5 miles downstream at the end of Ferry Street in the City of Goliad near the River Authority’s Branch River Park. The trail ultimately ends in Goliad State Park. Please keep in mind when taking out at the state park that users must pay a minimal day-use fee. Plans are underway to expand the Goliad Paddling Trail which will add about 25 miles to the trail upstream of US Highway 59.

New to paddling but still want to check it out? CTG makes it easy for you. Twice a year, CTG, with support from the River Authority, hosts a spring and fall flotilla where transportation and assistance putting in and taking out is provided. Please visit CTG’s Facebook page or their website (canoetrailgoliad.com) for more information and upcoming events.

If you take photos while on the Goliad Paddling Trail, please submit your best shot to the River Authority’s annual River Clicks Photo Contest. The annual photo contest has a category for images from Goliad. This year, the Goliad Paddling Trail and the River Authority’s Branch River Park are featured as the River Clicks Special Category.

For more information on the Goliad Paddling Trail or to submit your photos to the River Clicks contest, please visit sara-tx.org.

Employee Highlight

I was hired as an intern by San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) in 2015 and knew immediately I was at home with this organization. I was met by friendly faces internally and externally. Fast forward to today, I am the Procurement Coordinator working as part of the agency’s Purchasing function. The Purchasing team is responsible for the timely and efficient procurement of goods and services necessary for the River Authority to deliver services to the public. We assist staff in developing and processing of solicitations, providing procurement guidance, and the purchase of goods and services. We provide guidance to the agency’s departments to help meet their needs and mitigate risk to the organization.

Serving the staff of the River Authority and the public, efficiently, is my “why” that keeps me focused going strong. Knowing I assist in procuring goods and services in the most economical way while maintaining stewardship, integrity, and excellence gives me confidence that we are using taxpayer dollars effectively. Working with my fellow colleagues in creating safe, clean, and enjoyable creeks and rivers makes me beyond proud!
The 3rd 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 Basin. The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) encourages the community to participate in this annual photo contest that includes prize incentives to the winners.

The 2020 River Clicks Photo Contest opened on February 28, prior to National, State, and local emergency restrictions being enacted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We decided to keep the contest open this year as the River Authority’s parks and trails are still available for use. If you visit a River Authority park, or another local park, for your safety and the safety of others, please follow social distancing guidelines. However, while there enjoying the outdoors, also please consider taking a photo that would quality for a category listed below and submit your favorite image for a chance to win. We have extended the photo contest submission period which now remains open until May 31.

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

**Creeks & Rivers**
Images that have a focal point of a creek or river within the San Antonio River Authority’s four-county jurisdiction of Bexar, Wilson, Karnes, and Goliad counties.

**Recreation**
Images capturing the use and enjoyment of creeks or rivers within the San Antonio River Basin, preferably at a River Authority park, including, but not limited to, paddling; walking, running, or cycling on a trail; fishing; picnicking; or camping.

**Animals**
Images capturing native wildlife in their habitat.

**Plants**
Images capturing plant life or pollinators and insects.

**Seasonal Variation**
Photos that capture environmental change along the San Antonio River Basin throughout the four seasons.

**Special Category**
Goliad Paddling Trail & Branch River Park in Goliad to honor the 20th Anniversary of the local non-profit organization, Canoe Trail Goliad, who have collaborated with the River Authority to promote river recreation and nature-based tourism in Goliad.

**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, and Goliad counties.

People’s Choice voting will be open to the public on our website from May 29 to June 12. Upon conclusion of the contest, the winners will be announced and awarded prize packages valued up to $1,000. Winners will be recognized in June and through other promotional activities.

To learn more about the River Clicks Photo Contest or to enter, please visit [sara-tx.org](http://sara-tx.org).
In Mexico, Monarchs are believed to be the returning souls of ancestors.

Map of the United States illustrating the annual migratory patterns of the Monarch Butterfly.

Become a Citizen Scientist
Would you like to help scientists track the Monarchs migration this Spring? Become a Citizen Scientist. Visit sara-tx.org for more information.

Create your own Monarch Rest Stop by planting lots of nectaring flowers like Prairie Verbena, Mealy blue sage, Gregg's Mistflower, or Duranta.

Confluence Park near the Mission Reach segment of the San Antonio River Walk has come alive with brilliant orange and black butterflies! These magnificent Monarch butterflies have flown thousands of miles over the last 6-7 months!

If you wish to visit them, be very still and quiet and you may spy them delightfully drinking from Gregg’s Mist-Flowers. Please don’t disturb them. This generation of Monarch has suffered many hardships and still has one final mission to complete. The female Monarchs will lay hundreds of tiny eggs on the Native Milkweed planted at Confluence Park. Finally, the next generation of butterflies will continue the northward summer migration.
The Rest of the Reimbursement Story

SUZANNE B. SCOTT, GENERAL MANAGER

In February, we celebrated the receipt of the final reimbursement payment to Bexar County from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) for the Mission Reach Ecosystem Restoration and Recreation Project (Mission Reach) in San Antonio. The final payment came more than six years after the completion of the Mission Reach project, but Bexar County has now been fully repaid the $61.3 million it advanced to cover the federal costs of the project.

You might wonder, why did Bexar County take the risk to advance local funds to cover the federal funding obligation on the project? That is a good question, and honestly, it was a decision that was made back in 2008 when construction costs were rising and the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) and the County wanted more certainty that if we started project construction, we would actually be able to finish the entire 8 miles of the project. The River Authority explored innovative financing options with the Corps and members of our Congressional delegation that would guarantee the construction of the project could continue despite the annual uncertainty of the federal appropriations process. The County secured voter approval to use Visitor Tax funding to meet the full funding required for the project in 2008, and in 2009, Congress gave the River Authority authorization to seek reimbursement for any local funding used to cover the federal share of the project. Securing the reimbursement was subject to annual funding through Congress. Knowing that, each year we mounted a strong, consistent, community-wide advocacy, with the support of the business community, to meet with members of Congress, Corps leadership, and the Office of Management and Budget to make our case to bring the funding back to the local community. We were relentless and it paid off.

At the time, this was a highly innovative project delivery strategy for the Corps working with local partners. Although the strategy did come with risks and payments came over several years, the approach saved over $46 million in overall project costs. The savings resulted from more cost-effective construction and faster completion due to availability of the County’s funding and the local project management by the River Authority.

Since the Mission Reach was fully opened to the public in October 2013, hundreds of thousands of visitors annually have enjoyed the beauty and tranquility of the restored river. The native habitat is now home to over 200 bird species and to a thriving population of fish and other aquatic species. Additionally, in 2015, the restored river was noted as a vital feature in the designation of the San Antonio Missions as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The federal funds returned to Bexar County have been reinvested into the San Pedro Creek Culture Park, under construction now, which is already generating significant economic development opportunities in downtown San Antonio. The return on the original investment in the Mission Reach continues to benefit our community.