The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) has proudly provided wastewater service in northeast and eastern Bexar County for more than 50 years. Although most people do not associate the River Authority with providing vital utility service, we stepped in to provide the service decades ago to ensure that as this part of the community grew, public health and water quality would be a priority. Today, we are proud to provide the highest quality wastewater services to the fastest growing part of Bexar County. River Authority Utilities staff are dedicated to treating our community’s wastewater to the highest standards prior to discharging it to our creeks.

With this new quarterly newsletter, the River Authority is pleased to provide you news and information about the services we provide to you and your neighbors. It is our hope that through more regular communication, we can share with you timely updates on our service and activities while also providing you with direct access to the River Authority should you have questions or comments you wish to share with us.

With the rapid growth in the area, the River Authority’s Utilities Department is actively adding infrastructure and facilities to meet demand including expanding our Martinez IV and Salitrillo wastewater treatment plants; extending lines and working directly with developers to ensure that services are available to support commercial and residential development. In this first issue, we share information on, facility expansions, the creation of a new Utilities Development Advisory Committee and efforts underway to address odors.

As the General Manager of the River Authority for the past 13 years, it has been a privilege to work with our Utilities Department and the rest of the River Authority staff. I recently announced my retirement from the River Authority. I am very proud of the highly dedicated public servants working every day to provide the wastewater services. It is often a thankless job, but so vital to community health and environmental protection. These men and women have been working especially hard during the pandemic to ensure that services continue uninterrupted.

In upcoming newsletter editions, we look forward to sharing more information on topics like: the progress of construction for our wastewater treatment plant expansions, updates on sewer rates, utility crew highlights, and tips for keeping our pipes clear and functioning optimally.
Residents near the San Antonio River Authority’s (River Authority) Martinez II Wastewater Treatment Plant and the adjacent Texas Landfill Management, LLC (TLM) composting facility have raised concerns regarding odor. Since the last update given to residents, we have made some advances but also run into some challenges. Regardless the River Authority is committed to continue addressing the matter.

Working closely with an engineering firm experienced in investigating and mitigating odor issues, we have been diligently working to coordinate another study during a distinctive odor-prevalent day so that we can gather additional data to compare with the data collected in 2019. Due to a combination of concerns including the implications that COVID-19 has had on resources, we have been unable to complete the additional study, but are still attempting to schedule the study soon.

Meanwhile, as a part of our best management practices, we have planted 64 Cyprus trees with drip irrigation at our Martinez II wastewater treatment plant. As these trees grow and thrive, they will provide a physical barrier that blocks the direct line of sight and disperses dust. The vegetation buffer will also assist in reducing the concentration of odors in the air. We have included a picture of these trees for your reference.

Additionally, we are still employing the use of Wind Sleeves and deodorizers at our Martinez II Wastewater Treatment Plant to help alleviate odor concerns.

We are committed to keeping you informed of our efforts and look forward to sharing the results of the new odor study with you when it is completed.

As a reminder, you may call the River Authority at (210) 302-4200 for any questions, comments and/or odor concerns. You may also submit an online odor complaint through the River Authority’s website at sariverauthority.org/services/utilities/odor-information. Upon receiving an odor report, River Authority staff will contact the individual who made the report and conduct a site visit to observe the reported odor and document any findings. The River Authority will also inform TLM of all submitted odor reports.
The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) Utilities Department operates and maintains five permitted and active wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) in its jurisdiction of East Bexar County. Currently, two WWTPs are in the process of undergoing plant expansions. Plant expansions assist in servicing and updating our treatment systems, system administration and operation and maintenance. Expansions are funded by connection fees, interest income on utilities funds, and uniform user rate charges.

The Salitrillo WWTP located in Converse, Texas is the River Authority’s most senior plant opened in 1966. Currently permitted at 5.83 million gallons per day (MGD) with an average daily flow of approximately 4.86 MGD. This plant will be expanded to 7.33 MGD to accommodate expected development in the area. This will be a progressive design build project and is anticipated to be completed by 2022. Presently, this project is being contracted and is estimated to cost $25 million.

The Martinez IV WWTP located in St. Hedwig, Texas is the River Authority’s newest WWTP, opened in April 2019. Not only is it the newest but the plant received a Silver Envision Rating from the Institute of Sustainable Infrastructure. The plant serves 2,200 customers and is permitted for .25 MGD. Due to the unexpected rapidly developing area the WWTP is already near its capacity and needs an expansion. Currently the design team is assessing the level of expansion needed and the cost.

As these projects progress you can look forward to detailed updates in future newsletters. To sign up to receive our newsletter online or by mail, please visit sariverauthority.org/utilities.
New Utilities Development Advisory Committee

At the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority), facilitating community and public engagement is a critical component of our operations. The Utilities team has been hard at work helping to form the new Utilities Development Advisory Committee (UDAC). This new committee’s purpose is to incorporate community feedback as we promote sustainable development within the wastewater service areas of the River Authority. The UDAC will advise and assist the River Authority with the adoption, implementation, review, and updates of its land use assumptions, capital improvements plan (CIP), impact fees, and other development-related fees and charges.

“The UDAC will improve our ability to plan for the future,” said River Authority District 4 Board Director Jim Campbell. “The important work of this committee will enhance our communication with rate payers, the development community, and businesses that rely on our award-winning wastewater treatment systems.”

The UDAC will be co-chaired by two individuals appointed by the River Authority Board of Directors (Board of Directors) upon recommendation of the River Authority Operations Committee (Operations Committee). The appointed co-chairs will serve to ensure that processes are observed to include, but are not limited to, consensus, roll-call for decisions, and meeting management norms.

- One appointed co-chair will represent ratepayers, and the other will represent real estate, development, or building industries. The co-chairs will confer with River Authority facilitators regularly before the meetings.
- The committee will have a maximum of 11 members, but no less than 5. No less than 40 percent of the UDAC membership must be representatives of the real estate, development, or building industries who are not employees or officials of a political subdivision or government entity.
- UDAC must have at least three ratepayers representing the River Authority’s Salitrillo and SARA Wastewater systems.

The first nomination period was held between August 17th – September 18th. Staff of the River Authority aspire to bring nomination recommendations to the Operations Committee and Full Board of Directors in October of this year. New member orientation for the newly established committee is scheduled for mid-November. For more information visit sariverauthority.org/utilities