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

Contents

SUMMER 2021

3 Inaugural River Symposium
Katye Brought, Brand & Public Communications Manager

4 Expanding Wastewater Treatment Plants For Growing Communities
Hector Morales, Board Member, Bexar County At-Large

4 Employee Highlight
Monique Kisner, Human Resources Administrative Assistant

5 Sustainable Stormwater Solutions In Alamo Heights
Garrett Phillips, Sustainable Infrastructure Planner

6 FY 2021/22 Budget Approved
Yvian Serbones-Hernandez, Brand & Public Communications Coordinator

8 Goliad Paddling Trail Extension
Meera Keshav, Government Affairs Coordinator

8 South Texas Natives
Carrie Merson, Brand & Communications Officer

9 Board Budget Approval
Gaylon Oehlke, Board Member, Karnes County

9 Mission Reach Fiesta Flotilla
Albert Carmona, San Antonio River Foundation Special Events Coordinator

10 New Playground For Falls City Lions Club
Meera Keshav, Government Affairs Coordinator

10 River Camp!
Janine Garcia, Education & Engagement Coordinator

11 Green Stormwater Infrastructure Master Plan
Michelle E. Garza, Environmental Sciences Stormwater Analyst

12 My 1st River Reach
Derek Boese, JD, PMP, General Manager

Mission

COMMITTED TO SAFE, CLEAN, ENJOYABLE CREEKS AND RIVERS

Vision

INSPIRING ACTIONS FOR HEALTHY CREEKS AND RIVERS
Inaugural River Symposium

STEVEN SCHAUER, DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority), in partnership with the San Antonio River Foundation (Foundation), will host the inaugural River Symposium on September 24-26, 2021. The River Authority intends to make this an annual weekend celebration of the San Antonio River with a new theme for each year’s festivities. The theme for the inaugural River Symposium is Cleaning, Protecting, and Taking Pride in our Waterways.

The River Symposium is designed to increase the community’s understanding of and appreciation for the San Antonio River Basin. This fun, family-friendly weekend will provide opportunities to learn, celebrate, network, and explore the San Antonio River Basin. The schedule of presentations and activities are intended to draw together area citizens, families, and professionals alike who share a common interest in the San Antonio River. This event also offers an opportunity for the public to interact with River Authority professionals, collaborating governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, other engaged citizens, and environmental and community advocates who are all working together to ensure area creeks and rivers remain healthy for generations to come.

The weekend celebration is built around National Public Lands Day (September 25) and World Rivers Day (September 26), with the goal to serve as a “call to action” by inspiring attendees to become good stewards of area natural resources. Participants will enjoy special announcements and sessions that include insightful presentations on safe, clean, and enjoyable creeks and rivers as well as events that include park tours and activities, outdoor volunteer events, a kayaking event, and professional training sessions that come with continuing education credits. Those who sign up to attend the River Symposium will also be given free admittance to the River Authority’s 8th Annual Environmental Film Fest, which will again be virtual this year.

Each year, to help promote the River Symposium, there will be an event design contest. The public will be encouraged to submit artistic designs based on the theme for the symposium, and the winning design will be used on t-shirts and other promotional materials to support the River Symposium. We’re excited to announce that the winner of the inaugural River Symposium design contest is Jeff Ramirez of San Antonio.

The agenda for this year’s symposium will be finalized soon. To learn more, please visit the River Authority’s website at sariverauthority.org. We look forward to seeing you at the 2021 River Symposium!
Expanding Wastewater Treatment Plants for Growing Communities

HECTOR MORALES, BOARD MEMBER, BEXAR COUNTY AT-LARGE

The rapid growth and development in eastern Bexar County is keeping the San Antonio River Authority’s (River Authority) Utilities and Engineering departments busy planning the expansion of two of the five River Authority owned and operated wastewater treatment plants (WWTP). The plant expansions will assist in servicing and updating our mechanical treatment systems, system administrations, operations, and maintenance. The expansions are being funded by connection fees, interest income on utilities funds, and uniform user rate charges.

The Salitrillo WWTP located in Converse, Texas (pictured right) is the River Authority’s most senior plant having operated since 1966. It is 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 the current and future 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 opened in April 2019 and is the River Authority’s newest WWTP. The plant is the first wastewater treatment plant in Texas to receive a Silver Envision Rating from the Institute of Sustainable Infrastructure. It serves 2,200 customers and is permitted for .25 MGD. Due to the rapidly developing area, the WWTP is already near its capacity and needs to be expanded. The expansion will bring the plant's capacity to 2 MGD. This project is estimated to begin later this year and be completed in 2022. The total cost of the expansion is estimated to be $18 million.

The River Authority has recently started a new quarterly publication, The Clarifier, dedicated to educating constituents on current events and projects within the Utilities Department. As these projects progress you can look forward to detailed updates in The Clarifier. Please visit sariverauthority.org/utilities to sign up.

Employee Highlight

MONIQUE KISNER, HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

My name is Monique Kisner. I was hired at the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) as the Human Resources Administrative Assistant in 2016. When I started, I could never have imagined how much I would grow in the five years working at the River Authority. In the Human Resources (HR) Department, we are responsible for recruiting, developing, and retaining expert staff members who are dedicated to public service and use their talents to inspire actions in others for healthy creeks and rivers.

Amazing, enthusiastic people work here who love the River Authority culture and exemplify that passion through their jobs every day. As the Human Resources Administrative Assistant, I serve the public by being the first face that they see at the front desk as well as the first person they speak to when they call our main office. I’ve always loved helping people and, in my position, I’m able to assist the public and our employees in many ways, such as informing the public that pass through our lobby about what the River Authority does and what our responsibilities are.

Since day one, I knew I made the right choice to join this organization and the wonderful HR team. There is a sense of family, not just in the HR team, but throughout the whole organization. I worked in theme parks for eleven years before I came to the River Authority, and I have enjoyed every minute of my tenure here because of the people around me. I look forward to my future with the organization and continuing my growth and outreach.
GARRETT PHILLIPS, SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNER

The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) is collaborating with City of Alamo Heights to make Broadway and Austin Highway a better place for people and businesses, while supporting a safe, clean, and enjoyable San Antonio River. The Austin Highway/Broadway Improvement Project will reduce localized street flooding, improve water quality in the San Antonio River, and transform the corridor into a parkway that is more aesthetically pleasing and enjoyable to visit.

This project is a collaboration between the Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Bexar County, the River Authority, and the City of Alamo Heights. The River Authority’s commitment of up to $1.3 million is one of several contributions by project partners that together comprise the estimated $31.5 million project.

The project includes a new underground box culvert, upgraded curb inlets, replacement of sewer and water lines, surface improvements to include new pavement, wider sidewalks, bike lanes, traffic signals, and landscaping incorporating green infrastructure features on Broadway and Austin Highway.

Over the coming year, the River Authority will work with the project partners as the project is designed to incorporate the benefits of green infrastructure to achieve multiple community goals. Three kinds of green infrastructure that may be included in the project are bioswales, permeable pavers, and newly planted trees. Following the design process, project construction will begin. The River Authority will help to ensure that green infrastructure components are planned, implemented, and maintained to improve stormwater runoff quality.

This project supports the River Authority’s goal for a clean San Antonio River by incorporating green infrastructure that removes pollution from stormwater runoff before it drains to the San Antonio River. Bioswales and permeable pavers use soil and gravel to filter pollution such as bacteria, metals, and oil. Bioswales can provide multiple benefits when incorporated vegetation removes stormwater pollution, air pollution, and greenhouse gasses. Bioswales and permeable pavers can also be designed to enhance the look, feel, and function of important places like Broadway.

The project supports the River Authority’s goal for a safe San Antonio River by using a combination of green and grey stormwater infrastructure to slow down and store the stormwater runoff that causes downstream flooding. The project’s primary flood risk reduction benefits are expected to occur on and around Broadway itself, reducing localized street flooding that occurs in the more frequent storm events.

The River Authority looks forward to assisting the City of Alamo Heights and TxDOT in leading our region in sustainable stormwater implementation that deliver multiple community benefits using green infrastructure.
The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) was created in 1937 by the State of Texas to preserve, protect, and manage the resources and environment of the San Antonio River Basin.

The Annual Budget is focused on supporting the mission, goals, and objectives of the River Authority. Information on the annual revenues and expenditures, to include projects and departmental operating activities, are provided within the publication. The River Authority Board of Directors recently adopted a $318.2 million budget for Fiscal Year 2021-22 (FY22). The budget is based on a proposed tax rate of $1.858 cents per $100 of property value, a rate unchanged from the current fiscal year. The approved budget, which begins on July 1, 2021, supports projects and organizational goals that advance the agency’s commitment to harmonize the needs of people and nature through our stewardship of rivers and land.

FY22 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Of the $318.2 million total available funds for FY22, $39.5 million are General Fund revenues with 92.5 percent generated from property tax. Other major revenue sources include utility Charges for Services of $19.8 million and grant funding of $6.8 million. Another significant source of funding is Intergovernmental Revenue which totals $94.6 million across Capital Improvement Funds. This group of Funds represents investments in the completion of capital improvement projects, such as the collaboration with Bexar County and the City of San Antonio for the construction of the San Pedro Creek Culture Park.

The total expenditure appropriation is highlighted by $51.1 million in General Fund operations; $176.9 million for capital improvement projects (across all budgeted funds); $7.1 million for annual debt service (across all budgeted funds); and $11.4 million for utility operations (excluding debt service and construction and improvement funds).

The FY22 budget includes the authorization of 62 projects across all funds, with 34 projects in the River Authority Projects Fund totaling $5.5 million in new funding for FY22. Highlights of new proposed projects within the River Authority Projects Fund include Predictive Flood Modeling for Wilson, Karnes, and Goliad counties; initiating Phase II of the Escondido Creek Parkway in Kenedy; Freshwater Mussel Reintroduction along the Mission Reach of the San Antonio River Walk; Watershed Master Plan Integration; Floodplain Remapping along the Leon and Salado creeks and Medina River; collaboration with the City of San Antonio and Alamo Heights for the installation of green infrastructure; and coordination with Bexar County on the development of the Bexar County Rivers & Creeks Program.

The Board of Directors will act on the final tax rate for FY22 on September 15, 2021, after receipt of the final property valuations in late July. A public hearing will be held prior to adoption of the tax rate and information on the meeting will be available on our website.
REQUEST A PRESENTATION TO LEARN MORE!

Interested in learning more about how the River Authority carries out our commitment to safe, clean, enjoyable creeks and rivers through our projects, initiatives, and other efforts? Whether you are a part of a company, organization, neighborhood association, Kiwanis Club, Rotary Club, Gardening Club, or any other community interest group, you can request a member of our staff to present at your meeting to share valuable information and engage with your members. Simply fill out a presentation request on our website and a staff member will connect with you to coordinate!

For more information, please visit sariverauthority.org or follow @sanantonioriver on these social media platforms.
On May 28, San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) Board Members and staff were joined by representatives of Goliad County and the non-profit organization Canoe Trail Goliad (CTG) to officially open the new Riverdale paddling access site. This is the fourth paddling access point now open along the Goliad Paddling Trail. The River Authority added stairs at the Riverdale location providing river recreationalists easy access to the river and a simple way to slide canoes and kayaks into or out of the river with a railing ramp. An improved parking area, including a camera which sends video to the Goliad County Sheriff’s office, was also added by the River Authority.

The River Authority and CTG have been interested in expanding the original Goliad Paddling Trail for quite some time due to its great success and popularity. This success is contributed in large part to the CTG and their annual Flotilla events, which are supported by the River Authority. Twice a year, CTG makes exploring the river easy by providing transportation and assistance with participants’ kayaks and canoes during their spring and fall Flotillas.

The Goliad Paddling Trail is officially designated as a Texas Inland Paddling Trail, due to its deep Texas history, and it is now close to 20 miles long with the addition of the Riverdale access point. Paddlers can see lush woodlands, migratory birds, and countless species of wildlife on this rural and incredibly scenic route. Putting in at the Riverdale location allows for almost 12 miles of paddling to the Hwy 59 access point. The original paddling trail then runs from Hwy 59 to the Goliad State Park, which is just under 7 miles long and has a mid-point access location at Ferry Street. Feel free to stop off at the Ferry Street access point and enjoy a break at Branch River Park, which is near the Goliad town square. Keep in mind, if paddling all the way to the final access point at Goliad State Park, users must pay a minimal day-use fee to access the state park.

The River Authority looks forward to seeing how the community embraces the new launch site and the paddling trail’s extension. For more information on the Goliad Paddling Trail, visit the Parks & Trails page at sariverauthority.org.

If you’re out having a mindful moment by the San Antonio River, you might be lucky to see a bright glint of a unique-looking fish hunting dragonflies that fly low to the water’s surface. Longear sunfish have numerous fascinating characteristics outside of their vibrant coloration of brilliant orange and turquoise, and unique elongated flap near its gill slit that looks a little bit like an earlobe. When the time is right, usually during the warmer months, the male will don its spawning colors and swim out to a female to invite her to lay her eggs in the nest he created.

Females lay a surprising number of eggs, anywhere between 140 to 2,800 eggs in a cycle. The male will continue to keep the eggs free of debris by fanning them with his fins while also guarding the eggs from predators. A vigorous defender, he will continue to guard over the nest for nearly a week after the eggs hatch, chasing other fish away aggressively, until the young disperse.

As the fish grows to an average length of 6 inches, it is both prey and predator in the ecosystem, hiding in aquatic vegetation or undercut banks. A carnivore, its large eyes help to improve the ability to see prey items such as aquatic insects, small fish, and fish eggs.

It is important to note that the longear sunfish is sensitive to poor water quality conditions, especially turbid, or murky, waters. Land use changes that bring about more impervious, hard surfaces as well as habitat degradation can increase erosion and sediment introduced to the river, resulting in increased turbidity. Green Infrastructure practices such as rain gardens and bioswales, designed to keep rainfall on the properties it falls on as nature intended, can go a long way in preventing increased erosion and turbidity.

When we connect with the longear sunfish, or any other wildlife of the San Antonio River, it is important to keep in mind that they rely on us to stay healthy and flourish so they can continue their important role in nature’s checks and balances.
The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) Board of Directors recently approved the budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 (FY22). The Board has allocated funding by identifying initiatives that reflect the River Authority’s commitment to safe, clean, and enjoyable creeks and rivers.

Key southern basin projects include the Clean Rivers Program, Bacterial Source Tracking, and paddling trails as well as park construction and improvements. The Clean Rivers Program and Bacterial Source Tracking collaborate to monitor and analyze the water quality of the river basin’s creeks and rivers. The River Authority’s laboratory staff monitors habitat communities as well as bacterial sources, focusing on promoting healthy and stable water quality levels.

The River Authority continues to make significant investments throughout the basin. In the southern basin specifically, the Board has designated funds to support recreational activities and the extremely successful Household Hazardous Waste collection events. These events now happen twice a year in Goliad, Karnes, and Wilson counties. The collection events provide an opportunity for residents to properly dispose of household hazardous materials such as chemicals, paints and oils, old electronics, and tires.

The FY22 budget also contains funds for the Risk MAP and floodplain mapping to include the most current rainfall totals and updated topography which will improve flood risk preparedness throughout the basin. Recreational improvements, such as Phase II of the Escondido Creek Parkway in Kenedy, are also included in the FY22 budget. In a continuation of upgrades, the Parkway’s trail will add an additional 1.2 miles in length. Since opening in 2020, the Escondido Creek Parkway has become a regional hot spot, attracting residents from throughout Karnes County and the surrounding area.

To learn more about the annual budget, please visit sariverauthority.org/budgets.

Mission Reach Fiesta Flotilla

Fiesta San Antonio® is a special time for locals and visitors alike! The sights and sounds of this 10-day celebration feature over 100 events that are put on by local non-profit organizations. With COVID-19 canceling last year’s Fiesta season and 2021 having half of the regularly scheduled events, this year’s lineup of Fiesta events represents the resiliency of our community and local non-profit organizations.

The San Antonio River Foundation (River Foundation) and our partner, the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority), participated in the festivities with our Official Fiesta event, the Mission Reach Flotilla Fiesta! This FREE event took place on Saturday, June 19, and is the only Fiesta paddling event along the San Antonio River. The Mission Reach Flotilla Fiesta provides attendees the opportunity to kayak the San Antonio River, an activity many participants have not tried before, with kayaks provided Mission Adventure Tours.

With COVID-19 changing how many Fiesta events have been planned, this year’s event had a new look and a temporary location change. Registration was required to participate in the kayaking activity of this year’s event. Registration was used as a COVID-19 precaution to limit the crowd size of participants waiting to get on the river. Within 24 hours of registration being opened, all the FREE kayaking spots were filled. This shift in scenery did not take away from the excitement and celebration of the Mission Reach Flotilla Fiesta. The event had beautiful Fiesta Medals for sale, tasty morsels from local food trucks, and booths that highlighted the many organizations that made this year’s event possible. The River Foundation partnered with Metro Health and the Fiesta San Antonio Commission to offer a mobile vaccination station at the event. This mobile site was one of many locations that welcomed visitors from the community and surrounding areas to receive a FREE COVID-19 vaccine.

If you are interested in kayaking the San Antonio River, be on the lookout for the River Authority’s upcoming Be River Proud Kayak Series throughout the year.
New Playground for Falls City Lions Club

MEERA KESHAV, GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COORDINATOR

Avid readers of the River Reach may remember that the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) has been working with the Falls City Lions Club (Lions Club) to assist in replacing the playground equipment at Veterans Memorial Park in Falls City. The park, which is located at 703 W. Elwood in Falls City along the San Antonio River was severely damaged by a flood in 2002, leaving a dilapidated wooden playground structure, a worn-out swing set and no amenities for children with disabilities.

Beginning in 2019, the River Authority has supported the Lions Club’s project and fundraising efforts as they align with our mission of inspiring actions for healthy creeks and rivers. This endeavor will provide a safe and enjoyable green space for the community to enjoy near the San Antonio River. We are excited to announce that the new equipment has arrived and been recently installed at the park. The park is now ready and available for the community to enjoy.

The Lions Club has ensured that visitors will find the park a safe place for all children, including the physically challenged and honor veterans of Falls City and Karnes County. The new swing set is commercial-grade, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant playground equipment, designed for children ages 2 to 12-years old. The Falls City Lions Club was established on March 31, 2015. The Club serves the community of Falls City and the surrounding area by aiding in disaster relief, providing scholarships, and initiating community involvement. The Club is also partnering with Falls City Council to pave the way for future improvements to the Veterans Memorial Park.

For more information or to donate, please contact Falls City Lions Club President Kristen Jendrusch at fallscitylionsclub@gmail.com

PLAYGROUND CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS AS OF JULY 1, 2021

Falls City Council to pave the way for future improvements to the Veterans Memorial Park.

RIVER CAMP!

JANINE GARCÍA, EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR

Imagine that you are hiking through the hot, semi-arid environment of south and central Texas in the middle of summer. Would you feel thirsty? Would you feel like you were overheating? Plants and animals that live in hot climates often have physical or behavioral adaptations that help them survive. Keep reading to learn more about the adaptations of three organisms that live in the San Antonio River Basin.

The Palo Verde tree (2), whose name translates to green stick in recognition of its green trunk, stems, and branches, drops its leaves during periods of extreme drought. This helps the tree reduce water loss through its leaves while its green branches continue to photosynthesize.

Succulent plants hold a surprising amount of water in their fleshy leaves and stems! Javelinas (1) rely on succulent plants like the prickly pear cactus for up to 88% of their water requirements. These mammals can often be found scooting the thorny cactus pads along the ground to remove some of the spines before their feast.

For most of the year, Texas Tortoises (3) are diurnal, which means that they are active during the day. However, during the summer months, these tortoises become bimodal, which is a scientific word that means they avoid the midday heat by restricting their activity to the early morning and evening hours when it’s cooler.
The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) was awarded a Clean Water Act Section 319(h) Grant by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), administered by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to develop a master plan for the use of green infrastructure (GI). This grant project builds off recommendations made in the Upper San Antonio River Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) to implement GI to reduce stormwater runoff pollution and addresses measures in the Texas Non-Point Source Management Program.

Traditional stormwater infrastructure is designed to manage stormwater volume, not stormwater quality. GI includes constructed features that add the stormwater quality component by mimicking the predevelopment hydrology of an area. Examples are bioretention swales (pictured above) and basins (called rain gardens), extended detention basins, constructed wetlands, permeable pavement and pavers, vegetated filter strips, and cisterns. They are designed to clean and reduce local flooding by capturing and treating stormwater runoff pollution before it enters local creeks and rivers.

Since GI is still relatively new to the San Antonio River Basin, the Master Plan aims to guide decision-makers on where and how to apply limited resources in the upcoming years to maximize water quality benefits while addressing local flooding concerns. The River Authority incorporated stakeholder input to identify and build on common goals and investment priorities for implementing GI.

The River Authority’s watershed scale models have identified smaller watersheds that have the highest stormwater pollution reduction potential. This project used existing data and modeling tools to identify and prioritize sites within those areas that have the highest potential for GI benefit. Properties considered for implementation included public lands, schools, capital improvement projects, city planning areas, and neighborhoods with supportive stakeholders such as homeowner’s association partners.

For the recommended sites, the River Authority developed site-scale models, concept designs, and GI cost estimates. Using an existing model, the River Authority estimated the pollution reductions that these projects would achieve across the watershed. The GI Master Plan will include a recommended schedule of implementation, the stakeholder process, costs, funding considerations, and the overall evaluation and prioritization process – all as examples communities can use for their own decision-making. Ultimately, the goal is for the GI Master Plan to become a template for all sub-basins not meeting water quality standards in the San Antonio River Basin. To learn more about this project and others, please visit our website at sariverauthority.org/projects.
It’s been a very busy six weeks since I started at the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority)! I would like to thank the River Authority Board, staff, and the community for making me feel welcome.

I come to the River Authority from New Orleans, where I was the Chief Administrative Officer of the Flood Protection Authority – East (FPA). The River Authority’s mission of being committed to keeping the region safe from flooding is near and dear to me, since in New Orleans, the FPA’s mission was to protect the region from hurricanes and Mississippi River flooding. I oversaw a 192-mile flood defense system composed of levees, floodwalls, floodgates, and pumping stations and worked closely with the leadership of 3 Parishes (Counties), partner state agencies, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to keep the region dry. Water surrounds New Orleans, and since much of the region is under sea level (my house was at elevation -4.0’), the FPA also dealt with rain – a series of pump stations and drainage canals keep the city dry.

The levee system also served a secondary purpose for recreation. Along Lake Ponchartrain and the Mississippi River, hundreds of people daily used our maintenance paths to walk, bike, and get closer to water.

I lived in New Orleans since 2006, and while much of my work was on hurricane protection projects, I also worked on coastal and ecosystem restoration projects. Due to numerous factors, including subsidence, sea level rise, and coastal erosion, the coastline of Louisiana is slowly disappearing. The State spends millions of dollars a year on restoring marshlands, creating barrier islands, and reinforcing shorelines to keep the Gulf of Mexico at bay and I was fortunate enough to work on a number of these projects.

It’s great to be back in Texas again! I received my undergraduate degree in Civil Engineering from Rice University and was stationed at Fort Hood for three years during my eleven years of active-duty Army service. I’m a lifelong fisherman, and Stillhouse Hollow Lake near Fort Hood was where I caught my biggest largemouth bass (10 lbs.), so I have many fond memories of Texas.

“I look forward to getting to know San Antonio and the region more in the upcoming months as well as ensuring the great work of the River Authority continues!”