



# 2021 RIVER SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS

FRIDAY | SEPTEMBER 24, 2021



**Chad Pregracke**  
President and Founder of  
Living Lands & Waters  
*Guest Speaker*

Chad Pregracke is the internationally named 2013 CNN Hero of the Year, founder and president of Living Lands & Waters; a nonprofit river cleanup organization, author and professional public speaker. He is proof one person can make a difference. Best known for starting out as a young man in East Moline, Illinois wanting a cleaner waterway, Chad has become the champion for the Mississippi River. Growing up on its banks, he worked as a commercial shell diver during his early years, experiencing the river from the bottom up. Sometimes spending 10 hours a day in the depths and current of the pitch black waters, he crawled nearly 150 miles of the river bottom over six years. Chad saw its beauty and was frustrated by the neglect. At the age of 17, he decided to clean it up. Twenty three years later, Chad and his Living Lands & Waters crew have organized and led over 1200 community cleanups on 23 rivers in 21 states and removed almost 11 million pounds of garbage. Chad had an idea that evolved into a movement that has helped to restore one of America's greatest icons, the Mississippi River.

Chad has been recognized by former President, George W. Bush as a national "Point of Light." He received a standing ovation at the Kennedy Center from all four living former U.S. Presidents for his inspirational message on dreaming big, taking action, persevering, leading and collaborating. He has been the keynote speaker for college graduations, business conferences and events, classrooms, nonprofit organizations and more. Named "America's Hardest Working Person" by Mitchum, Chad's enthusiasm, sense of humor and passion amplifies his story and entertains audiences. Ultimately, his message inspires people to believe they can make a difference.

Chad currently lives and works with his wife Tammy dividing their time between life on the Teamwork barge and their home in East Moline, IL.

For more information: <http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/19/world/hero-of-the-year/>  
<http://chadspeaksnow.com/>  
<http://livinglandsandwaters.org/>

## SA Report Roundtable Panel - 12:00pm (Virtual)

Join the San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) for an engaging roundtable conversation with Steven Schauer, Director of External Affairs at the River Authority, Nefi Garcia, Assistant Director of Public Works at the City of San Antonio, Minna Paul, Education & Engagement Coordinator II at the River Authority and a member of the River Authority River Warrior Program on litter and the impacts it has on the San Antonio River. Presented by San Antonio Report and moderated by Robert Rivard, learn how the River Authority is tackling the tough issue of litter and how the public can get involved and be a part of the solution.



**Robert Rivard**  
Editor & Publisher  
San Antonio Report  
*SA Roundtable Moderator*



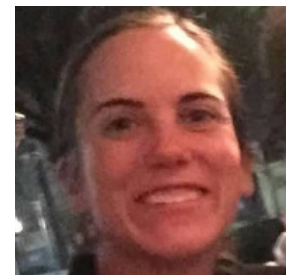
**Steven Schauer**  
Director of  
External Communications  
*San Antonio River Authority*



**Nefi Garza**  
Assistant Director  
Storm Water Division  
*City of San Antonio's  
Public Works Department*



**Minna Paul**  
Education and Volunteer  
Engagement Coordinator  
*San Antonio River Authority*



**Amanda Love**  
River Warrior  
*San Antonio River Authority  
Alamo Area Master Naturalist*



# 2021 RIVER SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS

SATURDAY | SEPTEMBER 25, 2021

## Sheridan Speakers



**Steven Schauer - Director of External Communications, San Antonio River Authority**

**Panel Moderator:** Steven Schauer will serve as host and moderator for the presentations held at the San Antonio River Authority's (River Authority) Sheridan office. Schauer is the Director of External Communications for the River Authority. He oversees the Government Affairs Department and Brand & Public Communications Department. His work at the River Authority includes developing and implementing the strategic direction for the agency's communication and outreach activities, acting as the River Authority's spokesman, coordinating local, state, and federal legislative and policy agendas, and directing the educational outreach programs. He also manages the River Authority's national and international relations.

*The Value of a Floodplain - 10:00am*

**Yasmin Gutierrez, P.E., CFM – Engineer, San Antonio River Authority**

Originally from San Diego, CA, Yasmin has been a Texan since 2004. After completing her bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Texas at San Antonio, Yasmin has worked in both the private and public sectors of Engineering for the last 10 years. Since joining the River Authority, Yasmin's expertise has been in the field of identifying and mitigating flood risk for the community, helping communities plan drainage infrastructure, and become more resilient to flooding.



**Great Springs Project - 10:45am**  
**ActivateSA – San Antonio**

ActivateSA is a guerilla planning initiative and thinktank composed of architects, landscape architects, civil engineers, conservationists, transportation planners, and cyclists – is advocating for a more connected San Antonio region through regional active infrastructure including greenway trails, cycle tracks, multi-use paths, and more accessible, safe, and comfortable sidewalks and bike lanes.

Having represented clients in over \$800 million in corporate, financial, and real estate transactions, Garry brings the Great Springs Project (GSP) a unique combination of business development savvy, real estate law expertise, government service, and a longstanding commitment to the conservation of Texas' natural resources. A former rural County Judge, County Attorney, and corporate counsel, Garry's legal expertise include business and real estate transactions, water rights, business development, private securities offerings, acquisition of venture capital, and contract negotiations. Prior to joining GSP, Garry served as General Counsel and Legislative Director of the Texas Association of Counties. Garry has also previously served as Board Chairman of the Hill Country Alliance, the Middle Rio Grande Development Council, and the Southwest Area Regional Transit District. An avid river guide, Garry cares deeply about our beautiful hill country and preserving it for generations to come.

**Gary Merritt**  
CEO,  
Great Springs Project  
Activate SA



**Jim Bailey**  
Senior Principal,  
Alamo Architects &  
Founder, ActivateSA

Jim leads the housing studio at Alamo Architects in San Antonio and has been responsible for the design and construction of over 13,000 housing units. He has played a key role in many major local planning efforts and served on various related boards, commissions, and committees, and has initiated many community-driven infrastructure projects over the last quarter-century. Jim served on Mayor Ron Nirenberg's five-member Housing Policy Task Force to develop San Antonio's Housing Policy Framework. In 2019, he founded ActivateSA. Jim is driven by the belief that active listening and deep collaboration are the foundation of a future San Antonio that is just and sustainable.





# 2021 RIVER SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS

SATURDAY | SEPTEMBER 25, 2021

## Sheridan Speakers *(continued)*



*Wildlife Wonderful Wastewater Treatment - 11:30am*

**Clairissa Flores** – *Treatment Quality Control Supervisor, San Antonio River Authority*

Clairissa Flores has been with the San Antonio River Authority for six years. After graduating from the University of Texas at San Antonio, she decided to put her passion for the environment towards water reclamation. As treatment quality control supervisor, she oversees the operations of treatment plants and ensures the biological treatment process runs effectively and efficiently to produce high quality effluent to protect the health and safety of the creeks and rivers.

*Bexar County- 1:00pm*

**Zaid Subhi** – *Storm Water Quality Engineer, Bexar County Public Works*

Zaid holds a master's degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Texas at San Antonio. He has more than 13 years of experience in civil and environmental engineering. He works with consulting engineers and general contractors. His milestone projects include, analysis and redesign of the drinking water distribution system of the City of San Juan, Texas, construction of Terminal III in Abu Dhabi Airport, construction of 52 miles of sewer main in Jordan. Zaid is a licensed Professional Engineer in the State of Texas and a Certified Professional Project Manager.



*So, What is Green Infrastructure?- 1:45pm*

**Karen Bishop** – *Senior Supervisor for Sustainable Infrastructure, San Antonio River Authority*

Karen Bishop has 20 years of experience with the San Antonio River Authority. For the past decade, she has advocated for increased stormwater and surface water quality by identifying and attempting to remove barriers to water quality-driven land development design. She serves as senior supervisor of the Sustainable Infrastructure Unit which offers training, rebates, policy recommendations, design guidance, and other green infrastructure tools to make it easier to design and develop for water quality. Karen co-chairs the Environmental & Water Resources Institute's San Antonio board and is a board member of US Green Building Council's South Texas Region.



*Greater Edwards Aquifer (GEAA) & Hill Country Alliance (HCA) Panel - 2:30pm*

Annalisa Peace holds an MS in Urban Administration from Trinity University and has over thirty years' experience working with government and non-profit organizations in a variety of capacities. Since 2004, Ms. Peace has been the Executive Director of the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, which unites 52 organizations and thousands of Texans throughout a 21 county region behind a plan to protect the Edwards and Trinity aquifers, their contributing watersheds, and the Texas Hill Country and participates in many other efforts to maintain the environmental integrity of our region.

**Annalisa Peace**  
*Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance*

After a childhood spent visiting grandparents in Wimberley, Leah left her hometown in Southern Illinois to pursue a B.S. in Wildlife Biology at Texas State University. She has spent nearly a decade in science education at the Saint Louis Zoo, El Ranchito at The Shield Ranch, and The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment. Leah joined the Hill Country Alliance in October of 2018 and stepped into a full-time role as the Storytelling and Public Engagement Manager in the summer of 2021. She is passionate about protecting the natural resources and scenic beauty that originally drew her to Texas.



**Leah Cuddeback**  
*Storytelling and Public Engagement Manager Hill Country Alliance*



# 2021 RIVER SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS

**SATURDAY** | SEPTEMBER 25, 2021

## Confluence Park Speakers



*Aquatic Wildlife of the San Antonio River - 1:00pm*

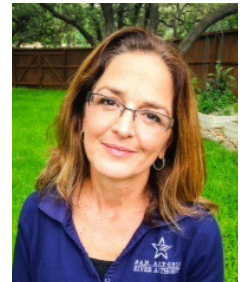
**Shaun Donovan** – *Manager of Environmental Sciences, San Antonio River Authority*

Shaun has been with the River Authority since 2012. He was originally hired as an Aquatic Biologist and worked his way to the Senior Aquatic Biologist position before being promoted to management. In his time with the River Authority, he has been instrumental in developing and expanding proactive ecological restoration efforts throughout the basin including fish and mussel reintroductions. Prior to working at the River Authority, Shaun worked offshore as a Marine Fisheries Observer where he studied various species including sharks and red snapper.

*How to Garden With Nature - 2:00pm*

**Lee Marlow** – *Sustainable Landscape Ecologist, San Antonio River Authority*

Lee Marlowe is a restoration ecologist with over 20 years of professional experience working in the field of ecological restoration and natural resource management including sustainable landscape practices and applications for improved ecological functions. Her expertise includes the use of native plants to provide wildlife habitat, water quality benefits, bank/site stabilization and aesthetic beauty in landscapes of all sizes.



*San Antonio River Foundation Panel Discussion - 3:00pm*

**Frates Seeligson** – *Executive Director, San Antonio River Foundation*

Frates Seeligson graduated from Duke University in 1992. Upon returning to Texas, he studied ranch and range management at Texas Christian University. A fourth-generation rancher, he has managed agricultural operations across South Texas for over two decades, with a specific focus on native habitat management and restoration.

In 2007, Frates joined the board of the San Antonio River Foundation and in 2016 joined the staff of the River Foundation as Director of Confluence Park. In this role he managed the fundraising, construction and programming of Confluence Park, a one-of-a-kind venue for environmental education along the banks of the San Antonio River. In July of 2019, Frates took over the Executive Director position for the River Foundation.

## National Public Lands Day

*NPLD Trash Pick-up at Olmos Park - 9:00am*

**Minna Paul** – *Education and Volunteer Engagement Coordinator, San Antonio River Authority*

Minna manages the task of engaging and inspiring 1,300 registered volunteers of the River Warrior volunteer program to support the mission and vision of the River Authority. Her role is to help the community understand our river as a critical and finite freshwater resource for humans and wildlife and inspire them to adopt actions for healthy creeks and rivers. Formerly, as the Education Coordinator with the River Authority, she coordinated and conducted field trips, teacher trainings and other educational opportunities for schools and other groups in Bexar, Wilson, Karnes, and Goliad counties. She has a master's degree in the Environmental Sciences and has worked with many national and international nature organizations in her 12+ years career in environment education.

