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## **BEXAR COUNTY AND SARA ANNOUNCE \$10 MILLION FOR MISSION REACH REIMBURSEMENT**

**San Antonio, TX** – Bexar County and the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) announced today that \$10 million for reimbursement towards the Mission Reach project has been included in the Fiscal Year 2017 Work Plan released by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

The Work Plan allocation adds to the \$6.2 million in reimbursement previously received and reduces the remaining balance of the reimbursement owed to \$45.1 million from a total of \$61.3 million.

“We are grateful to the members of our delegation who have once again secured this reimbursement by working with committee leadership and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Our delegation continues to accomplish great things for our community through their bipartisan efforts,” said Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff. “These funds will be utilized to enhance our waterways through projects like San Pedro Creek and others.”

The Fiscal Year Work Plan allocation resulted from the successful work by San Antonio’s congressional delegation to include language in the FY17 Omnibus Appropriations Act. San Antonio’s delegation includes Congressman Henry Cuellar who sits on the House Appropriations Committee, Senators John Cornyn and Ted Cruz, and Congressmen Will Hurd, Joaquin Castro, Lloyd Doggett, and Lamar Smith. The language included in the appropriations bill provided, *“Of the additional funds provided in this account for flood and storm damage reduction, navigation, and other authorized project purposes, the Corps shall allocate not less than \$10,000,000 to authorized reimbursements for projects with executed project cooperation agreements and that have completed construction or where non-federal sponsors intend to use the funds for additional water resources development activities.”*

San Antonio Congressmen and Senators that have been seeking to secure reimbursement for Bexar County and SARA said:

"I submitted this language, as a member of the Appropriations Committee, and worked with my Committee colleagues and the delegation to secure the provision providing the necessary reimbursement towards the Mission Reach project," said Congressman Cuellar. "This project has transformed the San Antonio River into a unique family friendly outdoor recreation area for all San Antonians and visitors to enjoy. I want to thank my delegation colleagues, as well as the House Appropriations Energy & Water Subcommittee Chairman Mike Simpson and Ranking Member Marcy Kaptur, for their support.

"The Mission Reach project has had an enormous environmental and economic impact on San Antonio, and I am proud to have worked alongside the San Antonio delegation to secure this reimbursement. Fighting for federal resources is one of the many ways that I have continued to serve constituents back home, and it's my hope that the local officials and organizations throughout the district know that they can count on me to deliver," said U.S. Representative Will Hurd whose district includes Mission Espada.

"The River Authority's work on the Mission Reach has resulted in sounder water infrastructure, greater ecological integrity, and improved economic outcomes for the local community," said Rep. Castro. "Our vibrant local waterways help make San Antonio a desirable travel destination and special place to live. I'm glad that Bexar County received this significant reimbursement, and I will continue working with the USACE and other federal officials to ensure the County is provided the entirety of what it's entitled. This funding enables us to make future investments in our city's historic and environmental treasures."

"I am pleased that federal funds continue flowing on a project that I have worked on for the last five years, for which we have enjoyed good bipartisan cooperation," said Congressman Doggett. "These are federal dollars that can now be reinvested in our Westside Creeks."

Rep. Smith: "I am happy to see the Corps Work Plan prioritize the reimbursement of Bexar County funds. The Mission Reach habitat conservation and development project has generated community activity in an area that had previously been underutilized. This is a win for SARA, the county and the whole community of San Antonio."

"It is important that the federal government fulfill its obligations and I am pleased to see the Army Corps prioritize further reimbursement to Bexar County for the money it expended on the Mission Reach project,"

said Senator Ted Cruz. “I will continue to work with my congressional colleagues and the administration to ensure that the federal government fully reimburses the county what it is owed under the agreement.”

In an effort to expedite the completion of the Mission Reach Project, SARA entered into an agreement in 2010 with the USACE to build the project using funds provided by Bexar County with the obligation that the USACE reimburse Bexar County the federal share of the project. Bexar County funded over \$61 million toward the federal share of the Mission Reach project allowing the project to be completed faster and at less cost than if the project would have been completed by the USACE.

“Since its completion in 2013, the Mission Reach has had more than 1.5 million visitors, hosted school field trips, nature walks, charity fun runs, river paddling and festival events and seen a return of bird and aquatic species that indicate that the ecosystem restoration is working,” said Suzanne Scott, SARA’s General Manager. “The project is returning the benefits promised when we embarked on this partnership with the Corps of Engineers and through the continued collaboration by our delegation to secure the receipt of the reimbursement owed, investment in the improvement to the San Pedro Creek and the other westside creeks can continue.”

The Mission Reach project successfully restored the ecosystem of an eight-mile stretch of the San Antonio River south of downtown previously channelized for flood control purposes. Construction of the project was completed in October 2013. The restored ecosystem consists of 113 acres of aquatic habitat, 334 acres of riparian woodland, 31 riffle structures, 13 acres of embayment habitat, and two river remnants. The project is also maintaining and increasing the flood control capabilities of the original (USACE) project. Additionally, the 2014 River Walk Impact Study found that the project is acting as an economic catalyst as a part of the River Walk, contributing to an estimated \$3.1 billion in economic impact for the area which is generated annually by the San Antonio River Walk.

“The Mission Reach project has been a tremendous success, transforming a flood channel into a beautiful river with fish, birds and people enjoying the restored ecosystem,” said Precinct 1 Commissioner Sergio “Chico” Rodriguez. “The county is committed to working with our delegation and SARA to continue to have the reimbursement funding come back to our community.”

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**San Antonio River Authority**

*The San Antonio River Authority (SARA) was created by the 45th Texas Legislature on May 5, 1937 and reorganized in 1961 to plan, manage and implement water-related programs and projects within the San Antonio River Watershed. The State of Texas empowered SARA to preserve, protect and manage the resources and the ecology of the San Antonio River and its tributaries. To learn more about the SARA, visit our website at [www.sara-tx.org](http://www.sara-tx.org).*