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News Release

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SARA TO REMOVE NON-NATIVE NUTRIA-RAT POPULATION FROM EAGLELAND AND MISSION REACH

Invasive Species Damaging the Ecosystem Restoration Project

SAN ANTONIO – The San Antonio River Authority (SARA) is contracting with wildlife management specialists over the next few weeks to control the non-native Nutria-rat population within the Eagleland and Mission Reach segments of the San Antonio River Walk. There will be a total of 60 visible trapping mechanisms placed off the trails along the banks of the San Antonio River and the community is cautioned to not come in contact with these traps for their safety.

Nutria-rats have already damaged banks and destroyed significant portions of the restored native emergent plants within the Eagleland and Mission Reach segments and their removal is to protect these restored ecosystems from further damage. Nutria-rats kill vegetation by eating the soft succulent parts near the base of plants and the roots. Besides their destructive appetite, Nutria-rats also damage their environment by burrowing into the soft soil in the banks of the river producing excess erosion to cause them to collapse and fail.

Nutria-rats are large, brown, stocky rodents that are very similar in size to beavers. Instead of the beaver's famous broad flat tail, Nutria-rats have long round scaly tails with bristles. Breeding up to two times per year with up to nine offspring per litter, Nutria can increase in population at an alarming rate. These semi-aquatic rodents prefer to live in marshes and riverbanks where they forage on 2.5-3.5 pounds of vegetation daily. They arrived in North America in the 1930's as a fur bearing species and since then, they have spread to cover the eastern two-thirds of Texas as well as many other states.

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“As the agency responsible for the maintenance of the Mission Reach segment, it’s important that we address any challenges to the well-being of the project for the safety and enjoyment of the general public,” said SARA’s Watershed & Park Operations Manager Kristen Hansen. “Our staff worked to find an appropriate solution to the damage caused by the Nutria-rat population in an effort to preserve the project’s ecosystem and the health of the San Antonio River.”

The wildlife management specialist contract to remove these rodents is for 45 days and is in accordance with the guidelines of the United States Department of Agriculture’s Wildlife Services. If the community has any questions, they can contact SARA at (210) 227-1373.

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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.