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**MEMBERS OF *TEAM RIVER* ANNOUNCE FOUR MILESTONES IN THE NEXT PHASE
OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION OF THE SAN ANTONIO RIVER**

Congressman Henry Bonilla Recognized for His Contribution to the Project

SAN ANTONIO – The Final Four aren't the only teams in town making news this week. U.S. Congressman Henry Bonilla and representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) joined other members of *Team River* – City of San Antonio, Bexar County, San Antonio River Authority, and San Antonio Oversight Committee – to announce four critical milestones in the next phase of the environmental restoration of the historic San Antonio River. A member of *Team River*, Congressman Bonilla was also recognized as the team's Most Valuable Player for 2004.

Mike Mocek, deputy district engineer of the USACE – Fort Worth District Office, was on hand to announce four key dates for 2004 relating to the USACE's involvement in advancing the project to the next round. Prior to the announcement, Mocek discussed the longstanding relationship between the USACE and this community. "We have come a long way over the past 50 plus years since Congress authorized construction of flood damage protection along the San Antonio River," said Mocek. "Together, we have constructed miles of channels and two tunnels to protect the citizens of San Antonio." Mocek also praised the savings this community has seen with these improvements. "To date, the federal government and the locals have spent upwards of \$230 million. This investment has resulted in more than \$300 million in damages prevented."

The community vision for the next phase of the improvements project includes restoring the functional drainage channel, which is devoid of a viable aquatic habitat and sustainable ecosystem, to a natural meandering waterway teeming with diverse native plants, fish and wildlife – while maintaining flood control protection.

(more)

Team River Announces Milestones

The four major milestones that will advance the project into the next phase are:

- **April 12, 2004** - The Fort Worth District will identify the preliminary National Environmental Restoration Plan. The NER plan establishes the preliminary federal funding in accordance with the USACE's current planning and policy requirements.
- **April 30, 2004** - The local interests in coordination with the San Antonio River Authority and the Fort Worth District will select the Recommended Plan. The Recommended Plan provides the local community the opportunity to revise the project as proposed in the NER to more closely reflect the local vision by adding non-federal components or deleting federal components of the project.
- **June 21, 2004** - The Fort Worth District will present the draft General Re-evaluation Report (GRR) for Public review. This draft plan and funding amount will represent the proposed plan after incorporating local input and review by Corps Headquarters.
- **August 2, 2004** – The Fort Worth District, in coordination with the Corps Headquarters, will submit the final GRR, which will identify the Recommended Plan for implementation; this plan is what identifies the level of federal funding for the San Antonio River Improvements Project.

Mike Mocek continued to say that the GRR report is the first step in determining what elements of the project will be eligible for future federal funding, which is essential in moving the entire project to completion. The scope of the study will evaluate elements of the ecosystem restoration, flood management and recreational needs.

“In the spirit of the Final Four, this announcement is the equivalent of our team entering half time,” said H.B. “Trip” Ruckman, III, chairman of the San Antonio River Authority. “The anticipation is building and we are ready to take this game into overtime. The San Antonio River is the heart of the city and we want to ensure that it is preserved and restored so that many generations can enjoy it.”

(more)

***Team River* Announces Milestones**

U.S. Congressman Recognized for Contribution to Project

Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff and District 1 City Councilman Roger Flores also helped San Antonio River Oversight Committee Co-chairmen, Lila Cockrell and Irby Hightower, officially recognize Congressman Bonilla as *Team River's* Most Valuable Player for 2004.

“Congressman Bonilla, working with other members of our dedicated local congressional delegation, truly kept this project alive and moving to where we are today,” said Judge Wolff. “Congressman Bonilla’s continued support for this project is greatly valued and definitely improves *Team River's* odds for continued victories.”

Congressman Bonilla was bestowed with an official *Team River* jersey and team number and commended for his contribution to the project, which included securing \$5 million in federal funds over the previous two fiscal years to complete the preliminary design phase and the General Re-Evaluation Report.

On behalf of the San Antonio River Oversight Committee, Cockrell expressed her sincerest appreciation for Congressman Bonilla’s support of the project. She continued to say that without his leadership in Washington D.C., and his commitment to our community, we would not have reached today’s milestone. “Congressman Bonilla really sealed the victory for us with a heroic performance in the federal appropriations round,” she added.

“I’m honored to be here today to hear an update on such a significant project, and I’m even prouder to be on the starting team for *Team River*,” said Congressman Bonilla. “This project is a slam dunk for San Antonio, and enhances the lives of all residents – and visitors – in so many ways such as restoring the environmental surroundings, improving quality of life, and encouraging health and fitness.”

(more)

Team River Announces Milestones

Team River Partners

The San Antonio Improvements Project is a united vision comprised of many San Antonio community partners. In addition to the federal funding element, a local financial commitment has been made by the project partners to ensure this project is completed, including:

- City of San Antonio plans to invest \$37.8 million over the life of the project for the amenities and recreation elements.
- Bexar County has committed \$53.6 million to maintain flood control and support the ecosystem restoration elements of the planned improvements along the San Antonio River.
- The Corps of Engineers is currently performing analyses to determine the level of investment by the federal government in the ecosystem restoration and recreation elements of the project.
- The San Antonio River Foundation is working to raise more than \$15 million for art and cultural enhancements to the River Improvements Project.
- San Antonio River Authority is providing project and technical management, as well as overall project coordination between the project partners.

In regards to the federal funding component of the project, Congressman Bonilla added, “It’s too early in the process to make any assessment on what the federal funding requirements will be. I will be watching the project closely and look forward to hearing the results of the Fort Worth District study efforts in order to get a better understanding of what it will take from the federal level to achieve the community vision for the project.”

The River Improvements Project is a \$140 million city, county and federal investment in a four-mile segment of the river from Hildebrand to Lexington called the Museum Reach, and a nine-mile segment from South Alamo Street to Mission Espada called the Historic Mission Ranch.

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Team River Announces Milestones

To date, the four-phase project is entering the last two chapters of the project's overall plan. The Downtown Reach, between Lexington and Houston Streets, has been completed and recently the Eagleland project began its restoration, which will restore the natural habitat of the river and add hike and bike connections to downtown. That project, when completed, will serve as an example of what *Team River* is working to accomplish for the length of the river south to Mission Espada.

For more information on the San Antonio River Improvements Project, go to www.sanantonioriver.org or call the San Antonio River Authority at 210-227-1373.