



San Antonio River Improvements Project



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\$1.5 MILLION BUILDING BLOCK FROM CONGRESS ADDED TO FUNDING FOUNDATION FOR RIVER IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

(January 9, 2002) SAN ANTONIO – U.S. Congressman Charles Gonzalez joined city, county and community leaders today in stacking symbolic building blocks, during an announcement that federal appropriations are being added to the funding foundation for the San Antonio River Improvements Project. Gonzalez and the other members of the local congressional delegation helped secure \$1.5 million in fiscal year 2002 appropriations for the effort.

The River Improvements Project represents a 10-year, \$140 million city, county, and federal investment in flood control, amenities, environmental restoration and recreational improvements to the river, both north and south of downtown San Antonio. The federal funding announced today will allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) to begin its General Re-Evaluation Study, which is the first step in determining which elements of the project will be eligible for federal funding over the life of the project. A \$530,000 portion of the federal appropriations will assist construction efforts on a separate river restoration effort on the southern edge of downtown, called the Eagleland Project. This effort is expected to enter construction in 2002.

“The San Antonio River Improvements Project is worthy of all the support we can provide from the federal government because of the river’s historical significance, its tremendous potential for economic development beyond downtown, and the enjoyment it will provide to all in our community,” said Gonzalez. “The river already is the jewel of San Antonio, but this project will allow us to expand the river’s natural charm beyond downtown and create more opportunities for citizens to enjoy it for generations to come.”

The COE study will examine alternatives for environmentally restoring sections of the river to their natural flow, and maintaining or improving flood control. The award-winning Concept Design Guidelines for the project, already established by local project sponsors, have been reviewed by the COE and will be incorporated into their study. The COE is expected to complete the initial phase of their study in 2003, concurrent with the completion of the preliminary design phase currently underway on the River Improvements Project.

“This commitment is merely the beginning of federal support for the project,” said H.B. “Trip” Ruckman, chairman of the board of the San Antonio River Authority. “We will maintain our efforts with the local

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Congressional delegation over the duration of the project to ensure our continued partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers.”

Throughout the ten-year project, the San Antonio River Authority will provide project and technical management, as well as overall project coordination between the partners. It is anticipated that the County will contribute approximately \$53 million over the 10 years of the project, and the City’s contribution is expected to be approximately \$37 million. Funding is derived from Bexar County’s flood tax and the City of San Antonio’s capital improvements fund. Project leadership will also be seeking involvement from the private sector for the additional funds necessary to upgrade planned amenities. The total federal contribution over the life of the project is estimated to be more than \$30 million.

“Federal funding is essential to moving the river improvement efforts forward, and on the local level we are grateful to be a part of this partnership and we are looking forward to our hand-in-hand efforts with the Corps of Engineers,” said Lila Cockrell, Co-chair of the San Antonio River Oversight Committee. “The assistance of our congressional delegation is another example of the unity behind initiatives to improve the river – from the community’s vision, to our city and county leaders, and all the way to Washington, D.C.”

The River Improvements Project includes the four-mile Museum Reach of the river north of downtown from Lexington to Hildebrand, and the nine-mile Historic Mission Reach of the river south of downtown, from South Alamo Street to Mission Espada.

In addition to the General Re-Evaluation Study, the \$1.5 million in federal appropriations will provide \$530,000 to support the Eagleland project, which is an environmental restoration of the San Antonio River from Alamo Street to Lone Star Boulevard. This project includes the application of measures to stabilize the river banks, ensure erosion control, protect water quality and create or retain habitat for fish and wildlife.

Construction on this project, including the hike and bike trail funded through the Texas Department of Transportation, is expected to begin later this year. The Eagleland project will tie the Mission Trails project to the downtown section of the river, and will serve as an example of the restoration activities planned for other reaches of the river.

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