

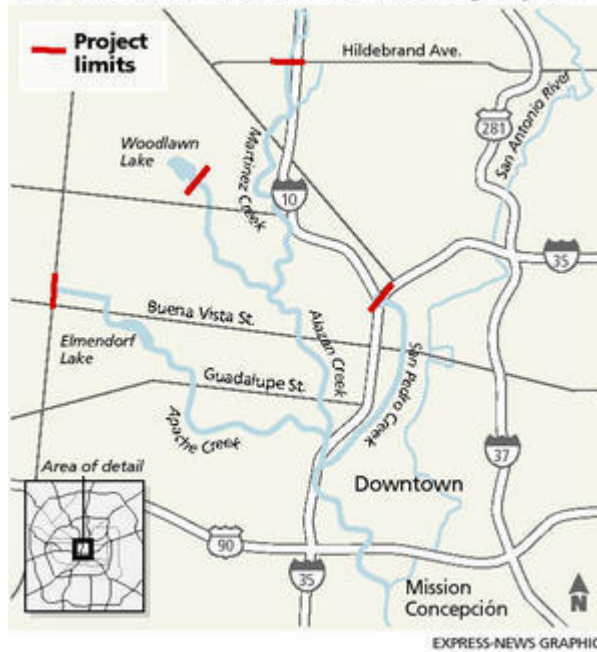
Urban oases await rebirth

By Elaine Ayo - Express-News



Alazan Creek clearly needs a cleanup as the San Antonio River Authority begins formulating a plan to transform roughly 14 miles of cement-lined creeks into habitats that will support wildlife and plants once common along their banks.

West Side creeks restoration project



The public will have a chance to participate in the effort to restore four West Side creeks to their natural state as part of Saturday's Earth Day festivities at Woodlawn Lake.

"We want the community to use the creeks, not have them be something that's over the fence to be ignored," said Robert Ramirez, co-chairman of the committee overseeing the effort.

A public input session will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Woodlawn Lake Gym at 1103 Cincinnati Ave.

Residents can also offer their opinions about the project by calling (210) 785-0888 or visiting www.westsidecreeks.com.

The San Antonio River Authority is heading the project and has been joined by more than 20 organizations, including neighborhood associations, universities and historical groups.

The first phase is to formulate a plan for transforming the roughly 14 miles of cement-lined

channels into habitats that will support wildlife and plants once common along the creeks' banks.

"The ecosystem was healthy, the water was clear," said Roberto Rodriguez, a River Authority board member and a driving force behind the effort.

Looking out over a section of Apache Creek, he recalled his days hunting crawfish and bullfrogs and said he wanted to draw wildlife back there, as well as to Alazan, Martinez and San Pedro creeks.

"It hurts to see them pecking at cement," Rodriguez said as he gazed at a couple of egrets.