



**Westside Creeks Restoration  
Oversight Committee Meeting  
San Antonio River Authority  
100 E. Guenther  
February 18, 2020  
6 p.m.**

**Committee Members Present**

Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair  
Skye Curd, Co-Chair  
Anne Parrish, Bexar Audubon Society  
Stella Tenorio-De La Garza, Conservation Society  
of San Antonio  
Joanne Walsh, Downtown Residents Assoc.  
Briana Salas, Ph.D., OLLU

Abel Ramirez, San Antonio Wheelmen  
Kamala Platt, Ph.D., TexasTejano.com  
Erwin DeLuna, United San Antonio Pow Wow, Inc.  
Veronica Lopez, West SA Chamber of Commerce  
Melinda Gonzalez, Westside Development Corp.  
Albert Salgado, UTSA

**Staff and Public Present**

Lourdes Galvan, SARA Board, D2  
Suzanne Scott, SARA General Manager  
Kerry Averyt, SARA  
Reuben Bazan, SARA  
Carrie Brown, SARA  
Richard De La Cruz, SARA

Brian Mast, SARA  
Monica Trevino-Ortega, SARA  
Daniel Leal, City of San Antonio  
Cosima Colvin, COSA Linear Creekway Parks  
Advisory Board  
Jim Funk  
Laura Calderon, Ximenes & Associates, Inc

**I. Welcome**

Ms. Curd opened the meeting by welcoming everyone.

**II. Citizens to be Heard**

Ms. Curd called for Citizens to be Heard. No citizens were signed up to speak. Ms. Curd stated that at any time after a presentation, citizens could ask questions.

**III. Calendar Items**

Ms. Curd reviewed upcoming calendar items:

- San Pedro Creek Culture Park Monday Night Yoga – March 2020 - October 2020
- San Pedro Creek Culture Park “Get Fit” event – February 22, 2020
- San Pedro Creek Sub-Committee Meeting – March 12, 2020
- San Pedro Creek Sub-Committee Meeting – April 9, 2020
- San Pedro Creek Sub-Committee Meeting – May 14, 2020
- Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee Meeting – May 19, 2020

**IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes – August 20, 2019 & November 18, 2019**

The minutes for August 20, 2019 were unanimously approved. The minutes for November 18, 2019 were unanimously approved as amended by Ms. Parrish, with the name “Rick Coleman” corrected to “Britt Coleman.”

**V. Status Report on Westside Creeks Improvement Project, Richard De La Cruz & Reuben Bazan, San Antonio River Authority** (See presentation for full details.)

Mr. De La Cruz said there had been a change in responsibilities and Mr. Bazan was the new Zarzamora Creek project manager.

Alazan Creek Trail

Mr. De La Cruz reviewed the project details, construction status and timeline.

Mr. Ramirez asked if any historians or Prospect Hill residents had been involved with the project, given the historical significance of the Battle of the Alazan, a precursor to the Battle of the Alamo. He said the location was near Commerce St. and Buena Vista and asked if a historic marker could be placed. A COSA representative in the audience said it was likely a marker did exist. Mr. De La Cruz said he would look into Mr. Ramirez's request.

Apache Creek Trail

Mr. Bazan provided project details, construction status and timeline. He said the new sewer lines were recently completed, so the restoration of all sidewalks, curbs, roadways, and park areas was now underway. The sewer line replacement, a joint project between SAWS and COSA, had halted work on the trails. Next month, the contractor will continue work on the trails, which should be finished by the end of summer 2020.

Zarzamora Creek Trail

Mr. Bazan provided project details and reviewed its construction status.

A committee member asked if the concrete culverts shown in the presentation would remain. Mr. Bazan responded the culverts would remain since SARA is only installing trails and infrastructure for the linear park.

Ms. Galvan asked if a trash boom was located near Commerce and 26<sup>th</sup> Street because it was full and needed cleaning. Mr. Bazan said a trash boom is located on Zarzamora St. near Gen. McMullen. He added Ms. Galvan was referring to a cable used to contain water hyacinths (free-floating aquatic plant) for mechanical removal.

Mr. Bazan said once this trail is complete, the public will be able to walk or bike all the way to the Museum Reach and the Mission Reach.

Ms. Tenorio-De La Garza asked if trees would be planted. Mr. Bazan responded trees would be planted in areas where water flow would not be impeded.

Mr. Ramirez told the committee Mr. Bazan had agreed to give a presentation on the Zarzamora Creek Trail to the Loma Park community. He thanked Mr. Bazan for doing so.

### Martinez Creek Trail

Mr. Bazan stated the project is on hold while SAWS installs a new sewer line. The trail design is complete and being held for implementation until SAWS finishes its work.

This concluded the presentations on the Westside Creek Improvements Project. Ms. Curd turned the meeting over to Mr. Ramirez.

### **VI. Status Report on San Pedro Creek (SPC) Culture Park and Communications - Kerry Averyt & Monica Trevino-Ortega, San Antonio River Authority** (See presentation for full details.)

Mr. Averyt reviewed the construction currently underway for Phase 1.2, and the design activities for Phases 1.3 and 2. He also discussed their coordination efforts with nearby partners, such as UTSA, SAISD, Texas Public Radio, and businesses along Commerce and Camaron. A committee member asked when traffic could access the Houston St. and Camaron intersection. Mr. Averyt responded the area would be accessible in April 2021.

Ms. Trevino-Ortega followed with a presentation on SPC outreach activities. She said a press conference and media tour had taken place to announce the \$26M Mission Reach reimbursement to Bexar County from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). She added she had scheduled several public tours, and could schedule one for the WCROC, as well.

Mr. Ramirez extended his congratulations to Ms. Scott and the Board for having received the \$26M reimbursement.

Ms. Galvan said an additional \$5M had been requested by the County but rejected by the USACE. Due to miscommunication, she felt clarification about the purpose of the request was necessary. Some people thought the funding request was for continued building along the creeks, but its purpose was to study or design the creeks' eco-system.

Ms. Scott said the purpose of the funding request to the USACE was for designing the first phase of the Westside creeks eco-system restoration. Mr. Ramirez requested WCROC members be involved in the study. Ms. Scott clarified that all of the creeks in the Westside Creek Restoration Project were studied in 2011. Now, SARA wants to secure funding for capital improvements to the creeks. She said the trails were built to stay in place when the eco-system restoration is underway. This restoration effort will focus only on the creek channels.

Dr. Platt asked if there had been public input on the eco-system restoration. She recalled public input had not occurred, and many environmental conditions had changed since 2011. Ms. Scott responded that once the design is funded, the USACE will review and update the original plan. She said she would send committee members a link to the study, and bring them periodic updates.

Ms. Galvan said instead of the briefing the WCROC, it would be better to present the eco-system restoration to the public so they can ask questions. Ms. Scott said she wants to first update the WCROC, but does not want to raise public expectations since funding is not

secured. At this point, SARA has only briefed the USACE and the legislative delegation. Ms. Scott said a public meeting could be held. Dr. Platt said there were many groups who need to be included, such as native plant groups. Ms. Scott said the USACE dictates the design, but SARA is exploring options that would provide local control.

Ms. Trevino-Ortega reported on the upcoming delivery of Fiesta medals. She then reviewed the street closure coordination and outreach undertaken for Camp, Guadalupe, and Alamo streets.

Ms. Trevino-Ortega updated the WCROC on the Interpretive Plan. The plan will be finalized by mid-March, and then presented to Bexar County Commissioners' Court. Dr. Platt asked who had authored the report. Ms. Trevino-Ortega said the author was Toxey-McMillan Design Associates. She added she would send a membership roster of the [???] to committee members.

## **VII. Update on Public Art for San Pedro Creek Culture Park - Carrie Brown, San Antonio River Authority** (See presentation for full details.)

Ms. Brown reviewed the status of the Phase 1.2 Five Panel Mural, and the public artworks *Creek Lines* and *Streams*. She stated by December 2020, there will be three completed public art projects on San Pedro Creek (SPC). Ms. Brown also reviewed upcoming events. Ms. Curd asked about certain features on the SPC smart-device app. Ms. Brown said they are updating the app and will be adding new features.

## **VIII. Elmendorf Lake Park Bird Project – Robert Ramirez**

Mr. Ramirez said he spoke with Mr. Homer Garcia, Interim Director for COSA Parks and Recreation, to discuss Bird Island. He asked Mr. Garcia for the City's immediate and long-term plans for Bird Island. Mr. Garcia said the immediate plans are to re-vegetate and monitor the island.

Mr. Ramirez asked Mr. Garcia if all birds, or only egrets, would be kept away. Mr. Garcia said the USDA had expanded its focus to "all migratory birds" that might affect Joint Base San Antonio. Mr. Ramirez inquired if chemicals would be used again, and Mr. Garcia said, "Absolutely not, that's not going to happen." Mr. Ramirez asked Mr. Garcia to call him if the use of chemicals is considered again.

Mr. Ramirez said Mr. Garcia met with Councilwoman Gonzalez. At this meeting, Councilwoman Gonzalez briefed Mr. Garcia on her December discussion with Mayor Hardberger regarding the Ecological Master Plan Overlay for Elmendorf Lake Park. Mr. Garcia said Mayor Hardberger is still interested, but the Hardberger Park Conservancy rejected adopting Elmendorf Lake Park. They did, however, offer their expertise and advice.

Mr. Garcia said the Parks Foundation might be an option since they are interested in conservation and may provide funding. He also introduced the idea of establishing a "Friends of Elmendorf" group which would operate under the Parks Foundation. Mr. Ramirez told him whether or not a friends group is established, community involvement is necessary. The community was not involved in the Bird Island issue and was unhappy about being excluded.

Mr. Ramirez recognized Dr. Platt, who reported on the Great Backyard Bird Count this past weekend. Dr. Platt surveyed Bird Island and saw three or four egrets. She also noted the percent of domestic ducks was higher than usual, the presence of Egyptian geese had increased, and the vegetation understory and tall grasses had been removed. Dr. Platt concluded, it was an unhealthy eco-system. Regarding a friends group, Dr. Platt said such a group is needed but should be comprised of residents, residents' allies, and knowledgeable people.

Mr. Ramirez asked why water hyacinths were out of control. Dr. Platt asked if water quality contributes to their growth. Mr. Mast responded most urban water is nutrient-rich. It is treated effluent that, when combined with a slow-moving waterway exposed to high heat and light, encourages rapid growth. He said water hyacinths are not uncommon in any Texas waterway.

### **IX. Miscellaneous Items**

Mr. Ramirez told the committee the January update had been sent out. The update included information on the six bird nests sent to the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center from Bird Island. The Center reports the nests are not yet in use. Also in the update, Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation rescued 61 young cormorants (aquatic birds) from Bird Island; 35 had perished and at last count there were 15 remaining cormorants.

Mr. Ramirez asked if anyone else had information to share. Ms. Cosima Colvin mentioned the upcoming Texas Public Radio's "Think Science" event. She added she is a member of the Linear Creekway Parks Advisory Board and invited WCROC members to attend their meetings on the last Tuesday of the month, at 6 p.m. at Lions Field.

Mr. Ramirez asked Ms. Parrish to share information on the Eco Centro, which is part of the San Antonio College campus on Main St. Ms. Parrish said the Eco Centro promotes environmental sustainability. One of their projects is operating the Garcia Street Urban Farm to help address local food deserts.

### **X. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:30 p.m.