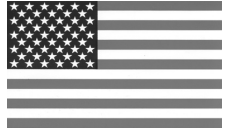




Water



N E W S

January 2003

Mitchell Lake Improvements Slated for Start-Up

Mitchell Lake, a hidden jewel on San Antonio's southside, is about to achieve star status with much-needed improvements recently approved by SAWS Board.

"I'm thrilled about developing this new opportunity for all San Antonians to enjoy the environmental and cultural aspects of this very unique site," Councilwoman Toni Moorhouse said. "The improvements at Mitchell Lake will not only spotlight this beautiful natural preserve in my district, it will also put San Antonio on the map as a world-class wildlife destination."

The lake is positioned on a natural migratory bird route and serves as a resting point for tens of thousands of birds each year. Bird-watchers come from all over the world to see the unique variety of birds that visit there. Among the more than 300 species observed are pelicans, egrets, roseate spoonbills, wild ducks, and hawks. But till now, visitors have enjoyed the wildlife without any kind of accommodations — not even restrooms.

In December, SAWS Board committed \$1.5 million to improve roads and bridges on the property and to build a visitor's center.

The center will be built around the Leeper house. It will feature a historic building relocated from the McNay Art Museum a meeting room, a testing lab, an office, and restrooms. Eventually Mitchell Lake will be part of a Mission Trail with hiking and biking paths.

"Although we're developing better access and a visitors' center for the Mitchell Lake site,

we're working very hard to ensure that the natural habitat that both attracts and protects these birds stays in its original condition," said SAWS Treatment Maintenance Director, Steve Clouse.

Paths to view the wildlife will be located away from nesting sites, and visitors will be required to remain on the access paths. Pets will not be allowed.

Plans for Mitchell Lake were developed by SAWS in partnership with the Mitchell Lake Wetlands Society, the San Antonio Audubon Society, and the public. Construction of improvements will be conducted by SAWS. Site operations will eventually be managed by a separate non-profit entity.

Mitchell Lake Task Force

SAWS would like to extend our sincere thanks to the following community leaders who provided the energy and expertise to create the Mitchell Lake Plan:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Carole Abitz</i> | <i>Councilwoman Toni Moorhouse</i> |
| <i>Bill Atkins</i> | <i>Rene Mosqueda</i> |
| <i>Carlos Benavides</i> | <i>Lynette Nelson</i> |
| <i>Dale Bransford</i> | <i>Anne Parish</i> |
| <i>Marcia Cochran</i> | <i>Thea Platz</i> |
| <i>Dee Emory</i> | <i>Leo Rahmgren</i> |
| <i>Leandro Esparza</i> | <i>Sergio Rodriquez</i> |
| <i>Leo Galindo</i> | <i>Ernest Roney</i> |
| <i>Frances Gonzales</i> | <i>Georgina Schwartz</i> |
| <i>Mike Gonzalez</i> | <i>Ann Seldon</i> |
| <i>Celena Gutierrez</i> | <i>Rufus Stephens</i> |
| <i>Sarita Hall</i> | <i>Steve Tillotson</i> |
| <i>Jack Jordan</i> | <i>Yolanda Uresti</i> |
| <i>Ruth Loftgren</i> | <i>Betty Walters</i> |
| <i>Marge Lumpe</i> | <i>Shelley Whitworth</i> |
| <i>Sonny Mayfield</i> | |

Many others from the business, environmental, educational, southside, and governmental communities contributed their time and energy to create the recommendations in this plan. The community involvement throughout the planning process is its foundation and will continue to guide the plan to reality.



Egrets at Mitchell Lake.

Environmental Studies Approved

In December, SAWS Board of Trustees approved funding for two environmental studies related to the impact of the proposed Lower Guadalupe Water Supply Project (LGWSP). The project is being developed with SAWS' regional water partners, the San Antonio River Authority (SARA), and the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA).

In the first study, GBRA has commissioned a study on the Whooping Crane habitat to ensure that the LGWSP does not negatively affect the species. Dr. Douglas Slack of Texas A&M will conduct the whooping crane study.

The second study was commissioned by SARA to evaluate the biological productivity of the bays and estuaries in the targeted area, and to determine freshwater inflow requirements necessary to support the ecosystem. Dr. George H. Ward of the University of Texas will conduct the San Antonio Bay Inflow study.

"The LGWSP depends on state environmental criteria and extensive environmental studies as well as public involvement," said Bill West, general manager of GBRA. "These two highly respected experts will examine the impact on the bays, estuaries and the whooping crane population, and to present their findings and recommendations to the partners."

"Independent studies in the SB1, Region L water planning process show that the project can provide water for both environmental and community needs," said Susan Butler, SAWS Director of Water Resources. "This is not a people versus the environment situation. These in-depth environmental studies will definitely tell us whether or not a mutually beneficial project can be built."

The whooping crane study will cost approximately \$1.3 million, and the San Antonio Bay inflow study will cost approximately \$1.5 million. Both studies will be implemented over the next five years.

The project partners — SAWS, SARA, and GBRA — are environmental advocates. These studies will provide vital information to assist in the development and operation of the project.

SAWS Board Approves Company-Wide Technology Project

San Antonio Water System Board of Trustees have given the go-ahead to a technology project that promises to bring a new level of day-to-day business efficiency to SAWS. The approved contract will support installation of an integrated Business Information System (iBIS), a comprehensive solution for updating and consolidating the company's computing and information capabilities.

The iBIS Project will provide a single, advanced system to replace the company's existing array of stand-alone computing packages. This effort will enable SAWS to more fully serve its customers and support agency-wide excellence.

"This is not about computers and software," SAWS President/CEO Gene Habiger said. "It's about leveraging the power of technology to streamline the way we do business. The goal is to improve efficiency in every area of the company, with a single purpose in mind: To deliver superior service to our customers."

The new system will allow SAWS personnel to instantly share information across the company – from customer accounts to work orders to equipment and materials availability – to help them make better, faster business decisions. SAWS customers can expect to reap the benefits of increased efficiency in the form of quicker, more responsive customer service.

The project is expected to take two and one-half years to complete at a total cost of \$22.5 million. Carter Burgess, a Fort Worth-based consulting firm, was selected to work with SAWS to implement the project.

Biosolids Program Halted After Community Input

After a series of community meetings, SAWS has halted the program to recycle biosolid residuals from its wastewater facilities in agricultural use. The decision came after communities in the areas surrounding the farms expressed their concerns.

"The biosolids used in these areas were high-quality, and we actually received very good feedback from the farmers in the program. EPA guidelines encourage this kind of agricultural use for biosolids, and recycling is much more beneficial than sending it to a landfill. But the neighbors in the area had concerns, so we've opted to cancel the program as it is now," said Steve Clouse, SAWS Treatment Maintenance Director.

"At SAWS, our goal is to become best in class by 2006. In the industry producing Class A biosolids is considered a best in class practice, so that's what we're going to do."

"To produce Class A biosolids, we are going to maximize our compost operation to use a larger portion of biosolids and landfill the remaining amount that we currently produce. We're also investigating other methods of upgrading the residuals to Class A use to make it broadly available to farmers and gardeners. We're planning to make progress on this program immediately."

Affordability Programs

SAWS offers a number of programs to help customers having financial hardship with water bills. To determine if you qualify, please call San Antonio's Community Action Division at 207-7830.

Winter Recipe for Summer Lawn Health

By Calvin Finch, Ph.D.; Manager of Conservation and Horticulturist

Winter is the perfect time for investing in a few activities that will help ensure your lawn will thrive this summer. The key activities? Aerate and top-dress your lawn.

The first step is aerating. Rent one of the plug-cutting aerators that places the plugs on the soil surface. The machine rents for about \$65 for a 4-hour minimum. Since it only takes about 45 minutes to aerate the typical San Antonio lawn with one of these machines, share the rental with two or three neighbors. Aeration opens up the root zone to water, nutrient and oxygen penetration. It's probably the most beneficial and environmentally appropriate action you can take to produce a healthy lawn.

Follow-up the aeration with a half-inch top dressing of compost for even more benefits. The compost material sifts into the aeration holes to bring the organic material down to the lawn's root zone. To calculate how much compost you need, remember that a cubic yard of compost will cover 648 sq. ft. If you don't have the time to shovel the compost, ask your favorite compost supplier about companies that spread the material for you. At a price of about \$55 per cubic yard, it will be the best investment you ever made in your lawn.

Together, aeration and top dressing with compost is as close to a magic elixir for a lawn as you are going to get. With these winter actions, you can expect your lawn to be more water efficient, less prone to fungal disease, and more vigorous. Not too bad for a few hours' effort this winter.

SAWS Vision: SAWS will be the best water and wastewater utility in the United States by 2006.

Water News is published for customers of the San Antonio Water System. For more information regarding Water News, contact the Public Relations Department at (210) 704-7320.

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T.D.D.	704-1852
CleanStream Hotline	212-5326

24-Hour Emergency

Customer Service/	
Water Waste Reporting	704-SAWS

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