

# San Antonio Bay Partnership (SABP)

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2018



Photo by Liz Smith

### ***Introduction to the San Antonio Bay Partnership Strategic Plan 2018***

#### **Why is a Strategic Plan important to the San Antonio Bay Partnership's Mission?**

- A Strategic Plan ("Plan") is needed to set direction and goals for the San Antonio Bay Partnership's near and intermediate term actions.
- The process of developing the Plan involves stakeholders and partners in identifying issues, needs, goals and projects they think important.
- The Plan communicates these priorities to the SABP Board, stakeholders, partners, donors and the public, and informs them as to how those priorities will be addressed and achieved.

#### **Why develop a Strategic Plan now?**

- It has been seven years since the original discussions regarding SABP's purpose. It is timely to revisit those founding principles and to re-engage our stakeholders in setting priorities.
- Public discussions of the Plan can provide another opportunity to reach additional stakeholders.
- The Strategic Plan will provide a tangible basis for fund-raising activities required to sustain and grow SABP activities.

## **Mission**

*The purpose of the San Antonio Bay Partnership is to create and sustain a working partnership of committed stakeholders in order to protect, restore and enhance the natural resources of the San Antonio Bay/Guadalupe Estuary System for the benefit of the ecosystem and its human uses.*

## Strategic Plan Design

- Input sought at two stakeholder meetings: April and July 2017.
- Input considered by Staff and Board to develop and finalize the Plan.
- Plan includes continuation of current activities and new initiatives identified in the process (judged as either high or medium priority).
- **Terminology used:**
  - **Mission** – who we are and what we hope to achieve.
  - **Goals** -- our desired outcomes.
  - **Actions** – methods needed to meet our Goals.
  - ✓ **Steps** – the series of activities designed to implement the Actions.

## Conclusions from planning process

- SABP does not lack for opportunities to work toward its Mission.
- Partners identified several additional areas where SABP could be helpful.
- Essential to addressing these new opportunities is increased funding for the requisite staff.
- Without an increase in base funding, SABP cannot expand its role beyond its present level of activities.

## Acknowledgements

The development of SABP's Strategic Plan 2018 was made possible by the generous support of the San Antonio River Authority, who provided funding to engage Chris Moore, CDR Associates, to assist SABP in the design of the strategic planning process and the facilitation of the stakeholder meetings. SABP would also like to thank all those who gave their time, ideas, energy and support during those meetings.

On behalf of the SABP Board, I present this Plan to our Stakeholders, Partners and Supporters

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allan R. Berger".

Allan R. Berger  
Chair, SABP Board of Directors

# Goals

## ***Fresh Water Inflows***

Encourage the establishment of voluntary, collaborative mechanisms throughout the watershed that provide sufficient environmental flows for the San Antonio Bay-Guadalupe Estuary System (SAB-GES), especially in drought conditions.

## ***Habitat Conservation***

Promote the conservation, protection, and restoration of aquatic and terrestrial habitats to ensure the SAB-GES is a resilient estuarine system with healthy marshes and oyster reefs, improved bird rookeries, and adequate freshwater for wildlife.

## ***Environmental Education and Outreach***

Increase environmental awareness of both coastal and watershed residents and of visitors so all better understand the SAB-GES and the ecological services it provides.

## ***Public Access and Ecotourism***

Encourage the responsible use of SAB-GES and adjoining public lands and waterways and promote ecotourism.

## ***Administration***

Establish an efficient and flexible organizational structure and administrative procedures to keep overhead low.

## ***Funding***

Increase funding available to support priority activities from current \$50k/yr. to \$100k/yr. in 2018 and to \$150k/yr. in 2019.



## Fresh Water Inflows (FWIs)

### Goal

***Encourage the establishment of voluntary, collaborative mechanisms throughout the watershed that provide sufficient environmental flows for the San Antonio Bay-Guadalupe Estuary System (SAB-GES), especially in drought conditions.***

### Accomplishments

- ✓ Developed report on *Strategies for Achieving Freshwater Inflows Targets for the San Antonio Bay System* as part of the SB3 Environmental Flows determinations and planning program for the Guadalupe/San Antonio River Basins, including the use of Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) to “bank” water for e-flows.
- ✓ Met with key stakeholders regarding comprehensive, basin wide approaches to ensuring environmental flows to the San Antonio-Guadalupe Estuary, especially in drought.
- ✓ Made proposal to the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine’s Gulf Research Program to engage, on a watershed scale, stakeholders and members of the scientific community in a program of information and experience sharing to prepare both groups to better participate in the development of programs and policies related to freshwater inflows for estuaries along the Middle Texas Coast.

<b>Actions</b>		<b>Priority</b>	<b>Next Steps -- as funding available:</b>
<b>FW1</b>	Determine the “threshold” amount and location of inflows needed for a “recognizable ecological benefit” during a drought.	High	Develop a "Study Topic/Project Description" for funding consideration. Work with Partners to identify a funding source (\$35K).
<b>FW2</b>	Promote a basin-wide approach to managing inflows by engaging stakeholders regarding issues and possible solutions.	Current	Continue to host meetings with other entities in the San Antonio-Guadalupe River Basin to solicit input on FWI issues and how to involve stakeholders in the GBRA-TAP process.
<b>FW3</b>	Use TWDB’s TxBLEND model to better define the potential effects of dedicated FWIs on SA Bay salinities.	Medium	Develop a project description and estimated costs. Seek funding.
<b>FW4</b>	Conduct a study to advance piloting of river bank filtration (RBF) wells as a means of “banking” surface water in aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) facilities as a strategy to increase FWIs to SA Bay.	Med	Follow implementation of Victoria ASR well project and literature on other applications. Look for opportunity to advance. Seek funding.





## Habitat Conservation

### Goal

***Promote the conservation, protection, and restoration of aquatic and terrestrial habitats to ensure the SAB-GES is a resilient estuarine system.***

### Accomplishments

- ✓ Conducted a stakeholder-based planning project to develop and publish a *Habitat Conservation and Coastal Public Access Plan for the San Antonio Bay System*.
- ✓ Updated the management strategies for rookery islands in San Antonio Bay and worked with a key landowner to improve habitat.
- ✓ Worked with the International Crane Foundation to develop a GIS-based index that characterizes and ranks locations in the wintering grounds as to their potential for successful use by Whooping Cranes. Fifty-five potential locations identified.
- ✓ Refurbished or drilled five wells using funds from USFW in 2016 to pump freshwater to surface ponds for use by whooping cranes and other birds / wildlife.
- ✓ Installed game cameras on several of the re-furbished water well sites to provide information on crane and other wildlife usage and possible insights on how to improve pond layout. Cameras have also been installed at two newly refurbished wells located on protected private lands.
- ✓ Applied to TCEQ to include Water for Wildlife as Supplemental Environmental Project in order to be eligible to receive funds from TCEQ enforcement actions.
- ✓ Coordinated pickup of derelict trap crab traps in Espiritu Santo Bay in 2017 and assisted SA Bay Foundation's efforts in San Antonio Bay.
- ✓ Following Hurricane Harvey, coordinating repair of water wells that provide essential fresh water to wintering whooping crane.



*Habitat Conservation, continued*

	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Next Steps as funding available:</u>
HC1	Develop a plan that improves sustainability and resiliency of oyster reefs in SAB-GES.	High	Advocate and facilitate formative efforts to develop the outlines of a SAB-GES Oyster Resiliency Plan. Develop white paper to initiate discussion.
HC2	Increase habitat protection by facilitating land purchases and conservation easements sufficient to protect biodiversity.	High	Engage USFW, ICF and Whooping Crane Winter Working Group to more fully develop the proposed Action and a potential SABP role. Identify other entities and knowledgeable contacts involved in this effort. Survey each's programs and plan to identify potential synergies as well as gaps / needs where SABP might play a role.
HC3	Determine the purpose and scope of periodic updates of the SA Bay Status and Trends Report; implement based on recommendations.	Medium	With Partners, identify focused update to marine key species of interest: Oysters, Blue crabs, trout, redfish, flounder and a food chain indicator species that could serve as basis for education / outreach efforts. Same for colonial waterbird survey results.
HC4	Conduct a thorough TPWD Crab Trap Removal Program in the SAB-GES each year.	Current	Work with SABF to plan Feb 2018 effort, including increased involvement from CCA.
HC5	Improve habitat of colonial waterbird rookeries within the SAB-GES and the lower watershed.	Current	Work with Dow to implement recommendations of management plan. Work with CBBEP and Audubon re improvement of SA Bay Rookeries.
HC6	Provide freshwater for Whooping Cranes and other wildlife during droughts by refurbishing existing water wells and installing new wells.	Current	Work with USFW re repairs of Harvey damage under NFWF grant. Determine status of TCEQ SEP application that would provide additional funding. Identify other grants to continue efforts.
HC7	Identify and screen opportunities to develop commercial oyster farms in SAB-GES	Medium	Participate in Gulf of Mexico Shellfish Initiative to provide input to that process. Contact Dr. John Scarpa, TAMU-CC, regarding his project "Identifying Information Needs and Regulatory Impediments to Off-Bottom Oyster culture in Texas." Identify any opportunities to be of assistance.
HC8	Update the San Antonio Bay Habitat Conservation and Coastal Public Access Plan (CCPAP).	Medium	Develop an on-line spreadsheet that includes any progress made on, and the status of, projects listed in the current CCPAP. The spreadsheet should also list additional project opportunities not included in the current CCPAP.

## Environmental Education and Outreach

### Goal

*Increase environmental awareness of coastal and watershed residents and visitors so all better understand the SAB-GES and the ecological services it provides.*

### Accomplishments

- ✓ Bringing the **Floating Classroom Archimedes** to the San Antonio / Guadalupe Estuary System for an education program called “Estuary October”. In 2016, 536 students and 97 adults participated. (Harvey postponed 2017 event until March 2018.)
- ✓ Sponsors a **Kids Birding Program** at the Austwell-Tivoli Independent School District beginning in the 2015-16 school year. The 2016-2017 program at ATISD included 10 students.
- ✓ Provided a one-day educational program entitled “Matagorda Island Ecology Training Program”.

	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Next Steps as funding available:</u>
<b>EEO1</b>	<p>Survey current environmental education programs in the region to understand educators’ needs and to identify opportunities for collaboration and efficiencies.</p> <p>Use learnings and contacts to promote a region-wide initiative to provide programs our kids deserve.</p>	High	<p>Find assistance and funding for a needs assessment; develop an approach with interested partners that could lead to a more coordinated approach to delivery and funding of environmental programs for the mid coast region.</p> <p>Partner with Texas Floating Classroom to design and implement an advanced module targeting high schools in the Guadalupe-San Antonio Rivers watershed.</p>
<b>EEO2 A</b>	<p>Continue the Floating Classroom program for coastal middle school kids each October.</p> <p>Expand the Floating Classroom program to upstream students with an increasing focus on high school students with science interests.</p>	Current	<p>Partner with Texas Floating Classroom, Inc to handle administrative duties associated with the Estuary Ed program.</p> <p>Focus on increasing advanced / high school modules for March 2018 makeup.</p> <p>Partner with Stakeholders to deliver Shore side modules associated with Floating Classroom program (ICF, SARA, GBRA, ANWR, TFC). Increase funding from the current \$18k/yr. to \$25k annually 2018. Implement program during October 2018 based on funds raised.</p>
<b>EEO2 B</b>	<p>Continue the Kids Birding Program at Austwell- Tivoli ISD.</p>	Current	<p>Develop a post-Harvey recovery plan for the program.</p> <p>Look for opportunities to expand the program to other schools;</p> <p>Identify and recruit other interested educators and additional volunteer leaders and assistants.</p> <p>Best current candidates: Palacios and POC 4-H clubs.</p>

## *Environmental Education and Outreach, continued*

	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Next Steps as funding available:</u>
<b>EEO3</b>	Support outreach events and activities that increase public understanding and support of SABP and partner activities.	Current	Develop media program around Strategic Plan. Produce SABP Annual Update. Host SABP Stakeholder Meeting annually. Participate in Partners' activities as appropriate.
<b>EEO4</b>	Develop a consistent and effective message that reaches targeted audiences.	Medium	Identify staffing resource to lead this effort. Define the audiences that need to be reached based on the goals from the other SABP action plans (e.g., freshwater inflows, habitat conservation and protection, and public access and eco-tourism)





## Public Access and Ecotourism

### Goal

*Encourage the responsible use of SAB-GES and adjoining public lands and waterways and promote ecotourism.*

### Accomplishments

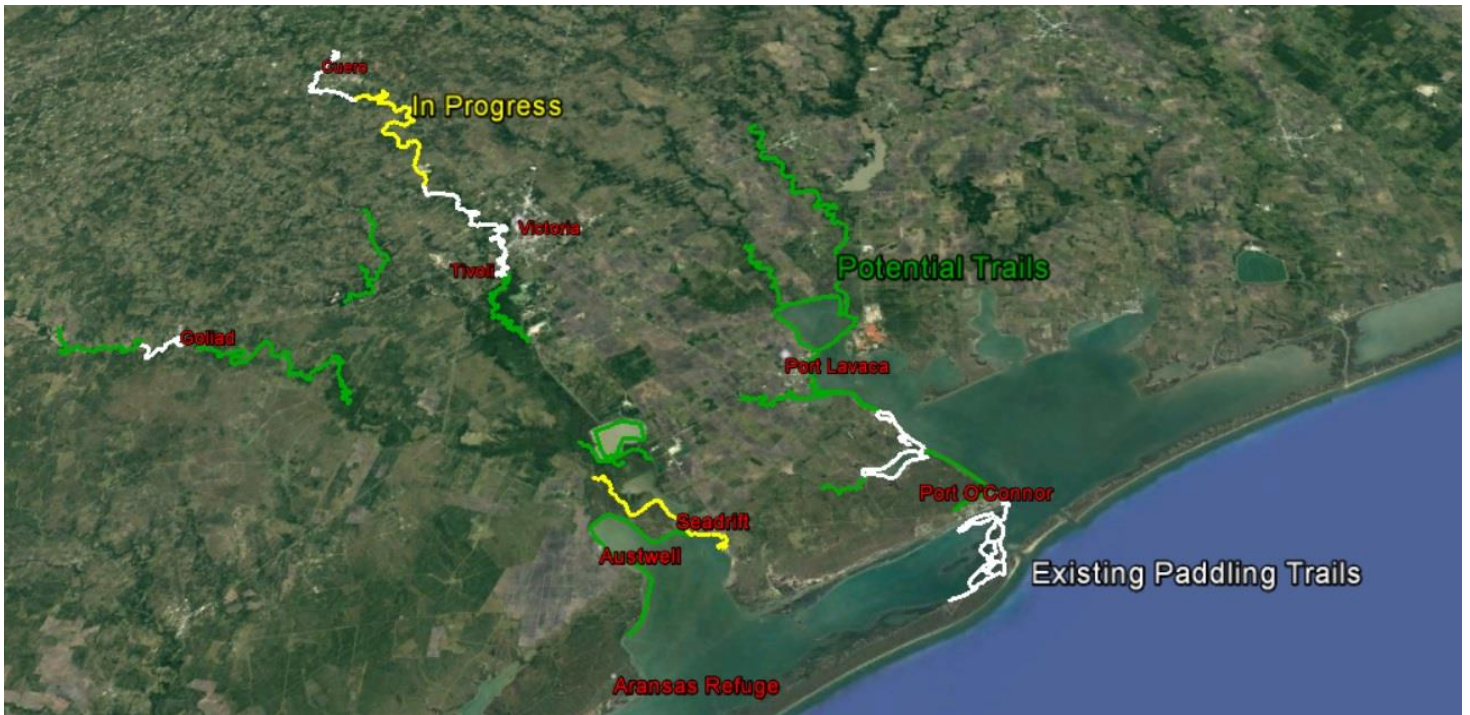
- ✓ Expanded and maintained the Port O'Connor Paddling Trail.
- ✓ Obtained approval for the Seadrift Paddling Trail; installation in progress.
- ✓ Applied for extension of the Guadalupe Valley / Cuero Paddling Trail; application under consideration.
- ✓ Developed proposals for several other trails in the region; discussing with potential partners.
- ✓ Leading monthly nature paddles to “Explore the Bay & More” during paddling season.
- ✓ Sponsored adult outings to bird at Mad Island Marsh, Powderhorn Ranch and Welder Flats.

	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Next Steps as funding available:</u>
<b>PAE1</b>	Improve and enhance the regional birding trail currently described in the TPWD Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail.	High	Engage interested Partners to determine / agree on a scope and way forward.
<b>PAE2</b>	Develop a regional network of paddling trails within TPWD Paddle Texas System.	Current	Implement Seadrift Trail. Address access issues with Cuero Trail extension and work toward implementation. Address Boggy Park improvement issues and work toward implementation. Identify next trail to advance.
<b>PAE3</b>	Develop a marquee paddling event(s) that highlights the River from Victoria to Seadrift.	Medium	Develop a list of potential events, their benefits and potential issues. Discuss options with key partners to determine interest and ability to participate. Develop specific recommendation for consideration by potential Partners.
<b>PAE4</b>	Conduct a feasibility study of the establishment of a Mid-Coast Birding Center.	Medium	Identify existing birding centers and consider current models. Engage with USFWS and TPWD. Engage Partners to consider potentially viable options.

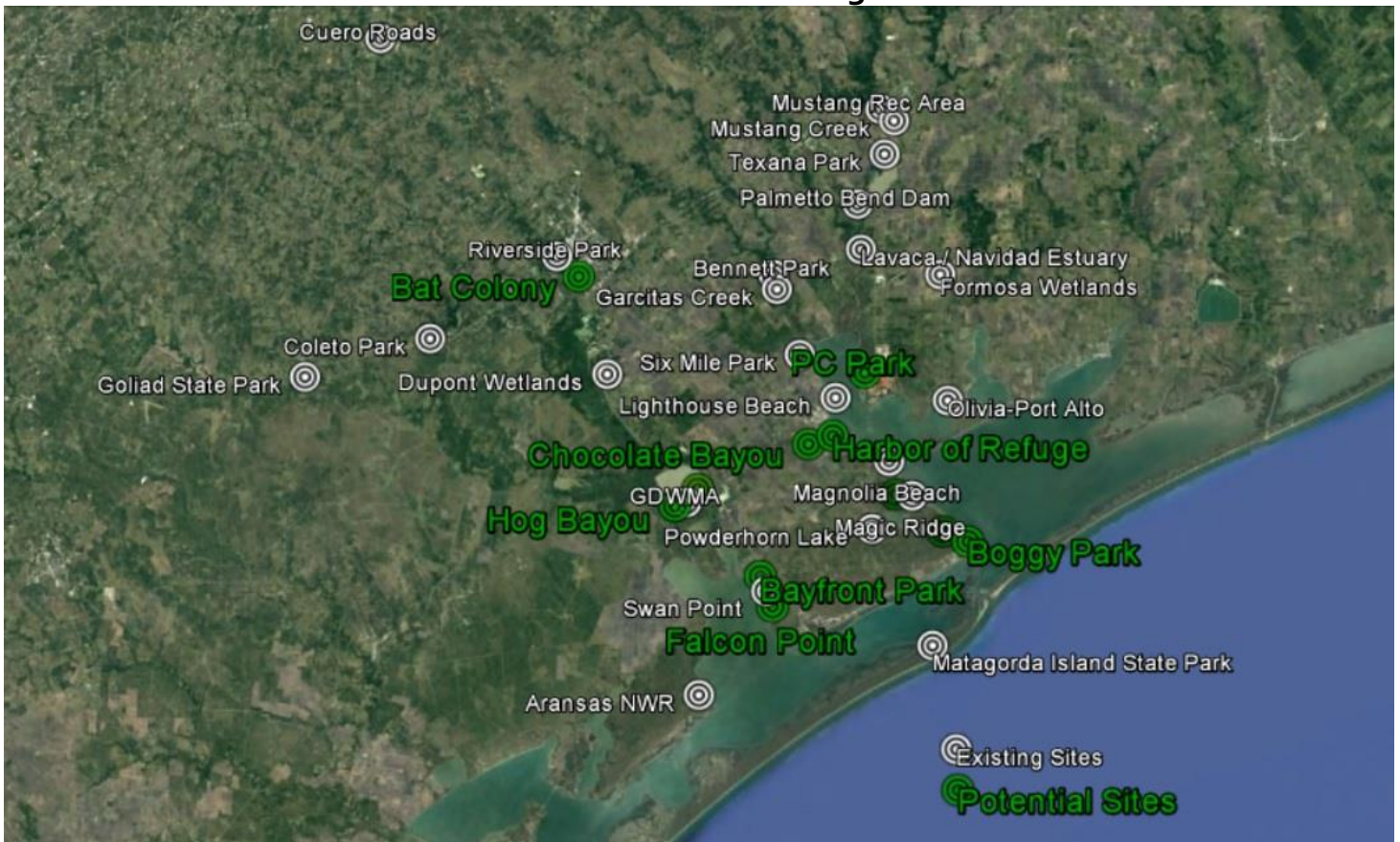


## Public Access and Ecotourism, continued

### Existing Paddling Trails in the San Antonio Bay Area



### Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail





## Administration

### Goal

*Establish an efficient and flexible organizational structure and administrative procedures consistent with Mission and Goals.*

	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Next Steps as funding available:</u>
<b>ADM1</b>	Add/replace staff to address increase in work load due to expanded program activities	High	Recruit candidates for vacant outreach coordinator position.  Consider hiring Development/Fundraising coordinator
<b>ADM2</b>	Conduct a feasibility study about the cost and benefits of a potential SABP Headquarters Facility.	Current	Investigate utilization of UHV office space.  Develop rational for own facility important in long-term and determine potential costs
<b>ADM3</b>	Conduct the requisite studies and develop the requisite documents so that SABP is "shovel-ready" should the EPA's National Estuary Program (NEP) designation and funds become available.	High	Develop a roadmap to complete an effective equivalent of the "Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan" (CCMP) required in the development of a National Estuary Program.  (A CCMP would identify resources, needs, priorities and actions to guide an expanded set of SABP programs, and position SABP to seek NEP status if the possibility arises. It should also facilitate efforts to acquire additional funding for project and plan implementation. Also, it should consider political steps to align with Lower Laguna Madre NEP efforts to advance collective cause.)
<b>ADM4</b>	Continue activities necessary to ensure successful program administration.	High	Provide training in financial accounting and reporting software.



## Funding

### Goal

***Increase funding available to support priority activities from current \$50k/yr. to \$100k/yr. in 2018 and to \$150k/yr. in 2019.***

	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Priority</u>
<b>FND1</b>	Develop a communication package for distribution to all stakeholders that includes and explains the Strategic Plan and solicits contributions / sponsorships.  Update Web site.  Follow with articles in the Advocate, Wave, and Dolphin Talk.	High
<b>FND2</b>	Identify key potential sponsors and request an audience to make our pitch.  Specifically, identify potential entities that might meet SARA's SABP Matching Grant Challenge (including in the San Antonio area).	High
<b>FND3</b>	Identify corporations that have a local presence and make online solicitations where appropriate.  Seek support of local managers.  Identify national foundations that might support our cause and make applications where appropriate.	High
<b>FND4</b>	Increase funding available to support staff activities from current \$50k/yr to \$100k/yr in 2018 and \$150k/yr in 2019.  Initiate targeted fund raising by: 1) distribution to all stakeholders; 2) direct contact to key stakeholders; and 3) on-line to national corporations and foundations	High



## THE FUTURE OF SAN ANTONIO BAY

**SAN ANTONIO BAY PARTNERSHIP**  
**Newsletter**

**Volume 1, Issue 1: May 2010**

### ***Would you like to play a role in determining the future of San Antonio Bay?***

This was the question posed to a large, diverse group of individuals gathered at the University of Houston – Victoria on January 12, 2010. The resounding answer from those present at the meeting was “Yes!” With that acclamation, a new local, stakeholder-directed, voluntary, non-regulatory planning program for the San Antonio Bay System -- ***The San Antonio Bay Partnership*** – was put into motion.



***For More Information on the San Antonio Bay Partnership:***

Visit our the SABP website: <http://www.sabaypartnership.org/>

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