



GUIDING PRINCIPLES



The foundation upon which the SARA nature-based park plan is based relies on the success of local users (single-day) and tourists (multi-day). The components that make up this foundation include cultural centers (existing cities and towns); historic points of interest; active and passive areas; transportation corridors; and most importantly, rivers, creeks and streams.

In this chapter, we will explore the relationship between the purposes of the foundation components and the goals that these components fulfill. This relationship provides a link between the resources and opportunities and the preliminary concept.

USERS

The nature-based park plan addresses two types of users in its system: the Local, or single-day user, and the Tourist, or multi-day user. These users represent either the communities they live in or the people attracted to the region by what is offered. The idea is to draw regional users from one end of the system (either beginning in San Antonio or Goliad) all the way through to the other side; offering amenities and opportunities along the way.

Furthermore, the study area will provide users both Recreation Tourism and Heritage Tourism. Recreation Tourism is a focus on recreational opportunities such as trails, parks, and traditional sporting activities. Heritage Tourism is more focused on historic opportunities such as historic sites, towns, and archaeological resources.

CULTURAL CENTERS

Cultural Centers serve as nodes and service areas, or HUBS, to provide services for both local and regional users. Trail heads and trail access points,

as well as river access points, should be located in or near Cultural Centers where possible. In addition, river-oriented development should be considered, especially in those towns where existing or future development abuts the river. River-oriented development should acknowledge and embrace the river's presence. This development can further enhance the image of the town by providing a new focus on an existing amenity, as well as provide new types of activities along the river.

Cultural Centers currently serve the role of providing user services and are located in close proximity to potential trail heads, river access areas, and activity nodes. They should provide simple comforts (*water, restrooms, trash receptacles, seating, and shade*), trailheads, overnight accommodations, restaurants, retail, and emergency services. Cultural Centers should highlight and celebrate the diverse and individual local characteristics of each town.

Refer to the Guiding Principles Matrix (Table 2) to compare Cultural Centers, Goals, and their Interpretive Opportunities.

HISTORIC POINTS OF INTEREST

Historic Points of Interest located outside of Cultural Centers provide additional destinations for heritage tourists. On-road or off-road routes between Historic Points of Interest and Cultural Centers should be considered. Such points of interest may include historic Spanish colonial structures, historic settlements, and archaeological sites and ruins.

The region's unique history and its place amongst the history of the State can be a unifying feature for the study area. The opportunity to relive ranching, farming, or transportation milestones exists in the study area, and should be explored. Along with

this historic regionalism, the history of the river corridor and river basin provide a strong link to the area. The San Antonio River's influence on historic settlement patterns throughout the basin over time promotes a sense of place and establishment of culture.

Refer to the Guiding Principles Matrix (Table 2) to compare Historic Points of Interest, Goals, and their Interpretive Opportunities.

GATEWAYS/ACCESS AREAS

Gateways/Access Areas are crossings of State and US Highways over the San Antonio River and its major tributaries. These areas provide visual access to the water and may include built or natural gateway elements. In some cases, they may also provide physical access to the water, such as in canoe/kayak launch areas or picnic areas. Many Gateway/Access Areas are located in close proximity to Cultural Centers, and may also serve as gateways and a "front door" into these communities. This is a chance for Cultural Centers to not only celebrate its proximity to the river, but also promote the community as a whole.

Gateways/Access Areas provide the plan with the opportunity to explore the San Antonio River as a "Living River". From an educational stand point, the river offers hydrological features, geological features, and other natural aspects to explore and study. Human use of the river through transportation, recreation, and water quality provide an opportunity to understand current and future issues related to the San Antonio River.

Refer to the Guiding Principles Matrix (Table 2) to compare Gateways/Access Areas, Goals, and their Interpretive Opportunities.

ACTIVITY AREAS

Activity Areas are areas of concentrated recreational opportunities and support services, generally located in close proximity to Cultural Centers. They provide local recreational opportunities close to local populations, and are primarily designated as day-use trails and facilities. Activity Areas may extend from Gateway/Access Areas to Cultural Centers or Historic Points of Interest, along the Railroad Corridor, Connectors, or Water Trails, and may encompass several types of recreational components.

Activity Areas are far reaching and cover various locations throughout the study area. These areas should highlight and celebrate the diverse and individual local characteristics of each town.

Refer to the Guiding Principles Matrix (Table 2) to compare Activity Areas, Goals, and their Interpretive Opportunities.

SOLITUDE AREAS

Solitude Areas are areas of limited programmed recreation, which may include natural conservation and/or interpretive areas with varying degrees of public access and low-impact activities. These areas may include private land, with public access determined solely by the land owner. Trails through Solitude Areas are intended for multi-day users to travel from one Cultural Center to another, or throughout the study area as a whole. In some cases, Water Trails may be the only form of access through Solitude Areas, if any access at all exists.

The opportunities in Solitude Areas rely solely on the natural environment. Within these areas the user should experience natural regions of Texas, local



vegetation, and wildlife or wildlife habitat. These areas are intended to provide the greatest potential for interpretive and educational processes.

Refer to the Guiding Principles Matrix (Table 2) to compare Solitude Areas, Goals, and their Interpretive Opportunities.

RAILROAD CORRIDOR

The Railroad Corridor should be utilized to link cultural and historic points of interest. These corridors focus on trails for Activity Areas and Cultural Centers, rather than system wide connectivity. Trails along the railroad corridor should be multi-use for pedestrian and cyclists. Equestrians can also be served along a separate side path within the corridor. In addition, the creation of off-road trail loops between the Railroad Corridor and utility corridors, via Connectors (local), give further opportunity to both single- and multi-day users.

Railroad Corridors provide insight into man's influence on the San Antonio River Basin. The history of transportation in the study area begins with routes established by Spanish explorers and eventually leads to the rail system developed. Railroad Corridors also explain the existence of many of the Cultural Centers found in the river basin. These rail lines provide the link to understanding the present situation of many of the communities.

Refer to the Guiding Principles Matrix (Table 2) to compare Railroad Corridor, Goals, and their Interpretive Opportunities.

CONNECTORS

Local Connectors serve as on- and off-road connections between Cultural Centers and other

local resources. They also serve as connections from one Cultural Center to another, primarily through Activity Areas. These connectors will be utilized if, and when, future resources are identified and acquired, and will serve both local users as well as tourists. In addition, the creation of off-road trail loops between the Railroad Corridor and the identified utility corridors via Connectors (local) give further opportunity to both single- and multi-day users.

Local Connectors create a variety of interpretive or educational opportunities. The intent of these connectors is to highlight any and all of the interesting aspects encountered in the area.

Refer to the Guiding Principles Matrix (Table 2) to compare Local Connector, Goals, and their Interpretive Opportunities.

WATER TRAILS

Water Trails link natural areas along the San Antonio River or its major tributaries. Canoe/kayak trails highlight significant natural or cultural features along the river, and provide access through Solitude Areas. Water Trails can be located within local communities or begin to tie resources together at a regional level. Water Trails can be accessed at Gateways/Access Areas, Cultural Centers, through local parks and public land.

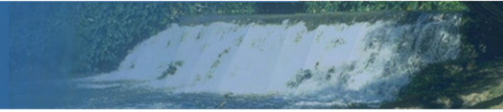
Water Trails provide the opportunity to explore the San Antonio River as a "Living River". From an educational stand point, the river offers hydrological features, geological features, and other natural aspects to explore and study. Human use of the river through transportation, recreation, and water quality provide an opportunity to understand current and future issues related to the San Antonio River.

Refer to the Guiding Principles Matrix (Table 2) to compare Water Trails, Goals, and their Interpretive Opportunities.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES MATRIX

The matrix found on the following page (Table 2) begins to identify the plan elements (listed on the left) found within the San Antonio River Basin Plan for Nature-Based Park Resources and how they relate to the goals established by the RPPAC committee (listed along the top). Each of the plan elements discussed throughout this chapter are in line with at least a majority of the goals. The third component of the Guiding Principles Matrix is the relation of the plan elements and goals to the opportunity they provide to the user (listed along the right side).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



COMPONENTS	GOALS										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Nature-Based recreational opportunities compatible with their surroundings	Educational and interpretive opportunities	River-related recreational opportunities	Sustainable materials and maintenance practices	Public and private partnerships, strategies, and funding sources	Economic development and tourism	Celebration of diverse local heritage	Stewardship of natural, cultural, and historic resources	Support for the preservation of natural beauty and aesthetic quality	Increased public awareness of the river basin and its opportunities	Community support and enthusiasm
Cultural Centers	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓
Historic Points of Interest		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	
Gateway / Access Point	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Activity Area	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Solitude Area	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Railroad Corridor	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Local Connector	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Water Trail	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

EDUCATIONAL / INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITY
Local Character: the diverse individual local characters of each town should be highlighted and celebrated
1) Historic Regionalism: the region's history is a unifying feature for the study area, and 2) The River Corridor: the San Antonio River's influence on the historic settlement patterns throughout the river basin over time
The Living River: hydrological, geological, and natural aspects of the river, human use of the river (transportation, recreation, water quality, etc.)
Local Character: the diverse individual local characters of each town should be highlighted and celebrated
The Natural Environment: the natural subregions of Texas, wildlife, habitat
1) Historic Transportation: the historic routes of travel and settlement through the basin, or 2) The Industrial Era: Man's influence on the San Antonio River Basin
Open Theme: highlight the interesting aspects of the place(s) being connected
The Living River: hydrological, geological, and natural aspects of the river, human use of the river (transportation, recreation, water quality, etc.)

Table 2. Guiding Principles Matrix

