



# Water



**N E W S**

**October 2002**

## SAWS and Builders Association Sign Agreement for New Home Conservation Measures

Officials from SAWS and the Greater San Antonio Builders Association (GSABA) signed a first-of-its-kind agreement on September 26 that will shape new neighborhoods in a way that will pay dividends for generations to come.

Under the initiative, SAWS will provide rebate incentives for new-home buyers who include water-conserving features in their homes and landscapes. GSABA members will market the Welcome H<sub>2</sub>OME program, and SAWS will administer and award the rebates.

Also under the agreement, builders will move toward using these water-conserving features as much as possible, and in three years will support a city ordinance requiring these conservation features in new homes.

Homebuyers who use the Welcome H<sub>2</sub>OME program, can receive up to \$1,000 in rebates from SAWS and CPS. To get full advantage of rebates available, new home buyers should look for:

- Drought-tolerant turfgrass; For full rebate credit, less than 50% is planted with turf.
- A minimum of four inches of soil wherever turf grass is planted.
- Approved, drought-tolerant flowers, shrubs, and trees.
- At least one drought-tolerant shade tree in lots less than 8,000 acre feet. In lots over 8,000 square feet, at least two trees are included.
- When irrigation is installed, it requires installation by a licensed contractor and include multi-program controllers, rain sensors, and separate zones for sun, shade, turf, and mulched beds.
- Inside the home, look for water- and energy-conserving washing machines and hot-water-on-demand plumbing systems.

"San Antonio has made significant strides forward in water conservation," said SAWS CEO Gene Habiger. "Over the last 15 years, we've reduced per capita water use by more than one-third. Currently we have the lowest water use per person of any major city in the state. By GSABA members incorporating water conservation features into new homes, that progress can



State Representative Robert Puente witnesses the Memorandum of Understanding signed by SAWS CEO Gene Habiger and GSABA President Jerry Smith, Jr.

continue into the future. These landscape and interior modifications can reduce citywide water use by 2%. And the savings will be achieved without sacrificing color or a lush looking landscape."

### Presenting Welcome H<sub>2</sub>OME

At the GSABA New Home Expo on September 27-29, SAWS gave visitors details about what they could do for new home water conservation.

Special thanks goes to the Gardening Volunteers of South Texas, who answered questions about low-water use landscaping for visitors to the SAWS exhibit.



Previewing SAWS Expo booth are: Doug Leonhard, Karen Guz, Rep. Robert Puente, J.J. Amaro, Nancy Bohman, Jim Mayor, Dana Nichols, and Gene Habiger.

## SAWS Now Accepting VISA and MasterCard

Paying your water bill is now easier than ever!

Beginning this month, San Antonio Water System accepts VISA and MasterCard for bill payments. Customers can pay via credit card at any SAWS service center location. Or, for added convenience, payments can even be made over the phone.

"People have come to expect a high level of service and convenience from the companies they do business with," said Mike McGwin, SAWS Customer Service Director. "Our goal is to consistently provide service that meets or exceeds our customers' expectations. Accepting credit card payments is just one more step toward achieving that goal."

SAWS is believed to be one of the first public utilities in Texas to allow credit card payments.

In addition, SAWS will continue to offer its other convenient bill payment options, including automatic debit and online bill payment at our website at [www.saws.org](http://www.saws.org). To find out more, call 704-SAWS.



## Pretreatment Program Wins EPA Award

SAWS Pretreatment Program won national recognition from the Environmental Protection Agency on September 30th, placing second in the nation for the EPA National Clean Water Act Recognition Award for Pretreatment Programs.

The awards are presented to municipalities and industries for outstanding and innovative achievements in

*Continued on pg. 2*

## Upcoming Election has Key Water Issues

Remember that elections are coming up on Tuesday, November 5.

While a wide variety of positions and items will be on the ballot, there are a few which pertain to water issues in San Antonio.

### **Edwards Aquifer Authority**

Three San Antonio positions on the Board of the Edwards Aquifer Authority Board will be on the ballot. Contested elections are District 3 (central Bexar County), District 5 (south, eastern, and northeastern Bexar County), and District 7 (west central Bexar County). For more information, contact the Edwards Aquifer Authority at 222-2204.



### **Trinity Glen Rose (TGR) Groundwater Conservation District**

Residents of far north Bexar County will decide whether to confirm the establishment of the Trinity Glen Rose (TGR) Groundwater Conservation District which was initially created during the last State Legislative Session. The TGR's goal is to regulate and manage water quality and conservation issues within the Trinity Aquifer area located in northern Bexar County. The TGR Conservation District has been functioning on a temporary basis. The upcoming election will determine whether the TGR should be established permanently.

For more information on the TGR, you can access their website at [www.trinityglenrose.org](http://www.trinityglenrose.org).

### **Early Voting in October**

You can cast your ballot October 19 through November 1 at any of the 39 voting sites located throughout the city including those at several malls, grocery stores, community centers, and schools. For more information on when and where you vote, contact the Bexar County Elections Department at 335-VOTE (335-8683).

*Thanks to the League of Women Voters and the Bexar County Elections Department for information provided in this article.*



## Frustrated by Traffic? Try Carpooling.

By carpooling, each of us can help reduce traffic, not to mention save hundreds or thousands of dollars on commute costs. You can get a free list of potential carpool participants by calling CAR-POOL (227-7665). Once you have your perfect carpooling match, you can just sit back, relax, and save as your fellow commuter does the driving. Also, remember to ask about the CARE program, which will get you a guaranteed ride in case an emergency forces you to miss your carpool.

## EPA Clean Water Act Award (cont.)

wastewater treatment and pollution abatement programs.

Rather than just imposing regulations, SAWS Pretreatment Program partners with local industry and manufacturers to educate and ensure that contaminants are not released into the sewer system, and in turn don't affect the city's water recycling centers.

The proof of the success of the Pretreatment Program is that SAWS Recycled Water and biosolids have been tested to be of high quality with low levels of contaminants or heavy metals.

"This award has come about because of the hard work and long hours that our staff puts in," said Scott Halty, SAWS Director of Resource Protection. "They are truly dedicated to preserving water quality. Thanks for the award also goes out to members of the San Antonio Manufacturers Association for their cooperation in making this program a success."



**Q** I like the way wildflowers conserve water, but don't know how to get them started in my yard. Do you have any tips?

**A** Wildflowers are great xeriscape plants. If you'd like to enjoy blooms next year, sow wildflower seeds now in the fall. Conditions must be just right for wildflowers to prosper, and if you want them to re-seed, you must be willing to tolerate the reproduction period when wildflowers have formed seed pods. During this time, wildflowers can be downright ugly!

The key to good wildflower performance is in selection of the site. Wildflowers are not good competitors so they grow best where the soil is thin and it dries out every summer. Most wildflowers need a site where the seed can make contact with bare soil, and the sunlight can reach the seed and small plant.

Disc or rake the soil before seeds are spread to increase sprouting. Provide a light spray of water when you seed and in extreme drought conditions.

Although most gardeners select wildflowers for carefree beauty, some will even spray insecticides if insect damage is noticeable. Bluebonnets are particularly susceptible to small caterpillars that can strip the foliage. As an organic alternative, a small amount of Bt insecticide does wonders.

### **Affordability Programs**

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

### **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.

#### **Numbers to Know**

Business Office	704-SAWS
Customer Account Information	704-SAWS
Jobline	704-SAWS
T.D.D.	704-1852
CleanStream Hotline	212-5326

#### **24-Hour Emergency**

Customer Service/	
Water Waste Reporting	704-SAWS

Visit our website at [www.saws.org](http://www.saws.org)