

BHP Billiton Gifts \$2.4 Million to San Antonio River Foundation

May 14, 2015

SAN ANTONIO, TX – The San Antonio River Foundation announced this afternoon a landmark \$2.4 million gift from leading global resources company BHP Billiton. The gift was raised as part of the Foundation’s Capital Campaign to build Confluence Park and will provide the funds necessary to construct and name the Lake|Flato Architects-designed “BHP Billiton Pavilion” & “BHP Billiton Multi-Purpose Room” at the park. Moving the Capital Campaign beyond the halfway mark, the gift is significant enough that it kicks off Phase II of the Foundation's Capital Campaign to raise funds for the design and build of the park located at the intersection of the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek on the Mission Reach of the San Antonio River.

“One of our charter values as a company is sustainability,” said Rod Skaufel, BHP Billiton Asset President, Shale. “It’s defined as ‘putting health and safety first, being environmentally responsible and supporting our communities.’ Within that community support priority, we place a strong emphasis on education. The Foundation’s educational vision for Confluence Park is well aligned with our priorities and we’re proud to be able to play a part.”

Announcement of the gift was made at a luncheon at the generously donated Hilton Palacio del Rio. The well-attended event included members of the press, San Antonio River Foundation Board of Directors and staff, BHP Billiton executives, San Antonio River Authority leadership and local philanthropic and political leaders.

The San Antonio River Foundation’s most ambitious project to date, Confluence Park will transform a former Southside industrial laydown yard into a unique, interactive learning and recreational space. The park will include an educational pavilion, a large scale water catchment system, ecotype demonstration quadrants, interactive educational play stations and an inviting gateway to hiking and biking trails along the *Historic Mission Reach* portion of the San Antonio River. The entire park is envisioned as a life-sized, interactive teaching tool that will inspire a greater understanding of Texas ecotypes and their relationships with one another, encouraging students and adults alike to become more involved with the preservation and stewardship of our waterways.

Established to provide amenities and enhancements along the San Antonio River and its tributaries not funded by public monies, The San Antonio River Foundation (SARA) is operated with the exclusive mandate to support charitable, tax-exempt investment in the educational, cultural and ecological projects and activities of the San Antonio River Authority. The Foundation’s investment in *Confluence Park* will provide a state-of-the-art outdoor classroom to accommodate the River Authority’s well-established educational outreach program that reached 22,000 students in the 2013-2014 school year. Educational programs offered by SARA and supported via funding through a secured \$1 million SARF Educational Endowment will be offered to public school systems free of charge, including through the availability of free transportation opportunities for schools that could otherwise not afford to participate in these programs. This convergence of resources will eliminate a huge barrier to the provision of

important hands-on scientific environmental educational experiences to San Antonio area students.

Also unveiled at the luncheon were new architectural renderings of Confluence Park. Designed by a much acclaimed team comprised of Lake|Flato Architects, Matsys and Rialto Studio, Confluence Park's programmatic elements and educational features will include:

- 1) Opportunities to experience and learn more about five ecotypes that occur in our region: The Grassland Ecotype is a central feature in the park around which the paths and other ecotypes are organized; the San Antonio River Improvement Project Ecotype demonstrates the species of plants used along the river as part of SARA's ongoing restoration project; the Trans Pecos/Chihuahua Desert Ecotype demonstrates the use of west Texas plants that thrive in San Antonio (this ecotype spreads into the parking lot providing dappled shading for cars); the Texas Oak Conservatory Ecotype demonstrate the many types of oak trees that thrive in our region; the Texas Live Oak Savannah provides shade around the edges of the pavilion and will help block unwanted winter winds from the pavilion space.
- 2) A site-wide water catchment system which collects all the rainwater that falls on the site and feeds this water into an underground water storage tank
- 3) Play areas are designed for learning and exploration
- 4) A primary pavilion constructed of large concrete forms that together create a geometry that collects and funnels rainwater; this lofty pavilion will provide shade and shelter while at the same time allowing visitors to understand the cycle of water at Confluence Park and how this cycle relates directly to the San Antonio River watershed; the pavilion will speak to the confluence of water systems and is oriented to point directly toward the confluence of the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek
- 5) Satellite pavilions that create distinct gathering nodes throughout the site and are derived from the same form as the primary pavilion.
- 6) A multi-purpose space that has a green roof providing thermal mass for passive heating and cooling; this space will be used for classroom and meeting space as well as pre-function space for the primary pavilion; a supporting actor to the pavilion structure, the building's lowered elevation will make it appear to emerge from the ground and gradually grow out of the earth, becoming a fluid part of the landscape
- 7) A photovoltaic array that will provide 100% of the energy use for the project on a yearly basis

"With environmental education as its core purpose, Confluence Park is designed to inspire students and visitors to become more involved with the river, practice environmental stewardship and gain a greater understanding of Texas ecotypes," said San Antonio River Foundation Executive Director, Estela Avery. "This generous gift from BHP Billiton is instrumental in moving Confluence Park from concept to construction."