

# San Antonio Missions National Historical Park

## IMPACT and OPPORTUNITY

- Examine the park's 2009 economic impact
- Explore seven initiatives to more than double its benefits for San Antonio by 2016



LOS COMPADRES  
de San Antonio Missions

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
A Strong Foundation: 2009 Impact .....	2
Investing in Future Growth.....	3
Seven Initiatives to Double the Park’s Impact in 2016 .....	4
New Park Initiatives: 2016 Impact .....	6
2016 Community Benefits .....	7
It Takes a Community to Support a National Park .....	8

## Acknowledgments

Research, writing, report design  
Michele L. Archie and Howard D Terry  
The Harbinger Consulting Group [www.harbingerconsult.com](http://www.harbingerconsult.com)

Economic impact analysis  
Dominique Halaby, Javier Oyakawa, Christine Shayne,  
John Quiroz and Goran Todorovic, Center for Community  
and Business Research, Institute for Economic Development,  
University of Texas at San Antonio [cbr.iedtexas.org](http://cbr.iedtexas.org)  
William Dupont, Historic Preservation Program, College of  
Architecture, University of Texas at San Antonio

Project advisors and contributors  
Suzanne Dixon, Perry Wheeler, National Parks Conservation  
Association  
Al Remley, Krista Sherwood, National Park Service

Project funding  
Bexar County [www.bexar.org](http://www.bexar.org)  
Los Compadres de San Antonio Missions National Historical  
Park [www.loscompadres.org](http://www.loscompadres.org)  
National Parks Conservation Association [www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org)  
Western National Parks Association [www.wnpa.org](http://www.wnpa.org)

Cover photos  
Front cover, clockwise from upper left: Mission Concepción;  
School group at Mission San José; Father and daughter at a Mis-  
sion San José interpretive sign.  
All photos: © Bob Howen.

Back cover: Interior of the church at Mission Espada.  
Photo: © Bob Howen.

## About this Report

In 2010-2011, the Center for Community and Business Research at the University of Texas at San Antonio conducted a study to evaluate the current and future economic impacts of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park in the eight-county San Antonio metropolitan area. The study was commissioned by the National Parks Conservation Association with funding assistance from Bexar County, Los Compadres de San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, and Western National Parks Association. This report summarizes the study’s findings.

## Understanding the Economic Impact Study

In its analysis, the Center for Community and Business Research estimated economic impacts using an “input-output” model. This model assumes that money spent locally—whether by visitors paying for meals, lodging, fuel, and gifts, or by a government agency paying staff, contractors, and suppliers—supports further local economic activity. Businesses use this income to pay employees, purchase goods, and pay for rent, fuel, taxes, and other expenses. Employees, too, spend their income on goods and services. Some of these expenditures are made locally, where the money can then be spent “again” by the local businesses and persons who receive it, and so on.

“Direct impacts” are calculated as the amount of spending for an activity or by an organization or group—such as the National Park Service or visitors—and the jobs this spending immediately supports. “Total impacts” reflect the “multiplier effect” of portions of those direct expenditures being circulated through the local economy, as described above.

Impacts of visitor spending are estimated based on non-local visitor spending only. Their expenditures are clearly “new” dollars that originated outside the study area and can be clearly linked to the presence of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. Spending by local park visitors does have an economic impact, but it is difficult to determine how much of that money would *not* have been spent locally if the park did not exist. Given these difficulties, and the relatively small contribution of local visitor spending, this study takes a conservative approach to calculating the economic impact of visitor spending, based solely on the expenditures of out-of-area visitors.

Download the study: *Economic Impact of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park* (Center for Community and Business Research, San Antonio, Texas: University of Texas at San Antonio, April 2011) at [http://www.npca.org/missions\\_economic\\_impact](http://www.npca.org/missions_economic_impact).



National Parks Conservation Association®  
Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®

Copyright © 2011 National Parks Conservation Association • [www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org)  
777 6th Street, NW • Washington, DC 20001 • 800.NAT.PARK

*Since 1919, the non-profit, non-partisan National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its members, and partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation’s natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come.*



# Introduction

**Above:** Mission Concepción. Photo: © Bob Howen.

This is a time of tremendous opportunity in south San Antonio. Building on decades of grassroots efforts, new initiatives are focused on renewing neighborhoods around the missions that anchor the city’s identity. Here, where San Antonio’s seeds were sown and the roots of Tejano culture run deep, the community’s future rests on the strong foundation of the past.

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park (NHP) protects and interprets south San Antonio’s four 18th-century Spanish colonial mission compounds—Mission Concepción, Mission San José, Mission San Juan, and Mission Espada. Mission *acequias* (irrigation systems), the San Juan dam, *labores* (farm fields), and a *rancho* are also protected within the park. Nominated as a World Heritage Site, the park preserves the largest collection of Spanish colonial resources in the country. Visitors come from as far away as Europe and Asia, and from as close as the local schools.

Since before the park was established, protecting San Antonio’s missions has been a collaborative effort. San Antonio Missions NHP succeeds through the combined efforts of over 20 formal partner agencies and organizations, and a variety of informal partners including neighborhoods and business associations.

The community has long held a vision of an even more vibrant park, in which the missions are linked by a parkway and connected—as in the past—to the San Antonio River. Decades in the making, this vision is closer than ever to reality as the “Mission Reach” ecosystem restoration of the river nears completion.

While the focus on revitalization in south San Antonio is strong, this should also be a time of tremendous opportunity to leverage park resources for a more economically vibrant future. With the 2016 celebration of the National Park Service still a few years away, there is time to tackle important new initiatives that will strengthen the park and expand its ability to tell the stories of mission life.

This report summarizes the current economic impact of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, and summarizes seven initiatives—proposed and underway—that could more than double the park’s impact by 2016. This report illustrates how the park might be a partner in making San Antonio a better place to work, learn, enjoy, and share, while sustaining the communities and the culture that the missions helped spawn.

*San Antonio Missions National Historical Park is an economic and cultural anchor for San Antonio and its southside neighborhoods. As the whole community turns its attention to restoring the river and revitalizing this part of San Antonio, we stand at a confluence of opportunities. With continued investment and support, the park stands to become an ever-more integral part of San Antonio’s economic fabric.*

— Nelson W. Wolff  
Bexar County Judge

## Economic Impact of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park\*

2009

**\$98.8 million**  
in economic activity

**1,116 local jobs supported**

2016

with river restoration and seven new initiatives in place

**\$214.5 million**  
in economic activity

**2,335 local jobs**

\* Impacts based on investments by the National Park Service and five partner organizations (see p. 2 for detail).

A strong foundation

# 2009 Impact



**Above:** Two girls examine a turtle shell at the annual Get Outdoors It's Yours event at the park. In 2008, its first year, this event involved more than 50 organizations and attracted more than 3,800 participants. Photo: © Bob Howen.

**Below:** A park volunteer helps students unearth artifacts at a mock dig during the park's Archeology Day. In the 2009 fiscal year, 222 volunteers contributed more than 13,000 hours to the park—the equivalent of six full-time employees. Photo: NPS.



## Federal Investments in the Park Yield Strong Returns in 2009

**\$1** National Park Service investment yielded **\$20** in local economic activity

**\$1** NPS funding was matched by more than **\$0.70** of local partners' investment in the park

**\$4,300** of federal funds supported **1** local job

## Park Economic Contributions are Substantial

The study by the Center for Community and Business Research at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) analyzed current and future economic impacts of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park on the eight-county metropolitan area. The current impact analysis focused on 2009—the last year for which complete data were available when the study began.

In FY2009, the National Park Service (NPS) invested \$4.8 million in operating and maintaining the park and conducting special projects. These funds leveraged more than \$3.4 million of additional investment from local partner organizations,<sup>†</sup> and supported 1,116 jobs and \$98.8 million in economic activity throughout the surrounding region.

## Visitors Make the Biggest Contribution

The park's economic impact is largely driven by its appeal to visitors. In 2009, the park hosted 1.76 million visitors, four of five from outside the metro area. Visitor spending on everything from lodging and meals to fuel and gifts supported nearly 90 percent of the park's economic impact.

San Antonio Missions NHP is more than a tourist attraction. The park contributes to the local economy and community vitality as a center for education, historic preservation, green space, and community events. The missions are also focal points for cultural identity and religious practice. In 2009, 22,000 school children visited the park on field trips and thousands from San Antonio and beyond attended park events. Hundreds of volunteers donated their time and skills. The park paid 40 permanent employees and a staff of 32 seasonal workers, and purchased three-fifths of its goods and services locally.

<sup>†</sup>In 2009, five partner organizations (City of San Antonio, Los Compadres, San Antonio River Authority/Bexar County, and Western National Parks Association) spent \$2.2 million dollars in operations, maintenance, and improvements in the park and its immediate vicinity. That year, another park partner, the Archdiocese of San Antonio spent \$1.3 million to restore and maintain the parts of the missions used for church services. (Because of data availability, the Archdiocese expenditures were not included in the UTSA economic impact analysis.)



## Investing in Future Growth

**Above:** Mission San Juan. Photo: © Bob Howen.

### Doubling the Park's Economic Impact

Since San Antonio Missions National Historical Park opened in 1984, visitation has grown by approximately 750 percent. In 2009, the park hosted 1.76 million visitors, a third more than in 2008. But the park operates on a shoestring budget and is grossly understaffed. Funding shortfalls show in every area of operation from law enforcement to education to historic resource preservation.

The UTSA study found the park could more than double its economic impact by 2016 by doing two things: 1) bringing operations funding up to a level that allows the park to provide top-quality visitor experiences while properly maintaining and preserving the cultural riches entrusted to its care; and 2) completing six other initiatives—some proposed, some already underway—that would help the park realize its full potential and expand offerings for visitors.

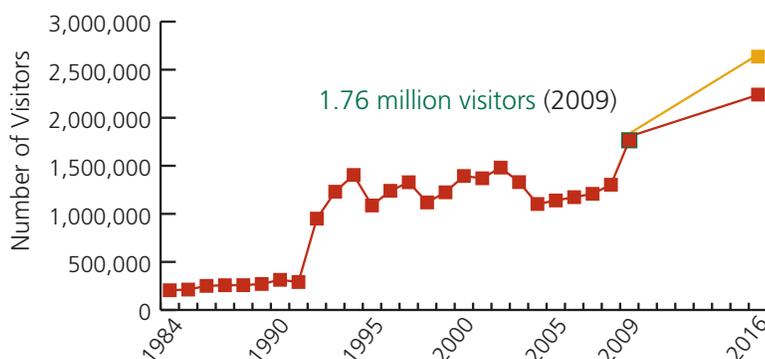
San Antonio would benefit from these investments, which are projected to boost park employment and local purchases, attract more visitors who would stay in the area longer, and support 1,219 new local jobs in 2016. While dramatically increasing the park's economic impact, these investments would significantly upgrade visitor programs and improve safety for visitors, staff, and park resources. They would also bring preservation and maintenance capacity up to established NPS standards and expand visitor access to the missions' landscapes and history.

*The future of south San Antonio's businesses is closely linked to the kind of community we build today through our efforts to revitalize the southside. Quality of life, recreation, green space, and real cultural connections are key. Along with the river, San Antonio Missions National Historical Park is the backbone for this quality of life. Investing in the park will help strengthen the economic environment and create more opportunities for local businesses to serve the park and its visitors.*

— Cindy Taylor  
President  
South San Antonio  
Chamber of Commerce

### Growth in Park Visitation Expected to Continue

In 2016, San Antonio Missions NHP is expected to host 475,000 more visitors than in 2009, without any programming or facilities changes, pushing visitation over 2.2 million. New programs and venues described on the following pages could add nearly 400,000 more visitors in 2016, most of whom will stay at least one night in the area.



**2.6 million** visitors expected, with new programming and facilities initiatives in place (2016)

**2.2 million** visitors expected, without any new programs or facilities (2016)

## Seven new initiatives

# To Double the Park's Economic Impact in 2016

Several construction projects and programming, budget, and boundary changes could more than double the park's economic impact in 2016, the National Park Service's centennial. Additionally, the park's capacity to serve visitors and preserve historical resources would get a sorely needed boost. The initiatives—some proposed, some underway—fall into three categories. See the descriptions below, and locate the initiatives by number or symbol on the map to the right.

### A. Telling the Whole Story of the Missions

Three aspects of mission life are key to understanding the history and resources the park protects: how the mission community sustained itself through farming; daily life at the missions; and raising livestock at the mission ranches.

Three new initiatives would enable the park to tell a more complete story. In all three locations, hands-on experiences would take visitors back in time to explore the native and Spanish customs that blended to create today's Tejano culture. The park would rely heavily on community knowledge and volunteer energy to bring these experiences to life.

#### 1 Mission San Juan Demonstration Farm

Staff and volunteers would use Spanish colonial methods to farm parts of the *labores* (farm fields) at Mission San Juan. A new visitor center, trails, and hands-on programming would expose visitors to mission-style farming. Community and school groups could maintain gardens, and 136,000 new visitors are expected in 2016.

#### 2 Mission San José "A Day in the Life of the Missions" Program

Staff and volunteers would offer cultural programs at Mission San José. In 2016, 205,400 new out-of-town visitors are expected to join locals and school groups to explore mission life and learn Spanish colonial-era skills such as fresco painting and food preparation.

#### 3 Opening El Rancho de las Cabras

For the first time, the ranch site that supported Mission Espada would be open regularly. Visitors would learn about the *ranchos* that supplied livestock to the missions and spawned American cowboy culture. Nature trails would wind from the ruins of the ranch compound to the river. Locals and school groups are expected to be joined by 22,500 new out-of-town visitors in 2016.

### B. Connecting People with the Park

The National Parks Second Century Commission—convened by the National Parks Conservation Association—noted that parks need to expand their appeal for culturally diverse groups. A 2007 National Park Service study at San Antonio Missions NHP confirmed this challenge, calling for more variety in park programs to better connect with a variety of audiences.

The three "Telling the Whole Story" initiatives (#1-3) would broaden the park's appeal and boost numbers of visitors, volunteers, and staff. Two other initiatives (#4 and 5) would make physical connections for increased access.

#### 4 River Trails & Mission Portals

Trails, interpretive exhibits, and art spaces would connect the missions with San Antonio River hike and bike trails, welcoming trail users to explore the missions. Locals and 31,000 new out-of-town visitors are expected to stroll to the missions from the river in 2016.

#### 5 New Park Headquarters & Mission San José Cultural Landscape Restoration

A new Center for Mission Management and Research at Mission San José would house staff, a library, classrooms, and historical collections. A restored landscape connecting the mission and the center would remove barriers between Mission San José and the San Antonio River.

### C. Enhancing Park Capabilities

The park's administrative facilities and staffing levels are insufficient for the world-class resources entrusted to its care. Despite efficiency improvements, many positions remain vacant and aspects of basic operations and maintenance are unfunded.

The new headquarters (#5) would house park staff and facilities for a million Spanish colonial artifacts now kept in six locations. The proposed boundary expansion (#6) would help the park better protect historic resources. The final initiative (#7) would cover critical operating needs.

#### 6 Expanded Park Boundary

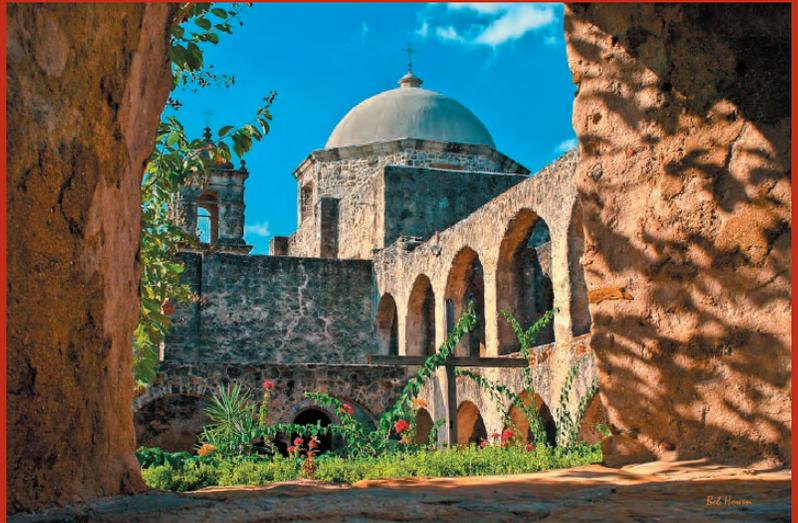
The park's boundary—and its ability to protect historic resources—could be expanded to include parts of the ecologically restored San Antonio River, the San Juan Dam, and other lands integral to the historic missions, acquired from public agencies and willing private sellers.

#### 7 Full Funding for Essential Park Functions (not shown on map)

Boosting the park's budget would protect and maintain park resources and provide adequate services such as law enforcement and education for a steadily increasing number of visitors.



# New park initiatives 2016 Impact



Above: Mission San José courtyard. Photo: © Bob Howen.

Proposed Initiative or Project	Projected 2016 Impacts		Project Status
	Local Spending	Local Jobs	
1 Mission San Juan Demonstration Farm	\$24 million	265 jobs	Bexar County has dedicated \$3 million to construction. Environmental Assessment underway. Funding and partners needed to operate.
2 Mission San José "A Day in the Life of the Missions" Program	\$35.7 million	392 jobs	Funding needed. Renovated rooms at the mission are ready. Webcasts are being developed to help attract funding and volunteers.
3 Opening El Rancho de las Cabras	\$4.8 million	56 jobs	Funding needed for construction and operation. Planning and Environmental Assessment underway so project is "shovel-ready."
4 River Trails and Mission Portals	\$8.6 million	69 jobs	Bexar County and SARIP are funding construction of the main river trails and mission portals. The park needs funding for connecting trails and interpretive exhibits.
5 New Park Headquarters & Mission San José Landscape Restoration	\$507,000	3 jobs	Legislation introduced to authorize the new headquarters. Planning and Environmental Assessment underway so landscape restoration project is "shovel-ready." Funding needed.
6 Expanded Park Boundary	Impacts incorporated into other initiatives and projects.		Legislation introduced to grant authority for boundary study and expansion.
7 Full Funding for Park Operations	\$32.3 million	361 jobs	Requests for operating budget increases submitted to National Park Service.

Total Impact of New Initiatives Only, 2016      \$106.0 million      1,146 jobs

## Construction Boosts Economic Impacts, 2010-2015

Many of these new initiatives involve construction projects in the park and the river corridor. These help set the stage for the park's expanded economic impact in 2016, and provide additional economic benefits from 2010 through 2015.

2010-13 impacts, San Antonio River Improvements Project "Mission Reach" construction

{ \$518 million local spending  
981 local jobs/year

2012-15 impacts, San Antonio Missions NHP construction projects

{ \$26 million local spending  
205 local jobs



## 2016 Community Benefits

### Park Could Support \$214 Million in Local Economic Activity in 2016

If all seven initiatives are enacted, in 2016, the park would support 2,335 jobs and \$214.5 million in economic activity throughout the surrounding region, more than double its 2009 economic impact. In 2016, a projected \$13.8 million National Park Service investment in park operations, maintenance, and special projects is expected to leverage more than \$6.7 million of additional investment from local partner organizations, while making great strides toward realizing San Antonio's long-held vision for the park.<sup>†</sup>

### Laying the Foundation for a Strong Future

Investing to bring San Antonio Missions National Historical Park up to full capacity and develop new visitor venues and programs would lay a foundation for an economic impact that grows each year. Measured in dollars, the most significant impacts would come from new visitors to the park. As the new initiatives mature, visitation is expected to continue to increase.

Additionally, investing in a more robust park will expand the role the park can play as a community partner in San Antonio, Floresville, and the larger metro area. These investments give the park a solid capacity for engaging more local residents in learning, sharing, and protecting their own culture and history.

Beyond boosting local employment, involving more volunteers, and engaging more local student and adult visitors, many of the proposed initiatives would offer opportunities for community and economic development. For example, produce grown at the Mission San Juan demonstration farm could supply local restaurants. School gardens could grow food for local families and food banks. Small farmers could lease plots, and partnerships with local universities could provide hands-on education in small farm management. Other proposed initiatives offer similar opportunities for the park to grow as a community resource and a model of community-park partnerships.

**Above:** Park workers repair the Mission Espada aqueduct. To preserve visitor services on a tight budget, the park's acequia maintenance and masonry crews were downsized. Boosting the park's operating budget would restore these jobs and the regular maintenance these historic structures need. Photo: NPS.

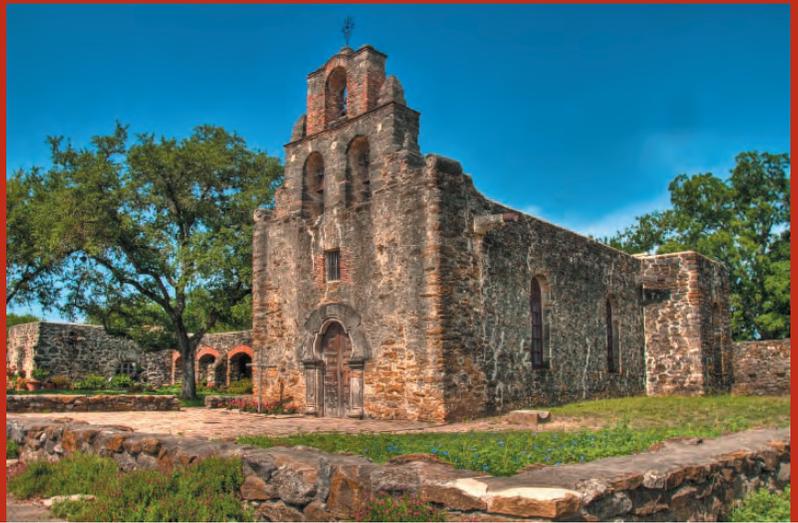
**Below:** Illustration of how the new park headquarters might connect with Mission San José. The open park area could be used for local cultural events.



<sup>†</sup> In 2016, the overall "return" on NPS funding is projected to drop to \$15 from the \$20 of local economic activity that a one-dollar investment yielded in 2009. This is because the park needs to spend significant money hiring staff to fully support essential park functions. The return on investment is smaller for catching up with operating needs than it is for new programs and facilities. As park visitation continues to grow in the years after 2016, so will the park's economic impact, likely boosting the "return" on federal dollars invested in the park over time.

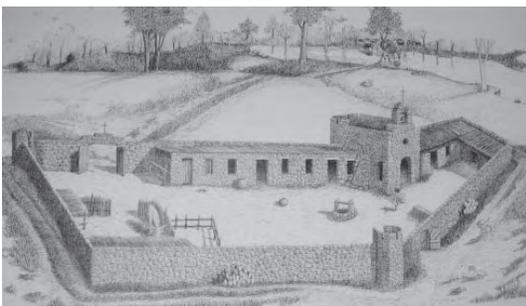
It takes a community to

# Support a National Park



**Above:** Mission Espada. Photo: © Bob Howen.

**Below:** Illustration of the Rancho de las Cabras compound, based on information uncovered during archaeological studies of the remaining walls, foundations, and ruins. Illustration: Steven Hawkes.



For too long, the Rancho de las Cabras has been neglected as a vital link to our Spanish colonial and indigenous heritage. Developing the rancho fits well into our strategic plan of using our history as an attraction for visitors, and enables us to provide our schools a great venue for making this history come alive.

By connecting our city river park and our civic center to the rancho by land and water trails, we reconnect with our own past, and enhance our economic development initiatives that aim to make Floresville a destination for travelers.

— Colonel Jesse M. Pérez  
Executive Director,  
Floresville Economic  
Development Corporation

## A Park that Models the Future of America's National Parks

The Obama Administration's 2011 *America's Great Outdoors* report points to urban parks as catalysts for reinvigorating local communities and economies, places to foster youth as new stewards of our public lands, and venues for connecting the diversity of Americans with their cultural and natural heritage. San Antonio Missions National Historical Park is becoming a model for urban community connections to their local national parks.

## It Takes a Community to Support a National Park

The park keeps the mission heritage alive through a growing partnership with the community. In 2009, local families contributed photographs and memories to a "Faces of the Missions" exhibit. That year, volunteers gave 13,000 hours to the park, mostly telling the mission story to visitors. Park partner organizations and individual benefactors donated more than \$183,000 to support the park in 2009. Between 2002 and 2007, volunteers, young and old, worked under the direction of the park archaeologist during the excavation of the Mission Concepción courtyard.

In keeping with the park's deep roots in the San Antonio community and close ties with a range of dedicated partners, collaboration will be critical to completing the proposed initiatives. As these initiatives take shape and progress, these changes will result in a range of opportunities to:

- Work, volunteer, apprentice, or intern at the park.
- Create community resources (e.g., community and school gardens, green spaces, trails, art spaces, and educational opportunities).
- Keep the heritage of the missions and the roots of San Antonio's unique culture alive.
- Engage locals and attract more out-of-town visitors with authentic cultural experiences.
- Focus on business development and jobs related to recreation, education, small-scale farming, visitor services, arts and crafts, and historic preservation.
- Enjoy the park with neighbors and visitors of all ages.

## San Antonio Missions National Historical Park—Quick Facts

- Encompasses 826 acres along the San Antonio River in southern Texas.
- Protects four 18th-century Spanish colonial mission compounds, as well as *acequias* (irrigation systems), the San Juan dam, *labores* (farm fields), a *rancho*, and other resources historically linked to the missions.
- From north to south, the missions are: Mission Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña, Mission San José y San Miguel de Aguayo, Mission San Juan Capistrano, and Mission San Francisco de la Espada. The Alamo (Mission San Antonio de Valero) is protected separately.
- Includes ruins of the Rancho de las Cabras (“goat ranch”) headquarters compound, near Floresville. This ranch, which covered 17,000 acres in its heyday, provided livestock to feed Mission Espada during the mid-to-late 1700s.
- Protects the largest collection of Spanish colonial buildings and features in the United States.
- Each mission serves an active Catholic congregation.
- Over half of the lands within park boundaries are co-managed through cooperative agreements with more than 20 federal, state, county, and city agencies, and nonprofit organizations such as the Catholic Archdiocese of San Antonio and the San Antonio Conservation Society.



[www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org)



LOS COMPADRES  
de San Antonio Missions

[www.loscompadres.org](http://www.loscompadres.org)



[www.bexar.org](http://www.bexar.org)

WESTERN  
NATIONAL PARKS  
ASSOCIATION

[www.wnpa.org](http://www.wnpa.org)



[www.nps.gov/saan](http://www.nps.gov/saan)



National Parks Conservation Association®  
*Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®*

777 6th Street, NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20001  
800.NAT.PARK  
[www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org)

2904 Swiss Avenue  
Dallas, TX 75204  
214.370.9735