

**Intensive Archaeological Survey of the Proposed French  
Creek Park Project,  
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas**

**Antiquities Permit #6950**

**Principal Investigator: Melanie Nichols, M. Sc.**

**Prepared for City of San Antonio  
1901 S. Alamo St  
San Antonio, TX 78204**

**Report Authors: Melanie Nichols, M.Sc.  
Pape-Dawson  
7800 Shoal Creek Blvd  
Suite 220W  
Austin, TX 78757  
July, 2014**

## Abstract

At the request of Atkins North America, Inc., an intensive archaeological survey was conducted by Pape-Dawson for the proposed City of San Antonio (COSA)-sponsored French Creek Park project located in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The proposed project will entail construction of a new parking lot and trail. The project will also include tree removal from within the footprint of the proposed new parking lot. For the purposes of this report, the archaeological project area (also known as the Area of Potential Effect [APE]) is defined as the footprint of the proposed 0.5-acre parking lot and the 1,300 linear feet (ft) of proposed trail enclosed within a 25-ft-wide corridor. Depth of impact for all improvements will vary, but the maximum depth of vertical impact will be approximately 2 ft (60 cm) from the ground surface.

This project will occur on COSA-owned land and will be locally funded, so compliance with the Antiquities Code of Texas (ACT) is required. However, no federal permitting or funding is attached to this project, so compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act will not be necessary.

Fieldwork took place on July 16-17, 2014. The entirety of the APE was subject to visual inspection supplemented by systematically placed shovel tests in order to evaluate the impact of the proposed project on cultural resources. This work was conducted under Texas Antiquities Permit No. 6950. A total of 13 shovel tests were excavated exceeding the minimal archaeological survey standards established by the Council of Texas Archeologists. All shovel tests were negative, and no cultural resources were located or recorded during the course of the survey. All project records and photographs will be curated at the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) at the University of Texas San Antonio. Based on the results of the investigation, Pape-Dawson archaeologists recommend that no further archaeological work is necessary for the proposed project and that the project be allowed to proceed.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
List of Figures .....	4
Introduction .....	5
Project Setting.....	5
Methods.....	7
Records Review.....	7
Fieldwork.....	8
Results.....	8
Previously recorded sites.....	8
Fieldwork.....	10
Summary and Recommendations.....	14
References Cited .....	15

## List of Figures

Figure 1	Project Location Map .....	6
Figure 2	Cultural Resource Map.....	9
Figure 3	Overview of the wooded portion of the APE showing modern trash and flood debris.....	11
Figure 4	Shovel Test Locations Map.....	12
Figure 5	Typical profile of shovel test placed within the southeastern half of the APE.....	13
Figure 6	Typical profile of shovel test placed within the northwestern half of the APE.....	13

## **Introduction**

City of San Antonio (COSA) proposes to construct a new parking lot and trail located in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas (Figure 1). The project will include the construction of a 0.5-acre parking lot on the north side of Mainland Drive (west of Bandera Road) as well as up to 1,300 linear feet (ft) of trail extending northward from the proposed parking lot. However, of the 1,300 linear ft of trail, the northern most trail loop, consisting of an approximate total of 300 linear ft, will be an additional/alternate trail extension. The project will also require tree removal from within the footprint of the proposed new parking lot. Although the parking lot will be constructed by bringing fill to the site to reduce the incline from the street level to the parking area, trail construction and tree removal are anticipated to require subsurface disturbances. For the purpose of this report, the archaeological project area (also known as the Area of Potential Effect {APE}) is defined as the footprint of the proposed 0.5-acre parking lot as well as the 1,300 linear ft of proposed trail enclosed within a 25-ft-wide corridor. Depth of ground disturbance for all improvements will vary, but the vertical depth of impact is considered to be up to 2 ft (60 cm) from the ground surface.

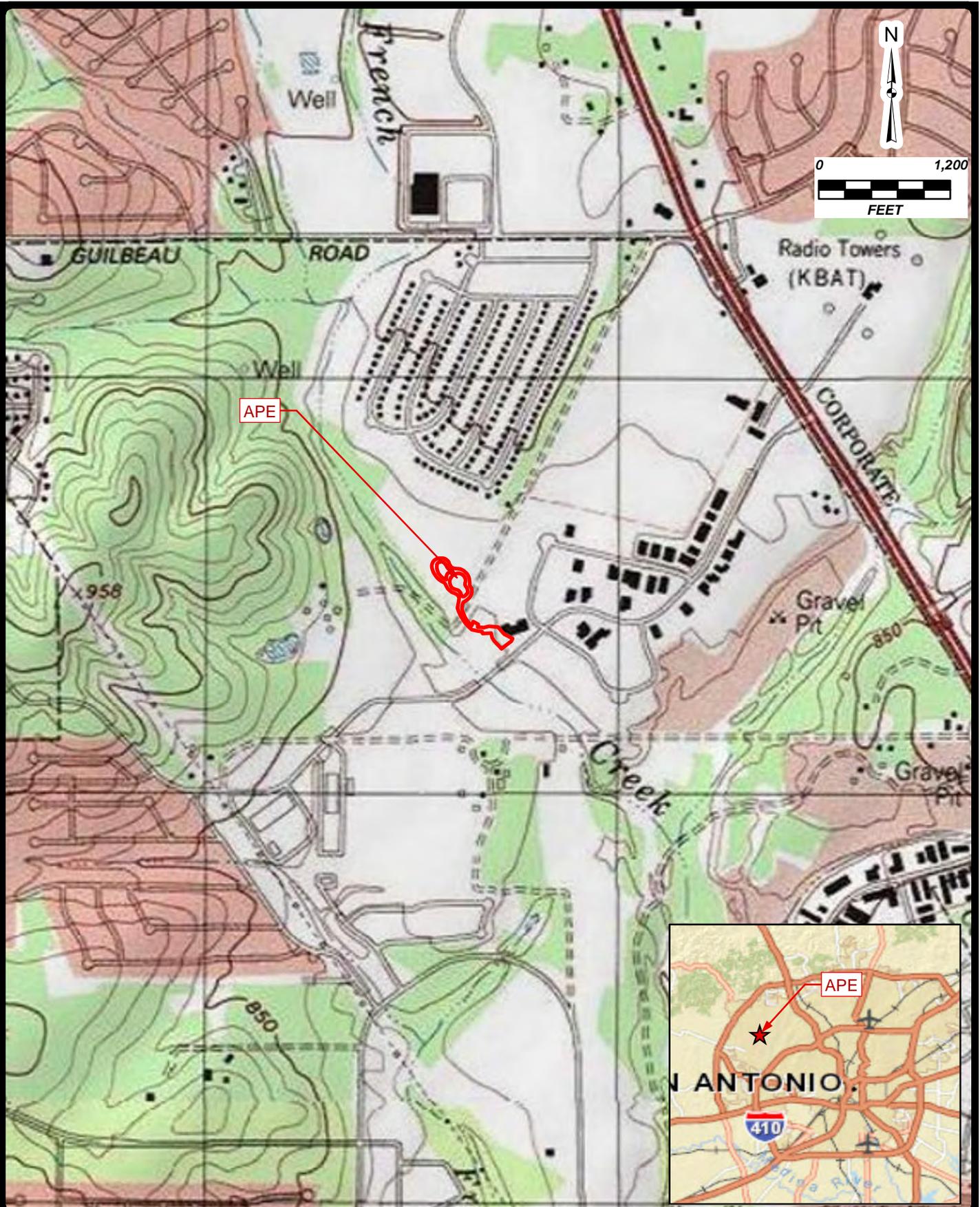
This project will occur on COSA-owned land and will be locally funded, so compliance with the Antiquities Code of Texas (ACT) is required. However, no federal permitting or funding is attached to this project, so compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act will not be necessary. Pape-Dawson applied for and received Texas Antiquities Permit No. 6950.

On behalf of Atkins North America, Inc. (Atkins), an intensive archaeological survey was performed by Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc. (Pape-Dawson) for the proposed COSA-sponsored French Creek Park project. Fieldwork took place on July 16-17, 2014. Melanie Nichols served as Principal Investigator and was assisted in the field by Jon White. The goals of the investigation were to (1) locate all prehistoric and historic archaeological sites within the APE; (2) establish vertical and horizontal site boundaries as appropriate with respect to the APE; (3) evaluate the significance of recorded sites within the APE with regard to State Antiquities Landmark (SAL) eligibility.

## **Project Setting**

The project is situated in northwest San Antonio, just north of Mainland Drive and approximately 0.6 miles southwest of the intersection of Mainland Drive and Highway 16 (Bandera Road). The project is located on a tract of unutilized land within a semi-urbanized area largely comprised of residential development with some commercial properties intermixed along Mainland Drive. This development is the result of urban expansion emanating from the City of San Antonio that has occurred within the past thirty years. Prior to that time, the APE and much of the surrounding area consisted of cleared farm land (NETR 2014). Today, the APE is primarily vegetated by a dense forest of immature live oak and mesquite trees with an understory of native grasses. Cleared areas with little to no tree growth are still present but are limited to the northern and southern extents of the APE.

Located within the eastern edge of the Edwards Plateau, also referred to as the Balcones Escarpment (Wermund 1996), the project landscape is largely characterized by level to gently sloping terraces overlooking the east bank of French Creek though, the westernmost margin of the proposed parking lot



Date: Jul 23, 2014 12:10:54 PM User: allington  
 File: H:\projects\Environmental Projects\San Antonio\French Creek\GIS\mxd\Project Area Map.mxd

JOB NO. 61048-00  
 DATE Jul 2014  
 DESIGNER ASL  
 CHECKED MN DRAWN AL  
 SHEET 1

**AREA OF POTENTIAL EFFECT (APE)**

**FIGURE 1**  
**French Creek**  
**San Antonio, TX**


**PAPE-DAWSON ENGINEERS**

7800 SHOAL CREEK BLVD | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78757 | PHONE: 512.454.8711  
 SUITE 220 WEST | FAX: 512.459.8867

TEXAS BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS, FIRM REGISTRATION # 470

lies along the eastern edge of the narrow French Creek floodplain. The APE is geologically mapped as Pleistocene-age fluvial terrace deposits (Bureau of Economic Geology [BEG] 1983). The dominant soil within the APE is mapped as Lewisville silty clay (1-3 percent slopes) and composes roughly 95 percent of the project area. Lewisville soils are formed in ancient loamy and calcareous sediments and are found on nearly level to rolling upland landscapes. Lewisville soils are upland soils and as such have a low chance of harboring deeply buried archaeological sites. Tinn and Frio soils (0-1 percent slope), located along the western edge of the proposed parking lot, make up the remaining soils within the APE. Tinn and Frio series soils are formed in calcareous clayey alluvium and are found on floodplains of streams that drain the Blackland Prairies. These soils are frequently flooded and thus harbor the potential for buried archaeological deposits (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA] 2014).

Across the stream terraces overlain by Lewisville soil which accounts for the majority of the APE, it was anticipated that archaeological sites would likely be found shallowly buried or above ground and visible to surface observation. Supplemental shovel testing was considered sufficient to reach soils of pre-Holocene depth. Within the narrow floodplain of French Creek which constitutes the remainder of the APE, archaeological material could be deeply buried within alluvial sediments. However, shovel test excavations were considered sufficient to reach the maximum depth of vertical ground disturbance and therefore, sufficient to investigate any cultural deposits that may be impacted within the floodplain as a result of the proposed project. Thus, mechanical trenching was not required.

## **Methods**

### **Records Review**

Prior to fieldwork, a cultural resources background review was conducted of the area within one kilometer (km) of the APE. Research of available records was conducted at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) at The University of Texas at Austin with the purpose of determining the location of previously recorded archaeological sites (sites issued a trinomial/recorded at TARL). The Texas Historical Commission's (THC) on-line Restricted Archeological Sites Atlas files were used to identify National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listed properties and sites, NRHP districts, cemeteries (including Historic Texas Cemeteries), Official Texas Historical Markers (OTHM) (including Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks), State Antiquities Landmarks (SALs), as well as any other potential cultural resources such as National Historic Landmarks (NHLs), National Monuments, National Memorials, National Historic Sites, and National Historical Parks to ensure the completeness of the study. As a secondary source of NRHP properties and NHLs, the National Park Service's (NPS) NRHP database and GIS Spatial Data as well as the NHL Program were consulted. The NPS Geographic Resources Program National Historic Trails Map Viewer was used to identify National Historic Trails (NHT). Supplementary to the NPS NHT Trail Map Viewer, the El Camino Real de los Tejas Comprehensive Management Plan/Environmental Assessment Maps provided additional information about the El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT. Additionally, TXDOT's database of NRHP listed and eligible bridges was reviewed. Finally, the City of San Antonio's Historic Landmark Sites and Historic Districts GeoDatabase was consulted.

## Fieldwork

Pape-Dawson personnel conducted an archaeological investigation of 100 percent of the proposed APE. This investigation consisted of an intensive pedestrian survey, with inspection of the ground surface augmented by shovel testing in areas with the perceived potential for buried cultural deposits and with less than 30 percent ground surface visibility. Due to the proximity of the APE to French Creek and the presence of dense grasses that limited ground surface visibility to less than 30 percent, shovel tests were placed at 30-m intervals along the survey transect. A total of 13 shovel tests were excavated to investigate the APE exceeding the state's minimum standard of 16 per mile (1 shovel test every 100 meters) for linear projects with a corridor equal to or less than 30 m wide. Shovel tests were roughly 30 cm in diameter and excavated in 10-cm levels to pre-Holocene clay, bedrock, or to a maximum depth of 100 cm below surface. All soils were screened through ¼-inch mesh unless clay concentrations were high enough to require hand sorting. All shovel tests were recorded, visually described, plotted by Global Positioning System, and backfilled upon completion. No artifacts were identified or collected as a result of the survey. All project records and photographs will be curated at the Center for Archeological Research (CAR) at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

## Results

### Previously Recorded Sites

The results of the cultural resources background review identified no previously recorded sites or cultural resources within 1 km of the APE (Figure 2). The closest previously recorded archaeological sites, located within 1.2 km of the APE, are sites 41BX54, 41BX59, and 41BX73. Site 41BX54 was originally recorded in 1971 by Paul and Ellen McGuff. At the time the site was recorded, it was described as an open camp site consisting of chert flakes and some burned rocks located on the ground surface across an eroded terrace overlooking Leon Creek. The site was later revisited in 1997 by Weir Enterprises and reported as being mostly destroyed by gravel quarrying. In 2007, the site was once again revisited, this time by Geo-Marine, Inc., and determined to be completely destroyed by urban development. The site has an unknown or undetermined eligibility for inclusion in the NRHP.

Site 41BX59, also recorded by Paul McGuff in 1971 during the course of a survey of Leon Creek, is an Archaic-age campsite located on the northern bank of a small tributary to Leon Creek. The recording author noted a density of burned rock scattered across a ground surface that showed signs of erosion from overgrazing. The site has an unknown or undetermined eligibility for inclusion in the NRHP.

Site 41BX73 represents a single Native American burial reported to contain shell necklaces and "young" teeth. The site was originally discovered and excavated by Richard Steubing in the 1940s but was recorded years later by Paul McGuff in 1971, at which time the site was found to have been completely destroyed by pond construction. The site has been determined ineligible for inclusion in the NRHP. Additionally, although previous investigations have been conducted in the vicinity of the project area, the APE does not appear to have been subjected to any prior archaeological investigations.

**This page has been redacted as  
it contains restricted  
information**

In addition to this review of previously recorded resources, Pape-Dawson archaeologists reviewed historic maps and aerials of the project area. USGS topographic maps from 1959, 1969, 1975, 1985, and 1992 show that while an unpaved road crossed the APE near its midpoint, no structures stood within or adjacent to the APE. Aerial photographs from 1955, 1963, 1966, 1973, 1986, and 2004 show that the project area remained cleared farm land until at least the mid-1980s. The only portion of intact forest is depicted to the southwest of the APE where a riparian buffer of native vegetation lined French Creek. The 2004 aerial photograph shows that the project area is no longer being maintained and a new growth of trees has begun to spring up across the APE by that time (NETR 2014).

Based on the background research, sites encountered within the project area were anticipated to be prehistoric encampments. These would likely consist of lithic scatters observable on the ground surface or potentially buried where alluvial sediments may be present within the APE.

### Fieldwork

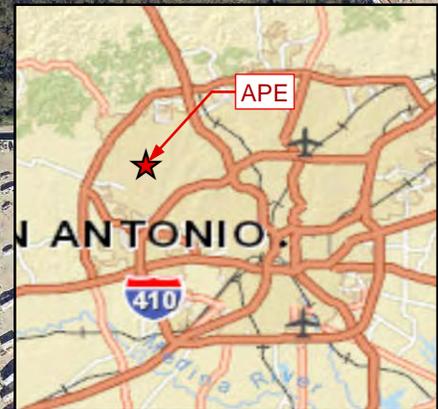
The APE for this proposed project covers a total area of approximately 1.2 acres and includes a 0.5-acre parking lot and 1,300 linear ft of proposed new trail within a 25-ft-wide corridor. An archaeological survey of the APE was conducted on July 16-17, 2014, by Pape-Dawson archaeologists. The entirety of the APE has seen significant disturbance as a result of former land clearing and agricultural activities. The upper portion of the natural soils has likely been stripped away during clearing and the remaining subsoil has likely been subjected to plowing at some point in the past. Other impacts to the APE include an old road bed-the remains of the unpaved road previously noted as being depicted on historic maps and aerials, a two-track road, overhead transmission line easement and an underground waste water line. Additionally, the forested portion of the APE has been damaged by the dumping of modern trash and recent flood activity as evidence by tires, shoes, clothing, plastic bottles, beer bottles, metal aerosol cans, sports balls, and Styrofoam cups intermixed with clumps of broken twigs and tree limbs scattered across the ground surface (Figure 3). Dense grasses and dumping/flood debris limited ground surface visibility to less than 30 percent. Therefore, shovel tests were placed at 30-m intervals along the length of the APE. During the course of the survey, a total of 13 shovel tests (Figure 4) were excavated to evaluate the impact of the proposed project on cultural resources. Shovel tests excavated within the southeastern half of the APE typically revealed 20 cm of dark grayish brown clay loam over strong brown clay with inclusion of weakly cemented limestone (Figure 5). Within the northwestern half of the APE, shovel tests typically encountered 10 cm of dark grayish brown clay loam over indurated limestone (Figure 6). Small areas where no soil is present were also observed within the northern section of the project area. No historic or prehistoric artifacts were located and no archaeological sites were recorded as a result of this survey.



Figure 3: Overview of the wooded portion of the APE showing modern trash and flood debris, facing northeast



- Legend**
- APE
  - Negative Shovel Test



Date: Jul 23, 2014 4:16:05 PM User: ekilington File: H:\projects\Environmental Projects\San Antonio\French Creek\GIS\mxd\Shovel Test Map.mxd

JOB NO. 61048-00  
 DATE Jul 2014  
 DESIGNER ASL  
 CHECKED MN DRAWN AL  
 SHEET 1

**SHOVEL TEST LOCATIONS**  
*Figure 4*  
**French Creek**  
**San Antonio, TX**

**Pape-Dawson ENGINEERS**

7800 SHOAL CREEK BLVD | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78757 | PHONE: 512.454.8711  
 SUITE 220 WEST | FAX: 512.459.8867  
 TEXAS BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS, FIRM REGISTRATION # 470



Figure 5: Typical profile of shovel test placed within the southeastern half of the APE, facing northwest



Figure 6: Typical profile of shovel test placed within the northwestern half of the APE, facing northwest

## **Summary and Recommendations**

On behalf of Atkins, Pape-Dawson conducted an archaeological investigation of the proposed COSA-sponsored French Creek Park project located in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. No historic or prehistoric artifacts were located and no archaeological sites were recorded as a result of this survey. Therefore, Pape-Dawson recommends that no further archaeological work is necessary and that the project be allowed to proceed. However, if undiscovered cultural material is encountered during construction, it is recommended that all work in the vicinity should cease and COSA archaeologist Kay Hindes be contacted.

## References Cited

Bureau of Economic Geology (BEG)

- 1983 *Geologic Atlas of Texas, San Antonio Sheet*, Robert Hamilton Cuyler Memorial Edition. 1974; rev. 1983. GA0029. Bureau of Economic Geology, The University of Texas at Austin.

NETR Online

- 2014 Aerial Imagery of San Antonio, Texas 2004. <http://www.historicaerials.com/> (accessed July 22, 2014).

United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (USDA)

- 2014 *Soil Survey of Bexar County, Texas*. <http://websoilseries.sc.egov.usda.gov/> (Accessed July 22, 2014)

Wermund, E.G.

1996. Physiographic Map of Texas. Bureau of Economic Geology. The University of Texas at Austin.