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For Immediate Release

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San Antonio Water Quality Program Honored for Excellence in Erosion and Sediment Control

Steamboat Springs, Colo. – A municipal program that has improved the quality of surface water in the San Antonio, Tex., metropolitan area has been honored for excellence in natural resource conservation and environmental protection. The San Antonio Water System Storm Water Quality Management Program serves as an example for other communities in eliminating illegal discharges from industrial and construction sites and minimizing erosion and sedimentation.

This accomplishment has earned the 2005 Environmental Achievement Award from the International Erosion Control Association. The annual award is given to an outstanding program or project which demonstrates excellence in natural resource conservation and environmental protection through the use of effective erosion and sediment control policies, practices and/or public education.

The award will be presented during formal ceremonies at the annual IECA conference in Dallas, Tex., Feb. 22, 2005, to four members of the San Antonio Water System's Resource Protection and Compliance Department: Scott Halty, director; Robert Martinez, manager; Martin Miller, industry compliance supervisor; and Philip Handley, construction compliance supervisor.

Established in 1992, the San Antonio Water System has evolved from a local effort to control water pollution within the San Antonio River watershed to national prominence as second place winner of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 2003 National Clean Water Act Recognition Award.

The Storm Water Quality Management Program staff members combine site inspections and regulatory enforcement with educational activities to improve water quality. Working with developers, contractors, homebuilders and engineers, the staff

emphasizes the use of temporary and permanent best management practices, like erosion control blankets, sedimentation ponds and vegetated filter strips to control erosion and sediment.

Educational activities include workshops, seminars and conferences for the construction industry and youth education programs, such as Adopt-A-Creek and H2O University. Each year the staff inspects more than 4,000 industrial and construction sites for compliance with storm water management regulations and investigates nearly 200 complaints of possible pollution.

By reducing the amount of sediment entering creeks, streams and tributaries of the San Antonio River, the Storm Water Quality Management Program has paid off in several ways for both the San Antonio metropolitan region and areas down stream.

- *Cleaner water*

Despite a growing population and increased development in the past 12 years, the quality of surface water in the watershed continues to improve. In 2001, the upper San Antonio River received a score of 48 (high quality on a scale of 0 to 60) in the National Biological Integrity rating. This was higher than the previous year. In 2003, the score had risen again to 54 (between high quality and excellent.)

- *Cleaner streets*

Over the past four years, the amount of sediment washed from construction sites into street gutters has declined by one third. Education, erosion and sedimentation control technologies and aggressive enforcement of storm water regulations have contributed to this success.

- *More fish*

By 2002, an area of the San Antonio River once classified as a *dead zone* had become home to nine species of fish, including the log perch and spotted sunfish, which can't survive in polluted water.

- *Less costly water treatment*

Improved water quality has allowed water to be pumped from the Edwards underground aquifer and chlorinated without additional costly water treatment processes and construction of expensive water treatment plants. Such costs would far outweigh the expense of funding the Storm Water Quality Management Program.

The IECA, founded in 1972, is a non-profit professional organization with members in 39 countries around the world who are dedicated to minimizing accelerated soil erosion.

This is the 14th year of the annual IECA Environmental Excellence Awards program.

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