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SAN ANTONIO CELEBRATES WORLD HERITAGE DESIGNATION IN STYLE

***Dignitaries from Around the World Join San Antonio Community in
San Antonio Missions World Heritage Celebration***

SAN ANTONIO, (October 17, 2015) — The nine years of work to have San Antonio’s five Spanish Colonial Missions and the Rancho de las Cabras inscribed as a World Heritage site culminated today with an elaborate ceremony at the “Queen of the Missions,” Mission San José. Dignitaries from around the world plus thousands of people from the San Antonio area gathered at the historic site to celebrate the official World Heritage designation.

The Missions were approved as a World Heritage site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on July 5 in Bonn, Germany. The San Antonio community has been celebrating ever since.

Before the official ceremony, Mariachis greeted the crowds with festive music. San Antonio Charros, or Mexican horsemen which originated among the Spanish conquistadors in the sixteenth century, paraded onto the grounds of Mission San José, and indigenous dancers moved onlookers with a solemn but uplifting dance and blessing.

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell represented the United States government. Spanish Consul General Enric Panés and Mexican Consul General José Antonio Larios participated in the ceremony representing their respective home countries. San Antonio Mayor Ivy Taylor and Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff led San Antonio officials and Alamo Director Becky Dinnin spoke on behalf of the State of Texas.

“In Germany this summer, the World Heritage designation announcement was an electrifying moment which validated the deep pride we have in our heritage, our historic Missions and our community,” said San Antonio Mayor Ivy R. Taylor. “That was a great day and today was also a great day. Together we celebrate and will redevelop the most beloved landmarks in San Antonio so that citizens and visitors see a complete historic interpretation of our rich and layered history.”

“The San Antonio Missions are universally admired for their representation of the unique, interwoven heritage of Spanish and indigenous cultures in the U.S., and warrant worldwide recognition,” said Secretary Jewell. “Today’s ceremony recognizes the many years of hard work and dedication put forth by individuals and organizations to achieve this designation, sharing an important chapter in the history of America with the world. Their efforts will help make San Antonio a top tourist destination.”

Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff noted, “Bexar County led the efforts to determine the economic impact of the Missions being named a World Heritage site and the restoration of the Mission Reach of

the San Antonio River, which connects the Missions. It's an honor for our Missions to be officially inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site today, but our work is just starting to protect, preserve and promote these assets."

The lengthy and technical nomination process began in 2006 at the initiation of the San Antonio Conservation Society, and attaining World Heritage status has truly been a massive community-wide effort. The San Antonio Missions are now the first World Heritage Site in Texas and only the 23rd in the United States. U.S. World Heritage sites include the Statue of Liberty, Independence Hall, Grand Canyon and Yellowstone National Parks, Louisiana's Poverty Point (2014) and others.

Major Economic Impact

A UNESCO designation is a catalyst for socio-economic change, with increased visitation and tourist spending. According to the U.S. Travel Association, \$928 billion was generated by domestic and international travelers in 2014, placing tourism as one of our nation's largest economic generators and spurring an additional \$1.2 trillion in other industries.

For San Antonio, the impact will be even more significant, as tourism is one of the city's top five industries, providing one in eight jobs and more than \$12 billion annually. By 2025, the World Heritage site economic impact on San Antonio and Bexar County is expected to generate an additional \$44 million - \$105 million in economic activity, with over 1,100 newly created jobs.

Official World Heritage celebration videos, interviews and photos can be found at:

www.WorldHeritageSA.com

More background on the San Antonio Missions and World Heritage story can be found at these sites:

www.MissionsofSanAntonio.org

www.nps.gov/saan

www.LosCompadres.org

Social media hashtags include:

#MissionsofSanAntonio

#WorldHeritageMissionsSA

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