**For Immediate Release** Contacts: Annalisa Peace, GEAA 210-275-9336

10/26/2015 Spanish Language Contact: Margaret Day, Alamo Sierra Club

210-413-6402

**An open letter to San Antonio’s City Council Representatives**

Honorable Council Representatives of the City of San Antonio,

We have received “Mayor Taylor's Statement on Water Measures”, issued on October 7, 2015. Among other things, Mayor Taylor has promised that “In partnership with civic organizations, I will host additional public meetings at which SAWS will provide information and answer questions.” A schedule of five meetings was published in the October 11, 2015 edition of the San Antonio Express News. We note that these meetings have been scheduled at venues that are not very accessible to San Antonians who live in the inner city and ride the bus.

We know of no civic group that has been contacted to partner in presenting these meetings. Nor, to our knowledge, have any civic groups been asked to present at these meetings.

We object to the format whereby SAWS presents information and those in attendance are limited to asking questions about the information presented. Leading up to the Vista Ridge vote, SAWS scheduled a series of such “public meetings” that allowed for no comment from the public. A public hearing that welcomes all citizens and organizations to comment on SAWS rate increases and structure, and planned water supply projects is long overdue.

During the summer of 2012, SAWS scheduled a series of public meetings at venues throughout the city to present their 2012 Water Management Plan. These meetings were well attended and informed citizens about SAWS plans for our community. Citizens were allowed to comment on those plans, and they did. Unfortunately, City Council Representatives and SAWS Board members were not there to hear them and, citizen feedback was not reported to our decision makers.

We call on you, the City Council, to schedule public hearing at a time and venue that is accessible to citizens of San Antonio, with translators available for Spanish language speakers. We also suggest that each of you might host hearings in your own district. We ask that all citizens be given no less than three minutes to comment, and that organizations be given no less than 9 minutes to present comments. Further, we ask that you attend these hearings to learn about the concerns of your constituents prior to making decisions that will affect our city and all SAWS rate payers for years to come.

What has been missing as the City and SAWS consider the $ 3.4 billion Vista Ridge Pipeline and how we are going to pay for it are meaningful “partnerships”. We look forward to working with you on these and other issues.

Alamo Group of the Sierra Club

Baja Beacon Hill Neighbors

Environmental Defense Fund

Environment Texas

Esperanza Peace and Justice Center

Fuerza Unida

Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance

imagineSanAntonio

Mi Agua, Mi Vida

Mujer Artes

PEACE Initiative

Promotores de Corazon

San Antonio Time Dollar

SATX Permaculture

Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project

Southwest Workers Union

Texas Organizing Project

Vecinos de Mission Trails

West End Hope in Action

Westside Preservation Alliance