SAN ANTONIO WATER SYSTEM
WATER QUALITY MONITORING PROGRAM in 2013 CONSENT DECREE

On October 15, 2013, a Consent Decree was entered in the U.S. District Court, Western District of Texas, San Antonio Division. The CD resolved government's claim for injunctive relief to address the violations of Clean Water Act and its NPDES permits, primarily due to sewer system overflows (SSOs). The CD also required the San Antonio Water System (SAWS) to conduct a water quality study of its selected storm water system outfalls before they discharge to waters of the U.S. The purpose of the study was to quantify selected pollutants including human bacteroidales (human marker) in the POTW's storm water discharges with an objective to establish a connection between the pollutants from SSOs being discharged to the waters of the U.S. The study conducted by SAWS revealed a close correlation between the pollutants in storm water discharged to waters of the U.S. with the pollutants contributed from the SSOs. The dry weather samples collected by SAWS were detected 40 percent positive and the wet weather samples were 86 percent positive for human bacteroidale. The presence of human bacteroidale in storm water samples is an indication of the contamination of storm water and the receiving waters from raw sewage or SSOs.

Ever since SSO cases became a priority, EPA had been striving to determine the impact of SSOs on nation's waters. Investigating conventional pollutants including E.coli to establish a connection between SSOs and the impairment of water quality was not enough proof since such pollutants are contributed by other species also. This study is one of the earliest investigation by EPA by the use of human marker which establishes a definitive correlation between SSOs and water quality degradation. In future, EPA may use this methodology to enforce a required goal of SSO corrective program by a municipality.