



On the Water Front

May 2017 | A Message from John Balliew, P.E., President/CEO

Texas Water Reuse Experts Gather in El Paso with an Eye to the Future

Last week, water utility and engineering professionals from around the state converged on the El Paso Convention Center for the 7th Annual WaterReuse Texas Conference. We were honored to welcome and network with other industry experts who see the benefit of reusing and recycling wastewater in the quest for a sustainable drinking water supply.

EPWater treats the wastewater collected from customers throughout the city. In 1963, the Ascarate Golf Course was the first site to be irrigated with reclaimed water. Over the years, we have expanded our system to include more than 50 miles of "purple pipe" that delivers 2.2 billion gallons per year of reclaimed water to golf courses, cemeteries, street medians and sports fields for irrigation. It also helps restore the Rio Bosque Wetlands.

We were also among the first in the nation to treat wastewater to drinking water standards in 1985. Since then, more than 26 billion gallons of that water has replenished the Hueco Bolson aquifer, which is an important water resource.

El Paso's diverse water supply portfolio

Public Service Board Chair and keynote speaker Henry Gallardo gave conference attendees an overview of El Paso's diverse water supply portfolio and our plans for additional resources to keep pace with the city's growth. He announced a feasibility study to increase aquifer recharge sixfold, up to 5.5 billion gallons annually, by banking treated river water as well as reclaimed water.

Redirecting excess river water supplies in non-drought years would make El Paso's water supply more resilient to drought and help preserve the aquifer for future generations. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation recently awarded EPWater \$150,000 in funding for the study.

Our colleagues are familiar with our water reuse innovations. They are also monitoring our progress as we reach milestones that take us closer to the construction of an Advanced Water Purification Facility.

Other Texas cities use advanced processes to purify treated wastewater, mix it with river or lake water and treat it once more at a conventional water treatment facility. El Paso plans to place purified water directly into the system that delivers it to customers. We've completed two steps of the eight-step regulatory process. The next step – designing the facility – will begin later this year. Once completed, it will be a game changer for other communities wanting to implement similar water reuse projects.

We were happy to host water professionals from across Texas, and we're hopeful that our innovative solutions will inspire others in their efforts to provide reliable water supplies to their communities.



Public Service Board Chair Henry Gallardo speaks to attendees at the Water Reuse Texas Conference.

