November 2019 | A Message from John Balliew, P.E., President/CEO

EPWater embraces new ways to reduce waste

Recent strategic investments are priming El Paso Water for a bright future in resources recovery at our wastewater plants.

Expanding on our industrywide reputation in innovation, EPWater is focusing on maximizing our efforts to convert waste into a resource. At the Haskell R. Street Wastewater Treatment Plant, which serves Central El Paso, we are working to expand energy generation using our co-digestion system project.

FOG as fuel

It begins with fats, oils and grease (FOG) collected from local food service establishments. Liquid Environmental Solutions (LES) will deliver the FOG supply to the Haskell plant, where it mixes with wastewater sludge to boost biogas production. Haskell employees use the gas to run boilers, reducing our energy costs significantly. This will allow the plant to produce more heat and power for treatment processes.

Through co-digestion, EPWater is aiming to supplement the Haskell plant’s power needs with the energy from biogas produced onsite. The benefits stretch beyond cost and energy efficiency.

Diverting FOG from landfills to digesters at Haskell also helps our community manage waste more responsibly. Ultimately, we are doing our part to reduce the volume of waste disposed and recover energy from waste products.

Recovering nutrients

Our efforts don’t stop there, as we are studying innovative treatment technologies for resource recovery at the Roberto R. Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant.

In collaboration with Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center, EPWater recently began a compost pilot project to recover nutrients from solids treatment processes at the Bustamante Plant. Instead of using energy at the plant to treat filtrate – a byproduct of dewatered sludge – the filtrate will be used in the project.

The study uses more than 38,000 pounds of compost material supplied by Las Cruces Utilities. Rows of the compost will undergo batch spraying, using the Bustamante Plant liquid filtrate. The goal is to reduce the amount of filtrate in the plant’s wastewater, with an eye toward the production of an enriched organic fertilizer.

The study’s environmental benefits are immense. Recovering the liquid filtrate reduces energy consumption at the Bustamante Plant, and diverting sludge from the landfill reduces disposal costs and eases the burden on the landfill. The enriched compost will also reduce the need for chemical fertilizers used by farmers.

Early results of the pilot project are favorable, and the possibilities are endless.

With these efforts, EPWater is joining a new generation of wastewater treatment plants, where energy, organics and other resources will be recovered as valuable byproducts.

Ultimately, EPWater’s work will improve the resiliency, reliability and revenue of our utility while delivering on our commitment to environmental stewardship.