



On the Water Front

October 2018 | **A Message from John Balliew, P.E., President/CEO**

Preparation counts when drought persists

It's clear. El Paso is in the middle of a long-term river drought.

Our community's river supply is dependent on Elephant Butte Reservoir. Warm temperatures and low snowpack in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado can severely impact storage in Elephant Butte, which has dropped to a near-record low of 3 percent capacity.

Though we can't forecast weather and precipitation for this coming winter, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has cautioned that water supplies will struggle to recover, even if weather cooperates.

However, our city has seen severely reduced river supplies in the past, and we pulled through successfully. El Paso endured 2011 – the worst single-year drought in Texas. Then, there was 2013 – a year we received 10,000 out of a possible 60,000 acre feet of normal river water supply.

Just as El Paso managed through these drought cycles, we are prepared to manage through the next drought cycle and future cycles. Why? Because we have been working hard for decades to ensure El Paso has a sustainable, resilient water supply.

Diversification

EPWater has long diversified our supply beyond the river and fresh groundwater from the Hueco and Mesilla bolsons. After years of investment and careful planning, our utility has built an innovative portfolio of water resources, including desalination, water reuse and conservation. These water sources can be utilized when other sources are not available.

Limited river water means groundwater is at a premium. With less than a full river supply expected, the utility will supplement El Paso's water supply by responsibly pumping from our wells to meet demand.

EPWater is already striving to maximize our groundwater production by expanding our well program. We have 21 wells – both new and existing – which will bolster our water supply.

For many years, water reuse has been an effective water management strategy, whether replenishing our aquifer with treated wastewater or using reclaimed water for irrigation of parks, golf courses and more.

And then there's the Kay Bailey Hutchison Desalination Plant. In its 11 years of operation, the world's largest inland desalination plant has proven its worth. In both freeze and drought, the desalination plant helped prevent water restrictions and potential water shortages by offering an alternative water supply.

All hands on deck

We also owe credit to our customers. In our great city, conservation is a way of life. For more than 25 years, EPWater has prioritized water conservation. As a result, we have seen total water usage per person decline by 35 percent since 1991, when we launched major conservation initiatives and established a conservation ordinance.

We have seen and experienced river droughts before, and we have learned what works. Even though we were allotted very limited amounts of river water in 2013, extraordinary regional cooperation enabled us to successfully manage supplies and meet demands. Our customers also played a role by answering the call for voluntary conservation during the hottest time of the year to avoid mandatory restrictions.

EPWater knows that our water supply grows stronger when diversified. I'm proud of our commitment to ensure a sustainable water supply in the Chihuahuan Desert. Because of years of investment and responsibly managing our water sources, we are prepared to handle Mother Nature's occasional challenges.



Elephant Butte Reservoir



El Paso Water is maximizing groundwater production through our well program.

Photo courtesy of John Shomaker & Associates, Inc.



On the Water Front is a publication of El Paso Water. Contact Christina Montoya at **915.594.5596** or cmontoya@epwater.org with any comments or questions.

Share this email:



[Manage](#) your preferences | [Opt out](#) using TrueRemove™

Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.

View this email [online](#).

1154 Hawkins Blvd
El Paso, TX | 79925 United States

This email was sent to .
To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

