I’m very proud to share that El Paso Water was one of only nine utilities across the nation to be recognized with the 2020 Sustainable Water Utility Management award by the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA).

We were one of only two “encore” or repeat winners, with the first win in 2014. This year, we demonstrated progress and new achievements in economic, innovative, environmental and social endeavors.

AMWA pointed to strong financial management with high bond ratings, financial audits for accountability, solid budgeting practices and a conservation-driven pricing structure.

We were recognized, too, for our strategic plan and innovative solutions that are underway to secure future water supplies while protecting existing sources. AMWA lauded the following pioneering water-supply projects:

- our aquifer storage and recovery project, which will replenish our primary aquifer
- our advanced water purification facility that will transform treated wastewater into drinking water
- the expansion of our Kay Bailey Hutchison Desalination Plant
- plans to import water from an aquifer in neighboring Hudspeth County

All are innovative industry-leading projects that many across the country are following with great interest because they are models for drought resilience and sustainability.

Environmental stewardship

AMWA cited improved environmental performance in key areas, including the development and implementation of an energy management master plan that saves energy and costs, and our fleet replacement strategy that reduced emissions and fuel efficiency of vehicles. Both initiatives reduced the utility’s carbon footprint and contributed to improved air quality for our community.

Other achievements included odor-control improvements at our wastewater treatment plants that resulted in a 75% reduction in the number of residents affected by odors and stormwater system investments that results in thousands of properties being removed from floodplains. This, in turn, enabled thousands of property owners to save money on costly flood insurance.

Social responsibility

AMWA pointed to major strides in the utility’s engagement with the community and stakeholders. Examples mentioned included the AguaCares program to help low-income seniors with emergency payment assistance and advocacy for funding to help economically distressed areas secure water and wastewater service.

According to AMWA, “through sound financial planning, forward-thinking management and engaging programs developed to serve its community, El Paso Water continues to be a model for sustainable water utility management.”

We appreciate the recognition and the years of employee efforts that are behind these improvements. All of us at the utility work every day – pandemic or not – to serve our community with a sense of pride.