



On the Water Front

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

On the Waterfront: EPWater budgets invest in our future

With an eye trained on El Paso's future, El Paso Water staff unveiled our proposed budgets earlier this month, which include rate and fee increases for the 2018-2019 fiscal year. The monthly increase for the typical residential customer is estimated at less than \$4, a number that combines water, wastewater and stormwater services.

When contemplating rate increases, it's never easy. Most of our budget is driven by large capital projects related to new or aging infrastructure. We evaluate what we feel we must do

now versus what we can push back. Chief among our priorities is securing water sources for the next generation, including adding 16.3 billion gallons of new water sources to meet expected growth demands by 2030. We also owe it to our current customers to improve our customer service, modernize our systems to be more efficient and improve flood control that protects public safety and private property.



Completed Gateway East Pond along I-10.

On the horizon

The proposed \$490 million budget for our water and wastewater systems reflects our continuing plans to extend existing systems and build new infrastructure to meet El Paso's expected growth and future water needs. Our plan calls for securing new water sources by purchasing additional land and water rights in Hudspeth County as part of our long-term water importation strategy. We will continue designing the Advanced Water Purification Facility and begin the initial phase to expand the desalination plant. With new developments on the Westside and Eastside, we also must extend infrastructure to serve new homes and businesses.

Because we continue to wrestle with the challenges of aging infrastructure, the proposed rate increase also finances the replacement of pipes, wells, pumps and wastewater lift stations. If we strategically target and replace vulnerable infrastructure, we can prevent some service disruptions and reduce costly emergency repairs.

Although we have successfully completed stormwater projects in Central El Paso that have reduced flooding on I-10 in Central El Paso, we have more work to do. Our proposed \$51.1 million stormwater budget and associated 8 cent fee increase will enable us to shift our focus toward other flood-prone problem spots. After an estimated 5,000 properties are removed from the floodplain, the Will Ruth Stormwater Pond in the Northeast will help control flooding on Dyer. The Silver Springs Dam Project in West El Paso will help slow down stormwater runoff from the Franklin Mountains, preventing flooding on Mesa Street and surrounding areas. The Thomas Manor Pond improvement project in Mission Valley will increase the capacity of the pond, and a new pump station will be installed to reduce flooding in the area.

More about the budgets

We encourage customers to blunt the rise in fees and rates by practicing conservation. Water users who use less than 3,000 gallons in a month are eligible to have their Water Supply Replacement Charge of \$9.83 waived. Currently, about 38,000 customers take advantage of this waiver and save money on their monthly bills.

When compared to other cities such as San Antonio, Austin and Corpus Christi, the projected increases still put El Paso's rates among the lowest in Texas.

The PSB will consider and vote on budgets and increases at its Jan. 10 meeting. If approved, the new rates and fees would go into effect at the beginning of our fiscal year, which begins March 1.



On the Water Front is a publication of El Paso Water.
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