

RIO BOSQUE NEWS

A newsletter reporting on events at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

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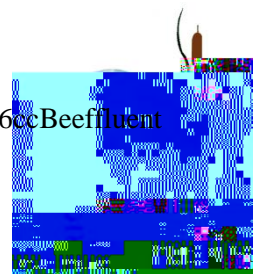
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PIPELINE COMPLETE, WATER EXPECTED IN MAY

The pipeline from the Roberto Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant to Rio Bosque Wetlands Park is complete. On Jan 28, El Paso County Water Improvement District #1 (EP#1) approved the license for El Paso Water Utilities (EPWU) to install buried pipe across the right-of-way for the old Rio Intercepting Drain. EPWU completed this final segment of the pipeline in March.

The first water deliveries from the pipeline are expected May 3. Before the license was granted, EP#1 and EPWU entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under which EPWU may deliver 2,000 acre-feet (af) of water to Rio Bosque through the pipeline during the 5 months from May through September. 2,000 af is ~15% of the Bustamante Plant's output during that period.

Two prior contracts shaped the MOU. The 2001 Third Party Contract among the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), EP#1 and the City of El Paso obligates EPWU to deliver 13,333 af of water from the Bustamante Plant to EP#1 from Feb 15 to Oct 15. Additional water produced from the plant during that time (7,692 af in 2014) is available for EPWU to use elsewhere, including the park. The second contract is a 1988 agreement between the City of El Paso and the Rio Bosque Wetlands Park Authority (RWPA) that provides for the delivery of effluent from the plant to the park. The agreement states that the plant will deliver effluent to the park through the old Rio Intercepting Drain. Because of this provision, EP#1 contends EPWU can deliver water via the pipeline to Rio Bosque – a park EPWU administers – only when EP#1 permits that use.



In recent years, water has typically been delivered to Rio Bosque from the Bustamante Plant from early November to early February, a 3-month period. The other 9 months of the year, no deliveries took place. The additional water provided under the MOU will be of great benefit to the park. Thanks go to EPWU and EP#1 for making it available. Still, there remain 4 months – February, March, April and October – when no deliveries will take place. To ensure year-round availability of adequate water for the park, there is still work to be done.

PARTNERS STEP UP FOR PARK

Once again, Chihuahuan Desert Native Wildlife Conservation (CDNWC) and the El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society (EP/TPAS) have made

significant contributions to UTEP's Rio Bosque Wetlands Park Gift Fund, the park's main operating fund. Last year, costs to pump groundwater – already the park's biggest operating expense – doubled with the addition of a second water-supply well. CDNWC stepped up to cover our expenses for operating the new well in 2014 and for replacing the water pump on our hard-working water trailer. EP/TPAS, as it has consistently for many years, contributed funds raised in its 2014 Birdathon. With the new pipeline in place, we had hoped to give our wells a rest in 2015. Now, with water deliveries via the pipeline limited under the MOU, it appears the wells will again be in steady use. Sincere thanks go to CDNWC and EP/TPAS. Their generosity is literally keeping important areas of the park alive!