



On the Water Front

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

EPWater ensures stormwater project, owls thrive

Utilities and wildlife can coexist peacefully. With utility projects constantly in motion, El Paso Water’s commitment to the environment extends to our workplaces and worksites.

Customers count on EPWater to provide a sustainable water supply of the highest quality. Our core values guide our decision-making and influence our conduct on the job. Sometimes, though, it takes a close encounter of the wildlife kind to drive the point home.

‘Wild’ neighbors

Recently, our work crews at the Thomas Manor Park Pond and Pump Station project noticed an unusual visitor at the pond construction site. A burrowing owl— a bird federally protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in the United States, Canada and Mexico— was living onsite in a drainage pipe, Project Manager Ryan Stubbs said.



Habitat was created for a family of burrowing owls.

We contacted Texas Parks and Wildlife to assess the situation because project plans called for the pipe to be moved.

Because of the burrowing owls’ special status in Texas, Lois Balin, Urban Wildlife Biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife, said it’s especially important not to disrupt owls while they are breeding. But because it was early in the breeding season, there was a possibility the female owl had not begun laying eggs. Using cameras, Balin sought evidence of a nest.

“Luckily for the project, it hadn’t laid any eggs yet,” Balin said. “So I knew it was okay to make a habitat for them in a safer area. The owls would find it and move in on their own.”

Within two days, the owl located and settled into its new shelter.

High standards

We at EPWater take pride in raising standards for environmental stewardship; it’s one of our core values. Our utility infrastructure must coexist with the great outdoors, and ensure safe, reliable delivery of water in a responsible practice that helps protect land and species.

Although Balin commended us for our work to protect the owls, we believe it’s all in a day’s work.

EPWater works hard to build relationships in our community and to be a good neighbor. We are committed to stewardship and the careful and responsible management of our lands, an ethic that incorporates our responsible planning and management of resources.

Good stewards believe in sustainability, embrace innovation and change, and practice inclusiveness.

As the Thomas Manor project winds down, EPWater and Texas Parks and Wildlife will work with landscape architects to ensure that the owls have the open space needed to thrive.



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