



Exceptional Value and Reliability

Day in and day out, Austin Water provides safe, high-quality drinking water to over 900,000 citizens and works to ensure reliable service for the future, including during times like this historic and ongoing drought.

*2013 Drinking Water
Quality Report enclosed.*





From the Director

The fundamentals of managing your water utility

The water professionals at Austin Water have been proudly providing water services for more than 100 years. Austin Water provides a wide array of water services to Austin, most of which are largely out of sight to most citizens. We thought we would take the occasion of this report to describe some of the value provided by the rates you pay.

These are challenging times for water utilities nationwide and particularly in Austin where we are in the sixth year of a historic and ongoing drought. To provide effective services, utilities must address four major overlapping areas: water supply, infrastructure, conservation and rates. I want to report where Austin Water stands on these fundamentals.

Austin planned ahead on water supply, and the City has water rights and long-term contracts that amount to more than twice as much water as we are currently using. During the drought, Austin has had to work hard to protect our water supply, but absent those rights and contracts, the water supply situation would be much worse.

Nationwide, water utilities are coping with aging infrastructure and Austin Water is no different. For example, our two existing water treatment plants are 45 and 60 years old. Many of our water lines date back to the 1950s and even further. However, Austin has sought to address these challenges by building the soon to open Water Treatment Plant 4 and we have completed major upgrades to our

water distribution network and sewage collection system, along with a number of other initiatives in recent years. These are needed improvements which of course, increase costs.

On conservation, the citizens of Austin have responded resoundingly to calls to decrease water use since the City Council strengthened conservation programs in 2007. That response strengthened even more as the drought intensified and Austin Water called for further reductions. Without these savings the lakes would have already reached the lowest levels in their history.

This brings us to the fourth major issue for utilities, rates. Our current rate structure has a mix of flat customer charges coupled with charges based on the amount of water you use. That model has served well for many years but recently has fallen short since expenses necessary to keep good quality water flowing to all our customers continue to increase while our successful conservation program, along with drought response, has driven down consumption. We need to change our business model and associated rate structure to reflect these challenges and our ongoing community-wide efforts to conserve this precious resource. We will be tackling this critical challenge in the upcoming months.

Still, we understand that we need to keep rates as low as possible. We want you, our customers, to know Austin Water employees work hard everyday to deliver services to you in the most affordable, efficient and environmentally sound way possible.

Greg Meszaros | Director | Austin Water



Lake Travis, one of the Highland Lakes, with Sometimes Island and surrounding limestone cliffs much more exposed than normal due to the current drought.

Austin Water treats your drinking water to the highest standards providing exceptional value and reliability.

The Colorado River, in the form of the Highland Lakes, is the source of all of Austin's drinking water. We treat the water and then pipe it to homes and businesses through more than 3,700 miles of underground water lines. Then, Austin Water collects the wastewater from almost 2,700 miles of sewer mains and treats it to a standard higher than what is required by the state, so much so that the segment of the Colorado River downstream of Austin's wastewater discharge is rated exceptional under Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) standards approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



In Austin, we put our heart and soul into our music, food, festivals and enjoying the outdoors. Austin Water shares this passion when it comes to your water, and for Austin Water, nothing is more important.

For more than 100 years, Austin Water has been providing safe, reliable drinking water and treating wastewater to make it safe. From the Colorado River and back again, generations of employees have built a legacy of delivering high-quality water services.

Austin Water delivers more than clean water to your tap every day.

Whether it's our biologists on the Wildlands, water plant technicians, pipeline repair crews, engineers or chemists in the lab, Austin Water has over 1,100 dedicated professionals who are proud to serve more than 900,000 citizens every day.



Water Infrastructure

Our water distribution system carries the lifeblood of our community and our wastewater system helps keep us safe from disease and protects the Colorado River. In order to dependably deliver service to our customers each and every day, Austin Water is responsible for operating and maintaining an incredible amount of infrastructure, including not only over 3,700 miles of water lines, and almost 2,700 miles of sewer mains, but also two existing water treatment plants, two major wastewater treatment plants, 124 lift stations, and 41 pump stations and boosters. Every month, Austin Water crews respond to an average of over 3,000 water and wastewater infrastructure repair requests. Austin Water also maintains more than 26,000 fire hydrants. In addition to this infrastructure providing reliable water services, it is also the backbone of public safety when it comes to fire fighting.



Treatment and Distribution

Water is pumped from Lake Austin into the treatment plants and goes through several treatment steps including screening, disinfection, softening and filtration. The process takes about 6 to 10 hours to complete and the clean, treated water is then sent to homes and businesses through our extensive network of underground pipes. After that, wastewater is collected into sewer mains and treated to standards higher than those required by the state, so much so that the segment of the Colorado River downstream of Austin's wastewater discharge is rated exceptional under Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) standards approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



Water Treatment Plant 4 (WTP4)

WTP4, Austin Water's newest water treatment plant, will be completed later this year. The plant, which is located on Lake Travis, will be capable of treating 50 million gallons a day (mgd) with room to expand to 300 mgd. This investment will add reliability by giving utility customers an additional plant that draws from Lake Travis instead of Lake Austin, save energy in serving the north and northwest Desired Development Zone, and provide for continuous service during shutdowns and repairs of Austin Water's two other treatment plants and aging pump stations which are critical to getting water to customers. WTP4 featured an unprecedented environmental commissioning process that worked to protect the environment at every step of construction and into the future.



Renewing Austin

In 2012, Austin Water launched Renewing Austin, a five-year program to upgrade aging water lines to keep pace with the infrastructure demands of a growing city. The utility has identified the most vulnerable pipes in the system by analyzing breaks and leaks over the past several years and many of the pipes being replaced are over 60 and even 80 years old. Renewing Austin is part of a sustained, long-term approach to ensuring the reliability of Austin's water distribution system.



Austin Clean Water Program

In response to an administrative order from the EPA, the Austin Clean Water Program replaced and repaired leaking sewage pipes and moved sewer lines out of creek beds, greatly improving local water quality and in the process winning an award from the International Right of Way Association as one of North America's Top 10 infrastructure projects in the last 75 years. Other winners included the Golden Gate Bridge, Hoover Dam and the Interstate Highway System.

Water Conservation Programs

Working with the citizens of Austin, the utility's conservation programs reduced per capita water use per person by 17% in the last five years (compared to the five years prior to establishing a more aggressive water

conservation program in 2007). And, total water use has remained below 2006 levels each year—even as Austin has continued to grow. Austin Water is working hard to protect your water supply during this historic drought by engaging with leaders across the region to promote sound water management.

The utility is also aggressively expanding the reclaimed water program to supply non-potable water for business, industry and city uses like parks -- tapping into an existing, renewable resource using new technology and infrastructure, and conserving precious drinking water in the process. Reclaimed water is highly treated wastewater that can be reused in activities that don't require fully treated drinking water. Using reclaimed water conserves approximately 1.6 billion gallons of drinking water a year.





Wildlands

Austin Water proudly acts as the steward of the Wildlands, which filter the water that flows through them and protect the animals that call them home. Now, more than 40,000 acres of preserve lands, purchased with voter-approved funds and/or through voter-approved programs, provide valuable habitat for endangered species, wildlife and native plants while protecting watersheds that help provide safe drinking and recreational water to the public. Management of these lands protects 22% of the recharge zone for the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer and provides open space, which adds to Austin's quality of life and reputation as a community that deeply values its natural environment.



Leak Response and Repair

Austin Water conserves water by maintaining the integrity of our water distribution system. In the past two years, the utility has inspected more than 1,500 miles of water lines for leaks using acoustic technology. Last year, we completed a five-year program of inspecting the entire water distribution system. Austin Water has also initiated an accelerated leak response and repair program that has proven highly successful, with most leaks now repaired in one day or less.



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Reliability, Value, Sustainability and Stewardship—words we live by as we supply Austin with clean, safe, drinking water every day, and work to ensure water for the future.

For more information please visit our web site,
austinwater.org