



News Release

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AMWA Recognizes Utility Management Achievement in Water Industry Awards

Washington, D.C. – The Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA) honored the exceptional operation and performance of 13 public drinking water systems with its top utility management awards on October 13 at its 2020 Executive Management Conference.

“In an unprecedented year for this nation, these systems are at the forefront of providing innovative solutions to the multiple challenges a global pandemic, extreme weather events, and infrastructure gaps are creating,” said AMWA President Steve Schneider, General Manager of Saint Paul Regional Water Services. “By supplying their communities with clean, safe, and affordable drinking water, these water utilities are helping to safeguard the nation’s health.”

AMWA management awards recognize the exceptional performance of public drinking water utilities where management vision and employee commitment create sustainable utilities producing ample supplies of clean, safe drinking water. The Sustainable Water Utility Management Award spotlights efforts of water utilities implementing long-term and innovative economic, environmental, and social endeavors, while the Platinum Award for Utility Excellence and Gold Award for Utility Performance honor outstanding achievement in implementing the industry standard Attributes of Effective Utility Management.

AMWA awarded the 2020 Sustainable Water Utility Management Award to nine utilities, including the starred second-time winners:

- Anaheim Public Utilities (California)
- Charleston Water System (South Carolina)
- Contra Costa Water District* (California)
- El Paso Water* (Texas)
- Greenville Water (South Carolina)
- KC Water (Missouri)
- New York City Department of Environmental Protection (New York)
- Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority (Florida)
- South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (Connecticut)

AMWA presented three utilities with the 2020 Platinum Award for Utility Excellence:

- Central Arizona Project (Arizona)
- Great Lakes Water Authority (Michigan)
- Houston Water (Texas)

AMWA awarded the 2020 Gold Award for Exceptional Utility Performance to:

- Rochester Public Utilities (Minnesota)

Sustainable Water Utility Management Award Winners

Anaheim Public Utilities (APU) continues to achieve financial effectiveness by maintaining robust liquidity, minimizing long-term obligation, offering affordable and competitive rates in the face of COVID-19 pandemic challenges and rising water supply costs. APU employs data analytics to optimize decision-making, organizational performance, and capital project investments. The utility invested over \$67 million in capital improvement projects to support long-term water system sustainability. APU consistently focuses on assisting customers and partnering with them to help the community prosper. Through rebate and incentive programs, Anaheim also achieved a 30 percent per capita water use reduction in 2020.

Charleston Water System (CWS) established capital planning programs that ensure water and wastewater capacity, fire protection, and environmental and regulatory compliance requirements are fully met. It is the first combined utility in the U.S. registered in conformance with the Environmental Management System standards of ISO 14001. A dedicated source water manager maintains source water infrastructure, works with watershed stakeholders to address water quality and quantity concerns, and develops a source water protection plan. The CWS low-

income assistance initiative supports customers in need through the Palmetto Community Action Partnership, and creation of a Citizens Academy program enhances customer education and engagement.

Contra Costa Water District (CCWD) is a state-wide leader in water affairs with a focus on preserving Delta water quality and developing regional water supply reliability. CCWD is committed to balancing operational expenditures, revenues, and debt service while investing in infrastructure assets; controlling operations and maintenance expenditures, while increasing water quality and customer service levels. The utility incorporates climate change considerations and resiliency into long-term planning, addressing vulnerabilities and investing in improvements that will increase sustainability. It has made significant investments in water use efficiency projects that have reduced total water use by over 30 percent since the late 1980s.

The **El Paso Water (EPWater)** strategic plan objectives include strengthening financial viability, improving land and water management, increasing innovative solutions, and strengthening stakeholder partnerships. Its financial management is consistently recognized for its bond ratings, debt service, audits, budgets, and pricing structures. EPWater has developed aquifer storage and recovery, advanced water purification desalination, and water importation projects, which contribute to a diversified water portfolio. Investments in flood control, water conservation, and open space preservation make EPWater a leader in environmental stewardship. The utility engages the community through payment assistance programs to help low-income seniors and low-income families financially impacted by COVID-19.

Greenville Water had the foresight to purchase watersheds in a high rainfall area, construct dams to develop reservoirs at favorable hydraulic gradients, and limit the access to its watersheds, ensuring a sustainable water supply for the next 100 years. The utility maintains a AAA financial rating from all three major rating agencies and a financial plan that supports daily operational needs and meets required debt services. Its asset management program promotes the continuous improvement of business processes, and its business services model optimizes employee efficiencies to benefit customers and billing partners. A robust watershed management plan supports resource management through strategic planning and partnership efforts.

KC Water implements sustainable management using green infrastructure solutions whenever possible as part of a 25-year, \$5 billion program to mitigate adverse effects of its combined sewer system. The utility's aggressive asset management program minimizes the cost and maximizes the benefit of infrastructure investments. KC Water relies on climate studies and other research to drive planning and execution of short-term operations and maintenance and long-term capital improvement programs, serving both immediate needs and generational impact. These initiatives have also saved treatment costs, delayed or avoided additional water and wastewater treatment expansion, and minimized risks to the water supply.

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) achieved progress in a broad range of sustainability-related factors, including: receiving a 10-year filtration avoidance determination for drinking water from the EPA in 2017, building the largest green infrastructure program in the country with over 10,000 assets spread across the city, achieving Envision and LEED certifications for multiple projects, and launching innovative and impactful rate payer assistance programs. DEP approaches these achievements with triple bottom line thinking that assesses and seeks to maximize the utility's priorities of protecting health and the environment, supporting its constituents and communities, and benefitting the economy.

Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority created a reliable, sustainable, and affordable water supply in southwest Florida and provides the infrastructure for business development and economic growth. Through partnerships the Authority invested in alternative water supply (AWS) and interconnecting the major water supply systems. The utility is a model in AWS development, implementing surface water storage by off-stream reservoirs and aquifer storage and recovery systems. Limiting water withdrawal to occur only during high flow periods provides the sustainability of the downstream estuary and Charlotte Harbor while meeting demands for public water supply.

South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (RWA) is focused on the long-term economic viability of its company, resources, and region. Periodic studies ensure its rates reflect the true cost of water and remain affordable. Internally generated funds finance the capital program and increase discretionary reserves. To preserve and protect the natural environment,

RWA has robust land and water management programs, has reduced its energy use using renewable energy sources, and diverts hundreds of tons of treatment residuals from landfill disposal. Its education program provides free, hands-on programs to local schools, and its recreation program provides access to nine recreation areas.

Platinum Award for Utility Excellence Winners

Central Arizona Project (CAP) leads and innovates in all aspects of its business. Through collaboration, CAP ensures resiliency and sustainability of the system, maintains water quality, improves stakeholder understanding and support, and puts customer service in the forefront. Its custom-developed programs and processes contribute to success in employee leadership and development, excellence in infrastructure strategy and performance, and an ever-evolving asset management program. CAP's well-established financial planning cycle results in top bond ratings and award-winning work.

The **Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA)** has been in continuous compliance with state and federal drinking water standards since its 2016 establishment. By optimizing operational efforts, it has experienced two rounds of rating agency upgrades by reaching AA category status in September 2018 and receiving further upgrades in March 2020. Focusing on collaboration and long-term sustainability, it boasts a 90 percent member partner satisfaction. It supports affordable programs and has kept its annual charge increases to less than half of its peers in the Black & Veatch Utility Rate Index. It achieved a systems-total of debt service savings of over \$1 billion.

Houston Water provides drinking water and wastewater services to 2.3 million customers. Planning for sustainable, long-term utilities that are more resilient to the effects of climate change and other stressors, it is developing a strategic plan with the city's stormwater utility using a One Water approach. Its focus on asset management has helped to reduce operational costs and has allowed for development of a risk-based prioritization of preventive maintenance. It actively engages with stakeholders to meet or exceed expectations and has reduced its customer response time by 96,000 days, increasing customer satisfaction by 73 percent.

Gold Award for Exceptional Utility Performance Winner

Rochester Public Utility (RPU) has no water debt obligations and provides one of the lowest water rates in Minnesota. Its investment in mobile technologies and other efficiencies has resulted in more time spent serving customers. Over the past few years, RPU has collaborated with Rochester Public Works to plan joint replacement projects of aging infrastructure. The capital improvement plan includes the top 20 highest risk score water main sections being replaced in the next five years. As part of its sustainability study with state agencies, RPU protects groundwater sources to ensure long-term supply of drinking water while maintaining its precious natural resources.

The Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies is an organization of the largest publicly owned drinking water suppliers in the United States.

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