# How winning a $5 million WaterSMART grant is helping BPUB improve reliability, conserve water, and save energy

By Kierra Thomas
October 10, 2023

---

## How winning a $5 million WaterSMART grant is helping BPUB improve reliability, conserve water, and save energy

Brownsville Public Utilities Board (BPUB) in Brownsville, Texas, recently applied for and won a WaterSMART grant from the US Bureau of Reclamation. The $5 million grant is enabling the utility to implement an advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) solution that will improve water-supply reliability, conserve water, and increase energy efficiency.

### PowerTalking, Episode 9: What utilities need to know about winning a WaterSMART grant

Tune in to hear the full conversation with BPUB about applying for and winning $5 million WaterSMART grant.

Listen now

E Source proudly supported BPUB through a comprehensive application development process for the WaterSMART grant. And we look forward to continuing to work with the utility on the transition to AMI.

We recently sat down with BPUB to record a special episode of our podcast, PowerTalking. We discussed the collaboration and how we helped BPUB make sure its application met all the requirements of Reclamation and the US Department of Interior.

Here are some highlights from our conversation with Eddy Hernandez, director of enterprise solutions for BPUB.

## A helping hand for a successful AMI journey

BPUB wanted to keep water bills low for all its customers, but the high cost of big projects, like implementing AMI, can make that a challenge. The utility decided to seek external funds to pay for the large project, keeping rates affordable for its customers.

After many years of planning for the AMI project, BPUB partnered with E Source in 2022 to apply for a WaterSMART grant. E Source helped make sure the application for the grant was as thorough and detailed as possible. “E Source has been a valued partner in BPUB’s AMI journey,” Hernandez stated. “E Source notified us of the grant and offered to help us apply. BPUB jumped at the opportunity to apply for the WaterSMART grant.”

“E Source has been a valued partner in BPUB’s AMI journey. E Source notified us of the grant and offered to help us apply. BPUB jumped at the opportunity to apply for the WaterSMART grant.” —Eddy Hernandez, Director of Enterprise Solutions, BPUB

In the spring of 2023, Reclamation awarded BPUB a $5 million grant to help fund the water side of the AMI project. BPUB will use the money to modernize services for all customers. The AMI improvements will support energy and water equity by providing rate relief to disadvantaged communities.

BPUB will replace more than 17,500 manual-read meters with smart meters. And the utility will retrofit almost 40,000 more meters with AMI-compatible registers and endpoints. This upgrade will enable near-real-time monitoring of water usage, leak detection, and management.

## The AMI implementation that could

With the new AMI system, BPUB can contact customers quickly when they’re using a lot of water. That way, utility customers can slow their water usage or address leaks to save money and conserve water.

“We will be able to see what is happening—as it happens—and then be able to communicate that to customers so they can take action,” Hernandez explained. “This will be a massive improvement compared to finding out about a water leak at the end of the month (after 30 days) and receiving a huge bill and wasting a lot of resources.”

## Developing a WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grant application and don’t have the time or resources?

Fill out this short form to start a conversation about your needs and how we can help.

By proactively addressing leaks and reducing water loss, BPUB aims to conserve 2,103 acre-feet of water annually. Water loss prevention is the greatest benefit of the project and can be categorized as:

- Distribution-side leak detection and management
- Customer-side leak detection and management
- Improved customer water conservation and management
- Improved metering accuracy

- Theft detection and aversion

Big picture, BPUB is excited about the improvements in efficiency and processes. From a safety and security perspective, BPUB meter personnel will now only have to visit a customer's home and meter once a year for its annual checkup, rather than every month for readings. This will reduce expenditures and truck rolls.

"Let's say we've got 55,000 reads to perform every 12 months. That's 660,000 truck rolls per year," Hernandez estimated. But after AMI, being able to cut out those reads will bring major savings in a variety of areas. "With fewer vehicles on the road, that means less gas, lower insurance, fewer accidents, and lower emissions. These savings will help offset the ongoing cost of AMI while providing even better service."

To hear more about BPUB's experience applying (and winning) a WaterSMART grant, tune in to the newest episode of PowerTalking, Episode 9: What utilities need to know about winning a WaterSMART grant..

---

© 2008 - 2026 E Source Companies LLC. All rights reserved.
Distribution outside subscribing organizations limited by license.