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New Braunfels is making a way for water

NBU breaks ground on ASR project; recognizes 8 years of accomplishments

By Lindsey Carnett | The Herald-Zeitung Oct 30, 2019

1 of 3



The construction of New Braunfels Utilities' Aquifer Storage and Recovery project is officially underway.

In the presence of state, city and NBU officials, NBU broke ground on a demonstration well Monday morning, the first well in its ASR project.

Eight years in the making, the groundbreaking celebrated the accomplishments of NBU innovators, Rep. John Kuempel and Sen. Donna Campbell, the Edwards Aquifer Authority and city officials to come together and make New Braunfels the fourth Texas city to utilize ASRs.

"This ASR project is an important piece in helping expand and diversify our water sources and resiliency," said Ian Taylor, CEO of NBU.

Taylor explained the reasoning behind NBU's desire to utilize ASRs.

"During the drought of record in the 1950s, there was a 10-year period that was the driest recorded era of our region's history," Taylor said. "After that, state officials realized the need for planning for a similar event."

Adding resiliency helps to

protect both a water source and the population using it, Taylor explained.

"The Highland Lakes in the Austin area have a total annual evaporation rate equal to their annual water demand," Taylor said.

ASRs work to take water during times of plenty and inject it underground into a lake-like formation to recover during times of drought, Taylor said.

"With the ASR we can take treated water we're permitted to use during times of plenty, allowing us to more fully use our water rights," Taylor said.

NBU felt the chosen location — by the New Braunfels Regional Airport — was a win-win selection because it helps bring utilities out to the area while also protecting the ASR wells from development.

"Eight years ago NBU kicked off this project with a feasibility study that found this area and the Brackish Edwards could be suitable," Taylor said.

Taylor thanked Rep. Kuempel and Sen. Campbell for having a huge hand in legalizing the use of the Brackish Edwards this past legislative session.

Through Senate Bill 520, access to the Brackish Edwards was legalized — a previously unheard of concept.

The area where the ground breaking occurred will allow for the potential recovery of 9 million gallons per day — which is equal to NBU's lowest demand days.

"To ensure the protection of the water, NBU will also build monitor wells to monitor and study the Edwards Aquifer," Taylor said.

NBU has worked closely with the EAA to ensure the protection of the Edwards Aquifer, Taylor said.

"This location will have a demonstration well and three monitor wells," Taylor said. "That will be expanded in 2020. We will need of a total of nine ASR wells."

The cost for the project is between \$22 million to \$25 million, Taylor said.

Sen. Campbell said the project is vital to the protection of the Hill Country and the growth of the region.

"We're in the second fastest growing city in the country and second fastest growing county in the country," Campbell said. "This project addresses growth and shows the city is planning ahead responsibly."

Rep. Kuempel congratulated present city and NBU officials, saying the moment was monumental to the area's growth.

"Congrats on this historic moment that is important to Texas and to New Braunfels going forward," Kuempell said.