

## Expert Spotlight: Joe Del Rio

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From treating injured soldiers in the Army to treating various sources of water for Brownsville residents, BPUB Foreman Joe Del Rio has dedicated his lifelong journey to serving others.

Del Rio was born and raised in Port Isabel, and like most from here, he spent a lot of time enjoying the beach and fishing with his friends. He attended Port Isabel High School and later graduated from Texas Southmost College. Soon after, he enlisted in the Army and served as a Specialist E-5 from 1976 to 1980.

“Having served in the Army in my earlier years allowed me to gain the strength and confidence to work in different environments,” he said.

After the Army, Del Rio worked as a tour guide to people visiting South Padre Island, Brownsville, Matamoros and Monterrey. He also served as a translator and negotiator for tourists visiting Mexico. Soon after, he met some friends who worked in the utility industry and encouraged him to dive into the field of water treatment.

Del Rio began working in the water plants treating surface water from the Rio Grande, but he later learned a more complex form of treatment by treating sea and underground water at the Southmost Regional Water Authority facility. This extensive experience in water treatment prepared him to become an essential part of one of Brownsville’s biggest environmental projects.

The Resaca Restoration Project began in 2013 as a way to remove sediment, trash and other debris from Brownsville resacas. Del Rio is one of the few employees who has been working on the Resaca Restoration Project since the beginning. He says that the possibility of seeing resacas used for recreational purposes motivates him to continue restoration efforts.

“I hope to have a positive impact on our community, not only for the present, but for many generations to come,” Del Rio said. “I would love to see the resaca at Dean Porter Park be enjoyed by our community similar to how many enjoy the San Antonio River Walk. Perhaps having a boardwalk, kayaks, and paddle boats along a resaca will allow our community to enjoy the natural beauty of the resacas.”

At BPUB, Del Rio is more than a foreman. His early experience as a tour guide turned him into one of BPUB’s favorite presenters as he frequently conducts tours of the Resaca Restoration Project for members of the community, students and new employees, as well as industry peers and officials who want to know more about what BPUB is doing. He’s, no doubt, an expert in the fields of water treatment and resaca restoration. His goal is to continue improving his community’s natural habitat and exploring other leadership roles at BPUB to teach younger employees about the ongoing efforts in his field. Individuals like Del Rio help ensure Brownsville has the clean water necessary to call Brownsville home.

“I have been surrounded by water my entire life, and this has made me appreciate its value and significance to us all,” he said. “I hope my journey here at BPUB, from operator to foreman, encourages others.”

He thanks his wife, children and grandchildren for their love and support throughout his career.