

California Department of Water Resources NEWS

April 29, 1997

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Last Section for Coastal Pipeline

A long-awaited pipeline to deliver water from the California State Water Project to the Central Coast has reached a major milestone.

The last section of pipe for the Coastal Branch was set in place Monday, April 28. The project is a joint venture of the California Department of Water Resources and the Central Coast Water Authority.

The 40-foot section, located east of San Luis Obispo, is part of a 143-mile pipeline project to carry water from the California Aqueduct as far as Lake Cachuma in Santa Barbara County. Damage from a landslide triggered by last winter's heavy rainfall set back the project's completion. Water delivery is expected this summer.

Background Information of the Coastal Branch

Construction started on the Coastal Branch and local facilities in late 1993. The pipeline, the longest in the State Water Project, follows a route through Kern, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara counties. The California Department of Water Resources and the Central Coast Water Authority worked together to construct various parts of the project. Total cost is over \$500 million dollars.

In over three years of construction, crews excavated millions of cubic yards of earth and buried more than 20,000 sections of pipe at least five feet below the surface. Under arduous conditions, crews drilled new tunnels in rugged Calf Canyon and West Corral de Piedra in San Luis Obispo County. Engineers also renovated an existing mile-long water tunnel under Cuesta Grade. Refurbished and lined with concrete, the Cuesta Grade tunnel is also being used for a local water pipeline.

Engineers used the latest "trenchless" technologies to cross several streams. Boring machines formed tunnels underneath the streambeds and the pipeline was welded and pushed through the tunnels. Crews also bored under Highway 101 in three locations.

A 100-mile fiber optic cable is a critical part of the project's electronic monitoring and control system. This system will allow technicians at the Polonio Pass Treatment Plant and in Sacramento to monitor and operate facilities 24 hours a day. In addition, technicians in the field can use portable computers to monitor and modify operations.

The bulk of the water will be received by cities and communities in Santa Barbara County. About 10 percent will be delivered in San Luis Obispo County. Water will be moved by pressure and gravity. The diameter of the pipeline gets progressively smaller, reducing to 42 inches where it ends at Vandenberg Air Force Base in Santa Barbara County. At this point, the Coastal Branch links to a 42-mile-long locally-owned pipeline. This pipeline further decreases in size to 30 inches and ends at the storage reservoir of Lake Cachuma in Santa Barbara County.

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs. The State Water Project provides water to two-thirds of California's population.

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