Lining the Olivenhain Dam

Poised on scaffolding similar to what window washers use, crews are installing a state-of-the-art waterproof liner on the upstream side (water side) of the 318-foot-high Olivenhain Dam. The dam is designed to remain operational even after a magnitude 7.25 earthquake. This liner will ensure that minor leaks will not occur in the dam. Where water will soon be, these workers are methodically bolting a polyvinyl chloride membrane liner to metal beams attached to the dam. This flexible, rubbery plastic liner is applied in 8-foot sheets that are melded together. The result is the creation of a uniform waterproof surface that covers the entire side of the dam. Between the plastic liner and the dam is a black mesh screen that protects the plastic liner from being punctured. At approximately 210,000 square feet, the amount of liner being used is equivalent to the size of four football fields.

The 318-foot dam height was reached last October when roller-compacted concrete operations were completed two months ahead of schedule. Currently, work progresses on the inlet/outlet tower, which will control

Environmental Study Under Way for the San Vicente Pipeline

An environmental study is in progress for the 11-mile San Vicente Pipeline, the longest tunneled pipeline in San Diego County. Tunneling will enable the Water Authority to build the pipeline with fewer impacts to land surfaces and the surrounding communities. In January, the Water Authority provided information and received comments from the public at a community open house and two environmental scoping meetings that were hosted to prepare for the Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The comments received were used by the project team to assist in determining the scope of this environmental study.

The purpose of the Subsequent EIR is to evaluate elements of the project that have changed since 1997, when the Emergency Storage Project's
Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) was certified. After 1997, portions of the tunnel route and other aspects of the project were modified and now need to be evaluated for their potential environmental impacts.

San Vicente Pipeline Tunnel Alignment

The route for the tunnel and pipeline begins at San Vicente Dam and extends in a northwesterly direction. As the tunnel approaches more densely populated areas in Scripps Ranch, it will be below San Diego Gas & Electric transmission lines. The tunnel route ends just west of I-15 at Mercy Road.

Environmental Resources - Avoiding, Minimizing and Mitigating Impacts

The Water Authority is committed to avoiding impacts to the environment from Emergency Storage Project construction activities whenever possible. Prior to any construction project, a detailed study is conducted to identify sensitive habitats, plants, wildlife and cultural resources that could be affected. An environmental mitigation monitoring program is developed based on the study’s findings.

The ESP Mitigation Monitoring Program includes avoiding and minimizing impacts, compensating for impacts by restoring habitat onsite and acquiring and preserving offsite mitigation lands.

As part of its mitigation efforts, the Water Authority is obligated to acquire and preserve habitat to compensate for temporary and permanent impacts associated with the Emergency Storage Project. Rather than purchasing lower-cost, easy-to-acquire land, the Water Authority exceeded its mitigation requirements and acquired core upland areas that benefit regional conservation planning efforts. Working closely with wildlife resources agencies and jurisdictions impacted by project construction including the...
Rather than purchasing lower-cost, easy-to-acquire land, the Water Authority exceeded its mitigation requirements and acquired core upland areas that benefit regional conservation planning efforts.

city and county of San Diego, the city of Poway and the San Diego Association of Governments (on behalf of seven north county cities) enabled the Water Authority to identify a land mitigation package that was beneficial to all parties. To date, 650 acres of upland habitat has been acquired and 45.4 acres of wetland habitat will be created or restored. These lands will be preserved for future generations.

Environmental mitigation work along Escondido Creek has been rescheduled to begin in September. The work was postponed due to permitting issues and the approaching migratory bird breeding season. The goal of this project is to remove non-native plants such as eucalyptus trees that displace native species along Escondido Creek between the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve and the intersection of Harmony Grove Road/Elfin Forest Road - near the Olivenhain Dam.

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The majority of water stored in the Olivenhain Reservoir will be reserved for use in the event of an interruption in imported water deliveries, caused by a drought or major earthquake. The filling of the reservoir is scheduled to begin late this summer.

OLYMPUS DIGITAL CAMERA

Finally, the construction of a pump station and design for a surge control pipe are under way to support the dam and reservoir (see related story).

The dam is designed to remain operational even after a magnitude 7.25 earthquake.
Harmony Grove Road — the road leading to the Olivenhain Dam — is a winding, rural road with one lane traveling in each direction. Well before construction began at the Olivenhain Dam, the Water Authority studied various ways for construction traffic to safely access the site. Because large trucks turning left from Harmony Grove Road into the construction site posed a safety issue, the project’s traffic study recommended a temporary traffic signal be installed. To preserve the rural characteristic of the drive along Harmony Grove Road, the community voiced its preference that the traffic light look very temporary and be removed at the conclusion of construction at the Olivenhain Dam. In response, the Water Authority included this requirement in its permit with the county and committed to the removal of the traffic light upon project completion. Work will begin the end of April to return the intersection at Harmony Grove Road and Via Ambiente to its preconstruction condition. By mid-May, the signals will be dismantled and it will be lights out once again along Harmony Grove Road.

**For more information**

About the San Diego County Water Authority’s Emergency Storage Project, please call toll free (877) 426-2010 or visit the “Infrastructure” section on our Web Site at: www.sdcwa.org.