Gina Molise, public affairs representative with the San Diego County Water Authority, introduced Randy Huber, the construction administrator for the San Vicente Pipeline project. The San Vicente Pipeline is a key component of the San Diego County Water Authority’s Emergency Storage Project. The Emergency Storage Project will protect San Diego County by increasing the amount of water available for use if the county’s imported water supply is severed. It will also improve the Water Authority’s ability to move water around the county when needed. The other components of the Emergency Storage Project include the Olivenhain Dam and Reservoir and Lake Hodges Pipeline (completed), the Lake Hodges Pump Station and San Vicente Pipeline (currently under construction), and the San Vicente Dam Raise (construction began this summer).

Randy explained the San Vicente Pipeline will be 11 miles long and will connect San Vicente Reservoir to the Second Aqueduct located just west of I-15 at Mercy Road. The tunnel is 12 feet in diameter, and the pipeline is 8.5 feet in diameter. He showed a map of the pipeline alignment and four access points for the tunnel.

He announced the contractor anticipates the remaining tunneling machine will complete the final 30 feet of excavation for the pipeline tunnel in several hours, connecting the final two tunnel sections (**Note: All tunnel excavation work was completed on September 22, 2009**). This significant milestone is the culmination of three years of tunnel excavation work for the project. Over the next several weeks, crews will remove pieces of the tunneling machine from the Central Shaft. After tunneling is complete in the eastern portion of the pipeline, crews will start preparing to install steel pipe between the San Vicente Portal and Central Shaft.

Randy explained that the contractor has already installed five miles of pipe in the tunnel between the West and Central shafts. The grout work will be completed soon. This work involves pumping grout to fill the space between the outside of the pipe and the tunnel walls to ensure the pipe remains in place and is protected from corrosion. He stated the final step in pipe installation is to apply a one-half inch thick, cement mortar lining to the inside of the pipe to further prevent corrosion.
Randy stated that the West Shaft is the closest access point to the Mira Mesa community. From now until the completion of the project, the West Shaft will remain a busy construction site. The contractor will connect the new pipeline to existing water facilities at this location and will complete grading, fencing and road improvements to restore the area. However, there will be less activity at the West Shaft moving forward than there has been previously with this project. Randy explained that all work for the pipeline is scheduled to be complete in late summer 2010.

Gina Molise explained that water conservation will be required for the foreseeable future in our region. Even if San Diego County has a wet winter this year, the regulatory restrictions on water will remain in place, which further solidifies the importance of conserving water. This month the Metropolitan Water District and the Water Authority launched some new incentive programs to help residents and businesses conserve water. The programs include rebates on high-efficiency clothes washers, high-efficiency toilets, weather-based irrigation controllers, and rotary nozzles with pressure-regulating heads. She encouraged everyone to participate in these programs and visit www.sdcwa.org for more information.

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