



The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

NEWS RELEASE

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WATER BEGINS FLOWING THROUGH
ENTIRE LENGTH OF INLAND FEEDER
**Water line is one of longest, most challenging construction
projects in Metropolitan Water District's 80-year history**

Water began flowing through 44 miles of large-diameter pipelines and tunnels this week, bringing into service a major water line designed to help Southern California reliably meet its water needs for decades to come.

“Our region faces numerous water reliability challenges, including drought, climate change, regulatory restrictions in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the threat of earthquakes,” said Jeffrey Kightlinger, general manager of the Metropolitan Water District.

“Completion of the Inland Feeder project will play a pivotal role in meeting those challenges. The planning and construction of this project has been one of the longest and most demanding capital improvement projects in Metropolitan’s 80-year history,” he said.

Planning of the Inland Feeder began in the late 1980s, and construction was launched in 1997, with the project’s Arrowhead west and east tunnels under the San Bernardino Mountains being particularly difficult, Kightlinger said.

“The tunnels—drilled with special, 500-foot-long mechanical moles—traversed extreme geologic conditions, with zones of sand as soft as toothpaste and other zones of rock 10 times harder than concrete. They crossed numerous earthquake fault zones. High groundwater levels raised concerns and temporarily halted construction while new tunneling methods and tunnel-boring machines were developed,” he said.

But the obstacles were not limited to construction. In October 2003, a 100,000-acre wildfire engulfed two of the tunnel portals in Waterman Canyon north of the city of San Bernardino, forcing an evacuation and destroying some construction equipment.

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Two months later, on Christmas Day, a strong El Niño storm drenched the charred mountain area, releasing a torrent of mud, water and rock down the canyon, flooding one of the portal sites and burying a tunnel-boring machine under 10 feet of rock and mud.

“Tragically, that mud slide claimed a number of lives, but our workers were not in the tunnel at the time and were spared,” Kightlinger said. “It took months before the mud and rock could be removed, repairs completed and tunneling resumed—a testament to the hard work and resolve of Metropolitan employees and its contractor.”

The Inland Feeder’s origins date to the district-wide Distribution System Overview Study completed in 1988. The study concluded that Southern California needed additional storage and conveyance facilities to reliably meet the region’s growing demands and to respond to an emergency such as an earthquake. In response, Diamond Valley Lake—Southern California’s largest reservoir—and the Inland Feeder were conceived by Metropolitan planners.

Today, completion of the \$1.2 billion Inland Feeder further integrates Metropolitan’s distribution system, connecting State Water Project supplies from Northern California with the district’s Colorado River Aqueduct near the city of San Jacinto and then flowing into Diamond Valley Lake, near the city of Hemet in southwest Riverside County.

The water line, which at its widest is approximately 12 feet in diameter, nearly triples Metropolitan’s water delivery capacity from the SWP’s east branch at the Devil Canyon Power Plant just north of California State University at San Bernardino.

As the state identifies solutions to problems in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, Kightlinger noted the operational flexibility offered by the Inland Feeder.

“Ultimately, this project will help protect the Delta’s fragile environment by allowing us to deliver water during wet periods when water is available and then store it in Southern California’s reservoirs and groundwater basins. In dry years, we can rely on these reserves and reduce our reliance on imported water sources,” he said.

The Inland Feeder also will help Southern California deal with future weather uncertainties that may be brought on by climate change, including the possibility of less snowpack but more rain. The project will allow Metropolitan to capture short-term volatile water supplies to store for dry times.

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“The Inland Feeder represents the best of what Metropolitan offers the 19 million people who depend on the district to help secure regional water reliability. The culmination of this 20-year effort demonstrates Metropolitan’s Board of Directors’ commitment to meet its mission.

“Like the Colorado River Aqueduct, our five major treatment plants and Diamond Valley Lake, the Inland Feeder is a crowning engineering achievement that showcases the resiliency and determination of this agency,” he said.

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The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a cooperative of 26 cities and water agencies serving 19 million people in six counties. The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps its members to develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs.