



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6633

public.affairs@mwr.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

For immediate release September 23, 2013

'Last Blast' signals end of major excavation at Thornton Reservoir

Over 152 billion pounds of 400 million year old dolomite limestone has been blasted and removed from the Thornton Composite Reservoir since 1998, and the very last blast took place on Monday, Sept. 23.

Located along interstate 80 in southern Cook County, this important component of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago's (MWRD's) Tunnel and Reservoir Plan will be operational by December 2015. The MWRD executed an agreement with the owner of the Thornton quarry 15 years ago to mine the north lobe of the quarry for use as a component of the MWRD's Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP).

The second phase of TARP involves the construction of three reservoirs which, when completed in 2029, will provide more than 18 billion gallons of storage capacity. Besides the Thornton Reservoir, the McCook Reservoir is also under construction. Stage 1 of McCook Reservoir is scheduled for completion by Dec. 31, 2017, and will add 3.5 billion gallons of storage capacity. Stage 2 of McCook Reservoir will add 6.5 billion gallons of storage capacity. The Majewski Reservoir was completed in 1998 and provides 350 million gallons of CSO storage. Since it went online, the Majewski Reservoir has provided over \$250 million in flood reduction benefits to its service area in Arlington Heights, Des Plaines, and Mount Prospect.

The first phase of TARP was completed in 2006 and consists of 109.4 miles of deep, large diameter tunnels that have a total storage capacity of 2.3 billion gallons; the tunnels have provided millions of dollars in flood protection benefits. TARP's large tunnels and reservoirs are designed to reduce the amount of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and hold the polluted water until it can be fully treated at MWRD water reclamation plants. Since the TARP tunnels went online, the average annual number of days with CSOs has reduced to 50 from 100.

The Thornton Reservoir is set to come online at the same time as disinfection facilities at the MWRD's Calumet Water Reclamation Plant in Chicago, which also serves the southern area of the county. Working in tandem, the combination will maximize water quality while minimizing flooding.

Additional information about TARP can be found at www.mwr.org/irj/portal/anonymous/tarp.



MWRD Commissioners and speakers prepare to detonate the explosives during the last blast at the Thornton Reservoir on Sept. 23.



Officials and guests of the MWRD witness the last blast at the Thornton Reservoir on Sept. 23.

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwr.org) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. **Our water environment, Take it personally.**