

Casitas Dam Update

Issue #2
Public Affairs Office
Bureau of Reclamation
September 3, 1999

This newsletter is designed to keep neighbors of Casitas Dam informed about construction and related issues. It will be published as needed throughout the project.

When you have questions regarding the status of work at the dam, truck traffic, or other concerns, please call the general information line: 805/641-9494

Visit our
website at
www.casitasdamsafety.net

Coming Soon...

Ready Freddy Goes to School
Community Evacuation
Planning
Meeting Schedule



Bureau of Reclamation's Barry Longwell, Casitas Municipal Water District Director James Word, U.S. Congressman Elton Gallegly, Ventura City Councilman Sandy Smith, and Barnard Construction Chief of Operations Gary Wilson, break ground for work at Casitas Dam.

VIPs Attend Groundbreaking Ceremony at the Dam

We're on our way! The groundbreaking ceremony to inaugurate preliminary work at Casitas Dam took place on Thursday, August 12, under beautiful skies. The event was well-covered by the LOS ANGELES TIMES and the Ventura edition of the DAILY NEWS, bilingual newsletter VIDA, as well as radio and television outlets representing KEYT-TV, the local ABC affiliate, and KVEN.

The dignitaries that participated in the ceremony included U.S. Congressman Elton Gallegly, Ventura City Councilman Sandy Smith, Bureau of Reclamation's Barry Longwell, Barnard Construction Chief of Operations Gary Wilson, and Casitas Municipal Water District Director James Word.

During the press conference that preceded the groundbreaking ceremony, Congressman Gallegly and Councilman Smith both stressed the current safety of the dam and endorsed the project to strengthen it. Both noted that the seismic upgrading of Casitas Dam was the result of a greater understanding of earthquakes and the application of new technology to ensure the future safety of residents from Casitas Springs to the area known as the Avenue in the City of Ventura.

Having Gary Wilson and the other engineers from Barnard Construction present allowed the press and other dignitaries to ask questions about the nature of the construction project. Barnard Construction is one of the top companies in the country in dam projects and the recipient of many safety awards.

continued on page three

What's happening at the Dam?

Interview with Matt Sheskier,
Resident Engineer, Bureau of Reclamation

Q. How is the preliminary work at Casitas Dam coming along?

A. The contractor, Barnard Construction, is carrying out preliminary site work, such as removal of the outer rock slope protection of the dam, before beginning excavation in late September. An enlarged system of dewatering wells (which will remove most of the water that makes the soil unstable during an earthquake) has been installed. In addition, the contractor is preparing the haul road and "borrow area" in the hills on the west side of Casitas Lake. The borrow area will provide earthen material for strengthening the dam.

Q. Have you started to widen the crest of the dam?

A. We have begun widening the crest with placement of compacted earth materials on the face of the dam. This work ultimately will add 70 feet to the current 40-foot breadth of the crest to protect the dam against overtopping by reservoir water.

Q. What happens to the materials that you are removing from the dam now?

A. The rock and earthen material removed from the dam is being stockpiled nearby and will later be reused.

Q. What happens next?

A. The dewatering wells will be tested. Following confirmation that the dewatering system is performing as designed, we can begin actual excavation. At the same time, the contractor will continue to widen the crest of the Dam.

Q: How many trips are trucks making up and down Casitas Vista Road?

A: Currently, four covered haul trucks are making about 20 round trips daily, except Sunday. They are bringing in processed sand and gravel which is being stockpiled near the dam. This material will become the new filter material for the dam's base and crest providing increased protection against seepage.

Truck trips will increase later in September. In the meantime, signage has been posted with speed limits and other traffic control information. County permits limit truck traffic to the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Freddy is Ready for School

Ready Freddy made a personal appearance at the groundbreaking ceremony on August 12, and was quoted as saying "grrruff, woof woof" (translated, he said he was happy to be of service to the community). In fact, Ready Freddy is gearing up for a very exciting task: he will be involved in evacuation training at schools in Ventura.

During this school year, Ready Freddy will work with the children, teachers and administrators from schools on Ventura Avenue to show them how easy it is to learn evacuation routes. Ready Freddy, a very intelligent Labrador Retriever, will, along with his trainer, help lead school evacuation drills. This exercise is part of Ventura City and County plans to educate area residents and their children on disaster preparedness. School children will also be given emergency preparedness materials in English and Spanish to take home to their parents.

Ready Freddy is, pardon the play on words, "ready", and cannot wait for all the kids to go back to school so he can earn his dog chow. We will have more Ready Freddy updates in future newsletters.



We Have Winners!

The Bureau of Reclamation had a booth at the 1999 Ventura County Fair to answer questions about the Casitas Dam modification project. A large scale three dimensional model of the area showed the changes being made to strengthen the dam. Thousands of fair visitors stopped by to look.

Interestingly, many people living and working in this area do not have a sense of how far Casitas Dam is from Ventura.

To raise awareness, a contest was held asking people stopping by the booth for their best guess on the distance from Casitas Dam to Seaside Park, where the Fair was held. The answers received varied widely -- from 1.5 miles to 200 miles!

The correct answer was provided by an 8-year-old third grader, Alex Woodard, who guessed a distance of 8.8 miles -- the exact mileage! Close runner-up was Ted Nugenburg, a 60-year-old estate-planning attorney, who guessed 8.9 miles. Both our winners live in the City of Ventura and will be recipients of "Ready Freddy Grab & Go" backpacks. Everyone who participated in the contest received a policeman's whistle used in emergency preparedness.



VIPs Attend Groundbreaking

continued from page one

"Ready Freddy," a black lab from the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation based in Ojai, attended the ceremony. Ready Freddy will be hard at work this fall teaching evacuation planning and disaster preparedness to school children. Ready Freddy and his canine colleagues had the distinction of serving the Federal Government in the search and rescue efforts following the Oklahoma bombing.

Immediately after the ceremony, the group proceeded to Foster Park where one of the warning sirens was being erected. All eight sirens are now in place, and the system will be tested in early September. In late September, excavation efforts at the dam will begin. By that time, all 16,000 residents in the flood inundation area will have received an evacuation planning brochure (in Spanish and English) mailed to their homes. Area businesses will be offered the opportunity to attend workshops on educating employees who may live and work in the flood plain. Ventura County and City officials plan to hold community workshops in September and October to further inform the community about self-preparedness and evacuation planning. Meeting times and locations will be well publicized.