

Minidoka Spillway Takes Shape

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Jared Schofield, Reclamation Construction Control Representative:

“We’re here working on the new dam and spillway for Minidoka Dam. It’s expected to be a three year project. We are completely replacing the existing dam, which is, at this point, 106 years old, with a new roller-compacted concrete structure and a new structural concrete spillway structure.

Currently what we’re working on is... we’re replacing sections called the ogee crest – just giant blocks of concrete roughly 12 feet tall, 25 feet wide, and 48 feet deep. So (they’re) very large sections. They run about 400 cubic yards of concrete on each and take approximately 12 hours to place each section of concrete.

So it’s very, very labor intense... very hard on the guys and they feel it, and especially with weeks like this where we’re doing two of these sections. So you have two days this week where the crews are working non-stop for 15 to 17 hours. You know, they don’t really stop for lunch. They don’t stop for breaks. They have to just keep going. No matter how tired they are, they just keep moving and get it done.

They have to work this kind of length because once the concrete starts going down, we can’t stop. It has to be placed continuous(ly) so you’re bonding wet surfaces to wet surfaces. Otherwise you end up with a cold joint or a sheer plain in the concrete, which, in a concrete dam, is very undesirable. So there’s a lot going on on this site at all times, and it never slows down. The concrete crew, when they’re finishing this type of work... they do not have a very glamorous job. It is some of the hardest work you’ll ever see, and, you know, these guys do a great job at it.

After these sections are done then we’ll continue with the wall placements, which will continue the spillway structure up another 20 feet in height. From there, we’ll be on to the next phase of this project, which will be the roller-compacted concrete. And that will extend the dam from the current spillways structure, which we’re working on now, to the existing powerplant on the north side of the job site.”

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