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Boone sewage tunnel boring complete

BY MIKE RUTLEDGE • MRUTLEDGE@NKY.COM • OCTOBER 29, 2010

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BURLINGTON - A 65-ton, 193-foot-long machine on Thursday finished boring a 12-foot-wide, nearly seven-mile-long tunnel beneath Boone County.

The tunnel, created by the massive beast nicknamed the "Celtic Tiger," next will be fitted inside with 8.5-foot-diameter pre-cast pipe sections through the underground pathway that will convey sewage mix to the under-construction Western Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant, being built along the Ohio River near Belleview in western Boone County.

The \$109.4 million tunnel will convey sewage from near Camp Ernst Lake County Park in the Burlington area to Sanitation District No. 1's new treatment plant.

The tunnel-boring machine used spinning cheese-grater-like blades on its large front face to claw through the thick, gray layer of shale and limestone called the "kope formation" that runs across Northern Kentucky. Its slightly uphill journey started near Bellevue in August 2009. The trek, which sometimes had the machine 300 feet below Boone County's surface, ended near Camp Ernst Lake County Park. The machine passed beneath Gunpowder Creek.

The machine arrived ahead of its projected date of late November. The treatment plant should be finished by November, 2012.

The tunnel's size will allow it to store 14 million gallons of rainwater that mingles with sewage during large storms. That sewage/stormwater mix can gradually be released to the new treatment plant after storms so huge volumes of rainwater don't force crews to divert diluted sewage untreated into the Ohio River.

The tunnel and treatment plant should alleviate sewage flooding in places like Florence, Union, Richwood areas of Boone County along Gunpowder Creek. It also will help stop sewage overflows into Banklick Creek near Interstate 275 and Ky. 17, according to SD1.



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The Enquirer/Patrick Reddy Ace Monroe, Mike Wake and Bill Bracken unbolt the the cutting head of tunnel boring machine i in an access shaft off Camp Ernst Road, Boone County.



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The Enquirer/Patrick Reddy Overhead view of an access shaft for a sewage treatment plant pipeline tunnel off Camp Ernst Road, Boone County.



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