

Construction of Durban's Northern Aqueduct begins

Construction of Durban's Northern Aqueduct Augmentation (NAA), which will begin to put in place urgently needed bulk water infrastructure for the rapidly developing northern areas of the city, is expected to begin this month



The project manager, Martin Bright, said that Esor Franki Construction, which was awarded the contract for the first phase of the NAA project at the beginning of this year, was already on site.

This first phase of the NAA extends from Phoenix 2 reservoir in Phoenix to Waterloo and then to Umhlanga, with a feed to the new Blackburn reservoir. It comprises 22km of pipeline valued at R150 million.

Awarding of the tender to construct the Blackburn Reservoir is imminent. This reservoir is essential for further development of Cornubia, which is now regarded as both Durban and KwaZulu-Natal's largest "sustainable integrated human settlement initiative".

Once completed, Cornubia will be a 1300 hectare, multibillion-rand development, incorporating industrial, commercial, residential and open-space uses. Construction of the first residential phase of the development is underway and completed houses have been allocated. A total of 25 000 units is expected to be built within the next 10 years. Construction on the 200 hectare Cornubia Business and Industrial Estate has also commenced with the majority of sites already sold to developers.

Stretched to the limit

The existing Northern Aqueduct that currently operated by EWS is stretched to the limit. This network of bulk supply pipelines serves the north-eastern portion of the EWS area of supply to the north of the Umgeni River, to the south of the Ohlanga River and to the east of Ntuzuma. The aqueduct conveys potable water from Durban Heights Waterworks to a large number of terminal reservoirs in the system. These, in turn, supply water to residents and businesses.

The Durban Heights purification works draws water from the Albert Falls, Nagle and Inanda dams and supplies about 93% of total water demand for the entire northern area.

"The Northern Aqueduct has reached capacity on various sections of the trunk mains as a result of growth in demand over the years. We may have enough water to meet the current demand, but we don't have the infrastructure or network capacity to deliver it to where it is needed," Macleod said.

However, Neil Macleod, head of eThekweni Water and Sanitation (EWS), said that now that the NAA was about to commence, concerns about the tenuous water situation to the north of Durban had been alleviated and approval of building plans for much-needed new developments, such as Cornubia, the Dube Tradeport, DubeAgrizone and DubeCity, La Mercy and Westbrook could be expedited.

Bright explained that the Northern Aqueduct was not being constructed in linear fashion. Segments in areas of critical need would be put in place first, which would allow for back feeding of reservoirs in order to guarantee an uninterrupted supply of water.

Construction of the second contract of the NAA project, which stretches from Duffs Road to the Phoenix 2 reservoir, is expected to begin during the first half of 2014. This 6km pipeline, valued at approximately R80 million, stretches from Duffs Road to the Phoenix 2 reservoir.

Completion of both the first and second contracts is scheduled for the second quarter of 2015.

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