



# MID completes important tunnel rehab project on the District's Main Canal

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Merced Irrigation District has successfully completed a vital \$6 million project to rehabilitate a lengthy tunnel through which its Main Canal brings water into its expansive water delivery system.

“This was an important undertaking,” said MID General Manager John Sweigard. “This will shore up a potential failure of our system and benefit the District growers we serve for decades to come.”

“This project will help ensure the Main Canal can continue to serve the current and next generation of MID growers,” said Bryan Kelly, MID Deputy General Manager of Water Resources.

MID's Main Canal begins above Snelling on the Merced River. After water is released from Lake McClure, it flows through Lake McSwain, down the Merced River, and is then diverted into the Main Canal just upstream of the Crocker-Huffman Diversion Dam. The water is delivered through various canals and waterways, including Lake Yosemite, to MID growers.

Roughly midway between Lake Yosemite and the Merced River, the Main Canal flows through approximately 1,600 feet, about 0.3 miles, of MID's Tunnel 1.

Both the tunnel and the Main Canal itself predate Merced Irrigation District. They were constructed by the various private entities which began the early development of eastern Merced County waterways that ultimately would become owned by Merced Irrigation District after its formation in 1919. Lake Yosemite was constructed between 1887 and 1888, resulting in the first flows of water making the 20 mile journey down the Main Canal for storage in the local reservoir.

Beginning in early November, crews reshaped and reinforced the tunnel with concrete lining known as shotcrete. Crews also reshaped and reinforced the tunnel's entrance and exits. Working around the clock, crews completed the project and returned the canal to service on Feb. 18, 2022.

Preliminary analysis of the project began in 2019. In addition to studying the cost of rehabilitating the existing tunnel, MID considered routing the Main Canal around the existing tunnel in an open channel. That alternative would have cost upward of \$17 million.

“This project represents an enormous team effort with MID staff overseeing the work of the consultants and contractors,” said MID’s Kelly. “The project was completed in time for this year’s season.”

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