

WATER COMING! Bear River water line nears completion

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Town clerk Barb Couture, Mayor Robin Rhodes and State Rep. Owen Petersen, stand on top of the new 450,000 gallon water storage tank that is a part of the Bear River water pipeline project that has been under construction for almost a year now. The pipeline is nearing completion, bringing good water from Evanston, to the residents of the town of Bear River. HERALD PHOTO/Erin Buller

After 10 years of work, a \$10 million budget, 26 miles of meandering pipeline, and one year of construction, the 450 people living in the town of Bear River will have clean water coming out of their faucets by Christmas time.

The Bear River Regional Joint Powers Board water line project is nearing completion.

Bear River mayor Robin Rhodes said he hopes to have “substantial completion” and water running in the pipes by Christmas.

“The best scenario would be a week or two, but regardless, this is going to be the best Christmas present for the Town of Bear River ever,” Rhodes said.

Rhodes said they’ve had a tremendous response to the water pipeline, which meanders through the countryside north of Evanston for 26 miles, bringing water from the Evanston water treatment plant on top of E Hill.

“We have 316 residential taps, 40 commercial taps and 74 fire hydrants, which is right on the money (as far as planning goes),” Rhodes said. “An interconnect building, pump house and a 450,000-gallon storage tank have also been completed.

Rhodes said total completion, and turning the water on, is contingent on getting electricity to the pump house and interconnect building.

“The lines have been pressure tested and disinfected,” Rhodes said. “We’re just waiting on a few things to turn it all on.”

He added that the lines range in size from six-inch pipe to some stretches of 14-inch pipe.

Project on time, under budget

Rhodes said the project is on time and under budget, which was \$10.7 million.

"I know we'll come under that, just not by how much yet," Rhodes said. "The bids for construction came in way under what we anticipated. Contractors were hungry and this all came together at the right time."

Allied Construction out of Corinne, Utah, was the low bid on the project and has done a "wonderful job," Rhodes said.

Rhodes said the money all came together a little more than a year ago, with the help of Rep. Owen Petersen, from three state agencies — the State Land and Investment Board, the Water Development Commission and the Wyoming Business Council — and included both loans and grants.

On top of gaining those sources of funding, Rhodes said, they had to secure agreements with the City of Evanston for the water itself, the state engineer, rights of way and easements with private landowners as well as jumping through other bureaucratic hoops.

"We appreciate the patience of landowners and residents with having the roads torn up and other construction things," Rhodes said. "It's not too late for people to sign up for JPB water, it's just a lot more expensive."

Positive growth

Rhodes said one of the most positive things to come out of this project is the problems that the Meadow Park Subdivision has experienced with sub-par water.

"Meadow Park will no longer be using their current wells, which were on the Environmental Protection Agency arsenic list for exceeding minimum contamination levels. The whole subdivision will now be on the Bear River Regional Joint Powers Board water," Rhodes said.

Rhodes said that subdivision was going to have to shut down their joint water system or find another source of water, if not for this pipeline.

Other positive effects of the water line, said Rep. Owen Petersen, is that this should increase the economic vitality of northern Uinta County.

"This will promote community entities and attract businesses," Petersen said. "Home insurance rates should go down and property values will go up. Having a separate water and septic system is only positive."

Petersen pointed out the forward growth of the town, officially incorporated in 2001.

"There's a town park, a volunteer fire department, this year WYDOT put in turning lanes on highway 89, and now a central water system," Petersen said.

The town is made up of about 450 people with around 200 households, and now they have a "brand new, state-of-the-art water system."

"It'll be 20 years before you have to do anything to it," Petersen said. "That's exciting."

Follow rules

Rhodes said they want to remind homeowners to follow the rules and regulations handbook handed out when individual water tap contracts were signed.

"Copies of the handbook are also available at town hall," Rhodes said. "It's also very important that people not connect private waterlines to the meter until they've contacted the JPB at 789-2800."

Rhodes said the water line project began forming in the minds and hearts of residents more than 10 years ago and before the town was even incorporated in 2001, because the water quality and quantity has been sub-standard in the area from the beginning of development.

Town councilman Ron Hornibrook said there is a lot of iron in the ground water in Bear River and with nearly all the residents on private wells, that became a huge problem.

"The water, without some kind of water treatment, is undrinkable," Hornibrook said. "People will be elated when they don't have to haul water, especially with winter coming on."