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Boone sewage tunnel ahead of schedule

BY MIKE RUTLEDGE • MRUTLEDGE@NKY.COM • JANUARY 16, 2010

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BOONE COUNTY - Deep below the snow-covered fields near Botts Lane, a 65-ton Celtic Tiger is clawing a 12-foot-wide path through the shale and limestone, 16 hours a day, five days a week.



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This is not your average groundhog burrowing a tunnel: The boring machine nicknamed the Celtic Tiger is 193 feet long, working more than 130 feet below the surface, and is on a gradual six-mile eastward journey that will take it to near Camp Ernst Lake County Park by this time next year.

"It's running so good that we can't keep everything else up with it," chuckled Larry Lenahan of Westlake, Ohio, with the project's contractor, McNally/Kiewit Joint Venture.

• **Photos: A close-up look at the project**

Working behind the boring machine, crews operate tiny locomotives that pull sets of six miniature rail cars through the tunnel to the site near the Boone County town of Belleview along the Ohio River where the Western Regional Treatment Plant is under construction.

The Celtic Tiger is the primary piece of machinery being used to increase Sanitation District No. 1's ability to treat sewage from local sinks, toilets and factory drains, as well as the storm water that falls over Northern Kentucky.

During several heavy rainfalls per year, storm water overwhelms local sewage-treatment plants to the point that the treatments must be bypassed, with storm-diluted sewage instead pouring untreated into local creeks and rivers. During such periods, when residents flush their toilets the flow makes its way into the Ohio River without treatment.

This tunnel, being built at a cost of \$109.4 million, will help alleviate such problems - especially in Richwood, Florence, Union and unincorporated areas of Boone County along Gunpowder Creek. It also will help stop sewage overflows into Banklick Creek near Interstate 275 and Ky. 17.

The tunnel will prevent sewage overflows in two ways:

It will convey sewage and storm water to the new treatment plant.



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The Enquirer/Patrick Reddy

Charles Pike operates a locomotive pulling muck cars through a tunnel being bored under Boone County for a regional sewage treatment plant. The tunnel will be six miles long and extend from western Boone County off Ky. 20 to Camp Ernst Road, Union.

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