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Murphy Pipe and Civil signs off on SINO

Murphy Pipe and Civil has commenced the final commissioning phase for the SINO Iron Ore Mine's concentrate, desalination and return pipeline project in Cape Preston, Western Australia.

Murphy Pipe and Civil Operations Manager William Weaver said the last string of steel pipeline was successfully installed in early September after crews made a fast-paced construction run to the finish line.

Mr Weaver said the project for Chinese-owned MCC, consisted of 3 x 30 km (750mm-1200mm) steel pipelines, 60km of which was HDPE lined, as well as associated infrastructure works.

Mr Weaver said the company's 340-strong work crew was determined to meet the client's September deadline despite being faced with a number of challenges during the five month project.

"While extreme weather conditions were well and truly factored into our work schedule, I think we bore the brunt of everything the Pilbara could possibly throw at us during the project," Mr Weaver said.

"In the first two months our crews had to deal with a combination of cyclones, torrential downpours and extreme heat, which called for equally extreme safety and construction management measures to ensure we stayed on track.

"Fortunately, the last few months of the project provided more traditional Pilbara winter conditions which enabled our weld and lay crews to increase their pace and also allowed our subcontractor, United Pipeline Systems, to follow closely with their HDPE lining crews to further decrease the lost time gap.

"Working from dawn to dusk each day can take its toll on a workforce but our crews stepped up to the plate and ensured the project was completed on time and to budget," he said.

Mr Weaver said apart from crew performance, he was also pleased with the close working relationship shared with MCC that had enabled Murphy Pipe and Civil to deliver on its project commitments.

"This is the second project we have delivered for MCC, after completing their 17km (750-1000mm) steel flanged tailings return pipeline late last year.

"In the initial stages both companies had to overcome a few language and cultural barriers, but I am pleased to say that in the end we all agreed the international language of 'getting the job done' would ensure we all reached our agreed project outcomes," he said.

Mr Weaver said one of the many positive outcomes of the project was the committed focus both companies had regarding the responsible management of the environment during pipeline construction.

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“From the outset, MCC and Murphy Pipe and Civil agreed that appropriate measures had to be put in place to ensure construction activities did not adversely impact on the natural wildlife found across the Pilbara.

“As part of our environmental planning, we engaged NatureCall, one of Australia’s foremost wildlife management agencies, to carry out an intensive trench monitoring program throughout the course of the project.

“The 30km open pipeline trench unfortunately presented a very real risk to animals living within the project area, so it was critical that we had an experienced team of fauna managers on board to safely manage any wildlife that may have become trapped.

“Thanks to the monitoring program more than 320 native animals were safely rescued and released back into the Pilbara as a result of the regular trench monitoring carried out and the implementation of proven rescue measures.

“Where possible we installed fauna ladders to provide animals with escape points but we also erected fencing and refuges where trapped animals could safely wait for rescue by the NatureCall handlers.

“This type of positive environmental management provided the project with double-edged benefits as trapped animals could be safely released back into the wild and our construction crews could safely work in the trench without potentially encountering venomous reptiles,” he said.

NatureCall Project Manager Matt Cecil hailed the environmental monitoring program an outstanding success for all project stakeholders – including the Pilbara wildlife.

“Apart from our fauna teams being able to safely relocate a variety of reptiles, birds and bats, they were also able to compile important habitat data so that environmental agencies could gain a better understanding of animal movements,” Mr Cecil said.

“Our team of 11 handlers rescued tiny blind snakes and geckoes right up to the Perentie – the largest monitor species in Australia.

“Some animals were a real pleasure to handle, while others need skilled management - but overall the team was happy knowing that the monitoring program and the work carried out delivered positive environmental outcomes,” he said.

With construction on the SINO project now complete, Murphy Pipe and Civil’s key project personnel would redeploy to Queensland’s Surat Basin to start work on a series of coal seam gas pipeline projects.