

Arapuni finally celebrates a dam good job

They've done a dam good job. That was the verdict from all quarters at the completion of the highly challenging two-year Arapuni Dam foundation enhancement project yesterday.

In July 2005, Mighty River Power began work on the 80-year-old Arapuni hydro dam, 16km west of Putaruru on the Waikato River, to fix a seepage problem that was first identified in 1929.

Yesterday, to the relief of the small Arapuni community, the dam roadway across the Arapuni Gorge, which connects the Waipa and South Waikato district councils, was finally re-opened.

Speakers at the opening ceremony praised the "alliance" work of Mighty River Power, Italian foundation-engineering company specialist Trevi, and Brian Perry Civil, which carried out a precision-drilling programme to stabilise fissures in rock beneath the Arapuni Dam.

South Waikato mayor Neil Sinclair said it had been a special project for the district.

"Over the whole period, there was not one complaint from the community," he said.

The \$20 million Arapuni project attracted international interest because it was the first of its type to be undertaken world-wide while a dam remained operational.

Mighty River Power project manager Tom Newson said the project took a year longer to complete than originally expected because of the difficulty in drilling 136 400mm interconnected holes up to 90 metres in depth from the top of the dam into the rock.

The project won a Shell Environmental Excellence merit award at the New Zealand Contractors Federation 2007 conference in recognition of the efforts taken to minimise the environmental impact.

About 150 people attended yesterday's opening ceremony, which included the paddling of the Pohoroa Marae waka to the dam.



MISSION COMPLETED: Project managers Marco Lucchi, left, and Tom Newson are delighted to have finally completed tricky repair work on the Arapuni Dam.