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Lake Mead third straw flooded to provide water

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Flooding the tunnel is finished, and officials are opening the intake on a massive "Third Straw" project to draw drinking water for Las Vegas from a shrinking Lake Mead.

Project chief Jim Nickerson says an 8.6-ton steel cap will be hoisted Wednesday to a barge from a massive lake-bottom structure designed somewhat like a big bathtub drain.

That'll mark completion of a dangerous and sometimes frustrating six-year, \$817 million Southern Nevada Water Authority project to keep taps flowing even if Lake Mead drops to its lowest levels. One worker died.

The drilling has been done by Vegas Tunnel Constructors, a subsidiary of Italy-based Salini Impregilo.

The next step is completion in 2020 of a third pumping station at the Lake Mead reservoir. That job will cost another \$650 million.

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