

# Water Link Spreads Precious Resource

From A1

reservoirs into Long Island Sound.

"We spill more than we pump," said Alfred C. Dion, a deputy director at the Groton utility, who said his work on developing a regional system has been the most rewarding of his 42-year career there.

In addition to tapping into the ample Groton supplies, the revamped system should make it possible, in an emergency, to move water from the other major utilities in the region — Norwich Public Utilities and the New London Water and Sewer Authority — to any point in the system. The New London system, serving that city and Waterford, can provide 9 million gallons a day. The Norwich system can yield 7 million.

"It dramatically reduces the region's vulnerability to a drought," said Chris Clark, operations manager of the Mohegan Tribal Utility Authority and the primary architect of the system.

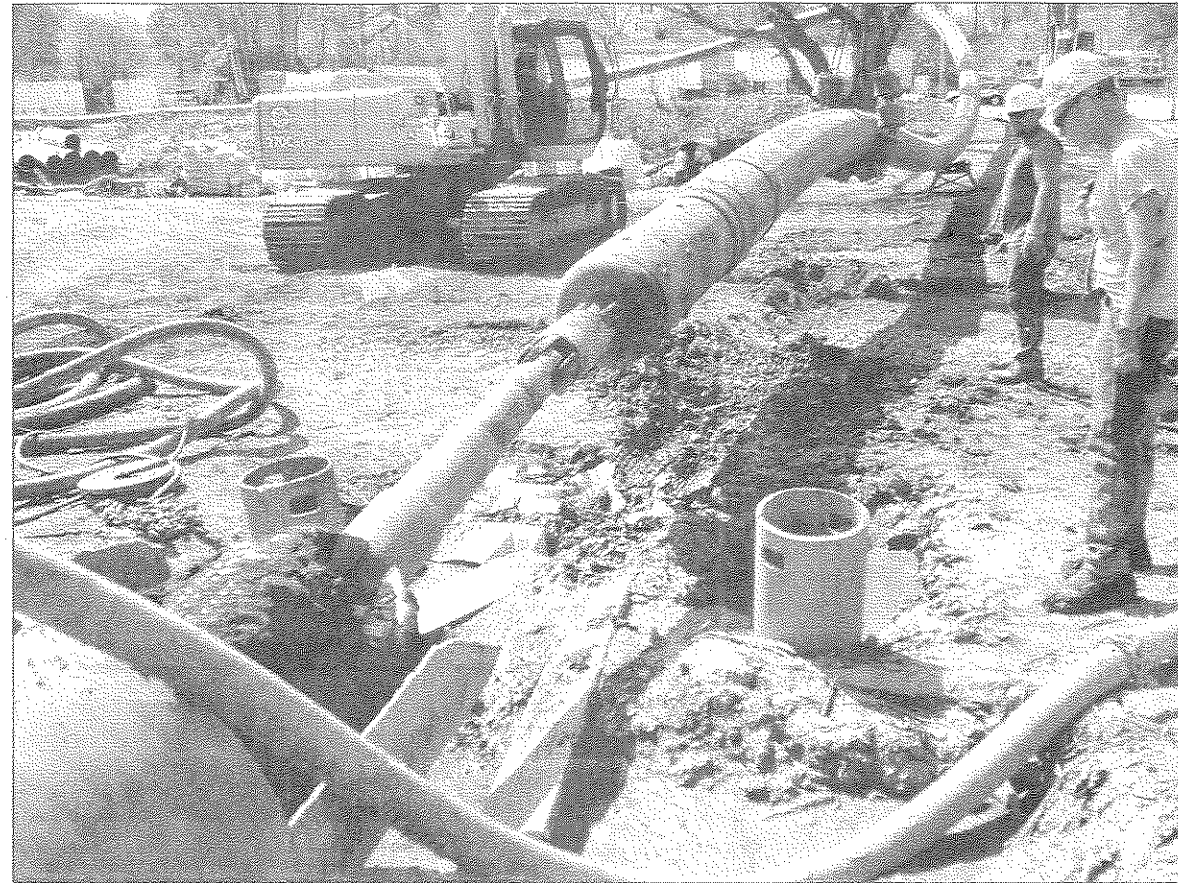


Over time, neighborhoods now using wells or small independent systems might begin tying into the more robust system.

About 70 percent of the region's population is served by a water supply system, according to the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, a group instrumental in getting the regional system constructed.

Groton Utilities first proposed a regional plan in 1999, but the idea did not move beyond discussions until 2002, when the Mohegan Tribe, intent on finding a long-term, reliable source of water for its growing casino, offered to finance the construction of a water main crossing the Thames River to make a regional system possible.

The key elements of the new system are the 1,400-foot, 20-inch diameter pipe buried as deep as 85 feet beneath the riverbed of the Thames River, and two new water tow-



and tested, will allow water for the first time to move between water systems on both sides of the river. The two water tanks, each about 310 feet above sea level, equalize pressure in the system, allowing for the movement of water where needed. The Rogers Hill tank is finished, and the Ledyard tank is nearly done.

"With water, height is everything," said Clark.

The tribe has received accolades for fronting the money to pay for the \$13.5 mil-

portional share of that investment, but the tribe is not counting on recovering all its money, Clark said. Montville is reimbursing \$4.3 million of the \$13.5 million because of the immediate benefits it will receive.

The cross-river connection alone would have been enough to tap into the Groton water supply, but the new tanks and pumping stations create a significant regional system.

"We tried to look at the thing from a big perspective," said Mark F. Brown, tribal

■ A major link in the water project was completed when a pipeline was snaked beneath the Thames River between Montville and Gales Ferry in April.

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"We grew up here," said current tribal Chairman Bruce "Two Dogs" Bozsum. "Once we were committed, we were going to get this done for the region. It's the Mohegan way."

The system is expected to be fully completed by November and operational soon after, Clark said.



The most immediate beneficiary will be the Mohegan Sun casino and the stores and businesses along and adjacent to Route 32 in Montville.

With the turn of several valves, water will flow north from the Groton filtration plant six miles into Ledyard, where it will take a hard left down Hurlbutt Road under the Thames River and then emerge on the west bank, just south of the Montville boat launch. A right turn will take the water along Route 32 in Montville, providing as much as 1.93 million gallons of water daily, 1 million of it for the Mohegan Sun casino and hotel.

Norwich has provided water to the casino since it opened in 1996 and to the United Nuclear Corp. that was located there previously. It began serving business and neighborhoods along Route 32 in Montville 15 years ago. Now Norwich wants to use its water for its own development needs, said John Bilda, general manager of Norwich Public Utilities.

Preston First Selectman Robert Congdon, who is on a commission appointed by Gov. M. Jodi Reil to study ways of diversifying the region's economy, said having a reliable water system for the region is key to attracting business and industry.

Even with the imminent improvements, the search for new water supplies will continue, Dion said.

"While the region continues to grow, so will the demand for water," he said. "And

sion, 'Why wouldn't we do this right?'"

With the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, all parties worked out a detailed agreement outlining how the water will be metered and protocols for an emergency. The agreement gives Groton Utilities the authority to manipulate the system from a central control room using radio-controlled valves.

Officials from the City of Groton, Ledyard, Montville, Norwich, Preston, Waterford and the tribe signed the agreement on