Dams and Tunnels: The Underground Connection

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Intakes and drawdown facilities are often critical to dam safety and require officials to understand and employ skills gained in tunneling and underground work. While foundation failures may not be the most common, when they do occur the failures can be quick and catastrophic. During construction, underground work often sits on the critical path and understanding the issues and risks is vital to project success. This presentation will explore the connection between the “toolbox” of underground skills and techniques that are necessary for dam projects that look not just at the dam itself, but at inlet/outlet and spillway facilities, which often borrow from the tunneling world as shafts and tunnels are often key components. It will also explore lessons learned from recent inlet and outlet works dam projects in California and their application on upcoming and current projects in California.