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Water under the new bridge

Elyria's new pedestrian span connects the Two Falls Trail

By Cindy Leise, *The Chronicle-Telegram*

ELYRIA — A massive yellow crane lifted a 120-foot section of bridge Tuesday and swung it over the swollen waters of the Black River in Cascade Park.

Workers pushed and prodded at the 26-ton structure, setting it down.

Then the crane lifted a 25-ton, 80-foot section of bridge into the air and swung it into place.

Viola! A \$497,000 pedestrian bridge was finally bolted into massive concrete footers and drilled 20 feet down into bedrock.

Mayor Bill Grace said the bridge-raising was an impressive sight. "It'll last all of our lifetimes," Grace said of the federally funded project.

The pedestrian and bicycle bridge, constructed of steel and topped with 2x4's, should easily stand a hundred years or more, said project manager Tom Scullen of Don Mould Plantation, contractor on the job.

"This was probably the worst day you could imagine to set this thing," Scullen said of Tuesday's weather. "The crossing washed out and the crane was sinking."

Time was of the essence, because leasing the crane with a 250-ton capacity cost \$10,000 a day, Scullen said. Scullen said workers could tell the crane was "maxed out" when it swung the largest portion of the bridge in place.

While the crane might be able to lift much more weight in a different setting, the rugged landscape in Cascade Park presented some



The new pedestrian bridge over the west branch of the Black River is in place in Elyria. The West Falls and the Lake Avenue Bridge can be seen in the background.

challenges that required a bit of physics to calculate its capacity, he said.

After the bridge was pieced together, Scullen's boss, Don Mould, bragged, "It fits like a glove."

Heavy rains delayed the job about a month, but construction is on budget, Scullen said. A river crossing constructed of corrugated steel pipe and stone filler had washed out four times, including Tuesday, he said. The crossing was needed for equipment such as cement trucks that had to work on both sides of the river, he said.

He said the bridge has a 10-foot-wide road surface and has a 10,000-pound capacity. It will be closed to all vehicles, except those used to maintain the park or to respond to river rescues and other emergencies.

The bridge will be open to the public later this year, Grace said.