

Hydroelectric plants power up in Pacolet and Lockhart

By [Kim Kimzey](#)
kim.kimzey@shj.com

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Pacolet, like many local towns, developed around the textile mill that stood there.

The mill is gone, but the rushing waters of the Pacolet River that once drove its operation is again being harnessed for power.

Lockhart Power Company began operating a new hydroelectric generation plant at the site of the demolished mill, as well as another plant in Lockhart.

The utility celebrated its centennial last year. CEO Bryan Stone said Thursday at the Pacolet plant that he expects it will be there for 100 years.

The public had an opportunity Thursday to tour the new plants.

The dam in Pacolet is more than 20 feet high. The generator there can produce more than 1,100 kilowatts, Stone said, enough to power 1,100 homes that consume an average of one kilowatt per day. The Lockhart plant can supply power to 800 homes — enough for the entire town.

The two new plants, along with other projects the utility owns and operates, will not produce enough power to supply all the customers in the five-county area it serves, but will “chip away” at demand.

Lockhart Power also owns the Lockhart Hydro Plant built in 1920 and the Wellford Renewable Energy Landfill Gas-to-Energy project, which converts methane gas produced at the Wellford Landfill into energy.

Stone said the utility has not raised rates yet. It's applied for federal grants to offset the multi-million investment spent building the plants.

Stone said the plants will prove beneficial in the immediate and long-term, both economically and environmentally.

“There are no emissions associated with this. It's renewable energy. It's very low impact to the environment. Certainly the job creation during the construction process supports jobs ... and by helping keep our rates lower over the long term, it helps support our customers and support the economics of those customers and the industries that we serve,” Stone said.

He said 10 to 15 people were employed during the construction phase.

There also is a recreational benefit.

“This is land that was historically not open to the public, and now it is,” Stone said.



MICHAEL JUSTUS/michael.justus@shj.com
 Mike Callahan, of Lockhart Power, right, leads Damaron Anderson, of the S.C. Commission for the Blind, on a tour of the Pacolet hydroelectric plant Thursday morning during an open house at the facility.



He said a waterway has been opened from Glendale to Pacolet and a canoe and kayak outtake has been created.

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Lockhart Power's parent company is Pacolet Milliken Enterprises.

“Investing in new renewable energy sources is a core mission of Pacolet Milliken, and we are proud to be a part of these new projects that not only enhance the services of Lockhart Power and benefit these communities, but show that clean energy is possible and viable,” Richard Webel, president of Pacolet Milliken, said in statement.

Photos from Newspaper Article











