

New River Clean Energy Project kicks off with opening of new facility

By Jordan Nelson - Register-Herald Reporter
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New, alternative fuel sources — a goal West Virginia is slowly striving for, and a goal the Raleigh County Solid Waste Authority is beginning to achieve.

RCSWA hosted an open house and ribbon-cutting ceremony Wednesday for the building behind the company's newest act — the New River Clean Energy Project. James Allen, executive director of RCSWA said the idea of the new project is based around transforming landfill gas — which is approximately 50 percent methane gas, into clean energy.

As a greenhouse gas, methane has 21 times more global warming impact than carbon dioxide.



Raleigh County Landfill Executive Director James Allen talks about one of their two new generators at their new methane conversion facility in Beckley Wednesday. The two generators, which are 20 cylinder Caterpillar engines, convert methane captured from their landfill, cool it then converts it to electricity and puts into the local power grid, said Allen, adding that "we have the capability to power around 2,000 homes." (Chris Jackson/The Register-Herald)

"The gas is transported into our new plants' generators and they fuel 1.6 megawatts each of electricity," Allen said. "That energy gets transferred through power lines and creates enough electricity for over 1,000 homes."

The project reduces negative impact on the earth's atmosphere and minimizes the landfill's local environmental effects.

John Wooton, chairman of RCSWA board of directors, said he was proud to have the project located at the Raleigh County Landfill because it has been developed without any government money and runs and operates only on tipping fees.



The two generators, which are 20 cylinder Caterpillar engines, convert methane captured from their landfill, cool it then converts it to electricity and puts into the local power grid. They can convert 600-700 standard cubic feet per minute of methane gas, said Raleigh County Landfill Executive Director James Allen. (Chris Jackson/The Register-Herald)

"Everyone here at the landfill, and everyone on the board works so hard and has worked so hard on this new project and it's great to see that hard work pay off," Wooton said.

Wooton explained how in the past methane gas from the landfill would be burned off through a flare system and released into the atmosphere. "This new project is a much healthier, much safer resource than what was being done in the past."

The project has also been conducted by associates with Seven Islands Environmental Solutions and Cox Enterprises Inc.

Alex Taylor, president and CEO of Cox Enterprises, said the company is a media telecommunications company based in Atlanta, Ga.

"Our company is always looking for business on the backside of the economy we always knew," Taylor said.

Taylor said he never thought he would be standing in front of a landfill and smiling up at something that used to be banking off money up into the sky. "It's wonderful that they are trying to figure out a way to harness this methane and turn it into something productive," he said.



The new clean energy facility at the Raleigh County Landfill houses two 20 cylinder Caterpillar engines that convert methane from the landfill and converts to electricity on the local grid. The facility cost \$5 million and had major support from Seven Islands Environmental Solutions. (Chris Jackson/The Register-Herald)
