

RFK Jr. visits for plant partnership

New technology makes HRSD plant greener

Updated: Thursday, 27 May 2010, 6:03 PM EDT
Published : Thursday, 27 May 2010, 4:38 PM EDT

SUFFOLK, Va (WAVY) - Starting Thursday, batches of "Crystal Green" began coming from the Hampton Roads Sanitation District's Nansemond Treatment Plant in Suffolk. The product, and the process that creates it, brought Robert Kennedy Jr. to town.

The environmental attorney and advocate celebrated the fact that the new fertilizer will not pollute local waterways.

"Every child in Hampton Roads has a right to go to the Elizabeth River, the James River, Hampton Bays, throw in a hook, pull out a striped bass, and go home and feed it to their families," Kennedy told a crowd gathered at the plant.

A partnership between HRSD and Ostara Nutrient Recovery Technologies Inc.--a company that markets itself as "creating value from waste"--is transforming nutrients from waste water. In many treatment plants, nutrients like phosphorous and nitrogen build up inside pipes. Eventually the waste gets washed back into waterways, but not at the Nansemond Treatment Plant.

Kennedy said the Ostara technology will be good for both the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the local economy.

"It doesn't dissolve in water, so it's never going to get back into the Chesapeake Bay...This technology not only costs nothing, we actually install it for free," he said. "But it creates a fertilizer product at the end which is valuable. We sell it and split the proceeds with the sewage treatment plant."

Suffolk Mayor Linda Johnson applauded the public-private partnership that also represents a \$5 million investment for the facility.

"HRSD's efforts to protect public health in the waters of Hampton Roads contribute much to the quality of life in our region," she said. "While we work to reduce our ecological footprint, we also are making great strides in our collective efforts to live in harmony with our environment."

Ostara's process for converting nutrients into fertilizer was a good mix for HRSD. HRSD General Manager Ted Henifin said, "The benefit of Ostara's Pearl system is gaining the ability to recover nutrients that were maintenance problem in our plant and turn them into a commercially viable fertilizer product with basically no additional costs to HRSD. HRSD is focused on reducing human impact on the environment, and recovering phosphorous to replace mined phosphorous does just that."

HRSD serves 17 cities and counties in Hampton Roads. The Nansemond Treatment Plant is an award winning plant that has been honored for compliance with environmental permits.

Kennedy said of only the second Ostara nutrient recovery facility, "I'm glad one of our first projects in the United States is with Hampton Roads because it is an exemplary... treatment plant."