

First of its kind nutrient recovery plant opens in Hillsboro

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((A first of its kind nutrient recovery plant has opened in Hillsboro. (Photo courtesy of Ostara Nutrient Recovery Technologies))

It sounds like something from the 1970s movie *Soylent Green*, but Washington County's Clean Water Services newest product – Crystal Green – is far from science fiction.

On Tuesday, the waste water utility company in conjunction with Vancouver, B.C.-based [Ostara Nutrient Recovery Technologies Inc.](#) opened a new \$4.48 million nutrient recovery facility at its Rock Creek plant in Hillsboro. In attendance for the grand opening was State Treasurer Ted Wheeler and Ostara board member Robert Kennedy, Jr.

The facility converts phosphorous and nitrogen into a high-grade fertilizer called Crystal Green. The 5,000-square-foot facility is the most advanced nutrient recovery operation of its kind in the world and is able to produce an estimated 1,200 tons of fertilizer per year.

Mark Jockers, government and public affairs manager for Clean Water Services, said the installation of the new technology, here and around the country, represents a transformation in municipalities' thinking about waste. Whereas 20 years ago, cities questioned how to get rid of waste, today more are questioning how they can recover it.

“Instead of recycling, it’s up-cycling,” Jockers said. “How can you harvest and recover resources that would be considered waste and make it a valuable commodity.”

The Rock Creek facility uses two Pearl 2000 reactors that are the first of their kind to be installed in the world and have four-times the capacity as the reactors at the nutrient recovery facility in Durham, which Clean Water Services opened in 2009 and produces 500 tons of fertilizer annually. In addition to removing phosphorous from the Tualatin River, Jockers said revenue from the sales of Crystal Green and reduced operation costs would result in an additional \$650,000 in the company’s budget.

While the nutrient recovery technology is still fairly new – the company itself spawned from research at the University of British Columbia in 2005 – other plants are beginning to pop up around the country, and local Oregon manufacturers are benefiting from the trend. Along with the facilities in Oregon, Jockers said construction of plants in York, Pa., and Hampton Roads, Va., have brought nearly \$1 million in sales to local manufacturing businesses.