

Fresh Water for a Flood-Ravaged Town

A post-Katrina project helps WorldWater move toward profitability

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Pennington

With millions of gallons of water washing over rooftops and stretching for miles, towns devastated by Hurricane Katrina faced an irony of Mother Nature: all this water and not a drop to drink.

Pennington-based WorldWater & Power, which specializes in solar power, engineered a solution to provide clean water to one hard-hit Mississippi community last fall. The filtration system has weaned the Gulf Coast hamlet of Waveland, Miss., from pricey bottled water and a second generation of the company's mobile water filtration is set to debut next month at the National Hurricane Convention in Orlando, Fla.

The new system is part of a recent flurry of activity for WorldWater, which two weeks ago signed a contract with NAI Global, a network of commercial real estate brokers, to promote solar technology to its clients. NAI also worked with WorldWater to set up the Waveland project.

"When we go to work with property managers, we will talk to them about this as an option to develop on their properties," says Jennifer Szwalek, NAI's public relations director. "We all know that solar



The Mobile MaxPure provides 15,000 gallons of clean drinking water a day from solar power.

energy saves money, time and resources."

In another move, WorldWater this month struck a deal to install a solar electric system for a new office and classroom building at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey in Pomona.

Such deals should help 20-year-old WorldWater move toward profitability. The company's stock traded at around 35¢ a share on the Nasdaq Bulletin Board last week, about midway between its 52-week range of 3¢ to 69¢ a share.

WorldWater began focusing on a water

management system four years ago, concentrating on markets in New Jersey and California. The company launched a residential solar power division last year. "This year we started 2006 with an [overall] backlog of orders worth \$25 million to \$30 million," says executive vice president Anand Rangarajan.

After Katrina, WorldWater modified a solar-powered pump designed for agricultural irrigation to enable it to filter water for drinking. The resulting MobileMaxPure can pump out 15,000 gallons of clean water a day, powered by the energy stored in five hours

of sunlight. "We still provide clean water for the main part of Waveland," says Quentin T. Kelly, WorldWater's chairman and founder.

"Waveland is one of those towns that got totally wiped out by Katrina," says Gerald Finn, CEO of NAI Global, whose international network includes 4,000 commercial brokers. "They were living in tents with no water or electricity. We got to talking and we thought [the filtration systems] could be very helpful in the flood. The amazing thing to us is that it really works. Solar energy has been a dream for us."

The WorldWater system has proven invaluable, says Renee Aue-Weaver, a Mississippi office manager for the Morrell Foundation, a Utah-based nonprofit that provides temporary housing for disaster-relief volunteers in the Gulf Coast area.

Before WorldWater arrived, "we had no good water, we depended upon bottled water for everything," says Aue-Weaver, a 25-year resident of Waveland. The WorldWater system "gave us pure, clean water to drink that was safe. We didn't have to worry about becoming sick. It gave us one less thing to worry about."

WorldWater's Kelly says the company's new MobileMaxPure 2 system will be twice as powerful and half the size of the current system and will include a satellite hookup.

"It's a trailer-mounted unit that's got everything on it," says Rangarajan. "The solar panels to provide the power; the pump; batteries to run emergency equipment; a communications system that

will run through a satellite where you can pick up a phone and call anyone anywhere in the world; [plus] a laptop with an Internet connection where you can reach anyone you want by e-mail."

The idea for the communications system came after WorldWater heard about the communications blackout in the wake of Katrina. After the hurricane, neither landline nor cellular phones were working and people in the area were unable to reach the outside world.

The seven-foot MobileMaxPure 2 cube is sturdy enough to be dropped from an airplane to where it is needed and can be deployed at the push of a button. Kelly says the \$80,000 unit "is going to be the sleeper of the whole convention," when it debuts next month in Orlando.

"The fear is that this year's hurricanes will be worse than last year's, and we are running as fast as we can to get ready for this," Kelly says.

WorldWater's breakthrough came in 2001 when it received a patent on a system that converts the sun's direct current (DC) energy into alternating current (AC) with sufficient power to operate pumps and a four-stage filtration system.

When it comes to solar power for homes and offices, Finn says New Jersey tax incentives enable the systems to pay off financially. "That's what makes [solar power] feasible today," he says. "Our job is to market it and get it out there so people can see it."

Still a Long Way From Normal

Life is gradually getting better along the Gulf Coast.

Renee Aue-Weaver, a 25-year resident of Waveland, Miss., says people are returning to the storm-damaged region to rebuild. "Someone said to me the other day we would have made good pioneers because we have so much tenacity and determination to not let it beat us," Aue-Weaver says.

Area businesses are slowly reopening. "I remember when the Sonic [fast food restaurant] opened up, there was a waiting line. The cars just backed up. It was like it was a gourmet restaurant," Aue-Weaver says. "It's going to take us a long time, years, but we'll get there."

"They [WorldWater] understand the plight of people in a catastrophic event," she says. "After a catastrophe, water and food are some of the hardest things to find."

Recovery is still a long way off. A Congressional delegation visited Waveland in early March, she recalls, and "they could not believe the piles of debris and destruction.

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