



Senior operator William Francis shows the membrane biological reactor area at the Johns Creek Environmental Campus, Fulton County's newest water treatment reclamation plant. Vino Wong vwong@ajc.com

'Good neighbor' ready for Fulton grand opening

Water treatment plant licensed to purify 15 million gallons a day.

By **Patrick Fox**
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It's one thing to set up a water treatment plant near the Chattahoochee River; it's another to be a good neighbor.

Fulton County thinks it is doing both with the grand opening today of the new Johns Creek Environmental Campus.

The 42-acre complex sits along the river's west bank on Holcomb Bridge Road in Roswell, one of three water treatment plants the county runs in north Fulton. But at this plant, all the processes involved with wastewater treat-

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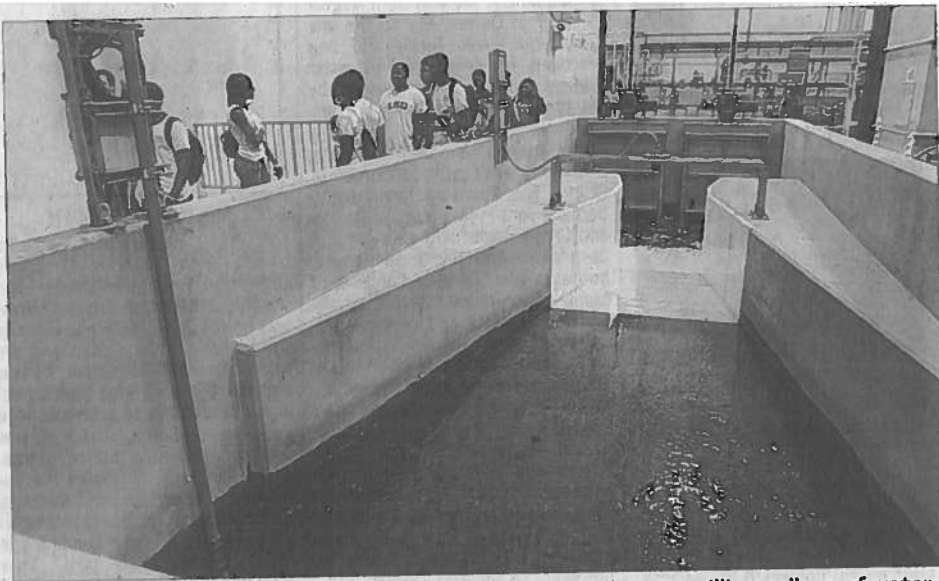
ment are enclosed and odorous gases are treated before release.

"It's pretty amazing," said Angela Parker, director of Fulton County Public Works. "There's virtually no odor. There's virtually no noise. From the standpoint of the adjoining properties, we'll be a very good and stable neighbor."

The facility is built of red brick, matching the general architecture of Roswell's Fire Station 7 directly across Holcomb Bridge Road. The plant is bordered by more than 30 acres of green space – all irrigated with reclaimed water – that abuts Roswell's Garrard Park.

"They wanted it to look like something that would fit in," said senior operator William

Plant continued on B5



The plant at Johns Creek Environmental Campus can reclaim 15 million gallons of water a day. The water is returned to the Chattahoochee. Vln Wong vwong@ajc.com

Plant has education potential

Plant

continued from B1

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While it blends in with its surroundings, the plant stands out for its technology. The \$137 million facility is one of the largest water treatment plants in the country using membrane biological reactor technology, a purification system that produces higher quality water in less space.

The plant is licensed to treat and release 15 million gallons of wastewater a day, more than twice what is allowed at the Johns Creek Water Reclamation Facility on Riverbirch Lane, which is scheduled to go offline soon. The water is returned to the Chattahoochee, Fulton's primary source of drinking water, much cleaner than when it was removed.

MBR technology employs hollow fiber strands that filter solids up to 0.45 microns, small enough to stop most bacteria, Francis said. A human hair is about 100 microns.

The strands, referred to as ZeeWeed, hang vertically in cassettes, swaying as screened effluent circulates around them. The wave action helps solids rub off the membrane surface, keeping them clear of obstruction, Francis said. A chlorine pulse washes off whatever is left.

The filtered water is sucked up through the strand and piped to the final stages of the treatment process.

The facility also has educational potential. It has a laboratory, lecture hall and classroom, and students have toured the plant since it went online last summer. Officials also hope to use the surrounding grounds as an "outdoor laboratory" to display landscaping techniques and water gardens.

Today's dedication will end what began as a contentious process seven years ago when Fulton decided to build the plant on land owned by Roswell. Residents and

nearby developers were concerned a sewage treatment plant would depreciate land values.

Roswell Mayor Jere Wood said one concern he worked out with the late Commissioner Bob Fulton was to share the green space around the facility adjoining Garrard Park. But after Fulton died in 2004 that arrangement became cloudy, Wood said.

"I'm optimistic now that they are finished that we will be able to revive that and have a shared park," Wood said. "Citizens don't care whose land it is as long as they can use it, and we're hoping they'll open up some of their land for folks who come to our park."

Otherwise, Wood said he's pleased with the facility. But he does have one reservation.

"I think they picked the wrong name," he said. "I don't think it's appropriate to call it after our neighboring city, because it's not in Johns Creek and it's not on Johns Creek. It's in Roswell."

Parker said the facility is located in and services the Johns Creek wastewater basin and was named before the city of Johns Creek came into existence in December 2006.