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Floating Solar Power Energizes New Jersey American Water Treatment Plant

New Jersey American Water installs solar modules on reservoir

VOORHEES, NJ (October 19, 2011) – Floating on a reservoir near New Jersey American Water’s Canoe Brook Water Treatment Plant in Millburn is the East Coast’s first solar array on a body of water designed to withstand a freeze/thaw environment.

The 538 solar modules will generate 135 kilowatts of DC power, which will then be converted to 115 kilowatts of AC power, generating approximately two percent of the Water Treatment Plant’s power. Annually, the solar field will produce 135,000 kilowatt hours per year. New Jersey American Water estimates a savings of approximately \$16,000 per year in energy costs.

“New Jersey American Water is exploring new ways to use green energy to enable us to operate more efficiently,” said Suzanne Chiavari, vice president of engineering at New Jersey American Water. “Using innovative solutions to control costs and reduce our carbon footprint provides benefits to our customers and furthers our goal of becoming a more environmentally friendly business.”

The \$1.35 million project is a pilot for New Jersey American Water as the company monitors the effectiveness of the solar station during changes in weather, and also considers adding more solar panels on the 735-million gallon reservoir. The Canoe Brook Water Treatment Plant sits on more than 500 acres of protected land and only a small portion of the property can be used for construction and/or operational purposes. With such little space available, the spacious reservoir is the most viable place to install solar power.

“The support structure of the anchored array features a unique mooring system that allows it to rise and fall with the water level of the reservoir,” said Bob Biehler, senior project manager at New Jersey American Water. “The solar panels are fixed at a 14-degree angle and specially made to endure the severe weather conditions – such as heavy wind, rain, snow, and ice – that are not uncommon during northern New Jersey winters.”

New Jersey American Water chose ENERActive Solutions of Asbury Park to design and build the solar station. To the benefit of the company’s ratepayers, some of the cost of the project may be offset through solar tax rebates obtained through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

This is the fourth solar project that New Jersey American Water has implemented at one of its facilities. The company's Canal Road Water Treatment Plant in Somerset has one of the largest ground-mounted solar arrays on the East Coast which generates nearly 20 percent of the plant's power. This past summer, New Jersey American Water added a 150-kilowatt solar field to a well station in Farmingdale and anticipates a savings of \$20,000 per year in energy costs. In fall 2010, New Jersey American Water installed "solar bees," which are also anchored on Reservoir No. 1 at the Canoe Brook Treatment Plant. The "bees" constantly circulate water in the reservoir to improve water quality. An additional solar installation is planned for the company's Delaware River Regional Water Treatment Plant in Delran.

The floating solar array is one of the sustainability improvements underway at the Canoe Brook site in Millburn, where the company will unveil a new water treatment plant in mid 2012. The new plant will replace the current 1920s-era plant that has served the surrounding communities for most of the last century.

For a photo album of the Canoe Brook solar array, visit New Jersey American Water on Facebook at www.facebook.com/newjerseyamericanwater.

New Jersey American Water, a wholly owned subsidiary of American Water (NYSE: AWK), is the largest publicly traded water utility in the state, providing high-quality and reliable water and/or wastewater services to approximately 2.5 million people. Founded in 1886, American Water is the largest publicly traded U.S. water and wastewater utility company. With headquarters in Voorhees, N.J., the company employs more than 7,000 dedicated professionals who provide drinking water, wastewater and other related services to approximately 15 million people in more than 30 states, as well as parts of Canada. More information can be found by visiting www.amwater.com.

In 2011, American Water is celebrating its 125th anniversary with a yearlong campaign to promote water efficiency and the importance of protecting water from source to tap. To learn more, visit www.amwater125.com.

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