

## Moyock sewage plant up and operating

By Cindy Beamon  
Staff Writer  
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MOYOCK — A new sewage treatment plant in Moyock was up and running at the start of the new year.

About half the plant's 99,000 gallon capacity is already committed, and county officials are hoping more businesses will be connecting soon, said Currituck public works director Patrick Irwin.

Commissioners agreed to build the \$2.6 million plant as a way of encouraging commercial growth in one of the county's largest business districts.

Irwin said the new plant began offering services to several customers on Dec. 31. Moyock Commons, Newtown Road subdivision and the Currituck Welcome Center were among the first to hook up. Southland and a couple small shopping centers have also signed up but are not yet ready to begin service, he said.

Irwin said the plant's remaining 50,000-gallons-per-day capacity could easily reach its limits with one new major subdivision. Reaching that capacity with businesses could take longer because commercial businesses demand less capacity than subdivisions. A small shopping center, for example, would take only 750 to 1,000 gallons per day capacity, Irwin noted.

The county borrowed money for the plant's construction, but eventually customers will cover the cost of the new plant, County Manager Dan Scanlon has said. Earlier this year, he estimated the operation should be self-sufficient and paying off the construction loan in three years. Like all county-owned water and sewer operations, the system is designed to pay for itself and will not draw on county property taxes, he said.

To make that happen, the county is hoping to add more customers to the new system.

Although some customers with failing septic systems have jumped at the chance, others are hesitant because of the cost for new connections.

The county's connection fee for the average residential customers would be \$5,500. The monthly charge would be 1.5 times the cost of the customer's water bill. For example, the average customers with a \$50 water bill each month would pay an additional \$75 for sewer services.

About 35 houses in the Newtown Road subdivision will be paying those rates after connecting to the new system. The subdivision had relied on its own system but problems with its drain field and high-nitrate levels forced residents to make a change.

In subdivisions without sewer lines, tapping onto the new service would probably be too expensive, county officials have said.

Commercial users will pay higher connection fees. For example, a small restaurant using 1,000 gallons of water a day, would pay a county tap-on fee of \$22,000.

Irwin said he doesn't expect getting more customers will be a problem now that the service is being offered.

"The economy is improving, and we are ready," said Irwin.

The county purchased 68 acres in 2010 for the plant and construction began in the spring. Geo. Raper and Son won the bid to become the project's construction manager at risk. Under the state-approved construction method, the construction manager agreed to a guaranteed maximum price of \$2.6 million while being allowed to select his own contractors. T.A. Loving was the general contractor for the project.

The new plant was designed so that the county can enlarge the system's treatment capacity in the future.