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An aerial shot of the new hydroelectric facility at the Willow Island Locks and Dam in Pleasants County.

Willow Island Update

*Work on Pleasants
County hydroelectric
facility nearly done*

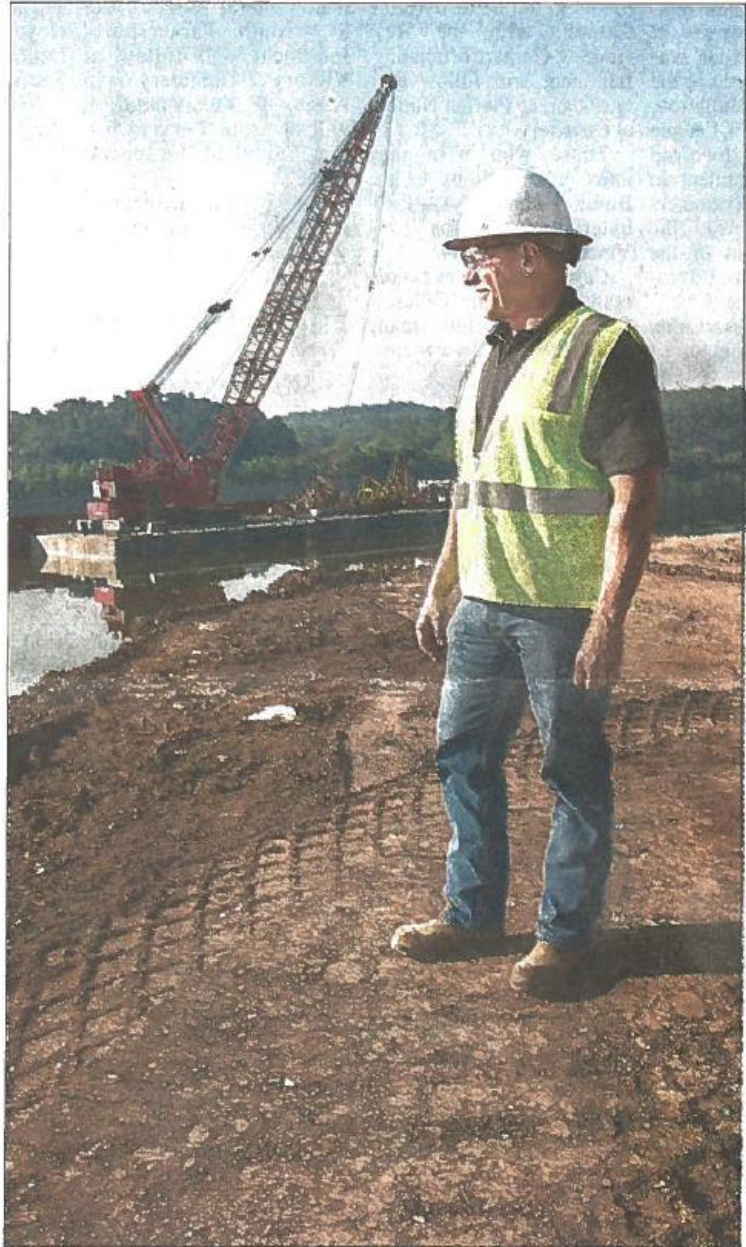
By BRETT DUNLAP

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ST. MARYS — After four-and-a-half years of work, the hydroelectric facility at the Willow Island Locks and Dam is nearing completion.

The American Municipal Power (AMP) project is expected to be completed within the next couple of months, said Neil Baker, resident engineer with MWH Global. The company designed the facility and is supervising construction of the project.

"It should be completed in the next couple of months," Baker said.



Photos Provided

Neil Baker, resident engineer with MWH Global, on the site where the hydroelectric facility at the Willow Island Locks and Dam is being constructed. The company designed the hydroelectric facility at the Willow Island Locks and Dam and is supervising construction of the project.

WILLOW ISLAND

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The Willow Island project, which began construction in 2011, will divert water from the existing Corps' Willow Island Locks and Dam through bulb turbines to generate an average annual output of approximately 239 million kilowatt-hours.

The site will include an intake approach channel, a reinforced concrete powerhouse and a tail-race channel. The powerhouse will house two horizontal 17.5-MW bulb-type turbines and generating units with an estimated total capacity of 35 MW at a gross head of 20 feet.

The project is one of four being worked on along the Ohio River with construction of facilities at the Meldahl, Cannelton and Smithland dams. Together the facilities will have a combined capacity of more than 300 MW.

The projects share similar design features, allowing a large

degree of standardization, MWH Global officials said.

Together, the four plants will generate enough electricity to power 200,000 homes, Baker said.

The facility is attached to the Willow Island Dam, which is about two miles before the First Energy Pleasants Power Station at Belmont.

Officials are preparing to start one of the turbines in about a month.

"By the end of September (the 28th), we will water up the first unit," Baker said.

Then around 30 days later they are planning to water up the second unit and go into full operation, he added.

The plant will provide 35 MW of clean, renewable energy, benefiting 79 AMP communities in Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia and Kentucky.

Officials said a grand opening ribbon cutting to commemorate the facility once it goes into full

commercial operation is being planned.

Baker said there is a need for clean renewable energy. Where there are issues that have resulted from burning coal and nuclear energy has hazardous waste issues, hydroelectric provides an option that is clean and can be set up in a number of locations across the country along rivers.

"There is potential for hundreds of sites all over the country where hydroelectric power can be utilized," Baker said. "These facilities can run for many years before needing any extensive maintenance."

"There is no pollution involved because we don't have to fuel it."

As water runs over locks and dam systems, the potential exists to generate hydroelectric power, Baker said.

"There is a potential power source sitting right there that needs to be taken advantage of," he said.