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Rochester, NH's Cocheco Well facility earns LEED certification

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The city's recently constructed Cocheco Well facility is the first water treatment facility in New England to be LEED certified.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification is a standard set by U.S. Green Building Council to reward environmentally conscious building design.

Although there are more than 40,000 LEED certified projects in the country, very few municipal facilities qualify for the designation, according to representatives from Wright-Pierce, a group providing water, wastewater, and civil engineering services in New England.

The Cocheco Well water treatment facility went online in March 2011, according to Wright-Pierce media representative Susan O'Connor.

The city worked closely with Wright-Pierce and the U.S. Green Building Council from the early stages of building the water treatment facility, built on the Cocheco River watershed, ensuring the Cocheco Well facility is LEED certified.

In seeking LEED certification, one of the goals was reducing energy costs and minimizing impact to the watershed.

"When undertaking this project we wanted to think long-term about the city's customers, so sustainability was key," said Rick Davee, senior vice president of Wright-Pierce. "We're very proud of the LEED certification."

Criteria for LEED certification includes lower operating costs and increased asset value, reduced waste sent to landfills, site sustainability, energy and water conservation, use of recycled and local materials, air quality, and innovation in design.

The newly built Cocheco Well facility has a geothermal heating and cooling system, and high efficiency pumps. In addition, the orientation of the building takes advantage of natural sunlight for lighting, according to Wright-Pierce.

Environmental features of the water treatment facility include separation and recycling of waste materials, and infiltration of storm water into the ground.

The plant uses local materials, as well as wood products certified to be grown in sustainable forests.

A technique called "directional drilling" helped minimize the impacts to the river and surrounding wetlands when the water main was installed beneath the Cocheco River.

In addition to Rochester's Cocheco Well facility, Wright-Pierce is also working on a LEED certification upgrade for the Central Water Treatment Plant in Rye, which is currently in the design phase.