

Unused hydroelectric plant on Kentucky River sparks interest

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HARRODSBURG - The future of a small electricity generating plant on the Kentucky River is unknown, but not because no one is paying attention.

A Louisville company is investigating the prospect of buying the operation from Kentucky Utilities, but the investigation is at a point where little can be said publicly.

The Lock 7 hydroelectric plant has not been used since 1999 by KU and has fallen into disrepair. It reportedly would take between \$4 million and \$6 million to renovate it and bring it back on line.

Cliff Feltham, KU's communications officer, said there was a reason the company did not use it frequently, even before it fell into a state of disrepair.

"The level of the river dictates how often and how efficiently we can run it," he said. "It never was a functioning 24/7 hydroelectric station."

Those and other factors have not stopped Soft Energy Associates of Louisville from looking into the possibility of buying the plant from KU, renovating and generating what one Mercer Countian calls "clean, renewable electricity."

Zoe Strecker lives near the plant in question, and in both a letter to the editor and in public hearings has called for the renovation and use of the plant. She says it produces no toxic emissions, comparing it to the larger KU plant above it on Dix Dam that burns coal to produce electricity.

David Brown Kinloch, president of Soft Energy Associates, explained last week that he and his company may want to buy and renovate the plant, but they are in the midst of a 60-day [due diligence](#) agreement with KU and cannot discuss any specifics of the investigation to determine his company's next actions.

"We will tell them whether we want to buy it from them or we don't think it's feasible," Brown Kinloch said.

KU's plan to demolish the Lock 7 plant, which is just downstream from Shaker Landing on the Kentucky River, raised interest in maintaining the plant. KU is going through a process, which includes gathering public input and information about the property. The aim is to get the Federal Energy Regulatory [Commission](#) to allow KU to take the plant off line, dismantle it completely and in Feltham's words, "take the whole thing down."

[Selling](#) it to another firm or individual who could renovate it and bring it back on line is one alternative, and KU has not ruled out that possibility. Feltham said the plant might be brought back to operating condition and begin to generate electricity within a year.

Two public hearings were held at Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill last month, and the public comments will be sent to the regulatory agency.

Brown Kinloch said his company already is in negotiations with a possible customer for the electricity the plant would generate. However, he said he could not identify that buyer.

Brown Kinloch said people still can comment about KU's plans and those comments need to be sent to the company by July 13.

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