

JFK's nephew joins local waste-water treatment firm's board of directors

BY GRAEME WOOD, VANCOUVER SUN FEBRUARY 26, 2009



Robert F. Kennedy Jr. sits on the board of directors of Vancouver-based Ostara Nutrient Recovery Technologies Inc.

Photograph by: handout, .

VANCOUVER — Robert F. Kennedy Jr. will lend his environmental expertise to a Vancouver-based company that aims to clean up waste water across North America.

The prominent environmental lawyer and nephew of former U.S. president John F. Kennedy has joined the board of directors of Ostara Nutrient Recovery Technologies Inc.

The firm removes polluting nutrients such as phosphates from waste water and turns them into commercial fertilizer using technology developed by and licensed from the University of B.C.

Ostara announced the appointment Wednesday to coincide with a visit by Kennedy to the company's headquarters in downtown Vancouver.

"Bobby is a recognized expert on water management and an active environmentalist," Phillip Abrary, president and CEO of Ostara, said in a statement.

Kennedy is a partner in a venture capital firm called VantagePoint Venture Partners, which has been a significant Ostara shareholder since 2008.

He has a strong reputation within the U.S. environmental community and believes clean water is an important legacy to give to future generations.

“We need to start protecting our environmental infrastructure,” Kennedy said in an interview with The Vancouver Sun.

Excessive phosphorus causes algal blooms and sludge in waterways. When such nutrients build up they can clog pipes and reduce a treatment system’s capacity.

Ostara claims its technology helps waste-water treatment plants reduce operating costs and meet environmental regulations while providing municipalities with revenue from the sale of “environmentally safe slow-release fertilizer.”

According to Ostara, the Lulu Island wastewater treatment plant has been conducting pilot experiments since January 2004 with UBC scientists. The company has targeted 400 treatment plants in North America where it believes its waste-to-fertilizer system can be used.

Kennedy, a professor of environmental law, said the management of phosphates in waste water has commonly been overlooked in New York.

“I have probably sued more sewage-treatment plants than any other attorney in North America,” said Kennedy.

Kennedy believes Ostara has the solution for towns and cities that cannot afford water treatment required by law.

“Instead of imposing this huge expense on these towns and cities we can go to the cities and say look, we’ll install this process for free and you can make money selling the fertilizer,” he said.

Kennedy says removal of phosphorus is especially critical for land-locked cities because buildup is more likely to occur in lakes and rivers than in the ocean.

“If the discharge is into a river that ends up in a basin, there probably is a phosphorus issue,” he said.

The first commercial-scale Ostara nutrient removal system began operating in May 2007 in the North Saskatchewan River Valley outside of Edmonton. Ostara says it produces 500 kilograms of fertilizer each day.

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