After Fayetteville Public Utilities completed upgrades and resolved issues with its wastewater system, the full lifting of the sewer construction moratorium was celebrated in a special ceremony marked by a visit from Commissioner Bob Martineau of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), Sen. Jim Tracy, Rep. Pat Marsh and Dr. Sandra Dudley, TDEC director of water resources. The six-year moratorium previously placed a halt on new sewer service connections inside the city of Fayetteville.

The full moratorium lifting is due to major improvements made by FPU to the wastewater treatment plant and collection system in addition to the city’s ability to meet the requirements of an Agreed Order issued in January 2006.

“We made a good-faith effort to achieve compliance and have made incredible strides to improve the community’s wastewater treatment and sewer connections,” Dye said.

“FPU remains committed to making continued improvements, and we appreciate the support we’ve received from our local elected officials, state partners and the community.”

Other officials present at the ceremony included Karen Stevenson, TDEC regional director of external affairs (Columbia); David Owenby, TDEC chief of staff; Ryan Swindell, TDEC legislative liaison; FPU board members Micky Lawson, Linda Schoenrock, Janine Wilson, Marty Pepper and Glenn Oldham; and several FPU employees who have been directly involved with system rehabilitation.

“What impresses me even more about the whole program that you’ve undertaken here is that you’ve taken a holistic look at your system and...
haven’t just limited yourself to what was necessary to comply with the order,” said Dudley. “You’ve made system improvements that invest in the long-term life of your system and protect the economic and other resources of your infrastructure.”

“The moratorium lifting has exponentially enhanced the opportunity for growth and industry,” said Wilson. “That’s so important to our community.”

“The employees do a fantastic job,” said Dye. “If it weren’t for them, we wouldn’t be where we are. They go out in the rain and check manholes and check for flow and infiltration of our sewer system. They also keep our system in check by smoke-testing our sewer lines and continuing our flow monitoring.”

Dye also thanked the FPU board of directors for its aggressive approach in tackling the moratorium issue.

**FPU recognized for wastewater’s energy efficiency**

Fayetteville Public Utilities has been recognized for its successful participation in the Tennessee Water and Wastewater Energy Efficiency Partnership Program in a ceremony held in Nashville by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation.

FPU was among seven drinking water and wastewater utilities across the state recognized for their efforts to reduce energy consumption at their respective facilities.

According to the EPA, improvements already made at four of the seven utilities are collectively saving 3.3 million kilowatt-hours, $260,000 and more than 3,200 tons of annual carbon dioxide emissions. With the additional improvements under way or planned at the utilities, the initiative is expected to save more than 7 million kilowatts per year and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 6,696 tons — equivalent to removing 1,190 cars from the road or powering 739 homes for a year.

Each of the utilities participated in workshops and conducted energy assessments to determine how best to reduce energy use at their plant.

FPU’s Wastewater Treatment Plant is projected to reduce the 2012 base load of electric consumption by 27 percent, which equals a $34,000 savings to the facility’s operation cost.

FPU was able to operate the plant’s digesters at reduced aeration levels while closely monitoring plant performance and biosolids quality. Other energy-saving steps have been taken since 2010 that include the aeration of our oxidation ditches and replacing 22-year-old gearboxes and motors to optimize plant performance.

“FPU is very glad to be recognized and have the opportunity to participate in the program to see where additional savings could be made,” said Britt Dye, FPU CEO and general manager.

“EPA applauds these utilities in Tennessee for their leadership in reducing energy use, which is expected to save costs and yield substantial benefits across the state and Southeastern region,” said EPA Regional Administrator Gwen Keyes Fleming.
At Fayetteville Public Utilities, we are asked occasionally how our electric rates are established. What you should understand is that many factors are considered when your electric rates are set — whether its the regular base rate per-kilowatt charge or the adjustable monthly fuel cost charge. Let’s break them down in layman’s terms to help you better understand how FPU’s electric rates are established.

First and foremost, you need to know that FPU’s electric rates are governed by the Tennessee Valley Authority, just as other TVA power distributors. Neither FPU nor its board are able to establish electric rates without receiving TVA’s final approval.

In fact, the lion’s share of the electric rates you pay — about 73 percent — is paid to TVA as the overall cost of purchasing natural resources/fuel used to produce, generate and deliver power to Lincoln County. Most of TVA’s power supply is generated from natural resources that include coal, water, natural gas, wind and solar. At times of high demand, TVA sometimes purchases additional power produced by other power generation plants bordering TVA’s service territory. When this need arises, the cost of supplying power for the Tennessee Valley typically increases for TVA and end-use customers like you.

Fluctuating costs of these natural resources can increase and decrease TVA’s total monthly fuel costs to consumers across the Tennessee Valley. These costs are passed along to all electric consumers who get their power through TVA. Some power distributors have chosen to include the monthly fuel cost with their regular rates whereas FPU elected to show this monthly charge separately on utility bills so that you can see each month how it affects your electric rate.

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The total monthly fuel cost is controlled solely by TVA based on its costs of producing power; FPU and other TVA power distributors only pass this rate change along to their customers to remain revenue-neutral with the adjustable fuel cost.

On occasion, TVA must increase overall power rates — the base rate that FPU and our customers pay. FPU and other power distributors have the option to increase local rates if needed. Even so, TVA enforces restrictions on how much the local distributor’s rate increase can be.

FPU receives from TVA a “guideline amount” for local rate increases. This guideline amount simply means that TVA recognizes that its local distributors have an opportunity to raise rates to cover rising costs of operation and construction, fund new electric growth and system upgrades and more.

In recent years, FPU has not taken the full guideline amount for a local rate increase. And when FPU has needed to increase its local electric rates, it is only after every step has been taken to decrease budgets and operational costs. Many times TVA has given FPU a guideline of 3 percent. Even so, FPU may elect to raise rates by less than the guideline given — or not at all — to lessen the effect on our customers.

We are very fortunate to live in the TVA region where we have a stable supply of hydroelectric and nuclear energy produced to help keep energy rates low. TVA reports that its average retail rate, including residential, commercial and industrial rates, for the 12-month period from March 2010 through March 2011 was 8.48 cents per kilowatt-hour. (A kilowatt-hour is the amount of electricity it takes to burn 10 100-watt light bulbs for one hour.) For the same period, the national average retail rate was 9.87 cents per kilowatt-hour, giving TVA the 40th best rate among the nation’s top 100 utilities.

You saw in the October issue of The Tennessee Magazine how your energy dollars are spent by FPU. Only 27 percent of your monthly electric bill stays here to operate Fayetteville Public Utilities. Of that 27 percent, 8 percent goes to capital projects, 13 percent is spent on operations and maintenance of our electric system and 2 percent each goes to interest expense, tax-equivalent payments and debt principal payments. None of your money goes to investors or stockholders. This 27 percent is reinvested in FPU to continue supplying reliable electricity, upgrading our system and making sure we’re there when you need us.

FPU works with TVA to do what’s best for our customers in Fayetteville and Lincoln County. Controlling our costs of operation and maintenance, office expenses and more helps keep our rates affordable without jeopardizing the quality of service we provide.

For more information about FPU’s utility rates, please visit our website, www.fpu-tn.com.
Student Utility Board learns from three key FPU departments

Fayetteville Public Utilities’ Student Utility Board (SUB) has learned about three different departments: Customer Service, Water Treatment and Wastewater Treatment.

In October, the SUB learned first-hand what it’s like to work on FPU’s front lines in our Customer Service Department. Employees taught students about some of the main concerns customers have about their utility service and about overall duties of providing good customer service.

The FPU youth board has also toured the Water Treatment Plant and the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Tours of the plants allowed young board members to see where water flows in and out of the plants as filtered, clean and treated water. During the tours students watched the water-testing processes in each of the labs and learned about the contaminants that are filtered from our public water supply.

“When we started the tour, I had no idea how many steps there were in cleaning the water we use and drink,” says SUB member Jonathan McLeod.

“Each SUB day is structured to allow students to see the operations of each department, and this gives them a better understanding of what FPU is, how we work and how we serve the community,” says Gina Warren, SUB coordinator. “Not only are these students learning about our daily operations, but they also learn about other things we do for the community like participate in community events, sponsor educational programs, teach utility safety and conservation and more.”

The FPU Student Utility Board program includes 10 regular monthly meetings throughout the school year. Some of those meetings are field trips to our facilities and job sites across the county. The students also prepare a Channel 6 television show featuring information from their schools, promoting upcoming events or interviewing someone they look up to. The shows they produce will be aired on FPU’s Channel 6 in 2013.

The upcoming December SUB meeting will expand on how FPU gives back to its customers through community service. The young board members will be working directly with the Harvest of Hope Food Drive and also helping with charitable giving that benefits local Head Start children.

The Fayetteville Public Utilities offices will be closed on Dec. 24 and Dec. 25 in observance of the Christmas holiday. We will also be closed on New Year’s Day. If you need emergency utility service, please continue to call 433-1522 as a dispatcher will be on duty.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
Save energy this month!

Top 10 easy ways to save during winter’s worst weather

1. Turn down your heating system’s thermostat to 68 degrees. Turn it down even lower if no one is going to be home for several days.
2. Lower your water heater temperature to 120 degrees and reduce hot water use by taking shorter showers and using cold water for laundry whenever possible.
3. Turn off lights, televisions and computers when not in use.
4. Caulk and weather strip around windows and doors to stop air leaks. Seal any gaps in floors and walls around pipes and electrical wiring.
5. Keep curtains open on the south side of the house and closed on the north side during the day.
6. Change air filters for your heating system monthly.
7. Make sure the fireplace damper is closed when not in use. Don’t send warm air up the chimney.
8. Wrap your electric water heater with insulation or install an insulating blanket.
9. Once a year, drain about one gallon of water from your water heater to remove sediment.
10. Air-dry dishes instead of using the dishwasher’s heat-drying option.

For more information about energy efficiency, please call FPU at 931-433-1522 or visit www.energyright.com.

Help stock the local food bank through the Harvest of Hope Food Drive

Now through Dec. 31, you can donate canned and nonperishable food items in the Harvest of Hope Food Drive sponsored by Fayetteville Public Utilities. All donations will be given to the Good Samaritan Association of Lincoln County to help feed our neighbors in need. Each year, FPU serves as a drop-off center for those who wish to donate food items for the Good Samaritan assistance program.

“Even though the Good Samaritan receives donations throughout the year from caring citizens, the Harvest of Hope Food Drive serves as a ‘boost’ during the holiday season to help supply the local food bank for the upcoming year,” says Gina Warren, FPU public information specialist.

Items can be left at the main FPU office located at 408 College St. W. during regular office hours.

Food donations can include nonperishable canned food items such as meats, vegetables, fruits or juices. Boxed or bagged rice, noodles and beans, canned or dry soups and soup mixes are needed. Dry goods like crackers, oats, packages of Kool-Aid, hot cocoa and coffee will also be accepted.

If your group or school would like to participate in the Harvest of Hope food donation program, please contact Warren at FPU at 433-1522, ext. 166. And if you or someone you know is in need of assistance this year, please contact Good Sam at 433-0260.

Recycle your Christmas tree with Grind a Pine

The employees of FPU will once again be recycling your live Christmas trees into useable mulch in the Grind a Pine recycling event. Dates to grind your natural pine and cedar Christmas trees are Dec. 26 to Jan. 4.

Simply bring your cedar and pine Christmas trees to the designated location at the Lincoln County Museum. FPU tree-trimming crews will grind the trees into mulch and leave the mulch at this location for anyone interested to collect and use at their homes.

To recycle your Christmas tree, please remove all decorations, tree stands and tinsel. This will help reduce polluting the mulch and prevent damage to FPU equipment.

You can come back to the museum site with your shovel to collect the mulch by the bagful or truck load. This is a first-come, first-served basis, so check the site regularly if you want any of the mulch.

This is a free community service and recycling project co-sponsored by FPU and Keep Fayetteville/Lincoln County Beautiful Inc.

If you have questions, please contact Gina Warren of FPU at 433-1522 or Gail Randolph of Keep Fayetteville/Lincoln County Beautiful Inc. at 433-8208.

Please help control our landfill capacity by participating in the free Grind a Pine project.

Give your Christmas tree a “second life” by turning it into useable mulch for your gardening and landscaping projects!