



JULIE HOWLE / Staff

Operator Lewis Howard explains the workings of the city of Pickens' more than 50-year-old water plant. For more photos, go to [greenvilleonline.com](http://greenvilleonline.com)

## Pickens hopes to channel stimulus money into water

### Treatment plant project ready to go, city says

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Pickens city officials hope to get a boost from the federal stimulus package for their \$15 million project to restore the city's aging water plant.

City Administrator Chris Eldridge said the city would like to get a slice of the stimulus to help pay for the \$15 million water plant renovation and as reimbursement for engineering and design costs, which were about \$600,000 to \$700,000.

He said staff members from U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham's office are set to be in Pickens today to look at the water plant.

Eldridge said he doesn't know if or how much money the city could get but said it's good that the engineering work was done up front and that the project is ready to go.

"It's fully engineered," he said. "We have the permit from DHEC."

The work to rebuild the plant, which was constructed in 1955, will take about a year to a year and a half, Eldridge said.

"It's very outdated," he said. "It has structural problems. The actual filter system itself is failing."

Eldridge said that after the water plant is built it could save the city money and help with water sales because the system would be more reliable.

"We've stayed within compliance (of DHEC regulations)," he said.

"But there've been times when we've shut it down to stay in compliance when we've had heavy rain events" that make the water too cloudy.

City Councilman Connie Bowers said when the plant has to be shut down the city has to buy water from the Greenville Water System.

He said city officials considered five options, including building a new plant.

"The upgrade of this plant was the most viable option, the most cost-effective," Bowers said.

Eldridge said he hopes some of the stimulus money will come through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's rural development.

"That's one area that we've made applications that would be a typical funding source for this type project," he said.