

New Geotek owner plans on expanding

By Jeff Kiger
Post-Bulletin, Rochester MN

STEWARTVILLE -- A new owner is in the driver's seat at Stewartville's Geotek Inc., and the Fiberglass products maker is not slowing down.

It might even shift into high gear soon.

The company was purchased in February by Granite Equity Partners, a St. Cloud, Minn.-based private equity firm that bought Geotek for an undisclosed amount.

"We're looking to maybe expand our existing lines and then possibly to develop some new product lines," says CEO Derek Mazula.

Does that mean the facility might be upgraded or expanded?

"As we go forward, we are definitely evaluating expansion both in terms of production equipment as well as the physical space to support growth," he said. "We're looking to be part of the economic recovery for the Rochester and the Stewartville area as we continue to grow."

Geotek, which was founded by Conrad F. Fingerson and Amy L. Donahoe in Rushford in 1991, uses a pultrusion process to make Fiberglass crossarms and poles for electric distribution installations as well as posts for electric fences to contain farm animals.

It has about 50 people on staff.

Mazula says Geotek is seeing growth in the electric distribution industry as long delayed maintenance is driving upgrades. He describes the Fiberglass product as superior to the standard wooden crossarms, because they are stronger as well as having up to three times the life span, being lighter to install and insulating more effectively.

Fingerson and Donahoe moved the company to Stewartville in 1996. The founders now are members of Geotek's board of directors.

"The nice thing about this is it is an investment by a Minnesota company by another Minnesota company," says Mazula. "Granite saw this as a great opportunity that is really superbly positioned for growth."

While the buyer is from St. Cloud, the new CEO came from much closer to Geotek. Mazula was in Rochester when he was approached about the project.

While much of his background is in manufacturing and supply chain management, Mazula's most recent project was founding Drifens, A Rochester chemical dependency recovery center.

The deal that brought him into the top spot at Geotek was negotiated by Aethlon Capital, a Minneapolis investment bank.

"Despite the credit crunch, there are still buyers in the market for strong businesses like Geotek," stated Sima Griffith of Aethlon Capital in a press release.