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Hovnanian sons spawn enviro-firm JSH International

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MOUNT LAUREL, N.J. — Peter and Stephen Hovnanian are best known as the sons in the name of **J.S. Hovnanian & Sons LLC**.

But they think another company they own has the potential to have a reach far beyond the South Jersey and Delaware communities where the company started by their grandfather, Stepan K. Hovnanian, builds homes.

JSH International LLC has developed products from peat for three uses: enabling plants to grow faster with less fertilizer and water; breaking down fats, oils and grease in grease traps and pipes; and enhancing wastewater treatment.



The brothers have invested millions in developing the products and two years ago brought in Kevin Mulvihill, who has worked in the consumer and biotechnology industries, to be JSH's CEO.

Under Mulvihill, JSH has formed three divisions, one for each product, and begun selling the products locally even as it continues to have studies performed upon them.

The company employs 15, including a few workers it shares with J.S. Hovnanian & Sons, and has a processing plant in Akron, Ohio, as well as its headquarters in Mount Laurel. Additionally, it's bringing on sales and distribution partners in preparation for expanding nationally and overseas.

"Our expectations are very high," Mulvihill said.

JSH's products stem from a product developed from peat by Hal Hartung, a chemical engineer and a friend of Peter and Stephen Hovnanian's father, Jirair S. Hovnanian. The product stimulated microbes in the soil, which did wonders for J.S. Hovnanian's roses. Hartung and J.S. Hovnanian also thought the product could be used to stimulate the growth of the microbes that break down wastewater.

After J.S. Hovnanian died in 2007, Peter and Stephen Hovnanian took over JSH, put more money into it and brought in Mulvihill, whom they had known for many years, to run it.

“Based on our work with the wastewater treatment, we began to find that our product would eliminate grease and odor” and so developed a version of it that could be used by restaurants to clean out their pipes and grease traps, Mulvihill said.

Mulvihill broke JSH into three divisions, one for each of its products.

Nature’s Wonder makes the company’s original product, now called Apex-10, which is able to be used in organic growing operations. Its users include Joseph’s Landscaping and Irrigation in Williamstown, which said the product has cut its plant loss rate in half.

Greenovative Technologies makes Total System Solution (TSS), which is marketed to restaurants. The division’s website features testimonials from seven restaurant owners.

Prodex Products makes Biological Activity Enhancer (BAE) that is marketed to wastewater treatment plants.

The Cinnaminson Sewerage Authority has been using BAE since 2003. Paul Phillips, the authority’s superintendent of operations, said the product has saved it more than \$100,000 a year by enabling the microbes in the authority’s wastewater treatment plant to break down the waste more thoroughly, which reduces the amount of chemicals needed by the plant and the amount of sludge the plant has to have hauled off.

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