

Upgrading Saco River

A case study on how to modernize a PEG cluster

On either side of Maine's picturesque and historic Saco River lie half a dozen communities that share more than just the riparian landscape. They share a common access point to their cable provider, Time Warner. And that point is the genesis of a regional plan to upgrade a multi-channel operation to a seamlessly-integrated network of TelVue broadcast servers.

Saco River is the local headend for a total of six government channels, two educational channels, and a regional public channel. For the past ten years, these channels operated on a system that was hard to maintain and had neither web interface nor remote management of any kind. People sent in their programs on DVDs. It was not a scalable operation.

The legacy system was not able to keep up with the times, either. Internet connectivity in that region is fairly limited, and there was no comprehensive online video streaming solution. The Cable Committee began to evaluate proposals for a more modern system.

Nearby South Portland Community Television already uses TelVue® equipment, and its manager Tony Vigue is also Chairman of the Saco River Cable Committee. "We found that ease of programming and the willingness of the [TelVue] software developers to listen to and adopt our suggestions was a big plus," Vigue explains. "Other vendors offered great products as well, but TelVue just seemed to have the edge in ease and flexibility of scheduling, which is, after all where you spend most of your time once the system is up and running."

When the decision was taken to upgrade, the Saco River Community Television managers called in Chris Perry, Owner and Lead Design Consultant for Audio Visual Support Consulting. Perry's company helps design and install next-generation media systems. "I like to apply a broadcast mentality to these operations", Perry says of his work with PEG stations. "Planning for things like redundant power, lifetime warranties, file-based workflow, remote access, and 24-hour tech support. TelVue has 24-hour tech support and that was a big selling point."

It took Perry less than a week to install the entire system, spanning six towns: Hollis, Waterboro, Limerick, Limington, Standish, and Buxton. All together he installed 18 TelVue® B100 servers, one Turbo Workflow Accelerator, and four C100 Streaming Encoders. "Fortunately, Telvue was able to meet our budget requirements and provide the needed equipment very quickly," says Vigue. It was professionally installed with a minimum of downtime."

As a result, each town now has its own scheduling interface, and the combined file storage capacity of the whole system is four times larger than what they had before. The towns can broadcast live from city

hall, or put their videos up on TelVue's PEG.TV™ streaming service for on-demand Internet viewing. "That was particularly important for them because of the way the area is so spread out," remarked Perry. It was a sizeable project, and a unique setup. TelVue streamlined the whole process."

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