

Enviva to produce first pellets in the fourth quarter

By: Royce Armstrong

roycearmstrong1219@att.net

Release Date: 7/22/2021

Even with this year's weather delays, the Enviva Lucedale wood pellet plant is expecting to produce its first wood pellets during the fourth quarter this year.

Plant manager Clint Pierce came before George County Board of Supervisors on Monday with that announcement as part of an update presentation.

Construction on the \$150 million fuel-grade wood pellet plant began in October 2019. Construction of the plant was expected to take 15 to 18 months, but ran into delays caused by factors including the COVID-19 pandemic and weather.

"I am sure you understand we lost 20 of the last 40 days due to weather" Pierce told the supervisors.

He said the plant is currently employing 350 construction workers, and will soon be going around the clock. Additionally, 70 production workers and 15 supervisors have already been hired. Another 10 to 15 workers will be hired as the plant goes into production.

Answering questions from the supervisors and audience, Pierce said the facility would begin production by processing round wood or logs and then chipped wood. A chipper is being installed and the plant will ultimately process both round wood and chips.

He said the first pellets should be shipped by rail to the Port of Pascagoula during the fourth quarter of the year.

The plant is designed to produce 750,000 metric tons of high-density wood pellets per year. The pellets are fuel grade, a sustainable energy alternative to fossil fuels for electric power plants generating plants. The pellets produced at the Lucedale facility are already sold through contracts with power plants in Japan and will be shipped to Japan.

At the time of the 2019 groundbreaking, the Lucedale plant was billed as the largest wood pellet plant in the world, by Enviva Chairman and CEO John Keppler.

"Every single ton of production this mill will ever produce has already been sold," Keppler said during the groundbreaking ceremony. "Not just for the next year. Not for just the year after that, but for the next several decades. So, when we say we are going to be here for a while, we mean it."

Enviva, founded in 2004, operates nine pellet manufacturing facilities in six states. Mills already operating include Ahoskie, North Carolina; Amory, Mississippi; Cottondale, Florida; Greenwood, South Carolina; Hamlet, North Carolina; Northhampton County, North Carolina; Sampson County, North Carolina; Southhampton County, Virginia; and Waycross, Virginia.

Enviva Biomass is a \$2 billion company employing about 1,200 people with a current stock price of about \$51 per share. It is the largest producer of wood pellets in the world.