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Built-In Feedstock Flexibility

By Bryan Sims | February 10, 2009

Two new facilities were added to this month's plant construction list. Once operational, both will employ novel process technologies that will effectively and economically use multiple feedstock streams.

Ever Cat Fuels LLC is building a 3 MMgy biodiesel plant near Isanti, Minn., which will use a proprietary process technology called the McGyan Process. Initially developed as a separation science by Peter Carr at the University of Minnesota's Department of Chemistry, Augsburg College Professor Arlin Gyberg and Clayton McNeff, cofounder of Ever Cat Fuels, are now using it for biodiesel catalysis. The key to this new technology is a highly efficient, heterogeneous metal oxide-based catalyst reactor that converts plant oils and animal fats into biodiesel.

According to Ever Cat Fuels Vice President Steven Rupp, the tank farm is complete, and most buildings are erected. The plant is expected to start up in March. "We've made quite a bit of progress," he said. "We were hoping to have things done by now, but since it's a new design and process, it's taking a little bit longer than expected."

Green Valley Bio-Fuels is constructing a 10 MMgy multi-feedstock facility in Warrenton, S.C., which will mostly take in chicken fat, but has the capability of processing soy oil and other types of rendered animal fats, according to Chief Executive Officer Chuck Pardue. "We're excited about the project," he said, adding that the 24,000-square-foot facility is located near a soy oil processing plant and poultry rendering facility. "When we decided to do this last year, [the price of] oil was higher. Now that it's much lower, we anticipate that our model will work effectively at \$50 to \$65 per barrel of oil."

Two projects on this list have been suspended. Alterra Bioenergy of Middle Georgia temporarily halted construction of its 30 MMgy facility in Plains, Ga. The company will resume construction once "economics become favorable again," according to Wayne Johnson, former project manager. Meanwhile, Channel Chemical Corp. continues to evaluate the construction of a 20 MMgy biodiesel facility adjacent to its chemical manufacturing plant in Gulfport, Miss., which has been in operation since 1980, according to Tim Reid, director of operations for Channel Chemical. "We're still very interested in moving forward with the project, but we haven't gotten to the point of breaking ground yet," he said. "We have the entire infrastructure in place. All we have to do is erect what's needed for the plant, which makes things easier and keeps the overhead down on the biodiesel side."

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