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Progress report

5/31/06

By AMY GAREIS

News-Herald Staff Writer

WORK IS advancing slowly for Harrison Ethanol LLC, but the company had a few thousand reasons to cheer on Tuesday.

A \$600,000 loan for the land purchase has been repaid one month ahead of schedule, and now officials are waiting for earth to possibly move within the next month.

“We’ve been working on this for five years,” said Wendel Dreve, who manages the company along with Marion Gilliland. “We’ve paid off our interim loan from Consumer’s National Bank [in Carroll County].”

He thanked the bank officials for their support in the biorefinery and continued that Harrison Ethanol now had funding to move forward on site preparations and intermediate construction.

“We’re doing the final surveys,” he said, adding that locations where heavy equipment, ethanol tanks and other large structures would be built first had to have clay added for a solid foundation.

Thirty inches of clay is required prior to forming the concrete foundation, and state officials must test every six-inch layer after the clay is placed. Dreve said the material must cure before the next layer is added and the overall portion of that project could take six weeks to finish.

“Clay is critical in the permitting process. Then there is a waiting period before the concrete goes on. It’s a little bit of an ebb and flow now, but the news of paying off the land is great. To us that’s a big

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milestone.”

Weather permitting, heavy excavation and soil preparation could begin in four weeks. Rocks will be removed and ground will be cleared to make way for the facility, which sets on 276 acres at Dickerson Church Road, also known as Cadiz Township Road 93. Construction is targeted over a 14-month period with about 400 construction jobs to be created during that time.

Stages of the project will be put out to bid, while the actual building portion could use workers within a 100-mile radius.

“If all goes according to schedule, it will be under heavy steel construction in the fourth quarter [of this year]. The concrete must cure at least 21 days before we can set the steel,” he quipped. “We can work through the winter months on steel erection construction. We have cleared all the trees and shrubs to allow for the final geotechnical study and topographic survey to comply with regulations. That’s to ensure the heavy structures...are going to be properly engineered to have a solid foundation.”

He said in the past six months, steel from Consolidated Coal Co. structures was salvaged and railroad spurs were being moved to make way for the facility. Rail rehabilitation is also on track to the tune of \$700,000 to \$1.1 million. That endeavor would reconstruct 7.2 miles of rail stretching north of U.S. 22 to the site.

Meanwhile, another 107 people would be employed on-site with 60 contracted trucking posts upon its completion. Hirings are expected to start shortly after the heavy construction commences. If all goes according to plan, the biorefinery could be operational during the third quarter of next year.

The ethanol distillation facility will convert about 9 million bushels of corn annually to ethanol; the refinery should produce 20 million gallons of fuel-grade ethanol per year, in addition to animal feed and goods for human consumption. The ethanol will be used as a fuel additive for vehicles, while 12,000 heads of beef and dairy cattle will be on-site to consume distiller’s grains. The cattle will be housed in barns at all times and animal waste will be processed in an anaerobic digester. Byproducts range from liquid fertilizer to methane gas, among others, and the methane will also help generate “green” electricity at the facility.

Chris Copeland, executive director of the Harrison County Community Improvement Corp., confirmed that the interim loan was \$600,000

and said funding was continuously coming in to back the project.

“They have met a lot of milestones,” said Copeland, who eyed big things to come in the future. “Certainly there will be product leaving here and the agricultural community will have focused on the process. They could grow hay, corn and fodder or raise replacement heifers and cattle. Farmland will be resurrected from being unused to being put back into production.”

He said everything from agriculture to infrastructure would be heightened by the operation, with better roads expected amid paving of Dickerson Church Road.

“It will have better access coupled with [improvements on] Industrial Park Road to have an effective bypass around the Village of Cadiz and take heavy truck traffic from [the business district and uptown areas].”

Copeland said it also would spur more business development in the long run.

“We are already getting inquiries from businesses you would not normally think of [as offshoots for the biorefinery]. It will be a huge opportunity for the economy of the village and surrounding areas.”

Commissioners Phil Madzia and Dennis Watson concurred.

“It’s been my vision that once this gets rolling the county will flourish,” said Madzia.

“Benefits from the plant will be tremendous,” added Watson, “and the infrastructure improvements...will have positive effects [on the railroad, roads and water and sewer lines]. It opens up more area in the county to be developed. It’s a win-win situation all the way around.”

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