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Progress is in site - Harrison County breaks ground for ethanol plant

By J. ANN TIPTON, T-R Staff Writer

CADIZ – Five years of hard work paid off for Harrison County officials and business promoters Monday as area and state leaders dedicated 276 acres south of Cadiz for an ethanol distillation facility.

Ohio's first ethanol biorefinery, Harrison Ethanol LLC, represents a \$73 million investment in Harrison County, 170 new jobs and new markets for locally grown corn and grass products. The land off Dickerson Church Hill Rd. was purchased from Consolidation Energy, the former Consolidation Coal Co.

“Even when (Harrison County) watched a lot of jobs get taken away, the region didn't give up, and this project is proof of that,” U.S. Rep. Bob Ney, R-Heath, said at a program in Harrison County Community Hospital at Cadiz. “This is life, jobs and a future for our children in the area.”

The project has been led by a dozen individuals and businesses including Harrison Ethanol managing members Wendel Dreve and Marion Gilliland, both of Adamsville. The facility has received all permits for operation from the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. Cutting



Gov. Bob Taft (R) talks with Cadiz Mayor Don Bethel during the Harrison Ethanol plant site dedication in Harrison County Community Hospital at Cadiz Monday.

T-R/Jim Cummings

through all that red tape is no small task, according to Fred Dailey, director of the ODA.

“Wendel and Marion made believers out of us with all the work they did to secure permits,” Dailey said. “Ethanol’s time has come. We’re not just talking about producing food on farms anymore. We’re also talking about fuel.”

Besides \$28 million in private investment, the project will be financed by hundreds of thousands of dollars in state grants and loans. Harrison Ethanol, a subsidiary of Farmers’ Ethanol LLC based in Adamsville, will use nine million bushels of corn to produce 20 million gallons of ethanol annually. The resulting ethanol will be used as an automotive fuel additive to increase octane levels and add oxygen that lowers carbon monoxide emissions.

Brent Porteus of Coshocton and Phil Cunningham of Delaware County, a Piedmont native, are among founding members of Harrison Ethanol. This is the first of three ethanol distillation facilities in Appalachian Ohio. Others are planned for Perry County and in southern Ohio.

“It has taken a significant team effort to bring us to this point, and I appreciate the cooperation and commitment of everyone involved,” said Harrison County Commissioner Dennis Watson.

Gov. Bob Taft discussed the importance of the project to Ohio’s agricultural community because it will provide new markets for corn and other products.

“As energy prices escalate, developing our own clean and affordable sources of energy becomes even more important,” Taft said. “Today’s groundbreaking ... confirms our commitment to renewable energy in Ohio.”

Site preparation work will take place in the coming weeks and construction is expected to begin in April. Up to 400 construction jobs will be created during the 14-month construction phase.

For Joyce Klingler of Cadiz, who with her husband raises beef cattle, the groundbreaking represents more than a new construction project or a renewable source of energy, she said.

“We’re hoping it will help improve the economy, since there isn’t as much coal production as there used to be,” Klingler said. “At first, I was surprised they were interested in coming to Harrison County, but now I’m excited and anxiously waiting for it to be up and running.”

Chris Copeland, executive director and general counsel of the Harrison County Community Improvement Corp., contributed to this story.