

SENT TO LSU AGCENTER/LOUISIANA FOREST PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT CENTER - FOREST SECTOR / FORESTY PRODUCTS INTEREST GROUP



Biomass plant wins forestry sourcing certification



The power block, at back left, of the Gainesville Renewable Energy Center is shown in this Aug. 21, 2013 file photo.

Doug Finger/The Gainesville Sun

By [Morgan Watkins](#)

Staff writer

Published: Tuesday, October 28, 2014 at 4:01 p.m.

Last Modified: Tuesday, October 28, 2014 at 4:01 p.m.

The Gainesville Renewable Energy Center announced Tuesday it is the first power plant in the country to receive the Forest Stewardship Council's chain-of-custody certification, affirming that its procedures for buying waste wood fuels conform to the FSC's standard.

GREC CEO Jim Gordon said the biomass plant hopes to encourage other such facilities as well as landowners to become certified by the FSC as well.



31 October 2014



SENT TO LSU AGCENTER/LOUISIANA FOREST PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT CENTER - FOREST SECTOR / FORESTRY PRODUCTS INTEREST GROUP

“We’re stepping out first with this very responsible forest management program,” he said. “What it means to the community is we are providing a real economic boost to the forest industry.”

Within the forest products industry, FSC certification is seen as the gold standard for responsible forestry practices, according to a GREC news release.

The certification confirms the biomass plant uses stringent procedures allowing it to source its wood, which is used to generate power, with certainty as to where it comes from because it’s able to trace the path of the materials from the forests through the supply chain.

Brian Condon, the wood procurement manager for Bio-Resource Management, GREC’s wood procurement contractor, said they track all the wood that’s brought in to ensure it isn’t coming from inappropriate sites, such as lands with high conservation value.

Aaron Maizlish, of SCS Global Services, which was hired to conduct the certification assessment of GREC, presented the FSC certificate to Gordon on Tuesday morning. He said the assessment involved having an auditor on-site for a couple of days to do a review. Communications director John Brushwood told The Sun the audit money came from GREC’s owners, not from Gainesville Regional Utilities.

GREC and GRU are providing financial incentives through the utility’s Forest Stewardship Incentive Plan to landowners who go through the process of becoming certified by the FSC or by the state Division of Forestry.

Some have already taken advantage of the DOF incentive, he said.

Condon told The Sun that GREC doesn’t get any FSC-certified wood right now because it’s located too far away from those sites and is therefore too expensive to access. They hope the biomass plant will be able to use FSC-certified wood in the future, though.

Using certified wood differentiates one’s product similar to the way having an organic label on a tomato does, he explained.





31 October 2014



SENT TO LSU AGCENTER/LOUISIANA FOREST PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT CENTER - FOREST SECTOR / FORESTY PRODUCTS INTEREST GROUP

The biomass plant has been a controversial project since before it began operating last year. Local residents who are critical of GRU and GREC often speak at government meetings and have raised various concerns.

Gordon said he thinks earning this certification can put to rest some of the concerns about the source of the wood.

“Unfortunately, there seems to be misinformation in the community ... and we wanted to have an independent third party come in and look at our program,” he said.

Gordon also pointed out they have foresters working every day making sure the biomass plant is maintaining these stringent standards.

Contact Morgan Watkins at 338-3104 or morgan.watkins@gainesville.com.

Richard P. Vlosky, Ph.D.
Director Louisiana Forest Products Development Center
Crosby Land & Resources Endowed Professor of Forest Sector Business Development
Room 227, School of Renewable Natural Resources
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
Phone (office): (225) 578-4527
Fax: (225) 578-4251
Mobile Phone: (225) 223-1931

