



20 October 2016



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# GREATER ● BATON ROUGE BusinessReport

## Drax Biomass signs deal with environmental group to avoid timber in forested wetlands

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Georgia-based Drax Biomass International—which stores the wood pellets it manufactures in those two massive white domes at the base of the Mississippi River bridge in Port Allen—signed a deal today with an environmental group, pledging not to source its timber from the cypress and tupelo stands found in forested wetlands like the Atchafalaya Basin.

The pledge was largely symbolic. In the two years since the company began operating in Louisiana, it never has sourced its timber from forested wetlands. However, a DBI spokesman says it wants to be an industry leader in establishing best practices because others in the wood pellet and logging industry are eyeing the cypress-tupelo swamps as a potential source for mulch and wood pellets.

“Part of the effort with this objective is for us to explicitly recognize the unique value of the basin and implement standards to make sure we do not source wood from those areas,” says David Malkins, director of communications and policy for DBI. “We also want to lead the way and set an example for other loggers and wood pellet companies.”

The agreement signed today between DBI and the Atchafalaya Basinkeeper, a nonprofit group dedicated to protecting and restoring the ecosystems within the basin, was several months in the making and came about after officials with the nonprofit brought their concerns to DBI executives.

DBI sources most of its wood from southern yellow pine forests within an 80-mile radius of its two pellet manufacturing facilities, which are located in Morehouse Parish and Amite County, Mississippi. A small percentage of its wood also comes from woodchips and other residuals from local sawmills.



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DBI developed the plants in 2014, at the same time it constructed the two domes at the Port of Greater Baton Rouge. The company's total investment topped \$120 million. The domes are used for storing the pellets, which are transported by rail or truck from the manufacturing facilities, then loaded onto ships for use overseas. DBI also stores pellets in the domes from other area manufacturers.

The market for wood pellets has grown in recent years as a result, primarily, of demand from Europe.

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