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Port of Greater Baton Rouge adds bulk storage facilities

BATON ROUGE, La. – Authorities with the Port of Greater Baton Rouge have announced that two 120-foot-tall bulk storage facilities will be constructed at the port over the next few months to service one of its newest business partners, Drax Biomass.

The storage facilities, which will be located on port property north of the I-10 Mississippi River Bridge, will safely store biomass material produced locally from forest thinnings and residuals in the form of wood pellets. The stored biomass materials will be used as a clean and renewable power resource.

Port Executive Director Jay Hardman, P.E., said the two new facilities represent a substantial investment and supports nearly 120 construction jobs. This investment comes on the heels of a recent expansion of the port's Louis Dreyfus grain elevator facility, which accounts for a \$150 million upgrade and as many as 70 new jobs.

“We are excited about the investment Drax Biomass is making in our port and the greater community by creating jobs and increasing our cargo capacity,” Hardman said.

Construction workers will inflate the first storage facility's outer shell this month. The process will take roughly six hours to complete. Once the shell is in place, an interior concrete lining will be constructed. Gray Construction, a top design-build and construction management company based out of Lexington, KY, is managing the project.

“The inflation process will be very noticeable to motorists travelling over the I-10 bridge, as they see a large rubber-like shell inflate to approximately 200 feet in diameter and 120 feet tall – something similar in appearance to, but smaller than, the LSU Assembly Center,” Hardman said.

Hardman noted that sheriff's deputies from East Baton Rouge and West Baton Rouge parishes will be on standby to assist with traffic flow over the bridge in the event that motorists become too distracted by the activity.

The process will be repeated to erect the second bulk storage facility later this year, Hardman said. The new bulk storage facilities are to be located on 10 acres of port property, and they will be capable of storing approximately 80,000 metric tons of wood pellets once they are fully operational. Upon completion, the storage facilities will include mechanical housing units on top, stretching their vertical measurement to nearly 145 feet tall.

“This project has high strategic importance to the port, state and region over the long term. The project will help diversify the port's cargo and industry base by making the port a key player in the sustainable biomass

energy sector. This is a remarkable boost for the state of Louisiana, the Baton Rouge region and the port. It will support and improve Louisiana's timber and forest products sector, create new jobs and increase the number of ship calls at the docks," Hardman said.

For more information about the Port of Greater Baton Rouge, visit www.portgbr.com.