

Oil field steam project resumes after cash shortfall

John Cox, Bakersfield Californian, 3-3-11

Work has resumed on an \$8 million demonstration project intended to test new technology for turning agricultural waste into fuel to make steam for oil production in Kern's Belridge area.

The 4-year-old "Greensteam" project came to a halt in late December, when Vancouver-based Global Green Solutions Inc. ran short on money after completing what it calls a successful demonstration of its technology, generating 5.8 thermal megawatts using only woody ag waste as fuel.

But after a month of idleness, Global Green was able to raise enough money through a sale of company stock to proceed with the project and gear up for a key, 30-day test, said Craig Harting, Global Green's chief operations officer.

"We did have to re-fund, but we've done that and we've put our team back on the site," he said, adding that the company expects the stock sale to raise \$1.5 million from private individuals.

If results from the 30-day test meet expectations, Harting said, the company and its partner, Bakersfield-based oil producer Aera Energy LLC, plan to move forward with a full-scale project 40 times larger than the demonstration.

Aera operates the Belridge oil field that surrounds the demonstration. It remains supportive of the project, a company spokeswoman wrote in an e-mail Tuesday.

"We are encouraging Global Green Solutions to restart the Greensteam demonstration plant at Aera's Belridge oil field and remain interested in full-scale application if they can prove up the technology in the demonstration project," spokeswoman Susan Hersberger wrote.

The use of "steam flooding" is common in local oil fields because it helps release the thick, heavy crude common in Kern County.

Until recent years, oil producers used natural gas almost exclusively to generate steam. But as emissions rules have become stricter, other technologies have surfaced, including solar power and biomass -- another term for urban and agricultural waste such as plant trimmings and wood.

Global Green intends to use agricultural waste collected from local farmers, as well as biomass shipped north from Los Angeles.

Where the company holds an advantage over other biomass energy projects, Harting said, is its combustion efficiency and pollution-control technology.

"We're talking about emissions of the key pollutants that are 80 percent less than what the other (biomass) plants are currently performing at," he said.