

Work underway on Idaho fertilizer facility

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

POCATELLO, Idaho — Officials at a June 8 groundbreaking ceremony for a new Valley Agronomics fertilizer distribution center lauded the project as a rare example of redevelopment occurring in conjunction with an environmental cleanup.

Valley Agronomics, a regional agronomy cooperative based in Rupert, Idaho, is investing \$10 million to build what will be Idaho's largest fertilizer distribution facility on the 12 acres. The location is a federal Superfund site where FMC Corp. operated the world's largest elemental phosphate plant until 2001.

Idaho Gov. Butch Otter suggested naming the plant grounds the "Phoenix Site," as a new economic opportunity for the state has "risen



John O'Connell/Capital Press

Construction workers build a pit June 8 where trains will unload dry fertilizer at a new Valley Agronomics distribution facility near Pocatello, Idaho, at the former FMC site.

from the ashes."

"The saddest day was when I heard that the FMC plant was going to be shut down and decommissioned," Otter said. "Who would have believed here we are 15 or 16 years later celebrating a whole

new opportunity, in fact a whole new venture, with great promise at that same site today?"

It will be the 14th location and largest investment to date for Valley Agronomics, which has about \$200 million

in annual sales of agronomy inputs and services. Valley Agronomics General Manager Richard Lloyd said the benefits of the location outweighed the hassle of dealing with a Superfund site. Lloyd explained it will be Idaho's only fertilizer distribution facility capable of receiving "unit trains" — complete trains all loaded with fertilizer, which are far more efficient for the railroad than sending individual cars. Because FMC already had unit train infrastructure in place, Lloyd said the freight savings — between \$30 and \$50 per ton — will be passed along to grower-members. Lloyd said his company stands to save \$2 million in construction costs.

Valley Agronomics is also one of the largest buyers of fertilizer from J.R. Simplot, and the FMC site is adjacent to Simplot's Don

phosphate plant.

Valley Agronomics project manager Sid Jensen said the site is "ideally located to support a large, rapidly growing customer base."

Despite the timing of the ceremonial groundbreaking, construction of the plant has been underway for more than two months. The dry fertilizer storage building, which will have a 26,000-ton capacity, is already beginning to take shape, and excavation is ongoing of a dry fertilizer receiving pit, with an 800-ton-per-hour capacity. The facility will unload up to 300 tons of fertilizer per hour into trucks for shipping, including to customers and other regional Valley Agronomics locations that lack rail access.

Phase one of the project — the dry storage infrastructure — will involve 70 con-

struction workers and should be complete by November. Phase two entails building a tank farm with 3 million gallons of liquid fertilizer storage and a shop, and phase three includes an office and seed warehouse. The plant will employ about 50 full- and part-time workers.

FMC, which has been involved in cleanup since its plant closed, plans to have contaminated areas capped by the end of the year and a shallow aquifer below the site treated during 2017.

"In 2001, when FMC decommissioned its elemental phosphorous plant, we made a commitment FMC would remediate and redevelop the property for the benefit of all southeast Idaho, and I'm so glad that's what we're here today to celebrate," said FMC Vice President Barry Crawford.

Washington Farm Bureau's support for coal terminal heats up

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Agriculture's stake in a coal company's proposal to build an export terminal along the Lower Columbia River has increased in recent weeks, according to Washington Farm Bureau CEO John Stuhlmiller.

The state Department of Ecology's tentative plan to hold the company responsible for greenhouse gases emitted in Asia should concern producers, Stuhlmiller said Friday.

"It infuses an extra constraint on an export facility based on the product that's being exported," he said. "That's what we object to most vigorously."

The Farm Bureau has long supported a plan by Millennium Bulk Terminals to build a dock at an abandoned industrial site near Longview.

The organization argues that the terminal would increase the state's capacity to export bulk materials, includ-



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington Farm Bureau CEO John Stuhlmiller, left, talks with Millennium Bulk Terminals Vice President Peter Bennett Oct. 19, 2015, at the industrial site where the company proposes to build a coal export terminal. Stuhlmiller warns that a state report imposing climate change-related requirements on Millennium sets a dangerous precedent for exporters.

ing farm goods.

If coal exports drop off in the future, Millennium's terminal could be a new outlet for other exports, taking pressure off crowded ports, Stuhlmiller said.

The Farm Bureau has accepted BNSF Railway's assurances that adding coal

trains to its mainline will not hinder moving agricultural goods, Stuhlmiller said.

The project, first proposed in 2012, reached a milestone in May when DOE released a draft environmental impact statement, a preliminary report on what Millennium must do to eliminate or min-

imize the terminal's effect on rail lines, shipping lanes and water and air quality.

The report also warned about climate change.

DOE decided to hold Millennium responsible for the greenhouse gases that Asian power plants would emit by consuming U.S. coal.

Millennium must submit a plan to slash the project's carbon footprint by 50 percent. The carbon-reduction goals are at the high end of various scenarios of how much additional greenhouse gases would be emitted if the terminal were built.

DOE calls the requirement reasonable and appropriate, given that the Legislature and Gov. Jay Inslee have set car-

bon-reduction goals.

Stuhlmiller warned agriculture could find itself facing novel requirements if activists oppose exported products, such as genetically engineered foods or foods seen as unhealthy.

"Public opinion can sway

on a whim," he said. "It should scare anybody who wants to build a facility going forward."

The Farm Bureau emailed a "call to action" Friday, asking members to submit a short form letter to DOE in support of the project.




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