

California firm says its purchase of Okeechobee plant will create jobs Okeechobee facility to become 'largest advanced biodiesel demonstration plant in the world,' company says

By staff report

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OKEECHOBEE — A California petroleum company is acquiring an existing production facility in Okeechobee, creating new jobs while increasing the region's presence in the biofuels market, the company announced in a news release Wednesday.

LS9, a South San Francisco company that bills itself as "the Renewable Petroleum Company," said it anticipates 15 to 20 operations jobs will be created throughout a demonstration period.

The project also is expected to generate approximately 30-50 construction jobs over the six month retrofit period, as well as preserving job opportunities in the Okeechobee region through the company's use of local suppliers and contractors.

The facility will be retrofitted to accommodate LS9's proprietary, one-step fermentation process that converts renewable raw materials into low-cost, low-carbon transportation fuels and chemicals, the company said.

The project is designed to enable the production of 50,000 to 100,000 gallons of its "UltraClean Diesel" by late 2010. "This level of production will validate the commercial viability of LS9's UltraClean Diesel technology before moving to full-scale commercial production," the company said in its release.

"LS9's acquisition of this state-of-the-art fermentation facility ... represents significant promise for the U.S biofuels sector, and it benefits the Okeechobee economy," said LS9 CEO Bill Haywood in the news release. "The new facility will allow LS9 to demonstrate that our one-step manufacturing process is ready and capable of bringing low-cost, low-carbon fuels to market while creating and preserving jobs in the Okeechobee area."

LS9 describes itself as a low-cost producer of renewable advanced diesel products.

"LS9's UltraClean Diesel is the only finished diesel directly produced by fermentation of renewable raw materials in a single step," the firm says in its release. "The company's proprietary one-step process has higher yields and removes additional production costs associated with the multi-step processes required by other renewable diesel technologies.

"A leader in synthetic biology, LS9 genetically engineers microorganisms to precisely produce fuels to have desired properties such as cetane, volatility, oxidative stability and cold-flow, while offering an 85 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions when compared to conventional diesel."

LS9 officials say they are currently producing "significant" amounts of UltraClean Diesel at its pilot plant in South San Francisco.

"The new Okeechobee facility will allow LS9 to move its technology from proven pilot capabilities to commercial demonstration scale production in 2010. Once the retrofit is complete, the facility will be the largest advanced biodiesel demonstration plant in the world," the company said.

