



8 January 2014



SENT TO LSU AGCENTER/LOUISIANA FOREST PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT CENTER - FOREST SECTOR / FORESTY PRODUCTS INTEREST GROUP

(This is the first time I have heard about "black pellets".) Am I behind the curve on this? Rich



### **Zilkha, Aconex to build first black pellet plant**

Written by [Marketwired](#)

January 7, 2014, Selma, Ala. - Aconex, provider of the world's most widely used construction project management software, is supporting Zilkha Biomass Energy in the design and building of a black pellet fuel plant. With an output capacity of 275,000 metric tons per year, this will be the first full-scale commercial black pellet production facility in the world. The plant is expected to be completed and fully operational by early 2015.

Zilkha uses the Aconex Online Collaboration Platform to manage project information and processes across a multi-company team of contractors, consultants, subcontractors, and vendors involved in construction of the new plant. The Aconex platform provides a secure, neutral collaboration system for managing workflows and processing RFIs, documents, drawings, and correspondence. Version control ensures that users always have up-to-date project information at their fingertips, and all decisions and actions are maintained in a permanent audit trail for transparency and accountability.

"After reviewing several project information management solutions, we found that Aconex was the best fit for our needs," said Clyde Stearns, vice president of engineering at Zilkha. "While our selection was based primarily on technology, the company's training and support of our users have made the total solution even more valuable. Having a central location for all project data and workflows saves time, improves accuracy and reduces overall project risk. In the future, we expect to use Aconex on more complex projects with larger teams and greater volumes of information."

### **Clean, Low-Maintenance, Alternative Fuel**

The Zilkha Black Pellet is made of woody biomass - compressed green wood that is pre-dried to reduce moisture content. It has higher energy density than conventional white pellets, without the safety risks, and is waterproof to decrease storage and transportation costs. As a next-generation renewable fuel, black pellets can seamlessly replace coal, which is currently the world's primary source of energy. Zilkha opened its first commercial production facility, with a capacity of 40,000 metric tons per year, in Crockett, Texas in 2010.

Stearns indicated that during the course of the Selma plant construction, users from up to 20 different organizations will review, mark up and approve documents and drawings and communicate with each other on the Aconex platform. Project set-up took two weeks, and users with widely varying technical skills were productive soon after that.



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"Our engagement with Zilkha further demonstrates the value of Aconex in the U.S. power sector," said Frank Kopas, general manager of the Americas at Aconex. "Black pellet technology has the potential to transform the energy industry, providing affordable power to more consumers while reducing the carbon and other harmful emissions produced by coal. We're pleased with the opportunity to help Zilkha deliver the Selma plant project with the highest possible quality and the lowest possible risk, and we look forward to working with the company on future projects."

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Richard P. Vlosky, Ph.D.  
Director Louisiana Forest Products Development Center  
Crosby Land & Resources Endowed Professor of Forest Sector Business Development  
Room 227, School of Renewable Natural Resources  
Louisiana State University  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
Phone (office): (225) 578-4527  
Fax: (225) 578-4251  
Mobile Phone: (225) 223-1931

