

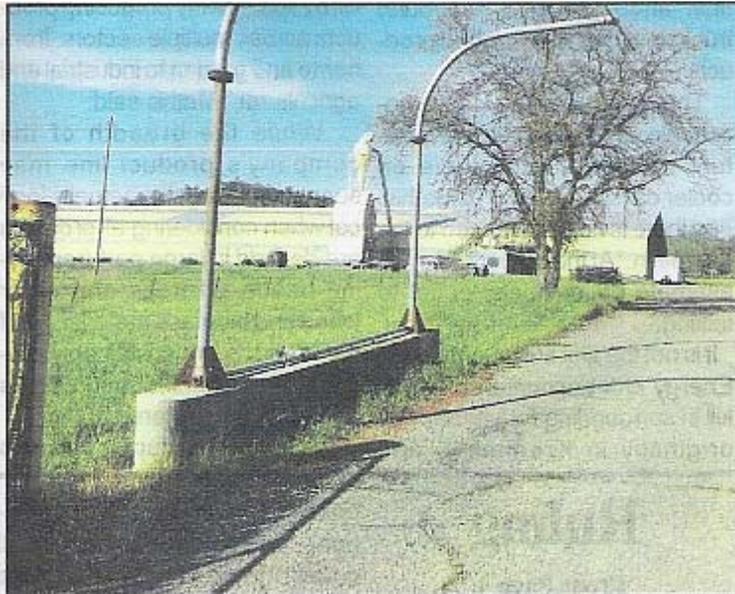
# VS chosen as site for manufacturing plant

By Nick Baptista / The Valley Springs News / Friday, March 24, 2017

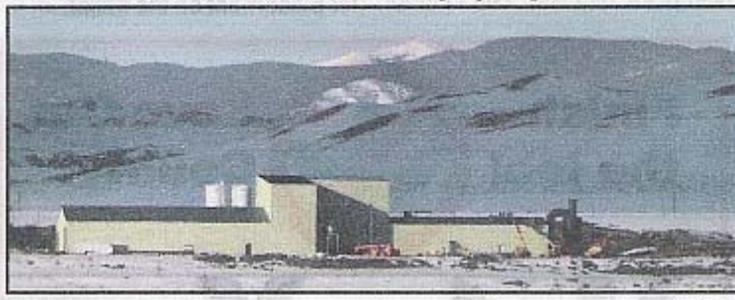
Valley Springs is being considered for a new state-of-the-art manufacturing facility with the potential for 24 to 34 new jobs.

Sustainable biomass and wood fiber manufacturer Confluence Energy, LLC, announced its proposed expansion to Valley Springs earlier this week and has scheduled a public meeting from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday at the La Contenta Event Center to meet the community and share more about the company's Valley Springs expansion plans.

The Colorado-based company is looking at locating its new facility on industrial-zoned property off Paloma Road across the street from Snyder Ranch.



***An industrial site on Paloma Road, above, could be the new home for the biomass and wood fiber manufacturing firm of Confluence Energy, LLC. A photo of the company's Kremmling, Colo., plant appears below and something similar could be constructed near Valley Springs.***



The site already has a large manufacturing building, once the location of Calaveras Redwood, and the proposal calls for the addition of another building, said Mark Mathis, Confluence Energy CEO.

If all goes according to plan, construction of the new multi-million dollar facility would start in July and be completed in November.

The company takes dead, beetle-infested trees and other salvageable forest materials and turns them into a variety of manufactured products such as wood pellets, cat litter and garden and soil products.

After noting the pine beetle and tree mortality problem on the West Coast and visiting several locations, Valley Springs won the initial bid for the expansion plan, Mathis said.

Valley Springs “combines a desire by the community to join together in this project and offers a good location, access to material and a strong work force,” he said.

With the expansion, he added, Confluence Energy will be strong community partner. It will bring jobs to the region, increase the tax base within the community and utilize the dead beetle-kill material, which is a tremendous fire hazard in the region.

He anticipates the manufacturing facility will generate 10 to 12 inbound trucks per day delivering fiber and eight to 10 outbound trucks per day with finished products.

The plant will produce no noticeable smells and a small moisture release vapor plume on cooler days, according to Mathis, and there is noise attributed to the operation. “At the property line, we estimate 60 decibels, equal to talking.”

It is not the first time Confluence Energy has encountered beetle kill in surrounding forests. Based originally in Kremmling and Walden, Colorado, the company was initially founded to combat the massive beetle kill infestation in the Rocky Mountains around its onset about a decade ago.

The company originally began manufacturing wood heating pellets and expanded its product line to more than a dozen environmentally sustainable products.

“We are thrilled to help clean up an environmental issue like beetle kill by sustainably producing products across multiple sectors, from home and garden to industrial and agricultural,” Mathis said.

While the breadth of the company’s product line may seem surprising, it’s actually logical when considering all products are derived in large part from dying beetle-kill trees and other

wood and biomass material. All of the products are sustainably produced, free of artificial ingredients and many are organic.

Sustainably producing products has been a mission for the company from the beginning, and the addition of a biochar product to its mix was a huge step in the company's mission to become a carbon-negative manufacturer, Mathis added.

Since early in its operations, Confluence Energy has maintained its commitment to provide at least half of its energy usage from its own production process through thermal energy utilization within the plants. That eliminates the requirement for additional fossil fuels to provide energy for the manufacturing process. In an era where every carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) molecule counts, CE also is making an impact in reducing its carbon footprint. By producing Biochar and deriving approximately 50 percent of the company's energy from renewable, biomass sources, they're making green products even greener, Mathis said.

### **The path to a Carbon-Negative Manufacturing Process**

By developing and producing a patent-pending process to make TruChar™, a biochar product, Confluence Energy substantially reduced their atmospheric impact or "carbon footprint." To understand, it's important to look at how CO<sub>2</sub> is released into the atmosphere. Mother Nature, through photosynthesis, sequesters or stores carbon in biomass, like trees. When those trees burn or decompose, that carbon is released back into the atmosphere. CE uses a process to "fix" or sequester some of that carbon in a solid form that doesn't get released into the atmosphere. That product, called TrueChar™, "looks a lot like charcoal and acts like activated carbon," Mathis said. "It has an extremely high surface area and is a high value filter medium for improving soils, filtering water, erosion control, odor control, air filtration, along with a number of other applications we are developing."

CE currently generates about half of its energy at the Kremmling facility. At the Valley Springs location, "We intend to generate all of our required energy. This would make us the first carbon-negative manufacturing facility in the world, to the best of our knowledge," Mathis added.

Situated on what has been proposed as a site for the Coe Trade & Technology Center, Mathis said there would be an educational component to the company's operations with training provided in a variety of fields.