



A rendering of the Burgess BioPower plant to be built in Berlin.

COURTESY

Crowd celebrates start of Berlin biomass plant

By SARA YOUNG-KNOX
Union Leader Correspondent

BERLIN — There was no shortage of optimism in the Androscoggin Valley Thursday, as a crowd of 200-plus celebrated the beginning of a new era in Berlin with the groundbreaking for Cate Street Capital's Burgess BioPower plant.

Preliminary work on the \$275 million project has already begun. The expected start-up date for full-power generation at the facility is late 2013.

"It all starts today," Mayor Paul Grenier declared on the grounds of the former Burgess Pulp Mill, adding, "watch out New Hampshire, Berlin is back."

The plant, which will produce steam and hot water, will burn about 750,000 tons of low-grade wood per year. That consumption is expected to pump roughly \$25 million into the North Country economy, as foresters, loggers and chippers work to meet the demand.

Public Service of New Hampshire has a 20-year agreement with Cate Street to purchase its power.

Gov. John Lynch had high praise for Cate Street and its president and CEO, John Hallé. "There were many times," Lynch said, "they could have

walked away."

Gary Long, PSNH president, said Hallé is a problem-solver. "He gets things done."

Long said he first talked with Lynch five years ago about locating a biomass plant in Berlin, when the pulp mill shut down. Lynch, he said, "led us all through the last barriers."

Hallé said everyone worked hard to overcome obstacles.

"It was hard, it was tough, but that's nothing new to Cate Street and Berlin."

He said there was more in the works, "so stay tuned because we're not done yet."

He has said that the site is an ideal spot for a manufacturing company to locate.

During the construction phase, the plant is expected to create 400 construction jobs. When it is online, it will employ 40.

Among those who attended Thursday was Berlin resident Paul Cusson, who served on the local site evaluation committee for the project.

"People are starting to see we're not going to be a ghost town anymore," he said.

"There are all kinds of things that will happen that we can't foresee," Cusson continued, adding, "We learned a whole new word in this process: synergy."