

## LOCAL NEWS

# HSPP seeking to change fuel source

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File photo

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Howe Sound Pulp and Paper (HSPP) is in the midst of an application process with the Ministry of Environment (MOE) that could allow the company to add construction and demolition debris to the list of fuels it can burn to generate power.

Al Strang, manager of environment and external relations for HSPP, said he expects studies currently underway will show no measurable change in the local environment and airshed.

"We are confident that burning this fuel will not affect air quality in our community. To be certain of this, we are carrying out a comprehensive testing and modelling program that has been developed in conjunction with experts in this field and Ministry of Environment staff," Strang said.

HSPP has been using the debris in its power boiler since they filed the application in December. HSPP was then granted a temporary permit by MOE to begin studying any potential environmental effects.

The study looks at a range of factors including what is coming out of HSPP's stack and in what quantity, where the particulate and emissions go, climate factors, and air quality both in the mill and in the airshed around it. HSPP will make test results open to the public and gather comment at a series of public meetings in September.

Jonn Braman, regional manager in MOE's environmental protection division, said MOE staff will closely consider all the available information before it decides whether to allow the debris burning on a permanent basis.

"We want to make sure that if they are adding things and it changes the emissions, that the environment is protected," Braman said. "Any permit is evaluated based on the science, based on the input that we get from the public and other interested agencies and we have a choice. We make a decision to deny it. We make a decision to let it go ahead as requested or let it go ahead with specific conditions."

He said these types of applications have been turned down in the past. In the meantime, the public and interest groups can submit comments to MOE.

Strang said using the debris, which is about 94 per cent untreated wood, came about because of changes in the provincial forest industry.

"Milling on the Coast isn't what it once was, so the availability of hog fuel is an issue for us. So it's a way to get fuel for our boiler without bringing it from the Interior," Strang said.

He added that construction wood burns better and cleaner, is cheaper to acquire and allow HSPP to find another use for materials that would otherwise end up in a landfill.

"We shouldn't be sticking that stuff in a hole in the ground, which is what would be happening to it if it wasn't being burnt," Strang said.

Strang has been making the rounds to the Coast's local governments to notify them about the application and the consultation process that comes with it.

Gibsons council reacted with interest to Strang's presentation on Tuesday and raised concerns about the level and type of particulate the change would put in the air.

Strang told council that he expected "no measurable change."

Mayor Barry Janyk thanked Strang for the early consultation saying he had faith that the decision-making process would carry out as it should.

"We'll let process deal with it the way we always do," Janyk said, closing the discussion at the council table.

Sechelt council similarly raised a few concerns at their meeting Wednesday night, asking Strang, how HSPP could ensure that substances such as drywall and Styrofoam won't make it into the debris. Strang explained the process whereby waste goes through a picking line and air density separator to remove undesired waste.

"It's not 100 per cent effective. I'll be right up front about that," he said, but reiterated previous comments that the tests would show that the new fuel wouldn't impact air quality.

Council also asked if this type of fuel had been tried successfully elsewhere; Strang said that it is widely-used in Europe and that in the past few months of testing, HSPP has been using the fuel with success.

Strang was slated to appear at the Sunshine Coast Regional District at their committee meeting yesterday (Thursday) afternoon.

— With files from Jenny Wagler