



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION III
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029

Mr. Brent Collins
Vice President and Mill Manager
Georgia-Pacific Corporation Big Island Mill
9363 Lee Jackson Highway
Big Island, VA 24526

Dear Mr. Collins:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) wishes to recognize the Georgia-Pacific Corporation Big Island Mill for the hours, resources and talent it has dedicated over the last eight years in its effort to bring the black liquor gasification project to fruition. The EPA acknowledges receipt of your letter dated October 12, 2006 and the decision to discontinue the operation of the reformer system and begin construction of a conventional black liquor recovery system at the Mill, as provided for in the EPA Project eXcellence and Leadership (Project XL) Final Project Agreement and the February 11, 2005 Consent Agreement issued by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VADEQ).

EPA has been actively involved in tracking the successes, as well as the setbacks, the project has experienced and understands Georgia-Pacific's decision was based on the recent discovery of the cracks in the pulse heaters, continuing concerns with the carbon conversion, and the reliability of the system to support the Mill by economically treating all the black liquor waste. It is truly unfortunate that the superior environmental performance which EPA, Georgia-Pacific, and the other stakeholders had hoped to achieve (including order of magnitude reductions in air emissions and increased energy efficiency) will not be realized at the Big Island Mill through black liquor gasification. However, based on discussions at the November 1, 2006 stakeholders meeting, EPA believes the tremendous amount of information gained by the project will nevertheless prove to be of value, especially since the lessons learned will be made available to the public.

Georgia-Pacific's efforts have considerably advanced the science and engineering necessary to implement black liquor gasification on a production scale. EPA hopes that this endeavor will be the foundation that leads to a successful implementation of this technology in the near future.



EPA commends Georgia-Pacific as an innovator and leader, and for its willingness to attempt to implement pollution control technology whose performance all the stakeholders hoped would exceed existing regulatory requirements, and establish a new state of science for air pollution control in its industry.

If we can be of any further assistance in the future, please feel free to contact me or Steven J. Donohue, of the Environmental Assessment and Innovation Division at (215) 814-3215.

Sincerely,

Donald S. Welsh
Regional Administrator

cc: David K. Paylor, Director
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

