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Plans for Hersey potash plant in works

Posted by Karin Armbruster on May 3rd, 2016



INFORMATION: Allan Millward of the Michigan Potash Company speaks to Osceola County Township Association meeting attendees on Tuesday about a new potash plant in the works to be built in Hersey. The plant will mine potash and food-grade salt, he said. (Pioneer photos/Karin Armbruster)

EVART — A new company is making plans to build a potash plant in Hersey, which could mean more than 100 new jobs will be available for area residents.

At an Osceola County Township Association meeting on Tuesday in Evart, Michigan Potash Company representatives Allan Millward, Ward Forquer and Scott St. Germaine spoke about the endeavor and answered questions about the plant.

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The company, still in its beginning years, has purchased about 120 acres within Hersey and Evert townships and has plans to construct a plant on 120th Avenue and Schofield Road in the near future to cultivate about 800,000 tons of potash and 1 million tons of food-grade salt each year. Millward said the plant will take about two and a half years to build and provide hundreds of opportunities for construction companies. A road also will have to be created for shipping purposes.

The area where the plant is expected to be built is loaded with high-quality potash, which will be mined through six cavities 7,500 feet below ground. Using a deep underground aquifer, a closed-loop system will provide saturation to bring the minerals to the surface. The method will not affect area drinking water or wetlands, Millward said, according to environmental studies that already have taken place.

He said the company estimates there is enough potash in the Hersey area to last between 200 and 250 years. Mosaic Company, now Cargill Salt, previously mined potash from its plant location in Hersey. Potash is derived from potassium compounds and is commonly used in the making of fertilizers.

"The resource here is very rich and it'll be good for the people to have us here mining it," Millward added. "It's big and it's great for the community."

Once built, the plant also will provide an estimated 150 to 175 new full-time jobs for area residents on round-the-clock shifts. Wages, Millward said, are expected to be "competitive" with large companies like Yoplait, Cargill Salt and Consumers Energy. In addition to plant positions, about 170 indirect contract jobs also will be available.

Although a groundbreaking date has not been set due to pending permit approval and meeting state standards, Millward hopes details of the project will be finalized by the end of summer. If that occurs, a groundbreaking could happen as early as fall.

"I feel confident that this is coming down the road," he said.

Potash mined by the Michigan Potash Company will not be sold directly to farmers, but to state-registered fertilizer dealers to make sure their product

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FACTS: At the meeting, Millward said the plant could offer 150 to 175 new full-time positions for area residents and 170 indirect contract jobs.

is used properly.

Meeting attendees and Osceola County Township Association board members said they are hopeful to see the plant under construction soon and issued the company a warm welcome.

"I hope it comes because we need a lot of jobs," said Vicki Cushman, association supervisor.

Millward thanked the attendees for their interest and questions.

"We think it's wonderful for the county and for the state of Michigan," he said. "We have the knowledge and we have the right people to build a plant and do it right."

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Posted by Karin Armbruster

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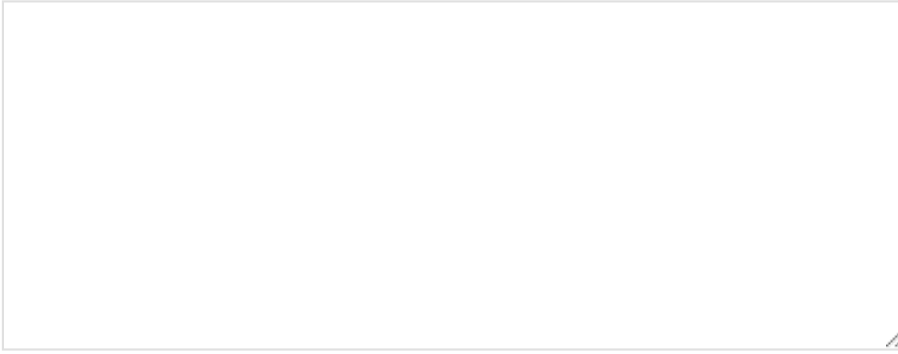


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