

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

Biofuel Boost in Indian River County

Big plans at New Planet Energy and Ineos Bio

by Mike Vogel



The Indian River County facility is slated to be completed in late 2011.

Biofuel refineries and jobs have been long on promise and short on delivery, but prospects of a demonstration plant materializing in Indian River County seem more concrete now that the federal Energy Department has awarded its developers a \$50-million grant.

A joint venture between a small firm, New Planet Energy, and Ineos Bio, an offshoot of the British chemical giant, wants to build the plant on the site of an old Ocean Spray grapefruit processing facility. Construction would create 120 jobs, and the on-going operation would require up to 50 full-time employees.

The funding came from a \$564-million grant pool for 19 biorefinery projects, all outside Florida except for the Indian River project. New Planet Energy President W.L. "Tex" Carter says the parent companies of the joint venture will provide the required matching funds to obtain the grant. "We're pretty excited about the project," Carter says.

Helene Castletine, Indian River County Chamber of Commerce economic development director, says the grant announcement is welcome news as it pushes the project, talked about for at least a year, closer to fruition.

The joint venture must obtain local permitting and approvals and close on the site, which is near the county landfill. It is slated to produce 8 million gallons of ethanol per year and 2 megawatts of electric power from a variety of sources such as yard, wood and vegetative waste. Once the demonstration plant proves the technology works, the plant can be expanded, Carter says.