

Formosa, opponents battle in EPA hearing

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Formosa Plastics Corp. promises a safe, clean plant for St. John the Baptist Parish's west bank.

Opponents are skeptical.

Company officials and River Parishes political leaders promise the plant will be an economic boon.

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The company says its proposed \$700 million rayon pulp-producing plant will fit in with the land-use plan on St. John's west bank.

And again, opponents are skeptical.

The sides have been drawn in the battle for what has become the most contested 1,800 acres in St. John Parish — the site Formosa has chosen for its proposed plant.

The sides squared again Friday night during an Environmental Protection Agency public hearing in Edgard.

Formosa officials said the rayon plant would produce 800 construction jobs for two years and 1,000 permanent jobs.

Last April, the St. John Parish Council rezoned a tract of land in Wallace, most of it on the Whitney Plantation, to accommodate the Formosa plant.

The battle has raged since.

Friday's hearing, the second conducted by the EPA, was to help the agency establish what issues are to be addressed in the environmental impact statement for the proposed rayon plant.

Walk, Haydel and Associates, with offices in Baton Rouge and New Orleans, will draft the

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