

Weather B-4
Deaths B-5
Editorials B-6

RVMT

Formosa negotiates

By **BOB WARREN**
River Parishes bureau

To the outrage of preservationists and environmentalists, Formosa Plastics Corp. has opened negotiations to buy Evergreen Plantation on St. John the Baptist Parish's west bank.

A Formosa official, however, said any purchase is far in the future. The company entered negotiations after being contacted by the plantation's owner, he said.

"They approached us," said Alden

Andre, a Formosa vice president. "We've had some preliminary discussion. It's been a long time since we last talked. Months. We made a proposal and they made a proposal."

Last year, Formosa announced plans to build a rayon and petrochemical plant on the 1,700-acre Whitney Planation site in Wallace, which borders Evergreen to the west. The announcement, and the Parish Council's zoning to accommodate the plant, touched off a firestorm of controversy pitting environmentalists against company executives, parish offi-

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to buy plantation m

cials and local businessmen. Environmentalists say the company is a polluter; Formosa's supporters say it will bring jobs to the impoverished west bank.

Opponents have filed suit challenging the rezoning.

Evergreen encompasses nearly 2,100 acres in Wallace. Historical accounts say the house, a white, tall-columned structure with a double staircase in front, two fireplaces and a widow's walk, was built in 1840.

Company and parish officials have pledged to renovate the Whitney Planta-

tion house, now fenced off and in disrepair. Andre said that if the company buys Evergreen, the house would be preserved and opened to the public. Evergreen is currently closed to the public.

But the prospect of another River Road plantation home owned by industry doesn't sit well with preservationists. They criticize Formosa for endangering a "green belt" devoid of heavy industry on St. John's west bank.

The River Road is the second-most desirable area for visitors to south Loui-

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B-2 SATURDAY, JANUARY 5, 1991 THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

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Plantation

From B-1

"Once this plant is con-
structed, Evergreen is worth-
less," Coleman told
as a residence." Coleman told
Environmental Protection
Agency officials Thursday night
during a hearing on Formosa's
rayon plant proposal. "Evergreen
comes out of operation."

Coleman would not elaborate
on his statements. Stream, who
maintains homes in New Orleans
and Lake Charles, is out of town
and not available for comment, a
secretary said.

Andre said Stream asked "in
excess of \$20 million" for the
plantation but would not discuss

specific figures. Blanche Lovelly
of the River Road Restoration
Coalition said she heard that
Formosa offered \$8 million for
Evergreen.

"It's worth that much to
them," Andre said of Stream's
asking price. "But not to us.
We're not in the antebellum
home business."

He said Formosa's interest in
the Evergreen property is "just to
add some more buffer zone. At
this time, if the price is right,
we'd buy more land."

Historians have pointed to Ev-
ergreen as one of the few planta-
tions with many of its support
structures — slave quarters —
still intact.
"Most don't have the outer

buildings," said Natchez, Miss.,
resident J. Wesley Cooper, who
studied Evergreen for his 1961
book "A Treasury of Louisiana
Plantation Homes."

"This gives a historical glimpse
of plantation life, including slav-
ery. That's very much a part of
Louisiana and the U.S," he said.

Mayhew said plantation-
spurred tourism — Oak Alley saw
more than 95,000 visitors last
year; San Francisco Plantation in
Garyville, more than 78,000 —
should be pushed as a Louisiana
industry.

"It's an insult to site a plant
next to Evergreen Plantation and
Whitney Plantation," Mayhew
said. "The fact that the public doesn't
not open to the public doesn't
mean it's not of interest to peo-
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Saturday, January 5, 1991

to buy plantation neighbor

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The River Road is the second-most desirable area for visitors to south Loui-

siana, behind New Orleans, said Zeb Mayhew, an administrator of Oak Alley Plantation in Vacherie, La., west of Wallace. "How people can want to ruin that, I can't fathom," Mayhew said.

Evergreen owner Matilda Stream initiated the talks in November, Andre said.

Stream's attorney, James Coleman Sr. of New Orleans, has indicated that Formosa's proposed Whitney location is behind the sale negotiations.

See PLANTATION, next page