

## **Right-of-Way Clearing Method Creates Biofuel**

*Scanner Magazine* – January 2009

Construction is set to begin around February on Line 114, a new 18-mile 69-kV insulated transmission line from the Macedonia switching station to the Ellisville Junction switching station, following completion of the right-of-way clearing process. The line will provide improvement to South Mississippi Electric's 69-kV transmission system and voltage support for the Member's substations.

Kermit Broome and Sons Wood Chipping, Inc. of Sumrall is working on the clearing project, its third for SME using the chipping method. Not only does the company clear the trees and grind the stumps, the specialized equipment which is used also chips and mulches everything on-site. When completed, the right-of-way is completely cleared of trees and brush and ready for construction to begin, while the salvaged wood is ready for recycling.

"It is a win every way you look at it," said Mitch Westberry, construction inspector. "Broome and Sons takes the woodchips from the site and sells them to various paper and pulp mills for use as fuel or pulp. The chips from this project will be sold to Center Point Energy in Wiggins, Masonite in Laurel, and Temple Inland in Bogalusa, Louisiana."

The method used to clear new rights-of-way depends on the volume of timber within the proposed route. Regardless of the method used, however, the tree roots must be left in place, and the soil must be left in a condition that prevents erosion.

Some landowners ultimately decide to sell the merchantable timber along the right-of-way. In such cases, after the logging operations are complete, the right-of-way is sheared, leaving the remaining timber scattered. After that, the vegetation must be pushed to the outside edges of the right-of-way, creating piles of debris that become a hindrance during construction and maintenance.

"The chipping process is competitive when it comes to clearing rights-of-way with timber that will not be sold," said Jerry Pierce, director of transmission construction. "Because chipping involves higher operating expenses due to the equipment involved, the contractor has to be able to generate revenue from the salvaged wood, as Broome and Sons is doing on this line."

"Having the rights-of-way completely cleared allows the construction to begin sooner," said Westberry. "Saving time on the front-end makes the entire construction process smoother and more efficient. We are always planning ahead for our transmission needs, and this allows us to build lines in less time."

The benefits of the chipping method also extend to future maintenance efforts. After Line 114 is completed this spring, it will be easily adapted to the Quality Vegetation Management program recently adopted by the Association.

“A new line cleared in this manner can receive its first herbicide spray immediately after being completed,” said Wesley Graham, right-of-way supervisor. “Then the right-of-way will be placed on a 2- or 4-year maintenance rotation. The completed line will be treated as a whole unit since there are no debris piles to interfere with the maintenance. Having the lines cleared enhances our ability to properly treat the vegetation and capture any new growth or potential re-growth.”

“Using Broome and Sons has made a positive difference,” said Westberry. “They are good at what they do, which makes it easier for us to be better at what we do.”