

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
August 18, 2020

**Contact:**

Tom Pelton, Environmental Integrity Project, (202) 888-2703 or

[tpelton@environmentalintegrity.org](mailto:tpelton@environmentalintegrity.org)

Clarissa Ayala, Lone State Legal Aid, (713) 652-0077 or [cayala@lonestarlegal.org](mailto:cayala@lonestarlegal.org)

Courtney Naquin, Communications Coordinator, Sierra Club, (512) 888-9373 or

[courtney.naquin@sierraclub.org](mailto:courtney.naquin@sierraclub.org)

**Environmental Groups Sue Texas Wood Pellet Plant for Toxic Emissions**

*The Woodville Pellets Plant Releases Vast Amounts of Unlawful Air Pollution That Is Dangerous For Public Health And The Environment*

**Austin, Texas** — The Environmental Integrity Project and Lone Star Legal Aid today filed [a lawsuit](#) in federal court against a wood pellet manufacturing plant about 90 miles northeast of Houston for violating the Clean Air Act and emitting hundreds of tons of illegal VOC pollution and dozens of tons of hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) per year.

The plant, located in Woodville, Texas, has delayed installing a required air pollution control for nearly two years, and also routinely used unauthorized “bypass” smoke stacks to circumvent the facility’s existing air pollution controls. On dozens of occasions since Woodville Pellets, LLC, acquired the facility from the bankrupt German Pellets in June of 2019, the company has used these bypass stacks to emit harmful air pollution directly into neighboring communities.

“We’ve seen many wood pellet plants emitting vast amounts of illegal pollution, but most of those plants quickly installed the additional controls needed to operate within the law,” **said Patrick Anderson, attorney for the Environmental Integrity Project.** “Woodville Pellets could and absolutely should do the same as soon as possible, but they are dragging their feet, forcing us to bring this lawsuit.”

When the facility was constructed in 2012, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) limited VOC emissions from the plant to 64 tons per year. In 2015, however, German Pellets admitted the plant actually emitted at least 580 tons of VOCs per year, nearly ten times the legal limit. This also meant that the plant should have been permitted as a major source of air pollution under the Clean Air Act, which would have required much more stringent emission controls.

It took until 2018 and the intervention of EIP and Sierra Club, amongst other groups, to convince regulators to take action and require the installation of new, advanced air pollution controls needed to bring the plant into compliance. Unfortunately, after Woodville Pellets acquired the plant, with full knowledge of the requirement to install the new control technology, the company sought extensive delays to start installing the new pollution controls. Woodville Pellets ultimately

convinced TCEQ to allow the company until April 2022, nearly three years after purchasing the plant, to even begin construction of the new controls.

“Since the day this plant began operating seven years ago, this facility has been severely out of compliance with crucial Clean Air Act requirements that protect the health of the community,” **said Amy Dinn with Lone Star Legal Aid.** “It’s extremely disappointing that Woodville Pellets now wants to wait at least two more years to start fixing the problem.”

The Environmental Integrity Project and Lone Star Legal Aid are filing suit against Woodville Pellets on behalf of the Sierra Club and its Lone Star Chapter as well as one individual plaintiff, Dustin Stafford. EIP is representing the Sierra Club while Lone Star Legal Aid is representing the individual plaintiff.

“The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club fights to protect Texans from illegal and harmful pollution,” **said Neil Carman, Clean Air Director, Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club.** “Woodville Pellets needs to stop its unacceptable bypassing that impacts the community and install the critical air pollution controls as soon as possible.”

“Living with the smoke, dust, and pollution from this plant in our backyard has been a nightmare since Woodville Pellets took over operations,” **said plaintiff Dustin Stafford.** “We’re not trying to shut down the plant, we just want the plant to be in compliance with the law and for the company to be a good neighbor here in Woodville.”

Download the complaint [here](#).