

Italian-based carpet recycling firm opening 2nd US plant in Woodland

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Aquafil, a carpet recycling facility, is opening a new plant in Woodland that will bring about 50 jobs. JIM SMITH-DAILY DEMOCRAT

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A company based in Trento, Italy, has chosen Woodland as its second location in the United States for a multi-million dollar carpet recycling facility.

Aquafil opened its first recycling operation in Phoenix, Arizona, offering a long-awaited solution to a persistent source of waste. Aquafil Carpet Recycling — known as ACR No. 1 — has been recycling the Nylon 6 waste from carpets back into raw material, further enhancing its pioneering ECONYL Regeneration System. The company says it's the only technology in the world capable of regenerating Nylon 6 from carpets and other waste, including fishing nets.

The Woodland plant – known as ACR No. 2 – will perform the same function, according to Kathy Long, brand communications manager of an Aquafil facility in Cartersville, Georgia.

She said the decision to put a plant in Woodland was made in April. Members of the Woodland City Council toured the facility in the 500 block of Pioneer Avenue several weeks ago.

When completed by spring 2019, the \$12 million facility will employ 50 people full time with three shifts of eight hours each. Workers needed include those with mechanical, electrical and technical skills.

Long said the building in Woodland is actually twice the size of what's needed and that the firm intends to sublease a portion of it. "We already have a subtenant, Cutting Edge, they make mobile homes, and we are looking for a second."

Woodland Mayor, Enrique Fernandez, called it "a huge investment on their part and the city of Woodland welcomes them with open arms.

"I'm thrilled to have them here," he said at a council meeting two weeks past.

Long said since it was founded in 1969, Aquafil has been one of the leading players – both in Italy and globally – in the production of polyamide, or Nylon 6. The Aquafil Group has a presence in eight countries on three continents, employing more than 2,700 staff at 14 plants located in Italy, Germany, Scotland, Slovenia, Croatia, the U.S., Thailand and China.

Right now, the plant in Phoenix is on track to recycle 16,000 tons of used carpets a year that would otherwise end up in landfills. The recycled material is used for filler in concrete and asphalt. The fibers reclaimed can also be used for new fabrics, clothing other things.

Each year in the U.S., about 4 billion pounds of carpet is discarded in landfills.

"We're not comfortable with the status quo – in this case that less than five percent of carpet waste is recycled," said Aquafil CEO Giulio Bonazzi. "We know Nylon 6 waste can be powerful with the proper technology ..."

Carpet recycling has historically been a challenge due to the many different materials used, along with designs that do not allow for easy separation. At both the Phoenix and Woodland plants, Aquafil is seeking to avoid the use of petroleum, reduce carbon emissions and give waste "an infinite number of lives without sacrificing quality."

"We want to recycle as much carpet as possible by establishing a number of these facilities throughout the U.S.," said Bonazzi. "This activity will be closely connected to our fishing nets recycling efforts, which diverts millions of pounds of waste from our oceans."

ECONYL yarn is in demand with carpet and textile manufacturers, as well as apparel brands.

To date, Aquafil has partnered with more than 160 brands including Adidas, Volcom and Stella McCartney, along with carpet manufacturers such as Interface, Milliken, Mannington and Tarkett Group.