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Manufacturing startup chooses Las Cruces for production center Big Tuna USA has rights to exclusive pipe product

LAS CRUCES, N.M. -A company with a unique niche in the North American pipe industry has chosen Las Cruces for its manufacturing center and will be hiring 30 workers over the next three years, Economic Development Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes announced today.

Big Tuna USA has signed a lease on a vacant 15,000 square foot building that sits on 7.5 acres at 1846 W. Amador Rd., Las Cruces, N.M. Big Tuna USA holds the exclusive rights to manufacture and distribute a high-density pipe product patented by Australian-based Long Pipes Ltd. The product has a significantly larger internal diameter and a higher pressure rating than current market solutions.

The initial target market for the piping is the oil and gas industry for process water management systems.

The company chose New Mexico over other states in the Southwest for its strong business climate, workforce, transportation infrastructure, and incentives. The company will invest \$7.5 million of private money into the site, while the state has pledged \$200,000 in economic assistance from its LEDA closing fund. The city of Las Cruces has also pledged \$75,000 from its municipal LEDA dollars.

"We looked at Colorado, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico and we're pretty excited about this location in Las Cruces," said Mike Watters, director of operations for Big Tuna USA. "We're starting a business from the ground up and the incentives really make this feasible."

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham welcomed the company, saying its decision to locate in New Mexico shows the state is now on the map for manufacturers looking to expand.

"I'm absolutely thrilled by our continued economic expansion across key growth areas," Gov. Lujan Grisham said. "Every new partner, each new investment, all the new jobs -- all of it boosts the signal we're sending to industry here and elsewhere that New Mexico is open for business and ready for significant growth."

Keyes said that Big Tuna is bringing a new product to market that adds to New Mexico's reputation for innovation.

"We have the workforce, we have the business climate, we have the incentives and companies are taking notice," Keyes said. "Big Tuna is a great example of a startup company coming to New Mexico where it can take a great idea and succeed."

Big Tuna was recruited by the Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance. The city of Las Cruces serves as the fiscal agent for the assistance.

"We are excited about this opportunity to welcome yet another international manufacturing operation to Las Cruces," Las Cruces Mayor Ken Miyagishima said. "Through the efforts of MVEDA and our economic development team we continue the momentum of industry diversification and new job opportunities for our residents."

Big Tuna expects to spend four months on construction and redevelopment at the Las Cruces site with a goal of producing 50-miles of pipe in 2020 and doubling that in 2021 and 2022. The jobs will pay an average of \$15.70 an hour.

The company plans to initially target water management systems in the United States and then progressively step into other pipeline markets, including low-pressure natural gas, non-potable water, and agricultural and municipal water distribution services.

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The New Mexico Economic Development Department's mission is to improve the lives of New Mexico families by increasing economic opportunities and providing a place for businesses to thrive.

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