



Heritage-Crystal Clean, Inc. Announces Re-Refinery Startup

ELGIN, Ill., January 26, 2012 -- Heritage-Crystal Clean, Inc. (Nasdaq: HCCI), a leading provider of parts cleaning, used oil re-refining, and hazardous and non-hazardous waste services to small and mid-sized customers, today announced the startup of the second phase of its used oil re-refinery in Indianapolis, Indiana, and the first production of lubricating base oil from the plant.

This re-refinery is the second largest in the United States, with the capacity to annually recycle up to 50 million gallons of used oil and produce up to 30 million gallons of lubricating base oil. The project was announced in 2010, initially with an expected startup in the middle of 2012, but the Company was able to accelerate the project and finish the construction by the end of 2011.

HCCI's Founder, President and Chief Executive Officer, Joe Chalhoub, commented: "We are very excited that we have begun to produce lubricating base oil at our re-refinery. Our engineering, construction, and operations teams did a great job getting the plant built and started well ahead of the original schedule. While plant construction was ongoing, we were also adding service customers and building our used oil collection volume, and we are now up to an annual run rate of approximately 25 million gallons per year. During 2011, we added more than 12,500 new used oil customers, and we anticipate accelerating the growth in our customer base as we continue to roll-out our used oil services to the 67 branches in our network. We expect that after breaking in the plant and completing performance test runs, we will begin running at approximately this rate (50% of capacity) and plan to ramp up to full capacity by 2013."

Greg Ray, Chief Operating Officer, added: "While our accounting is not yet final, our current estimate is that the total project cost will be about \$54 million. This is slightly higher than previously estimated, and includes additional costs for profitability-related scope changes to the project as well as incentive payments to contractors to accelerate mechanical completion." He added, "During the second half of 2011, we operated the front end of our re-refinery, producing and selling intermediate products, and gaining valuable experience with the production capabilities of this facility. While in this intermediate mode, our results did not reflect the full potential of re-refining. After completing the plant construction in December, we started up the hydrotreating section of the re-refinery, and began to produce lubricating base oil. The costs for starting this phase of the plant, and the accelerated expansion of our used oil collection program, have led to greater pressure on our margins, and this may continue through the ongoing shakedown of the plant during the first quarter of 2012. As the plant commences normal operations, we expect to increase the potential profit contribution from our Oil Business."

Safe Harbor Statement

All references to the "Company," "we," "our," and "us" refer to Heritage-Crystal Clean, Inc., and its subsidiary.

This release contains forward-looking statements that are based upon current management expectations. Generally, the words "aim," "anticipate," "believe," "could," "estimate," "expect," "intend," "may," "plan," "project," "should," "will be," "will continue," "will likely result," "would" and similar expressions identify forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other important factors that could cause our actual results, performance or achievements or industry results to differ materially from any future results, performance or achievements expressed or implied by these forward-looking statements. These risks, uncertainties and other important factors include, among others: our ability to complete our used oil re-refinery as anticipated; the used oil re-refinery does not perform as anticipated; we are unable to generate sufficient funds to build and support our used oil re-refinery; we do not realize the anticipated benefits from our acquisition of the Warrior Group; our ability to comply with the extensive environmental, health and safety and employment laws and regulations that our Company is subject to; changes in environmental laws that affect our business model; competition; claims relating to our handling of hazardous substances; the limited demand for our used solvent; our dependency on key employees; our ability to effectively manage our extended network of branch locations; warranty expense and liability claims; personal injury litigation; dependency of suppliers; economic conditions including the recent recession and financial crisis, and downturns in the business cycles of automotive repair shops, industrial manufacturing business and small businesses in general; increased solvent, fuel and energy costs and volatility in the price of crude oil; the control of The Heritage Group over our

Company; and the risks identified in our Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 4, 2011 and subsequent filings with the SEC. Given these uncertainties, you are cautioned not to place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements. We assume no obligation to update or revise them or provide reasons why actual results may differ. The information in this release should be read in light of such risks and in conjunction with the consolidated financial statements and the notes thereto included elsewhere in this release.

About Heritage-Crystal Clean, Inc.

Heritage-Crystal Clean, Inc. provides parts cleaning, used oil re-refining, and hazardous and non-hazardous waste services to small and mid-sized customers in both the manufacturing and automotive service sectors. Our service programs include parts cleaning, containerized waste management, used oil collection, and vacuum truck services. These services help our customers manage their used chemicals and liquid and solid wastes, while also helping to minimize their regulatory burdens. Our customers include businesses involved in vehicle maintenance operations, such as car dealerships, automotive repair shops, and trucking firms, as well as small manufacturers, such as metal product fabricators and printers. Heritage-Crystal Clean, Inc. is headquartered in Elgin, Illinois, and operates through 67 branches serving over 44,000 customer locations.

The Company uses its website to make available information to investors and the public at www.crystal-clean.com.

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