

## More businesses are betting on biodiesel

### Companies in the region and across the U.S. are paying to power vehicles in an environmentally friendly way

By Jordan Novet / *The Bulletin*

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For five years, Daniel Brewster had run his zero-emissions bicycle-courier business around Bend.

But when he saw an opportunity to expand Cascade Couriers' services, picking up and delivering baked goods and other products to cities nearby, he needed a vehicle powered by more than just his legs.

He knew he didn't want a gasoline-powered vehicle. An electric van probably would have cost upward of \$40,000. So he went with what he saw as the best technology available last year — a used 2006 Dodge Sprinter, which can run on both ordinary diesel and vegetable oil-based biodiesel — allowing him to keep the environmentally friendly image and grow the business.

"It fits in to what I want to do with the business, and if that fits in with what our customers want, then that's awesome," he said.

In selecting a vehicle that can run on biodiesel — which is processed vegetable oil — Brewster joined a group of business owners who are paying a premium to be more environmentally friendly.

Data measuring biodiesel use locally isn't available. But anecdotally, it does seem to be going up in Central Oregon.

The number of gallons of biodiesel used in the United States shot up 4,600 percent from 2000 to 2009, according to data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration. And by 2025, supply in the country will increase sixfold over the amount available in 2009, which was approximately 20,000 barrels per day, the agency predicted.

Biodiesel fuels have cost more per gallon than gasoline and standard diesel in the past three years, according to U.S.



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Department of Energy reports. Cold weather causes some biodiesel fuels to gel, preventing vehicles from running.

Nearly all diesel fuel sold in Oregon contains some biodiesel, and on April 1, state law increased the amount from 2 percent to 5 percent.

Looking toward the future, Brewster said he foresees more businesses and individual consumers switching to biodiesel.

Plenty of businesses beside Brewster's have already made the jump, for environmental and economic reasons, said Brennan Morrow, ex-president of the Bend BioFuels Cooperative, an organization promoting biofuel.

Companies in the region with biodiesel-powered vehicles include Fagen Trees & Chips, Bellatazza and Nik's Diesel & Repair, Morrow said.

Morrow's company, Solar Light & Energy LLC in Bend, is also part of the group, with two vehicles that take biodiesel.

"We do B100 as long as we can until the temperature starts dropping, and then we switch to the B20," Morrow said, referring to blends containing almost 100 percent and around 20 percent biodiesel, respectively.

He gets the blends at the Quickway Market Inc. station in northeast Bend.

So does Brewster, who said he hopes travelers will strike up conversations with him while he's out on the job. A small sticker on the van states, "Sustainable distribution."

Jeff Rola, president of Go Bio Co. in Bend, has in the past three years found profit in supplying a company with used vegetable oil, which gets converted into biodiesel.

He regularly brings used vegetable oil from around 160 Central Oregon restaurants and other businesses to SeSequential-Pacific Biodiesel's Salem production facility.

And yes, he said, he fills up his three diesel trucks with biodiesel.

"There's that whole altruistic story that we're saving the planet, that we're using a recycled product, that we're getting off of foreign oil and all that stuff, which is valuable," Rola said. "But what people have to realize is that green is also the color of money. ... (But) I can sleep a lot better at night if I can contribute to my community being a better place to live."

His business stands to gain from Oregon's biodiesel mandate.

"Pretty much every person that runs a diesel vehicle has some percentage of biodiesel — from 5 percent to 20 percent — and they just don't know it," Morrow said.

On the supply side, that's a good thing for biodiesel producers such as SeSequential-Pacific, said marketing director Brad Marluke.

The rollback of a federal tax credit for diesel blenders on Jan. 1 was a setback, he said. But the plant's output has gone up substantially in the years since its establishment in 2006, Marluke said, and supply and demand will increase in the coming decades.

“We are in desperate need of every single drop of cooking oil we can get, and the more cooking oil we can get, the more biodiesel we can make,” Marluke said. “We don’t really have an issue with selling biodiesel.”

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