

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

## Biodiesel pumps reach one-year mark at Shell

*East County's only source for alternative fuel celebrates anniversary of B99*

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CAROLE ARCHER / THE GRESHAM OUTLOOK

Lila Leathers, owner of the Shell Station on 182nd Avenue and Division Street, talks about biodiesel Thursday, May 17. Her husband, Michael Fitz, StarOilco owner, is at the pump.

### **StarOilco Owner Michael Fitz loves checking out the bumper stickers of the vehicles that pull up to Leathers Shell Station's biodiesel pumps.**

"It's everything from NRA to John Kerry," he said. "It's a complete cross section of America. It's everybody who is concerned about our dependence on foreign oil. It's everybody who is concerned about having cleaner air, recycling, supporting the American farmer."

The Shell Station, at 18145 S.E. Division St., is East County's only source for the fuel made from recycled cooking oil, animal fat and/or canola oil. This month it celebrates its first anniversary of offering B99, or a blend of 99 percent biodiesel and 1 percent petroleum diesel. Station owner Lila Leathers plans to open one more pump next year, offering B50, which is 50 percent biodiesel and 50 percent petroleum.

The station has a retail pump, available to anyone, and a "cardlock" pump, which is for drivers who have a commercial fueling card.

Leathers said the transition to offering biodiesel was easier for her at the 182nd/Division station because she already had four large tanks underground to hold the fuel.

"That was key," said Fitz, her husband. "You have to have those tanks in place, and they're huge, like 20,000 gallons each."

Leathers said sales have been steady at the two biodiesel pumps, with an expected drop in the winter season. Biodiesel, especially the B99, will gel in colder temperatures. Some trucks have heaters built in to keep the fuel from gelling, but many vehicles don't have such technology installed.

That's why Leathers will be installing a B50 pump next year, because that mix can often keep the fuel at the right consistency no matter the weather.

The station has seen the biggest jump in sales from March to April – a 30-percent increase.

Offering biodiesel, Leathers said, “just seemed like the thing to do. For the environment, and with the war in Iraq, this was something we could do to help decrease the importing of oil and also cut down on emissions.”

Gavin Carpenter, sales representative for Portland’s SeSequential Biofuels, said Leathers has been a leader in installing biodiesel pumps in Oregon. Of the 25 Leathers’ Shell stations in the state, two of them offer biodiesel; and all of Leather’s husband’s six stations offer the alternative fuel.

Statistics compiled by SeSequential found that the sale of biodiesel at Leathers Shell stations has decreased carbon dioxide emissions by 828,100 pounds and lowered carbon monoxide by 990 pounds. SeSequential used Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency calculations as a source.

While the benefits of biodiesel are many, some criticize the fuel for adding more nitrogen oxide to the air, a chief cause of smog. But studies have varied, and often the increase depends on the engine type.

“It’s not a clear-cut case of across-the-board increase in nitrogen oxide,” Carpenter said.

Advantages of biodiesel include:

- New markets for American farm products.
- New jobs in rural communities.
- Increase in energy independence.
- Unlike petroleum, which takes millions of years to form, the plants used to create biodiesel are a sustainable resource.
- Biodiesel causes engines to run more smoothly and quieter.
- Decreases tailpipe emissions, including carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter, hydrocarbons and carbon dioxide.
- It is biodegradable and breaks down roughly four times faster than petroleum diesel.
- It is less combustible than petroleum, making it safer to store and transport.

At the Leathers Shell on Thursday, May 17, a gallon of diesel fuel cost \$2.99; a gallon of biodiesel cost \$3.29.

It’s more expensive, Leathers said, but it pays off in dividends for the environment. “This is worth it for us,” Leathers said. “It just seemed like the friendly thing to do for Oregon.”