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Asheville Restaurants to Recycle with Local Biofuels Producers under New Certification

Asheville, N.C. (07/23/12) – As of June 2012, restaurants in Asheville, NC are required to recycle used cooking oil through a biofuels producer in order to receive Green Restaurant Association (GRA) certification. Asheville adds its name to a short list of cities with this requirement, including Baltimore, MD, Boston, MA, and Portland, OR. Prior to the decision, restaurants in Asheville receiving certification were permitted to use any service provider, the majority of which are based outside of NC. These service providers take the valuable resource of used cooking oil away from the local economy and from biofuels production, thus adding to a restaurant's carbon footprint instead of improving it.

Used cooking oil is a valuable commodity that has many applications, including animal feed and the manufacturing of biodiesel, makeup, and soap. Competition has driven prices paid to restaurants for their oil to record highs. This resource is in high demand and Blue Ridge Biofuels, a biodiesel manufacturer in Asheville, NC must compete with a dozen other service providers for used cooking oil in Western North Carolina. The requirement that restaurants seeking Green Restaurant Certification must now use a biofuels producer as their oil collection service provider ensures that the restaurants are fulfilling their mission to be sustainable establishments.

GRA is a national nonprofit organization helping restaurants become more environmentally sustainable. When Kevin Westmoreland and Joe Scully, the owners of Corner Kitchen, a renowned farm-to-table restaurant in Asheville, decided to seek Green Restaurant Certification, the GRA contacted their service provider, Blue Ridge Biofuels, to confirm the restaurant recycled its used cooking oil. This inquiry, coupled with the Asheville Independent Restaurant (AIR) Association's initiative to make Asheville the Premier Green Restaurant Certified city in the US, prompted the examination into the Green Restaurant Certification 4.0 Standard. Following the discussion, Blue Ridge Biofuels contacted North Carolina Biodiesel Association President Leif Forer in an effort to build a case for changing the GRA certification requirement. GRA Founder Michael Oshman made the final decision to modify certification requirements for Asheville. Together, all parties agreed that recycling cooking oil with a local biodiesel producer helped lower green house gas emissions and supported local fuel production used for farming, transportation, and industrial manufacturing.

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