

Biodiesel Push Welcome, Sensible

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Written by Woodrow Eaton

OPINION

The Obama administration should be commended for supporting strong domestic energy policy by boosting biodiesel production in September under the Renewable Fuel Standard. This decision will stimulate new biodiesel production and create jobs across the country, including right here in Asheville. Blue Ridge Biofuels has been producing biodiesel made from regionally collected used cooking oil since 2005. Our Asheville-made biodiesel is used throughout Western North Carolina by a variety of customers, including large fleets, farms and construction companies as well as being sold at eight public stations and to more than 1,000 individual homes as Bioheat. To date, we have displaced more than 1.24 million gallons of petroleum diesel, which equates to more than 10,000 tons of carbon dioxide being kept out of our atmosphere.

Biodiesel — made from recycled cooking oil, agricultural oils and animal fats — is the first and only EPA-designated advanced biofuel to be produced on a commercial scale nationwide. The administration's decision increases the amount of biodiesel that refiners must use to displace petroleum diesel next year to a total of 1.28 billion gallons (out of a U.S. diesel market of about 55 billion gallons).

This gives the biodiesel industry the certainty it needs to boost production and invest in manufacturing plants and technology.

It also will diversify our fuel supplies so that we're not so dependent on global petroleum prices that are so damaging to our national security and economic growth. Blue Ridge Biofuels is currently producing 500,000 gallons of biodiesel a year with a staff of 11. By having a strong Renewable Fuels Standard, we will be able to continue our growth, hire more employees and achieve our target goal of 1 million gallons produced annually. North Carolina imports all of its liquid petroleum fuel.

Using North Carolina-made biodiesel keeps dollars in our regional economy instead of sending them overseas. Using biodiesel is one of the most patriotic and environmentally responsible things a person can do.

With fuel prices once again on the rise, this is exactly the kind of smart domestic energy policy we need for the future.

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