

Marine Fleets Fuel with BioDiesel

By Meaghan Wims
Newport Daily News staff

NEWPORT - Capt. Jim Head calls his job "a labor of love." He steers everything from small launch boats to the Amazing Grace Harbor cruiser, all docked at Oldport Marine.

Oldport's fleet of launches, water taxis and tour boats recently switched to biodiesel fuel, a cleaner and more environmentally friendly alternative fuel source.

To Head, the change is a positive one.

"Besides a slight aroma of cooking oil (think French fry grease) and a sticker identifying the Oldport boats as biodiesel powered, there isn't much difference in captaining vessels run partly on soybean oil," Head said.

"I drive everything from the smallest boat to the biggest ship," Head said while aboard Tango, a launch boat, **"I don't notice a difference. It hasn't compromised performance."**

Oldport Marine, run by Ron Ackman and Mike Muessel, recently announced the switch from common diesel fuel to a BioDiesel mixture. Oldport uses B20, a mixture of 20 percent BioDiesel and 80 percent standard petroleum-based diesel, which is delivered once a week for fuel-ups.

"We believe in the whole program and in having less dependence on foreign oil," said Oldport Manager Matt Gineo. **"It's much better for the environment and burns cleaner. It's actually better for engines because it's lubricating and preserves the longevity of engines."**

Biodiesel is a renewable fuel source made from grease waste or soybean, fat or vegetable oil. Unlike traditional diesel fuel, it contains no sulfur and emits 78 percent less carbon dioxide, reducing smog production and contributing fewer emissions to global warming. No engine modifications are required.



Oldport Marine is part of a pilot program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy and the Rhode

Island Office of Energy Resources. Oldport partnered with Drew Oil of Cranston, hudsonecofuel of Providence and TH Malloy Fuel of Cumberland.

Save the Bay also is part of the pilot program, using biodiesel in its 46- and 26- foot educational vessels.

"There doesn't really seem to be a downside to it," said Eric Pfirrmann, Save the Bay's fleet captain. **"It reduces carbon output by 30 percent, and the bio product helps to break down the diesel in the environment. My fuel consumption rates have been unchanged and I've seen no loss of power."**

Only a handful of companies in Rhode island make or sell biodiesel. Warwick has used biodiesel in some of its schools and school buses.

Gineo said Oldport Marine hopes its visibility – the company's launches and water taxis operate throughout Newport Harbor – will promote biodiesel.

"We want to get the word out," Gineo said. **"We've always believed in biodiesel. We're hoping many marinas will eventually begin to carry it."**