

Friday, September 25, 2009

Sustainability

Green network collects restaurant cooking oil to create fuel

Phoenix Business Journal - by [Patrick O'Grady](#)

The [Green Dining Network](#) is getting a new start, new digs and a new partner in producing biofuels from used cooking oil.

The once-nomadic sustainability effort that started in Chandler and ended up in Gilbert now is based in Glendale. It has severed ties with AZ BioDiesel, a group that was hoping to market large quantities of the biofuel, and signed on with [Amereco Biofuels Corp.](#) to refine its fuel and bring it to pumps across the state.



Jim Poulin/Phoenix Business Journal
Green Dining Network President Marvin McCarthy, left, and driver Dennis Fulin collect used cooking oil into tanks for conversion to biofuel.

Marvin McCarthy, president of Green Dining Network, was brought on board by founders Mark Hinkle and Rick Katt to develop connections with the Valley's restaurant base, which will supply the used cooking oil.

"Our goal is to create a sustainable community of diners and restaurants," McCarthy said.

The group started about 18 months ago, initially working with AZ BioDiesel to collect cooking oil from restaurants and turn it into fuel. McCarthy said the group decided to change partners and set up a collection site at a 14,000-square-foot location at 58th Avenue and Ocotillo Road in Glendale, where it hopes to collect and clean about 40,000 gallons of used fry oil a month.

The partnership the network offers to restaurants is essentially unchanged. The company will collect the used oil and offer its member restaurants connections with service companies that will clean their grease traps and vent hoods at discounted rates. The network is working with about 1,000 locations, even after splitting some with AZ BioDiesel, McCarthy said. Most of the member restaurants are in the Valley, but McCarthy said the network is looking to expand to other areas of the state.

Amereco, based in the town of Arlington in western Maricopa County, continues to look for suppliers of cooking oil to meet a growing demand for biodiesel in Arizona, said Bill Sheaffer, vice president of

marketing for the company. He said the partnership with the Green Dining Network was a good step.

“We really think their program distinguishes them from some of the other competition,” he said.

Reclaimed cooking oil represents a potential boom for the biofuels industry. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that more than 1.1 billion pounds of salad and cooking oils were produced in June.

Ameresco produces fuel exclusively with biodiesel created from used cooking oil. It has several suppliers, but the amount of fuel it produces is being outstripped by the state’s growing demand, Sheaffer said.

One gallon of used fry oil can make one gallon of bio-diesel. The biodiesel is mixed with ethanol to ensure it meets federal fuel standards. Sheaffer said Ameresco has a deal with a wastewater treatment plant to use the processing by-product, glycerol, as a food source for the bacteria that help clean the water.

Ameresco also has developed a cleaning product line that uses cooking oil as a replacement for mineral oil and similar elements in cleaners that restaurants typically use. McCarthy said the Green Dining Network is marketing those products to its members.

Restaurants are eager to find a home for the used oil.

“Our partnership with Green Dining Network affords us the perfect solution to a common hotel operation waste management issue and has helped to make this type of recycling a part of our standard operating procedure,” said Teri Agosta, general manager of the Pointe Hilton Squaw Peak Resort in Phoenix.

Green Dining Network collects the oil from restaurants at no charge and cleans it for Ameresco. Cleaned cooking oil can cost between \$1.15 and \$1.30 a gallon, while unprocessed oil runs about 95 cents to \$1.25 a gallon. Once processed, the fuel sells for about \$1.95 a gallon plus tax, McCarthy said.

Green Dining Network is starting its new operation with seven employees and two collection trucks. The challenge is getting the word out to more restaurants after the group’s slow start, McCarthy said.

“For us now, the biggest thing is to give restaurants and awareness of the program,” he said.

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Ameresco Biofuels Corp.: www.amereco.biz

Green Dining Network: www.greendiningnet.com