

Dorms' Cooking Oil Heading to Vehicles

BY HALLIE WOODS • HallieWoods@coloradoan.com • July 23, 2008



Katie Liesveld cooks up french fries Thursday at the Corbett Residence Hall at CSU. CSU Housing and Dining Services have partnered with Rocky Mountain Sustainable Enterprises to donate used cooking oil to be refined to create biodiesel. (Mara Auster/The Coloradoan)

The 3,600 gallons of cooking oil used each semester to fuel hungry freshmen in the residence halls is fueling vehicles, too.

In a partnership with Boulder-based Rocky Mountain Sustainable Enterprises, CSU sends used cooking oil from its residence halls to be cleaned and made into biodiesel.

The approximately 3,600 gallons of oil each semester can make 2,520 gallons of biodiesel, said Tonie Miyamoto, spokeswoman for Colorado State University's Housing and Dining Services.

Rocky Mountain Sustainable Enterprises used to charge for the pickup service but now offers it free and, in some cases, pays customers for their oil, said Martin Newton, vice president of project development for the company.

"We used to have to pay to have the oil collected, but now we actually get some money from them," Miyamoto said.

The waste oil can be turned into biodiesel, a clean-burning, renewable fuel. Though some vehicles can be converted to run strictly on waste vegetable oil, biodiesel is a processed fuel that can run in any diesel engine.

CSU's vehicle fleet uses approximately 35,000 gallons of biodiesel each year from several different companies, said Carol Dollard, CSU facilities management utility engineer.

Rocky Mountain Sustainable Enterprises recycles oil from 1,800 restaurants and food organizations along the Front Range, Newton said.

"The other advantage of using used grease is that you don't have food displacement issues," Newton said.

While the business is in between the closure of a biodiesel production plant in Berthoud it used to rely on and building its own plant in the Fort Morgan area, the company continues to recycle used cooking oil for livestock production.

Come fall, however, the used vegetable oil will be processed and turned into biodiesel.

"The name of the game in biofuel production is having a secure feedstock," Newton said. "We saw vegetable oil as an opportunity."

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