



COMMUNITY NEWS

The Fuel of the Future *Marathon BioDiesel Needs Your Oil!*

By Blair Shiver

Marathon Biodiesel owner Jeff Lillie has invested the last seven years as well as most of his life savings in his business, and this former machinist and commercial fisherman is determined to make it work.

Though the concept of refining waste vegetable oil into bio-diesel fuel is not a new concept, Lillie's idea of his business as a long-term investment in the community is one he's hoping that will last a lot longer than 3 months of 3,000 miles.

"I had one guy come on board because he saw that I could employ his son or grandson in the near future," Lillie said this week from his site at the corner of U.S. 1 and Coco Plum Drive.

His facilities look more like a science lab than a fuel-making factory, and he's a self-professed neat freak about his set up.

"I'm the engineer, the sales department, the system operator," he laughed, elaborating that until more restaurants allow him to



The before and after: the oil sample on the left is the raw product with which Marathon BioDiesel begins before he refines it to the sample on the right that efficiently and effectively fuels diesel engine vehicles.

collect their waste vegetable oil, he will be the primary employee. He will continue, as he has, to persevere. He's currently researching algae production as a feed-stock source for continued bio-diesel

Middle Keys landmark restaurants The Island Fish Co. and Keys Fisheries eagerly jumped on board when Lillie approached them with

his plan. Laurie's Deli owner Laurie Tencelski agreed and offered Lillie feedback on his pitch and plan to bring more businesses on board. The Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen's Association also used Marathon BioDiesel to dispose of their oil after the Key West Seafood Fest in mid January.

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What is bio-diesel?

Biodiesel is simply a liquid fuel derived from vegetable oils and fats, which has similar combustion properties to regular diesel fuel. It is biodegradable and non-toxic and has significantly fewer emissions than petroleum-based diesel when burned. Biodiesel functions in current diesel engines.

"Taking garbage and turning it into something good? That's just a no brainer," agreed Island Fish Co. owner Greg Chapman. "I'm not a save-the-planet kind of guy, but there are certain things it just makes sense to do – like a cistern."

Chapman also contended that though some waste oil companies offer to pay restaurants for their product, "It's minimal. It's not going to change your life."

As part of his service, Lillie is offering regular steam cleaning and degreasing of collection areas,

often situated at the rear of a restaurant.

"He runs a super clean operation, and that is worth it alone," Chapman continued. "Besides that, he's a local guy and I drive a diesel truck. I hope one day I can begin buying his product."

The Illinois native first visited the Florida Keys on vacation, and in the 70s, moved permanently to become a commercial fisherman and raise his family. Fishing south of Key West on his 63-foot freezer boat, he regaled *The Marathon*

Weekly with tales of making money hand over fist when his crews processed fish on the boat and sold directly to restaurants in the Southernmost City. But the Mariel Boatlift forever changed South Florida and his commercial fishing business.

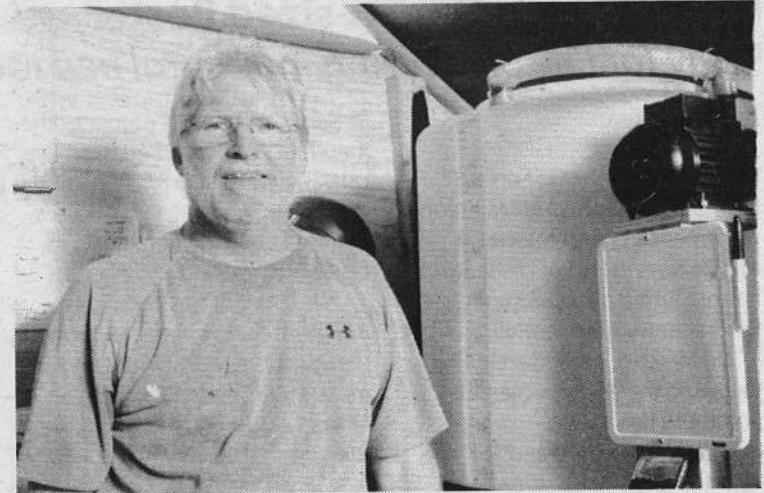
"All my traps were just disappearing, and the market was so flooded that I couldn't sell my boat," he remembered. "I tied up my boat and walked away."

Lillie's son, a graduate of the Naval Academy currently training to be an officer, was always a dreamer, and at 15, he set off with his parents to cruise the open ocean for five straight years. When his mother fell ill, Lillie returned home to care for her and gained technological, mechanical and engineering expertise working as a machinist. Skills that would later help him take his career in another direction.

It's taken him seven years to develop his processing system to the highest standards. Government testing standards mandate that bio-diesel fuel can only be sold with 150 parts per billion contaminants like and Marathon Biodiesel's end product is less than half that.

Many processors, Lillie explained are not as good and don't produce as clean a product, which he maintains that despite costs, is of utmost importance in his operation.

Biodiesel is a solvent and a lubricant at the same time, which not



Jeff Lillie of Marathon BioDiesel is his processing facility at the corner of U.S. 1 and Coco Plum Drive. His facilities look more like a science lab with meticulous precision of measurements and cleanliness, and his enthusiasm for his business is infectious

only cleans your engine but with more frequent fuel filter changes, can prolong the life of your vehicle. A paramount principle of his operation is that nothing is wasted. Glycerin is a by-product of the refining process, and he's planned to partner with someone to sell customized glycerin soaps.

Lillie's business consulting company projected if he has 80 percent of the restaurants across the Keys on board, he can add two collection points in Key West and Key Largo with a total of three

collection trucks, two soap-processing plants and approximately 15 additional jobs within the next five years.

"They keep telling me I could sell my business or begin to market and sell the processors within the next five years, but I'm not going anywhere," he insisted. "If I spent the past seven years on this, I'm not going to walk away after five."

For more information about this locally-owned and operated company, visit www.marathon-biodiesel.com.



Marathon BioDiesel, located at 2 Coco Plum Drive in Marathon, is accepting waste vegetable oil (wvo) in their drop off location. Restaurants interested in having their wvo collected onsite should contact Jeff Lillie at (305) 522-7655.