

More retailers offering biodiesel throughout the county

David Clifton, co-owner Anderson's General Store

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With sales of premium gasoline sagging under the weight of rising gas prices, Anderson's General Store owners Charlotte and David Clifton are trotting out a product they hope will bring more customers to the pump.

Having already dropped premium grade gasoline altogether from their Guemes Island store, they began last week selling biodiesel, a move they say is as much about business as social awareness.

"I don't think it's going to be a giant moneymaker at all," David Clifton said. "It was more about finding a viable product that spoke to our hearts and one that the community was interested in."

By making the switch, Anderson's General Store became at least the fifth retailer offering biodiesel in Skagit County. In addition, at least three more retailers are expected to add it by year's end.

While the number of local businesses offering biodiesel is growing, the alternative fuel remains more of a curiosity among consumers than an everyday product.

"There aren't people jumping out of the woodwork to buy it, but it's piquing the interest levels of a lot of people," said John Hargrove, an energy specialist with Skagit Farmers Supply, which began selling biodiesel last year. "I'm questioned daily, if not several times a week."

As much as five million gallons of biodiesel will be sold in the state this summer, estimates Kevin Kuper, the marketing director for Bellingham-based Whole Energy, which operates a refinery in Burlington that supplies just about all of the biodiesel sold in Skagit County.

Of that, he figures about 500,000 gallons will go to personal automobiles. The rest will be used by private businesses, farmers and government entities.

Nationwide, biofuel represents about 0.1 percent of the total fuel market.



Anderson's General Store owners Charlotte and David Clifton are selling biodiesel.