

Residents support biomass drop site

BY TOM CARSTENS

Last year, Biomass One, the 30 MW electricity plant in White City offered to grind up and haul away our biomass waste for free if we set up a drop site, similar to the one we had in Murphy for so many years. (Their portable grinder is pictured.) So the Applegate Partnership and the Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation (GACDC) teamed up with SOU and yours truly to ask residents of the valley if they would support such a site.

This past summer I drew a 10% random sample from all 7,046 of the Applegate watershed tax lots in Jackson and Josephine Counties. In all, 687 survey forms were mailed out and 357 were returned, for a response rate of 52%. Statistically, that provided us with a reliable sample within a margin of error of 5%. I tabulated the results at SOU in October and delivered a report to the Partnership and the GACDC in November. The results of that survey are summarized below.

SUPPORT: 79% of respondents thought that the concept of a biomass drop site was a good idea. 68% said they would actually use it to drop off slash and other wood waste. Support was a bit stronger among Josephine County residents.

THINNING: 83% of respondents said they thinned their property at least once per year. Of those who said they would use a drop site, 50% said that having a waste site close by would motivate them to thin more often.

DISTANCE: 45% of those who would use a site said they would travel up to ten miles to haul their wood waste. An additional 25% said they would haul further than ten miles.

USER FEE: About 70% of potential users said they wouldn't mind paying a small charge to help offset the cost of running a site. Almost all thought that \$5 per pickup load would be about right.

PREFERRED SITE: Of six sites listed, Murphy received the support of 40% of the respondents. This might be reflective of the fact that about two-thirds of the tax lots are in Josephine County.

MISCELLANEOUS DATA: *Age:* Over half of respondents are over 60. Less than 5% are 40 or under.

Residency: 72% of respondents have lived here more than 10 years.

Production: 89% of respondents say their property produces wood waste.

Disposal: 86% of respondents burn their wood waste.



Air: Only 1% thought air quality was poor.

Wildfire: 69% rated the risk of fire on their property as moderate to high.

The full report has a lot more information, including a synopsis of all the written comments and suggestions (43% of respondents chose to comment). If any of you would like to see the entire report, give me a call and I'll arrange to e-mail a copy to you, complete with charts, tables, and analysis.

I'd like to thank all of you who participated. The Partnership and the GACDC have the data and will meet in January to discuss next steps, if any. If anyone has more thoughts on this, let them know how you feel, or give me a call.

Tom Carstens • 541-846-1025



Choosing a Well Drilling Contractor #17

with Bob Quinn

You're preparing to arrange for a well on property you own or are planning to buy. Take the advice of the Oregon Ground Water Association and choose your contractor wisely.

The decision is an important one, because it is the presence of a healthy water supply that gives value to your land. Among the suggestions of OGWA are these: How long has the contractor been in business and constructing wells? Is the firm licensed, bonded, and insured? Will they provide references from recently drilled wells? Do they provide a written agreement or contract that sets down an understanding of the work to be performed? Are the details and costs estimates of well construction included? Is there a checklist of things to be included in the project?

In addition to these suggestions, you might also want to know the experience of homeowners in the surrounding area, the depth at which water was found, the flow rate (gallons per minute), and the costs. Such information can be enormously helpful, and a good well driller should be able to provide it without obligation.

Bob Quinn is a member of the Oregon Ground Water Association and owner of **Quinn's Well Drilling and Pump Service** at 6811 Williams Hwy., Grants Pass. As part of a tradition of information and service that began more than 50 years ago, these columns are provided by the firm to help take the mystery out of well drilling and ground water. If you have a question about your well or one you are planning, please call Bob or his helpful staff for advice, estimates, or helpful information at no obligation or cost.

862-9355

Is ethanol really helping?

BY TASHA KNOWLTON

About a year and a half ago I was rooting for ethanol plants. I thought that it was a great idea to put ethanol into our gasoline because it would reduce the amount of carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon tailpipe emissions. The difference might not have been drastic, but if we could improve our environment in the slightest way, I thought the idea must be good. But is ethanol really helping anyone?

Since the E-10 (10% ethanol, 90% gas) mixture came to our community, I have heard people saying that they have noticed a downgrade in the performance of their vehicles. In the March edition of the *Outdoor Life* magazine, it discusses the problems that ethanol has been causing in boats. Bud Tillman, a Suzuki dealer in Florida, said that they had more than 200 boaters come in with boat problems. New filters were getting clogged up and full of water, and screens and injectors were getting ruined. Ethanol was supposed to burn cleaner and cooler and was supposed to be easier on engines than pure gasoline.

Ethanol has the power to dissolve fiberglass fuel tanks and in some cases it has caused severe engine problems. Ethanol is very corrosive and sounds like it could be dangerous to some of our vehicles. When I did research on ethanol plants a year and a half ago, people were saying that ethanol would be cheaper, but gas prices have been higher than ever. The only good thing that ethanol seems to be doing is reducing the carbon monoxide and smog emissions.

Our community is full of farmers who have to use heavy equipment on their crops. They cannot afford to have ethanol ruin this expensive equipment. Each year, my grandparents grow fields of corn to sell right here in our community. If anything happened to their equipment, they wouldn't be able to do this and a major part in their livelihood would be ruined. Farmers—let alone everyone else—cannot afford these problems. However, one thing that has seemed to improve the function of the ethanol is fuel stabilizer. *Outdoor Life* magazine says that keeping the tank filled to the brim to prevent condensation

will also help.

On the other side, I have heard many people say that the ethanol has no effect on their vehicles. They have vehicles that run just as well as when they filled them with pure gasoline. So ethanol, in some cases, isn't a bad thing.

I still have faith that one day ethanol will be more useful to us. If we could find a way to improve the performance of ethanol, then our environment could be improved, little by little. It's the nuances of assistance—like switching to a more environmentally friendly way of fueling cars—that can make a difference in our community and our nation. If we could just discover an efficient way to prevent ethanol from degrading the performance of vehicles, all would be good. Until then, we can do what we can, like putting in the fuel stabilizer, to prevent the negative effects of ethanol.

Tasha Knowlton

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