

Port of L.A. Fleet Experiments With Biodiesel

Thursday, August 24, 2006

By James Longton

SAN PEDRO - As pressing economic and ecological issues feed the need for alternative fuel more severely everyday, private boaters continue to investigate and experiment with alternative fuel sources.

With the Port of Los Angeles Harbor Department's fuel usage increasing, biodiesel is now becoming more and more readily available to the public in the area. Right now, Jankovich Fuel provides the department's boat, *Angelina*, with biodiesel in addition to others from their maintenance fleet, and the Port Police have been asked to test alternative fuel on some of their vessels.

"I think that the Port Police's usage will help to secure in people's minds the reality of the future of the fuel," said Sgt. Kevin McCloskey of the Los Angeles Port Police. "Oftentimes people will be hesitant to adopt something until a proven use has been established. Until there is enough usage to support the infrastructure for the filling stations, a boater in the public can't realistically consider a conversion."

The Harbor Department plans to increase its usage in the near future and a local tug company might be trying it soon, as well. As demand continues to rise, Jankovich is even considering segregating a tank for exclusive use with biodiesel.

"I'm fairly certain that in the very near future we'll be offering biodiesel by pump," said Gene Hester of Jankovich Fuel. "The importance of the conversion is clear, and this may be the badly needed solution to a growing international problem."

For now, recreational boaters must order fuel in advance from Jankovich, which provides biodiesel by the drum in differing blends.

The Port of Los Angeles has a history of innovative action in terms of alternative fuel solutions. Just two years ago, they were the first and only harbor in the world to integrate the ultra-low sulfur fuel into its fleet.

"We are now using biodiesel in some of our boats, and this might be the 'foot in the door' for this fuel as it was for the ultra-low a couple years ago," McClosky said.

In conjunction with the University of California at River-side, the harbor department extensively testing air quality results with different types of fuel emissions. This kind of partnership is believed to be integral to the future of environmental health and fuel efficiency.