

# The <http://www.wvagriculture.org/> Market Bulletin

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## Alternative Energy Sources on the Rise

There is no doubt that everyone is feeling the impact of energy costs, more especially gasoline and diesel fuels. There doesn't seem to be any end in sight to the soaring petroleum prices, and everyone is looking at alternate fuels.

We are trying to do our part here in West Virginia to reduce our dependence on foreign oil by making biodiesel fuel available at the Inwood Farmers' Market in Berkeley County (see full story on page 6). Biodiesel is derived from soybean oil and is an additive to diesel fuel, usually an 80/20 mix. It is available in 55-gallon barrels or lesser amounts. Our supply is coming from a plant in the Richmond, Virginia, area and the Inwood Market has already sold about 1,000 gallons in the one month it has been offered. There are considerable mechanical advantages to using biodiesel fuel. In addition to extending fuel, it also acts as a natural engine detergent and extends the life of engines.

There are also millions of dollars being invested in agriculture using corn to produce ethanol, and these plants will utilize millions of bushels of corn for this production. The question now arising is what effect this will have upon availability of soybeans and corn for feeding livestock and poultry. A recent issue of the *Council of Northeast Farmer Cooperatives* newsletter noted that when the ethanol plants in production or in the development phase in North Dakota come on line within the next two years, the plants will consume more than the total corn crop in North Dakota. The state will have to import feed for its livestock. The Council of State Governments' *Ag Clips*,

April 22-28, noted the construction of another renewable fuels plant in Cass County, northern Indiana that will be a 110 million-gallon ethanol production facility. The new facility has a price tag of \$140 million and will be utilizing 40 million bushels of corn each year and will be sourced from Cass and surrounding counties.

Agriculture and poultry operations are also continuing to look at digesters to convert methane to energy. A rancher in California with a dairy herd of 270 claims he has figured out a way to run his dairy farm, organic creamery, and an electric car from manure generated by his herd. His \$280,000 investment is an environmental breakthrough for that state's dairy industry.

The technology at West Virginia State University utilizing microbes to breakdown poultry wastes is also getting attention. I understand the design is moving along for a commercial anaerobic digester system for a large operation in Missouri.

Another growing source of energy I should mention in our state is wind turbines. The federal government has requested a study to determine what effect the turbines might have on radar being used in navigation at airports. One of the other factors is that the environmental activists have questioned the fatalities on native and migratory birds. The California Energy Commission will conduct a study on whether or not bird fatalities could be reduced if livestock were grazing the area around the turbine towers. The reasoning behind this study is that grass clipped very short will keep small wildlife away, thus not attracting predator birds.

Speaking of farm wastes, the debate continues with environmental groups attempting to declare farms as hazardous waste sites under the federal Superfund law. The Superfund law was never intended to apply to natural animal waste. There is considerable congressional legislative action through H.R. 4341. This bill has bipartisan supporters urging Congress to take action to clarify that the Superfund law was never intended to regulate manure. My observation here in West Virginia is that the present regulations



### Gus' View . . .

under the *Clean Water Act*, the *Clean Air Act*, and various other state laws has brought our farms into compliance to protect the environment with fair restrictions.

Rabies gets my attention each month as we continue to find additional 'hotspots' across the state. The latest area having an increase in rabies is in the Lewisburg area, Greenbrier County. We will continue the aerial drop of vaccine-laced baits. The area covered will be extended to cover most of Greenbrier County this year. The baits are not a threat to domestic pets, but we recommend that you keep children away from them. If you find bait, place it in an area where wildlife may be found. So far, 40 cases of rabies have been found statewide this year, which may surpass last year's reported 75 cases.

The Southeast Dairy Farmers Association *Washington Report* for June 16, 2006, notes the congressional House Homeland Security Committee passed legislation this week that would add additional regulations to the sale of ammonium nitrate-based fertilizer in this country. The move follows the recent arrests of 17 suspected terrorists in Canada who allegedly planned to blow up buildings there using explosives made from three tons of fertilizer they had acquired.

According to *Congress Daily*, the bill would require producers and sellers of ammonium nitrate to register with the Department of Homeland Security and maintain records of all sales and transfers for three years. We'll keep you informed of this legislation as it progresses through Congress.

*continued*

### Enter Your Prize Winning Forage and Grain Crops

The State Fair of West Virginia is looking for small grains including barley, buckwheat, oats, and wheat; forages including alfalfa, clover, orchard grass, timothy and any type of corn crop.

Visit the State Fair's website at [www.statefairfwv.com](http://www.statefairfwv.com) or call 304-645-1090 for more information.

Another first for West Virginia with its agribusiness industry is in processed foods. Vita Specialty Foods introduced their newest line of sauces at the Food Marketing Institute show in Chicago this past May. All of these new sauces are made with Budweiser beer. Vita is the first company to receive permission to use Budweiser beer in products. It is certainly a feather in the "West Virginia" cap to know that

## Agriculture Field Day

**When:** Saturday, Aug. 26, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

**Where:** Mountain Diamond Longhorn Farm near Tunnelton (Preston County), owned by Dave and Barb Miller.

**Registration:** The event is free and open to the public, but pre-registration is required.

Call the Preston County Extension Office at 304/329-1391 to register.

**Topics:** Beekeeping, gardening, aquatic weed control and farrier and equine demonstrations. There will also be a session on the history of the Longhorn breed, as well as genetic techniques for horn generation, leaner meat and hide coloring to maximize niche marketing.

**\*\*Fresh-from-the-Farm Picnic Lunch\*\***

**Sponsors:** Dave and Barb Miller, the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA), WVU's Davis College of Agriculture, Forestry and Consumer Sciences, WVU Cooperative Extension Service, West Virginia Direct Marketing Association and West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA).

these products are produced in Inwood, West Virginia. Mr. Terry W. Hess is currently the Chief Executive Officer, responsible for the overall operations of Vita Specialty Foods with an emphasis on sales and production.

In reading a recent update from the Institute for Rural Journalism, I found it interesting the number of one-room schools that continue to survive in the United States. The schools are mainly in isolated western towns and a few are sprinkled across the country. An ongoing National Public Radio series is examining one-room schools that have dwindled from 190,000 in 1919 to fewer than 400. I believe we might have one of those schools in Helvetia, Randolph County.

My congratulations to the six individuals selected for enshrinement into the West Virginia Agriculture and Forestry Hall of Fame. The enshrinement banquet will be held at WVU Jackson's Mill in Weston, Saturday, July 8. This year's enshrinees are Neil Aberegg, the late Geraldine C. Belmear, Paul E. Lewis, the late Armand Ricottilli, Robert D. Whipkey, and Robert L. Williams (see bios and photos in August Market Bulletin issue).

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture is once again assisting seniors in receiving \$20 worth of vouchers to be used for WV Grown fruits and vegetables at approved farmers' markets and stands. Coupons are valid July 1, 2006-October 31, 2006 and eligible recipients will each receive \$20 in \$2 vouchers. West Virginia senior citizens should contact their local Senior Center in the county they live in to apply for the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. Seniors should take proof of age and residency with them to meet eligibility require-

ments. For additional information, contact Connie Tolley at 304-558-2210.

Stormy weather is making the news across the country, especially in the Northeast. New England has been inundated by record rain-falls which have severely affected the planting of corn and harvesting of the first cutting of hay. Vermont becomes the first state to request disaster assistance as damage estimates are as much as \$45 million to the hay crop and to corn that will likely have to be replanted. Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island may have to follow suit and request emergency assistance as well.

Things are going well on the farm as the long stretch of dry weather provided a perfect time to harvest about 75 percent of the hay crop. In excess of 5,000 square bales of high-quality hay are in storage, as well as several round bales made when the fields were opened. Most of the hay left will go to round bales. The garden is doing well after the frost that set it back a bit. The cabbage and broccoli coming on are keeping Anna Lee busy. We enjoyed a fine meal from the garden the other evening of broccoli, cabbage, new potatoes, onions, radishes, and my favorite, kale. Venison was on the table, too – my kind of living. I'm trying to get the garden in shape as the last week in June I plan to enjoy a visit with my daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren at Myrtle Beach.

I hope you make plans to visit the Mountain State Art and Craft Fair in Ripley, July 1-4, or any of the other great fairs and festivals going on across the state this month. Also, be sure and support our 4-H, FFA and other youth groups participating in fair activities. Have a happy and safe July 4!



# Vision Bl ms into Reality for AgrAbility Client

Nestled in the Appalachian Mountains, Butterfly Gardens is a sight to behold with sprawling flats of annual bedding plants, unique varieties of tomato seedlings, pots of hardy perennials and colorful hanging baskets. While the success of this rural business is a part of the story, Becky Conrad's determination to open Butterfly Gardens is itself testament of entrepreneurial spirit.

"Almost everybody who comes to Butterfly Gardens buys a whole flat, and last week I had two ladies fighting over a hanging basket before I could unload it at the store," said Ms. Conrad, owner of Butterfly Gardens. However, business was not always booming for Ms. Conrad.

She began losing her sight at the age of nine, when she was diagnosed with Retinitis

Pigmentosa (RP), a condition in which photoreceptor cells gradually degenerate and die, translating into a progressive vision loss and eventual blindness. By the time she finished high school, she could no longer see to walk and worked with the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS) to receive training for an occupation that would accommodate her blindness and provide an adequate income. After being trained as a medical transcriptionist, she quickly realized it wasn't for her. "I didn't like it," she said. "And I couldn't get to any of the jobs without transportation."

Ms. Conrad couldn't deny her passion for plants and working outdoors. "I've loved plants since I was a little girl." Her life-long passion for plants has flourished into her own business

over the past few years, but it wouldn't have been possible without West Virginia AgrAbility.

Congress established the AgrAbility Project in the 1990 Farm Bill to help people with disabilities engaged in production agriculture continue to farm and live independently in their chosen communities. AgrAbility is a consumer-driven USDA-Cooperative State, Research, Education, and Extension Service funded program that provides vital education, assistance and support to farmers and farm workers with disabilities and/or their family members with disabilities.

In 2001, Ms. Conrad gave AgrAbility a call. "She could have just plugged along with the work as a transcriptionist, but her love of gardening was there all along, and I saw it as my job to help make her vision for a greenhouse into a reality," said Inetta Fluharty, Field Operations Manager for West Virginia AgrAbility.

Vision, continued on page 12

## Food Entrepreneurs Vying for \$10,000 Prize at State Fair

The State Fair of West Virginia will host its first-ever "West Virginia Recipe Challenge" Saturday, August 19, and the can win as much as \$10,000 worth of goods and services to help turn their special dish into the next West Virginia Grown hit product.

The contest will consist of two separate categories: new products from existing agribusinesses and products from new entrepreneurs who hope to turn their great recipe into a retail product.

"This will be a great feature for the Fair and a great opportunity for some new agribusiness," said Commissioner of Agriculture Gus R. Douglass. The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA), for its part, will provide winners with technical assistance, nutritional facts panel analysis and West Virginia Grown labels to identify the product as a genuine product of the Mountain State.

"These are a few of the services the Department has been offering for years to new agribusinesses to help them get off to a running start. These are costly services and we are one of the few agriculture departments in the country that offer them to businesses free of charge," Commissioner Douglass continued.

Services are also being offered by West Virginia State University Extension, Mountain Bounty Kitchen, BIZASSIST, Tamarack, the Marshall University Art Department, and the State Fair of West Virginia.

"Altogether, this should be a very nice prize package for someone who's interested in starting or growing an agribusiness," said WVDA Marketing and Development Director Jean Smith. "The new entrepreneur grand prize includes literally everything they need to put a product on the shelf. The prize package for the existing business category will provide the opportunity to gain some invaluable publicity."

The new entrepreneur grand prize is valued at \$10,000 and includes extensive technical assistance, food and packaging material, free use of Mountain Bounty commercial kitchen, samplings at Tamarack, label design, cookware and a trophy. The existing business grand prize package is valued at \$1,000 and includes technical assistance, kitchen time and the chance to jury for a national food show.

**Deadline for registration is July 15, 2006.** Forms and more information are available at [www.statefairfowv.com](http://www.statefairfowv.com), or by calling Reagan Simms Rodgers at 304/558-1090.

# W.V.A. ENVIROTHON WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The Shady Spring High School Biology Club from Raleigh County in the Southern Conservation District won the 10th West Virginia Envirothon at Jackson's Mill, April 27. Members of the team will share a college

scholarship of \$3,000 donated by the Weyerhaeuser Company. This team will also represent the Mountain State in the Canon International Envirothon in Manitoba, Canada.

Kelly Sponaugle of Shady Spring, W.Va. was the Shady Spring team advisor and Walter Winant of Daniels, W.Va. was the assistant advisor.



**Shady Spring High School Biology Club from Raleigh County (Southern Conservation District) won the 10th West Virginia Envirothon at Jackson's Mill, April 27. Members of the team will share a college scholarship of \$3,000 donated by the Weyerhaeuser Company. This team will also represent the Mountain State in the Canon International Envirothon in Manitoba, Canada.**

Sarah Hunter, Terry Hutchison, Adrienne Kurnot, Derek Rhodes and Kelsey Thomas.

The Ripley High School Environmental Science II team from Jackson County in the Western Conservation District placed third in

the West Virginia Envirothon. The Ripley II team was also the top scoring rookie team in the competition. Members of this team will share college a scholarship of \$1,000 donated by American Electric Power.

The third place team also was advised by Barbara Heckert. The Ripley II team members were Jordon Gaal,

Katrina Leaptrot, Mitchell Riggleman, Isaac Thompson and Daniell Whited.



**The Ripley High School Environmental Science I team from Jackson County (Western Conservation District) took second place in the competition. Members of this team will share a college scholarship of \$2,000 donated by the West Virginia Farm Bureau.**

The winning team members, including alternate, were Alex Bragg, Kayla Bragg, Andrew Lester, Cherie Overmiller and Will Vincent.

The Ripley High School Environmental Science I team from Jackson County in the Western Conservation District took second place in the competition. Members of this team will share a college scholarship of \$2,000 donated by the West Virginia Farm Bureau.

Barbara Heckert of Ripley served as the team's advisor. The Ripley I team consisted of



**The Ripley High School Environmental Science II team from Jackson County (Western Conservation District) placed third in the West Virginia Envirothon. Members of this team will share college a scholarship of \$1,000 donated by American Electric Power.**

The Doddridge County High School Gold team from Doddridge County in the West Fork Conservation District was voted the most enthusiastic team award by members of the Envirothon teams.

The Doddridge Gold team is advised by Tina Moore of West Union, W.Va. The Doddridge Gold team members were Stephanie Edgell, Shayna Follett, Cody Hall, Kayla Hall and Chelsea Welch.

# What's Cookin'

## Recipes

### Fruity Ice Cream Pick Me Up

- 4 scoops vanilla ice cream
- 1/3 cup milk
- 2/3 cup fresh raspberries, blackberries & strawberries, mashed
- 1/2 cup crushed cookies (your choice)
- Fruit for garnish if desired

Place all ingredients into blender. Cover tightly with lid and process until mixture is the texture you like your favorite ice cream beverage. Place in tall chilled glass or glasses and garnish with fresh berries if desired.

## Recipes

### Fall Harvest Ice Cream Dessert

- 22 ginger snap cookies
- 1 pint vanilla ice cream
- 1 1 pound can pumpkin
- 1 3/4 cups sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1 cup slivered almonds

Line the bottom of pie pan with ginger snaps. Break remaining cookies in half and line the edge of the pan with halved cookies. Put softened ice cream on top; freeze until firm.

Mix together pumpkin, 1 1/2 cups sugar, salt, spices and vanilla. Whip cream until stiff; fold into pumpkin mixture. Pour over ice cream. Cover with foil; freeze 4 hours.

**Topping:** Combine almonds and remaining 1/4 cup sugar in skillet over low heat; stir quickly. Remove from heat; spread on waxed paper. Break up when cooled. Sprinkle on ice cream pie before serving.

# Ice Cream Month, Yum!

Jean Smith, Director, Marketing and Development Division

Happy Ice Cream month! This wonderful treat lends it self to any budget and almost every dietary consideration. Best of all it provides a wonderful way to cool off on

a hot summer day, end a great meal or is fun to share with someone and enjoy a great conversation.

— Bon Appetit!

## Recipes

### Crunchy Ice Cream Dessert

- 2 cups crispy rice cereal
- 1 cup flaked coconut
- 1/2 cup pecans
- 1/2 cup almonds
- 1 stick butter, melted
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 1/2 gallon vanilla ice cream, softened
- Favorite ice cream topping

Mix cereal, coconut, nuts and butter in bowl until well coated. Place in cake pan and brown in oven at 350°F until lightly toasted (watch closely). Remove from oven; top evenly with brown sugar. Line a 13x9 cake pan with wax paper. Place one half of cereal mixture on wax paper and press into even layer. Add ice cream; spread to cover first layer of cereal mixture. Top with remaining cereal mixture and spread evenly. Cover pan with plastic wrap and place in freezer for a minimum of 2 hours before serving. Cut in pieces and top with your favorite ice cream topping.

## Recipes

### Coffee Can Ice Cream

(This keeps the youngsters busy!)

- 2 empty coffee cans (one, 1-pound and one, 3-pound with plastic lids)
- 1 1/2 cups rock or kosher salt
- 7 1/2 pounds crushed ice
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/3 cup of any of the following diced peaches or strawberries, raisins, your favorite cookie
- 1 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Clean and sanitize coffee cans. Combine ice cream ingredients (salt, ice, cream) in the 1 pound can. Cover can tightly with plastic; place in the center of the 3-pound can. Layer one half of crushed ice with one half of salt in the space between the cans — this can be a slow process but will be worth the effort. Place the lid on the 3-pound can. Roll the can back and forth for 10 minutes on a hard surface. Open the outer can and empty the ice and salt mixture and water. Remove 1-pound can, dry the lid and open carefully. Using a table knife or thin spatula, scrape the ice cream from the sides of the can and replace the plastic lid. Place the 1-pound can back into the center of the 3-pound can and repeat the ice and salt layering. Cover with the plastic and repeat the rolling process for an additional 5-7 minutes. Enjoy!

## Recipes

### Fruity Frozen Yogurt Shake

- 2 cups fresh strawberries, blackberries or raspberries
- 1 cup chopped banana
- 1 1/2 cups frozen vanilla yogurt
- 1/4 cup milk
- Fresh berries for garnish, if desired

Place berries, banana, frozen yogurt and milk in blender. Cover with lid; blend until smooth. Place in chilled glasses and garnish with fresh berries if desired.

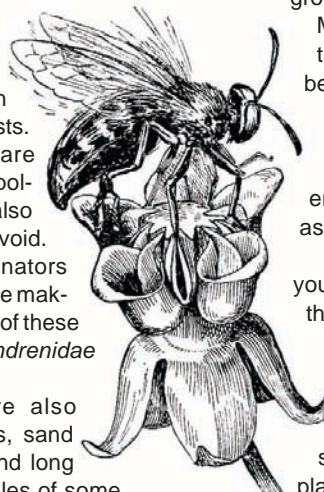
# Mining Bees Help Pollinate Your Crops!

Dr. Lois E. Swoboda – Entomologist  
WVDA Plant Industries Division

Pollination refers to the transfer of pollen granules from flower to flower. Animals, including bees and other insects, play a crucial role as pollen transporters. Approximately 90 percent of our crops, producing over 30 percent of our food resources, are dependent on insect pollination. Bees are by far the most efficient pollinators. The value of bees, both as producers of honey and wax and enhancers of crop production, has been recognized for thousands of years. Honeybees were probably domesticated around 6,000 years ago in southern Asia. The Greeks and Romans kept domesticated honeybees. The occupation of beekeeping was practiced throughout Europe by the end of the Dark Ages. When Europeans took to the seas colonizing the New World, they carried many familiar domesticated animals, including the honeybee with them. Swarming honeybees quickly escaped into the wild establishing feral (wild) colonies across North America. Honeybees are highly adaptable and rapidly became important pollinators of wild plants, as well as field crops in the New World. Unfortunately, these bees displaced many native insect species by taking their food, pollen and nectar.

Beginning in the second half of the Twentieth Century, populations of wild honeybees declined throughout North America due to parasites, disease and environmental factors like weather and pollution. This decrease in population has been of great concern to farmers and scientists. Many researchers are looking for substitute pollinators. Nature has also taken steps to fill this void. Several native pollinators that were once rare are making a comeback. One of these is the mining bee (*Andrenidae* sp.).

Mining bees are also known as lawn bees, sand bees, digger bees and long horned bees (the males of some species have very long antennae.) There are over 900 species of North American mining bees that pollinate many plant species. Mining bees are often drab in color but may feature spots of red, blue or gold. A few are



metallic green. They are furry and vary in size. Most are about as large as a honeybee but the largest are as big as a bumblebee. Unlike honeybees, mining bees do not live in colonies. Mining bees are solitary bees. This means that each individual female builds her own nest. Each nest is lined with a shiny wax-like material that is waterproof, highly resistant to decay, and protects larvae while they are in the ground. Females sometimes build turrets or little volcano-like towers of soil at the nest entrance. Often large groups of nests are located in the same area, especially on the banks of creeks and in sandy soil. People working and playing near large groups of nests may become concerned.

Mining bees are NOT aggressive and their stings are very rare and reported to be mild. If left alone, mining bees will often nest in the same area year after year, and provide an annual service by pollinating your garden plants and help to ensure good crops. Some species also act as predators of insect pests.

To welcome these helpful residents into your garden, be careful to avoid disturbing their nesting area. You may wish to reserve an area of the garden for their use. Mining bees prefer warm, sandy areas of soil with a light mulch cover, but lacking surface vegetation. Providing seasonal long forage in the form of flowering plants also encourages mining bees to remain in your garden. Finally, take care not to contaminate plants and nests with harmful pesticides. Mining bees are helping provide a natural solution to the decline in wild honeybees.

## Sign Up to Begin for the 2007 Gypsy Moth Suppression Program

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) and the West Virginia University Cooperative Extension Service announced that landowners in Barbour, Berkeley, Braxton, Brooke, Doddridge, Gilmer, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hancock, Hardy, Harrison, Jefferson, Lewis, Marion, Marshall, Mineral, Monongalia, Morgan, Nicholas, Ohio, Pendleton, Pleasants, Pocahontas, Preston, Randolph, Ritchie, Taylor, Tyler, Tucker, Upshur, Webster, and Wetzel Counties may sign up for the 2007 Cooperative State-County-Landowner Gypsy Moth Suppression Program beginning July 1, 2006 at county extension offices.

Brochures answering questions about the gypsy moth and the 2007 gypsy moth suppression program, as well as egg mass survey applications, are available at WVDA offices at Elkins (304-637-0290), Inwood (304-229-5828), Morgantown (304-285-3133), Moorefield (304-538-2397), and New Creek (304-788-1066), as well as from your local county extension agent. Additionally, the WVDA Cooperative Gypsy Moth Program brochure and egg mass survey applications

may be downloaded from the WVDA website ([www.wvagriculture.org](http://www.wvagriculture.org)). A landowner living in one of the above counties that has a problem with gypsy moth may want to participate in the 2007 program. To sign up for an egg mass survey, contact the county extension agent in the county where your property is located and leave your name, address and phone number to obtain an egg mass survey application. The completed application must be submitted by August 31, 2006.

Landowners must provide a 7½-minute topographic map with boundaries clearly marked. The WVDA cannot map your property for you. Topographic maps are available from the United States Geologic Survey at 1-800-ASK-USGS or their website at <http://store.usgs.gov>.

The minimum acreage required to participate in the program is 50 contiguous acres of wooded land. If you have fewer than 50 acres, you may contact neighbors and join with them to meet the acreage requirement. Blocks must be made as rectangular as possible in order to be treated properly by aircraft without significant overspray. The presence of electrical

transmission lines, communication towers, etc., may prohibit some spray blocks or portions of some spray blocks from being sprayed.

The 2006 landowner costs were \$11.51 per acre for Btk and \$8.58 per acre for Dimilin. However, like all other everyday costs, inflation has been driving these costs up, so 2007 costs may be higher. A 50 percent cost share on treatments may be available from the USDA Forest Service through a cooperative agreement with the WVDA. The total cost depends on the USDA Forest Service cost sharing, total acres proposed for treatment, and the cost of the insecticide and aerial application.

A final decision to participate in the program must be confirmed by signing a contract and making a deposit to the WVDA by December 6, 2006. A final payment to the WVDA will be required prior to actual treatment. Notification of the deadline for final payment will be by mail.

For more information, contact WVDA Plant Industries Division Assistant Director S. Clark Haynes, at 304-558-2212 or Butch Sayers, Gypsy Moth Program Manager, at 304-788-1066.

# FUEL OF THE FUTURE comes to West Virginia

With no end in sight to soaring petroleum prices, Americans are seeking an alternative fuel source that will cut dependence on foreign oil. Preferably, that alternative will also be renewable, produce fewer emissions and generate just as much power as petroleum. Oh – and it should also work better than petroleum in the vehicles we already drive, without major modifications or having to develop new modes of transportation.

Too bad such a fuel is just a pipe dream, you say.

Too bad you don't know about biodiesel, a mixture of soybean oil and petroleum-based diesel fuel, said West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture Gus R. Douglass.

"Biodiesel fuel provides a viable and practical alternative to pure petroleum-based fuels, and it's a fuel source that should be embraced by the American public because it's something we make right here in this country," said Commissioner Douglass, now serving his tenth term in office.

And it's not just a topic for science fair projects (although it was a prize-winning project for two Musselman High students this year). For the first time biodiesel is for sale commercially in West Virginia.

Inwood Farmers Market began selling 55-gallon barrels of biodiesel fuel in April in response to its growing popularity in the Mountain State. Nationally, biodiesel consumption grew from virtually zero in 1999 to 75 million gallons just six years later.

"The Inwood Farmers' Market is one of three in the state operated by the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) and we do much more than just help local farmers sell their produce," said WVDA Marketing and Development Director Jean Smith. "We are trying to look forward and recognize the emerging agricultural needs of farmers and consumers."

At Inwood, biodiesel is available by the drum or in lesser amounts for \$3.89 a gallon, which should drop as biodiesel supply increases, according to Steve Miller, the WVDA's Executive Director for Eastern Operations. The fuel comes from a plant in the Richmond, Va., area and is pure biodiesel, meaning it must be blended with petroleum by the buyer.

While straight biodiesel is not necessarily recommended and may void engine warranties on passenger cars, the mixed version works



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**"We've sold about 1,000 gallons in a month with no advertising, and more people are showing up looking for it all the time. People typically use an 80/20 mix, but there's one guy who comes in who's running straight biodiesel in his Volkswagen."**

– Steve Miller, Executive Director,  
WVDA Eastern Operations

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**Soybeans are grown throughout the United States, by far the world's leading soybean producer with 40 percent of worldwide production. In 2004, American farmers harvested more than 85 million metric tons of the legume, nearly half of which was exported to other parts of the world. More than half of West Virginia's 2004 production of 828,000 bushels was grown in Jefferson County.**

wonders on diesel engines. Jefferson County farmer Cam Tabb started using biodiesel in his fleet of trucks about two years ago and he sees it as a win-win situation for the consumer and the environment.

"We were already satisfied that the engine benefit was substantial, even when using low grades of biodiesel," Tabb said. "It enhances the fossil fuel because of the oxygen level in

natural oils. It essentially oxygenates the fuel and enhances the burn, consequently lowering the emissions in terms of soot and other things that come out of the stack." It also acts as a natural engine detergent, he said, and keeps engines running better and longer than straight petroleum.

Emissions from school buses have become an issue recently in the wake of a report by the Union of Concerned Scientists that says America's schoolchildren are at risk from particulate pollution generated by diesel engines. On average, a West Virginia school bus releases 80 percent more pollution per mile than the average big rig, according to the author of the study.

But that's not true in a number of West Virginia counties that have been using biodiesel in their bus fleets. State Department of Education Transportation Director Ben Shew said that 13 county school systems are using "B-20," a blend of 80 percent petroleum and 20 percent biodiesel. Five counties will start using B-5 in the near future, he added. Shew said the state normally picks up 85 percent of county maintenance and operational expenses, but will pay 95 percent of costs to counties as an incentive for using alternative fuels.

More school systems are looking at biodiesel as it becomes more widely available and perceived problems with the fuel are put to rest. The main problem is probably the fuel's strong detergent characteristics, which clean so thoroughly that filters in older engines can become clogged with old debris.

Soybeans are grown throughout the United States, by far the world's leading soybean producer with 40 percent of worldwide production. In 2004, American farmers harvested more than 85 million metric tons of the legume, nearly half of which was exported to other parts of the world. More than half of West Virginia's 2004 production of 828,000 bushels was grown in Jefferson County.

More information is available at the National Biodiesel Board's website at [www.biodiesel.org](http://www.biodiesel.org). For more information on West Virginia agriculture, visit the WVDA's website at [www.wvagriculture.org](http://www.wvagriculture.org).

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*Inwood Farmers' Market is open Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and 9 a.m.-3 p.m. on Saturdays. It is closed on Sundays.*

Return Service Requested

### **Vision, continued from page 2**

Finding ways to better accommodate Ms. Conrad's low vision was a key issue to tackle to engaging her in something she was truly passionate about. AgrAbility helped her re-partner with WVDRS to support her dream of

### **EQUINE EVENTS, CONT. FROM PAGE 11**

#### **Town & Country Days**

*Horse Show*  
August 13, 12 Noon  
Wetzel County 4-H Grounds  
Contact Christina Booker, 386-4127.

#### **Randolph County Regional Riding Club**

*Class A Summer Celebration*  
*Horse Show*  
August 26, 9 a.m.  
4-H Camp Pioneer  
Beverly, W.Va.  
Contact Sonya Penson, 636-6711 or Angie  
Kisner, 637-5299; [jarhead@meer.net](mailto:jarhead@meer.net)

#### **Mt. Zion Community**

*Ox Roast*  
August 26, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Mt. Zion Park  
Calhoun County  
Contact Vier Hall, 354-6205 or 354-6132.

self-employment. She was able to get a computer with a screen-reader and a Voice-It-All, a hand-held device that identifies colors, as well as monetary bill denominations funded through WVDRS.

AgrAbility made several farm visits to evaluate options for easier watering, labeling, and marketing Ms. Conrad's products. Though she could easily tell a customer where the tomatoes are, she might not know exactly which flat contained the unique tomato variety 'Persimmon Orange'. When Ms. Conrad used adhesive labels from a Braille label-maker, she found them no match for the dirt and constant moisture of the humid environment of the greenhouse. Inetta worked with her to solve the problem by using thin sheets of copper and a slate and stylus to form custom-made Braille labels that can then be inserted into the soil directly or tied with wire around the edge of each flat of plants. In addition, West Virginia AgrAbility provided technical assistance to Ms. Conrad in applying for a low-interest loan from the Farm Service Agency, which helped her dig a well for adequate irrigation water.

On a recent visit, Inetta brought Ms. Conrad a wireless alert system to notify her of approaching customers for trial use. By mounting the sensor at the entrance of the driveway and taking the console with her, Ms. Conrad knows when someone is coming so she can attend to her customers. This allows her flexibility, as well

as some peace of mind that new customers who don't know to call out when approaching won't simply leave when they don't immediately see anyone. "I have a hard time telling people I'm blind. Most people see Amos (her service dog) and understand, but I appreciate any little thing that will help them get the picture."

As it turns out, Ms. Conrad's passion for working outdoors has other benefits. In recent years, as her RP has progressed, she has lost a significant degree of light perception. This means that her body has a difficult time sensing daylight, and thus establishing a normal sleep cycle. Days spent largely indoors, even to write, often result in insomnia and migraines.

Being in the greenhouse most of the day, however, is like intensive light therapy for her body, helping her sleep at night and reducing headaches. Setting aside her initial transcriptionist training to pursue her dream, it seems, was as much bodily instinct as it was a professional passion.

*AgrAbility promotes agricultural know-how and disability expertise to provide farmers and farm workers with disabilities the specialized services they need to safely accommodate their disabilities in everyday production agriculture operations. Projects across the country provide information and assistance annually to nearly 1,000 - allowing them to continue their agricultural endeavors and remain vital community members.*

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