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As State Deals with Oil Spill, Group Touts Domestically Produced Biodiesel

(Birmingham, Alabama) – Long before oil began spewing into the Gulf of Mexico, the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition had partnered with the Soybean Checkoff to present a series of workshops designed to illustrate how biodiesel could offset some of our nation's reliance on foreign oil. However, since the oil spill began on April 20th, the importance of the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition's workshops has spiked.

"Alternative fuels began gaining a lot of momentum when fuel prices hit \$4 per gallon a few years back, which led to people being more responsive to the energy security, environmental advantages, and the domestic economic investment advantages fuels such as biodiesel provide," said Mark Bentley, the executive director of the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition. "Now with the oil spill, we've got yet another glaring example of why governments, businesses, fleets, and individuals should incorporate biodiesel and other alternative fuels into daily fuel demands."

To drive the message home, the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition works hard to educate consumers at all levels about the advantages of alternative fuels. From July 13th to July 15th, the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition hosted a series of free biodiesel workshops to provide interested parties in the Tuscaloosa, Auburn-Opelika, and Mobile areas with an understanding of biodiesel basics.

The workshops focus on the most important questions that potential biodiesel users have expressed in the past. Bentley stated that chief among past concerns was quality. "The quality of biodiesel in the 1970s was often questioned and sometimes for good reason. Today, biodiesel meets the highest of rating standards before distribution to the pump," Bentley added.

With biodiesel quality no longer an issue and prices competitive with traditional diesel, the next question consumers pose relates to utilizing the fuel in a standard diesel engine. Possibly one of the best advantages of biodiesel as an alternative fuel is that it can be used in any diesel engine without any conversions. Thus, cost-conscious consumers are able to switch seamlessly between traditional diesel and biodiesel blends depending on price, with the only noticeable difference being an increase in power from filling up with the higher-octane biodiesel blends along with more eco-friendly emissions.

"Once government officials, businesses, and fleets learn about the quality and availability, they often begin thinking about how they could implement it into their business models," Bentley said. "Then when they learn about the incentives available, the only other question we get is 'where to we sign up?'"

"When we decided to hold an event in Mobile, we never began to imagine that the coast could be dealing with an issue such as this," Bentley said. "Like everyone in Alabama our hearts and prayers go out to the entire coast. Hopefully, our message that alternative fuels can lessen dependence on oil with the added advantages of improving air quality and increasing investment in our local economies will be beneficial to impacted communities as they develop long-term recovery plans."

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The Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition is the state's leading advocate for alternative fuels. The promotion of clean, renewable, domestic energy sources helps reduce our dependence on foreign oil, improves local air quality, and increases economic development investments in our local communities. For more information, please visit our website at www.alabamacleanfuels.org or call us directly at 205-402-2755.

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