

### Local heating oil dealer sees customers embracing bio-diesel

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Genesee Fuel and Heating and its owner, Steve Clark, have sold home heating oil in the Maple Valley and Covington areas since 1999. *Courtesy Photo*

Steve Clark, the third-generation owner of Genesee Fuel and Heating in Seattle ([www.geneseeheat.com](http://www.geneseeheat.com)), has been selling heating oil to Maple Valley and Covington residents since 1999. Two years ago, he purchased Terry Morris Fuel and Burner Services, a third-generation, family-owned business that's located in Maple Valley at 26458 Maple Valley Hwy.

Clark is active in the Pacific Northwest Oil Heat Council ([www.pnwoilheat.com](http://www.pnwoilheat.com)), an association of small heating oil dealers in Washington. He talked to the Reporter about the advent of mandated use of renewable biofuel in the heating industry, and the council's efforts to compete with large natural gas companies such as Puget Sound Energy (PSE).

Reporter: Is the heating oil trend only in the Northwest, or is it nationwide?

Clark: There's a good-size pocket in the Northwest, but bio-diesel is most popular on the East Coast. We started seeing it come to the Northwest about four years ago. There isn't much desire for it in the rest of the country.

Reporter: What would a homeowner have to do to convert from Puget Sound Energy heating product to yours? What's the cost? And would a customer have to purchase a new tank?

Clark: The advantage of switching to heating oil is that it creates a cozier warm feel throughout your home. The heating oil tank lasts two to three times longer than a regular heating system, and it's safer than using electricity to heat your home. Our product gives you more flexibility because any time a customer wants to switch from heating oil to bio-diesel, all they have to do is call, and we'll have someone out there to swap them out.

Bio-diesel also gives even more options. It allows you to burn it at a lower carbon B20. It's cleaner for the environment because it doesn't leave a carbon footprint like other sources people are currently using to heat their homes. Although, most people are not switching to bio-diesel at this time probably because the cost is more but that could change. When it becomes more popular, the cost will go down. Also, depending on the blend will determine the price difference. The price fluctuates up and down.

Reporter: Explain why there have been complaints of the smell of the heating oil/bio-diesel.

Clark: There is no smell. The only way someone could smell the product is if they literally stuck their head in it.

Reporter: Why would you recommend your product to someone?

Clark: Well, if someone cares about the environment, they will want to switch over to bio-diesel. A lot of people like how green the Northwest is, and this is their chance to make an impact on the environment. All together, our product is better for the environment, since it is not foreign to it and the product is reusable.

Reporter: What is your company doing to compete with Puget Sound Energy?

Clark: We literally are gaining customers one by one. We depend on the spread of our product by word of mouth. We're so much smaller than PSE, but we're taking our time to really talk to each and every customer to explain all the benefits they have with our product.

Reporter: You purchased Terry Morris Fuel and Burner Services two years ago. Why?

Clark: Josh, the former owner, asked me to buy. Maple Valley has a long history with an interest in bio-heat. He approached me to buy out his company.

Reporter: How many locations for Genesee?

Clark: We really only have the one location that we operate out of, which is in Seattle.

*News intern Mika Paige contributed to this report.*