

# Seeing Green in Soybeans

By blending soybeans with heating oil, Hart Petroleum offers Long Island a cleaner heating alternative with environmentally friendly biofuel.

By Adina Genn

**W**illie Nelson is a fan. So are Julia Roberts and Morgan Freeman. Now you can add Raymond Hart to the list. We are talking about biofuel, a renewable, clean-burning fuel that is kinder to the environment than traditional petroleum. And Hart is taking it to the next step by making biofuel available to all Long Islanders.



Troubled by environmental concerns and America's dependence on foreign oil, Hart hopes to make a difference. As president of Deer Park-based Hart Petroleum, a home heating oil and service company that serves Nassau and Suffolk, Hart is adding to his offerings the newest alternative—a blend of soybeans and oil to make biofuel.

Although the venture has cost him much time and hundreds of thousands of dollars, Hart feels the investment will ultimately prove worthwhile. Besides, he says he wants to make the world a better place for future generations—for reasons that go beyond a business' bottom line.

"I have four children as well as a grandchild," he explains. Using biofuel can "save millions and millions of gallons of petroleum. Somebody had to step up to the plate. I decided to do it," he adds.

Hart says he already had much of the needed infrastructure in place. In the retail heating business since 1980, he purchased a large oil terminal facility in New Hyde Park in 1998. By 2005, he began purchasing trailers and tractors, and today he owns four transporters and nine oil delivery trucks. This past July, Hart Petroleum began offering BioHeat, a blend of high-grade heating oil and grain-based oil made from soybeans. Though biofuel can be made of other ingredients, such as palm oil and even algae, Hart Petroleum relies on soybeans, because, he says, soybean is a stable crop that is clean-burning and also stands up to cold temperatures.

"BioHeat works with any heating system that uses regular fuel oil and does not require any modification to existing burners or tanks," says Jacqueline Hart, Hart's daughter, who runs the Deer Park office. And though other Long Island companies do offer biofuel, Hart Petroleum blends the soybean

oil right at its New Hyde Park facility with its fuel injection system, a \$400,000 investment.

BioHeat is available to Nassau homeowners, businesses, and municipalities, as well as to other petroleum companies that want to provide fuel alternatives to clients. Hart Petroleum customers in Nassau receive BioHeat, rather than traditional fuel, at no additional expense. The product is available to commercial clients in Suffolk, and, once the company secures additional storage by next summer, Hart plans to deliver it to the county's residential customers as well. The New Hyde Park terminal also features a separate tank for storing biodiesel for cars and trucks for commercial businesses as well as individuals seeking a green alternative to fuel their vehicles.

The soy product used in the biofuel process is grown by Midwest farmers who then ship it to New Jersey, where it is off-loaded from rail cars and transported by truck or barge. But trucking weight law limitations put costly restrictions on transportation of



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the product from New Jersey to New York. So Hart plans to further benefit the environment by reopening an existing freight rail spur at the company's New Hyde Park terminal, which would allow for deliveries by train, rather than truck—a step that would help reduce local traffic.

Ray Hart expects that when the rail spur is operational next spring, he will be able to bring a higher volume of soy product from the Midwest into the New Hyde Park facility in a more cost efficient manner. The move would help the firm realize economies of scale as it also contracts the product out to other petroleum companies.

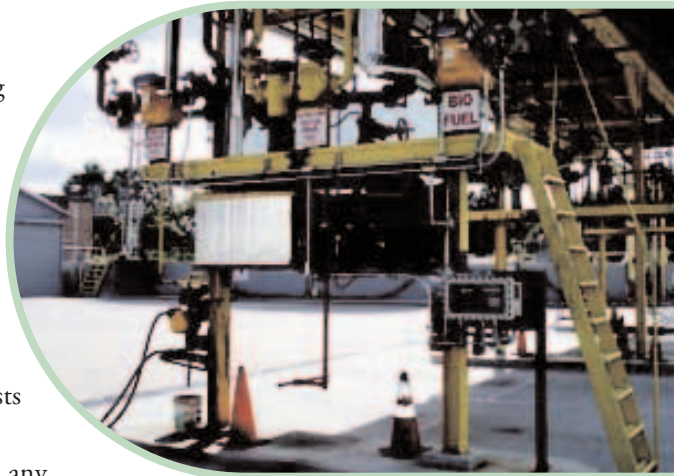
“Costs would probably be more efficient once we're able to open up the rail spur,” he says. Currently, Hart is in the process of looking for grant money

to help offset the costs of relaying tracks and installing a switch at the facility.

At a time when green energy is all the rage, Ray Hart believes he has the perfect opportunity to promote biofuel. “This is the first time where you find business, government, and environmentalists on the same page,” he says.

Still, there are no guarantees, as any risk-taking entrepreneur knows all too well. But Hart believes strongly in his mission. And it's easy to see why, as environmental experts say using biofuel can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent.

Meanwhile, Hart is doing his part to raise awareness of the importance of biofuel. In August, the company faced a setback when Gov. Elliot Spitzer vetoed a bill that would have extended a tax credit issued in 2006 to homeowners using biofuel. But rather than lose momentum, Hart hopes the provision will be included in next year's budget. Hart recently spoke with politicians at a Republican roundtable in Garden City to promote biofuel for Long Island. To further raise awareness, the company has created a website, [www.hartpetroleum.com](http://www.hartpetroleum.com). Hart is also in the midst of planning a tour of its New Hyde Park facility, and it hopes to run this program in



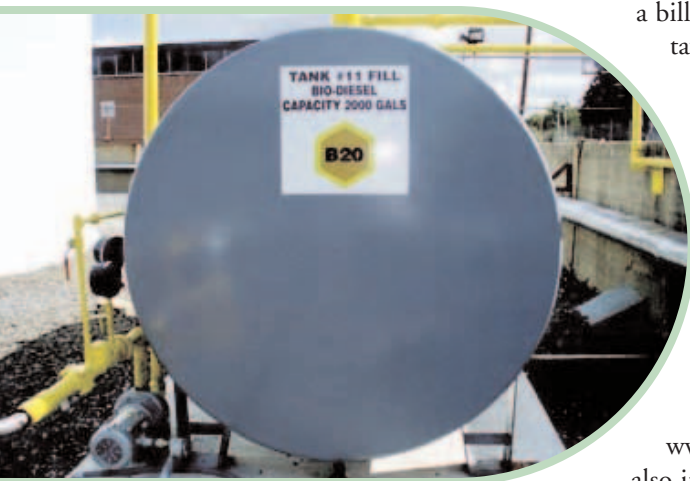
Rack positions where trucks are loaded with biodiesel or bioheat at the New Hyde Park terminal facility

partnership with the local public library.

Rhea Courtney Bozic, who runs Clean Fuels Consulting in Bay Shore, believes the biofuel initiative is good for Long Island. Other states such as California, Bozic notes, have oil wells and oil refineries. But in New York, “we have to import everything,” she says.

“If we can use a domestic fuel to make up a part of what we are importing, that can make a big difference. We have to start somewhere, and Mr. Hart is that somewhere,” says Bozic.

Ray Hart knows all too well that the path to a healthier planet has its twists and turns. But when future generations look to you to lead the way, he finds it is easy to stay focused. And he hopes to grow his business, as well as serve new fans of biofuel energy.



Biodiesel tank for fueling diesel cars and trucks

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