

Hellgate considers propane-powered engines for jet boat river trips

By Sue Kupillas

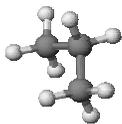
Rogue Valley Clean Cities

A call from Travis Hamlyn and a visit to Hellgate Excursions, meeting with Robert and Travis Hamlyn revealed an exciting project on which they are all working. After fifty years of operating on the Rogue River, Hellgate continues exploring new ways to improve the customer experience and operate responsibly on the river. Here is their story.



Travis Hamlyn of Hellgate Excursions

The Rogue River was one of the original six rivers designated as Wild and Scenic in the United States. Hellgate Excursions, operating in such a sensitive environment, has always kept the focus on minimizing impact on the environment while extending the opportunity for the public to enjoy the natural beauty of the river. With that in mind, the Hamlyn's a year ago started researching an alternative fuel that could run the fleet with the least impact on the environment. After researching many alternative fuels to replace the gasoline propulsion systems on the vessels, they narrowed the focus to a propane mono fuel system. Propane is domestically produced; (available in the US) so it does not rely on foreign oil markets to dictate cost or access. Propane exhaust contains only carbon dioxide and water vapor but does not produce any other greenhouse gasses. Propane has the least amount of loss of BTU's (British Thermal Units), less than any other alternative fuel. Therefore it has similar power produced by gasoline. Furthermore, there are propane fuel systems that increase the energy while reducing BTU loss to less than 10 percent for easier conversions in commercial and non-commercial applications.



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Learn more: <http://www.hellgate.com/>

More alternative cars on the road

Preparing for EVs and NGVs

The region's electrical grid has adequate supply for an increase in electric vehicles, but not at peak hours. It may take consumer education and incentives to encourage home charging efficiency to balance loads. This was a conclusion drawn during a January 20 Rogue Valley Clean Cities Board meeting with representatives from Pacific Power, Avista, Northwest Gas Association and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. The RVCC Board has been gathering information to prepare for a March meeting with homebuilders to discuss building garages equipped for EVs and NGVs. At the February 17 meeting with representatives from state and local building and fire code divisions, the RVCC Board learned that codes exist to allow builders to add outlets for electric vehicles and plumbing for natural gas home fueling devices. Thank you to everyone who participated in our meetings. Find summaries on the web: www.roguevalleycleancities.org

The United States to date has not used propane for commercial vessel fleets, although propane is used for vessel fleets in the UK, Australia and Canada. Without precedent, there are additional challenges with agency oversight and experimental outcomes. Travis Hamlyn explained that another challenge he has is that there is funding to convert commercial auto, bus and truck fleets to alternative fuels, but no funding designated to convert fleets of vessels on the water. There is funding to help mitigate costs for fueling stations on land but not for vessels on the water.

The Hamlyns have formed a team to create the first propane engine for a vessel and plan to test it this coming season. The City of Grants Pass is considering partnering on this project. Hellgate excursions continues to be a progressive Oregon company providing jobs and creating a multimillion dollar impact to the local Southern Oregon economy. Developing and manufacturing propane boat engines in Oregon will create new jobs and benefit the state and eventually the nation. Hamlyn says other agencies involved in this project include the United States Coast Guard, Bureau of Land Management, California Air Resources Board (CARB) and others. The Rogue Valley Clean Cities will consider partnering with Hellgate Excursions on this green solution to protect our valuable waterways and air shed.

On the web: Propane Education and Research Council, <http://www.propanecouncil.org/>, Propane Exceptional Energy, <http://www.usepropane.com/>, Propane Facts, <http://www.propane101.com/>, DOE, <http://www.afdc.energy.gov/afdc/fuels/propane.html>, National Propane Gas Association, <http://www.npga.org/>

The Chronicle is a monthly publication of Rogue Valley Clean Cities Coalition. The Coalition is made up of businesses and agencies with a shared goal of reducing the nation's dependence on imported oil. Contact Sue Kupillas, coordinator, by email, sue@roguevalleycleancities.org. Learn more : www.roguevalleycleancities.org