

Gathering Summary: "Oil + Water," a Documentary Film, April 28, 2010

Summary by Catherine Haug

The Film

"Oil + Water" is a documentary of two young men and their road trip from Alaska to the southern tip of South America.

A used fire truck, Baby, was retrofitted for their needs, and to burn bio-diesel made from waste oil found along their route. They brought along their kayaks and surfboards, for exploring white water and ocean surf at several points during their trip. And they filmed their adventure and the people they met.

Salmon oil in Alaska, pig fat (lard) in Mexico, waste deep-fat-fryer fat from roadside food stands, and dark red palm oil in tropical America are examples of the fuel they used. All of these worked, but the palm oil caused a bit of trouble when it congealed in Baby's system.

US Ambassadors organized greeting crowds at several stops, and at most stops, the local people were very curious and interested in their use of bio-diesel.

See nrpw.com, nrpw.com/blog, & nrpw.com/history.html for more.

Discussion

1. Question: What did they use for lube in Baby? **No discussion.**

2. Question: Is bio-diesel a good idea? Could we use it here?

Discussion: Why not? Brazil is 100% bio-diesel, from sugar cane. But growing food crops for fuel deprives people of needed food, and the earth's climate from precious carbon-sequestering forests. Brazil is sacrificing the Amazon forest for sugar cane plantations.

Discussion: What about camelina (a non-food crop) here in Montana. But is there enough available land to fuel all our cars and trucks, without taking land away from food crops?

Discussion: Perhaps the use of waste oil is OK, but not a good idea to grow crops for fuel, as the soil is needed to grow food.

3. Question: Is there enough waste oil for everyone to use it for transportation?

Discussion: probably not. Its use should be limited; for example, farmers might use it to power their own farm vehicles, but not for travel or errands.

4. Comment: The adventurers in the film are an example of the inventiveness of humans, for problem-solving.