

THE DAILY Reporter

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Adrian plant opens; Senator Levin visits ethanol source

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By roland stoy-Staff writer

ADRIAN — Unlike many states, Michigan is not putting all its eggs in one basket, as the old saying goes, for alternative fuel.

Or rather, the state is not relying solely on corn and ethanol.

According to David Panian, writing in the Adrian Daily Telegram, a wealth of elected officials last week attended the grand opening of the NextDiesel biodiesel plant in that city, employing 20 and expected to produce 20 million gallons of fuel a year, with a capacity of up to 100 million gallons a year.

But the ethanol is being pumped, and U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., visited a Meijer gas station on B Drive North in Battle Creek last week for informational purposes to talk about ethanol-based fuel and the E85 pump at the station, according to a radio report.

As to whether the Coldwater Meijer store may soon be selling ethanol, local officials could not answer that question and a call to headquarters had not been returned as of deadline Friday.

The manager of the Meijer station in Battle Creel was also not available for comment.

Meijer has 21 Stations in Michigan now selling E85, which, according to Internet sources is now selling at prices between \$2.69 and \$2.89 per gallon.

As for the Adrian plant, Panian wrote that the fuel is being made from vegetable oils or animal fats, including soybean oil, beef tallow or chicken fat.

Brad Schram, one of the company's co-owners, said the company is looking into acquiring cooking grease from large restaurant chains to use as one of the plants' feedstock. He said the company wants to acquire most of its feedstock locally.

"The plant is designed to process a variety of oils and greases. Inside are two dozen 30,000-gallon tanks, half to hold the feedstock and half for the biodiesel. There are other tanks to hold glycerin, a byproduct of the biodiesel production process that NextDiesel will sell," wrote Panian.

Present for the grand opening were Gov. Jennifer Granholm, Levin, U.S. Rep. Tim Walberg, R-Tipton and state Sen. Cameron Brown, R-Fawn River Township, as well as a host of other area officials.

Walberg was quoted as saying the plant represents a blending of the area's agricultural and industrial background and praising the entrepreneurial spirit of the company's "eclectic mix" of founders.

NextDiesel is owned by Biofuel Industries Group of West Bloomfield, and many of the company's investors are from Oakland County.

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