



Northwest Public Radio (NPR)  
April 14, 2006

## New Ways to Recycle Agricultural Waste

Posted: Friday, April 14,  
2006

The Northwest is a region known for recycling. A new research laboratory in the Tri-Cities will add to that effort. The goal: to turn farm waste into fuel... and fabric. Richland correspondent Carol Cizauskas attended the groundbreaking Thursday at Washington State University and has more.

We've all heard of biodiesel, an alternative fuel often made from vegetable oils or animal fats. The problem is, it costs a lot. Finding cheaper ways to make biodiesel is a job for researchers at the new lab, called Bioproducts, Sciences & Engineering Laboratory, or BESL for short.

Plaza: "It's a tremendous opportunity, and it gives us great hope."

John Plaza is excited about the lab's alternative fuels research. He runs Seattle Biodiesel, a small company that manufactures alternative fuel. Unlike the petroleum industry, he doesn't have a large research and development budget. He hopes to use the brain power of the lab to help him compete.

Plaza: "And we're a very small industry that needs

support from the federal government, from the state government, from the local government, and the education community for the resources around science, the knowledge base of engineering staff that can come work for us after they go to school here.

BESL isn't just about finding cheaper ways to make alternative fuels. Researchers at the lab will find other uses for agricultural waste products, like cow manure and corn husks.

Len Peters directs Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, a partner in the project. He says they've even made a fabric that's more environmentally friendly than polyester made from petroleum.

Peters: "We've already made prototypical tee-shirts out of corn, so that it would be a tee-shirt that you and I would not be able to tell the difference. But instead of using crude petroleum, we have used biomass and generated a thread that you can weave into a tee-shirt and you cannot tell the difference."

BESL is a collaboration between Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and Washington State University. The 24-million-dollar price tag is being split by PNNL and the state.

**The lab is scheduled to open in a year and a half.**

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