



Keeping the Company Rolling

Bob Powell leads MFA Oil's
Truck Services Department

See Story on Page 6



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Spring 2016

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Membership Has Its Privileges

Have you ever seen an advertisement you thought sounded too good to be true? In most cases, you'd probably be right. There's almost always a catch. Some people may feel similarly about cooperatives—and the patronage refunds you can earn as members—but trust me, they are legit!

The fact is, the cooperative is a wonderful business model. It has stood the test of time (86 years in the case of MFA Oil) and continues to be relevant and powerful today. How and why has the co-op model survived this long? Because the folks who primarily use the company (farmers, in our case) are the owners. Our co-op governance aligns with our farmer-owners, and our board is made up entirely of farmers who represent the geographies in which we operate. Best of all, much of our annual profits are returned to our farmer-owners.

Cooperative membership has great value. How value is defined varies depending on whom you ask. We think great service and competitive pricing must be a given. If a company can't do both on a daily basis, it's irrelevant. We believe our commitment to service and pricing, combined with all the benefits of membership (ownership, governance, patronage, etc.), brings a tremendous value. In fact, MFA Oil returned \$23.7 million in patronage to our members in our 2015 fiscal year—our largest single-year patronage distribution in the history of the company. When you consider all these benefits, why wouldn't you buy from MFA Oil?

We have made tremendous changes recently we feel our customers will embrace. We know we cannot treat everyone equally due to many variables, but I can assure you that all customers will be treated equitably. That means our offerings will be consistent based on circumstances such as tank size and customer openness



to more efficient deliveries. For example, is there a price difference between buying a plane ticket for travel tomorrow versus a month from now? Certainly there is! Allowing us to schedule your deliveries, which improves our efficiency, enables us to offer you better pricing.

At the end of the day, we are looking for win/win relationships. The beauty of this approach is that it aligns seamlessly with what the cooperative system is all about: working together for our collective benefit.

Cooperatively,

Mark Fenner
President and CEO



ON THE COVER:

Bob Powell has worked in MFA Oil's Truck Services department for 30 years and leads a talented crew of mechanics, painters and repair technicians. Photo by Casey Buckman Photography.



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This magazine comes to you courtesy of MFA Oil Company, a farmer-owned cooperative providing energy solutions to customers for more than 85 years. We deliver high-quality propane, fuels and lubricants to farmers and other customers across an 11-state region stretching from North Carolina to Utah. *Momentum* is an information service for farm families published by MFA Oil.

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Training Prepares Firefighters for Propane Emergencies

Last fall, the Fire Fighters Association of Missouri and the Missouri State Fair Fire Department hosted a statewide, two-day training conference at the Missouri State Fairgrounds in Sedalia, Mo., on how to handle propane emergencies. Larry Eggen, an MFA Oil plant manager in the area, helped to plan the event. In addition to his job with MFA Oil, Eggen serves as a member of the State Fair Fire Department and as battalion chief of the Johnson County Fire Protection District.

“I was asked by fellow MFA Oil employees Tom Procter (director of service) and Floyd Ouder Kirk (regional service manager) to use my connections with the Fire Fighters Association to put together a training program that would help educate Missouri firefighters about propane safety,” Eggen says. “I attended a similar event in Phoenix, Ariz., to see how the training course could be set up and how to best present this information to firefighters in our state. We collaborated with the Missouri Propane Education and Research Council (MOPERC) to fund the training at no cost to the participants.”

The conference provided 60 Missouri firefighters from 29 different departments with both classroom learning and hands-on firefighting instruction for dealing with propane fires and vehicles. A domestic propane tank and bobtail truck served as live fire props. Basic propane equipment and parts were also used to assist in building firefighter knowledge and awareness when arriving on scene, and several industry experts were on hand for questions and coaching during the training.

“This training gives the firefighters a good overview of the potential dangers they could face in a propane emergency,” says Dave Hedrick, director of University of Missouri’s Fire and Rescue Training Institute. “Propane is a very safe product, but just like any fuel, there are some potential hazards. If an emergency should occur, firefighters need to know how to mitigate that emergency and make sure the citizens they serve are safe and that they know how to keep themselves safe.”

The conference was conducted in cooperation with local fire protection and ambulatory districts, the national Propane Education and Research Council (PERC), MOPERC, the University of Missouri Fire and Rescue Training Institute, the State of Missouri Fire Marshall’s office and several vendors.


The national PERC paid for the conference as part of its efforts to assist in propane safety training across the country. MFA Oil brought in a bobtail truck and provided the propane fuel used during the live training exercises, and expenses were reimbursed by MOPERC.



Photos from Missouri Propane Gas Association

Firefighters from across Missouri gathered in Sedalia, Mo., to learn how to handle propane emergencies during a two-day training session. MFA Oil provided equipment, personnel and fuel to assist with the training event.

MFA Oil employees Darryl Grandfield, a driver from the Cole Camp, Mo. plant, and David Grothoff, propane safety manager, assisted Eggen with the event by bringing a bobtail truck and a propane compressor for demonstration purposes.

Eggen says the propane safety training conference was a success and plans are already under way to host another session in Sedalia next September. 



Pictured: Bob Powell



KEEPING THE COMPANY ROLLING

By Adam Buckallew | Photos by Anthony Jinson

Sliding through the narrow spaces between bobtail propane trucks and 10-wheelers for refined fuels, Bob Powell makes his way around the MFA Oil Truck Services Shop to check on his team's progress with the day's work. His crew is working efficiently to get trucks in and out of the shop as quickly as possible. The faster they complete their work, the faster the trucks can return to the road to service customers.

"We handle all of the work on the trucks except for repairs on engines, transmissions and vehicle rear-ends," says Powell, who manages MFA Oil's Truck Services. "I call my guys the 'Can-Do Crew' because they are all great at their jobs and can handle just about anything I throw at them."

The truck shop team consists of three mechanics/welders, two painters/body repair technicians, a crane truck driver and an office secretary. In addition to vehicular repairs, they handle refurbishments on tanks, certifications on tanks, trucks, tie downs, hoses and bumpers, compliance with Department of Transportation standards, Weights and Measures audits and testing on propane and refined fuel tanks.

All repairs and alterations the shop performs on pressurized vehicles must meet federal requirements.

"We have to keep stringent records and follow strict quality control procedures to maintain our R Stamp, which is a certificate of authorization work on pressure vehicles,"

Powell says. "R stamp certification is regulated by the National Board of Boiler and Pressure Vessel Inspectors. Due to the potential for catastrophic danger of a failed high pressure system, the review process is highly scrutinized."

A GREAT TEAM

When Powell discusses the performance of his employees, you can hear the pride in his voice.

"Everyone here is talented at what they do," Powell brags. "We've got an outstanding crew that works well together and is extremely focused on what needs to be done."

James Greer, MFA Oil vice president of supply and distribution, says the truck shop's performance is of immense value to the company.

"Bob and his team at the truck shop have proven themselves to be very capable," notes Greer, who has served as Powell's supervisor for the last two years. "Being able to handle the majority of the repairs and maintenance on our own trucks makes the company more efficient and saves us money because it minimizes the work we send to outside vendors."

Powell joined the truck shop as a painter in 1986. Since then, he's worked in every position within the truck shop on his way to becoming manager in 1995. Although he's now the boss, Powell does not let that stand in the way of occasionally rolling up his sleeves and tackling projects himself.



LEFT: Kyle Burton uses a grinder on a part for the truck shop. Right: Kyle Strodman washes a refined fuel tank wagon. Stacy Raps checks the register on a propane truck.

"I like to do some of the work now and then to show I'm willing to do anything I would ask my crew to do," Powell explains. "That includes lots of hands-on work and training for my employees."

Powell's leadership, experience and can-do mantra have resulted in an excellent record of maintenance and safety under his watch.

"Bob is an exceptional manager and you can tell his crew follows his lead on how they go about their work," Greer says. "Safety is always a top priority and we're proud of the department's diligence and commitment to maintaining a safe workplace."

FIXES OVER THE PHONE

Sitting at his desk at the back of the shop, Powell frequently fields calls from MFA Oil employees who are experiencing problems with their company trucks. Powell, who has earned a reputation as a sought-after mechanical guru, is often able to determine whether the equipment needs to be brought in for repairs or if he can solve the issue by phone.

Powell says a phone call for help might sound insufficient when dealing with today's highly-sophisticated trucks, tanks and related equipment, but in many cases, it gets the job done.

"You'd be surprised how many problems can be solved by phone," Powell says. "I

get a lot of calls from guys who think their truck needs to visit the shop when it's really not necessary. It takes a lot of interpretation, but we're able to figure things out in a lot of cases."

To help make the calls as efficient as possible, Powell puts a vehicle specification book onboard every new company truck his shop works on. The books serve as a quick reference guide by providing Powell with the information necessary to diagnose problems faster.

The troubleshooting calls can last anywhere from a few minutes to several hours. In the winter, he usually fields up to 10 calls a day.

"Our trucks, especially the newer ones, can be quite complex," Greer says. "Bob does an impressive job of helping others understand what they may be seeing or experiencing. His ability to come up with solutions over the phone is remarkable."

MOVING TO MOBERLY

The L-shaped building currently housing the truck shop was built in 1958. While it has served its purpose well throughout the years, upgrades were needed in order to keep up with the demands of the company.

Soon, MFA Oil's Truck Services will move from the corner of Paris Road and Vandiver Drive in Columbia, Mo., to its new home just off U.S. Highway 63 on the MFA Oil Business Support Campus in Moberly, Mo.

"It has been a struggle at times for the truck shop employees to work in the limited amount of space we have available at the Columbia location," Greer acknowledges. "The new facility will not have such constraints, which should improve the speed and efficiency of repair work and the overall safety of the shop."

Powell says the new truck shop will be roughly four times as large as the current facility.

"There's going to be so much more room in the new building, which will allow us the opportunity to work on more trucks at once," Powell notes. "We're going from 8,000 square feet to 32,000 square feet. It's going to be massive."

The expanded workspace in Moberly will also make it possible to bring in additional staff.

"In years past, we farmed out a lot of work because we didn't have the room or personnel to handle it all, but now we'll be able to bring all of that work back in house," Powell says. "Space restrictions will no longer be a concern."

Besides his excitement for a bigger shop, Powell looks forward to the enhanced equipment and facilities his crew will have at its disposal. The new and improved shop will have two cranes, one more than the current shop. The new crane is bigger and able to lift 10-wheeler-sized trucks. Additional new features will include: a truck wash booth, a sand blasting booth, a fabrication shop and a state-of-the-art paint booth.

Powell says the bigger building will also allow his crew to take on customer tank work.

"We'll be conducting inspections, re-doing valves and applying fresh paint to customer tanks," Powell says. "The company has recently purchased a new flatbed truck capable of hauling up to 25 tanks at a time to transport them back and forth from our shop."

Powell expects the move into the new facilities to occur by April.



"It may be a little bit of a logistical challenge because we have a lot of tools and equipment to move," Powell explains. "I anticipate it will take about 30 days to get everything transferred from Columbia to Moberly. However, we should be back up and operational quickly."

EDUCATING DRIVERS

Greer sees the proximity of Powell and the truck shop to the Moberly Business Support Campus' training facility as a big benefit to the company.

"Bob is a go-to guy in our industry and a great source of information for our employees," Greer says. "People from outside the company call him regularly for help. Having him in Moberly will mean we'll be able to better utilize Bob's expertise in our training process."

Likewise, Powell is enthusiastic about the chance to conduct more training sessions with drivers.

"We're going to be installing new tablets in our trucks beginning in March," Powell adds. "The opportunity to work together with our drivers as they are learning the new system will be valuable."

A MECHANIC AND FAMILY MAN

Powell has always enjoyed mechanical work and the challenge of fixing things on his own. He got his start working at a full-

service gas station when he was 16. Powell continued working at the service station until he joined the U.S. Army at age 18.

He would spend the next four years in the military as a heavy wheel mechanic and wrecker operator stationed at Ft. Hood, Texas, and a U.S. outpost in Amberg, Germany. It was in Germany where Powell met his wife-to-be, Doris. They tied the knot in 1984 and have enjoyed 31 years together.

In their spare time, the Powells enjoy playing volleyball and spending time with Bob's family and caring for their dog, Bear, a 10-year-old Newfoundland that weighs 200 pounds. They like to play volleyball so much that Powell built a white sand volleyball court at their home. He and his wife have played in recreational leagues for years and Powell has also participated competitively in the Show-Me State Games.

Powell's family lives in the Columbia area and he makes time to see them frequently.

"I'm a big family guy," Powell says. "I see my brother every Sunday and my sister lives in town so we see her a lot as well. My mother and stepfather are also easy to visit in nearby Pierpont."

CHANGES THROUGH THE YEARS

Many things have changed at MFA Oil since Powell first started working for the company in 1986. Truck tank sizes have grown from 1,200 gallons to 2,700

gallons. The pumping speed of the trucks is another area of improvement he has observed, going from speeds of 40 gallons per minute up to as much as 85 gallons per minute on some equipment.

"Everything has mostly gotten bigger and better," Powell says. "But we've also got more regulations and safety considerations to worry about now than we once did."

The appearance of MFA Oil's trucks and tanks have changed as well. Powell has seen three different sets of decals since he joined the company. He has a board with all of the old decal specifications hanging in the current truck shop that shows how much the signage has evolved over time.

Another difference is in the electronic systems used in the trucks to calculate deliveries and print customer tickets. MFA Oil is on its third system since Powell started.

Sometimes change can be difficult and create new problems to solve, but that doesn't bother Powell. He likes a good challenge and says his team is up to the task.

"We're soon going to be operating out of one of the newest and finest facilities in the state and we can't wait to get our hands on all of our new tools and toys," Powell says. "To say we're excited about the future of the truck shop would be an understatement." 



From Left:
Colette, Aaron,
Wallace, Curtis
and Tabbatha
Collett.

IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING GREAT

By Adam Buckallew and Sara Brunsvold | Photo by Adam Buckallew

When Aaron Collett talks about the plot of land he farms outside Warrensburg, Mo., he does not talk about simply an operation of row crops and cattle. Nor does he talk about simply a means of living. He talks about his family.

The land and his family are as intertwined in the past as they are into the foreseeable future.

For Aaron, this farm is his family.

At 61 years old, he is the second of three generations currently contributing to the success of the Collett family farming operation.

THE BEGINNING

His father, Wallace Collett, started the operation as a young man.

Wallace, now 85, was freshly arrived home from two years of service in the U.S. Army when he settled on 240 acres near Warrensburg in spring 1954. Though he rented the land, he owned the six head of cattle he kept on it.

Between his small herd and the variety of crops he raised, Wallace's success in farming began to bloom.

Over the years, Wallace and his wife, Sallie, cobbled together a growing operation. They purchased nearby properties and inherited land from Sallie's family. Together, this formed the core of the family's current acreage.

Aaron is the oldest of Wallace and Sallie's three children. Much like his father, Aaron cut his agricultural career teeth on rented land. After spending his formative years learning from his dad, Aaron rented land his freshman year of high school and began growing his own row crops.

"The next year, my dad and I went in 50-50 on 40 head of cattle," Aaron says. "I ended up renting more ground, buying a tractor and farming full-time after I graduated from high school in 1973."

Throughout it all, MFA Oil was a key partner in the Collett farming operation.

When Aaron was still a boy, his dad became a member of the MFA Oil Cooperative. In a pinch, Wallace was even known to fill in as a tank wagon driver



and help during the winter at the MFA Oil filling station once located on Business 50 in Warrensburg.

Aaron joined the cooperative in 1973, the same year he graduated.

Both Aaron and his dad have served as delegates or delegate-alternates for the past 40 years.

"MFA Oil is all I've ever used on our farm," Aaron says. "We're proud to be MFA Oil members."

COMING UP

Enduring family farms are becoming rarer these days, but the Colletts seem to have something special going.

Aaron and his wife, Colette, have two grown children, both of whom stayed close to home.

Their son, Curtis, now 24, is eager to work alongside Aaron as much as possible.

"I'd like to keep the family tradition of farming going," Curtis says.

Along with his wife, Tabbatha, Curtis contributes to the farm on a part-time basis. He works as a mechanic at a local Chrysler dealership, but wants to join Aaron full-time on the farm when enough work exists to justify him leaving his mechanic job.

The time may be soon.

Aaron plans to build three broiler chicken barns this spring. They will house 132,000 chickens, which will provide not only

additional revenue but also fertilizer for crops. He also hopes the addition will create new jobs for his son and daughter-in-law.

"It's taken nearly a year to get through all the paperwork and approvals, but we're looking forward to adding the broiler operation to our farm," Aaron says.

"MFA OIL IS ALL I'VE EVER USED ON OUR FARM. WE'RE PROUD TO BE MFA OIL MEMBERS." – AARON COLLETT

As part of the preparations, Aaron has worked closely with his local MFA Oil plant manager, Larry Eggen, on propane needs of the new barns. Each one will be equipped with three, 1,000-gallon propane tanks to provide heat for the chickens.

"It's really going to be quite the operation once we get everything going," Aaron says.

If all goes well, he may add more barns in the coming years.

REASON TO HOPE

Aaron is a new grandfather, with a second grandchild due soon.

If the farming gene is as strong in the fourth generation as it was in the first three, the Collett farm and their MFA Oil membership could be around for a while yet—something Aaron is all too pleased to think about.

"It would mean a lot to us if we could keep the farm in the family for generations to come." **M**



Goodbye, El Niño; Hello, La Niña?

By Adam Buckallew

As one of the strongest El Niño weather cycles in the last 65 years begins to weaken, the question on the minds of many is what will come next? Will the Midwest have a return to weather more in line with a typical year, or will a new weather phenomenon emerge with the potential to affect temperatures and precipitation totals?

The answers to those questions will largely depend on how long the El Niño phenomenon persists and whether a La Niña develops afterward, says Tony Lupo, an atmospheric science professor at the University of Missouri.

El Niño and La Niña are opposite phases of what is known as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle. The ENSO cycle is a scientific term that describes the fluctuations in temperature between the ocean and atmosphere. When oceanic waters in the

Pacific are warmer than normal, El Niño occurs. By contrast, La Niña is characterized by cooling temperatures in the Pacific Ocean.

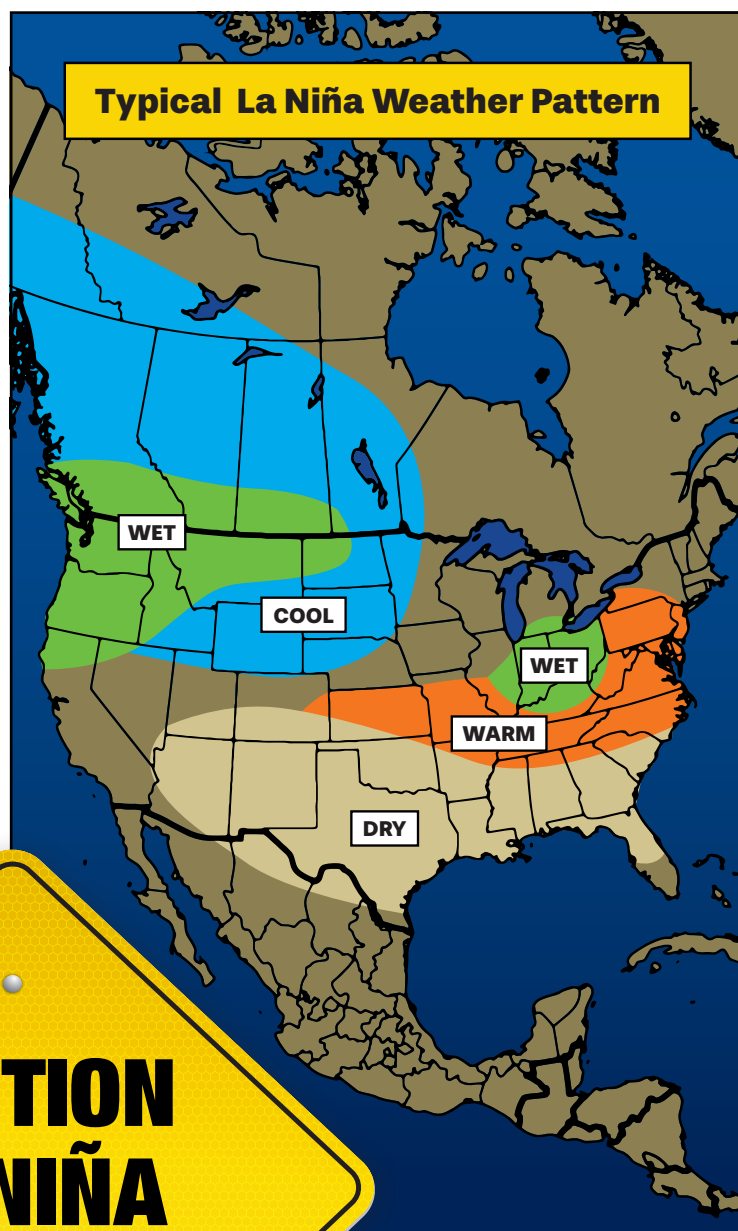
Lupo says he expects the current El Niño conditions to ride out the spring until May. What happens next will determine how the summer weather plays out.

“El Niño and its transitions are the 800-pound gorilla when it comes to our weather,” says Lupo. “El Niño and La Niña impact our winter seasons, while the transition from one to the other dominates summer.”

According to Al Dutcher, a climatologist at the University of Nebraska, four out of every five El Niño events since 1950 have been followed by a La Niña event and that transition occurs within a 12-month period.



"SPRING SHOULD BE COOLER WITH NORMAL PRECIPITATION. THIS SUMMER COULD BE WARMER AND DRIER THAN NORMAL." – TONY LUPO



**CAUTION
LA NIÑA
AHEAD**


"The one out of every five that doesn't still goes to the cool side in the Pacific Ocean," Dutcher says. "It just doesn't meet the quantifications of La Niña conditions as defined by the Climate Prediction Center. So we still see some of the same patterns with those weaker events that don't quantify as La Niña, but they can still have an impact on the upper atmosphere."

Transitions to La Niña often bring the Midwest hot summers and irregular rainfall, and that fits with Lupo's prediction for the upcoming summer.

"Spring should be cooler with normal precipitation," Lupo says. "This summer could be warmer and drier than normal."

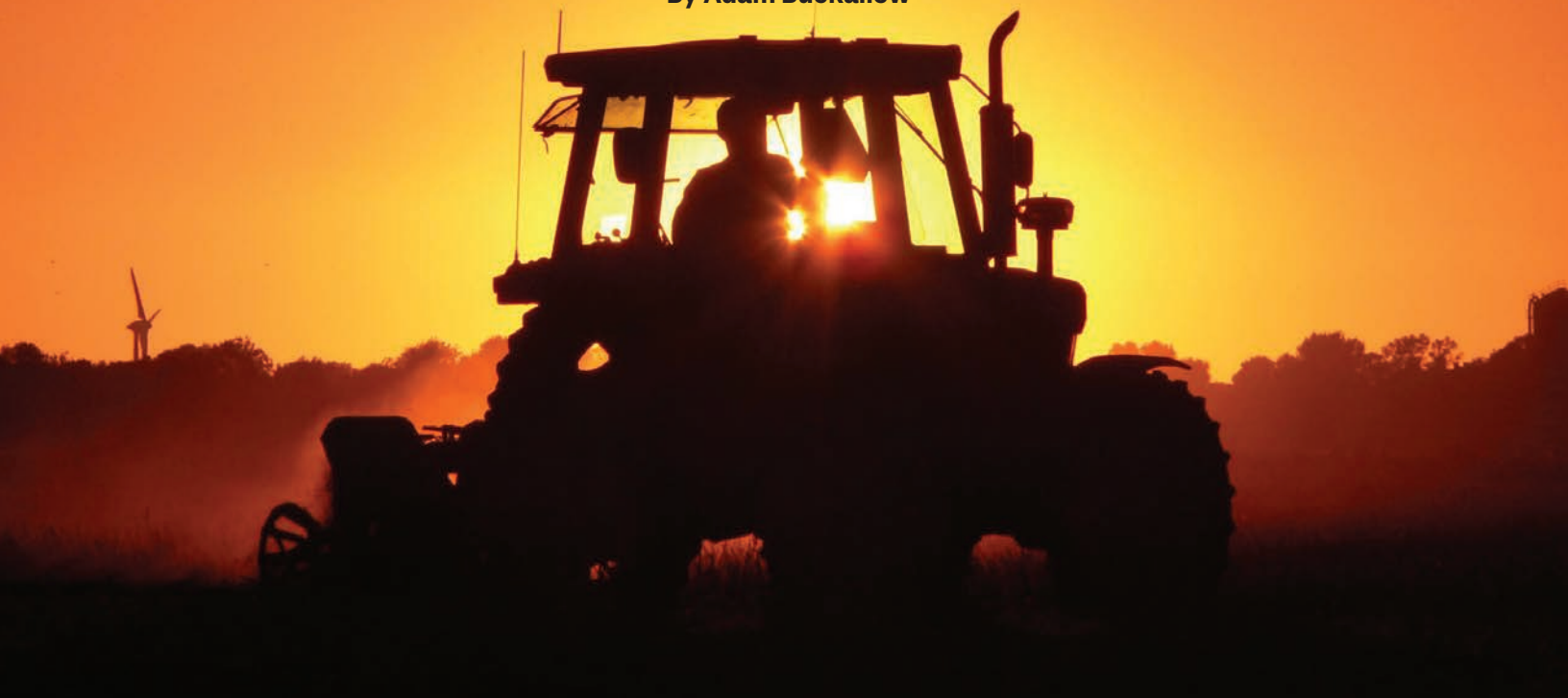
A developing La Niña could mean bad news for farmers. In 2014, Lupo and one of his students, Jessica Donovan, analyzed harvest records for corn, soybean and wheat back to 1920. Controlling for the effects of technology on yields, Donovan found a definite correlation between El Niño/La Niña and Missouri's corn and soybean yields.

"We're finding that when it's transitioning into El Niño years, the corn yields are higher," Donovan said. "Then when it's transitioning into La Niña, the corn crops don't have as high yields."

The study found the same trend to be true in soybeans, though the effect was not as strong as it was with corn. 

MEMBERSHIP PAYS

By Adam Buckallew



E Every February, MFA Oil Company members have something to look forward to finding in their mailboxes: annual patronage checks. This year's patronage was the largest in the history of the company at \$23.7 million. These patronage refunds are one of the primary benefits of MFA Oil membership and an example of how it pays to belong to the cooperative.

"Patronage is part of the beauty of the cooperative business model," says Mark

Fenner, MFA Oil president and CEO. "It allows our member-owners to share in the company's profits in proportion to their purchasing volume with the cooperative. In other words, it rewards our members for doing business with the company."

HOW IS PATRONAGE DETERMINED?

MFA Oil members are eligible to receive patronage on a percentage of the total money they spend on products such as gasoline,

diesel, propane or lubricants purchased through our refined fuel and propane plants, as well as Petro-Card 24 locations. The amount of patronage each member receives is also dependent upon the performance of the cooperative.

At the end of each fiscal year, the company conducts a formal accounting of its income and expenses. When MFA Oil makes a profit, the Board of Directors, which is made up of farmer-members, decides how to best use the money. Usually a

percentage of the profits is kept on hand to help fund the cooperative's operations. The remainder is distributed to the membership via patronage refunds. For example, the MFA Oil Board of Directors decided to distribute 80 percent of patronage for the 2015 fiscal year in cash. The remaining 20 percent will be held in equities to be paid to the membership in 10 years. Fenner says the percentage of patronage paid in cash and the time frame for distributing future equities can fluctuate in any given year, depending upon the financial condition of the cooperative.

"This year, we recommended to the board that we pay 80 percent of our patronage in cash because of the excellent financial position of the company," Fenner says. "Our balance sheet is very strong and we could afford it, so the board agreed with our recommendation. That's great for our farmer-owners and for the company. It means we have less of a financial commitment to plan for down the road."

SERVING THE MEMBERSHIP

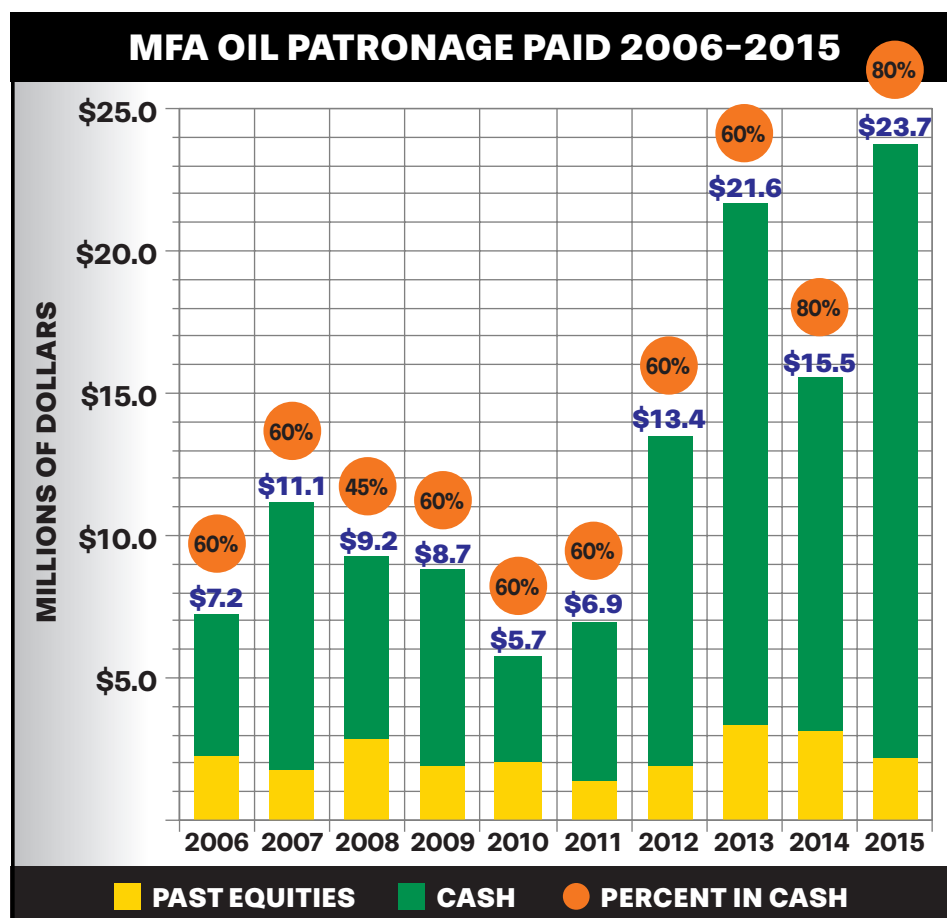
Patronage refunds create a mutually beneficial relationship that encourages and incentivizes member purchases. Because profits are returned in proportion to purchases, MFA Oil members can trust that the cooperative is not unduly profiting from their purchases.

"PATRONAGE IS PART OF THE BEAUTY OF THE COOPERATIVE BUSINESS MODEL...IT REWARDS OUR MEMBERS FOR DOING BUSINESS WITH THE COMPANY." – MARK FENNER

"We're committed to offering competitive pricing to our members and customers," Fenner says. "There's a perception that some cooperatives have to overcharge in order to be able to pay patronage, but that's not the case for us. We know there are lots of options these days, and if you aren't competitive, you'll quickly become irrelevant. We owe it to our member-owners to deliver the best pricing we can."

Fenner likes the way MFA Oil stacks up with the competition, especially when patronage is considered.

"The companies we compete with that are privately owned or publicly traded are always going to be more concerned with their



bottom line than their customers," Fenner says. "That's another area where cooperatives shine. Our duty is to our membership, and our focus is on doing what's best for the customer. For us, that means we're providing our customers with quality products at competitive pricing and with great service. When you add up all of those factors plus our patronage refunds, I don't see how you could afford not to buy from MFA Oil."

MFA Oil's competitive advantages compare favorably against other cooperatives as well.

BENEFITTING ALL MEMBERS

No matter the size of a farmer's operation, patronage is something that benefits all members.

"Big or small, patronage is there for you," Fenner says. "Everyone who qualifies for membership should take advantage of the opportunity to earn patronage and equities in the cooperative. Those checks really start to add up, especially if you look at it long-term."

It is easy for anyone interested in becoming an MFA Oil member to join the cooperative and earn patronage.

Who is eligible: Customers who are agricultural producers, owners of land used for agriculture production and other cooperative associates who purchase at least \$1,000 of product from MFA Oil during its fiscal year (Sept. 1 through Aug. 31).

How to join: Apply for membership at your local MFA Oil office.


How to earn patronage: Contact your local plant to verify all of your eligible MFA Oil accounts are tagged for patronage.

Mid-South Farmers Embrace Irrigation

Irrigation in the Mid-South has become increasingly popular with farmers who are looking to produce more reliable harvests. The 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture, the most recent data available, shows farmers in Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky increased their irrigated acreage by 22 percent, 33 percent, 68 percent and 95 percent respectively since 1997. Collectively, those states irrigated more than 5.4 million acres of farmland in 2012.

Farmers across these traditionally water-rich areas of the Lower Mississippi River Valley are

incorporating irrigation into their operations to manage risk against erratic weather and rainfall and to take advantage of advances in seed technology that have raised the bar on yield potential.

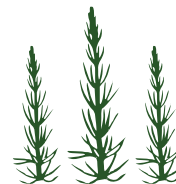
MFA Oil supplies many of its member-farmers with dependable, high-quality fuel to power their diesel- and propane-powered irrigation engines. Farmers considering adding irrigation to their operation can contact their local MFA Oil plant to discuss fueling options that would work best for their farm. 





**ARE
YOU
READY
FOR
THE**

WINTER



Prevented plant acreage from last season will most likely mean high weed pressure in 2016.

By Kevin Bradley, University of Missouri
associate professor of plant sciences

B Benjamin Franklin once said, “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” I think that statement is appropriate for where we are with weed management right now in Missouri—if we don’t plan accordingly, the problems experienced in 2015 could lead to even greater problems this year. Last year more than 1.5 million acres of cropland were never planted as a result of the continually wet conditions experienced from April through July. Most of this acreage was left fallow without any sort of weed management program, and these fields grew up into weedy messes. These weeds matured and produced viable seed that, in most cases, were deposited back into the soil seedbank. The primary weed I observed in most of these fields was waterhemp, which produces about 300,000 to 500,000 seed per plant. I also saw plenty of fields infested with marestail (also known as horseweed or *Conyza canadensis*), ragweed species and grasses like giant foxtail and fall panicum—all of which are also capable of high seed production. In short, the number of weed seed sitting in the soil seedbank waiting to germinate and wreak havoc this year may be unlike anything we have ever experienced before. As Mr. Franklin put it, we must have a plan or we might suffer the consequences.

So where do you start? How can you be ready to tackle the potential problems that exist in your fields right now? In this article, I suggest a stepwise approach for selecting your soybean herbicide program for the 2016 season. But remember that herbicides should not be the only component of your weed management program—you have to think beyond herbicides for weed management, and this includes cultural control methods like narrow row spacings, optimum planting populations, crop rotation, cover crops and tillage where appropriate. These cultural control practices need to be combined with an effective herbicide program to achieve the best weed control possible.

First, plan to start weed-free this season with an effective tillage operation or burndown herbicide application. You cannot afford to plant into weeds that have not been adequately controlled or that are already emerged at the time of planting. This will put you behind the eight ball before you even begin, and you likely will never catch up. Another reason to start weed-free is there are too many resistant weed species that will not be controlled in-crop if they have emerged by the time of planting. We now have multiple herbicide resistances within numerous populations of marestail, giant ragweed and especially waterhemp. This essentially means there are little to no post-emergence herbicide options for the control of these weeds in Roundup Ready soybean.

“THE NUMBER OF WEED SEED SITTING IN THE SOIL SEEDBANK WAITING TO GERMINATE AND WREAK HAVOC THIS YEAR MAY BE UNLIKE ANYTHING WE HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE.” – KEVIN BRADLEY



Second, make sure to apply a full use rate of a pre-emergence residual herbicide that targets your most problematic weed species. For most Missouri producers, this means an effective herbicide for waterhemp. For waterhemp, some of the most effective pre-emergence residual herbicides include the group 14 herbicides such as those containing flumioxazin and sulfentrazone (Authority products, Envive, Fierce products, Sonic, Valor products, etc.) and the group 15 herbicides such as those containing metolachlor (Dual II Magnum, in Boundary, in Prefix, etc.), dimethenamid (Outlook, OpTill PRO), pyroxasulfone (Zidua, in Fierce, etc.), and acetochlor (Warrant, in Warrant Ultra). Trifluralin (Treflan, group 3) and metribuzin (Sencor, Tricor, etc., group 5) can also provide good waterhemp control. A key point here is you should apply a full use rate of whichever product you have chosen. Unfortunately, some pre-emergence herbicides still have a section on their label with information about reduced rates for use in Roundup Ready soybean systems. Usually this reduced rate is half that

of the full use rate listed in a different section of the label. This makes no sense to me and is likely going to drive us toward more resistance problems in the future. If you have glyphosate-resistant waterhemp in your fields and know that glyphosate isn't going to control this weed no matter what rate you use, what's the rationale for applying a lower rate of a pre-emergence residual product that actually does control waterhemp? The bottom line is this: You need to make sure you do the best job you can upfront with pre-emergence herbicides, if for no other reason than our inability to successfully control waterhemp post-emergence in the majority of fields throughout the state.

Third, scout fields regularly after emergence and make timely applications of post-emergence herbicides to weed escapes.

Simply put, there was a time when many farmers forgot about the importance of weed size because glyphosate controlled the weeds no matter the size. Now glyphosate does not control most of our driver weeds (waterhemp, marestail, giant ragweed, etc.), and I think everyone is in the process of “re-learning”



Photo courtesy of Mizzou Weed Science Department



LEFT: Marestalk/horseweed was especially difficult to control this past spring in Missouri soybean fields. Fall herbicide applications are one component of an effective strategy to manage this weed. ABOVE: Fallow fields like this were a common sight across Missouri in 2015 due to the unusually wet conditions experienced throughout the season. Many of the weeds in these fields produced viable seed that were deposited back into the soil for farmers to contend with next season.

that lesson. Group 14 (or PPO) herbicides like Cobra, Flexstar, Marvel, Phoenix, Ultra Blazer and others just simply will not provide adequate control of waterhemp greater than 4 inches in height at the time of application. The same is true of glufosinate (Liberty, group 10) in LibertyLink soybean. If you apply one of these herbicides to waterhemp greater than 4 inches in height and are not happy with the outcome, it is not necessarily because the weed is resistant; the products are not labeled for waterhemp that size in the first place. Another thing to think about when it comes to post-emergence applications of the group 14 herbicides and also Liberty is coverage is critical, and the spray application parameters that may be ideal for glyphosate are not usually the best for these contact herbicides. So higher gallonage per acre and nozzles that provide good coverage will be critical.

Fourth, “layered” or “overlapping residual” herbicide programs are insurance against late-season flushes of certain weeds and have proven to be an effective strategy for the management of waterhemp. If you are not familiar with this

type of weed management strategy, it involves a pre-emergence residual herbicide before planting, followed by an in-crop application of another residual herbicide (Anthem, Cinch, Dual II Magnum, Outlook, Prefix, Warrant, Zidua, etc.), usually made at the same time as a glyphosate application in Roundup Ready soybean, or Liberty application in LibertyLink soybean. This herbicide strategy will not work on every weed species, but it does provide effective residual control of waterhemp and a variety of other small-seeded broadleaf weeds and grasses. More Missouri growers have adopted this herbicide program in recent years as a result of its effectiveness on waterhemp.

As mentioned previously, the most important thing is for you to have a plan. If you follow the four steps above, I believe you will be able to offset many of the consequences of the past season.

For more information on this topic and other weed-related issues facing Missouri producers, visit www.weedscience.missouri.edu or follow Mizzou Weed Science on Facebook and Twitter. 



THE VALUE OF TERTIARY PROPANE STORAGE

By Adam Buckallew | Photo by Geoff Johnson

The propane capacity in customer tanks is an important part of the overall propane storage picture in the United States. In fact, customer storage, also known as tertiary storage, represents a larger portion of the national propane supply capacity than the industry's primary storage, which is found mostly in underground caverns fed by pipelines. Taking advantage of tertiary storage is one way customers can help prevent future supply problems.

"In the past, most propane users have waited until it starts to get cold before they worry about refilling their tanks, but we're trying to educate our customers about the advantages of filling tanks during the non-peak season," says Kenny Steeves, MFA Oil vice president of bulk and propane plant operations. "Keeping tanks full year-round would go a long way toward eliminating the possibility of a shortage."

Steeves says spreading out propane deliveries past the winter season benefits both customers and MFA Oil.

"Most customers should be able to lock in good pricing in the spring and summer when demand is reduced," Steeves explains.

"Supply is abundant during the warmer months, so it's easy to source. Spreading out the demand also improves our delivery efficiency, which helps the cooperative and all of our customers."

LESSONS FROM THE 2014 SHORTAGE

The winter of 2014 was a stressful time for propane customers. Prices skyrocketed above \$4 a gallon, and supplies were hard to find. The propane inventory crunch was caused by a combination of factors.

It started with a record corn crop that came in late and wetter than usual. This caused a spike in demand among Midwest farmers who needed propane to dry their corn harvest. Some crops came in as late as November, as winter began to set in early in some parts of the Upper Midwest and eastern United States. Corn drying and home heating were competing for the same supply.

Complicating matters, a major propane pipeline was shut down for maintenance in December. The Cochin Pipeline, which runs from Chicago to Edmonton, Alberta, was converted from propane service to light crude service. This was a major hit to

propane users in the north central United States and drove them south to terminals in the MFA Oil service area to source product. Then, a polar vortex of arctic cold hit in January, driving temperatures down over much of the country and draining what was left of most of the propane inventory. On top of it all, record propane exports cut into the U.S. propane supply leading into the peak heating season.

“The Midwest saw massive demand for propane in a relatively short period of time that year, which caused a strain on the supply chain that made it difficult for propane retailers to keep up,” says James Greer, MFA Oil vice president of supply and distribution. “We can only hold so much storage in our tanks and trucks. We had to travel more miles to obtain propane and extended our time to restock our inventories, and that’s what leads to shortage situations like we saw in 2014.”

Steeves recalls sending trucks to Mississippi, Texas and Kansas to retrieve propane for MFA Oil customers in the Midwest.

“We were looking for propane wherever we could find it,” Steeves acknowledges. “We were having to ration out the propane we were delivering because the supply situation was so dire.”

According to Greer, the main issue that prevented propane distributors like MFA Oil from catching up with the high demand of the 2014 winter season was a logistical bottleneck. The industry can only funnel so much propane from the pipeline terminals to distributors at a time. Once it gets to the distributors, the bottleneck is further limited by distributors’ storage capacity (tanks and trucks). Other factors such as inclement weather and limits on the number of hours delivery drivers can work further constrict propane supply in times of extreme demand.


CUSTOMERS PLAY THEIR PART

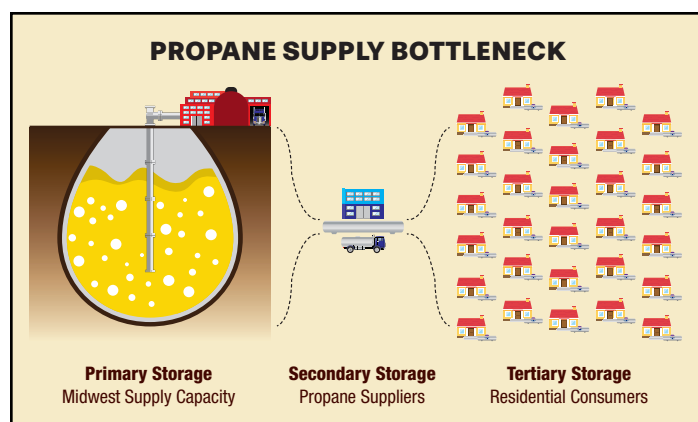
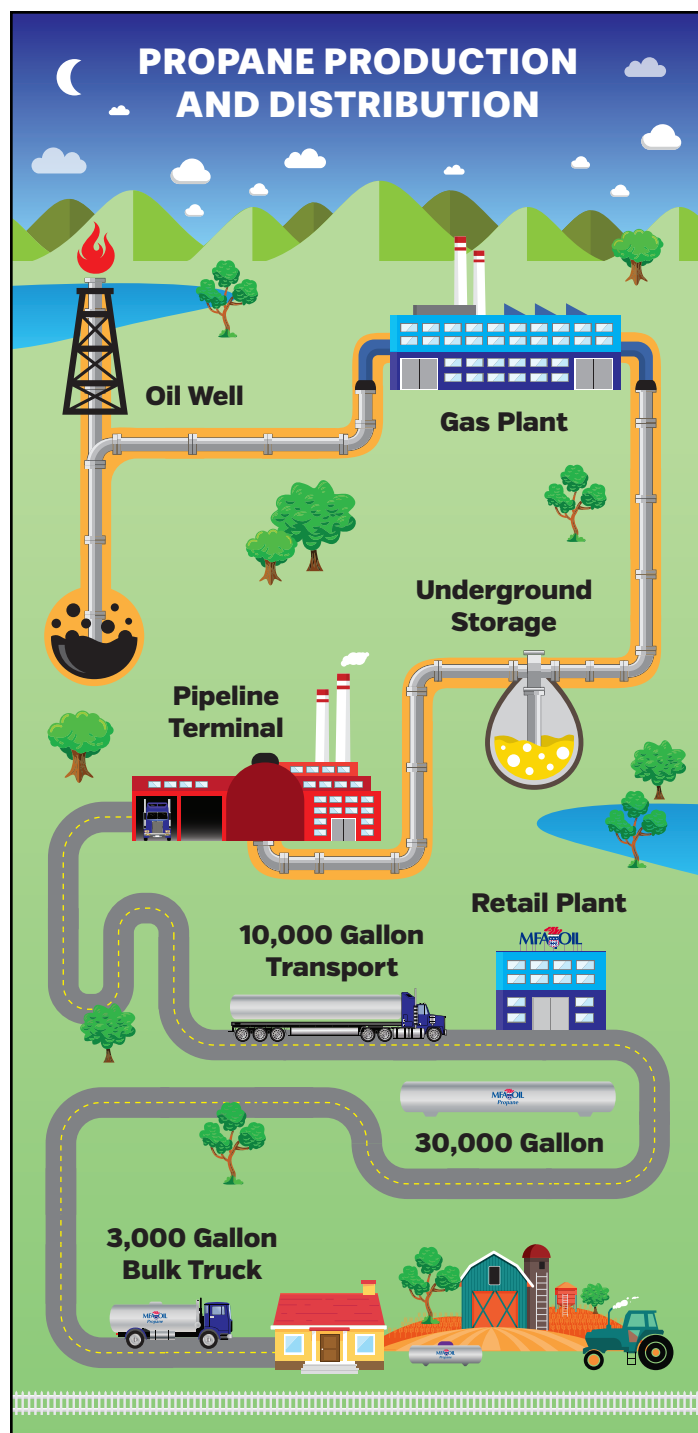
In order to avoid a repeat of the shortages that occurred in the winter of 2014, MFA Oil asks propane customers to consider having their tanks refilled this spring and summer.

Propane is produced at a relatively steady rate year-round by refineries and gas processing plants, and there is no other source of incremental production when supplies run low. As it is in any economic scenario, when supply is limited and demand increases, prices will inevitably rise. This is why it is in all customers’ best interests to play their part and help spread demand throughout the year by refilling on propane in the spring and summer. Taking advantage of the storage capacity in their own tanks greatly increases the supply of propane.

The other benefit of propane purchases made during the spring and summer is those purchases give MFA Oil purchasing priority during times of shortages.

“All of our non-peak purchases count toward our allocation ratios, which is how our suppliers determine how much propane we can purchase when supply is short,” Greer says. “In other words, those purchases in the warmer months allow us the opportunity to maintain supply to our customers in the winter when supply can be an issue.”

Customers are encouraged to contact their local MFA Oil propane plant by August to discuss plans for their 2016 propane needs. 







EPA FINALIZES INCREASES IN RENEWABLE FUEL LEVELS

By Adam Buckallew

ON Nov. 30, 2015, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced long-awaited blending requirements that will increase the amounts of ethanol, biodiesel and other renewable fuels in the nation's fuel supply. The EPA mandate calls for 18.11 billion gallons of renewable fuels to be blended with gasoline and diesel in 2016, yet falls short of the 22.25 billion gallons that Congress had in mind when it drafted the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) in 2005 and expanded it in 2007.

The final RFS ruling outlines production targets of 14.5 billion gallons of ethanol in 2016 and 1.9 billion gallons of biodiesel in 2016 and 2 billion gallons in 2017.

"The volumes we think are considerable, and really set a good direction and a stable signal for the industry to really produce both total renewable fuel in 2016 and also advanced fuel," said Janet McCabe, the acting assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Air and Radiation. "EPA is establishing volumes that go beyond historic levels and grow the amount of biofuel in the market over time. Our standards provide for ambitious, achievable growth."

MIXED INDUSTRY REACTION

The EPA had been walking a tightrope between the demands of renewable fuels producers, who have generally supported the ever-increasing statutory requirements, and the petroleum and refining industries, which have said that absorbing more biofuels into the fuel supply is not feasible.

Bob Dinneen, president and CEO of the Renewable Fuels Association, expressed disappointment with the EPA's decision, saying it would create uncertainty in the industry.

"EPA's decision today turns our nation's most successful energy policy on its head," Dinneen said in a press release. "When EPA released its proposed RFS rule in May, the agency claimed it was attempting to get the program back on track. Today's decision, however, fails to do that."

Maryland farmer Chip Bowling, who serves as president of the National Corn Growers Association, acknowledged the RFS ruling was a step in the right direction but fell short of his organization's expectations.

"While we are pleased to see the EPA take a step forward and revise its original proposal, the fact remains that any reduction in the statutory amount will have a negative impact on our economy, our energy security and the environment," Bowling said. "We should be

strengthening our commitment to renewable fuels, not backing down."

On the other side of the debate, the American Petroleum Institute (API) argues that increasing biofuel usage is not in consumers' best interests. API cites a 2014 report from the Congressional Budget Office that claims fuel prices could rise if the EPA mandated more than 10 percent ethanol into gasoline.

"EPA's final rule relies on unrealistic increases in sales of higher ethanol fuel blends despite the fact that most cars cannot use them," said Bob Greco, API downstream manager.

A WIN FOR BIODIESEL


Under the new RFS rule, biomass-based diesel volumes are projected to grow. The biomass-based diesel category—a diesel subset of the overall advanced biofuel category—is made up mostly of biodiesel but also includes renewable diesel, another diesel alternative made from the same feedstocks using a different technology.

The new standards reflect modest but meaningful growth over recent years when the U.S. market has hovered around 1.8 billion gallons annually.

"This decision means we will displace billions of gallons of petroleum diesel in the coming years with clean-burning biodiesel. That means less pollution, more American jobs and more competition that is sorely lacking in the fuels market," said Joe Jobe, CEO of the National Biodiesel Board. "It may not be all we had hoped for, but it will go a long way toward getting the U.S. biodiesel industry growing again and reducing our dangerous dependence on fossil fuels. We certainly think the biodiesel and overall advanced biofuel standards could and should have been higher. The production capacity is there, and we have surplus fats and oils that can be put to good use."

MOVING FORWARD

The EPA is expected to release its next proposed rule for the RFS no later than June 2016. The proposal is expected to include the 2017 conventional biofuels target and the 2018 biomass-based diesel target, along with other advanced and total RFS volumes.

MFA Oil is a leading provider of ethanol and biodiesel in the state of Missouri and is a part-owner in Mid-America Biofuels, LLC, the state's first major biodiesel production facility located in Mexico. 

What Now?

A As energy prices continue to fall to new lows not seen in years, many questions have arisen: Is now the time to buy? Have we seen the bottom? Can the market stay this low indefinitely? Let me start by addressing the last question first.

The markets are cyclical, and no one can predict what may happen next. It wasn't all that long ago people were concerned about peak oil. The basic theory behind peak oil was the world had reached the maximum rate of oil extraction and we'd be stuck with a terminally declining supply of petroleum until it eventually ran out. Remember when crude traded at \$147 in 2008? Obviously, that didn't last.

What caused the market to drastically tumble and bring prices down so far? Human ingenuity, creativity and technology turned the peak oil theory around and stood it on its head. How did it happen? The shale revolution. The industry found more oil and gas in the United States that could be brought to market with new technology and new drilling techniques. The shale discoveries and drilling advancements have produced an abundance of crude oil and other products and has created an oversupplied market.

The shale revolution along with OPEC's November 2014 decision not to cut production or put any type of cap on its production have created a global supply glut of crude oil and products. OPEC's decision to go after its lost market share and to let the market decide the price has helped to create this oversupply of everything. OPEC's other agenda item at the time was to drive down prices to the point it put other higher cost producers out of business. It was not clear who they were targeting at the time, but it has since become evident those higher cost producers were U.S. shale producers.




Why should you care about OPEC and U.S. oil producers? The world is shrinking, and what happens globally affects you. The activities of OPEC and the U.S. shale revolution have produced an abundance of crude oil. With no end in sight to the current oversupply situation, prices have fallen to levels the market has not seen in more than a decade.

Plenty of outlooks and opinions about the current market abound. Looking at the current situation at the most basic level, we're watching for the current global oversupply to be whittled down to allow supply and demand to get back into balance. Eventually this will happen, and it will likely be achieved through a combination of reductions to supply, an increase in demand and time needed for this scenario to play out.

Can this market go lower? Yes. Can this market stay at its current low levels for a longer period of time? Yes. Can this market carve out a bottom and move higher? Yes. All of these scenarios are possible. However, the strongest overriding outlook at this time is that supply and demand will begin to see changes in the back half of 2016, and by

the end of this year, we should see the market working toward a more balanced supply and demand situation.

What can or should you do about all of this? You can buy fixed price or maximum price contracts to lock in a price and know your future fuels cost. This allows you to establish a budget and get some price protection just in case we do see the market firm up later in the year. As always, we never recommend contracting 100 percent of your projected usage. Be conservative. Lock in a comfortable percentage of your needs and leave some gallons open to the market. The other thing to remember is weather can be a factor affecting your fuel demand. Leave yourself some room for flexibility. Do not just sit on your hands and watch. You have the tools available to lock in fuel prices and provide yourself some hedge protection against changing market conditions. While it would be nice to know where the market will go from here, things can change quickly, and it's best to be prepared. 



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Principled Leadership

A company's guiding principles are like the ability of a gyro-compass to consistently signal the direction of the true north. No matter the circumstances, they always point out the correct course to follow. MFA Oil Company has a strong set of six principles the Board of Directors relies upon to guide its actions. These principles are based on the company's unwavering commitment to always do the right thing by its members, employees and communities.

"Our guiding principles were put in place to ensure integrity, fairness, respect and excellence in all that we do," says Benny Farrell, chairman of the MFA Oil Board of Directors. "They serve as a beacon that shines the way forward and keeps us focused on our mission of returning value to our fellow cooperative members."

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Maintain a strong balance sheet
- Generate a reasonable return on our farmer-owners' investment by consistently paying patronage refunds
- Retire member equities within a reasonable time frame as defined by the Board of Directors

"OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES WERE PUT IN PLACE TO ENSURE INTEGRITY, FAIRNESS, RESPECT AND EXCELLENCE IN ALL THAT WE DO." – BENNY FARRELL

EXCELLENT PRODUCTS AND SERVICE

- Provide our owners and customers with high-quality products that meet or exceed their needs
- Provide the highest level of customer service
- Respond rapidly to any product issues or customer concerns



Photo by Casey Buckman Photography

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- Deliver products and services in the most efficient manner while maintaining high levels of customer service
- Embrace technology to lower costs and improve customer service
- Provide employees with the tools they need to operate in the most efficient way possible
- Stay focused on what we are good at, providing high-quality energy-related products and services to our customers economically

ETHICS AND CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP

- Maintain high ethical standards with our owners, customers, employees, vendors and the communities in which we operate
- Give back to the communities where we do business
- When in doubt, do the right thing, ethically and morally

- Ensure that our owners and employees are proud to be a part of MFA Oil Company
- Strive for win-win solutions to problems, issues or in negotiations

SAFETY AND COMPLIANCE

- Provide a safe work environment for our employees
- Adhere to all federal, state and local safety and environmental regulations

HIRE AND RETAIN EXCELLENT EMPLOYEES

- Recruit excellent employees
- Provide competitive salaries and benefits to retain high-quality employees
- Provide training and development opportunities
- Encourage open and honest communications between employees, management, owners, customers, vendors and the communities we serve **M**

Strengthening Positions in Kansas and Oklahoma

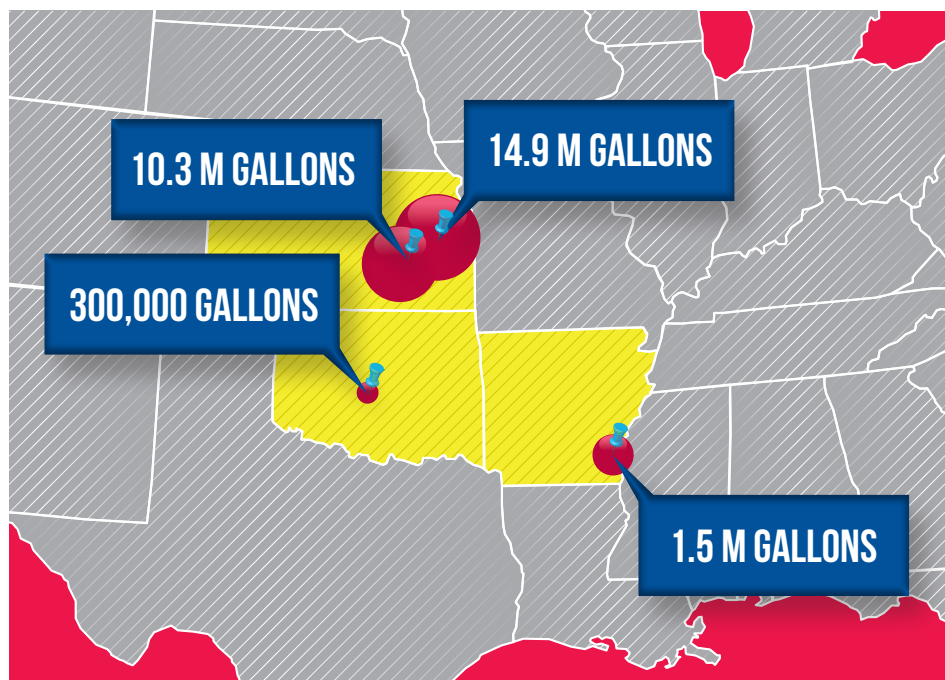
M MFA Oil continues to pursue strategic acquisition targets to fuel the company's growth and create additional value for its member-owners. In January, MFA Oil announced the purchase of R&S Propane, Inc. (R&S), a propane supplier based in Dibble, Okla. A month later the company acquired S&S Oil and Propane Company, Inc. (S&S), a propane, refined fuels and lubricants retailer based in Emporia, Kan. These purchases will strengthen MFA Oil's operations in central Oklahoma and southeastern Kansas.

The R&S acquisition adds 300,000 gallons of annual propane sales to the company and brings the number of propane plants MFA Oil operates in Oklahoma to eight.

"The acquisition of R&S Propane provides us with a good entry point into the nearby Norman and Oklahoma City markets and fits well with our existing operations in the state," says Jon Ihler, MFA Oil vice president of sales and marketing.

"IN FACT, THE VOLUME OF BUSINESS WE'VE ACQUIRED FROM S&S AND LYBARGER IS LARGER THAN ALL OF MFA OIL'S PREVIOUS BULK FUEL AND PROPANE ACQUISITIONS FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS COMBINED." – DON SMITH

Acquiring S&S has added 5.2 million gallons of annual propane sales and 5.1 million gallons of annual refined fuel sales to the company. The acquisition includes 17 propane storage facilities, five bulk fuel storage facilities, five card refueling locations and an office in Emporia. S&S covers a 24-county trade territory that stretches from Kansas' eastern border westward to the Wichita outskirts and from Interstate 70 southbound to U.S. Highway 54.



PROPANE & REFINED FUEL ACQUISITIONS FY 2016

SEPTEMBER 2015

Lybarger Oil Inc., Garnett, Kan.

- 10.2 million gallons of refined fuel and 4.7 million gallons of propane annually

OCTOBER 2015

Elaine Petroleum Distribution Inc.

Elaine, Ark.

- 1.5 million gallons of refined fuel annually

JANUARY 2016

R&S Propane, Inc.

Dibble, Okla.

- 300,000 gallons of propane annually

FEBRUARY 2016

S&S Oil and Propane Company Inc.

Emporia, Kan.

- 5.2 million gallons of propane annually and 5.1 million gallons of refined fuel annually

"This is a major acquisition that will significantly broaden our business in Kansas and fits in well with the Lybarger Oil purchase we made in September 2015," notes Don Smith, MFA Oil director of mergers and acquisitions. "In fact, the volume of business we've acquired from S&S and Lybarger is larger than all of MFA Oil's previous bulk fuel and propane acquisitions for the last five years combined."

MFA Oil is in the process of integrating the newly acquired businesses into its existing operations and welcomes the employees and customers of both companies.

"We're really excited about the high-quality portfolio of assets we've been able to acquire recently," Ihler says. "These acquisitions bring great value to our member-owners and great opportunities for us to grow in the future." **M**

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Jiffy Lube Adding Technology and Services to Benefit Customers

MFA Oil's Jiffy Lube franchises have been providing fast and friendly service to mid-Missouri motorists since 1988. The company currently operates eight Jiffy Lube stores with four in Columbia, two in Jefferson City, and one each in Fulton and Sedalia.

When customers visit any of the MFA Oil-owned Jiffy Lube service centers, they will find knowledgeable advisers who can handle all their preventive service needs based on driving habits and the manufacturer's recommendations.

Recently, Jiffy Lube International updated its point of sale (POS) system to streamline vehicle check-ins. The system uses scanners to look for vehicle identification numbers (VIN).

"The VIN scanners automatically download each vehicle's information directly into the computer system," explains Ed Harper, MFA Oil vice president of retail automotive. "This saves our employees time and helps to make our customers' visits fast and efficient."

Harper says all of MFA Oil's stores have received the state-of-the-art VIN scanning equipment and updates to their POS systems. Employees will use computer tablets when working through vehicle maintenance recommendations with customers.

"Rather than calling customers over to the service counter, our technicians will now be able to sit down with customers to walk them through all the preventive care their vehicle requires," Harper notes.

In response to customers driving their cars longer between oil changes, Jiffy Lube has increased its service offerings to include state vehicle inspections and brake service at some locations. Adding services



Photo by Adam Buckallew

increases Jiffy Lube's average ticket size and contributes to higher net earnings.

The Jiffy Lube service center on Worley St. in Columbia, for example, is able to perform repairs on breaks, steering and suspension, electrical systems, heating and cooling and hybrid battery replacements. Jiffy Lube mechanic Tony Rivera has been certified by the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence to handle all of these service options.

"We're very proud of what Tony is doing and how he's helping us bring new automotive service repair options to our customers," Harper says. "We're hoping to add more certified individuals like Tony to work in our other service centers."

Overall, Harper is proud of the contributions Jiffy Lube makes to the company.

"Jiffy Lube has been a great investment for MFA Oil," Harper adds. "Our stores

generate a good return for the company. Last year, the Jiffy Lube division beat its net earnings record, which had been set in 1999, by 17 percent."

The company's Jiffy Lube operations provide other benefits beyond earnings. According to Harper, 94 percent of all the motor oil sold in the company-owned Jiffy Lube stores is from MFA Oil.

"Selling our MFA Oil motor oils to consumer motorists helps to build customer awareness and recognition of our lubricants business," Harper says.

The mid-Missouri Jiffy Lube stores have also proved to be a great source of employee development.

"A number of MFA Oil employees started by working in our Jiffy Lube stores and have then been promoted to other areas of the company," Harper points out. "It's a great environment for employees to grow and become future leaders in the company." **M**



Harper Named VP of Retail Automotive

MFA Oil Company has named Edward Harper vice president of retail automotive. Harper will oversee MFA Oil's Big O Tires and Jiffy Lube operations in addition to the company's construction and maintenance departments.

"Ed is an experienced leader with a proven 20-year track record of success at MFA Oil," says Mark Fenner, MFA Oil president and CEO. "He is a tremendous asset to our company, and we are proud to add him to our executive team."

Harper began his career in Springfield, Mo., where he worked at a carwash and with a Jiffy Lube franchisee for 10 years. He joined MFA Oil in 1995 and has worked in a variety of roles, including supervisory positions with Break Time, Jiffy Lube and Big O Tires. Prior to his promotion, Harper had been serving as director of Jiffy Lube operations, retail construction and maintenance.

Harper is a graduate of State Fair Community College in Sedalia, Mo., with a degree in business management.



Tom Procter Elected Chairman of Missouri Propane Council

The Missouri Propane Education and Research Council (MOPERC) recently announced Tom Procter, MFA Oil director of service, has been elected to serve as its chairman. Procter

and other officers were installed on Jan. 6, 2016, at the council's winter meeting in Camdenton, Mo.

MOPERC comprises 15 volunteer directors and is administered by executive staff. The volunteer directors are propane industry representatives from across the state who serve in various capacities. Counting Procter, MFA Oil has two directors on the council. Tom May, MFA Oil director of employee relations, is also a MOPERC director.

MOPERC is a not-for-profit organization authorized by the Missouri legislature to administer a statewide checkoff program. Checkoff programs, also referred to as research and promotion programs, promote and provide research and information for a

particular commodity without reference to specific producers or brands. The MOPERC checkoff collects funds through assessments of up to one-half-cent per gallon on all odorized propane sold in Missouri. The proceeds are used for industry training, consumer safety, appliance rebates and market development programs.

Since its inception, MOPERC has helped thousands of Missouri homeowners replace water heaters, furnaces and other appliances with new, more energy efficient models. The council created a groundbreaking Lawn Equipment Assistance Fund (LEAF), which has helped dozens of Missouri lawn contractors and landscape companies acquire propane-powered lawn mowers, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and saving on operational costs.



New Petro-Card 24 Payment Kiosks

Customers who have recently filled up at a Petro Card-24 might have noticed a change. MFA Oil is in the process of upgrading the payment kiosks at all of its Petro Card-24 locations. More than 100 of the new kiosks have already been installed, according to Sandy Cryderman, MFA Oil director of revenue accounting and process improvement.

"The new payment kiosks are more sophisticated with touchscreens and quicker processing," Cryderman says. "Customers should notice a difference in how much faster the new system performs compared to the equipment we're replacing."

The new Petro Card-24 upgrades will not only benefit customers but also MFA Oil field staff. Rather than having to drive out to each location, local managers will be able to update fuel prices remotely from their office computers or using an app on their phones.

MFA Oil expects to have all of its Petro Card-24 locations outfitted with new payment kiosks by April 30. **M**

Providing Customers with the Service They Deserve

MFA Oil takes great pride in providing our farmer-owners and customers with the energy solutions needed to keep their operations growing. We know that meeting our customers' needs goes beyond simply delivering fuel. The MFA Oil Service Division was established to ensure our customers receive the care they deserve.

In order to deliver the best service, we have dedicated service technicians located throughout our operations. These technicians are capable of servicing both propane and refined fuel systems, handling many of the interactions with customers, including tank sets and repairs, equipment maintenance, leak testing and repairs, and much more.

In addition to having a team of professionals in place, MFA Oil is investing in the service division by purchasing necessary equipment. Besides a heavy-duty crane truck purchased this fall, we have recently added 18 new crane trucks and have 10 more on the way. These smaller trucks are used to install up to 3,000-gallon tanks. The heavy-duty crane truck, which has a 15-ton crane, allows us to install larger tanks (6,000 gallons or more) to accommodate the needs of bigger customers.

Our service technicians have been busy in the field with their new equipment. Since the beginning of September, we have set more than 1,800 refined fuel and propane tanks. On top of setting all of those tanks, the team has completed more than 3,000 leak checks in the same time period.

Right-sizing customer tanks is another area of emphasis for the service department. Ensuring our customers have right-sized tanks helps them avoid outages during peak usage times such as planting and



harvest and helps the company be more efficient with our deliveries. We've set up more than 200 right-sized fuel tanks for customers so far and the service team is actively changing out additional tanks every day.

MFA Oil is dedicated to making decisions and investments that benefit both our customers and our company. The Service Division is a great example of this. Truly, we are "Stronger Together." **M**

— By Tom Procter

Coatses and Big O Tires Recognized for Supporting Communities

The generosity and community involvement of the Missouri and Arkansas Big O Tires stores have caught the attention of Big O Tires corporate headquarters in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. The national tire retailer recently recognized Rusty and Melanie Coats with a “Living Our Core Values” award to salute the duo’s outstanding charitable efforts at MFA Oil’s 15 Big O Tires franchise stores.

“There are more than 480 Big O Tires stores across the country, so we feel honored to be selected to receive this award,” says Melanie, who manages marketing and advertising for the Missouri and Arkansas Big O Tires. “We see it as a great compliment to the commitment we’ve made to give back to our communities.”

The Coatses are well known for their philanthropic activities. Their efforts span both local and national initiatives, and they make giving a point of emphasis with the stores they manage.

“We really preach the importance of community involvement,” explains Rusty, MFA Oil’s director of retail tire services. “We’ve observed a direct correlation between the levels of local support our stores provide and their sales and success. Getting out and helping the surrounding community helps to build valuable relationships and goodwill for our business.”

Schools, veteran support groups and shelters for abused women are among the organizations the Coatses and their team of Big O Tires associates have helped in recent years.

“We like to start with support for the school districts where our tire centers are located, and then we work with our store managers to identify additional charitable endeavors that are important to them and their employees,” Melanie adds. “Several, like our Camdenton (Mo.) store, elect to give to charities that support military veterans. For the most part, our employees are very patriotic and that is usually a cause they can all get behind.”

>> BENEFICIARIES OF BIG O TIRES GIVING

- Local school districts in and around each of the 15 Big O Tires stores in Missouri and Arkansas
- True North (shelter for abused women)
- Camdenton, Mo., Salute to Veterans Air Show
- Operation Homefront (national non-profit providing emergency and financial assistance to families of service members and wounded warriors)
- Wounded Warrior Project



ABOVE: The Missouri and Arkansas Big O Tires stores typically support local schools and organizations that provide support to U.S. military veterans. **BELOW:** Rusty and Melanie Coats.

Beyond corporate giving, the Coatses believe charity begins at home and are intentional about giving back to their employees. In the past they have provided stocked backpacks for all their associates’ children as they return to school in August. They have also found ways to help when the holidays roll around each year.

“Our employees really bust their rear ends for us, and we like to find ways to show them how much we appreciate their hard work,” Rusty says. “Not only is it the right thing to do, but it creates tighter bonds among our team members and provides extra motivation for them to keep up the good work.”

Good corporate citizenship is one of MFA Oil’s guiding principles, and the company is proud to congratulate Rusty and Melanie Coats on their well-deserved honor. **M**

Protect Your Engines

When it comes to protecting your equipment's engines, routine oil changes play a vital role.

Engines require the right lubrication and protection to keep things running smoothly and efficiently. Investing a small amount of time and money on oil maintenance now can save money on potential engine problems in the future.

"Proper lubrication is essential to keeping your vehicles and machinery running at peak performance," says Don North, MFA Oil director of product development and quality control. "That means using a high-quality engine oil and changing it as needed to avoid equipment downtime. Proper lubrication practices can help customers avoid costly delays from engine downtime."

Engine oil has three primary functions: it lubricates to control friction and reduce wear on moving parts, it assists in the cooling of the engine and it helps prevent carbon and varnishes from accumulating in the engine. The ability of a motor oil to perform these tasks is of critical importance to maximizing the life of an engine.

"WE JUST COMPLETED A MILLION-MILE ROAD TEST ON OUR 10W-30 HEAVY DUTY ENGINE OIL AND THE RESULTS SHOW IT PROVIDES SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE AND PROTECTION." – DON NORTH

"Using a high-quality engine oil can provide improved fuel economy, enhance engine cleanliness and extend drain capabilities," explains North. "That's why we formulate our engine oils to exceed the minimum specifications required by the Society of Automotive Engineers, the American Petroleum Institute and equipment manufacturers. You'll pay a little more upfront for the higher quality product, but the added expense is usually worth the investment."

MFA Oil's premium lubricants are made using high-quality base stocks combined with the latest most technologically advanced, field-proven additive system. These engine oils are suitable for both turbocharged and naturally-aspirated diesel engines. Designed to exceed tough European original equipment manufacturer specifications, they provide superior engine protection for today's sophisticated, state-of-the-art, low-emission diesel and gasoline engines.

"We designed our heavy duty engine oils to withstand the rigors of severe workloads," North adds. "We just completed a million-mile road test on our 10W-30 heavy duty engine oil and the results show it provides superior performance and protection."

1000000

Another way to help prevent engine problems is to have engine oil regularly analyzed.

"If you ask most people how to achieve long engine life, they will tell you to use good motor oil and service the engine with regular oil drain intervals," North says. "If you ask a large trucking company the same question, they will tell you the same thing but also recommend an oil analysis program on each engine. The goal of a good oil analysis program is to increase the reliability of your equipment while minimizing maintenance costs associated with oil drains, labor, repairs and downtime. In other words, oil analysis is a good predictive maintenance practice. MFA Oil offers this to our customers free of charge."

Customers who would like to have their engine oil analyzed can contact the MFA Oil laboratory at 573-219-5740. **M**



>> MFA OIL PREMIUM HEAVY DUTY ENGINE OILS

- Outstanding control of soot-induced oil thickening
- Low ash
- Excellent TBN retention
- Excellent shear stability
- Outstanding piston cleanliness performance
- Outstanding ring wear performance
- Outstanding oxidation and oil consumption control
- Extended drain capabilities

Always consult and follow manufacturer's guide for proper SAE grade. Never exceed recommended drain interval without close monitoring through oil analysis.

>> ROAD-TESTED RESULTS

Excellent wear protection

- Connecting rod bearings show minimal copper
- Main bearings show minimal copper

Excellent piston cleanliness

- Minimal deposits after a million miles

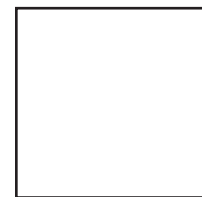
Excellent hone retention rating—90% average

- Controls oil consumption





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LIFE GETS BUSY.

Wouldn't it be nice to have one less thing to worry about?



MFA Oil's Auto-Fill Program utilizes tank-monitoring technology that factors in past usage and weather conditions and tells us when you need propane. You won't need to check your tank gauge or worry about running out of propane. We'll deliver when you need it.

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