



Innovative New Uses for Soy

Soy-Based Products Keep Hiawatha National Forest Clean and Green



Toby Rhue, Hiawatha National Forest fleet manager, poses with his new skidder that came loaded with biobased hydraulic fluids.

At the 879,000-acre Hiawatha National Forest in Michigan, soybean oil can be found in all kinds of applications, including hydraulic fluids, greases and oils, hand cleaners and bathroom cleaners. This National Forest partnered with the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee (MSPC), which supplied the forest with biobased products using a grant funded by the United Soybean Board and soybean checkoff.

The partnership began when Toby Rhue, Hiawatha National Forest fleet manager attended a biofuels and biobased products meeting. There he met with Keith Reinholt, field operations director for the MSPC to discuss moving forward with biobased products. Rhue had several good reasons for his interest in soy-based products.

"An executive order had just been given by the president stating that federal agencies should support biobased products when the performance and costs are similar to purchasing alternative or biobased forms of lubrication," says Rhue. "Also, it just made sense for a national forest to use green products to have the least impact on the natural environment as possible."

That's why Rhue tested a number of products this past year to determine the efficiency of the soy-based products. Rhue plans to continue using soy-based products and increase the scope as more products become available and certified for use.

"The soy-based products seem to be right on par with petrochemical and chemical-based products," says Rhue. "In some cases, soy-based products have advantages. Everyone loves the hand cleaner, which has natural emollients to keep your hands from drying out from frequent use." Rhue at Hiawatha National Forest has also experienced excellent results in using products such as biobased lubricants and hydraulic fluids.

"To make projects like this work, you first need champions for the cause," says Reinholt of Rhue's interest in soy-based products. "Then you need to provide products for a fair performance trial. This project has worked just like it was supposed to, and I think there are opportunities to continue working with the Forest Service at the national and state levels."

To learn more about Hiawatha National Forest, visit www.fs.fed.us. To learn more about soy-based products, visit soynewuses.org.