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U.S. Department of Agriculture Providing State Grants for E15 Ethanol Blender Pumps: As reported by Trade Only, the USDA is spending \$100 million to add 5,000 blender pumps in 21 states in an effort to handle E15, or gasoline blended with 15 percent ethanol. The USDA estimates that the investment will more than double the number of stations that offer intermediate blends of ethanol, mainly E15 fuel levels, nationwide. The move, which USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack announced Sept. 10, is part of a department grant program, the Biofuel Infrastructure Partnership (BIP). "The BIP is one approach USDA is using to aggressively pursue investments in American-grown renewable energy to create new markets for U.S. farmers and ranchers, help Americans save money on their energy bills, support America's clean energy economy, cut carbon pollution and reduce dependence on foreign oil and costly fossil fuels," said Vilsack in a statement.

The BIP, announced in May, authorized the agency to invest \$100 million to double the number of renewable fuel blender pumps that can supply consumers with higher ethanol blends, such as E15 and E85.

The boating industry and the National Boating Federation has long opposed introducing E15 into the main fuel supply because it has been shown to damage boat engines, and it is in fact prohibited by the EPA for fueling boats.

The National Marine Manufacturers Association spoke out against the move, saying it includes the popular boating states of Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina and Wisconsin. "As more and more E15 enters the market, the likelihood of misfueling increases. NMMA remains steadfast in our efforts to oppose the development of E15. We are currently working with our stakeholder partners on a strategy that counters the government's award program and continue to call on Congress to make the legislative changes to fix the dangerous ethanol mandate."

Some East Coast Marinas Will Sell Isobutanol Fuel: As reported by BOATING magazine, in the spring, East Coast marinas selling Gulf fuels will offer boaters ethanol-free gasoline under the trade name Gulf MARINE. Instead of 10% ethanol, its clean air additive ("oxygenate") will be isobutanol, at an EPA-approved concentration of 12.5%.

Boaters who have followed BOATING's coverage of isobutanol will recall that this advanced biofuel comes from the same feedstocks (plant material) as ethanol, but that it has greater energy density (30% higher BTU value) and, most important for our boat engines, it does not absorb moisture or undergo phase separation. It also does not corrode or otherwise damage fuel tanks, fuel lines, and engine components. Tests run on waterways and in laboratories over the past five years with the National Marine Manufacturers Association, the American Boat & Yacht Council, the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Coast Guard, Bombardier Recreational Products (BRP), and several other marine engine manufacturers have shown that isobutanol in blends up to 16.1% (B16, now EPA-approved for off-road fuels) are safe for our engines. In fact, at the 2015 Miami Boat Show, BRP offered test rides aboard a 25' Crevalle bay boat powered by a 300 hp Evinrude G2 running B16.

This past summer, one marina on a lake in Missouri sold Gulf MARINE, and a land-based Express Lube station in Fredericksburg, Texas has had customers drive as far as seventy miles to buy the fuel for lawn tractors, chain saws, and other outdoor power equipment. A go-kart track in Kemah, Texas (a Houston suburb) ran Gulf MARINE exclusively and successfully. Meanwhile, the two companies producing isobutanol, Gevo (www.gevo.com) and Butamax (a joint venture of BP and DuPont, www.butamax.com) have reached an agreement in which each will pursue development of markets for isobutanol, Gevo in jet fuel and Butamax in land fuels. At present, Gevo produces the isobutanol for Gulf MARINE.

The bottom line is that East Coast boaters will have an opportunity to try this new biofuel in 2016. It will cost more, possibly \$1.50-2.00 per gallon, since it is still a specialty fuel. With greater energy density and no more worries about water absorption, though, it will be well worth exploring, and greater market share should close the price gap with ethanol in time. For more information on Gulf MARINE, visit www.gulfracingfuels.com.

Isobutanol Advances Toward Becoming Powerboat Sector's Renewable Fuel

As reported by NMMA, [Biofuels Digest](#) presented "hard data" to answer the question of whether the "economics" of isobutanol as a replacement for ethanol-free gasoline are a "slam-dunk." The story also noted that Harbor Marina, on southwestern Missouri's Lake Pomme de Terre, recently became the first site of its kind in the US "to sell gasoline blended with Gevo's renewable isobutanol at the pump," after the marina's owner determined that it would be a "superior renewable fuel" for his recreational boating customers. Oil and Octane Shop of Springfield, Missouri has been supplying "test blends to major marine engine manufacturers" since Gevo moved into the boating fuels market following NMMA's endorsement of "isobutanol as a drop-in fuel for marine and recreational boat engines," [Biofuels Digest](#) noted.

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