



Switchgrass being grown for biofuel

with today's improved farming and if switchgrass breeding techniques improve, switchgrass-based fuels could be produced at 60 to 90 cents a gallon by 2015. Currently it costs about \$1.30 a gallon to produce crude oil and another 80 cents for refining crude into gasoline. Add taxes, distribution costs and profits, and the Oregon average retail gasoline price this week is \$3.12 a gallon.

— Camilla Mortensen

TIME TO RELOCALIZE

The Lane County Relocalization Conference is happening Friday and Saturday, April 27-28. What is it? Individuals, groups and civic leaders are gathering to talk about how we can

take care of our basic needs closer to where we live.

"The conference will look at five topics," says organizer Jan Spencer, "food, energy, local economy, land use, and culture, exploring how we can take care of these needs in a more eco-logical way."

Spencer says relevant issues include climate change, resource depletion, an unsteady global economy and the environment in decline, "and other trends tell us loud and clear that human impact on planet Earth is having severe consequences that cannot be sustained."

The conference will begin at 7 pm Friday at the First Christian Church, 1166 Oak St, with keynote addresses by Daniel Lerch of the Post Carbon Institute and Spencer.

Saturday's session will be at the Friendly Street Church of God, 2290 Friendly St., from 8:30 am to 6 pm. Morning panels will discuss each of the five topics and afternoon sessions will be facilitated discussions.

Cost of the event is suggested \$5 to \$25 sliding scale. For more information, call 686-6761, email spencerj@efn.org or visit www.suburbanpermaculture.org

crude-oil based fuels. In addition to his work in physics, Bothun teaches courses at the UO in alternative energy sources.

According to Bothun, biodiesel can't replace crude oil gas because the U.S. can only grow enough soybeans to produce 2 billion gallons of diesel in a year. This is not enough to satisfy the U.S. annual gas consumption of 200 billion gallons of gas.

Bothun said ethanol, as it is currently produced, won't work either. Ethanol comes mainly from grain, usually corn. Bothun said, "We don't have enough cropland to grow enough grain-based ethanol to cover our needs." He calculated it would take 78 percent of all U.S. cropland to grow enough corn to replace the gas we currently use. We need much of that land to produce food.

However, Bothun does see ethanol as a possible replacement for our dependency on crude oil. He said cellulosic ethanol, which can be produced from agricultural and industrial plant wastes, and energy crops such as switchgrass could replace crude oil.

Switchgrass a hardy perennial that grows rapidly, requires little herbicide or fertilizer use and has a large biomass output, according to sources on bioenergy. Bothun said that

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