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Pickens County biodiesel program honored

by Nathan DiBagno

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PICKENS — The state Department of Health and Environmental Control has recognized Pickens County as this year's Spare the Air Award recipient for its biodiesel fuel program that officials say has been able to save the county thousands.

Under the program, county employees worked at a landfill to convert used cooking oil from local restaurants and schools into biodiesel fuel.

The fuel has been used to power six roll-off trucks, seven road tractors, two track loaders, three skid steers, three rubber tire loaders, a steel wheeled compactor, three one-ton pick-up trucks, and heating systems in

the vehicle maintenance area.

"It was estimated that over 1 million pounds of carbon emissions have been reduced as a result of this great project," DHEC representative Rick Caldwell said during Monday's council meeting. "We the Department applaud your decision to be proactive."

County officials said employees worked closely with both DHEC and the Environmental Protection Agency to make sure the county followed the laws and obtained permits when needed.

This is the first time the county has won the award.

The county has expanded the program this year by adding more vehicles were converted to the program, and more restaurants helped provide used cooking oil.

"It was a tremendous savings on the part of the county," said Administrator Chap Hurst, who commended the county staff for implementing the program.

In other news from Monday's meeting, council:

-Voted to accept the annual audit report. The county has received a clean audit this year, the best it can receive.

-Approved the budget calendar for the 2012 fiscal year.

-Voted in favor of a fee in lieu agreement with Pacesetter, Inc.

-Voted on second reading of an ordinance to amend an agreement with the industrial and business park shared with Oconee County to enlarge the park.

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