

HOW I...

Support the environment with sales

BOLLINGER ENERGY CORP. HELPS CLIENTS REDUCE THEIR CARBON FOOTPRINT

Bollinger Energy Corp. doesn't like to rest on its laurels. Founded in 1988 as a commercial petroleum supplier, the company launched a transit division in 1994, and in 2005 established an electricity supply brokerage department.

Now the company has taken on a new project. Responding to demands for lower greenhouse gases, Bollinger has launched its Net Zero Carbon Natural Gas program. The program allows customers to buy carbon offsets to effectively reduce their carbon footprint. President Matt Bollinger explains how the business is working through the change.

Tell us about the business. What we do is quite unique: We supply petroleum, natural gas and electricity. Others may only do one of these or another. That's because it is capital-intensive, for one thing. You also need the expertise, the knowledge. So those are two big barriers to entry. But we have people who have been working here for 20 years or more, and they share what they know with the newer people.

How did the carbon offset program come about? The EPA has come out with some goals to reduce carbon, and the State of Maryland in particular has a target of reducing greenhouse emissions by about 25 percent by 2020. Our customers would like to make a statement about their commitment to this, so we are able to provide them with a tool to do that.

An example? Take St. Paul's School for Girls. Their contract started with us in July. They are a "green" school. That's the type of customer we were looking for. They are projected to use 48,034 units of natural gas per year, and their decision to use Net Zero Natural Gas



BY JACLYN BOROWSKI

Matt Bollinger, Bollinger Energy Corp. president, on the campus of St. Paul's School for Girls, which opted for the Net Zero Carbon Natural Gas program.

will remove 576,408 pounds of carbon emissions from the atmosphere.

How does it work? We match 100 percent of the projected usage with a carbon offset. These offsets fund projects that reduce carbon emissions and produce renewable energy. For example, you might have a landfill that is generating greenhouse gas, and now we are destroying that gas and converting it into energy.

Who pays for the offsets? Basically it's the customers. The added cost is built into the margin. It adds about 1 percent to the cost of natural gas.

How do you buy the offsets? We deal

BOLLINGER ENERGY CORP.

Revenue in 2013: \$66 million

Number of employees: 14

Number of customers: 2,000

Number of customers buying Net Zero Carbon Natural Gas: 34

with a company called TerraPass. They are guaranteeing that the product is a certified climate offset. So it is not like we are traveling to various methane facilities and checking that they are performing. It is all certified by a third-party company.

How do you market Net Zero?

First we have offered it to existing customers. Also, when we get calls from customers looking for a quote, we will offer this option to them. Some of them will take an interest right away, they start asking questions. We just provide the option, and they are the ones who express the interest.

Mistakes along the way? At one point we thought we would become residential suppliers, retail suppliers. The risks were minimal, the volume was not high, so we thought we could tiptoe in at first. But it turned out that was not something we did well. It took too much time. We got out of the market quickly, but it was a learning experience. It just wasn't adding value.

Looking ahead? We'll continue to push Net Zero Natural Gas. We will look for new products to develop, perhaps a Net Zero diesel fuel or a Net Zero gasoline or fuel oil. We are a small company so we are constantly brainstorming. Our goal is to have revenues at \$100 million within two years.

—Adam Stone