CLEAN PROPANE CUTS FUEL COSTS IN HALF FOR U.S. LAWNS FRANCHISE

A PROPANE CASE STUDY

HUSBAND-AND-WIFE TEAM SAVE GREEN BY GOING GREEN WITH MOWER FLEET POWERED BY PROPANE

U.S. Lawns is one of the largest providers of commercial landscape services in the country with more than 260 locally owned and operated franchises. Since opening their franchise in Hampton Roads, Virginia in 2002, husband-and-wife team Steve and Teana Ferguson have been focused on reducing their carbon footprint and practicing environmental stewardship.

"We are a green industry company, and we look for ways to reduce our carbon footprint in everything we do," said Steve, vice president of the franchise.

The Fergusons' forward-thinking and environmentally conscious mindset also sparked their interest in propane-powered mowers. They spoke with industry colleagues and conducted their own research before transitioning their entire fleet to the clean, American-made fuel.

INSIGHT FROM INDUSTRY PEERS

Teana, president and CEO of the Hampton Roads location, first discovered propane through the U.S. Lawns network. A fellow franchisee owner in northwest Arkansas, Ben Harrell, explained the cost savings and efficiency he gained after switching to propane for one year. Thanks to Harrell's feedback, the Fergusons began to consider a switch to propane more seriously.

"We tried to learn as much as we could about propane mower safety, efficiency, and cost, and we explored every equipment option. We worked closely with an equipment dealer and with our chosen propane retailer to figure out what would suit us best," Steve said.

After extensive research, the Fergusons found value in propane as clean, American-made fuel that made a good business case. The Fergusons' research culminated in the adoption of 16 John Deere propane-powered zero-turn mowers with conversion kits.

"Steve and I were looking to purchase several new mowers and instead of having a hodgepodge of equipment, we opted

COMPANY

U.S. Lawns
Hampton Roads, Va.

CHALLENGE & SOLUTION

U.S. Lawns franchisees Steve and Teana Ferguson were looking for economical ways to reduce their company's carbon footprint. After learning about propane-powered mowers from a fellow franchise owner, the husband-wife team decided to transition to a John Deere propane-powered fleet.

RESULT

- Propane-powered mowers reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 15 percent and carbon monoxide emissions by more than 40 percent compared with gasoline-fueled mowers.
- Crews save time not having to refuel at the gas station each morning, leading to greater productivity and less downtime
- The Fergusons save more than 50 percent on fuel costs.

to replace our entire fleet with propane-powered mowers," Teana said. "The low upfront cost of adopting propane made it a clear decision."

With the help of their local propane provider and equipment dealer, the transition was smooth and surprisingly simple.

"Our propane retailer and equipment dealer worked with us on an initial training day for our employees, including education on refueling, running the mowers, and basic maintenance," Steve said. "We now hold two training days per year; one before the spring season and one before we move into fall."

Their equipment dealer also provides ongoing support through an inventory replacement system. The dealership stocks mower parts at the U.S. Lawns shop, so the mechanics never have to wait for new parts to be shipped or take unnecessary trips to the dealership.

SAVINGS FROM ALL ANGLES

While Steve and Teana were motivated by propane's green profile, they wouldn't have made the switch if it didn't make fiscal sense. The low cost of fuel, coupled with incentive dollars, created substantial savings. The franchise received nearly $34,000 in incentives after taking advantage of the Propane Education & Research Council's Propane Mower Incentive Program and additional state incentives.

"Our propane retailer made the incentive application completely painless for us," Steve said. "We received incentives through both the Virginia Propane Gas Association and PERC. Since adopting our propane-powered mower fleet last spring, we have saved more than 50 percent on fuel costs."

The Fergusons have achieved greater efficiency for their team by working with their propane retailer on a cylinder exchange program. The program eliminates the need to refill at a gas station each morning, leading to more productivity and less crew downtime.

"Time is money for our business," Teana said. "With the cylinder exchange, we have total inventory control, which eliminates the problem of not knowing if we're losing fuel to spillage or theft. We can better estimate annual fuel usage, and having all of our resources readily available at the shop each morning is helpful."

SUSTAINING FUTURE GROWTH

The Fergusons are dedicated to 'greening' the green industry, and promoting their use of emission-reducing propane has helped further that mission.

"We are fortunate to be franchisees of a company that values sustainability and embraces environmentally friendly practices," Teana said. "As business owners, we have a greater responsibility to enhance our communities and enrich our employees, vendors, and planet. We feel strongly that implementing green initiatives, like the use of propane-powered mowers, has helped us be successful and will help other franchisees, too."

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— Steve Ferguson
Vice President, U.S. Lawns

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about propane-powered lawn care equipment and PERC's Propane Mower Incentive Program, visit **propane.com/mowerincentive**.

Propane Education & Research Council / 1140 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 1075 / Washington, DC 20036
P 202-452-8975 / F 202-452-9054 / propanecouncil.org

The Propane Education & Research Council was authorized by the U.S. Congress with the passage of Public Law 104-284, the Propane Education and Research Act (PERA), signed into law on October 11, 1996. The mission of the Propane Education & Research Council is to promote the safe, efficient use of odorized propane gas as a preferred energy source.

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