

Linda Engle: Sustainable Idaho on KISU is brought to you by the Portneuf Resource Council.

Charlie Medema: Oh hey, welcome back to Sustainable Idaho. I'm your host, Charlie Medema. This week's episode is the second part of my discussion with Craig Hunter, the president of Tire Reclaim, which is a dedicated tire reclamation organization with multiple facilities across the state of Idaho, including multiple right here in the Portneuf Valley.

CM: You touched on it earlier in our discussion. Would you expand more on tire-derived fuel?

Craig Hunter: So fuel recovery is very crucial to rubber recycling across the whole country. And there's a little cement kiln, I call it little, it's a giant plant just over the border in Oregon in Durkee, and they take about 6,000 tons of tires right now annually to use as fuel instead of coal. Now they still use coal and natural gas, but the tires, again, a renewable source, as well as it burns hotter and cleaner than coal, which most folks don't know that.

CM: Wow.

CH: It has a better BTU value, and because of the temperatures, it actually has a lower gas emission. So it works miraculously for making fire and creating heat that the cement needs to be made. So having said that, we have fuel recovery, we have asphalt programs, we have aggregate programs, we have obviously the crumb and the molding, and we're always looking for new ideas.

CM: Your organization has tackled what are commonly known as legacy piles, which are these mass aggregates of discarded tires, which are across the state, and they present both environmental and public safety concerns. What are some of your aims with these projects in helping Idaho tackle this problem?

CH: Yeah, so when we showed up in business, I'm on five years now, we got a lot of calls about legacy piles, and we actually did some work at the state house on trying to get some legislation done. I spent many hours with different folks that are stakeholders in the community for the the solid waste director of the DEQ was there. We have a state senator that was involved. He was actually the one putting the bill together. And in that time frame, I saw a list, and on this list was literally a pile of 600,000 tires, another pile of 100,000 tires, multiple piles of 50,000, 30,000.

CH: And when you say that, it's easy to say it and read it on paper, but when you look at it, it's massive. And when you start doing the calculations of what it takes to clean something up like that, we're talking millions of dollars. So one we're very proud of is right there in Idaho Falls, not too far from you. There was, I'd say at least 200,000 tires on the ground, and they were all in one particular area where a guy had been taking fees, taking money and putting it away. Well, he passed away and left the property to his son. And his son is getting bids for a cleanup of well over a million dollars.

CH: A lot of times, the rule of thumb is like \$4 a tire or more, depending on how far away you are from the recycling center. So it could be for every single tire. So I think the latest bid that he got before we got involved was \$1.4 million to clean up this project. So I approached the gentleman and said, we have a different process. We have the ability to shred on site with a mobile shredder. That mobile shredder allows us to go right to the tires and shred them up into a smaller piece. And then what that does is that allows you to put it on a truck and truck it somewhere. When tires are whole and you just put them on a truck, you don't get very many tires on one load. That's what drove that price up to well over a million dollars.

CH: So we were able to collaborate with which is Bonneville County Landfill and the Planning and Zoning. And those gentlemen contacted the property owner and said, hey, we can get involved. We're getting a lot of heat to clean this up. They paid us to come in and shred that material and haul it away. You go by that site now and it's completely clean. It's just nothing but dirt. We're really proud of the fact that these legacy piles are gone. But I will say there still are quite a few out there. And if there's any listeners that sees a large tire pile, we can always be reached at [tire reclaim.com](http://tirereclaim.com) and we'll get somebody involved in helping arrange getting those cleaned up. If you see them out there, just let us know. But the other part of that is giving somewhere people can take tires now. We hope to be avoiding future legacy piles.

CH: So giving all of these drop sites that people can come and do the right thing and know that their tires are going to get recycled or disposed of safely, they can do that with us now rather than going and pitching them out on file.

For someone with a garage of old tires, you know, more of an average Joe or possibly a business that has hundreds in buildup every month. What does the process look like for them to use tire reclaim as a service?

CH: Yeah, I'm glad you asked that. So what we do is we have box trucks, just like you'd see a regular U-Haul truck. So they're 28, 26 foot box trucks with two guys. And as long as the tires are stacked in an orderly fashion and clean, like we don't really want mud packed in. And like some folks have tires that they used for, you know, retaining wall or something like that. And that's really hard on the equipment. So those need to be cleaned out for us to pick them up. But if they're clean, orderly, like you say, like a tire shop and they're just stacked in the back of their business, they actually just call us and we get them on a route. We can go by two guys in a pickup, this kind of, or I'm sorry, in a U-Haul, just kind of load those tires up and then bring them back to us.

CH: We also do, and something that we did for the first time in state Idaho was a roll-off unit. So you've seen roll-off dumpsters that are dropped at people's facilities for cleaning up trash and things like that. They roll right off the truck onto the ground, but we can drop those at any site as well. And you put all your tires in and then we come back and pick it up. If you have 50 tires or more, we just charge a per cent or per pound price. And then you basically go dump them weighing in and then you pay your bill. You can go to TireReclaim.com and see all the locations.

CH: They stretch from Pendleton all the way to Pocatello, but there's different drop sites all across the state.

CM: Wow. And then your facility also recycles bicycle tires, which is something that isn't always advertised with Tire Reclamation.

CH: Yeah. So we're open to pretty much anything rubber. We take bicycle tires, tubes, tires, of course, motorcycle tires. A lot of folks forget about those. Motorcycle tires, ATV tires. There's actually a lot of ATV, Razors, four-wheeler tires. People forget about different things. We hear about all of them because we get calls for all types of tires. But yeah, we take bicycle. We have bicycle shops, ultimately anything rubber.

CM: Wow. That is excellent. What kind of gives you hope for the future as part of your organization and looking at sustainability?

CH: Yeah. So I'd say the biggest hope driver for me is folks like yourself. I get contacted actually quite a bit about people wanting to learn more. And if you don't have people that are asking the questions like you have been today, then you just kind of sit out on an island and nobody knows about you or what you're up to. Everyone needs tire recycling. Everyone is around tires in some way, shape or form. We just are able to take the tires and do something with it rather than just put it in a hole and hope somebody does something with it in the future. It's not trash. Well, the old saying, one's mass trash is another man's treasure. We've been able to make a treasure of a company out of recycling tires from people just throwing them away. Because I've seen such growth in these five years, I can only imagine we just got to get the right pieces to the puzzle in the right places and we'll be able to recycle tires for years to come.

CM: Once again, thank you so much to Craig Hunter for telling us about Tire Reclaim's mission and some of their projects within tire recycling. If you would like to learn more about Tire Reclaim, the services they offer, and how you can properly dispose of the tires in your possession, go to TireReclaim.com and KISU.org slash Sustainable Idaho.

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