

## Member Opinion

By Jim Herd

# Avgas We Need a Systemic Solution PART II

Last issue, member Jim Herd expressed his opinion on the economics of 100LL replacement fuels. He begins Part II with the question, "Are we doomed, or is there a way out of this?"

—Editor

### Does all that inspire confidence?

Let's look at the G.A. Avgas Coalition (sponsored by many of the alphabet groups) for inspiration; they asked for the above mentioned UAT-ARC. The coalition's mission has three parts:

- 1) assure a supply of 100LL,
- 2) a process to qualify a replacement fuel, and
- 3) a timeline for a transition.

Respectfully, this seems to ignore the greater systemic challenges and the consumer cost issue while prematurely conceding that there is a serious problem here that must be fixed urgently. Oh, and it directs us to a singular fuel solution when many aviators believe this is just wrong. If this group doesn't get its mission correct and in line with consumers, it won't get aviators' support or the results we all need. Besides, as the saying goes, "Who's on first?"

### It's really just Management 101.

Despite all the complexities here, I view the roles and responsibilities as quite simple. FAA – safety and continuity. EPA – environmental impact. Aviation industry – profit protection. Aviation advocacy groups – consumer cost protection. These primary responsibilities are all bona fide, but they are also in conflict with one another, so let's not pretend we are all pulling in the same direction – we are not and should not! The G.A. Avgas Coalition members should not act in unison!

- The successful organization, perhaps UAT-ARC, must have the necessary authority, responsibility, and accountability to achieve a specified goal.
- It must be populated only with industry and government leaders who have a track record of making things happen, and the project leader must possess uncommon gravitas.

**W**hat we face is a complex systemic problem with a variety of causes far beyond getting lead out of avgas. The entire industry must quit viewing this as just a technical challenge to reformulate avgas – the mindset should be "complex systemic solution."

Is the newly announced FAA committee, Unleaded Avgas Transition-Aviation Rulemaking Committee (UAT-ARC), our salvation? Let's take a look. Here is how it has been described:

*A collaborative industry-government task force that will bring together key stakeholders representing aircraft and engine manufacturers, fuel producers and distributors, operator groups, aviation associations, the FAA and the EPA to develop a comprehensive avgas program.*

*Here's what Pete Bunce, GAMA's president and CEO said: "The formation of this group is a critically important step in moving forward with identifying and prioritizing specific tasks necessary to resolve the issues related to the transition to an unleaded avgas for our industry and finding the best solution for the piston aviation community."*

*"This is a much needed step in the process that will ultimately determine how the aviation industry reaches an unleaded fuel solution," said Rob Hackman, AOPA vice president of regulatory affairs and liaison to the GA Avgas Coalition. "While the move toward an unleaded aviation fuel has been spurred by an Environmental Protection Agency action, it is the FAA that must approve new fuels, ensuring they provide adequate safety."*


- Each member, including representatives with consumer cost as priority one, must be sworn to truly listen to all perspectives and commit to a fully practical system-wide solution, and must be sworn to ignore conventional wisdom and kick down the barriers, otherwise there are endless reasons why "we can't do that."
- The necessary resources (funding, time, expertise, etc) must be made available inside a dynamic work process.
- Expectations must be reasonable.

Once the general public and even the lawmakers and "greenies" understand the level of pain, they will surely take a more sympathetic compromise posture.

None of this is currently in place! The total budget for UAT-ARC is \$7,500, with each member paying her or his own way. And if you want a copy of their documents you will have to pay for them under the Freedom of Information Act. Instead of blundering along like an unguided missile, we need a first phase to define goals, system-wide problems, and root causes; develop solutions, stepping stones, and milestones; timelines; resources; etc. (ed. note: Defining these goals and processes, not identifying any specific fuel formulation, is the chartered purpose of the ARC.) Note that this first phase does not involve technical fuel formulations, although that work should continue. I suspect it may be as much as a 10-year project or longer to achieve a full transition

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to a new systemic fuel solution, and it may set the stage for the following five decades or more, so let's get it right. We need a new approach to fuel, even if we don't need to get the lead out as an urgent priority.


This type of plan will clear the fog and settle everyone down in realizing that nothing Draconian will happen under a carefully phased and

orchestrated systemic solution. That solution might be a whole range of solutions, because there's no "one size fits all" in aviation. Note that the EPA hasn't even determined that we have a lead problem in the environment sufficient to cause such an upheaval that threatens the life of piston aviation. So let's not rush to judgment.

In summary, the story of aviation fuel is far more dire and complex than just getting the lead out. Many factors are simultaneously conspiring against us and the stakes couldn't be higher. What is needed is a system-wide approach; a calm, determined, and open-minded attitude all across the industry; a structure and working process that will achieve the very best outcome; and

a new priority to drive overall cost down to improve the viability of piston G.A. long into the future. And let's start with the fact that there is no proof of significant human harm for avgas lead as yet. Let's also make it clear to the entire country that removing lead from avgas is vastly more disruptive than it was for mogas. Once the general public and even the

lawmakers and "greenies" understand the level of pain, they will surely take a more sympathetic compromise posture.

But can the UAT-ARC get the job done for us? A whole lot more of us must get fully informed, actively involved, and outspoken. 

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See the "100LL Replacement Fuels" forum on ABS Hangar Flying for updates on the rapidly changing unleaded fuels issue. – **Editor**

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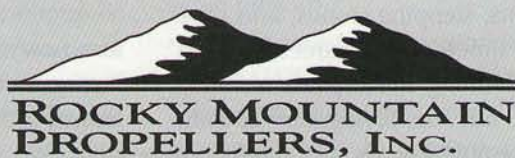
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