

# HOUSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

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## Houston firm ready to gel with oil flow product

**BY MONICA PERIN**  
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A Houston company that owns a proprietary, environmentally friendly chemical that dislodges hydrocarbons in practically all natural and man-made environments is lining up distributors to begin selling the product commercially.

Planet Resource Recovery Inc. has been fine-tuning production of the product, called PetroLuxus, for the past three months at a facility in Pearland. The product breaks up hydrocarbons to help make oil flow and to clean up oil when it spills on the ground or coats storage tanks and marine vessels.

Planet Resource has signed one unnamed distributor for the product and is talking with several others, according to company founder Kurt Neubauer.

In the meantime, Planet Resource is working on a deal that calls for Pearland-based Rada Technologies Inc. to use the technology in servicing clients for clean-up work.

Rada Technologies performs for major oil and pipeline companies exactly the type of tasks that PetroLuxus was created to tackle: Separating oil from other materials and cleaning up both as well as the tanks or pipelines in which they were contained — and providing precise measurements of the amount of recovered oil and waste materials.

Rada Technologies President Robert Arias believes the PetroLuxus product takes the process to the next step.

“It’s a tremendous advance,” he says. “This product will revolutionize the environmental cleanup business and help companies’ bottom lines.”

Neubauer says the primary markets for PetroLuxus will be oil tank cleaning, remediating oil sludge pits, marine barge cleaning, waste oil separation and cleaning

up contaminated soil from oil spills, all of which are big markets.

“It’s an oil-gathering material,” he says. “It’s inorganic, and it seems to go after hydrogen and oxygen atoms. It discards the carbon atoms. We’ve attacked heavy waste oil with it and a number of things.”

Those characteristics make PetroLuxus different from many other remediation products, which are typically organic petroleum distillates.

“The problem is you still have a toxic mess on your hands,” after using such a compound to clean up hydrocarbons, Neubauer says.

PetroLuxus, instead, is a nontoxic compound that separates and neutralizes hydrocarbons, which Neubauer says results in two advantages: Less of a disposal problem at the end of the remediation process plus the opportunity to recover more waste oil.

He says lab tests have indicated that the compound captures more than 99 percent of the hydrocarbons in samples and that the recovered material does not contain toxins or heavy metals.

Neubauer and his team are also doing some early work toward developing PetroLuxus for improving the efficiency of producing heavy crude oil from tar sands.

The company recently collected some tar sand samples from Utah and developed a process to break down the rock-like material and extract the oil in about five minutes with minimal heat.

Most processes literally boil the tar sands to extract the oil, which Neubauer says takes a lot of energy and results in higher costs.

He says the company was able to extract 99.2 percent of the hydrocarbon from the Utah tar sand.

Meanwhile, several entities are currently conducting field testing of the PetroLuxus compound to see how it would work in



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**Kurt Neubauer of Planet Resource: Cleaning up in the oil industry.**

actual tar sand production.

But for now, PetroLuxus will be marketed through distributors as a remediation product.

Since buying 2.5 acres of land in Pearland and building a production facility, Neubauer and his team can now produce up to 1,300 gallons of PetroLuxus in a single production run of less than 24 hours, for a total capacity of about 700,000 gallons of product weekly.

### A SPINNING PLANET

In addition to Neubauer, the Planet Resource team includes PetroLuxus creator Michael Smallwood, a Houston oil company scientist who had developed the product in Latin America; Chief Operating Officer Frank Crane; and Enrique Salinas, who had worked with Neubauer at a company called Sequoia Interests Corp.

## PLANET: Hydrocarbon-busting product ready to smooth over some oily issues

Sequoia had been developing a compound similar to PetroLuxus that had been trademarked as DiamondFlo. But DiamondFlo never reached commercialization, and Sequoia Interests was acquired last year by a Tennessee manufacturer and marketer of baby products.

By contrast, the PetroLuxus product has gotten off the ground fairly quickly. When Rada Technologies' Arias happened upon Planet Resource in December, he quickly arranged to demonstrate PetroLuxus to his biggest customer, a major U.S. oil company that refines and markets gasoline and other fuels.



**Crane**



**Salinas**

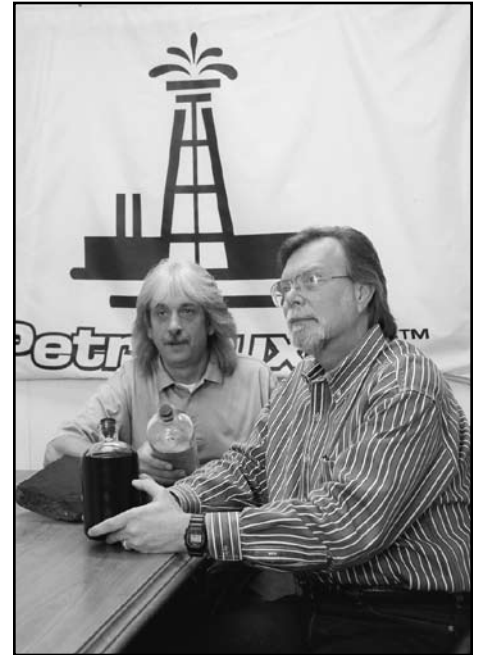
Arias says Rada Technologies and his customer are currently testing PetroLuxus' ability to separate water from jet fuel, which would be another "very important application" of the product.

"There is no other technology out there that will remove water and suspended particulates from jet fuel" he says. "And water and particulates in jet fuel will destroy a jet engine very quickly."

Meanwhile, Arias points out, remediation is a big and costly problem in the oil industry.

"The only way to increase your gains is to minimize the amount of product you lose by making more of it reusable," he says. "This product does that, and it also eliminates the environmental issues. It enables companies to account for every drop of fuel they make — and that's what the (Environmental Protection Agency) wants."

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**Michael Smallwood, left, and Kurt Neubauer of Planet Resource: Taking their product to market.**