

Bikes & Cars...

Source: Feed: Good Green Cars

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Aug 7, 2008

ALMS Green Challenge Race

You, Citizen Driver, are not the only one who cringes every time you fill the gas tank or feels a pang of guilt when your car belches those nasty emissions out the tailpipe. The American Le Mans Series of racing professionals knows your pain. That's why it's instituting the Green Challenge at its signature event, the Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta, scheduled for October 4.

Three factors will be considered in naming a winner of this race-within-a-race:

Performance (of course — this is a race)

Fuel Efficiency

Environmental Impact

Cars will be ranked by the amount of energy they use, the greenhouse gases they emit, and the amount of gasoline they displace over the course of the race. Which boils down to going as far as they can, as fast as they can, with the least environmental impact.

ALMS has been taking steps all season to lessen the environmental impact of racing. GM, Audi, and others have introduced race cars running on alternative fuels like E85 and clean diesel. You can bet those teams will be vying for the Green Challenge title. Race fans and consumers are winners in this event, too, as technological innovations on the track often trickle down to cars on the showroom floor.

Even NASCAR is dipping a toe in the clean-and-green waters. Michigan International Speedway, which hosts two NASCAR events during the season, stepped up its recycling efforts this year. During the Lifelock 400 weekend in June alone, MIS collected 15.3 tons of aluminum, plastic, and cardboard. They're even recycling construction materials from some recent upgrades to the facilities, and they've instituted an office recycling program.

Eco-friendlier fuels, recycling ... What is auto racing coming to? Oh, right. Its senses.