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Middletown entrepreneur named to National Petroleum Board

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MIDDLETOWN — Local businessman Steve Hightower has been named to the National Petroleum Board.

Hightower owns and operates Middletown-based Hightowers Petroleum Co., which supplies and transports fuel and other petroleum products nationwide. He was invited to the council by U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu on June 18.

During his 2010-11 term, Hightower said that as the only wholesaler and distributor on the council, he hopes to prompt more discussion on the alternatives and challenges in delivering petroleum product to the end user. It's a sector of the industry he said that "has been silent."

"It's an honor to be considered in such esteemed company, of course. You are sitting on an appointed board with the executives of Exxon Mobil and BP," he said.

Despite some of the negative attention the oil industry has garnered following the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, Hightower said his company has continued to grow. Within the last 30 days, the business has added Progress Energy, headquartered in Raleigh, N.C., to its client list.

Hightower said his construction company, High-Mark Construction Group, is also working with BP to secure a contract to assist with the clean-up work in the Gulf. He traveled to New Orleans last week to survey the scene and speak with local businesses.

While he said fewer people could be seen in the waters along the coastline, the city was still packed with tourists and every hotel was booked. Hightower said he hopes a total stoppage of drilling in the Gulf will not be the end result of the spill.

As part of the NPC, Hightower will have input on Chu's request for advise on future transportation fuels and development of North American natural gas and oil resources.

"It's not everyday that you get to set policy for the industry in the United States," he said.

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