



NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

Energy Bill Promotes Clean Biofuels

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The energy bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate (“Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007,” H.R. 6) includes a renewable fuel standard (RFS) that gets biofuels on the right track. The RFS would substantially increase biofuels production in the U.S., promote cellulosic biofuels, and establish crucial safeguards necessary to ensure that biofuels achieve climate benefits while protecting the environment and public health.

The RFS:

- **Substantially expands current RFS.** The RFS requires 36 billion gallons of renewable fuels to be produced in the U.S. by 2022. (Comparatively, 6 billion gallons of ethanol are currently produced in the U.S. annually and 140 billion gallons of gasoline are consumed each year.) The 36 billion gallon requirement includes 21 billion gallons of advanced biofuels, which are defined as renewable fuels other than ethanol produced from corn starch. 16 billion gallons of the advanced biofuels requirement comes from cellulosic biofuels, which are produced from plant material such as switch grass or wood chips.
- **Reduces global warming pollution.** According to analysis by NRDC, the RFS would reduce global warming pollution by about 114 million metric tons per year by 2022, which is equivalent to about 1 percent of U.S. emissions in 2005. The RFS achieves these reductions by establishing lifecycle greenhouse gas reduction standards for the renewable fuels covered by the RFS. The RFS requires all renewable fuels to have lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions at least 20 percent less than average emissions of fuel sold in the U.S. in 2005. Advanced biofuels and cellulosic biofuels have to meet 50 percent and 60 percent reduction standards respectively compared to 2005 average emissions. Critically, lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions are defined as emissions resulting from the full lifecycle of the fuel production from the extraction of the feedstock used to produce the fuel to the use of the fuel in a vehicle. Including this full spectrum ensures that the RFS generates climate

benefits instead of climate liabilities due to emissions associated with clearing of forests or other damaging production processes.

- **Includes safeguards essential to protect lands and wildlife.** The RFS establishes clear parameters for sustainable sourcing of biofuels feedstocks that guard against the loss of native forests and prairie, and protect threatened, imperiled, and endangered species, and public lands. While additional safeguards such as conservation standards to preserve soil and water quality are needed, the RFS contains critical safeguards necessary to protect our natural resources.
- **Is an amendment to the Clean Air Act.** Placing the RFS under the Clean Air Act gives the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the responsibility to administer the program. Among federal agencies, EPA has the most experience and expertise related to transportation fuels, and is already responsible for implementing the current RFS program. The Clean Air Act also provides important checks and balances, including specific statutory requirements regarding record keeping and public participation in rulemaking, as well as administrative and citizen enforcement measures.

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