



Project Summary: Midwestern Low Carbon Fuels Policy Initiative

Background

The imposition of Low Carbon Fuel Standards in several states, and passage of the 2007 Energy Independence and Security Act require development of life-cycle methods to quantify the net impact of biofuels on greenhouse gas emissions. But recent academic studies have raised questions regarding the life cycle greenhouse gas emissions profile of biofuels – especially for corn ethanol. Meanwhile, there is a renewed focus on federal and state policies that transition the U.S. to a transportation system that results in decreased greenhouse gas emissions. One of the policy options as part of the Midwestern Governors Association Energy Security and Climate Stewardship platform, as signed by nine governors and one Canadian premier is to, “Create a uniform, regional low-carbon fuels policy – implemented at the state level as a standard, objective or incentive – and report annually on progress.” The California Air Resources Board and the U.S. EPA are developing methods for assessing biofuel carbon intensity to allow implementation of policies explicitly favoring “low carbon” fuels. Various Midwestern states are individually pursuing a low carbon fuels policy.

Goals

The purpose of this initiative, hosted by the North Central Bioeconomy Consortium (NCBC), is to bring together key government officials, scientists, industry representatives, environmental groups, and other policy makers to:

- Articulate a Midwestern position on the development of state and federal policies in order to make recommendations to the Midwestern Governors Association (MGA) Bioeconomy and Transportation Advisory Group, the MGA Greenhouse Gas Accord Advisory Group, and the North Central Bioeconomy Consortium;
- Make recommendations on how to integrate state efforts to work towards a common framework for creating low carbon fuels policies;
- Assure that Midwestern interests have a voice in the development of low carbon policies at the national level and in other states so that the unique issues in the Midwest are represented;
- Improve life cycle estimates for corn ethanol to ensure they accurately reflect the current performance of the industry and can be adjusted to reflect any changes in performance;
- Understand how implementation of Low Carbon Fuel Standards will impact the corn-ethanol industry.

To accomplish these, we will:

- Learn about the status of recent research on the science required to develop appropriate life-cycle analysis tools, including identifying scientifically valid methods for estimating

indirect land use change resulting from biofuels policies, and discuss approaches for estimating biofuel carbon intensity.

- Explore the challenges and opportunities for the Midwestern biofuel industry associated with implementation of low carbon fuel standards;
- Learn about the status and deadlines for establishing and implementing the California low carbon fuel standard, Renewable Fuels Standard life cycle assessment rule, European policies and other initiatives;
- Learn about the status of low carbon fuel policy initiatives in Midwestern states;
- Identify opportunities to reduce the carbon intensities of biofuels—especially for corn ethanol and soybean biodiesel.

Process

We hope to convene, by invitation, key Midwestern participants from agriculture, biofuels industry, environmental NGOs, government, and academia to make recommendations in these areas. **This process will begin with several “webinars” dedicated to gaining a better understanding of the issues, and will culminate in an in-person meeting to finalize recommendations to MGA and NCBC.**

Schedule of Online Webinars and In-person Meeting

Webinar #1 (1 hour) - July 9, 8 a.m. central time

Overview of the process and time for questions and discussion

- Bill Northey, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture – Welcome to the process, introduction to NCBC
- Judith Greenwald, Pew Center on Global Climate Change – Introduction to the MGA Greenhouse Gas Accord process
- Ken Cassman, University of Nebraska-Lincoln - The need to improve life cycle greenhouse gas estimates for corn ethanol, and critical risks and opportunities for the Midwest.

Webinar #2 (1.5 hours) – July 15, 12 p.m. central time

Status of major Low Carbon Fuels Policy efforts: CARB, Lieberman-Warner, US EPA, EU. Briefings and discussion on various Low Carbon Fuels Policy efforts, including the process by the California Air Resources Board to write rules for the creation of a Low Carbon Fuels Standard for California, efforts by the US EPA to develop a life cycle assessment rule for meeting statutory requirements in the US Renewable Fuels Standard, the Low Carbon Fuel Standard amendment to the Lieberman-Warner climate bill, and Low Carbon Fuels Policy efforts in the European Union.

- Dean Simeroth, Criteria Pollutants Branch, California Air Resources Board
- Robert Larson, Associate Director of Transportation Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Jessica Holiday, Senator Lamar Alexander
- Alexandra Langenheld, Directorate-General for Energy & Transport, European Union

Webinar #3 (1.5 hours) – July 25, 2 p.m. central time

Life Cycle GHG Assessment for Biofuels. Current best practice for estimating life cycle GHG emissions from biofuels and other low carbon fuels. Possible impact of indirect land use change due to biofuels policy. We will hear from both research teams that published thought-provoking articles in the Feb. 08 issue of Science Express on biofuels and land use and learn other academic and industry perspectives.

- Simla Tokgoz, International Grains and Ethanol Analyst, FAPRI
- Joe Fargione, The Nature Conservancy
- Bruce Dale, Michigan State University
- Industry perspective (TBD)

Webinar # 4 (1.5 hours) – July 31, 2 pm. central time

Midwestern state Low Carbon Fuels Policy initiatives. Various Midwestern states are pursuing a low carbon fuels policy. This webinar will be dedicated to understanding the status of various state efforts to create low carbon fuels policies.

- Steven J. Taff, University of Minnesota and Shalini Gupta, Izaak Walton League - Minnesota
- Charles Griffith, Ecology Center - Michigan
- Pete Taglia, Clean Wisconsin – Wisconsin
- Joe Shacter, Environmental Law and Policy Center - Illinois

In-person meeting , Des Moines, IA - 2 p.m. August 4 to 2 p.m. August 5 (central time)

Agenda TBD