



National Association of Conservation Districts

House Agriculture Committee Hearing on the Agriculture's Role in the Renewable Fuels Market Comments submitted by the National Association of Conservation Districts June 29, 2006

On behalf of the nation's 3,000 conservation districts, the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is pleased to provide comments to the Committee Agriculture's role in the renewable fuels market. Established under state law, conservation districts are local units of government charged with carrying out programs for the protection and management of natural resources at the local level.

NACD supports the development and use of renewable fuels from agriculture and forestry products to help stretch our nation's energy supplies and reduce the amount of imported oil by millions of barrels each day. Our members help landowners implement conservation practices such as no-till that can save farmers over 200 million gallons of fuel and up to \$480 million per year. We are also interested in the use of crop acreage in conservation programs for the production of biofuels – corn ethanol, biodiesel and biomass ethanol. In looking toward the future many conservation programs can serve several purposes of soil and water quality benefits, habitat improvement, reduced energy inputs and contribute to biofuel production through crop and grass production, however we must ensure that these lands continue to be managed to protect natural resource conservation benefits.

One example of the Conservation District's commitment to biofuels is the Spokane County Conservation District's "BioBug". This Clean Green Bio Machine, a 2003 Volkswagen Beetle is fueled with 100% biodiesel. The BioBug is part of the District's educational efforts to increase awareness of biodiesel and its positive impacts on our environment and our economy. The District is coordinating the efforts of several public agencies, private industry and agricultural producers to develop the biodiesel industry in Eastern Washington. These efforts include the production of agricultural feedstocks, building oilseed processing facilities, developing biodiesel processing plants, and increasing demand for the fuel.

With energy prices at all-time highs and little expectation of change in the near future, there is a great opportunity for the development and use of renewable fuels and alternative energy sources made from biomass. Many conservation practices actually save energy while also benefiting the environment. Farmers can help solve America's energy problems by producing clean, renewable energy sources.

NACD encourages support for policies and programs that provide incentives for the development and use of renewable fuels and biomass including conservation practices that reduce energy use and the USDA Bioenergy Program. We look forward to continuing to work with the Committee on these programs and working at the state and local level to increase the awareness and use of renewable fuels.