



NEWS RELEASE

Fuel for Flames or Fuel for Energy? State Forester Provides Testimony on Negative Impacts of “Renewable” Definition

For Immediate Release

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July 24, 2008 DENVER: In a hearing this morning by the House Committee on Agriculture: Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy and Research Butch Blazer, New Mexico State Forester, gave testimony on the western impacts of the 2007 Energy Bill, with particular focus on woody bioenergy opportunities and failings with the new Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS). Blazer, as a representative of the Council of Western State Foresters, raised concerns over artificial limitations placed on sources of woody biomass that qualify for the RFS, stating, “The Council’s mission is to ensure the sustainability and health of western forests to meet today’s needs and the needs of future generations. It is this mission that has compelled me to testify before you.”

The Energy Independence & Security Act of 2007, signed into law in December, 2007, includes a historic 36 billion-gallon renewable fuels standard (RFS) goal by the year 2017. A portion of which will be reached through the use woody biomass, or wood waste. However, a last-minute change in a definition prevents, for all intents and purposes, wood waste from federal lands- such as trees, wood, brush, thinnings, chips and slash –from counting toward the renewable fuels goal.

The definition, as currently written unnecessarily excludes important wood waste supply sources to help meet our Nation’s renewable energy goals. This is a huge issue because it limits the likelihood of private market investment in woody biofuel solutions; solutions that not only would help decrease our dependence on foreign oil, but also address our catastrophic wildfire problem. “We only have to look as far as this year’s fire season in Northern California to understand what is at stake, stated Blazer.

With the increased demand for renewable energy and the need to protect communities and forests it is a perfect fit to turn wood waste into a clean burning, renewable source of energy. Blazer’s testimony ended with a request for Congress, “We believe the Federal government can and should be responsible land stewards as well as do their part to see our country on its way to energy independence – changing the definition is a critical component to getting there.”

Copies of the testimony can be found at www.wflcweb.org/infomaterials/testimonies.php

The Council of Western State Foresters represents the State and Island Forestry Agencies in the seventeen states and six Island territories of the western United States. The responsibilities of these agencies include wildfire and forest health protection services to landowners in forests, cities and communities. For more information please visit www.westernstateforesters.org