

EWG Fights Move To Increase Gas Ethanol Content

By The Associated Press - May 18, 2009

WASHINGTON (AScribe Newswire) -- The corn ethanol industry is misrepresenting scientific facts in efforts to dupe the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) into waiving critical public health protections for the sake of boosting ethanol sales.

In a letter delivered today, Environmental Working Group (EWG) urged EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson to reject a petition by leading ethanol industry group Growth Energy to waive restrictions under the federal Clean Air Act so that fuel blenders can add up to 50 percent more ethanol to gasoline, raising engine fuel's maximum ethanol content from 10 percent (E10) to 15 percent (E15).

If Administrator Jackson bends to industry's pressure, the results could be expensive and dangerous for the great majority of Americans: increased air pollution could aggravate children's health problems, and hundreds of millions of engines, especially small motors and older vehicle engines, could be damaged. Last Friday, EPA extended its public comment period by 60 days. EPA's decision on Growth Energy's petition is now expected in late July.

In the letter to Administrator Jackson, EWG summarizes a detailed review of scientific research on the health, safety and environmental consequences of so-called intermediate ethanol fuel blends, which the U.S. Department of Energy defines as blends with more than 10 percent ethanol. EWG's analysis concludes that scientists have found many reasons to be wary of blends with higher ethanol content and no scientific rationale to favor them.

EWG's research highlights Growth Energy's numerous fundamental errors of fact and interpretation of numerous scientific reports. Strikingly, contrary to Growth Energy's assertions, every study the industry group cites to support its petition contains evidence that undermines the case for E15 and above. When examined closely, these studies lead to the conclusion that intermediate fuel blends are incompatible with cars and trucks currently on American roads and with hundreds of millions of non-road engines, like power tools and marine engines.

As well, the EWG letter and supporting white paper lay out evidence that fuel blends above E10 could generate significantly more air-polluting emissions, with serious and lasting impact on human health and the environment.

"With consensus building that ethanol is at a dead end financially and environmentally, the ethanol industry is misrepresenting facts, inaccurately citing science and providing EPA with an error-ridden petition for new and potentially

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dangerous fuel blends," said Craig Cox, Environmental Working Group Midwest vice-president. "Increasing corn ethanol production will exacerbate the long list of problems ethanol poses to our society, from engines to air, water, wildlife habitat and human health," Cox said.

"Growth Energy is lobbying for an industry that cannot survive on its own, even after lavish taxpayer-funded subsidies. This push to promote E15 is a desperate move to expand the market for corn-ethanol and to shore up ethanol producers who over-built their capacity in a rush to profit from misguided federal mandates that force refiners to blend corn-ethanol into gasoline, at the expense of the rest of us. The Growth Energy petition is yet another plea for a handout to an industry totally dependent of government support and a serious distraction from what we should be doing: putting more fuel efficient vehicles on the road and working hard to find real solutions for a clean, secure energy future," Cox concluded.

EWG's key findings:

- Contrary to Growth Energy's claims, available data do not demonstrate that cars, other vehicles, and small engines burning ethanol in any amount over 10 percent would meet emission standards over their useful life, as is required under the Clean Air Act waiver provisions. Data cited in the petition not only fail to support the corn lobby's claims but demonstrate that a waiver would compromise the bedrock air quality protection principles of the Clean Air Act.
- Currently available scientific studies indicate that intermediate ethanol blends pose significant risks to human health and the environment. They do not support a decision to approve blends above E10.
- A comprehensive assessment of ethanol fuel impacts on air quality should consider air emissions from all stages of fuel production, transportation, and combustion, and, as well as fuel compatibility with the current vehicle fleet, including catalyst durability, materials compatibility and drivability.
- Older vehicles and small engines operating on ethanol fuel blends would likely experience performance and safety problems. Unlike modern cars, small engines lack an oxygen sensor feedback control and cannot compensate for higher oxygen content in ethanol-containing fuels. As a result, engines operate under "lean" or oxygen-rich conditions and can quickly overheat.

Go here for the full letter [http://www.ewg.org/letter/Factual-Analysis-Debunks-Corn-Ethanol-ndu strys-Call-to-Waive-Clean-Air-Act-Fuel-Standards](http://www.ewg.org/letter/Factual-Analysis-Debunks-Corn-Ethanol-ndu-strys-Call-to-Waive-Clean-Air-Act-Fuel-Standards)

Go here for the white paper <http://www.ewg.org/reports/Ethanol-Gasoline-Fuel-Blends-Human-Health-Risks-and-Engine-Performance-Issues>

EWG is a nonprofit research organization based in Washington, DC that uses the power of information to protect human health and the environment. The group's farm subsidy database and reports on the impact of modern agriculture on the environment can be found at www.mulchblog.com .

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