

2008 – 3 Supporting Low Greenhouse Gas Transportation Fuels

Whereas: Oil currently meets about 40 percent of the nation’s total energy supply—more than any other single source. Of the 20 million barrels we consume each day, nearly 70 percent is used for transportation. Passenger vehicles in the United States alone account for one-tenth of world petroleum consumption. The process of drilling, transporting, and burning it is generally destructive to the environment with petroleum responsible for about 44 percent of our nation’s carbon dioxide emissions. As the price of oil reaches record highs (adjusted for inflation), the price signal is having the unfortunate effect of making even more environmentally destructive means of extracting oil more economical. There is increasing pressure for procuring oil from tar sands and developing coal-to-liquid fuel technologies. For example in the Midwest, Minnesota currently gets 80% of its transportation fuel from tar sands in Alberta, Canada, and new pipelines are being proposed to bring the oil from Canada down through the Dakotas. Tar sand oil is extracted through a process that is estimated to release 3 times more global warming emissions than conventional gasoline. According to a recent report by the Natural Resource Defense Council coal-to-liquid transportation fuels are estimated to release two times the global warming pollution of conventional gasoline and displacing just 10 percent of our total oil demand with liquid coal would require a doubling in coal mining.

Whereas: Conservation, appropriate land use planning, and development of alternatives are key aspects to reducing our global warming emissions from our transportation use. Alternatives to oil, such as biofuels, have potential to curb our greenhouse gas emissions if done right. Biofuels developed from energy crops that are perennial (such as prairie grasses and woody biomass) store a larger percentage of carbon in their roots than annual energy crops such as corn, while providing other ancillary benefits such as wildlife habitat. They also can reduce the need for fossil-based fertilizers, further lowering their global warming impact while improving water quality. However, even as we look to perennials as a source for alternatives to petroleum liquid fuels, it is important that low greenhouse gas practices are promoted. For example, perennial woody biomass should be harvested in a way that does not deplete the carbon already stored in trees by further damaging our forests.

Whereas: As we work toward conservation and smart land use practices to reduce our consumption needs, we realize that any transportation fuel we do consume must have low greenhouse gas emissions. We should work to inhibit the development of more destructive oil procurement practices, promote better biofuels, and support innovation in low greenhouse gas transportation fuel alternatives (i.e. perennial biofuels, electricity, hydrogen, etc...). The greenhouse gas emissions associated with bringing the fuel to market with the growing/extraction all the way through distribution and consumption of the fuel should be considered (i.e. the “life-cycle emissions”) in order to get a true sense of the global warming emissions associated with the fuel.

BE IT RESOLVED: The Bush Lake Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America, on this date of Tuesday, March 18, 2008 urges that transportation fuel consumed in the United States should have lower greenhouse gas emissions than conventional gasoline consumed today. The greenhouse gas emissions associated with the growing/extraction all the way through distribution and consumption of the fuel should be considered (i.e. the “life-cycle emissions”) in order to get a true sense of the global warming emissions associated with the fuel. The process of drilling, transporting, and burning petroleum is generally destructive to the environment with petroleum responsible for about 44 percent of our nation’s carbon dioxide emissions. As the price of oil reaches record highs, there is increasing pressure for procuring oil from tar sands and developing coal-to-liquid fuel technologies. Coal-to-liquid fuel is estimated to release two times more global warming pollution as conventional gasoline, and tar sand oil is extracted through a process that is estimated to release 3 times more global warming pollution than conventional gasoline. The next generation of biofuels also should be grown and developed in a way that supports lower life-cycle green house gas practices, such as the use of low-fertilizer perennial crops and high-efficiency facilities. Supporting low greenhouse gas transportation fuels is an important part of achieving IWLA’s goals of significantly lowering global warming emissions by mid-century, reducing associated air emissions, and moving away from destructive mining practices. IWLA should work to inhibit the development of more destructive oil procurement practices, promote better biofuels, and support innovation in low greenhouse gas transportation fuel alternatives (i.e. perennial biofuels, electricity, hydrogen).

Submitted by the Bush Lake Chapter