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Bush Administration touts biofuel initiative, supports state and local innovators

State legislators considering biofuel market access bill in Olympia

EPA regional administrator L. Michael Bogert visited a biodiesel refinery in Seattle to talk about the benefits of biofuels, praise the initiative of local biofuel innovators and hand EPA awards to Seattle Biodiesel and the Harvesting Clean Energy Network for their pathbreaking efforts to build biofuels markets.

"The energy independence train stopped in Seattle today," said Peter Moulton, Coordinator of the Harvesting Clean Energy Program. "It's great to see the growing bipartisan groundswell – on both sides of the Cascades – for reducing our dependence on oil and securing our energy future. We especially want to thank our partners in the farming and business communities who are investing in a secure energy future."

Moulton said the train has important stops coming up in Olympia and Spokane in the near future.

In Olympia, state legislators are deciding the fate of an energy independence bill that would establish Washington as a leader in the growing biofuels industry – an energy industry that was featured as a national priority by President Bush in his State of the Union address. The biofuel standard bill (HB 2738/SB 6508) has passed both houses of the Legislature, but amendments weakening the bill may prevent it from being effectively implemented.

"If Washington wants to move ahead of the pack in biofuels, we need our legislators to deliver a strong, clear, market-making bill – a bill that says to farmers and entrepreneurs: 'Washington State is open for biofuel business!,'" said Moulton.

The bills enjoy strong bi-partisan support, led by Democratic Governor Christine Gregoire and Republican Representative Janea Holmquist, of Moses Lake. The House version passed last week on a 70-28 vote. Some lobbyists have tried to stop or weaken the bill, or add amendments that would make it difficult to implement. But Moulton said "You heard the President. Does anyone really think our problem is that we are reducing our oil addiction *too quickly*? These bills are small, measured steps with strong safeguards for fuel quality, warranties, and air quality. It's time to get the energy independence show on the road."

In Spokane, farmers, businesses, utilities and rural development specialists will gather for the annual Harvesting Clean Energy Conference, February 27-28. The conference will be keynoted by former CIA Director James Woolsey, who will speak to the importance of domestic biofuels as part of a smart national security strategy.

"This is a cross-Cascades agenda for energy independence," said Moulton. "We can reduce our fossil fuel dependence, strengthen the farm economy, and help clear the air with this one strong policy. It's a great step toward a more secure energy future. And after decades of growing dependence on oil, it's time now to take that first positive step."