



DELAWARE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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**Statement
of
Nicholas A. DiPasquale
Conservation Chair, Delaware Audubon
to the
Blue Ribbon Task Force on Ethanol
HCR No. 70**

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Ethanol Task Force, Delaware Audubon appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the feasibility of developing an Ethanol Plant and Delivery System within the State of Delaware. Unfortunately, given the short notice, we were unable to have a representative appear in person before the Task Force. We also have not had adequate time to prepare a detailed statement, but hope that our preliminary comments will be helpful to you in your deliberations.

Delaware Audubon was incorporated in Delaware as a non-profit organization in 1977. Delaware Audubon is a statewide chapter of the National Audubon Society and is dedicated to developing a better appreciation of our natural environment and working for species and habitat protection and conservation. Delaware Audubon consists of over 1,500 members throughout the state advocating on a wide range of environmental issues and sponsoring programs, field trips and school education. Our focus is on protection of the Delaware Bay and the Coastal Zone. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on an issue of great importance to our organization and its members, renewable energy.

The Delaware Audubon Society recognizes that higher fuel prices and national security concerns have stimulated interest in alternative sources of energy, including renewables. Our organization has long supported energy conservation and the use of renewable sources of energy. It is extremely important, however, that great thought and consideration be given to the social, economic and environmental impacts associated with these alternatives, including renewable sources of energy.

We offer the following comments:

1. Delaware Audubon has serious reservations about any attempt to locate an ethanol production facility within the Coastal Zone.
2. Delaware Audubon prefers cellulosic ethanol processes over corn-based ethanol production for the following reasons:
 - a. More favorable net energy balance.
 - b. Ability to use a wide variety of non-food materials as feedstock, including waste materials such as agricultural plant wastes (corn stover, cereal straws, sugarcane bagasse), plant wastes from industrial processes (sawdust, paper pulp), yard waste, construction debris, municipal solid wastes, as well as non-edible energy crops grown specifically for fuel production such as switchgrass.
 - c. Reduced greenhouse gas emissions compared to corn-based ethanol production.
 - d. Less reliance on the use of productive agricultural lands which should be reserved for food crop production.
 - e. Reduced need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides.
 - f. Ability to generate additional revenue streams from a diverse set of co-products including animal feed, fuels, chemicals, polymers, lubricants, adhesives, fertilizer and power.
 - g. Reduced soil erosion.
[Note: Corn production in the U.S. erodes soil about 12 times faster than the soil can be reformed.]
3. The pursuit of any liquid fuel alternatives for transportation purposes should be coupled with improved vehicle fuel efficiency and the development of smart growth policies that reduce vehicle miles traveled.

According to Lester Brown, President of the Earth Policy Institute, “The grain required to fill a 25-gallon SUV gas tank with ethanol, for instance, could feed one person for a year. If today’s entire U.S. grain harvest were converted into fuel for cars, it would still satisfy less than one-sixth of U.S. demand.”

Clearly, a massive conversion or expansion of agricultural lands to support corn-based ethanol production would have devastating consequences for food production in the U.S. The use of a vast array of cellulosic waste materials or non-edible energy plants would have less significant adverse social, economic and environmental impacts. Diverting cellulose-containing materials from the municipal solid waste stream could help reduce our dependence on landfills.

Delaware Audubon commends the Speaker for convening this important Task Force. Our comments only touch on some of the more significant issues and concerns we have about establishing an ethanol production facility and delivery system in the state. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to continue to participate in the dialogue on this timely and critical issue.