



December 19, 2008

Dear Senator,

As you consider priorities for economic recovery legislation we urge you to oppose any further funding for conventional corn or soy based biofuels. Instead, funding should be directed only toward developing more environmentally protective, next generation bioenergy.

The conventional biofuels industry is fully mature and has long enjoyed generous federal mandates, tax policies, and subsidies. In 2008 alone the biofuels industry received \$10 billion in tax payer money. This federal support has brought serious unintended consequences to the environment, including increased global warming emissions, water pollution, and loss of wildlife habitat.

A broad array of recent science makes it clear that the vast majority of today's biofuels are produced in ways that cause more global warming pollution than conventional fuel and carry serious impacts to habitat, soil, and water quality. In a world that is clearing tens of millions of acres of forest and grassland every year to feed and house a growing population, we cannot afford to make more biofuels from crops that directly or indirectly result in conversion of high carbon, biologically rich ecosystems and degrade already stressed water resources.

The most immediate challenge is to convert the potential for next generation fuels into a reality. Getting the first billion gallons of "advanced" biofuels, including cellulosic biofuels, from more environmentally benign sources and into the marketplace will demonstrate that they are technically and economically feasible, and will begin to move the industry in a more environmentally positive direction.

To support this effort, Congress should provide no additional funding for conventional corn or soy-based biofuels. Federal funding should be directed to developing next generation fuels that do not result in the conversion of native grasslands and forests, loss of sensitive wildlife habitat, degradation of our federal forests, or make global warming worse.

There are many ways for Congress to stimulate the economy and address our dependence on oil at the same time, including investing in cleaner bioenergy. Congress can begin by funding through the stimulus package EISA section 207's biofuel grant program and the Biomass Research and Development Act. Finally, the USDA Biomass Crop Assistance Program should be fully funded as soon as possible and directed to develop biomass feedstocks that demonstrably decrease greenhouse gas emissions, avoid deforestation and the conversion of natural habitat, and improve our soil and water resources relative to current uses for these lands.

As our nation finally begins in earnest to move beyond dirty fuels that exacerbate the climate crisis, we urge you to invest critical funding in the economic recovery legislation in moving towards more environmentally protective bioenergy rather than harmful, conventional biofuels.

Sincerely,

Karen Wayland, Legislative Director
Natural Resources Defense Council