

Bioenergy Council Meeting - Member Updates

David Donovan:

- Xcel is continuing to burn biomass at its [Bayfront](#) and [French Island](#) facilities. About ¼ million tons currently.
- Glad to see Domtar is moving forward

Jamie Derr:

- Oregon has contacted Jamie regarding [the Ditchmass study](#) he was involved in with Pam Porter and others. The state of Oregon is interested in developing guidelines for the harvest of ditchmass.
- Biodiesel development continues to be a project for Jamie. Jamie is interested in [RINs](#) for meeting the [RFS2 requirements](#). Talk of a potential project up in the UP of Michigan for a pennycress oil seed crop for biodiesel production.

Tyson Cook (Clean WI- proxy for Keith Reopelle):

- Tyson has been working on a white paper regarding the issues associated with woody and grass biomass production and harvest from an environmental standpoint. Tyson said they would share that white paper once it is completed.

Susan Butler:

- No [BCAP](#) projects for WI now; \$17 Million in 2012, \$12 Million to new projects- RFP for that coming out this spring. 50,000 acres enrolled (currently nationwide??)
- Application process arduous. Must complete an Environmental Assessment, work through the National office, EA published in Public Register.

Dave Siebert:

- Dave is the new member from the DNR, replacing Lloyd Eagan. Dave is the Division of Energy and Environmental Analysis Administrator. He is also the DNR liaison to the PSC, his team conducts DOT project reviews, and manages the DNR's Environmental Analysis Program.

T.J. Morice:

- TJ noted that propane prices are on the rise which is creating greater demand for pellets and pellet burners. The [Pellet Fuels Institute](#) is drafting [standards for fuel pellets](#).
- Boiler MACT continues to be an issue looming.
- [Heating the Midwest](#) (HTM) is a group of volunteers with a serious interest in growing awareness and usage of biomass thermal fuel for heat in the Midwest. Heating the Midwest is organizing its first annual [Heating the Midwest Conference](#) in Eau Claire on April 25-27, 2012. More information and registration is on the conference's website.

Gary Radloff:

- Gary has been in contact with the EPA regarding the [WBI Biogas Strategic Plan](#). The EPA is embracing anaerobic digestion systems for the mediation of environmental risks.

- To that end, Gary has been working with USDA Rural Development and the Farm Foundation to present a Webinar on March 14 at the Pyle Center. [The Webinar](#) will be live, nationwide and will be a day-long event with 2 separate tracks – *Financing an Anaerobic Digester System* (morning) and *Technical Aspects of Anaerobic Digester Systems* (afternoon).

Andy Fiene:

- Costs of farmland re up. \$13,000/acre now vs. \$4,500/acre only a few years ago.
- Record profits on grain is leading to increased land purchases, driving the cost of farmland up, and therefore what was once deemed “marginal land” is no longer considered marginal.
- Of the land being bought “now”, 80-85% of it is farmers buying it up
- Now, natural gas and fertilizer prices are no longer tied as they were in recent years, and historically. Now even though NG is very low in price, fertilizer prices are very high.
- Fertilizer prices are now tied to grain prices instead.
- More international pressure is applied to commodity pricing (25,000 farms make 80% of the Nations? Food, or is it world’s food?)

Dick Gorder:

- Dick echoed much of Andy’s sentiments, adding that the [important biomass study Premier Coop](#) developed a few years ago is no longer valid in today’s world.
- All is quiet from producers regarding bioenergy interest given grain prices.
- Dick was wondering about a Green Bay Algae project he heard about recently. (Sorry, Dick, I couldn’t find anything on this!)
- Biogas development in small scale will continue to be important for farming in WI
- From the farm Bureau/farmers, weight limit exemptions are important now as they extend to manure hauling trucks. Current issues with weight limits focus on transportation congestion and infrastructure improvements due to heavy loads.
- Farmers are tackling issue with the frac sand debate. They see unproductive farms after post-sand mining occurs”.

Steve Bertjens:

- Steve took the position as NRCS WI State Biologist in September of 2011, but is also the energy program director of the NRCS in WI, so will continue to serve in the role on the Council.
- The [NRCS Energy Program](#) includes Energy Management Plan services and Energy Audits, both required to be conducted by a TSP provider. The NRCS EQIP funding can be used for energy efficiency upgrades if the farm has a management plan.
- The FARM BILL!!
- Update on SW Badger biomass work – 4th yr of switchgrass with 2 producers. One of them is selling the switchgrass for bedding at \$100/ton!
- Drought in TX has caused increase in stover removal in WI and is being shipped south for use in TX.
- The SW Badger research also includes a Miscanthus plot of 4 acres that is of the “Mendel’s variety”. The DTE Cassville plant is going to use the biomass in its boiler and will monitor/test for composition and alkaloids.

Pam Porter:

- Again mentioned the Heating the Midwest Conference she is helping put together.
- Seems to be a general woody biomass is good, ag not so much mentality now.

- Pam is curious about interactions between the state's Phosphorus rules and bioenergy crop production opportunities. P rules allow for an adaptive management process and P trading and how bioenergy crop production and removal can reduce soil test P levels and P runoff to waterways.

Bob Sather:

- [EPA has approved E15 health](#) aspects moving it closer toward commercial blending.
- Big 3 automakers are able to meet the CAFÉ standards and Ricardo engineering/manufacturing is able to produce an engine to meet the 54 mpg requirement with 100% octane fuel with turbo charging (increased compression) while particulate matter decreases.
- [C5/C6 Technologies](#) produces enzymes as catalysts for breakdown of sugars.
- The enzymes increase production of corn ethanol by 10% in wet mills (not dry). Dartmouth is currently partnering on testing the enzymes for use in treating cystic fibrosis.

Amanda Mott:

- State Energy Office projects underway of interest to the Council
 - Bioenergy Feedstock Assessment
 - Gary Radloff/WBI are conducting a part of the assessment focusing on woody feedstocks, municipal and industrial wastestreams for biogas, and some on ag biomass resources as well
 - Baker Tilly is focusing mainly on waste streams from dairy operations for anaerobic digestion projects.
 - It was noted by a member that the trend for woody supply cost curves is actually not a curve at all, but more of a step-wise form in pricing based on market disruptions, not time oriented adjusters.
 - US Forest Service grant work on biomass boilers at Lakewoods Resort, Appleton Coated, and Gunderson-Lutheran.
- [Biofuels and Alternative Fuels Use Report for Wisconsin](#) for 2011 is now available on the SEO website.

Sara Walling:

- Nonforest Biomass Guidelines have received a few spotlight moments:
 - The Nature Conservancy regional team webinar, DATCP and DNR Board presentations, International Biomass Conference in Denver in April (Sara), NRCS webinar for wildlife professionals in May (Scott Hull, Sara and Carol Williams- UW)
 - The DNR is hiring an intern to work on the development of the "Extension-style" publications from the NFB Guidelines document. Scott has also secured DNR funding for printing of the entire document as well! Nice Job, Scott!
- MGA Advanced Transportation Fuels Workgroup that I have been working with is coming to a close. Attached and given out at the meeting are the deliverables – [Recommendations to Midwestern Governors on ways to promote biofuels production in the Midwest](#).
 - Governor Branstad of Iowa is the new elected chair of the MGA and his agenda can be viewed on the [MGA website](#). It includes a 2 pronged approach to increase the region's economic development and address energy issues.
- WI Legislative Symposium on Biogas is on February 15 at 8:30am in the Capitol, rm 412E. Symposium materials and the video coverage from WI Eye can be viewed at the [Legislative Symposium's website](#).

