Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

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California Energy Commission
Dockets Unit
Attn: Docket No. 06-BAP-1
1516 Ninth Street, MS-4
Sacramento, California 95814-5512

17 March, 2006

Dear Commissioner Boyd:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Consultant Report, "Recommendations for a Bioenergy Action Plan for California". I am writing on behalf of the Union of Concerned Scientists and our nearly 30,000 members and activists in California. In particular, I will focus my comments on the recommendations in the report related to transportation.

First, I would like to begin by commending the interagency group for beginning to tackle this crucial issue. Dependence on petroleum poses serious risks for the state's environment, economy, and security. UCS strongly supports California's efforts to reduce petroleum use. And, we support a transition to biomass-based fuels that is mindful of the state's air quality and climate protection goals as a part of this effort. The report identifies a number of opportunities for the state to expand the use of biofuels and for in-state production of biofuels. This report is a good first step in establishing a biofuels strategy for California.

Overall, we support the recommendations by the Working Group to increase use of biofuels in California. Clearly, development of the technology and infrastructure for broad use of renewable fuels by the transportation sector can be important steps to achieve California's goals for petroleum reduction and climate protection. In particular, it is vital that we retain the development of high-blend cellulosic biofuels as our ultimate goal as these are most compatible with these goals and the need to attain healthy air quality throughout the state.

The recommendation for the state to set a renewable fuel standard could be an important step in expanding the use of biofuels. Such a standard must be set in a manner that is consistent with achieving and maintaining clean air throughout the state. Simply doubling the current level of ethanol use in gasoline (E5.7) through an increase to E10 could achieve the 2 billion gallon goal for 2020 recommended by the Working Group, but would do so at a great risk to air quality. Further, this level of ethanol use, assuming a continued reliance on corn as a feedstock, would

achieve minimal reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.[1] Establishing a renewable fuel standard must be done within the full context of California's environmental and energy goals. This includes petroleum reduction, but also climate protection and achieving and maintaining state and federal air quality standards. **We recommend that the Working Group include a goal that states that the RFS should maximize greenhouse gas emission reductions.**

The report recommends that the Bioenergy Interagency Working Group should explore "cross-pollutant" netting. Such an approach is currently employed, to some extent, in the Predictive Model. But, widespread application of cross-pollutant netting should not be employed as it could pose serious risks to public health and the environment. The impact of criteria pollutant emissions on local air quality and smog formation varies spatially throughout the state with some areas being more sensitive to NOx emissions and others to VOC emissions. Therefore, cross-pollutant netting could pose serious risks to air quality. Further, a cross-pollutant netting approach could allow for the concentration of toxic air contaminants in certain areas of the state. And, this spatial heterogeneity would likely result in disproportionate public health impacts on populations throughout the state. In addition to cross-pollutant netting for criteria pollutants, a commenter at the March 9 Public workshop suggested that the state attempt to net criteria and greenhouse gas emissions poses serious challenges, not the least of which are scientific and methodological. **Therefore, we urge the interagency not to considering cross-pollutant netting in setting bioenergy goals for the state.**

In conclusion, while it is crucial that we set ambitious targets for the use of renewable fuels, it is equally important that we do so with an eye toward the future and that we lay out a clear path to achieve that goal. Doing this will require an open and inclusive public process that establishes clear targets not only for petroleum reduction, but also for air quality and climate protection; identifies pathways and benchmarks for achieving those targets; and relies on sound technical analysis and public process. We urge the Interagency Working Group to take all of these considerations into account as it moves forward with this process.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Louise W. Bedsworth

Louise W. Bedsworth, PhD
Senior Vehicles Analyst

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[1] Farrell, A.E., et al.. 2006. Ethanol Can Contribute to Energy and Environmental Goals. *Science* 27(January 27): 506-508.