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Report: Pump Primed for Three-Fold Growth in Clean, Alternative Fuels by 2025 California's Low Carbon Fuel Standard Targets are Achievable and Will Drive Growth

SAN FRANCISCO (February 2, 2015) – California is capable of tripling its use of alternative fuels over the next 10 years, according to a new report by the fuels and energy consulting firm Promotum. The study examined the growth potential for cleaner fuels under California's Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS), a program requiring the oil industry to reduce the carbon intensity of fuels through the production and use of cleaner fuels.

"It's time for the oil industry to send the lobbyists and lawyers home and put their engineers to work," said Dr. Simon Mui, director of NRDC's work on clean vehicles and fuels in California. "Despite their protests, this shows once and for all that industry can meet and exceed the standard by diversifying to cleaner fuels like advanced biofuels, renewable natural gas, and clean electricity. A range of cleaner options is there for the taking."

The report's findings show that the oil industry can meet the LCFS reduction target – a 10 percent decrease in carbon emissions by 2020 – through known, existing fuels and refinery technologies. This includes expanding the use of lower-carbon biodiesel and renewable diesel, biomethane, electricity, and ethanol, as well as improving the carbon-intensity of existing alternative fuels. It also found that existing oil refineries and crude oil production facilities could dramatically cut their carbon footprint by integrating renewable energy, utilizing innovative technologies, and investing in greater energy efficiency.

The study analyzed different scenarios in which the program would encourage cleaner fuels by rewarding producers based on their environmental performance, measured in tons of carbon pollution reduced. The strong, performance-based incentive provided by the LCFS – worth potentially more than a dollar per gallon for ultra-low carbon fuel producers of fuels such as ethanol made from agricultural waste or biodiesel made from recycled oils – will enable the market to expand and diversify.

"A growing body of evidence shows that the LCFS will be a critical tool toward achieving Gov. Brown's new goal of cutting petroleum use in cars and trucks in half by 2030 to help California meet its climate goals," said Dr. Jeremy Martin, Senior Scientist and Fuels Lead at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

"By providing a steadily growing market for clean fuels, the LCFS supports investments that will energize clean transportation for decades to come."

At its February 19 hearing, the California Air Resources Board will consider its staff's proposal for re-adoption of the LCFS together with a series of enhancements to the program. Together with other clean transportation policies, the standard will enable California to continue reducing carbon emissions that contribute to global warming and poor air quality

“The LCFS is working to diversify California’s energy mix. Innovation and investments in clean fuels is growing,” said Tim O’Connor, Director of EDF’s California Climate Initiative. “As part of a suite of smart policies under our clean energy law, AB32, we’re seeing more efficient vehicles, more clean fuel options, and better access to transit. Californians will breathe easier, save money at the pump, and reduce their dependence on oil.”

Over the next six years, 70 million tons of carbon pollution will be avoided and 280 million barrels oil will be saved. That’s equivalent to avoiding the pollution from nearly 15 million cars and trucks in one year.

As California considers more ambitious future targets, this report – along with a growing body of research over the last several years – demonstrates that the state can reduce the carbon intensity of fuels beyond its current 10 percent reduction target by 2020 to 15 percent by 2025. Long-term regulatory stability is key and will help enable the alternative fuels market to steadily grow to supply 20 percent of California’s transportation energy, up three-fold by 2025 compared to when the program began in 2011.

The report was commissioned by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF).

The full report can be found here: <http://www.nrdc.org/transportation/california-low-carbon-fuel-standard.asp>

Martin’s blog can be found here: <http://blog.ucsusa.org/low-carbon-fuels-california-610>

O’Connor’s blog can be found here: <http://blogs.edf.org/californiadream/2015/02/02/a-possible-antidote-to-the-fossil-fuel-economy>

Mui’s blog can be found here: <http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/smui/>

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