

Arkansas Renewable Energy News



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“Let every individual and institution now think and act as a responsible trustee of Earth, seeking choices in ecology, economics and ethics that will provide a sustainable future, eliminate pollution, poverty and violence, awaken the wonder of life and foster peaceful progress in the human adventure.” — John McConnell, founder of International Earth Day

Wal-Mart Launches Web-Based Innovation Tool To Drive Sustainability Progress

Wal-Mart and the Cleantech Group have announced a new web-based tool to identify technologies that will help Wal-Mart move toward its environmental sustainability goals.

The Cleantech Accelerator Project will connect Wal-Mart with the cleantech industry and accelerate the deployment of new technologies that reduce negative ecological impacts while increasing performance and lowering costs.

Wal-Mart and the Cleantech

Group established their partnership in October 2007. Since then, the two companies have worked together to identify the initial areas of opportunity for submissions.

Through the Cleantech Accelerator Project, Wal-Mart is seeking innovative ideas in the following areas:

- alternative battery technology for forklifts;
- wind harvesting;
- closed-loop water processing;

- sustainable building materials;
- organic waste;
- oil-based waste; and
- household hazardous waste

The Cleantech Group will review and evaluate submissions to determine which ideas might qualify for testing and adoption. For each issue area, the Cleantech Group will provide Wal-Mart with two to four solutions that can be integrated into its business within the next 24 months.

Natural Gas and Hybrid Vehicles Shine in Annual Ranking of Green Vehicles

With the auto world focused on fuel efficiency in the face of \$100-per-barrel oil, new fuel economy requirements, and concern about climate change, the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) has named the year's "greenest" and "meanest" vehicles, along with environmental



Honda's natural gas-powered Civic GX is 2008's greenest vehicle. Photo credit: Honda..

scorings of all model year 2008 cars and passenger trucks.

The announcement marks the eleventh year ACEEE has published its widely-respected rankings. The vehicle scores are part of ACEEE's Green Book® Online, ACEEE's environmental guide to cars and trucks, available at www.greencars.org

Earning the "greenest vehicle" title for the fifth consecutive year is Honda's natural gas-powered Civic GX.

Hybrid-electric vehicles also continue to perform well in ACEEE's annual ranking, despite being disproportio-

tionately affected by changes to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's fuel economy calculations. The Toyota Prius and Honda Civic Hybrid claim spots two and three, while the highly-anticipated Smart Fortwo Convertible and the Toyota Yaris complete the top five, showcasing the environmental benefits of smaller passenger vehicles.

Others on the "Greenest" list include conventional and hybrid-electric vehicles from Honda, Toyota, Mini, and Ford. The 2008 Ford Focus comfortably takes the ninth spot in ACEEE's annual ranking, reversing last year's shutout of domestic manufacturers.



The new DeWitt facility will create an important market for Arkansas soybean growers. Photo credit: National Biodiesel Board.

“All the biofuels we use now cause habitat destruction, either directly or indirectly. Global agriculture is already producing food for 6 billion people. Producing food-based biofuel, too, will require that still more land be converted to agriculture.”— scientist Joe Fargione

DeWitt Biodiesel Plant Opens

Arkansas SoyEnergy Group LLC has officially opened its biodiesel facility in DeWitt. The facility is the only such facility in Arkansas with an on-site crusher, according to a report on ArkansasBusiness.com.

The facility began operating in mid-2007. Fuel production is expected to begin in April.

The plant currently can produce 3.5 million gallons of bio-

diesel with the ability to expand up to 10 million gallons.

Most of the soybeans used in the plant will come from local growers. That will not only create a local market for farmers, but also reduce transportation costs. And, the soybean crushing process has another benefit: it creates soybean meal byproduct, which can be used for animal feed.

“Arkansas SoyEnergy’s new biodiesel facility will take great strides toward producing renewable fuels more efficiently, while creating new markets for our farmers and bringing more jobs to the region,” said U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln, a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, during the plant’s opening on Tuesday, February 19.

Study: Converting Farmland for Biofuel Crops Impacts Climate Change

A new study by The Nature Conservancy and the University of Minnesota finds that converting land for biofuel crops results in major carbon emissions, actually worsening the problem of climate change instead of mitigating it.

“This research examines the conversion of land for biofuels and asks the question ‘Is it worth it?’ Does the carbon you lose by converting forests, grasslands, and peatlands outweigh the carbon you ‘save’ by using biofuels instead of fossil fuels? And surprisingly, the answer is no,” said lead author Joe Fargione, a scientist for The Nature Conservancy. “These natural areas store a lot of carbon, so converting them to croplands results in tons of carbon emitted into the atmosphere.”

Fargione continued, “We analyzed all the benefits of using biofuels as alternatives to oil, but we found that the benefits fall far short of the carbon losses. It’s what we call ‘the carbon debt.’ If you’re trying to mitigate climate change, it simply does not make sense to convert land for biofuels production.”

According to research, the conversion of peatlands for

palm oil plantations in Indonesia resulted in the greatest carbon losses, or ‘debt,’ followed by the production of soy in the Amazon.

These findings coincide with observations that increased demand for ethanol corn crops in the U.S. is likely contributing to conversion of the Brazilian Amazon and Cerrado (tropical savanna). American farmers traditionally rotated corn crops with soybeans, but now, they are planting corn every year to meet the ethanol demand.

Instead, Brazilian farmers are planting more of the world’s soybeans – and they’re deforesting the Amazon to do it.

Fargione and co-authors Jason Hill, David Tilman, Stephen Polasky, and Peter Hawthorne from the University of Minnesota also found significant carbon debt in the conversion of grasslands in the U.S. and rainforests in Indonesia.

“In finding solutions to climate change, we must ensure that the cure is not worse than the disease,” noted Jimmie Powell, who leads the energy team at The Nature Conservancy. “We cannot afford to ignore the consequences of converting land for bio-

fuels. Doing so means we might unintentionally promote fuel alternatives that are worse than fossil fuels they are designed to replace. These findings should be incorporated into carbon emissions policy going forward.”

Researchers did note that some biofuels do not contribute to climate change because they do not require the conversion of native habitat.

These include waste from agriculture and forest lands and native grasses and woody biomass grown on marginal lands unsuitable for crop production.

The researchers urge that all fuels be fully evaluated for their impacts on climate change, including impacts on habitat conversion.



Scientist and study co-author Joe Fargione. Photo credit: The Nature Conservancy.

Award Winning Documentary on Biofuels to Hit the Road

A full-length documentary on biofuels, titled *Fields of Fuel*, premiered at this year's Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, and boasted sold-out audiences for all its screenings.

Fields of Fuel chronicles the personal journey of Josh Tickell, a man who is showing Americans how to take back their country one gas tank at a time. As one of the nation's leading experts on sustainable biofuels, Tickell's first book, *From the Fryer to the Fuel Tank – The Complete Guide to Using Vegetable Oil as an Alternative Fuel*, sparked a biodiesel revolution in the 1990s.

Tickell's two-year "Veggie Van" tour around the country to promote biodegradable biodiesel garnered international media attention and jump-started this now booming industry.

An energy revolution is growing and Tickell takes celebrities, scientists and world energy experts on an alternative power trip through the polluted bayous of Louisiana, the misguided

corporations of Detroit, the corrupt practices of Washington and reveals the real price we are paying for a barrel of oil.

As the film brings to light shocking information about the reality of our current energy crisis, Tickell presents a simple and immediately applicable strategy that uses existing infrastructures to secure America's energy independence and boosts the economy.

Fields of Fuel, provides inspiring examples of how other countries are making the shift away from black gold including Sweden's national commitment to become fossil fuel free by the year 2020 and a tax credit program for biodiesel use in Germany (where Rudolf Diesel first invented the Diesel engine to run on peanut oil over 100 years ago).

The film also addresses the controversy surrounding biofuels that are made from food crops and presents solutions for making fuel from non-agricultural sources such as algae.

Fields of Fuel profiles some unlikely green heroes like New York City Council Member

James Gennaro, who is working with local metro transit authorities and companies to green New York City, as well as innovative companies like *Nova Biofuels* and *Solazyme* that are leading the renewable energy revolution and the search for a "green barrel of oil."

In the spring of 2008 Tickell and his team plan to take *Fields of Fuel* on the road as part of a national community outreach education campaign to transform America's cities and towns to green energy and make energy independence a priority issue in the Presidential election. Armed with an arsenal of biofuel powered vehicles, his "Community Action Campaign" will hit 50 cities with a cadre of characters and notables from the film.

And with invitations to present at the Democratic National Convention and prestigious Republican events, *Fields of Fuel* might just be what America needs to pull the needle of oil addiction from its throbbing transportation vein - right before the next President takes office.

For more information, visit www.fieldsoffuel.com



The Farm Energy Search Tool, developed by the National Center for Appropriate Technology with funding from USDA's Risk Management Agency, makes it easy to find energy-related equipment, funding, and technical assistance in Arkansas and other states. In addition to its search capabilities, the tool also includes a self-listing feature that allows energy-related businesses, agencies, and non-profit organizations serving agriculture to submit or update listings. Check it out at <http://attra.ncat.org/farmenergy/farmenergymain.php>.

Funding Opportunities Wind Powering America



The U.S. Department of Energy has issued a request for proposals for Wind Powering America State Outreach. The solicitation is for projects that focus on state and community level outreach, specific agriculture

outreach, formation of wind working groups (WWG), and other initiatives to stimulate wind and rural economic development.

The Program expects to award up to 22 grants supporting targeted states, including Arkansas, that have adequate wind resources, yet are strug-

gling with little installed capacity, inadequate wind development policies, and developing WWG's and advocacy groups.

Responses are due April 3, 2008.

For more info, e-mail pat.liles@go.doe.gov or visit

<https://e-center.doe.gov/iips/faopor.nsf/UNID/E8A5CD7A5784E92985257402007276FD?OpenDocument>.

Mark Your Calendars

Here's a sample of the many upcoming events focusing on energy issues. For a more complete list, see our [Events Calendar](#).

Biofuels Conference

March 27, 2008

Monticello, AR

This event will focus on the future development of biofuels in Arkansas. Panelists for the conference include representatives from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, FutureFuel Chemical Co., Range Fuels, the Price Companies and UAM, among others. The event will be held at the Fine Arts Center Auditorium on the UAM campus in Monticello.

Alternative and Hybrid Vehicle Conference

March 31-April 1, 2008

Dearborn, MI

Oil prices combined with environmental concerns have pushed the need for automakers to make use of alternative fuels a reality. President Bush's "20 in 10" initiative has set the bar for automakers to reduce gas usage by 20% in the next ten years. Join the experts in Dearborn, MI, to learn from leading industry experts about how the auto industry and government are making this initiative a reality.

5th Annual Marketing Green Power Conference

April 16-17, 2008

Denver, CO

Marketing is key to the success of any green program. EUCI's 5th Annual Marketing Green Power conference is designed to offer utilities the latest information on messaging, strategic marketing approaches, product development, and customer insight to shorten the learning curve in creating and fostering effective, profitable green programs.

Tip of the Month: Upgrade to ENERGY STAR Office Equipment

These days, office equipment can be found in most homes, in addition to businesses, schools, and many other facilities. The amount of energy used by this equipment is considerable, which means there also is tremendous potential to conserve.

When it's time to upgrade your office equipment, select models that are ENERGY STAR certified. You'll be glad you did.

Office equipment — from computers and monitors to imaging equipment, such as printers and copiers — that has earned the ENERGY STAR rating helps eliminate wasted energy through special energy-efficient designs. It uses less energy to perform regular tasks, and when not in use, automatically enters a low-power mode.

2007 brought new ENERGY

STAR specifications for office and imaging equipment. This means it will be more difficult for computers, copiers, fax machines, mailing machines, multifunction devices (MFDs), printers, and scanners to earn the ENERGY STAR.

The new ENERGY STAR specifications promise significant energy savings. In addition to reducing power use for the products themselves, the new specifications also set additional requirements for accessories. If an imaging product is sold with an external power adapter, cordless handset, or digital front-end, the accessories must meet current ENERGY STAR External Power Supply (EPS), Telephony, or Computer specifications. These requirements ensure that the ENERGY STAR represents only the market's most energy-

efficient products.

ENERGY STAR qualified office and imaging products use as much as 60% less electricity than standard equipment. And using less energy keeps utility costs down. Over the next five years, these products will save Americans more than 5 billion dollars.

Remember, too, that saving energy prevents pollution. These new specs will reduce the greenhouse gas emissions equal to about 7 million cars!

Ready to buy? Find out which products are ENERGY STAR certified before you go shopping.

www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=find_a_product

(Source: EnergyStar.gov)

This newsletter is a bi-monthly feature of the Arkansas Renewable Energy website, which features solar, wind, biomass, and other renewable energy sources.

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arkansasrenewableenergy.org

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