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As EPA comment period closes on E15 waiver, American Coalition for Ethanol files official comments plus signatures of nearly 7,000 grassroots ethanol supporters

Sioux Falls, SD (July 20, 2009) – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s public comment period on the E15 waiver request closes today, marking the EPA’s decision-making period on whether to allow the base blend of ethanol and gasoline to be increased from 10 to 15 percent. EPA has until December 1 to rule on the waiver request filed on March 6 by a coalition of ethanol industry groups, corn ethanol producers, and cellulosic ethanol companies.

The American Coalition for Ethanol (ACE), the nation’s largest ethanol advocacy association, has filed official comments with EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson on behalf of its nearly 1500 grassroots members nationwide. ACE’s full comments can be read online at this link: http://www.ethanol.org/pdf/contentmgmt/ACE_Comments_to_EPA_on_E15_waiver_717.pdf.

In addition, ACE sent to the EPA the names of the nearly 7,000 people who signed the organization’s petition in support of the approval of E15. Those who signed the E15 petition represent all 50 states, demonstrating the widespread support for ethanol among the American people. The full list of names can be viewed here: http://www.ethanol.org/pdf/contentmgmt/E15_petition_signatures.pdf

“Americans want to use more ethanol, and the number of people who have signed this petition in support of E15 demonstrates widespread grassroots support for ethanol,” said Brian Jennings, Executive Vice President of ACE. “It is significant that the people listed here come from all 50 states, which shows that ethanol is not just a Midwestern issue. People all across the country recognize that Big Oil’s monopoly at the pump must be broken and that more ethanol represents meaningful consumer choice.”

Since the 1970s, the federal government has limited the ethanol content per gallon of gasoline to just 10 percent, but the ethanol industry waiver request asks the EPA to approve the use of up to 15 percent ethanol per gallon. If approved, this E15 allowance would not constitute an E15 mandate – just the ability to blend 5 percent more ethanol per gallon where desired.

“The science behind using more than E10 in standard vehicles is overwhelmingly positive, and the issue has been studied by many independent sources. This waiver request has been politicized by ethanol’s opponents, but the facts remain – there is nothing to show that using E15 would increase auto emissions or harm the vehicle’s emissions control system, the factors EPA is obligated to consider. The science is sound, and EPA must give its approval for this modest increase in the ethanol blend,” Jennings added.

To read the science behind the waiver or the waiver request itself, visit ACE’s E15 Action Center at this link: <http://www.ethanol.org/magazine/index.php?id=112&parentid=110>.

The issue of mid-level blends like E15 is of critical importance to the future of cellulosic ethanol as well. With today’s ethanol producers quickly running in to the E10 blend wall – the point at which all ethanol that can contain 10 percent ethanol will contain 10 percent ethanol – tomorrow’s ethanol producers may not have a market unless this unnecessary wall is removed. If there’s uncertainty about the market for cellulosic ethanol, there will be uncertainty about the investment in the R&D necessary to bring it to commercialization.

In addition, it is also clear that an allowance to go beyond E10 is necessary for the Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS) biofuels use targets to be met. The RFS calls for 36 billion gallons of renewable fuels to be used annually by 2022, which represents much more than 10 percent of our nation’s total annual transportation fuel consumption. The existing E10 and E85 markets are not large enough to accommodate the amounts of biofuels prescribed by the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, so an increase in the E10 blend will be necessary for the law to be fulfilled.

The approval of a mid-level blend like E15 would generate much-needed economic activity. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the production of 1 billion gallons of ethanol means between 10,000 and 20,000 “green collar” jobs are created. Using this data, the EPA’s approval of E15 or E20 can create between 70,000 and 280,000 jobs. The U.S. ethanol industry currently supports 325,000 good jobs, many in America’s rural communities.

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The American Coalition for Ethanol (ACE) is the grassroots voice of the U.S. ethanol industry, a national trade association for the ethanol industry with 1500 members nationwide, including farmers, ethanol producers, commodity organizations, businesses supplying goods and services to the ethanol industry, rural electric cooperatives, and individuals supportive of increased production and use of ethanol. For more information about ethanol or ACE, visit www.ethanol.org or call (605) 334-3381.