BioEnergy Producers Association
Clean Technology for Renewable Energy

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Conversion Technology Conference
Los Angeles County Department of Public Works
July 29, 2016

The BioEnergy Producers Association has led four legislative campaigns over the past decade to correct a scientifically inaccurate definition of gasification in statute and to address other statutory and regulatory provisions that have undermined the confidence of investors and conversion technology providers to do business in California. All of these legislative proposals would have preserved the integrity of existing recycling programs while expanding the integrated waste management toolbox to include clean technologies capable of converting landfill-bound materials to beneficial use.

After the Senate Environmental Quality Committee gutted our last attempt at a comprehensive package of legislation in 2010, which at that point was ready for final passage by the Senate and signature by the Governor, the thermal conversion technology industry essentially turned its back on the state.

Since that time, what little legislation that has come out of Sacramento has made it even more difficult to develop thermal projects that will address our overwhelming volume of municipal solid waste.

During the past five years, waste disposal in California has increased from 30.4 million to 33.2 million tons per year. Theoretically, this has enough energy value to produce more than 1.6 billion gallons of biofuels per year.

Despite the administration's virtually exclusive focus on recycling, anaerobic digestion and composting, little, if any, progress has been made in reducing our dependence upon landfills. Per resident disposal has been essentially flat, and in 2015 the state's recycling rate dropped below 50%.

In announcing these statistics, Scott Smithline of CalRecycle said, ""The state's economic resurgence is impressive, but we have to find ways around the barriers to consistent, sustainable reductions in disposal." We believe that conversion technologies should be a key element in this effort.

There are major initiatives evolving in Sacramento, perhaps a perfect storm of initiatives, which lead us to believe that the time is approaching for our governor and legislature to recognize the potential of these 21st century technologies and take action.

AB 341 has mandated the 75% recycling of organics by 2020, 100% by 2025.

AB 350 has mandated that 50% of our power be renewable by 2030. For Southern California Gas alone, that would require 50 billion cubic feet of renewable natural gas per year. Conversion technologies can help to meet that need by producing biomethane from solid waste residuals.

We now have a Low Carbon Fuel Standard in place, with no technologies available in California that can produce qualifying gasoline. Solid waste conversion technologies exist that can produce drop-in gasoline with a carbon intensity that meets this standard.

And the Governor remains committed to his goal of reducing California's consumption of petroleum Transportation Fuels by 50% by 2030.

To achieve 75% diversion of organics from landfills by 2020 will require the state to reduce by 10 million tons the amount of waste being landfilled today.

And this, when green waste, when used as daily cover in landfills, will no longer qualify as diversion.

It will also require regulatory changes that allow renewable natural gas to be injected in California's pipelines. You can inject waste-derived renewable natural gas in pipelines anywhere else in the country and sell it into California, but current regulations prevent you from producing that same RNG and injecting it into a pipeline here within this state.

Safe 21st century thermal technologies will be an essential element of any effort to achieve these goals, to interdict solid waste before it is placed in landfills and to produce fuels, chemicals and other products, most specifically biomethane for renewable power production. We believe their time has come and that the next session of our legislature may be the time to try again.

It has been estimated that energy recovery will ultimately generate 70% of the revenue attributable to next-generation waste management technologies in North America.

The industry has embarked on a paradigm shift. By the end of this decade, the ability to recycle MSW's carbon content at its molecular level will be seen as an asset, a strategic resource in a circular economy.

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