

BIOMASS

M A G A Z I N E

Introducing the RFS Power Coalition

Biomass Power Association has teamed up with the Energy Recovery Council and the American Biogas Council to create the visibility needed to convince the EPA to activate the eRIN program this year.

By Bob Cleaves | March 07, 2019

Members of the Biomass Power Association and everyone else who follows our activities are well aware that our top priority for 2019 is to get the so-called electric RIN or “eRIN” program off the ground so that our members can participate in the Renewable Fuel Standard.

A quick lesson for those who are new to the eRIN program—when Congress passed an updated version of the RFS in 2007, known as RFS2, it included electricity from qualifying renewable fuels as part of the program. Just like corn ethanol displaces the use of gasoline in internal combustion engine vehicles, electricity made by biomass fuels displaces the need for coal or natural gas to power electric vehicles.

Fast-forward 12 years, and the U.S. EPA still hasn’t administered the program. That means that biomass power producers, as well as our friends in the biogas and waste-to-energy industries, can’t generate valuable credits for the renewable power they produce. Biomass power producers who are challenged with low power prices could use the boost from eRIN revenue to keep plants running and mitigate the risk of forest fires. Waste-to-energy facilities, many of which are owned by local governments, could use eRINs to provide better waste management options at a lower cost to taxpayers. The biogas industry would use eRINs to build new infrastructure to recycle food waste, recycle nutrients, manage manure on farms and lower the cost of wastewater treatment around the country.

Enter the RFS Power Coalition. Biomass Power Association has teamed up with the Energy Recovery Council and the American Biogas Council to create the visibility needed to convince the EPA to activate the eRIN program this year. We have agreed on a three-prong strategy, which is as follows.

- Raise awareness. The RFS Power Coalition’s new website, www.rfspower.com, summarizes the problem and its importance to our industries. You can find many letters that biomass power producers and other qualifying electricity producers have sent to the EPA. You can also find correspondence between the EPA and members of Congress who support eRINs, including the entire Maine and New Hampshire delegations, as well

as bipartisan California House members. This website will be a handy tool for educating anyone who wishes to learn about eRINs.

- Build political momentum. We continue to build on the considerable support we have already received from members of Congress. Next, we'll develop a sign-on letter to the EPA from Congress, and we are working with congressional champions on legislation that requires the EPA to act.

- Challenge the EPA. The way we read the law, the EPA is in violation of a congressional mandate to implement the eRIN program. We recently filed a petition in D.C. Circuit Court challenging the EPA on its 2019 renewable volume obligation (a yearly setting of fuel targets for the following year), which did not include electricity.

At the International Biomass Conference and Expo in Savannah, Georgia, you can learn much more from the heads of the RFS Power Coalition and the companies most impacted by EPA's inaction on eRINs during the opening general session and the RFS track panel on Tues., March 19. You can also contact me or my colleague, Carrie Annand, any time to discuss whether your company is missing out on valuable eRIN credits because the EPA won't act.

Author: Bob Cleaves
President, Biomass Power Association
bob@usabiomass.org
www.usabiomass.org