



## **EPA chief: No movement on blend wall until end of summer**

**Compiled by Staff**

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Washington, March 5. Despite calls from industry officials for more aggressive testing and quick action on a proposal to increase ethanol blend limits in gasoline, an EPA decision on whether to raise the E10 blend level to E15 should not be expected before the end of the summer. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson told a Senate appropriations subcommittee that the Department of Energy is scheduled to finish testing on how the fuel will affect automobile engines by April or May, and that EPA will base its blend level decision on those results.

"We expect that once we get that additional data and make it publicly available, EPA will be in a position to move toward a final decision on a waiver on a late summer time frame," Jackson said. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack told reporters on Capitol Hill that all signals suggest the EPA will approve E15. "I am optimistic on E15 because there has been some indication from the Department of Energy that in their tests of newer-model vehicles with E15, it does not create any problems," he said. "I think that's a good sign."

In a recent "state of the industry" address to the annual Renewable Fuels Association meeting, RFA president and CEO Bob Dinneen said EPA should "tear down the blend wall" that industry officials say is driving ethanol to a saturation point in the U.S. transportation fuel market. Dinneen wants the government to accelerate its testing of E15 and E20 blends.

In a letter late last year to Growth Energy, a coalition of U.S. ethanol manufacturers that requested the increase from a 10-percent blend to a 15-percent blend, EPA Assistant Administrator Gina McCarthy said the agency knows that "ethanol will need to be blended into gasoline at levels greater than the current 10 percent" in order to meet a 36-billion gallon Renewable Fuels Standard by 2022.

McCarthy also said that, in anticipation of possible higher blend levels, the agency would take immediate steps to address fuel pump labeling issues to ensure that consumers utilize the proper gasoline for their vehicles and equipment. The Nov. 30 letter was the agency's first significant recognition of the national importance to increase the use of renewable fuels, particularly through an increase in blend limits. An increase in the blend wall also got some rhetorical support from the Obama administration when the White House unveiled last month a series of steps aimed at boosting U.S. biofuel production.

Industry officials say breaking the current 10 percent ceiling will help the industry grow and build capacity to produce next-generation biofuels, all while providing environmental, economic and energy security benefits.

EPA officials said they want all of the “necessary science” to make the right decision, meaning they want to wait for the DOE to finish testing more than dozen vehicle models to make sure their fuel, engine and emissions control systems can accommodate higher ethanol blends. A decision cannot come quickly enough for Dinneen, who said EPA’s delay from last fall to later this year in raising the blend wall threatened to paralyze the ethanol industry. He also complained that EPA’s apparent decision to limit the scope of its waiver research to model year vehicles of 2001 and newer is unnecessarily limiting, stating that data has shown no ill-effects of increased ethanol use in any vehicle, regardless of model year.

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