Developing State Policies Supportive of Bioenergy Development

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Submitted by
Kathryn Baskin
Southern States Energy Board
6325 Amherst Court
Norcross, Georgia 30092

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Abstract

Working within the context of the Southern States Biobased Alliance (SSBA) and with officials in each state, the Southern States Energy Board (SSEB) is identifying bioenergy-related policies and programs within each state to determine their impact on the development, deployment or use of bioenergy. In addition, SSEB will determine which policies have impacted industry's efforts to develop, deploy or use biobased technologies or products. As a result, SSEB will work with the Southern States Biobased Alliance to determine how policy changes might address any negative impacts or enhance positive impacts.

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Introduction

The federal mission for President Clinton's Executive Order on Developing and Promoting Bio based Products and Bioenergy reads: "To accelerate the creation and early adoption of technologies needed to make biobased products and bioenergy cost-competitive in national and international markets while promoting the efficient use of our renewable natural resources and protecting the environment." Goals in the draft biobased strategic plan address the need to remove barriers and provide incentives, and include suggested policy formulations to "...facilitate enactment of legislation at state levels synergistic with the national goals for biobased products and bioenergy."

This project addresses the need to develop state policies that are supportive of the development, deployment, and use of biobased technologies and products.

Over its lifetime, the Regional Biomass Energy Program has developed close linkages with state energy offices and other state agencies. State officials are key bioenergy stakeholders; especially since elected officials set policies within their states, have power over programs, and control appropriations that can positively or negatively impact the development, deployment, and use of bioenergy. However, career state officials are influential too as they carry out state programs and policies, and provide continuity across changing administrations. State governments are also important, as the federal government cannot, by itself, attain the potential of the region without the cooperation and assistance of the states. It is therefore essential for state officials to understand the benefits of bioenergy and the impact state policies have on bioenergy, and that these policies be supportive.

The Southern States Energy Board is an interstate compact that includes 16 southeastern states and Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. One of the Southern States Energy Board's goals over its 40-year life is to "...develop, promote, and recommend policies and programs on energy, environment, and economics that encourage sustainable development." One way that the Southern States Energy Board accomplishes this goal is to establish task forces comprised of members from its states, the private sector, non-profits, and others. The Southern States Energy Board, which is also the host for the Southeastern Regional Biomass Energy Program, is currently in the progress of setting up a biobased task force, which has been named the Southern States Bio-Based Alliance.

Initially, activities of the Southern States Bio-Based Alliance will be focused on creating awareness, and providing information and education to get its members up to speed and to the same level of knowledge. Once the members of the Southern States Bio-Based Alliance have an appropriate appreciation for bio-based products and bioenergy, one of the first activities of the group will be to review and, if necessary, make recommendations for modifying or adding to their existing policies to make them supportive of bioenergy development, deployment, and use. The Southern States Bio-Based Alliance will also provide a forum for discussing and developing additional bioenergy-related policies when the need arises in the future.

Although not targeted at local government officials, this activity will also impact policies at the local level since local officials frequently follow the lead of their state government in setting local policy.

Goal

The goal of this project is to have state policies within the SSEB region (and nation) that, to the extent possible, positively impact the development, deployment, or use of bioenergy and are consistent among states.

Statement of work

Working within the context of the Southern States Bio-Based Alliance and with officials in each state, a staff member and/or contractor will identify bioenergy-related policies and programs within each state and determine their impact (in any way) on the development, deployment, or use of bioenergy. The staff member and/or contractor will be asked to determine as quantitatively as possible how this impact occurs, and how the legislation originally came to be promulgated.

Additionally and simultaneously, the staff member and/or contractor will be interviewing bio-based industry officials to determine what policies (or lack of policies) have impacted their efforts to develop, deploy, or use biobased technologies or products. The staff member and/or contractor will also try to determine the nature of these impacts and how policy changes might address any negative impacts or increase positive impacts.

These policies may involve the following aspects or other aspects:

- Financial and other incentives for technology development, testing, demonstration, deployment, and/or use;
- Permitting and licensing processes related to construction of new facilities, modification of existing facilities, and/or use of new products;
- Regulations pertaining to land use and siting (e.g., zoning, height restrictions) of bioenergy facilities; or running utilities to bioenergy facilities;
- Environmental regulations including air and water quality protection related to bioenergy facilities or the production of biomass crops; wildlife management, development of new agricultural and forestry crops, testing new technologies;
- Resources for relevant state agencies and programs including staffing qualifications and needs;
- Policies pertaining to state procurement, specification, bidding, and purchasing requirements to design, finance, and/or build new or modify existing state facilities;
- Policies pertaining to state procurement, specification, bidding, purchasing, and/or use requirements for biomass fuels or bio-based products;
- State educational policies;
- Technical assistance;
- Solid waste management and recycling programs;
- Economic development and industry recruitment;

- Agricultural and forestry production;
- Transportation of biomass feedstocks and bio-based products;
- Taxes including investment, corporate, road use, etc.
- Project financing;
- Utility deregulation including power sales to others, stranded costs, electricity pricing; renewable portfolio standards, and wheeling policies;
- Health and safety;
- Purchase of alternative fuel vehicles and installation of refueling stations.

Once the policies are identified and analyzed for impact, SSEB will host a series of meetings of the Alliance to:

- Share the findings with other states using an interactive meeting forum
- For policies that provide negative impacts, the state representatives will be asked to determine how to *change* their state policies to provide positive impacts based on discussions of successes in other states.
- Also based on successes in other states and the ensuing discussion, the state representatives will determine if they need to *add new* policies in their states. The group will be asked to draft model legislation to fulfill these needs that can be taken back and implemented within their respective states.

Due to the wide range of policies and to keep each meeting manageable, policies that are more closely allied will be lumped together for discussion and meeting purposes. This approach will also make it easier to get officials from the appropriate state agencies to attend the meetings, since they will know that a particular meeting will deal with the topics that are relevant to them.

In addition to attaining the project goal, this project approach will facilitate information sharing and education on state policies and their ramifications, create peer pressure, and ultimately provide more uniform regulations across the region that are supportive of bioenergy development, deployment, and use.

Experimental

Due to the nature of the project, no experimental methods, materials or equipment are necessary.

Results and Discussion

The Southern States Energy Board compiles an annual energy and environment digest that is a compendium of significant legislation passed by its member states. SSEB has conducted this research for well over 20 years. At the time of this quarterly report, most state legislatures in the southern states were still in session. For the purposes of this project, key legislation related to bioenergy and the impact will be discussed in the final report. Notably, several southern states have long-standing policies and programs that support the use of bioenergy. Therefore, some states have a more developed bioenergy economy than others. However, all states in the southern region have significant biomass resources. SSEB will report these findings in the final report.

Conclusion

Beyond the potential economic development benefits, states gain the opportunity to strengthen and integrate the work of energy, agriculture, forestry, environmental and other state agencies. Where issues are the same among several states, strategies can be developed to address these issues without regard to state borders. Examples include the development of similar legislative actions, working with the private sector with multi-state locations, and multi-state training and outreach to economize resources.

References

No references were used for this report.