



March 19, 2007

The Honorable John Dingell
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Integrated Waste Services Association (IWSA), I appreciate the opportunity to provide the Committee on Energy and Commerce with comments on forthcoming climate change legislation from the perspective of the companies and local governments engaged in the nation's waste-to-energy industry. As I will further explain in these comments, waste-to-energy is an important tool in reducing greenhouse gas emissions namely, carbon dioxide and methane, on a nationwide basis. IWSA firmly believes that any future legislation should recognize and capitalize on the net greenhouse gas reductions provided by waste-to-energy technology in addressing this complex and important issue.

IWSA is the national trade association representing the nation's waste-to-energy industry and municipalities. Waste-to-energy facilities produce clean, renewable energy through the combustion of municipal solid waste in specially designed power plants equipped with the most modern pollution control equipment to clean emissions. Trash volume is reduced by 90% and the remaining residue is safely reused or disposed in landfills. There are 88 waste-to-energy plants operating in 26 states managing about 13 percent of America's trash, or about 95,000 tons each day. Waste-to-energy generates about 2,700 megawatts of electricity to meet the power needs of nearly 2.3 million homes while serving the trash disposal needs of more than 36 million people. The \$10 billion waste-to-energy industry employs more than 6,000 American workers with annual wages in excess of \$400 million.

Any climate legislation considered by Congress should address all greenhouse gases and recognize net emissions and reductions of greenhouse gases on a life cycle basis. IWSA believes Congress should exempt waste-to-energy facilities from any mandatory greenhouse gas reduction regime (such as cap-and-trade) given the waste to energy industry's significant contribution in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Waste-to-energy facilities should also be given credit for the net avoided releases of greenhouse gases which can be used to offset emissions from regulated entities.

Waste-to-Energy reduces greenhouse gas emissions

Waste-to-energy achieves the reduction of greenhouse gas emission through three separate mechanisms: 1) by generating electrical power or steam, waste-to-energy avoids carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from fossil fuel based electrical generation, 2) the waste-to-energy combustion

process effectively avoids all potential methane emissions from landfills thereby avoiding any potential release of methane in the future and 3) the recovery of ferrous and nonferrous metals from MSW by waste-to-energy is more energy efficient than production from raw materials – thereby avoiding CO₂ from fossil fuel combustion .

The three cited mechanisms provide a true accounting of the greenhouse gas emission reduction potential of waste-to-energy. A lifecycle analysis, such as the Municipal Solid Waste Decision Support Tool (MSW-DST) developed under an EPA contract, is the most accurate method for understanding and quantifying the complete accounting of any MSW management option. A life cycle approach should be used to allow decision makers to weigh all greenhouse gas impacts associated with various activities rather than targeting, limiting or reducing greenhouse gas emissions on a source by source basis.

IWSA advocates use of the MSW-DST because this peer-reviewed tool, available through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and its contractor RTI International, enables the user to directly compare the energy and environmental consequences of various management options for a specific or general situation. Independent papers authored by EPA (such as “*Moving From Solid Waste Disposal to Management in the United States,*” Thorneloe (EPA) and Weitz (RTI) October, 2005; and “*Application of the U.S. Decision Support Tool for Materials and Waste Management,*” Thorneloe (EPA), Weitz (RTI), Jambeck (UNH), 2006) utilized the DST to study municipal solid waste management options. These studies used a life-cycle analysis to determine the environmental and energy impacts for various combinations of recycling, land-filling, and waste-to-energy. The comprehensive analysis examines collection and transportation, material recovery facilities, transfer stations, composting, remanufacturing, landfills, and combustion. The results of the studies show that waste-to-energy yielded the best results—maximum energy with the least environmental impact (emissions of greenhouse gas, nitrogen oxide, fine particulate precursors, hazardous air pollutants and others). In brief, waste-to-energy was demonstrated to be the best waste management option for both energy and environmental parameters and specifically for greenhouse gas emissions.

When the MSW-DST is applied to the nationwide scope of waste-to-energy facilities that are disposing of 30 million tons of MSW – the waste-to-energy industry is reducing approximately 30 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalents through the three cited mechanisms.

Recognition of Waste-to-Energy as a contributor to climate change solutions

This position described by IWSA is consistent with the international perspective and accounting scheme that recognizes the contribution of waste-to-energy towards meeting Kyoto targets. The European Union (Council Directive 1999/31/EC dated April 26, 1999) established a legally binding requirement to reduce landfilling of biodegradable waste. Recognizing the methane release from landfills, the European Union established this directive to prevent or reduce negative effects on the environment “including the greenhouse effect” from landfilling of waste, during the whole life-cycle of the landfill.

In addition, the German Ministry of the Environment published a report in 2005 entitled “Waste Sector’s Contribution to Climate Protection,” which states that “the disposal paths of waste incineration plants and co-incineration display the greatest potential for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases.” The German report concluded that the use of waste combustion with energy recovery coupled with the reduction in landfilling of biodegradable waste will assist the European Union-15 to meet its obligations under the Kyoto Protocol.

The contribution of waste-to-energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions has been embraced on the domestic level as well. The U.S. Conference of Mayors adopted a resolution in 2004 recognizing the greenhouse gas reduction benefits of waste-to-energy. In addition, 400 mayors have signed the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, which supports a 7 percent reduction in greenhouse gases from 1990 levels by 2012. By signing the agreement, mayors have pledged to take actions in their own communities to meet this target, and have recognized waste-to-energy technology as a means to achieve that goal.

In addition, the Global Roundtable on Climate Change (GROCC) unveiled a joint statement on February 20, 2007 identifying waste-to-energy as a means to reduce CO₂ emissions from the electric generating sector and methane emissions from landfills. This important recognition from the GROCC, which brought together high-level, critical stakeholders from all regions of the world, lends further support that waste-to-energy plays an important role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The breadth of support for the GROCC position is evidenced by those that have signed the joint statement, including Dr. James Hansen of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and David Hawkins of the Natural Resources Defense Council’s Climate Center, as well as entities as diverse as American Electric Power and Environmental Defense.

IWSA strongly believes that any climate change legislation considered by Congress should recognize the life cycle approach to greenhouse gas reductions so that any greenhouse accounting system accurately recognizes the impact of any source. We believe that this approach is technically sound and that it will demonstrate that the waste-to-energy industry can significantly assist in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and therefore should be exempt from the universe of potential targeted sources for greenhouse gas emission reductions or limits. Further, significant harm would be done to the nation’s waste-to-energy facilities if they were treated as if they were fossil-fuel fired electric generators, and would contradict nearly thirty years of federal renewable energy policies that have recognized the benefits of waste-to-energy.

Further, IWSA believes that waste-to-energy should be given credit for the avoided emissions achieved on a life cycle basis. Lifecycle analysis using the MSW-DST demonstrates that for every ton of waste combusted at a waste-to-energy facility, nearly one ton of carbon dioxide equivalents are avoided. Any legislation which establishes mandatory greenhouse gas reductions must recognize the avoided emissions achieved by waste-to-energy as emission reduction credits that can be traded by the owners of waste-to-energy facilities as offsets under a mandatory program. Recognizing waste-to-energy

as an offset would provide an incentive to utilize the waste management option most widely hailed as contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gases.

In conclusion, IWSA very much appreciates the invitation to submit comments on climate change legislation and provide the views of the nation's waste-to-energy industry. I look forward to working with you and your staff to provide our perspective and craft legislation that is fair, sensible, and responsible. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ted Michaels".

Ted Michaels
President