

# A Rebuttal to "The Great Ethanol Fallacy"

By DAVID HOWREY  
Howrey Construction Company

(Editor's Note: The following article is a rebuttal to Paul Diegnau's "The Great Ethanol Fallacy" which was published in the January/February 2008 issue of Hole Notes.)

The article states a national commitment to ethanol for "green" or environmental purposes and for a reduction in our nation's dependence on foreign oil and says that this is furthest from the truth. While the "green" merits of ethanol can be debated, certainly it is a different product and produced quite differently than that of petroleum and, as such, there are advantages and disadvantages with each. However ethanol is a proven fuel which substitutes petroleum to an increasing extent and thus indeed reduces our nation's dependence upon foreign oil. And undeniably, the essential monopoly of petroleum for fuel is unhealthy for a free market and has been shown to benefit terrorism and enemies of this country.

Like so many aspects of our society, it is difficult to ascertain the truth in these matters where special interests exist for both camps and "facts" support both extremes and on virtually all aspects of petroleum or ethanol. Certainly ethanol production continues to be an emerging technology and the more recent the research and facts, the more economical and "green" it has become. Both products should enjoy continued benefits in "green" technology and improved emissions as regulated by our bureaucracies. However, it is well known that oil production is

limited and costs will continue to increase where available resources become more depleted, diluted, deeper and in more remote or distant offshore locations, whereas, ethanol production is truly renewable, produced by plants and solar energy!

By volume it is true that 100% gasoline fuel tank would be on the order of 2/3 the size of an 100% ethanol fuel tank in order to achieve the same range, however this is not an indication of "efficiency" and, incidentally, this equates to 50% more (BTU) energy. Perhaps many years ago one gallon of ethanol produced cost one gallon of equivalent energy input; however I have found ratios from 1995 of 1.24 and 2002 of 1.34 and since 2002 and into the future, can we not expect further improvements in the efficiency and production of ethanol, in a free and competitive market?

As voters and taxpayers we should be concerned with any subsidies or in this case, tax benefits and reduced taxes favoring ethanol. It may be interesting to note that the ethanol "subsidy" was introduced in 1978 and at 40 cents and which apparently did not spur the market much and where would such an alternative or competitive product be without such? Petroleum would have less competition. "The ethanol bust" published in February of this year by CNN mentions huge ethanol profits not long ago (disturbing?) but narrow and negligible profits now and numerous cancelled new-plant projects and suggests a possible shake-down in the industry. No, plant investments will not be paid for all too quickly. And these corporations should seek greater efficiencies as a result.

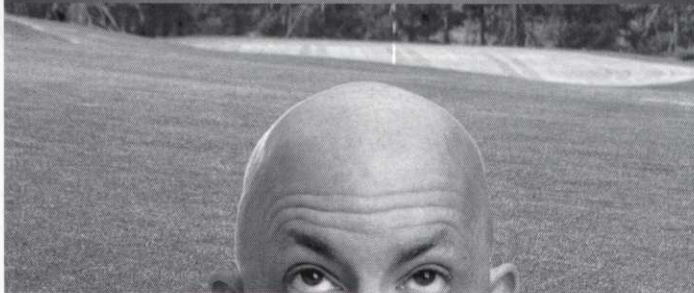
In 2005, UC Berkeley researchers have given ethanol a 10 to 15% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as compared to gasoline and opined that further improvements to be likely and that producing ethanol from corn uses much less petroleum than producing gasoline!

Most disturbing is that the previously mentioned article found in this publication attacked ethanol with respect to water usage and water quality and in a golf and turf publication! Briefly, we should all be wise stewards towards managing water quality. Irrigation water is indeed a commodity that market forces influence and yet, the greater majority of corn is produced by rain water! Crops (and golf courses) can be better managed for pollutant runoff whether such is used for ethanol production (or pleasure). Similarly, as to the attack on ethanol regarding subsidies or tax incentives, the author of the previous article works for a municipal golf course and we know that such public facilities enjoy the use of public monies or taxes whether in active areas of construction, bonding, maintenance, etc., or in more passive areas of insurance, administration, potential tax exemptions and other areas. Whose ox is goring whose ox?

Let us also consider the end products: ethanol is quickly biodegradable, petroleum products remain a pollutant for a very many years. This fact has enormous consequences to water quality nationally and globally, near term and long term. Pollutant runoff essentially never affects ground water quality and that sedimentation comprises 50% of impaired waters is false. According to the USEPA website, nationally 9.8% of such waters are impaired due to sedimentation and in Minnesota sedimentation is not even listed! The major reasons are pathogens and

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## Ethanol—

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mercury, among others.

We the people have demanded solutions to foreign oil dependence. The federal government has passed laws mandating renewable fuels usage, seven billion gallons for 2008 and increasing annually to 36 billion gallons by 2022. Corn ethanol is now the most mature industry to accomplish such mandates. Other promising means of producing ethanol are emerging as well as other fuel technologies. With careful use of subsidies to encourage research and development and regulations to minimize pollution, and in a free market, all should benefit from corn ethanol and other renewable fuels.

Ethanol from corn is not a fix-all. The "market" to introduce it and rather quickly and massively is based upon government mandates and tax incentives per public and special interest pressures, and this has yielded grain price increases as the major problem. Perhaps the larger issue is in electing thinkers with courage and morals to our Congress and state Houses so that decisions and programs can be introduced per facts and good judgment rather than per the whims of largely an ignorant public swayed by the slanted and deceitful institutions which influence it (i.e. the aforementioned article).



*ENJOYING THE MGCSA ASSISTANTS SPRING MIXER AT COFFEE MILL, are, from the left, Eric Rasmussen, Assistant at Southbrook GC, Randy Ryski, MTI Distributing, and Chad Snuggerud, Assistant at River Oaks GC.*

**David J. Oberle**

**Sales**

**david.oberle@comcast.net**



**4250 Wexford Way, Eagan, MN 55122**

**Phone: 651-681-8050 • Fax: 651-681-1969**

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