

# Defenders of Wildlife

## BIOFUELS - Impact on Wildlife



### GETTING BIOFUELS RIGHT FOR WILDLIFE

Biofuels can be a critical part of the solution as our nation works to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. If grown, harvested, and produced properly, biofuel crops can be beneficial for wildlife, the environment, rural economies, and energy independence. Defenders of Wildlife believes that developing cellulosic ethanol and other “advanced” forms of biofuels produced from diverse and less land-intensive feedstocks is the most sustainable approach to biofuels production.

But without adequate land protection measures, any legislation that mandates a significant ramp up in biofuel production -- such as the Senate-passed Renewable Fuel Standard -- will result in unintended pressure to break ground on forests, conservation lands, native prairie and critical wildlife habitat. A Renewable Fuel Standard must include private and public land protections and establish necessary safeguards for sensitive ecosystems and wildlife habitat. Otherwise, the large-scale changes in land-use patterns could result in a wholesale loss of habitat and other important ecological values.

Without proper safeguards, **biofuel production threatens wildlife in the following ways:**

- Making ethanol in the U.S using existing technology means converting millions of acres to corn production, and cornfields provide little habitat for wildlife. The impacts are especially detrimental if corn replaces native grasslands, which are already greatly reduced from their original size and provide critical habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife.
- Growing corn requires large amounts of fertilizers and pesticides that can be directly harmful to wildlife. Erosion on tilled cornfields washes soil, fertilizers and pesticides into local waterways, further threatening wildlife.
- Emerging technologies such as cellulosic ethanol could also harm wildlife if crops are grown in monoculture, require large amounts of pesticides and fertilizers, are harvested while birds are nesting, or replace native habitats.

**Wildlife-sensitive biofuels legislation would:**

- Promote advanced biofuels, including cellulosic ethanol, rather than expansion of corn-based ethanol.
- Exclude biofuel production on native prairie, Conservation Reserve Program and Grasslands Reserve Program acreage, and other lands that function as important wildlife habitat, control erosion, and sequester carbon.
- Direct biomass production toward agricultural lands and forest plantations already used or cleared for planting and restrict most other forest sourcing to pre-commercial thinning.
- Promote wildlife-friendly growing practices, such as mixed-species native perennial plantings, integrated pest management, minimal fertilizer use, and harvest after nesting season on a wildlife-friendly rotation.
- Achieve significant greenhouse gas reductions as measured over biofuels’ full life-cycle. Not tilling intact habitat, which would release carbon stored in soil, and limiting the transport distance to processing facilities are two ways to achieve such reductions.