

## RFS EDUCATIONAL SERIES BRIEFING NO. 1: WHAT IS THE RENEWABLE FUEL STANDARD?

*by Clayton McMartin*

The Renewable Fuel Standard or RFS is a federal program, which promotes the use of renewable fuels in the nation's motor fuel pool. The initial RFS, now known as RFS1 was established as a result of the 2005 Energy Policy Act (EPACT) and went into effect on Sept. 1, 2007. Fundamental to the RFS is the mandated use of renewable fuels, such as ethanol and biodiesel, throughout the continental United States and Hawaii <sup>(1)</sup>.

The first year of the new fuel standard required that a minimum of 4.7 billion gallons of renewable fuel, prorated to the months September through December, be blended into the nation's on-road gasoline and diesel fuels. The actual standard is expressed as a percentage, based upon the American motorist's fuel use in any given year. In 2007 the RFS value was 4.02 percent of the nation's total on-road gasoline consumption, excluding Alaska. Working together with the Department of Energy, EPA is required to calculate and publish the coming year's standard by Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> of each preceding year.

An advanced fuel standard, known now as RFS2, was enacted into law with the passage of the 2007 Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA), and signed by President George W. Bush on Dec. 19, 2007. The new RFS2 dramatically increases the mandated use of renewable fuels. This is accomplished through an increasing schedule of approximately 30 percent annually at which point it peaks at 36 billion gallons per year in 2022.

Originally scheduled to take effect on Jan. 1, 2009, RFS2 has been plagued with delays. Through the formal rulemaking process, EPA proposed a new effective date of Jan. 1, 2010, which will almost certainly be delayed even further.

In our next article we will investigate the renewable identification number also known as the RIN.

(1) Non-contiguous states and territories had the choice to opt into the renewable fuel standard as it was originally promulgated. Hawaii petitioned EPA on June 22, 2007 to opt into the RFS program, and EPA approved their request on July 22, 2007.

Clayton McMartin is the President of the Clean Fuels Clearinghouse and the founder of the RINSTAR® renewable fuel registry. Hundreds of companies process renewable fuel and RINs on RINSTAR® each day. More information about the company is available at [www.CFCH.com](http://www.CFCH.com) or by calling (575) 377-3369.