

## **2015 Issue Brief**

### E15 and the Renewable Fuel Standard

#### **Background**

In 2005 Congress passed the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), setting mandatory and levels of renewable fuel that must be blended into domestically used gasoline each year. The measure had wide bipartisan support and aimed to alleviate dependency on foreign oil while investing and advancing the development and use of biofuels. As originally written, corn-based ethanol was meant to be used as a bridge-fuel until the development of other biofuels occurred.

Since 2005 gasoline usage has steadily dropped in the U.S. however the amount of ethanol mandated under the RFS to blend into this shrinking fuel amount, continues to escalate. Because there are fewer gallons of gas to blend with the mandated amount of ethanol, the nation has hit the “blend wall” or the point at which we can no longer blend ethanol into gasoline at levels safe for all engines. In order to comply with the growing mandate, in 2010 the EPA approved the use of gasoline containing up to 15% ethanol (E15) for some engines – cars and light trucks 2001 and newer. E15 is now available in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Dakota, Michigan and Wisconsin. However, this fuel is prohibited from use in marine engines, motorcycles, snowmobiles, and small engines such as lawn mowers and leaf blowers.

#### **Issue**

Currently there is not a single marine engine warrantied to run on E15. Marine engine tests run by the National Renewable Energy Laboratories and the Department of Energy in October 2011<sup>1</sup> on four new 2 and 4 stroke engines showed that significant temperature increases occurred using E15, as well as piston damage, misfiring, cracked valves and deterioration of gaskets. With the potential to have both E10 and E15 dispensed from the same local fuel pumps, boaters are at a greater risk of misfueling and voiding their warranty. Additionally, according to AAA only 12 million of the more than 240 million cars, trucks and SUVs now in use have manufacturers' approval to use higher blends of ethanol gasoline such as E15.

#### **Status**

Several bills have been introduced in Congress to reform or repeal the RFS and limit the amount of ethanol required to be blended into our gas. There were also bills introduced in Florida, Maine, New Hampshire and Oregon that pursued the right to waive the RFS mandate to some degree or ban the use of ethanol outright.

### **Current Federal Legislation**

- **Representative Bob Goodlatte (R-VA)** has introduced **The RFS Reform Act**, co-sponsored by Jim Costa (D-CA), Steve Womack (R-AR), and Peter Welch (D-VT). It would eliminate the corn-based ethanol requirements and cap the amount of ethanol that can be blended into conventional gasoline to 10 percent. Also, it would require the EPA to set cellulosic biofuel mandates to match actual available levels.

**BoatU.S. Supports**

- **Congressman Goodlatte** also introduced the **Renewable Fuel Standard Elimination Act** and it eliminates the standard and all fuel blending requirements  
**BoatU.S. is Neutral**

- **Senators Diane Feinstein(D-CA) and Pat Toomey (R-PA)** offered an amendment to the Keystone XL pipeline legislation in January of 2015 calling for the removal of the corn-ethanol mandate from the RFS. This measure would have amended the Clean Air Act by eliminating the section on Corn Ethanol mandates.

**BoatU.S. is neutral**

- **Rep Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI)** re-introduced legislation which would remove higher blends of ethanol gasoline from the marketplace until greater research can be conducted by the National Academy of Sciences on the implications of the use of E15 or higher ethanol blends compared to E10 or E0. The bill also defines what engines the study must investigate – which includes marine engines - and what negative effects E15 would have on pipes, hoses, and storage tanks.

**BoatU.S. Supports**

### **Position**

BoatU.S. has long recognized that renewable fuels help decrease our reliance on foreign fuels and are a key part of America's energy solution. The introduction of E10 into now >90% of the nation's gasoline has not been an easy one for many boat owners who have experienced clogged fuel filters, unreliable engines performance and in some cases severely damaged engines due to ethanol's solvent and hydrophilic characteristics. While many boaters have learned to live with E10, introducing higher levels of ethanol in U.S. gasoline raises serious concerns for the dependability and durability of millions of marine engines.

E15 was approved by the EPA to be available at gas stations in 2011, however, there are no marine engines warrantied to run on this fuel. With E15 fuel now available in pumps offering multiple fuel choices, and often offered as the least expensive fuel option, a boater could easily misfuel and suffer engine failure and/or damage.

As a result of the potential for significant marine engine failure or damage from the use of E15 and resulting impacts for boating safety, BoatU.S. is seeking to reform the RFS. By supporting legislation to bring mandated volume requirements of ethanol in line with consumer gasoline usage, we can support the development of more compatible biofuels and ensure this policy is not mandating unsafe amounts of ethanol in our fuel.

**Staff Contact: Nicole Palya Wood, [nwood@BOATUS.com](mailto:nwood@BOATUS.com), 703-461-2878 ext. 3201**

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<sup>i</sup> [www.nrel.gov/docs/fy12osti/52909.pdf](http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy12osti/52909.pdf)