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March 3, 2009

The Honorable Lisa Jackson
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC

Dear Administrator Jackson:

I write to request information related to the potential for generating clean renewable energy on brownfield sites. Doing so would provide a highly synergistic win-win solution for the development of renewable energy generation capacity, for the cleanup and remediation of contaminated sites, and for providing economically viable and socially beneficial futures for the communities in which these sites are located.

It is my understanding that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has completed a mapping analysis, undertaken in conjunction with the Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), that has yielded an inventory of over four thousand EPA-tracked brownfield sites that might be good candidates for solar, wind, or biomass energy production facilities[1]. Unlike undeveloped public lands, many brownfield sites already have access to existing transmission capacity and other critical infrastructure that would be necessary for them to quickly meet the growing national demand for renewable energy.

With an estimated 15 million acres of potentially contaminated land in America, we have a long way to go in cleaning up the years of damage and abuse sustained by our nation's lands and returning these sites to useful purposes. With less than 3% of the nation's electricity produced by renewable energy, we also have a long way to go in developing the tremendous renewable energy potential in our country.

The opportunity to repower America while revitalizing underutilized lands is something I intend to aggressively pursue this year. Accordingly, I ask for your prompt assistance in responding to the following questions:

1) How great is the potential for renewable energy generation on the most promising brownfield sites EPA tracks?
2) Could redevelopment of brownfield sites for renewable energy be accomplished without compromising clean-up standards currently required by law and regulation?

[1] http://www.epa.gov/renewableenergyland/maps_incentives.htm

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3) How many renewable energy projects, if any, have been successfully sited on contaminated lands, particularly brownfield sites? Please provide a list of these facilities, including their locations, the type of energy that is being generated at each, and the amount of energy being generated.
4) What historically have been the employment benefits associated with cleaning up brownfields? What do you think these benefits could be for the redevelopment of these sites for renewable energy?
5) How has your agency prioritized projects for the clean-up funds provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act? How will redevelopment of brownfield sites for renewable energy be considered?
6) The definitions for biopower and biorefinery facilities need to be conformed to current law for purposes of the EPA/NREL analysis. Please rerun your analysis using assumptions consistent with the definition of biomass included in the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007.
7) The original survey performed by EPA and NREL did not evaluate the potential for geothermal development. Please rerun your analysis incorporating the potential for development of geothermal at utility or community scale.

Thank you very much for your prompt consideration of this important matter. Please provide responses no later than Friday, March 20, 2009. If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Michal Freedhoff on my staff at 202-225-2836.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey

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