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USDA, Navy Sign Agreement to Encourage the Development, Use of Renewable Energy

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From Navy Office of Information

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of the Navy (DoN) announced Jan. 21 that leadership from the two departments have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to encourage the development of advanced biofuels and other renewable energy systems.

"This agreement is part of President Obama's vision of a coordinated federal effort to build a clean energy economy, create new jobs and reduce our dependence on foreign oil," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "USDA looks forward to working with the Navy and other public and private partners to advance the production of renewable energy by sharing technical, program management and financial expertise."

Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus emphasized how partnering with USDA supports his vision for energy reform. Mabus' overarching goal is to increase warfighting capability.

"In order to secure the strategic energy future of the United States, create a more nimble and effective fighting force and protect our planet from destabilizing climate changes, I have committed the Navy and Marine Corps to meet aggressive energy targets that go far beyond previous measures," said Mabus.

From a strategic perspective the objective is to reduce reliance on fossil fuels from volatile areas of the world. Tactically, on the battlefield, the costs of transporting fuel has exponentially increased; in extreme cases, a gallon of gasoline could cost up to \$400.

"Even more serious and sobering, we are putting our Sailors and Marines in harms way as fuel convoys often meet a lethal enemy," Mabus continued.

To address this reality Mabus recently announced five ambitious energy targets for the Navy and Marine Corps and biofuels are a major component of four of those goals. Those targets are summarized below:

- When awarding contracts, appropriately consider energy efficiency and the energy footprint as additional factors in acquisition decisions.
- By 2012, demonstrate a Green Strike Group composed of nuclear vessels and ships powered by biofuel. By 2016, sail the Strike Group as a Great Green Fleet composed of nuclear ships, surface combatants equipped with hybrid electric alternative power systems running on biofuel, and aircraft running on biofuel.
- By 2015, cut petroleum use in its 50,000 non-tactical commercial fleet in half, by phasing in hybrid, flex fuel and electric vehicles.
- By 2020, produce at least half of shore based installations' energy requirements from alternative sources. Also 50 percent of all shore installations will be net zero energy consumers.
- By 2020, half of DoN's total energy consumption for ships, aircraft, tanks, vehicles and shore



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WASHINGTON, D.C. (Jan. 21, 2010) Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack, left, and Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) the Honorable Ray Mabus sign a memorandum of understanding at the Pentagon. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and Department of the Navy will work together to reduce energy consumption derived from fossil fuels, and to increase energy production from renewable energy sources. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kevin S. O'Brien/Released)

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installations will come from alternative sources.

The MOU complements USDA and the Navy and Marine Corps' existing renewable energy programs and efforts. USDA has a variety of programs and services that support renewable energy development, including:

- Rural Development loan and grant programs focused on developing renewable energy systems and helping agricultural producers and businesses adopt energy efficiency improvements;
- The Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Biomass Crop Assistance Program, which supports the establishment and production of crops for conversion to bioenergy, biobased products and power, and
- The Research, Education and Economics Division's comprehensive bioenergy research program focused on developing new varieties and hybrids of bioenergy feedstocks.

The DoN recently established a Naval Energy Office to develop and employ proven business models and investment strategies that leverage public and private investment to achieve naval, defense and national energy goals.

The parties will work together to support President Obama's initiative to make the United States a global leader in developing a renewable energy economy, reducing energy consumption derived from fossil fuels and increasing energy production from renewable energy sources. The United States has abundant natural resources – including wind, solar, hydrokinetic, ocean, geothermal and land for biomass energy crops – that can be refined into biofuels to meet commercial, military transportation and other energy needs.

USDA Rural Development administers and manages more than 40 housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a network of 6,100 employees located in 500 national, state and local offices. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of more than \$125 billion in loans and loan guarantees.

USDA's FSA facilitates income support, disaster assistance and conservation programs for the nation's farmers. It provides operating loans for the procurement of farm equipment, seed and fertilizer, and offers ownership loans to help new and veteran producers purchase a farm. FSA also works to procure various commodities to benefit low-income families through domestic food assistance programs.

The Research, Education and Economics mission area is dedicated to the creation of a safe, sustainable and competitive U.S. food and fiber system and strong, healthy communities, families and youth through integrated research, analysis and education. This mission area includes the Agricultural Research Service, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the Economic Research Service, and the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Watch the MOU signing ceremony video on demand at www.chinfo.navy.mil. >
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