

# **The Biomass Crop Assistance Program - Transitioning to a Greener Bioenergy Future**



**Director – Global Warming, Agriculture and Wildlife**

# Our view...



- **BCAP program had good intentions and is still very much needed**
- **BCAP program implementation to date has been extremely poor, but “don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater.”**
- **Sustainability provisions of the program really do matter!**

# What Was Intended for BCAP?

- Solve the “chicken-egg” problem of biomass power and fuels industry
- Help farmers learn to grow biomass feedstocks
- Set industry on a sustainable course



# What Has Happened?

- **Poor to no NEPA compliance - incentivizes destructive practices, hurts industry image and erodes support**
- **Emphasis on CHST and no limits - has done little to create a sustainable industry and has created a backlash**
- **Still no implementation of project areas component - Industry still struggling and biomass cultivation knowledge still to be developed**

# Sustainability in BCAP

## Minimal Sustainability Requirements in BCAP

- *“land that is native sod, as of the date of enactment...” is ineligible*
- *Selection criteria for projects includes – “The impact on soil, water, and related resources”*
- *Conservation and Forest Stewardship plans required*

# Sustainability in BCAP

- “...the Managers encourage the Secretary to consider the *most suitable use of the land* and encourage the *maintenance of native forest and late successional forest stands* and *discourage conversion of native forests to non-forest use*.
- The Managers intend that the use of “soil, water and related resources” under this section *includes wildlife-related concerns.*”
- “The Managers also intend that the primary focus of the BCAP will be promoting the cultivation of perennial bioenergy crops ... *that preserve natural resources...*”

**What do these two pictures  
have in common?**

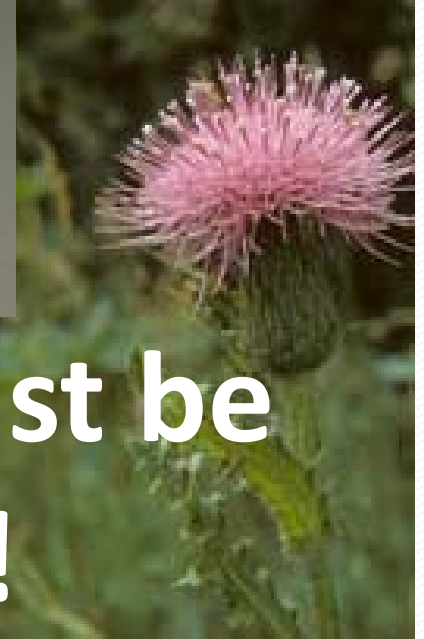


**What do these two pictures  
have in common?**





**“Marginal Lands”??**



**Sustainability needs must be taken into account!**



**“But we are planting perennials!”**



# BCAP should not fund ecosystem degradation and destruction!

- Public backlash, loss of support
- Erodes conservation investments
- Becomes a net emitter of GHGs
- Creates negative externalities that cost \$\$\$\$ (water quality, endangered species, soil erosion, ...)



# Agronomist Approach =

- Selection of crop
- Genetic modification of crop
- Planting of crop in monoculture
- Applying lots of pesticides and fertilizers
- Little concern for externalities
- Its all about YEILD- YIELD-YIELD!

Are we only going to try this?



# Ecological Approach =

- Diverse plantings that mimic natural systems
- Increased stability
- Improved yields (fills all niches)
- Less need for inputs
- Positive co-benefits for wildlife and biodiversity
- No introduction of invasive species

Why not try this  
as well?

A photograph of a diverse field of plants, including purple and yellow flowers, under a cloudy sky. The plants are tall and thin, with some purple flowers in the foreground and yellow flowers scattered throughout. The background shows a line of trees under a grey, overcast sky.



# The Way Forward

- Change emphasis to project areas component (suspend CHST pending NEPA)
- Implement all sustainability provisions
  - Involve NRCS and USFS in reviewing conservation/forest stewardship plans
- Establish graduated payments that offer the greatest rewards to those doing the most sustainable practices



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