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AMERICAN CLEAN SKIES FOUNDATION SUPPORTS STRICTER OZONE STANDARDS PROPOSED BY EPA; CALLS NATURAL GAS KEY TO LESS SMOG

WASHINGTON — Tougher proposed air quality standards for ozone could be met, in part, by greater use of natural gas for power generation and transportation, according to comments filed today with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by the Washington-based non-profit organization American Clean Skies Foundation (ACSF).

As compared to coal and gasoline, the combustion of natural gas releases a small fraction of the nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds that can lead to ozone pollution.

In its comments, ACSF said it supports EPA's choice of stricter National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone that are "science-based and adequately protect public health and the environment." The non-profit organization also urged accelerated adoption and implementation of new ozone standards so as to achieve the important public health and welfare benefits contemplated under a new rule. But ACSF cautioned EPA not to set ozone limits at levels that "are so stringent that the production and use of natural gas are unduly impacted because increased natural gas use is a key part of any solution for reducing overall ground-level ozone."

ACSF provided specific recommendations that include the need to aggressively develop markets for natural gas vehicles (NGVs) within strategic transportation sectors including commercial and private fleets, school buses, delivery trucks and taxi cabs. ACSF also advises that EPA and states, through their state implementation plans (SIPs), should pursue regulatory approaches that maximize the use of clean-burning natural gas. Additionally, ACSF suggests that EPA work with individual states to reduce any regulatory or infrastructure barriers to greater use of natural gas in the electricity sector.

Announced in January, the EPA's proposed new ozone rule would tighten primary ozone standards to between .060 and .070 parts per million (ppm) as measured in an 8-hour period. (The current primary ozone standard is .075 ppm.) A secondary standard designed to protect vegetation and forested ecosystems would have a cumulative, seasonal limit of 7 to 15 ppm-hours. The EPA comment period on the proposed rule ends March 22.

The complete text of the ACSF's comments is available at www.cleanskies.org.

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The American Clean Skies Foundation was founded in 2007 to advance America's energy independence and a cleaner, low-carbon environment through expanded use of natural gas and renewable energy.