



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

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5/20/2008

Commissioner of Higher Education Sheila Stearns
Montana University System
PO Box 203201
Helena, MT 59620-3201

Dear Commissioner Stearns,

On behalf of the Legislative Environmental Quality Council (EQC), I am writing to encourage your office and the Montana University System to assist the Legislature in its effort to promote the conservation of our state's resources. As part of the EQC's Climate Change Study, the Council has identified two areas in which MUS programs and research could be especially useful: tracking the production and consumption of locally grown foods and advancing biomass technologies.

The EQC supports increased use of locally grown foods as an economic benefit to the state and an opportunity to reduce costs and emissions associated with the manufacturing and transportation of our food supply. The EQC is asking MUS for help developing a formal tracking system of locally grown foods. By doing so, the EQC hopes to better understand where and how local foods are most used, identify efficiencies within that system, and identify where improvements are needed to encourage greater use of such products.

The EQC also supports increased use of biomass technologies as an alternative energy source and encourages MUS to continue its existing research and programs in this area. The EQC requests a report from MUS in the next biennium regarding these activities and any recommendations about the feasibility of the collection, processing, transportation, storage, and distribution of forestry and agricultural residues. The EQC would also appreciate recommendations on the development and expansion of markets for biomass materials, as a way to reduce our use of fossil fuels.

Commissioner Stearns, the EQC appreciates the time and attention you and the MUS staff give these matters. We look forward to working with you in the coming months. Please let me know if I, or the EQC staff, can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

David Wanzenried, Chairman