

Technology Planning Workshop plots future

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For immediate release

NORA plots future with Technical Review & Planning Workshop



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The [National Oilheat Research Alliance](#) (NORA) is charged by Congress with the “development and demonstration of clean and efficient oilheat fuel utilization equipment, including research to develop renewable fuels.” With NORA’s recent reauthorization spanning into 2029, the Alliance needs to identify and address long and short-term areas of concern. Keeping these goals in mind, NORA hosted a Technical Review and Research Planning Workshop on April 3rd and 4th in Melville, NY.

Close to 60 industry members, including heating oil retailers, equipment manufacturers, association executives and NORA staff participated in the workshop.

The first day focused on assessing the competitive environment for home heating. In particular, there was extended discussion on the increasing emphasis in states and regional

organizations to dramatically reduce atmospheric carbon emissions. Most northeastern states have a plan and some already have been codified into law. Generally, the plans commit to reductions of greenhouse gases of 50% by 2030 and 80% reductions by 2050, some even call for 100 % reductions.

As a result, the response of the heating oil industry is critical. Many of the states and influencers believe that a conversion of oilheated buildings to heat pumps will be an easy transition to a low carbon economy with the assumption that growth of renewable energy from wind and solar generation will provide the power. However, it was noted that even with renewable generation growth, the electricity demand will continue to soar, bringing into question the capacity to accommodate new uses (heating and automobiles).

Additionally, technologies for heating with electricity (cold climate heat pumps, heat pump boilers) and water (heat pump water heater) may be inadequate to heat a home in northern climates or provide adequate hot water.

NORA believes that the oilheating industry can develop solutions that will surpass the competing fuels, can be done at low cost, and will continue to provide great comfort for our customers.

After a thorough discussion of electricity and presentations on new and emerging technologies, work groups were formed as a first step in providing guidance on what the research agenda should be for steering the oilheating industry into a low-carbon future.

Extended discussion and summaries ensued and the most important items were put forward. The participants were asked to choose the items in order of importance to the industry and as priorities for NORA.

The most important items for further research focused on the fuels the industry uses and will need to use in the future. The survey results showed the highest priority items related to the increased use of biodiesel blends to reduce carbon emissions. Among the most important is the plan to develop a matrix/roadmap to understand the issues of using higher blends of biodiesel. The industry is aware that different issues may arise at different levels of biodiesel blending, and these may vary depending on what part of the supply chain is handling the fuel.

The participants want NORA to focus intently on the storage issues of biodiesel including long term-storage and possible cold flow issues. For example, can the product be stored outside and remain usable? A wide adoption of higher blends will require the addressing of many significant issues.

Not only must the industry compete with a low-carbon fuel, new equipment in the field was also identified as strong goal. Some equipment options that could be considered would be fuel-fired heat pumps, combined heat pumps with oil and equipment that provides electricity to the burner and the home in the event of a power outage.

The industry is keenly aware of the need to go to a low carbon renewable fuel in order to meet the environmental demands of legislators and regulators. Through continued and

vigorous research and education, the pathway to that fuel should become clear. NORA's Research Center has many tasks and issues in focus that must be addressed to help the industry move to the required destination.

The attendees' survey results are in the table [found here](#).

Presentations from the workshop can be [found here](#).

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