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RAISE YOUR VOICE

YOUR FORUM TO REACT TO PUBLISHED ARTICLES, TO EXCHANGE IDEAS, AND DESCRIBE INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO CONSERVATION INCLUDING LEGISLATION

Is “renewable” the right word?

I found the article “*A Matter of Balance: Conservation and Renewable Energy*” in the July/August 2006 *Journal* very interesting and enlightening. On the way to developing new sources of energy, we must keep in mind the potential impact on the environment lest we repeat past errors.

However, I wonder about the use of the term “Renewable Energy” not only by the authors, but by many others involved in this field. The authors were talking about the use of biomass which is a product of photosynthesis that depends on energy from the sun. That energy is transformed or stored in plant material. When that plant material is used as a fuel, the energy is released and is gone as far as we are con-

cerned. The only way to replace the biomass is to grow a new crop, which again stores more of the sun’s energy.

To me, the word renewable means to make new again, or to bring back to like new condition. But, when the sun’s energy is released from biomass it will never be available to us again. What we’re really doing with biomass energy is storing new energy rather than restoring the previous energy. We’re charging the battery again, but with new energy, not recycled energy.

Frankly, I don’t have a word in mind to replace “renewable”, but I’m concerned that the use of the term tends to give the wrong impression of just what we’re actually doing.

—Daniel F. Kesselring, *President Michigan Chapter, Soil and Water Conservation Society*

Readers are invited to express their views on land and water management.

Please make your letter less than 150 words. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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