

My Experience at the 2019 National Ethanol Conference

Krista Russell

Attending the 2019 National Ethanol Conference this year was an experience I will never forget. I am honored and thankful to the Renewable Fuels Association/Foundation for the opportunity to attend this year's conference. NEC had a great impact on me and was also a very educational experience. Learning from industry leaders provided me with a real-world educational experience that greatly expands upon what I am learning within the classroom. I was able to experience and learn about the ethanol industry first-hand, which is an invaluable experience.

Overall, I found all of the speakers informative and interesting. I enjoyed listening to varied perspectives from many different sides of the industry. One speaker session that especially peaked my interest was the session that focused on "What Do Consumers Really Think About Ethanol?". I gained a better understanding of the issues the general consumer is and is not concerned about. This information will help me be a better advocate and educator for the ethanol industry. Also, since I am beginning my Master's in Environmental Science with a specialization in policy, I found listening to several of the other speakers highly beneficial to me because I gained a better understanding of the Renewable Fuels Standard and ethanol related policy.

The largest impact the conference had for me is that I decided to change my research topic for my Master's degree thesis. As a first semester graduate student, I had been actively searching for a research topic. I was actively exploring several topics, but I had yet to find something that I had a strong passion for. After attending National Ethanol Conference, I decided to that I wanted to focus my research on ethanol and the Renewable Fuel Standard. I met with my graduate advisor and he agreed to my change in topic. Attending NEC increased my interest and determination for obtaining my Master's degree because I am now focusing upon a topic that I truly have a passion for. Attending NEC was also a

great networking opportunity for me. I made many connections that will be beneficial to me currently as a student and within my future endeavors.

After the conference, I am now focusing on researching current trends in the industry and ethanol policy. Attending the National Ethanol Conference provided me with a new focus for my research. It also gave me an abundance of varied information and topics that will serve as a great starting point as I continue on in my graduate program. This conference greatly impacted my life and I look forward to striving to make a positive difference in the ethanol industry as I continue with my education and future career.