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**“Green Gap Redux: Green Words Gone Wrong”  
EcoPinion Survey Points to Consumer Confusion and Value Gaps  
Connected to Conservation, Renewable Energy and Smart Grid**

Washington, DC ... EcoAlign, a strategic marketing agency focused on energy and the environment, today released the results of the sixth EcoPinion Survey to test consumer awareness and acceptance of terms used by the media and energy industry for messaging and communications around energy conservation, clean energy and smart grid.

The sixth EcoPinion survey confirms that consumers generally have positive associations with commonly used terms; however, our analysis shows that consumers do not understand the meaning of the terms and that individual consumers perceive little value or personal relevance of the terms with economic barriers being a key hurdle. As a result, the green gap between stated intentions and purchasing behavior still exists.

“Compared to two years ago, consumers today have a greater understanding of the importance of conservation and clean energy, but have not moved this awareness into action,” stated Andrea Fabbri, COO and Chief Marketing Officer. “The challenge for communications and marketing professionals is to make sustainability an economic value. This must start from engaging with consumers on a more deeply emotional level to transform beliefs into the values that shape consumer decisions. But it also has to be complemented by solutions that address the economic barriers.”

Findings from the sixth EcoPinion Survey include:

1. American consumers have positive associations with terms such as energy conservation and clean energy, using one-word associations such as “good, important and necessary.” All responses signal the coexistence of two customer profiles: 1) one for which conservation and clean energy are the right thing to do (good, necessary, important) and 2) one for which conservation and clean energy are a financially savvy thing to do (savings, save, efficient, money, cheaper).
2. With the exception of smart energy, consumer understanding of the terms tested decreased over the past two years. Less than one third of consumers could differentiate between energy conservation and energy efficiency. In other words, the constant use of these terms by media and industry has only resulted in declining levels of understanding and increased consumer confusion.

3. Some industry terms should not be used for external communications, including demand response and peak pricing. They are ambiguous at best and produce strong negative reactions with some consumers. Demand response was described as “authoritative, unpopular, annoying.” Almost half of American consumers had a negative perception of the value of peak pricing.
4. Thirty-one percent of Americans believe that the “environment” will *benefit the most* from smart grid investments. On the other hand, consumers thought that government, residential consumers and utilities would *benefit the least* from smart grid investments. Communications and marketing around “smart grid” need to build value dimensions that will justify the price increase that most consumers will pay; otherwise, smart grid will be grid locked.
5. When asked about motivations to use new energy technologies or participate in energy programs enabled by smart grid, approximately two-thirds of Americans describe themselves as “cost-conscious saver” or “value buyers,” emphasizing price as a primary determinant of purchasing decisions.
6. There is a huge range in the level of consumer understanding about the terms and concepts for alternative billing and payment options. For example, 14 percent of consumers had a very good understanding of “green pricing” as compared to 53 percent of consumers who indicated that they had a limited or no understanding of the term. Most other terms and concepts were evenly divided between those consumers who had high levels of understanding compared with those who had limited or no understanding.
7. Most consumers have a neutral perception of value connected to alternative billing and payment options. The exceptions include “peak pricing” (strong negatives) and “budget billing” (strong positives).

A copy of the full EcoPinion report is available **at no charge** by visiting EcoAlign’s website at [www.ecoalign.com](http://www.ecoalign.com).

For more information on DEFG, please visit our website: [www.defgllc.com](http://www.defgllc.com).