

[Tulare Advance-Register editorial, August 2, 2003:](#)

Ethanol plants would be good for the area

With the state reportedly needing to produce 613 million gallons of ethanol a year, dozens of plants to produce it will be needed. Hopefully, a few of them will be built in Tulare County.

This week, plans were laid out for a plant to be constructed in Pixley. There is talk of a plant possibly being constructed in Visalia as well.

There are several agricultural crops that can be used in ethanol, but the most common is corn. It is not the type of corn typically grown in Tulare County, but it can be easily grown here.

Based on information given to the Pixley Town Council this week, the plant would employ about 40 full-time workers. The plant would be designed to produce 40 million gallons of the fuel a year.

Ethanol is becoming the buzzword of energy policy these days. The state has ordered it be used in gasoline and the federal government has stepped up efforts to have more ethanol produced.

A question is whether the plant would use corn grown in California, or would it have it shipped in from the Midwest where it can be grown cheaper than here because of labor and water costs. Some ag byproducts, such as orange peelings, also can be used to make ethanol.

Among other concerns is the amount of water that will be needed for the plant, and any pollution issues. The developer of the Pixley plant assured people that the plant would not harm the environment.

Even if the plant does not use a lot of locally-grown corn, the plant would bring jobs and tax revenue to the area. The plus would be for farmers to benefit as well.

Sound Off for August 3

The Bakersfield Californian

Saturday, August 02, 2003, 10:35:09 PM

Reader: I've noticed that the forecast air pollution index published by *The Californian* consistently exceeds the actual index by about 50 percent. I have never observed the actual index exceeding the forecast index.

There must be some difference in the two numbers. Is the forecast number a peak value, while the actual is an average?

Our regulators will make it illegal to burn wood in home fireplaces this winter when the index exceeds 150. Will the APCD regulators stop wood burning based on the higher forecast index value or the lower actual index value?

-- *Jon Crawford*

Jenner: That's a great question, Jon. Your question prompted us to ask reporter Matt Weiser, who covers environmental issues, to dig into this.

His research confirmed your suspicion that the actual and the forecast values are apples and oranges.

Here's Matt's report:

The forecast air quality index in the newspaper is a regional forecast for both Kern and Tulare counties. To get this number, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District generally looks at the city in that region that's expected

to have the worst air quality. In our region, that's usually Arvin -- at the tail-end of the valley and downwind from all the cars and factories of Bakersfield.

"We have to be protective of public health," said air district spokeswoman Josette Merced Bello. "So if you give the highest reading, that lets the public protect themselves from the worst that it could be."

Bakersfield air quality is often better than the regional forecast, and that's where some of the confusion begins. The "reported yesterday" number in the newspaper is the actual reading for Bakersfield, not the region.

This is why the forecast always seems to be way off: We're comparing a regional forecast with an actual local measurement. For example, the forecast for Friday, July 25, was 140, while the actual measurement for Bakersfield on that date turned out to be 85. But in Arvin, the actual measurement ended up at 135 -- not far off from the forecast.

The good news is that, before residential wood-burning restrictions take effect in November, the air district plans to introduce a more localized forecasting system. The no-burn decision will be based on the forecast, but that forecast will more closely resemble actual conditions in Bakersfield. And that's important, because pollution related to winter wood burning tends to be an urban problem, the air district says, so if Arvin drove the no-burn decision, it might not be frequent enough to protect the public in Bakersfield.

Jenner: We will report the new forecasting system's reports as soon as the system is introduced.

Cheers & Jeers August 2

Submitted by readers of The Bakersfield Californian

Friday, August 01, 2003, 06:10:11 PM

Cheers & Jeers is a weekly feature inviting readers to praise, salute, criticize and nag their neighbors, public officials, community institutions and the newspaper.

Rail travel a breeze

I am writing this letter to advise the people in our area of how much less stressful it is to travel using our local Amtrak service. It is much easier and safer than driving your car. Due to the extra precautions the airports and airlines are obliged to use to keep the passengers safe, unless you are traveling more than 500 miles, it is just as fast to travel by rail. I won't disclose the ticket prices, but I think they are a bargain.

Our last train trip was to Sacramento a few months ago and it was a very pleasant trip. A large group of senior citizens boarded the train in Bakersfield and we learned that they came from Gault, Calif. They call themselves, "The Round Table Renegades." They carpooled from Gault to Lodi where they parked their cars and boarded the train for an adventurous trip to Bakersfield to dine at one of our famous Basque restaurants and they stayed overnight at the motel across the street from the train station.

Our downtown Amtrak Station is the 14th busiest in the country and I am told that they are thinking of adding another Bakersfield-to-Sacramento train. The folks at the ticket counter are friendly and helpful and the conductors are doing a good job.

I really hope this letter will encourage people to leave the car in the garage, hop on the train (a great opportunity to read a good book!) and perhaps with fewer cars on the road, the air quality will improve.

GRACI LEE BAILEY, Bakersfield

AIR POLLUTION VIOLATIONS

The Bakersfield Californian

Sunday August 03, 2003, 09:40:16 PM

Elk Hills Power, LLC in Tupman was cited June 3 for power unit #2 exceeding permitted emission limits for nitrogen oxide.

Etcheverry Body Works in Bakersfield was cited June 26 for solvent-laden cloth not stored or disposed of in closed non-absorbent container.

Frederico Viscarra of Reedley was cited June 4 for illegal burning of trash and household wastes.

Garret Construction in Fresno was cited June 20 for trackout not being cleaned up from out of the bike lanes, gutter areas and turn lanes. No one was on the work site.

Gary Brink in Modesto was cited June 17 for illegal burning of yard waste.

George Burgueno of Oakdale was cited June 19 for having a burn not properly attended and the fire escaped.

George Cobb in Manteca was cited June 28 for illegal burning of rubbish, grass, etc.

Granite Construction Co. in Bakersfield was cited June 30 for visible emissions from asphalt batch plant exceeding the 70 percent opacity limit.

Holiday Cleaners in Bakersfield was cited June 19 for vapor stream on outlet side of condenser was 57 degrees. It should not exceed 45 degrees. Facility violated permit by using 70 gallons of perchlorethylene. The limit is 60 gallons.

J&R Auto Body Repair in Selma was cited June 5 for operating without a valid permit to operate. Permit suspended since Nov. 12, 2002. Facility failed to maintain accurate and current coating records, operation of paint spray booth without exhaust filters in place.

Jaxon Enterprises in Porterville was cited June 11 for stockpiles not kept wet. Not operating fogger to feeder bins and transfer points particulate matter 10 microns or smaller, greater than 20 percent from equipment. Totalized fuel flow meter has not been installed on fuel line to the dryer burner.

Jim Bagda in Oakdale was cited June 19 for an ag burn not being properly attended and the fire escaped.

Joe Molina in Manteca was cited June 23 for failing to remain on site during a 50-acre wheat field open burn.

John and Lucina Noche in Stockton were cited June 12 for an illegal burn of lumber and metal. The fire escaped, burning grass, weeds, trees and river vegetation.

John Casey in Newman was cited June 21 for an authorized ag burn escaping control and burning approximately 40 acres of weeds, trees and river vegetation. Jorge Magana in Delhi was cited June 2 and 26 for an illegal burn on a no-burn day.

Jose Aguire in Fresno was cited June 6 for having no records of open containers of waste, gun washer not being operable and not using acetone to wash guns.

Kiewit Pacific in Strathford was cited June 19 for the operator not supplying district with a dust control plan prior to construction commencement.

Kraft General Foods in Visalia was cited June 20 for a bad filling station modified without an authority to construct. Existing unit was replaced with a nonidentical filling unit.

[Modesto Bee editorial, August 4, 2003:](#)

Bill aims for more low-emissions cars on valley roads

The biggest single problem -- and the hardest to deal with -- in efforts to clean the valley's air is the pollution caused by all the vehicles we drive. Just about anything that promises to help, even a little, is welcome. And if it's a pleasant incentive, then all the better.

Rep. Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced, is introducing legislation in the House of Representatives that would create such incentives for those who buy qualified clean-fuel vehicles. A similar bill will be offered in the Senate by Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn.

The idea is to give tax credits to those who purchase cleaner vehicles in areas where the federal Environmental Protection Agency says the problem of ozone -- the principal villain in our summer smog -- is most acute. The valley certainly qualifies.

The bill envisions a credit of \$3,500 per vehicle in areas of "severe nonattainment" of standards for ozone pollution. That's where we are now. If, as many expect, we move into the worst category -- "extreme" -- the credit under Cardoza's proposal would go up to \$4,000.

The legislation would also set up tax credits for those who purchase larger vehicles (trucks and vans weighing more than 10,000 pounds) with cleaner power plants: Under our current severe nonattainment status that would be \$8,500; under extreme status, \$10,000.

That could be an especially sweet deal for fleet owners, who might be able to get the credit several times over for converting to cleaner vehicles.

Vehicles contribute more than half of the nitrogen oxide pollution that is a key building block for the smog afflicting us each summer. Remedies are largely in the hands of federal and state authorities; the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has no control over so-called "mobile sources."

That ought to change. In the meantime, efforts such as Cardoza's are most welcome.

[Fresno Bee editorial, August 4, 2003:](#)

Singled out

Copper River Ranch project is the wrong target for environmentalists.

For too long, those of us living in the San Joaquin Valley have indulged ourselves at the expense of the air we breathe. We don't want to reduce the miles we drive, or give up using our fireplaces on winter days when wood burning exacerbates our air problem. Farmers complain about proposed air-quality restrictions and many other businesses don't want to make changes that would help clean the air.

The result is an air basin that's among the worst in the nation, and a shameful childhood asthma rate. We must do better, and in some areas we seem to be making progress both symbolically and substantively.

The Copper River Ranch development, for example, has instituted several measures that should help. Homes will not have wood-burning fireplaces and the developers are voluntarily putting up \$700,000 to mitigate the traffic created by the project. One of the developers, Gary McDonald, intends to subsidize the purchase of electric carts for home buyers in the project. That would reduce automobile use for short trips in the Copper River Ranch neighborhood.

These measures should be applauded by the community. Copper River developers have gone well beyond what other builders have done in their projects to improve the air. Unfortunately, Copper River is the target of a lawsuit by the Medical Advocates for Healthy Air and the League of Women Voters of Fresno.

The lawsuit contends that the city should have done more analysis of how much air pollution could be reduced at Copper River, and the plaintiffs call the developers' clean-air efforts "cosmetic."

While we are in agreement that housing developments contribute to air-quality problems, we believe this project was singled out because of its higher political profile than other developments. That's not fair, and could discourage other developers from making similar improvements. Copper River's 2,837 residential units will be built out over about six years. In Clovis alone last year, 1,300 houses were constructed without challenge over air quality.

Copper River Ranch is in the city's general plan, and has been the subject of three environmental impact reports.

Clearly more can be done in all developments. That's why we support requiring builders to pay a per-house air-mitigation fee for their developments. If that fee were in place at \$1,000 per house, for example, it would have generated \$1.3 million last year in Clovis to fund air-quality efforts.

That would help get us on the road to solving this problem, and we'd all breathe a bit easier.