

Smog: See your shadow, breathe a little easier

By Mark Grossi, Fresnobee.com, . Monday, Feb. 2, 2009

Punxsutawney Phil, the famous groundhog in Pennsylvania, saw his shadow this morning, which means six more weeks of winter. Here, sunshine and shadows might mean a little less PM-2.5.

OK, I'll completely ditch the groundhog lore at this point, though I've always thought it was cool. I just want to talk about fog, sunshine and dirty air. Sorry, but I'll bet the air is cleaner at Gobbler's Knob than it is here.

I saw my shadow in north Fresno, but there was dense fog around The Bee's downtown office. Others told me similar stories about their commutes to work.

Here's what's going on in the air, according to the experts. As the sun shines and the humidity drops, the tiny specks of PM-2.5 pollution tend to drop out of the air, they say.

But these microscopic bits of debris tend to hang in the moist air of the fog. If you're in a fog bank and there are no shadows in sight, you're probably breathing some polluted air in the Valley -- especially since the air has become so stagnant in the last few days.

Cox, Ishida led supervisors in 2007 earnings

By Valerie Gibbons

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Friday, Jan. 30, 2009

Two Tulare County supervisors reported earned income in excess of \$100,000 in 2007, a year in which they also received more than \$100,000 in compensation as public officials.

The two, Allen Ishida and Phil Cox, led the Board of Supervisors with outside earnings in 2007, the most recent year for which reports are available.

The other two current supervisors who were serving in 2007 reported substantially less earned income, which is usually defined as employment-based compensation, as opposed to income from investments and rental property.

Elected officials in California are required to file an annual public report on their personal finances for the previous year. The report, due by April 15, is called a "Statement of economic interests." Copies are usually available at a county elections office, city clerk's office, school district or other agency office.

It shows how much officials made in earned income, investment income and rental income and what their investments and property holdings are.

Officials are not asked to provide precise dollar amounts. Instead, they indicate ranges, such as \$500-\$1,000, \$1,001-\$10,000, \$10,001-\$100,000 or more than \$100,000. Thus, it's possible to say that an official reported earning at least \$1,001, \$10,001 or more than \$100,000.

Even before a pay raise scheduled to take place in March, each supervisor earns a base pay of \$86,331.60, with 4 to 8 percent stipends for serving as chairman or vice chairman of the board. A benefits package and a car allowance adds an average of \$19,659, leaving the total annual salary at \$105,990. All five own their own homes and all but Supervisor Pete Vander Poel draw income from their own businesses as well as a county salary.

Cox's businesses have gone through several changes since he became a supervisor in January 2005. At the time, he owned Cox Sheet Metal and Visalia Paintball Supply.

Now he owns C&C Construction, for which he listed an address that's the same as his South Jacob Street home. His report for 2007 said C&C Construction had a fair market value of less than \$100,000 but provided him with more than \$100,000 as owner and less than \$100,000 in salary.

Ishida serves as the president of Ishida & Ishida Inc., a Lindsay farming company. His report for 2007 said he earned more than \$100,000 in gross income from the business and less than \$100,000 in salary.

Supervisor Mike Ennis reported that he owns or is a partner in three companies in the Porterville area: the Ennis Cattle Co., Warden & Ennis Liquid Feed Co. and Ennis Rentals.

He reported income of less than \$10,000 as owner of Ennis Cattle, between \$10,000 and \$100,000 as a partner in Warden & Ennis Feed and nothing from Ennis Rentals.

In 2007, Supervisor Steve Worthley reported no income from his home-based law practice. The only income he reported totaled less than \$10,000 as a member of the boards of the state Commission on State Mandates and the [San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District](#).

Connie Conway, a supervisor in 2007 but now a state Assemblywoman, reported income of \$32,800 for 2007 along with a letter from an official of the California State Association of Counties, where she served as a board member. The letter stated the \$32,800 represented reimbursement for transportation, lodging and food in connection with her position on the association's board and was required by the state Fair Political Practices Commission to be reported.

Vander Poel, Conway's successor, worked as a financial analyst for Wells Fargo Bank and as a controller for Mendes Calf Ranch up until he was sworn in as a supervisor earlier this month. He says he has since left both of those jobs.

"My full-time job is serving on the Board of Supervisors," he said.

Feds: Air quality data insufficient for NM Intel

The Associated Press

Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, Feb. 3, 2009

RIO RANCHO, N.M.—A federal agency said Monday there's not enough air emissions information available for Intel's Rio Rancho manufacturing plant for it to fully evaluate potential public health consequences.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry concluded there wasn't sufficient air monitoring information for the various chemicals measured in the outdoor air earlier this decade. It is recommending the possibility of additional sampling and monitoring and reducing air emissions.

The agency reviewed air quality information gathered by Intel and the Environment Department in 2003 and 2004 and air modeling studies and samples collected by the department in residential areas near Intel in 2002 and 2003.

The agency has scheduled two public meetings next week to discuss the health consultation. It also will accept public comments through April 3.

Intel spokeswoman Liz Shipley said Monday the company has been working with the agency, the Environment Department and the community for the past four years on the study. She pointed out that the state's previous studies, which were reviewed by the federal agency, found no risk to the public.

Shipley said Intel officials were still reviewing the agency's report but that an initial reading suggested there were no new findings.

"Though we strongly believe that Intel's air emissions are not causing adverse health effects, we will work with ATSDR and the community to fill in data gaps as much as possible," Shipley said in a statement.

She added that Intel has already made some improvements to its emissions control systems to reduce emissions and odors.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Sunday, Feb. 1, 2009:](#)

Diesel deadline comes at a bad time

The California Air Resources Board should not scrap a rule requiring diesel-burning construction equipment to be cleaner burning. Instead, it should establish a new compliance deadline.

As a federal economic stimulus plan takes shape in Congress, California stands to be the biggest winner. Depending on who is counting and setting aside Republican grumblings, some are estimating California could reap as much as \$63 billion from the plan.

That would be money to shore up California's deficit-plagued state budget, as well as to fund job-creating public works projects.

But a cloud may be floating over this bright possibility. A state air cleanup rule targeting off-road construction equipment imposes a 2010 compliance deadline. That's just next year.

If California sticks to that deadline, the bulldozers and other diesel-powered equipment needed for these projects may be sidelined.

The rule requires the replacement or retrofitting of earthmovers' engines to make them cleaner burning. According to The Washington Post, California has an estimated 180,000 loaders, graders, excavators and other heavy equipment that would have to be converted by 2010.

The Associated General Contractors of America has petitioned the state to amend the rule. It also asked the federal Environmental Protection Agency to block it. But to meet a 2010 deadline, business decisions must be made today. Conversion is estimated to cost equipment owners \$3.4 billion.

A Southern Californian equipment company official told The Post that to bring just one of his Caterpillar D10 bulldozers into compliance will cost him \$226,000 for a new engine and \$56,000 for filters.

While the company has been purchasing cleaner-burning equipment in recent years, the 2010 deadline means the company's entire fleet, including older equipment, must be brought into compliance.

The air pollution rule affecting off-road, heavy construction equipment was adopted during California's home-building boom. It was assumed the cost would simply be passed on to customers.

But when the building boom went bust, the customers disappeared. With construction of housing and commercial development at a near standstill, customers -- the building contractors -- are not renting equipment. There also is little, if any, demand for the purchase of old equipment.

Equipment rental businesses are scrambling just to keep their doors open. Owners contend they need more time and money to comply with the rule.

For years, these companies have fought the cleanup rule, contending they should be able to use old equipment until the equipment "dies."

Air cleanup advocates contend the "tough economy" is just the industry's latest excuse for resisting a statewide upgrade of polluting equipment.

Both sides need to get real.

Polluting old equipment should be upgraded. The California Air Resources Board estimates making this equipment cleaner-burning will save \$18 billion to \$26 billion over 20 years from fewer air pollution-related illnesses and deaths.

But the realities of this dire economy also cannot be ignored. Nor can the potential consequences to the federal economic stimulus plan.

The California Air Resources Board should not scrap the rule. Instead, it should establish a new deadline for compliance that recognizes the economic realities of the situation.

Replace a 2010 deadline with a 2012 or 2015 deadline. It should be a deadline that will keep equipment companies in business and allow California to make full use of federal job-creating economic stimulus dollars.