

Highlights

February 19 Actions by the Governing Board

- The Governing Board approved an **Economic Assistance Initiative** for 2009 to provide relief to regulated businesses and municipalities during the current economic downturn without sacrificing environmental safeguards. Measures to relieve financial hardship include extra time to pay permit fees or meet grant performance requirements, late fee and penalty waivers, and installment payment plans.
- District staff presented a report on the **impacts of wildfires** on San Joaquin Valley air quality in summer 2008. In 2008, northern California's wildfires burned over 1.3 million acres, causing spikes in San Joaquin Valley's ozone and particulate matter air pollution levels. In the report, staff discussed the extent of the violations of the federal health-based ambient air quality standards and how the District is working closely with federal land managers to mitigate the air quality impacts of wildfires in the future.
- The Board approved a \$48,000 agreement with the American Lung Assn. of California to continue the **AQI Flag Program** in Valley schools. Schools receive four flags that serve as a visual communicator of daily air quality forecasts, as well as educational materials and workshops on air quality and the health impacts of exposure to air pollution. All materials are free to the schools and more than 750 have implemented the program. The goal is to work toward 100% participation.
- The Governing Board approved a \$30,000 agreement with Enterprise for Education to help fund the **Clean Air Challenge** middle school and high school curriculum program. The program focuses on ground-level ozone and is designed to help 7th- through 12th-grade science teachers meet state standards. The grant funds 25 teachers. With the assistance of other sponsors, the curriculum will be offered free of charge to 68 new teachers and more than 8,000 students. During the past three years, 332 teachers have adopted the curriculum, reaching about 40,000 students a year.
- The Board authorized voluntary agreements to mitigate **greenhouse gas emissions** associated with two proposed projects: the Cilion ethanol facility in Kern County and Great Valley Ethanol in Kings County. The funds will go toward grants for projects ranging from energy and water conservation efforts to the electrification of fossil fuel-fired internal combustion engines. The highest priority will be given to projects located near the new plants.
- Staff presented an update on **agricultural and wood-burning restrictions**. Preliminary data indicate that more stringent residential wood-burning restrictions have resulted in improved wintertime air quality. Ag burning is being phased out, declining from 14,000 acres to 4,000 acres per year, Valley-wide. Most ag burning is prohibited most days of the year, but exceptions remain on diseased crops and where alternatives to burning are not economically feasible. The burning that is allowed is strictly subject to the District's smoke-management system, which takes various factors, including meteorology, into account. Under a new District policy, on days when residential wood burning is prohibited, ag burning is also prohibited.
- The Governing Board approved received and filed amendments to **Rule 4902** (Residential Water Heaters) and set March 19 for the public hearing to consider adoption.

District Activities

Outreach and Education

- Elementary school students around the Valley are busy having family and friends complete clean air pledge forms for a chance to win an iPod Shuffle and a \$250 teacher resource grant. The **Kids for Clean Air contest** for 4th and 5th graders is part of the outreach efforts of this winter's Check Before You Burn program.
- Staff from O&C, Permits, Compliance and ERIP manned a District booth at the **World Ag Expo** in Tulare to answer questions about programs and pollution. About 5,000 people stopped by the booth over the four days of the February show.
- **Outreach and Communications** responded to 27 media calls, 234 public calls and gave seven air quality or Healthy Air Living presentations last month. A news release to Valley media announced the student artists selected for the 2009 kids' calendar and staff.

Grant and Incentive Programs

- The District's annual **Burn Cleaner** Wood Burning Device Change-out Program has been a great success with more financial incentive than ever, especially for low-income homeowners. Now in its third year, the program offered \$750 – and \$1,500 to low-income residents – toward the purchase of a cleaner-burning gas, pellet or certified wood-burning stove or insert. In the first two weeks of the program, ERIP processed 167 applications – 33 of those were low income – for a total of \$150,000. This year's allocation has been committed but staff is maintaining a wait list.
- The District received 26 incentive program applications in January.
- \$1,933,931 in Heavy-Duty Engine Program and REMOVE II Program grant funds were placed under contract in January.
- \$1,833,105.81 in Heavy-Duty Engine Program claims was paid.
 - Ag Engines – 45 \$1,411,236.81
 - Off Road – 2 \$ 261,869.00
 - On-Road 1B – 3 \$ 160,000.00

Heavy-Duty Emission Reductions (tons)

- NOx 587
- PM 32
- ROG 25

Total: 644

January Operations Overview

- **The District** received 122 environmental documents for review in January.
- **Planning** held 6 rule and plan workshops. Rule 1020 (Definitions) was adopted.
- **Compliance** conducted 2,131 inspections in January. 358 NOVs were issued and 192 cases were settled.
- **Permits** received 275 applications and issued 368 permits in January.
- **ERIP** received 37 smoking vehicle reports.

Upcoming Meetings

Governing Board

9 a.m. Thurs., March 19, 2009

Please see www.valleyair.org for agendas and other details.

Citizens' Advisory Committee

10 a.m. Tues., March 3, 2009