

Burn control

The days of wood burning could be a thing of the past as air-quality regulations that look to reduce concentrations of harmful air pollutants throughout the San Joaquin Valley tighten, and firewood suppliers feel the effects of no-burn restrictions.

By Michelle Machado

Monday, November 1, 2004, Stockton Record

A steaming bowl of soup, a pair of toasty slippers or a roaring wood fire -- typical antidotes to chase the chill from the bones of fogbound Valley residents.

But one of those tried and true remedies -- the wood fire -- may be on its way out as air-quality regulations tighten and firewood suppliers; fire-log manufacturers; gas-, wood- and pellet-stove retailers; and chimney sweeps feel the effects of no-burn restrictions.

"Customers know the direction that the regulations are going," said John Osburn, president of Ben's Appliance, Lighthouse & Hearth Inc. in Lodi. "We're selling almost all gas."

Beginning today, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will start the second season of its Check Before You Burn program that prohibits the use of wood-burning fireplaces, inserts or pellet stoves when and where air quality is expected to be unhealthy, reflected in an air quality index of 151 or higher.

A second component of the program encourages residents to voluntarily refrain from using wood-burning stoves when the air quality index is between 101 and 150, an unhealthy range for sensitive groups.

The goal of the program, which runs through the end of February, is to reduce concentrations of harmful air pollutants throughout the San Joaquin Valley. Wintertime residential wood burning adds about 24 tons per day of fine particulates to the region's air, about four times the amount spewed in one day by all the vehicles traveling on area roads, according to air district data.

Violations of the wood-burning prohibitions can result in fines of \$50 to \$1,000.

Last year, favorable meteorological conditions meant the burning ban was never invoked locally.

"We were expecting four to 25 mandatory curtailment days last year, and we had only two Valley-wide, with none in San Joaquin County," said Kelly Hogan Malay, an air district spokeswoman.

In the program's first year, wood-burning restrictions were not always well understood, affecting associated industries.

"Last year, there was a lot of confusion. In general, people now have realized that they can burn," said Dave Smith, a longtime Stockton firewood dealer who, with early cold weather, is seeing increased sales so far this year.

But other businesses have been hurt. Declining firewood sales, as well as escalating workers-compensation costs, forced Lionudakis in Escalon, now a tree grinding company, to discontinue selling firewood two years ago.

"It was a pretty good business, but it's no longer profitable," said Ed Alves, Lionudakis general manager.

The company still has hundreds of cords of wood stockpiled on its grounds, which it continues to advertise for sale.

Of greater effect to business than burning restrictions, though, might be the air district rule change in January allowing open-hearth fireplaces in new developments only where there are two or fewer homes per acre, effectively banning fireplace construction in most home projects.

"That's the area of the rules we think went too far. Our concern is that other air districts will look at this decision as a model," said Chris Caron, vice president of marketing for Duraflame, a Stockton-based fire log manufacturer that sells its products mostly in the United States and Canada.

The effect of that decision, Caron said, has yet to be felt because there is still a large existing base of fireplaces. He said the company's concern is with the long-term effect because its fire logs are designed for use in open-hearth fireplaces.

Sensitivity to air-quality issues and concerns about tightening regulations figure prominently in Duraflame product research-and-development decisions, he said.

Recently, Duraflame rolled out its All Natural Firelog, which contains plant-based waxes. It produces three-fourths fewer particulates than wood logs and somewhat less than traditional logs containing petroleum-based waxes.

And Duraflame is now actively involved in developing products that could be burned in enclosed heating devices, such as fireplace inserts and freestanding stoves, according to Caron.

Individuals are also feeling the effect of the new regulations.

Lodi resident Carl Hickmann, whose orchards supply wood for his open-hearth fireplace, said that, in general, he feels that the air district has done a good job educating the public about the Check Before You Burn Program.

But he does not agree with the restrictions.

"If you have retired people, who don't have a lot of money, they need to burn wood to stay warm," Hickmann said.

Hickmann also said that other pollution sources, particularly diesel vehicles, should be more strictly regulated.

The air district's rule change also affects home sellers, requiring that they ensure any wood-burning fireplace insert or stove in the house is EPA Phase II certified. Noncertified heaters must be removed, replaced or made inoperable before a sale can be completed.

Typically, however, home sellers do not upgrade to cleaner-burning devices.

"Most of my customers have stoves that are over 20 years old. They are only being pulled out if the stove is not EPA certified and the house is being sold," said Craig Roley, owner of Old World Chimney Sweep in Stockton.

Fireplace and freestanding stove inspections have become a big part of Roley's business because of the rule change.

"I'm behind on my regular customers because I'm doing so many real estate inspections. I have about 500 inserts, and I've only done 20 so far this year," said the 27-year veteran chimney sweep.

With so much business, Roley works a six-day week.

And he is hoping to maintain that pace.

"I love to knock on the door, with my dirty face and long beard, and have an 80-year old lady say, 'Come in, honey.' "

LA port officials weaken plan to limit air pollution at terminal

The Associated Press

Published in the Orange County Register, Bakersfield Californian, Los Angeles Times and

Merced Sun-Star

Nov. 1, 2004

LOS ANGELES (AP) -- Port of Los Angeles officials have weakened a plan to control air pollution at a container terminal that could enable ships to plug into electric power instead of idling their diesel engines while docked.

Harbor officials had said they wanted new tenants at the site to reduce emissions by operating 80 percent of their ships with electricity within two years.

However, records obtained by the Los Angeles Times show the port rejected all four bids from shipping companies vying for the lease even though two of the bidders promised to meet that goal.

The port opened a new bidding process last week with a lower target of 70 percent electricity use within three years.

The shift angered one of the companies whose bid was rejected despite its pledge to meet the standard.

"It's confusing and frustrating, and we're trying to make sense of it," an unidentified official with the firm, P&O Nedlloyd Container Line Ltd. of London, told the Times.

Port officials responded that the bids were turned down for several reasons such as confusion among the shipping lines about terms of the request. They said the initial request for proposals called the pollution cut a "goal" while the new one makes it mandatory.

"That's a huge difference," said Bruce Seaton, the port's interim executive director.

Seaton said the port also wanted to impose a new environmental rule that would force ships to reduce speed 40 miles offshore rather than 20 miles. That in turn could lower emissions.

But environmental groups argued that the measure would do far less to cut air pollution than moving quickly to switch ships to electric power.

"It defies logic that the port would be prepared to scrap the entire bid process that would create the greenest terminal in the world in order to require this additional measure," environmentalists wrote in a letter last week to Mayor James Hahn.

Ships at berth in the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, the nation's largest port complex, annually generate more than 4,000 tons of nitrogen oxide pollution, which contributes to smog, according to a recent report commissioned by the port of Long Beach.

Clean-air and community activists have raised concerns about the potential negative health effects of air pollution from ships, trains and trucks at the port. The port is the largest air polluter in Southern California.

No burn season begins today

Monday, Nov. 1, Modesto Bee

Mandatory wood-burning restrictions go into effect throughout the Northern San Joaquin Valley starting today and lasting through February.

The restrictions are part of a multipronged strategy the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has taken to reduce pollution.

The rule bans wood burning in fireplaces and stoves on days when air quality drops to an unhealthy level. The program, launched last year, was prompted by health concerns about particulate matter, known to trigger respiratory problems.

In air-quality jargon, the pollution is known as PM10 — particulate matter that's 10 or fewer microns in diameter, smaller than the diameter of a human hair.

Winter wood burning in the valley adds an estimated 24 tons of unhealthy particulate matter into the air every day, say air district officials. That accounts for about a third of the unhealthy particles released into the air each day.

During the winter, the Central Valley has some of the nation's highest levels of PM10, and fails to meet state and federal health standards.

The valley also is home to some of the nation's highest asthma rates — about 16 percent in Fresno and 11.7 percent in Merced, compared with an 8 percent national average.

Depending on the air quality index, the district can trigger two stages of the rule — a voluntary curb on burning or a mandatory shutdown. The rule covers houses, apartments, businesses and restaurants.

When the index is forecast between 100 and 150, which is harmful to people with sensitive lungs, the voluntary phase begins. The district will ask residents in the affected counties to voluntarily stop burning wood in open fireplaces or old stoves.

But when the air quality index is projected at 151 or above, officials will issue a mandatory no-burn order in the affected counties, and even cleaner wood-burning alternatives must not be used.

The district patrols neighborhoods to enforce such a ban. Citations could cost \$50 to \$1,000.

Valley's Rare Air

By John Wright

Oct. 31, 2004, The Herald Journal (Logan, Utah)

Local officials brace for another winter of smog, possible EPA action

It's relatively unusual for Cache Valley to make front-page news in Salt Lake City, but Jan. 16, 2004, was one of those days.

"Logan air is dirtiest in the U.S." read a headline in The Salt Lake Tribune.

The headline was accurate: On the previous day, Logan's air contained the highest concentration of particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in size, or PM 2.5, in the country.

However, the city's air did not, as the story went on to say, contain the highest concentration of PM 2.5 ever recorded nationally. An inflated reading from a real-time monitor in Logan had prompted a spokesman from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to make the erroneous statement. Official concentrations are determined by pollution-collecting filters after they're dried and weighed in Salt Lake City, a process that takes a few days. As it turned out, it had been only the ninth-highest PM 2.5 reading on record.

Fearing that the "dirtiest air" myth, which was reported not only in The Tribune but by media outlets nationwide, could affect everything from tourism to athletic recruiting at Utah State University, local officials subsequently launched a corrective blitz.

In retrospect, most say it worked, and Cache Valley's pristine image escaped largely unscathed. But the problem remains.

In fact, thanks to this year's severe pollution episodes, the area is on the brink of reaching "nonattainment" status under health-based EPA guidelines for PM 2.5 -- lung-penetrating soot that's less than 1/40th the width of a human hair.

Still, though, there may have been a silver lining to those clouds of smog that smothered the area last winter.

"It certainly raised the awareness in the valley," said Grant Koford, an environmental health scientist with the Bear River Health Department. "It (the information) was maybe a little erroneous, but it definitely got people's attention."

"We were still sky-high above the standard, and it's still a health problem," he added. "We were still among the top in the nation."

Logan actually has logged three of the 15 highest PM 2.5 readings in the nation since monitoring began in 1999. In fact, the number from January wasn't even the highest ever here. That came in 2002, when the concentration topped out at 137.5 micrograms per cubic meter, more than double the EPA's "unhealthy" threshold of 65 micrograms.

Eight of the other 12 readings on the dubious top-15 list were recorded in California's San Joaquin Valley, one of the most polluted areas in the country. And for that reason, air quality expert Randy Martin said he can live with the error.

"I don't feel bad saying we're the dirtiest ever," said Martin, an associate professor in Utah State University's civil and environmental engineering department. "Look at what you're comparing us with -- Bakersfield, Fresno, El Paso (Texas)."

Of course, there is a difference. While those places are plagued year-round by PM 2.5 and other pollutants, Cache Valley's problem is limited to winter -- and primarily January and February.

"Outside of the winter, our air is really very good here with regard to PM 2.5," Martin said.

Winter is when strong temperature inversions -- during which air is warmer at higher altitudes -- frequently trap pollution near the valley floor. Intermountain anticyclones, the technical term for inversions, are essentially large high-pressure systems that sit over the West.

The problem is exacerbated in Logan for a variety of reasons. First, Cache Valley is relatively small and deep. During inversions, vehicle exhaust and other pollutants have nowhere to go.

"We've got a much smaller mixing bowl, if you will," Martin said. "We just don't have the luxury of emitting a lot of things. We've got plenty of cars given our relatively small mixing volume. It's the combination of all these things. From an air quality standpoint, Cache Valley is not meant to handle 100,000 people."

The valley is also colder than most -- in part due to heavy snowpack that reflects solar radiation -- and the ingredients of PM 2.5 form more readily at lower temperatures.

Scientists believe that almost 50 percent of PM 2.5 locally is ammonium nitrate, which results from chemical reactions between oxides of nitrogen, or NOx, and ammonia gas. NOx are primarily the product of vehicle emissions, while ammonia gas comes mainly from livestock waste.

However, the equation may not be as simple as it once seemed -- "cars plus cows equals pollution." For one, scientists now believe cars may be producing some of the ammonia, and

volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, may play as big a role as NOx. Throw in temperatures at which such processes have never been studied, and the problem becomes rather complex. Rick Sprott, director of the Utah Division of Air Quality, said unlike in places like Libby, Mont. -- where the PM 2.5 problem is largely a result of wood-burning -- there doesn't appear to be a "one-bullet" solution.

"You have a lot of different things going in and we don't understand exactly what the mixture is in the soup," Sprott said. "It's a puzzler, a big puzzler. What we're seeing in Cache Valley is new to a lot of people in this field."

The DAQ currently is working on a computer model that could be used to estimate potential PM 2.5 reductions in Cache Valley when certain ingredients are curtailed. But the model is relatively simple, and Sprott said the DAQ has been unable to secure any EPA grant money to conduct further studies.

"It leaves us standing there all alone wondering how we're going to solve the puzzle," he said. A solution will become more pressing if Cache valley reaches "nonattainment." The state would then be required to draft and implement a detailed pollution-reduction plan under the watchful eye of EPA officials.

Cache Valley will reach nonattainment, which is based on three-year pollution averages, if it experiences one day with a PM 2.5 concentration of 101.3 micrograms or higher this year, or about seven days with concentrations of 61.8 micrograms or higher in 2005. There have been 17 days with concentrations of 61.8 micrograms or higher in 2004.

"I'm an optimist, but I would say considering some of the numbers we've had in the past, it's probably more likely that we will than we won't," Sprott said.

It's unclear what PM 2.5 nonattainment would mean specifically, because the EPA is still in the process of drafting rules for cleaning up the newly regulated pollutant. However, Sprott ventured some guesses.

"There will be more stringent requirements for permitting activities that pollute -- businesses and that sort of thing," he said. "There would in all likelihood be a requirement for some sort of vehicle (emissions inspection and maintenance) program. There would have to be more stringent controls put on existing sources of particulate or precursors to particulate."

Other potential nonattainment consequences include restrictions related to road projects and agricultural sources of ammonia.

Local officials have said they fear the impacts of nonattainment on economic development. Others, meanwhile, have said the designation might be a good thing.

"There's part of me that says I wish we'd just go nonattainment so we could deal with these issues," said Martin, who's unsuccessfully lobbied local officials to voluntarily implement emissions inspections. "It would address some of the frustrations of trying to get programs in place."

And some say the real threat to the local economy stems from the pollution itself.

Bobbie Coray, president of the Cache Chamber of Commerce, said many companies choose to operate in Cache Valley because of its clean reputation.

"One report that happened in the news is not going to change anything," Coray said. "But if we are really polluted, and we really are a place that's not nice to live, we will lose businesses here and certainly not attract any."

"I'm very concerned," she added. "I've watched this valley, and I think we've got to be so careful."

Fireplace limits put back on the burner

Unlike last year, residents may be fined for ignoring ban on burning wood

By MATT WEISER, Californian staff writer
Sunday, Oct. 31, 2004, Bakersfield Californian

Winter restrictions on heating with wood in the valley resume on Monday to protect air quality, and this year violators may be fined.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District last year imposed a ban on heating with wood when the Air Quality Index exceeds 150. This is the level at which particulate pollution from wood burning is considered unhealthy for everyone.

Last season, the district issued only warning letters to violators. About 60 of those letters went out in response to complaints from neighbors and inspections by district staff.

This year, the district will continue using warning letters but will also begin issuing fines to violators, ranging from \$50 to \$1,000, depending on the severity and circumstances of the violation.

Wood burning was prohibited only twice in the valley last winter. Air district officials say increased awareness about the health impacts of wood burning helped minimize the number of days when burning is banned.

A second part of the rule urges residents to voluntarily avoid burning when the air quality index is between 101 and 150. This range is considered unhealthy for children, the elderly, and people with breathing problems.

Brenda Turner, an air district spokeswoman, said many people heeded the call.

"We believe that when we asked the public to curtail wood burning, it decreased the number of days mandatory curtailments were issued," she said.

The valley does not meet federal and state health standards for particulate pollution, and Bakersfield is often one of the worst spots in the valley for this pollutant. While agricultural burning contributes to the problem, studies show that residential wood burning is a bigger factor in urban areas.

Particulates can aggravate asthma and bronchitis, and cause heart attacks and lung cancer. Wood burning pumps 24 tons of particulate pollution into the valley's air every day, about four times more than all motor vehicles in the valley.

"Probably most of the general public may be surprised the numbers are that high," said Turner. "It's enough so that it's really important that people follow this rule."

The particulate problem is aggravated by winter weather in the valley. Temperature inversions often trap particulates near the ground, and winds are usually light, preventing dispersal.

Valley burn checks will start again

Air district will set rules for using stoves, fireplaces.

By Mark Grossi

The Fresno Bee, Sunday, Oct. 31, 2004

Residents in eight counties must start checking this afternoon to see whether authorities will allow wood burning the next day in their fireplaces, wood stoves or wood-burning heaters.

The second season of the residential burn rule begins Monday from Stockton to Bakersfield in the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Last fall and winter, there were only two no-burn days in the Valley. But air district officials asked residents to voluntarily refrain from burning on 60 days to keep the air free of soot and ash particles.

To determine whether burning is allowed in your county Monday, call (800) 766-4463 or go online to www.valleyair.org after 4:30 p.m. today. Residents need to continue checking before burning until the end of February.

The district's daily status reports are based on the forecast for each county's air quality index, known as the AQI. The rating system ranges from healthy air at zero to a lung-searing 300 or above. Depending on the AQI, the district can trigger two stages of the rule. The first is a

voluntary curb on burning and the second a mandatory shutdown. The rule covers houses, apartments, businesses and restaurants.

When the AQI is forecast between 100 and 150 -- which is harmful to people with sensitive lungs -- the voluntary phase begins. The district will ask residents in the affected counties to voluntarily stop burning wood in open fireplaces or old wood stoves.

If people choose to burn on such days, the district encourages the use of manufactured logs, such as Duraflame, which burn much cleaner than regular firewood. Wood stoves and fireplace inserts that are federally certified are preferred as well.

But when the AQI is projected at 151 or higher, the voluntary phase will end, and officials will order a mandatory no-burn order in the affected counties. Even the cleaner wood-burning alternatives must not be used.

The district patrols neighborhoods to enforce such a ban. Citations could cost offenders \$50 to \$1,000.

The ban exempts residents whose sole source of heat is wood. It excludes those who live above 3,000 feet and those who don't have access to natural gas.

Fireplace soot, ash and other similar wood-burning pollution, called particulate matter, are primarily an urban problem, air officials said. Such pollution has been connected with heart problems and increased mortality rates.

The Valley is one of the worst places in the country for particulate pollution.

Report confirms Arctic changes

Study by 8 nations blames emissions

Andrew C. Revkin, New York Times

in the S.F. Chronicle, Saturday, October 30, 2004

A comprehensive four-year study of warming in the Arctic shows that heat-trapping gases from tailpipes and smokestacks around the world are contributing to profound environmental changes, including sharp retreats of glaciers and sea ice, thawing of permafrost and shifts in the weather, the oceans, and the atmosphere.

The study, commissioned by eight nations with Arctic territory, including the United States, says the changes are likely to harm native communities, wildlife and economic activity but also offer some benefits, like longer growing seasons. The report is due to be released Nov. 9, but portions were provided Friday to the New York Times by European participants in the project.

While Arctic warming has been going on for decades and has been studied before, this is the first thorough assessment of the causes and consequences of the trend. It was conducted by nearly 300 scientists, as well as elders from the native communities in the region, after representatives of the eight nations met in October 2000 in Barrow, Alaska, amid a growing sense of urgency about the effects of global warming on the Arctic.

The findings support the broad but politically controversial scientific consensus that global warming is due mainly to rising atmospheric concentrations of the heat-trapping "greenhouse" gases, and that the Arctic is the first region to feel its effects. While the report is advisory and carries no legal weight, it is likely to increase pressure on the Bush administration, which has acknowledged a possible human role in global warming but says the science is still too murky to justify mandatory reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The State Department, which has reviewed the report, declined to comment on it Friday.

The report says that "while some historical changes in climate have resulted from natural causes and variations, the strength of the trends and the patterns of change that have emerged in recent decades indicate that human influences, resulting primarily from increased emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, have now become the dominant factor."

The Arctic "is now experiencing some of the most rapid and severe climate change on Earth," the report says, adding, "Over the next 100 years, climate change is expected to accelerate, contributing to major physical, ecological, social and economic changes, many of which have already begun."

Prompt efforts to curb emissions could slow the pace of change, allowing communities and wildlife to adapt, the report says. But it also stresses that further warming and melting are unavoidable, given the centurylong buildup of the long-lived gases, mainly carbon dioxide.

Several of the Europeans who provided parts of the report said they did so because the Bush administration had delayed publication until after the presidential election, partly because of the political contentiousness of global warming.

The report is a profusely illustrated window on a region in remarkable flux, incorporating reams of scientific data as well as observations by elders from native communities around the Arctic Circle.

The potential benefits of the changes include projected growth in marine fish stocks and improved prospects for agriculture and timber harvests in some regions, as well as expanded access to Arctic waters. But the list of potential harms is far longer.

The retreat of sea ice, the report says, "is very likely to have devastating consequences for polar bears, ice-living seals, and local people for whom these animals are a primary food source."

Oil and gas deposits on land are likely to be harder to extract as tundra continues to thaw, limiting the frozen season when drilling convoys can traverse the otherwise spongy ground, the report says. Alaska has already seen the "tundra travel" season on the North Slope shrink from about 200 days a year in 1970 to 100 days now.

Central Valley town known for roses fears scent of another kind

By Juliana Barbassa, Associated Press Reporter

in the S.F. Chronicle, Friday, October 29, 2004

WASCO, Calif. (AP) -- The pride of this farming town tucked into the southern end of California's San Joaquin Valley is a crop not usually linked to one of the nation's most fertile agricultural regions.

Wasco grows much of the nation's domestic supply of roses, producing varieties with names such as the blood-red Lover's Lane, the yellow miniature Sun Sprinkles and the blush-pink Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The town celebrates an annual Rose Festival, complete with a Rose Queen pageant, and a small plaque in the modest downtown tells visitors they've entered the "Rose Capital of the Nation."

Its residents now fear the fragrance of their signature flower will soon be overpowered by another scent: cow manure.

Proposals pending with the Kern County Board of Supervisors to bring 10 mega-dairies to Wasco's immediate outskirts have residents worrying that the character of their town will change soon and for the worst. The dairies, if approved, would surround the town of 22,000 with about 100,000 cows.

Dairies "don't bring that many jobs, but they sure do create a stink," said hairdresser Maria Gomez, while cutting hair in the Casa Bonita salon.

Said her aunt, Maria Espinoza: "Anyone thinking about moving here will think twice."

It's not just the smell of the cows and the flies they attract that bothers residents of the town northwest of Bakersfield. They're also afraid the tons of manure to be spread on the ground will hurt water quality and that the cow's own emissions will worsen air pollution in what already is one of the nation's dirtiest air basins.

To express their frustration, a group of Wasco residents joined with several city council members to put a measure on Tuesday's ballot asking the dairies to stay at least 10 miles outside town.

They're hoping for a strong show of support, even though the measure has no legal weight. The sites proposed by the dairies lie outside city limits, giving responsibility to the board of supervisors.

County Supervisor Ray Watson said the proposal to establish a 10-mile buffer zone around Wasco is "excessive and arbitrary."

The proposal, he said, fails to consider "the new technology and the mitigations the dairies might employ to lessen their impact."

Industry representatives said dairy farmers have improved their practices in recent years to make their farms less of a nuisance and an environmental hazard. Among the examples they cite: spreading manure in fields where it can be absorbed by crops and capturing the cows' waste to control flies and odor.

Many in Wasco remain unconvinced.

"We'd be depending on which way the wind blows," said Marina Paredes, president of the Wasco Rose Society, which brings together commercial rose growers and others who grow their own flowers. "The manure, the smells -- the wind could bring that right into town."

Wasco City Council member Larry Pearson said county supervisors are concerned only with business and money.

"When does residents' health become an issue?" he said.

About 30 residents formed Residents for Clean Air and Clean Water to lobby for the ballot measure. Member Laurie Rodriguez said she realizes the supervisors and the dairy farmers don't have to listen, but she's hoping they will if residents favor the buffer zone.

Kern County's most valuable crops are almonds, citrus and grapes. But the dairy industry is growing quickly there, as it is throughout California's Central Valley. The state leads the nation in dairy production.

Many of the incoming dairy farmers are coming from the Chino basin east of Los Angeles, where their land is surrounded by booming suburbs and is coveted by developers.

Kern County, already home to 290,000 dairy cows, has relatively cheap land and several milk processing plants. County officials said they've received applications from 26 mega-dairies to move to the county, adding 237,000 animals, many of them in Watson's district.

David Jones, planning director for the San Joaquin Unified Air Pollution Control District, said he is concerned by the manure, the dust and contaminants from farms that sometimes hold as many as 25,000 cows each.

"It adds up," he said. "They're no longer the mom-pop-and-bunch-of-kids operations they used to be."

The San Joaquin Valley has some of the country's worst air pollution. Local air regulators say cows produce about 10 percent of the chemical compounds that combine in the atmosphere to produce ozone, a principal component in the smog that plagues the San Joaquin Valley's air.

A sudden influx of hundreds of thousands of cows is something the region has never before dealt with, and local officials are working hard to understand the cumulative effect on the environment.

"Traditionally, our county has been agricultural and we've been accommodating, but these dairies are locating closer to cities now," said Ted James, Kern County's planning director. "It brings in issues of how far do flies fly, how far does odor travel, and what's going to happen to the groundwater?"

Industry representatives dispute the science used to conclude that dairies are a significant source of pollution.

They rely on new dairy designs to control flies and odors, and manage waste to keep it from affecting the air and water, said Mike Marsh, chief executive officer of Western United Dairymen.

"Dairies have to be sensitive to the local environment they move into," he said.

Marsh also said dairies are good for business, saying they generate about \$20 billion and 150,000 jobs in the state.

Some Wasco residents see the dairies as a way to improve the town's struggling economy.

"Dairies bring steady, year-round jobs," said Alejandro Penaloza, who owns the .99 Cent Store on Wasco's main street. "By the time Christmas comes, most people who work in agriculture are unemployed. We need work. We can always deal with the flies."

Pollution cuts California rain, snow, study warns

By Don Thompson, Associated Press Writer

Thursday, October 28, 2004

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) -- Urban air pollution may be reducing rainfall in the Central Valley and along the heavily populated southern California coast, while trimming mountain snowfall that supplies much of the state's drinking and irrigation water and hydroelectric power, a Stanford University professor's study released Thursday shows.

It's the first study to use a new computer program to examine airborne pollutants' effect on a regional climate. Coupled with possible reduced precipitation from global warming, the effect could be a more limited supply of water for the state's growing population, the California Energy Commission warned Thursday.

Mark Z. Jacobson, a professor in Stanford's civil and engineering department, conducted his study for the commission's Public Interest Energy Research Program. It is one of the preliminary studies PIER is conducting before it attempts to project California's future climate and how the state can prepare for changing conditions.

Scientists have only recently begun reaching conclusions about the role of airborne particles in climate change.

Carbon specks on snow, for instance, speeds the melting of snow each spring and cuts ice fields' ability to reflect sunlight away from the earth. Carbon flecks suspended in the air may absorb sunlight, heating the atmosphere but blocking sunlight from reaching the earth. Other particles reflect sunlight away from the earth's atmosphere entirely.

Researchers at University of Nevada's Desert Research Institute reported findings similar to Jacobson's conclusions earlier this year by measuring snow from actual winter storms in the Rocky Mountains. Pollution-contaminated clouds produced half as much snow, and what fell contained 25 percent less water and had as little as half the mass of its pristine counterpart, the study found.

A scientist at Israel's Hebrew University used satellite photos to show decreased snow and rain in pollution-contaminated clouds around the world in 2000, and a study this year found a similar pattern in California.

Jacobson's computer modeling shows suspended pollutants can cut Sierra snowfall by disturbing air pressure systems and thus disrupting cloud and wind patterns. In addition, more moisture-attracting particles means fewer of the resulting cloud droplets may grow heavy enough to fall to the ground as rain.

"It gets accentuated in the mountains because that's where you get the most precipitation," he said in an interview. "Even if you get less pollution there, you have bigger effects."

He checked the model's results against extensive actual measurements from weather in February and August of 1999.

The model showed reduced precipitation and ground-level air temperatures in February in the Sierra Nevada mountains, Central Valley, and Southern California. Air temperatures increased slightly in August along the Southern California coast, while sunlight reaching the ground decreased, meaning a possible reduction in crop yields, Jacobson found.

Clouds were as much as twice as visually dense and were longer-lasting. They contained more liquid water concentrated around the suspended particles -- but less of it turned to ice because the sooty clouds absorbed more heat, the model showed.

Higher concentrations of airborne pollutants means more contamination of ground and surface water from the resulting rainfall, the study found.

Ultraviolet radiation reaching the earth was diminished, but the health benefits from less damaging radiation were offset by higher levels of harmful pollution.

"The breathing of these pollutants hurts you a lot more than a few percent reduction in the UV," Jacobson said.

Town famous for roses fears a different scent

Central Valley's floral bowl is fighting to halt 10 mega-dairies

By Juliana Barbassa

Oct. 30, 2004, Tri Valley Herald and Modesto Bee

WASCO -- The pride of this farming town tucked into the southern end of San Joaquin Valley is a crop not usually linked to one of the nation's most fertile agricultural regions.

Wasco grows much of the nation's domestic supply of roses, producing varieties with names such as the blood-red Lover's Lane, the yellow miniature Sun Sprinkles and the blush-pink Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The town celebrates an annual Rose Festival, complete with a Rose Queen pageant, and a small plaque in the modest downtown tells visitors they've entered the "Rose Capital of the Nation."

Its residents now fear that the fragrance of their signature flower will soon be overpowered by another scent: cow manure.

Proposals pending with the Kern County Board of Supervisors to bring 10 mega-dairies to Wasco's immediate outskirts have residents worrying that the character of their town will change soon and for the worst. The dairies, if approved, would surround the town of 22,000 with about 100,000 cows.

Dairies "don't bring that many jobs, but they sure do create a stink," said hairdresser Maria Gomez, while cutting hair in the Casa Bonita salon.

Said her aunt, Maria Espinoza: "Anyone thinking about moving here will think twice."

It's not just the smell of the

cows and the flies they attract that bothers residents of the town northwest of Bakersfield. They're also afraid the tons of manure to be spread on the ground will hurt water quality and that the cow's own emissions will worsen air pollution in what already is one of the nation's dirtiest air basins.

To express their frustration, a group of Wasco residents joined with several city council members to put a measure on Tuesday's ballot asking the dairies to stay at least 10 miles outside town.

They're hoping for a strong show of support, even though the measure has no legal weight. The sites proposed by the dairies lie outside city limits, giving responsibility to the board of supervisors.

County Supervisor Ray Watson said the proposal to establish a 10-mile buffer zone around

Wasco is "excessive and arbitrary."

The proposal, he said, fails to consider "the new technology and the mitigations the dairies might employ to lessen their impact."

Industry representatives said dairy farmers have improved their practices in recent years to make their farms less of a nuisance and an environmental hazard. Among the examples they cite: spreading manure in fields where it can be absorbed by crops and capturing the cows' waste to control flies and odor.

Many in Wasco remain unconvinced.

"We'd be depending on which way the wind blows," said Marina Paredes, president of the Wasco Rose Society, which brings together commercial rose growers and others who grow their own flowers. "The manure, the smells -- the wind could bring that right into town."

Wasco City Council member Larry Pearson said county supervisors are concerned only with business and money.

"When does residents' health become an issue?" he said.

About 30 residents formed Residents for Clean Air and Clean Water to lobby for the ballot measure. Member Laurie Rodriguez said she realizes the supervisors and the dairy farmers don't have to listen, but she's hoping they will if residents favor the buffer zone.

Kern County's most valuable crops are almonds, citrus and grapes. But the dairy industry is growing quickly there, as it is throughout California's Central Valley. The state leads the nation in dairy production.

Many of the incoming dairy farmers are coming from the Chino basin east of Los Angeles, where their land is surrounded by booming suburbs and is coveted by developers.

Kern County, already home to 290,000 dairy cows, has relatively cheap land and several milk processing plants. County officials said they've received applications from 26 mega-dairies to move to the county, adding 237,000 animals, many of them in Watson's district.

David Jones, planning director for the San Joaquin Unified Air Pollution Control District, said he is concerned by the manure, the dust and contaminants from farms that sometimes hold as many as 25,000 cows each.

"It adds up," he said. "They're no longer the mom-pop-and-bunch-of-kids operations they used to be."

The San Joaquin Valley has some of the country's worst air pollution. Local air regulators say cows produce about 10 percent of the chemical compounds that combine in the atmosphere to produce ozone, a principal component in the smog that plagues the San Joaquin Valley's air.

A sudden influx of hundreds of thousands of cows is something the region has never before dealt with, and local officials are working hard to understand the cumulative effect on the environment.

"Traditionally, our county has been agricultural and we've been accommodating, but these dairies are locating closer to cities now," said Ted James, Kern County's planning director. "It brings in issues of how far do flies fly, how far does odor travel, and what's going to happen to the groundwater?"

Industry representatives dispute the science used to conclude that dairies are a significant source of pollution.

They rely on new dairy designs to control flies and odors, and manage waste to keep it from affecting the air and water, said Mike Marsh, chief executive officer of Western United Dairymen.

"Dairies have to be sensitive to the local environment they move into," he said.

Marsh also said dairies are good for business, saying they generate about \$20 billion and 150,000 jobs in the state.

Some Wasco residents see the dairies as a way to improve the town's struggling economy.

"Dairies bring steady, year-round jobs," said Alejandro Penaloza, who owns the .99 Cent Store on Wasco's main street. "By the time Christmas comes, most people who work in agriculture are unemployed. We need work. We can always deal with the flies."

Port of L.A. Rejects Bids for 'Green Terminal'

Officials weaken plan to limit emissions although two firms had vowed to meet tougher standard.

By Deborah Schoch, Los Angeles Times, Nov. 1, 2004

Despite Mayor James K. Hahn's vow to reduce air pollution at the harbor, Port of Los Angeles officials last week weakened a plan to limit emissions from ships at a much-touted new "green terminal" intended as a national model.

The port has rejected all four bids from shipping companies vying for the coveted site on Terminal Island, including two that promised to meet the port's goal of operating 80% of their ships with electrical power while docked - rather than with diesel engines - within two years, according to documents The Times obtained from the port.

Instead, the port launched new bidding last week with a less ambitious target for reducing pollution, requiring that 70% of docked ships use electricity within three years.

The change mystified and angered at least one of the shipping companies. Some environmentalists charged that the port weakened the requirements to benefit shipping firms that could not meet the tougher standard.

"The bottom line is that people in Los Angeles will breathe the fumes of these ships for another year," said Gail Ruderman Feuer, a senior attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Port officials have offered several reasons for rejecting the bids, including that the initial request for proposals called the pollution reduction a "goal," while the new request makes it a requirement. "That's a huge difference," said Bruce Seaton, the port's interim executive director.

The controversy has clouded the port's first-ever formal bidding for a container terminal, which was prompted by a stinging 2003 audit from City Controller Laura Chick complaining of no-bid leases and backroom deals.

Port and city officials have been trying to lease the four berths, known as the Matson terminal after a former tenant, for more than two years. Their fitful and confused efforts to cut a deal have come under the scrutiny of federal investigators in an ongoing probe into city and port contracting practices. The U.S. attorney's office last spring requested the minutes of talks about potential tenants.

The new documents show that two of the four bidders met the city's goals for reducing pollution with "cold ironing," in which docked ships plug into onshore electric power.

Plugging in a single ship per day, rather than relying on diesel power to operate the ship's equipment, can eliminate a ton of nitrogen oxides, one of the most toxic port pollutants. Ships, trucks and trains calling at the Los Angeles-Long Beach port complex released more than 100 tons of nitrogen oxides daily in 2001. The port is the largest air polluter in Southern California.

Public concern about port air pollution has grown swiftly in recent months in the wake of research showing that it can permanently stunt children's lung growth and that residents downwind of the ports and the 710 Freeway have unusually high rates of certain lung and throat cancers.

Two of the four shipping companies seeking to become new port tenants - P&O Nedlloyd Container Line Ltd. of London and Hong Kong-based Orient Overseas Container Line - pledged to meet the port's goal of reducing pollution by switching 80% of the ships docked at the property from diesel power to electricity within two years.

A P&O Nedlloyd official said he does not understand why the bids were rejected. "It's confusing and frustrating, and we're trying to make sense of it," said the official, who asked not to be named. "This just means the process is being pushed back, and it doesn't need to be."

The two other bidders - Evergreen Marine Corp. of Taiwan and Tokyo-based Yusen Terminal Inc., existing port tenants - did not meet the plug-in goal. Evergreen proposed switching to electricity at other berths and Yusen wants to turn the land into a storage yard.

Port officials have offered a number of reasons for rejecting the bids, including apparent confusion among shipping firms about the terms of the first request and a desire to notify bidders that proposals will be made public before a tenant is chosen.

Seaton added that the port also wanted to insist on a new environmental rule, requiring ships calling at the terminal to reduce speed 40 miles offshore rather than 20 miles, which vessel operators now do voluntarily.

Slower ships produce less pollution, but clean-air groups counter that this requirement would be far less effective than swiftly switching ships at the Matson terminal to electric power from the dock.

"It defies logic that the port would be prepared to scrap the entire bid process that would create the greenest terminal in the world in order to require this additional measure," several environmental groups wrote last week in a letter to Hahn.

Seaton said the port also anticipated delays in its cold ironing schedule because the Department of Water and Power needed time to build the needed electrical infrastructure.

A DWP spokeswoman said that the department could provide electrical service for the ships by 2006 and could have service at one berth within three months. "We've been working closely with the port and see no problems whatsoever with meeting our obligations," said spokeswoman Mary Lemelle.

If DWP can meet that target, Feuer said, "the Board of Harbor Commissioners should reinitiate the process and award the bid to the greenest terminal."

Critics speculate that the port rejected the bids and altered its request to favor one of its existing tenants, Evergreen or Yusen, a subsidiary of Nippon Yusen Kabushiki Kaisha, or NYK, based in Tokyo.

"It looks to us like they are trying to delay or weaken the requirement to enable Evergreen or NYK to get the bid, and that approach smells foul," Feuer said.

Port officials deny that politics played a role. "It's disappointing that she feels that that's our intention, because that's not our intention," said port spokesman Arley Baker.

The mayor's office, however, is known to have favored leasing the land to Evergreen as part of a deal to get a sister company to move its air cargo operations from Los Angeles International Airport to Ontario airport.

"We're not backing anyone," Deputy Mayor Doane Liu said. "I think that's old stuff."

County eyes Customs at Meadows Field

Board of Supervisors likely to ask governor for support in getting federal facility in place

By GRETCHEN WENNER, Californian staff writer

Sunday October 31st, 2004, Bakersfield Californian

County supervisors Tuesday will likely move ahead with the next step in bringing Mexicana Airlines to Kern County: a letter to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The board is being asked to approve a letter to Schwarzenegger requesting his support in getting a U.S. Customs and Border Protection facility at Meadows Field airport.

The governor's support is required before federal regulators will consider installing customs inspectors at the airport. Such service is required before international flights can come and go in Bakersfield.

The airline gave county officials a letter of intent last week saying they wanted to start flights to Guadalajara and Mexico City.

International service would also open up Kern to other benefits, including foreign trade and tourism dollars, local officials say.

Mexicana officials estimate some 250,000 people a year from the San Joaquin Valley drive to airports outside the area to catch flights to Mexico. Currently, there are no direct flights from valley airports.

The board will likely have short sessions on Election Day, as most items are not slated for public discussion.

Other matters before supervisors include:

* An address by retired employee Lynda Taylor regarding problems with county health benefits. Taylor, a lawyer who now lives in Paso Robles, believes "the current health insurance program systematically denies" earned health benefits because she has moved to another county, according to a letter sent to supervisors. Taylor, who believes a systemic denial of claims is affecting other retired employees, will speak at the morning session.

- Filing of a Sierra Club letter announcing the organization will sue the county for its approval of a controversial residential development in western Rosedale. The project, by

developers Hageman Northwest, LP, will put more than 380 homes at the southeast corner of Hageman and Heath roads. The Sierra Club and many nearby residents opposed the project, saying the small-lot homes in a relatively rural area will create traffic and pollution problems and lead to premature development of farmland.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Sunday, Oct. 31, 2004:](#)

Environment besieged

During the campaign, the Bush administration has not been significantly challenged on its environmental policies. President Bush is gradually gutting the Endangered Species Act, as well as clean air and water mandates, all for the benefit of big business and to the detriment of the general public.

His "Clear Skies" program deceives the public by revising the method by which air pollution is calculated. Mandated industrial air pollution limits and industrial upgrading of pollution controls have been relaxed.

The administration's plan for building roads in roadless areas of our national forests and parks, under the guise of reducing fire hazards, is in reality aimed toward logging access. Indiscriminate logging destroys the natural watersheds, pollutes water sources and affects all wildlife.

If George W. Bush is re-elected, many of our environmental safeguards established over the last two or three decades will be lost.

George W. Oja, Bass Lake

[Sunday, Oct. 31, 2004 Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor](#)

Dairy question raised

by LARRY ALONSO PEARSON, Wasco City Councilman

This is in response to the concerns expressed by Supervisor Ray Watson in his paid advertisement that was placed in the Wasco Tribune concerning Measure U.

We, as a council, had approved a dairy buffer. But the information that came out of the public hearings taught us that the buffer that we planned was insufficient. Therefore, we did not submit that original plan.

Our city attorney assured us that there is no cost in placing Measure U on the ballot. The only time that \$5,000 came up was a local yahoo's comment in the local newspaper's letter to the editor.

Watson asks why anyone would think they should be able to control the rights of property owners 10 miles away engaged in a responsible business. The entire dairy question is, "How responsible is the dairy industry?" If the industry is so responsible, how did a state Fish and Game preserve get flooded with dairy lagoon water? How do piles of dead cows get left for days at a time on the side of a county road? How does a dairy's own alfalfa hay get such a high level of nitrates that it cannot even be fed to their own cows?

Watson brags about how the dairy technology is on the cutting edge. Go ask the people who live on Old River Road, Bear Mountain Road and Magnolia Avenue: "Is that dairy technology helping you?"

Watson doesn't like Sen. Dean Florez stepping in on local concerns. Where would Wasco be if Florez had not stepped in? When local leaders disagree with their county supervisor, the supervisor bashes and slams the local leaders in a paid advertisement.