

Calif. governor signs legislation to curb pollution from cruise ships

By TERENCE CHEA, Associated Press Writer

Friday, Sept. 24, in the Modesto Bee, Sacramento Bee, Bakersfield Californian, Visalia Times-Delta and The Merced Sun-Star

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) - Environmentalists applauded Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger for signing two bills aimed at stopping cruise ships from polluting the air and water near the California coastline and are urging him to put his signature on a third bill that would ban sewage dumping within state waters.

One law Schwarzenegger signed Thursday, authored by Assemblyman George Nakano, D-Torrance, bans the discharge of "gray water" from cruise ship kitchens, laundries and showers into state waters, which extend three miles from shore.

The other, by Assemblyman Joseph Simitian, D-Palo Alto, prohibits luxury liners from burning garbage in on-board incinerators while they are in state waters. Both are scheduled to go into effect on Jan 1.

But Schwarzenegger didn't act on a measure that would ban the release of sewage, both treated and untreated, into state waters. The legislation, which is opposed by the cruise industry, automatically becomes law if the Republican governor doesn't sign or veto it by Sept. 30.

"If he vetoes the sewage bill, the cruise lines will have his blessing to dump in California waters without oversight," said Teri Shore, campaign director for San Francisco-based Bluewater Network, which sponsored the measures.

Michael Crye, president of the Arlington, Va.-based International Council for Cruise Lines, said the industry supported the two new laws because cruise lines generally don't dump gray water or incinerate garbage in state waters.

But the council, which represents about 80 percent of the cruise industry, opposes the sewage bill. Crye said the group's members use advanced wastewater purification systems that "discharge water that is close to drinking water quality."

"(The bill) doesn't recognize this very promising, very efficacious technology," Crye said. "We believe an outright ban on the use of these systems in coastal waters is myopic."

The new California laws go beyond federal law, which prohibits cruise ships from dumping untreated sewage in state waters, but allows the discharge of treated sewage and gray water anywhere, including ports and harbors.

In April this year, Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Illinois, and Rep. Sam Farr, D-Monterey, Calif., introduced the federal Clean Cruise Ship Act, which would ban discharges by cruise ships within 12 miles of the coast. The cruise industry opposes the legislation.

Alaska has some of the nation's strictest cruise ship pollution laws, allowing the discharge of sewage and gray water only if the effluent meets state standards. Maine adopted similar legislation earlier this year.

In some states, such as Florida, Hawaii and Washington, cruise companies sign agreements promising not to discharge waste into state waters, but environmental groups say such agreements can't be enforced.

Calls to regulate cruise ships have been fueled by the rapid expansion of an industry that operates largely outside national borders. The industry has grown by about 12 percent annually for the past three years, and generated more than \$25 billion in "total U.S. economic impact" in 2003, according to the ICCL.

Cruise ship stops have increased by 50 percent in California over the past two years, and about 45 ships are expected to make more than 600 port calls this year, according to the Bluewater Network, which sponsored the bills.

The latest push to regulate the industry in California began after a luxury liner several miles off shore dumped about 36,000 gallons of sewage and other wastewater into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary in October 2002.

The dumping, which wasn't reported for five months, outraged the city of Monterey and prompted a ban on ships run by Crystal Cruises from its harbor.

State regulators consider landmark smog restrictions

By TIM MOLLOY, Associated Press

[Friday, Sept. 24, in the Modesto Bee, the Orange County Register and Merced Sun-Star](#)

LOS ANGELES (AP) - California air regulators were expected to vote Friday on ambitious rules to reduce car emissions that contribute to global warming - an effort that could effect how the entire country fights vehicle pollution.

The regulations being considered this week are fiercely opposed by the auto industry, whose representatives complain they unfairly target California and could raise the price of cars, trucks and SUVs as much as \$3,000. The industry has threatened to challenge the regulations in court if they are adopted.

The proposals call for California to require technological changes in vehicles in the state starting in 2009. The innovations would include better air conditioners, more efficient transmissions and smaller engines. Regulators estimate they would cut exhaust emissions in cars and light trucks by 25 percent and in larger trucks and SUVs by 18 percent.

"Obviously California cannot solve the problem of global climate change by ourselves. But we can certainly do our part," said Air Resources Board Chairman Alan C. Lloyd. The board heard public testimony Thursday and concluded its meeting without a vote.

The regulations could have a major effect automakers in two ways: California represents 10 percent of the national auto market, and several other states follow California's lead when it comes to adopting their own clean-air standards.

California is the only state able to set its own vehicle pollution standards because it began regulating pollution before the federal government. Other states can adopt either federal vehicle pollution standards or California's.

Board staff members said Thursday the tougher regulations would add about \$367 to the cost of cars and small trucks and \$277 for large trucks and SUVs starting in 2009. By 2016, the added costs could climb to \$1,064 for cars and small trucks and \$1,029 for large trucks and SUVs.

Auto industry officials complained that the rules unfairly target Californians for what is a worldwide air pollution problem. California produces less than 1 percent of the heat-trapping, or greenhouse, gases that many scientists believe are contributing to global warming.

Fred Webber, president and CEO of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, an industry trade group, said Thursday it would be technologically impossible for automakers to meet the standards, and that they would raise the upfront cost of vehicles by \$3,000.

Lloyd said the Alliance had declined to work with board staff on the proposal, and that he found the staff's findings to be more credible than the industry's.

The proposals stem from a law signed by former Gov. Gray Davis in 2002 that required the board to set emission standards for greenhouse gases. The bill's author, Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, said Thursday that global warming contributes to a slew of problems, including reduced availability of drinking water, more smog and poor agriculture.

Schwarzenegger approves conservancy, signs 20 enviro bills

By JIM WASSERMAN, Associated Press Writer

Friday, Sept. 24, in the Modesto Bee

COLFAX, Calif. (AP) - Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger chose a woodsy mountain setting Thursday to sign legislation establishing a 25 million-acre Sierra Nevada Conservancy, while also signing nearly 20 other bills to protect the Pacific Ocean, curb smog and clean up blighted urban land.

With numerous strokes of the pen, Schwarzenegger opened 1,100 miles of car pool lanes to hybrid cars, established the nation's first Cabinet-level Ocean Protection Council in state government and barred cruise ships from burning garbage and dumping sewage inside state waters. He also banned commercial fishing fleets from bottom trawling along designated parts of the California coast and required 100-foot firebreaks around homes in mountain wildfire zones.

"California is setting a standard for other states and badly needed reforms at the national level," said Karen Garrison, a San Francisco-based director of ocean programs for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Schwarzenegger used a public ceremony on the banks of Placer County's Bear River to sign the conservancy bill. It aims to attract up to \$30 million in new funding to save open space and working ranches, improve water quality and guard against Sierra Nevada forest fires from the Oregon border to Kern County.

The governor, spotlighting his administration's environmental initiatives since taking office last November, told an estimated 200 mountain residents, officials and environmentalists before inking the conservancy legislation, "I think today we are delivering the grand jewel."

Schwarzenegger called the conservancy a model of bipartisan effort, saying it's what "we can accomplish if both parties work together."

The conservancy will give the mountain region a united voice to lobby for state money, said Assemblyman John Laird, D-Santa Cruz, who co-authored the legislation with Assemblyman Tim Leslie, R-Tahoe City. The conservancy will have power to buy conservation easements, make grants and loans to public agencies, nonprofit organizations and Indian tribes to protect ranch land and promote recreation and tourism. It joins eight others in place for the state's 1,100-mile coastline, Lake Tahoe region, San Joaquin River, Baldwin Hills and Santa Monica Mountains.

Schwarzenegger championed the idea in his campaign last year, giving momentum to an idea that had long languished from infighting.

"That was the minute this went from an idea that was never going to go anywhere to winning," said Elizabeth Martin of the Nevada City-based Sierra Fund, a key force behind the conservancy.

Schwarzenegger also championed the idea of opening the state's freeway car pool lanes to up to 75,000 single-occupant hybrid cars that get at least 45 miles per gallon. Affecting mainly drivers of Honda Civics and the Toyota Prius, the bill he signed Thursday will take effect Jan. 1, but still requires federal approval because federal funds helped build the car pool lanes. A bill is pending in Congress to authorize the move.

The bill's author, Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, said the bill "eases our commutes, saves us money at the pump, reduces our dependency on foreign oil and cleans our air all at the same time."

Opponents argued that opening car pool lanes to hybrids would undermine their true purpose: encouraging people to ride together.

Schwarzenegger also signed a bill requiring smog checks for all cars built after 1976, despite opposition from his friend Jay Leno, host of the "Tonight Show With Jay Leno." The bill's author, Assemblywoman Sally Lieber, D-Santa Clara, said Leno called her twice to complain about the bill, fearing it would expose his extensive collection of vintage cars to smog checks.

Lieber's legislative director, Marva Diaz, said Leno preferred the state's old regulations that stopped smog checks for cars when they reached the age of 30.

In a statement, Leno publicist Dick Guttman said the comedian "arrives at conclusions in such matters as a private citizen and does not express them to the media, or for that matter, to me."

Among several ocean-related bills, Schwarzenegger approved creation of a high-level Ocean Protection Council inside state government to coordinate state policy toward the Pacific Ocean and steer millions of dollars in grants to state and nonprofit groups for ocean research and protection. Council members would include the secretaries of the state resources and environmental protection agencies and the chair of the State Lands Commission.

The legislation also establishes the Ocean Protection Trust Fund to steer state money to ocean projects, starting with \$10 million from the state's tidelands oil revenue fund this year to seed the trust.

The government council was a key recommendation last year in a study of world oceans by the Pew Oceans Commission. Supporters say state funds could help retire commercial fishing boats, fund fish population research and help stop storm water runoff into marine reserves where fishing is banned.

Barbar Matthews captures Farm Bureau's endorsement

By ERIC STERN - BEE CAPITOL BUREAU

[Friday, Sept. 24, Modesto Bee](#)

The California Farm Bureau, the state's largest agriculture organization, threw its support behind Assemblywoman Barbara Matthews, D-Tracy, on Thursday.

It was the group's first endorsement of a Democratic candidate for state Legislature this year.

Matthews faces Republican Nellie McGarry on Nov. 2 in the 17th Assembly District, which takes in San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties, with \$4.8 billion of agriculture production.

Matthews said she prides herself on trying to balance agriculture's needs with the rapid population growth in the valley.

"We do have spaces where we grow things — not just houses," she said.

Farm Bureau President Bill Pauli said Matthews has "grown tremendously" since she was appointed chairwoman of the Assembly Agriculture Committee as a freshman lawmaker in 2001.

He praised her role in fighting proposed cutbacks last year to the Williamson Act, which offers tax incentives to farmers to preserve their land instead of selling it to developers.

And even when Matthews voted for measures the group opposed, such as a package of [clean-air bills targeting farmers](#), Pauli said, there was an "open door" to Matthews' office and she worked to make the measures less restrictive.

"She was in there working for us," he said. "We've had an opportunity for dialogue, we've had an opportunity for discussion. We've agreed to agree and we've agreed to disagree on some issues, but we have respect."

He said Matthews has a similar voting record to Sen. Mike Machado, D-Linden, who chairs the Senate agriculture committee, but the group said it has an easier time bending Matthews' ear.

The Farm Bureau has endorsed Republican Gary Podesto, the Stockton mayor, over Machado, a farmer, in the 5th Senate District race.

Gov. Signs Bills for Air, Coast

Two dozen measures he enacts will extend smog checks, limit fishing and create a conservancy to protect the Sierra, among other things.

By Nancy Vogel and Robert Salladay, Times Staff Writers

[Friday, Sept. 24, Los Angeles Times](#)

COLFAX, Calif. - Cleaning California's air and protecting its coast was Gov. Arnold

Schwarzenegger's priority Thursday as he signed more than two dozen environmental bills into law.

His actions created a conservancy to protect the majestic Sierra Nevada mountain range, gave carpool lane preference to energy-efficient cars and cracked down on cruise ship pollution.

Environmentalists applauded most of Schwarzenegger's actions, but said several pending measures will further test his green credentials. Bills awaiting his approval or rejection include those to control port-generated air pollution in Long Beach and Los Angeles and to require cellphone makers to recycle their products. Both are strongly opposed by business groups.

"We're pleased that the governor has signed important bills for reducing diesel pollution and cleaning up older cars and preserving the Sierra Nevada, as well as important ocean protection bills," said Bill Magavern, senior lobbyist for Sierra Club California. "The biggest tests are yet to come."

Schwarzenegger apparently ignored the pleas of his friend Jay Leno, host of television's "Tonight Show," and signed a bill that will require smog checks for vehicles built since 1976.

Current law exempts 30-year-old and older cars from smog checks. A classic-car buff, Leno had called the Assembly office of author Sally Lieber (D-Mountain View) to complain. The governor included no message in his signing of the bill, AB 2683.

Another classic-car owner called the new law "poppycock."

Old cars are either dilapidated and soon to stop running anyway or else well-maintained by car buffs like him, said Chuck Abbott, past president of the Southern California chapter of the Pontiac-Oakland Club International.

"There are other things politicians could do," he said, "that would have a far greater impact on the air pollution than going after specialty cars that are maintained by people who cherish them."

Schwarzenegger also signed a bill - AB 2628 by Assemblywoman Fran Pavley (D-Agoura Hills) - that will allow solo drivers of vehicles that get 45 miles per gallon or greater fuel efficiency to use carpool lanes after the federal government approves such a use, as is expected.

Those vehicles include the Honda Civic Hybrid, Honda Insight and Toyota Prius. The law takes effect in January and is strongly opposed by Ford Motor Co. Eight members of the Assembly - all Democratic women - drive a Prius as their state-leased vehicle.

Schwarzenegger has hewed closely to the position of the California Chamber of Commerce and other business groups in acting on legislation, but on Thursday he ignored the chamber's "oppose" position to sign a bill requiring healthcare service plans to cover equipment used by children with asthma.

In a signing message on AB 2185 by Assemblyman Dario Frommer (D-Los Feliz), Schwarzenegger wrote, "Increasing the availability and affordability of essential medical equipment for children with asthma is vitally important to the management of the disease."

Better to prevent the disease, he wrote, than to have to manage it.

"Improving the quality of our air is a priority of my Administration," Schwarzenegger wrote.

In what was expected to be his only public bill-signing ceremony as he wades through more than 800 measures sent to him by the Legislature last month, Schwarzenegger appeared on a platform straddling a Sierra foothill creek east of Sacramento to sign a bill creating a Sierra

Nevada conservation zone.

Although it won't have any regulatory power, the government agency - covering 25 million acres from Modoc County in the north to the Owens Valley in the south - will be able to funnel state bond money to local governments and nonprofit trusts to buy land and easements and protect them from development or timber harvesting.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy grew out of frustration in rural California counties that environmental bond money was being spent in the Lake Tahoe area, San Diego, the Santa Monica Mountains and along the California coast - all areas with their own conservancies.

The California Coastal Conservancy, for example, has done more than 950 projects - constructing trails and restoring wetlands, public piers and waterfronts.

"Money keeps flying around for these resource funds, but we didn't have a pocket to collect it," said Elizabeth Martin of the Sierra Fund, a nonprofit environmental group. "These powerful constituencies - Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego - do have the pockets and they have been getting the money."

Assemblyman John Laird (D-Santa Cruz), who wrote the legislation along with Assemblyman Tim Leslie (R-Tahoe City), said the new conservancy "offers a unique marriage of economic development and environmental protection." Laird said rural Sierra communities comprise 8% of California's population but provide 48% of the state's water.

Another bill signed by the governor will set limits on one of the most destructive forms of fishing, which involves dragging weighted nets across the ocean bottom to catch halibut, pink shrimp, prawns and sea cucumbers. The bill - SB 1459 by Sen. Dede Alpert (D-Coronado) - restricts how many boats can engage in such bottom trawling and, for the first time, gives the state Department of Fish and Game the power to regulate all of those fishermen.

It also will close some sensitive areas to protect sponges, corals, sea anemones and nurseries for young fish. It will shut down additional areas in coming years unless regulators can show the trawlers are not damaging the seafloor.

Mike McCorkle, president of the Southern California Trawlers Assn., objected to the bill and said the Legislature has been told "nothing but lies about [wasted] bycatch" by environmentalists and recreational fishing lobbyists who he said eventually want to shut down all bottom trawling.

Despite Schwarzenegger's vow to streamline government - and his admonition in one veto message Thursday that "this is not the year to add another unnecessary program to California statutes," - the governor signed a bill to create an Ocean Protection Council to coordinate California's coastal conservation efforts. Estimated to cost \$250,000 a year, the new five-member board includes two lawmakers.

The state Department of Finance opposed the bill - SB 1319 by Sen. John Burton (D-San Francisco) - saying it creates a permanent new organization in state government and violates the separation of powers between the Legislature and the administration.

Schwarzenegger also signed bills to crack down on pollution generated by the eight major cruise ship lines operating out of California. AB 471 by Assemblyman Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto) bans onboard waste incineration within three miles of the coast, and AB 2093 by Assemblyman George Nakano (D-Torrance) bans the release of "gray water" from dishwashers, showers and sinks. Still awaiting action is a bill that would ban cruise ship sewage dumping.

In a move ridiculed by Democrats, Schwarzenegger vetoed a bill endorsed by the blue-ribbon commission the governor convened after the Southern California wildfires of 2003.

The bill - AB 2406 by Assemblyman Rudy Bermudez (D-Norwalk) - would have required fire departments to submit information to the state fire marshal about response times and staffing.

In his veto message, Schwarzenegger said the bill would impose "an unnecessary and costly mandate."

They're raising a stink in Lathrop

Neighbors upset about sewer pond odors

By ROSE ALBANO RISSO

Friday, Sept. 24, Manteca Bulletin

LATHROP -- Most children don't even think twice about going outside to play. Not so for John and Jennifer Rose's three little ones. First, they have to make sure the wind isn't blowing from the north.

The reason: they live right next to the city of Lathrop's sewer ponds.

"It smells bad all the time. The only time we don't smell it is if the wind is blowing the other way," said Jennifer Rose.

She and her husband are resident managers of a storage business located in the old West Yosemite Avenue just before the 120 Bypass on-ramp. They have three young children with the two older ones attending Nile Garden Elementary School. The stink from the sewer ponds has made it particularly hard for Jennifer and her two school-aged children when they have to go out and wait for the school bus.

She recalled one day back in March when the smell "was really bad" that it even raised the concern of the bus driver.

The olfactory irritant has the young mother worried about one of her children, too.

"My kindergarten is real sensitive to smell; it would literally make him ill," she said.

The Rows are not the only ones who live and work along this stretch of West Yosemite from the new D'Arcy Parkway intersection to the 120 Bypass and have been dealing with the smelly problem for years. The treatment plant, which was recently expanded to include a new facility that would provide sewer service to new developments in west Lathrop, is literally in the back yards of several residential homes and businesses in this area and are separated only by the Union Pacific Railroad tracks.

Ron Roblero, whose work requires him to be outdoors most of the time, said he has been coping with this olfactory affliction for close to five years. It gets even worse when there's dust all around, he said.

"It makes me spit all the time, and gag. I can even taste it in my mouth sometimes," the auto mechanic said, cringing.

"Sometimes, ugh! It's really bad. You can't explain it. For some people it's like s---t," he said.

He has learned to tolerate the stench: "I just try not to breathe it," he said with a shrug.

"It smells even worse on that side of the yard," he added, pointing to the shop next door.

Billy Tucker who works there sounded equally resigned and not too bothered by the odor. But he did admit, "it smells like a dead animal," and that it's a problem he deals with just about everyday.

"It really doesn't bug me much. I've smelled worse things than that, like dead cows," said Tucker who has worked in dairies before.

"You just put up with it," he said of the smelly occupational distraction.

Across the street where Tucker works is the house where Patricia Moore and her family have lived for 25 years.

"It smells like s---t," she said of the odor that blows over to their property from the treatment plant. Next door and behind her property on the south side of West Yosemite are other houses where several schoolchildren live. They've all learned how to cope with the problem.

When the smell gets really bad, "just stay inside and shut the door," Moore simply stated.

The people interviewed did admit there are days when the smell is not so bad. But they noted that the problem returned with a vengeance after the past weekend's unexpected rains.

At least one person who works in one of the area businesses expressed optimism that the city will deal with this problem which has become an increasing aggravation in the last year or so.

"I can't deny that we can smell that plant here. That's undeniable. Anybody in this area can smell it. But I have confidence that the city of Lathrop will eventually get that fixed," said the worker who asked not to be identified.

And that's exactly what the city has been trying to do.

"We try to keep the smell to a minimum," said sewer plant manager Randy Johnson, an employee of Veolia Water North America Operating Services, LLC, which is under contract by the city to operate the treatment facility.

What actually caused the smell to get worse earlier this week was the unexpected downpour over the weekend, said Terry Gardner, another Veolia employee who also works at the plant. The rains rehydrated the dried biosolids in the unlined old ponds which created the stench, he said.

Minimizing the smell from the biosolids has been one of the reasons for upgrading the city's treatment facility. Instead of releasing the biosolids into percolating ponds, they are released into a cemented area where they are disced and turned over to speed up the drying process.

"The drier it is, the less smell it makes," Gardner said of the solid byproducts that come out of the treatment plant.

The city's treatment facility, which is located in the southeast corner of Crossroads Commerce Center on Harlan Road, has been upgraded to meet stringent state and federal requirements whereby tertiary-quality water coming out of the plant can be used to irrigate parks and street landscaping.

e for addressing all of our air quality concerns.

City, county meetings help

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Friday, Sept. 24, 2004](#)

Kern County supervisors and members of the Bakersfield City Council will hold a joint meeting on

Monday from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors chambers to discuss shared concerns.

These regularly scheduled joint meetings have gone a long way to improving city-county relations. They also give Kern County residents confidence that their elected representatives are working in citizens' best interest.

Monday's agenda will include discussion of the following issues:

- Development standards in metropolitan Bakersfield. This will include planning for future fire stations, sewer service policies and roadway median construction.
- The potential for a half-cent transportation sales tax to help fund road improvements.
- Efforts by local representatives to convince the railroad to reduce its [air pollution](#) impacts.
- An update on construction of a south beltway.
- Standardization of animal control policies.

Bringing elected county and city officials together to discuss mutual concerns helps reduce government waste, unproductive rivalries and duplication of services.

We encourage supervisors and council members to increase the frequency of these meetings. Now that Bakersfield and Shafter city limits touch, similar joint meetings must be scheduled between the two jurisdictions to create coordinated plans for development and government services.

Dairies and the air

Cows must go under the microscope before new rules can be enforced.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Friday, Sept. 24, 2004](#)

A settlement in a lawsuit over emissions from cows will give scientists, air regulators and the dairy industry a chance to develop a more accurate picture of just how much pollution is wafting into the Valley's air from huge and growing dairy operations.

It's a useful step in the effort to better understand just how bad our air really is, and help create ways to improve it.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has the authority, under Senate Bill 700, a new law written by state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, that repealed the agriculture industry's historic exemption from emissions permits.

The bill requires studies of the problem to be completed by next July, with rules for issuing permits drawn up and put in place by July 1, 2006.

The dairy industry sued after the air district said it wanted to start issuing the permits this past July. This week's settlement avoids a trial. That's good. There is little dispute that cows emit gases, some of which are elements in the creation of our chronic air pollution. But the key question -- how bad is it? -- is difficult to answer, mostly because the estimates of such emissions are based on a 1938 study that is badly out of date.

Help should be on the way in that regard. Studies are under way at California State University, Fresno, and at the University of California's Davis campus that could go a long way toward providing us with accurate data on which we can base sound decisions about regulations and remedies.

At Fresno State, agriculture science professor Charles Krauter is using lasers, computers and other high-tech gear to identify the gases cows emit.

And at Davis, Frank Mitloehner, a UC Cooperative Extension specialist in the Department of Animal Science, is monitoring several dozen Holstein heifers in airtight "bovine bio-bubbles." The

study should help us understand the nature and amount of airborne emissions from cows of ammonia, particulate matter and volatile organic compounds that give rise to ozone.

This is no small thing. California's \$4.5 billion dairy industry is the nation's largest, and many livelihoods are riding on the industry's ability to work in a safe and environmentally sensitive manner.

Representatives from the industry, the air district, scientists and others will monitor the progress of the various studies in an advisory group.

This is a good start on a good solution to a serious problem, and the collaborative nature of the effort is a useful example.