

## Natural-gas station a pioneer

### Pumps will fuel 29 Fresno County school buses.

By Erin Kennedy / The Fresno Bee

Saturday, April 2, 2005

Politicians and educators Friday lauded a new office building, some ordinary-looking gas pumps and a gleaming white 15,000-gallon tank as revolutionary.

The Southwest Education Support Center, just south of Caruthers, now boasts a fueling station for both liquefied and compressed natural gas that will be open to the public, as well as servicing a fleet of 29 school buses.

The center provides bus service for 15 rural school districts in southwest Fresno County, transporting 7,000 students a day on 65 routes.

The Valley has one of the dirtiest air basins in the county. Compared with diesel, natural gas-powered buses will emit 10 times less soot and 40% less smog.

According to PG&E, the conversion of the bus fleet is equivalent to taking 580 cars off the highways. J.W. Rogers Jr., from the U.S. Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory, hailed the fueling station as a "first of its kind facility" and talked of expanding the facility to handle a hydrogen fueling system when that technology is developed.

The 17-acre education support center's unveiling off Highway 41 and Elkhorn Avenue was celebrated with 11 speeches, marching music from a school band and a fancy lunch.

Fresno County School Superintendent Pete Mehas called the transport center a model of public/private partnership that needs to be replicated: "It's an absolute harbinger of what the future should look like."

The Southwest Transportation Agency was formed in 1988 by Riverdale, Caruthers, Laton, Alvina Charter and Monroe Elementary school districts as a way to pool resources and get a handle on increasingly expensive transportation costs that were eating into schools' classroom funds.

Director Kirk Hunter said the agency is looking into also providing custodial, maintenance and technical services for small rural school districts.

Until recently, the agency operated out of an old bus barn on a small lot, crowded with older buses.

"Look what happens when small school districts work collectively," said Elaine Cash, superintendent of Riverdale Unified and president of the Southwest Agency's board of directors. "This took vision. Those school boards had to suppress their own agendas."

Mehas said this agency now has one of the lowest per student transportation costs in the state.

But Hunter said he didn't just want to provide cheap transportation — he wanted to do it in a way that didn't add to the Valley's air pollution.

He shopped his vision for natural gas-powered buses and a fueling station to politician after politician and contacted energy agencies with grant money to give.

"This man exhibited a tenacity that bordered on pugnacity," said David Crowe, executive director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. "He left no one unbothered in pursuit of clean air."

The air control district contributed \$900,000 to the new center and fueling station. California Energy Commission, the Department of Forestry, Pacific Gas & Electric Co. and the U.S. Department of Transportation also helped fund construction.

Crowe said the Valley has a long ways to go in cleaning up the air, but this helps in the fight.

Fresno County Supervisor Judy Case, who also sits on the air district's governing board, noted that the most harmful air pollutant — tiny particles of soot — are produced in part by diesel exhaust.

John Harris, owner of Harris Ranch beef producers, said his company has been using the liquefied gas technology for four years and its trucks have traveled more than 9 million miles on the fuel.

"I'd like to get a facility producing it here so we don't have to truck it in. The economics of LNG are starting work now," he said.

Hunter did not know how many people in the public would use Southwest Transport Agency's fueling station but said he hopes it will encourage more companies to convert their trucks.

PG&E has 13,000 vehicles using the technology, said Brian Stokes, the company's alternative fuels manager.

State Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, praised the innovation of the school districts and thanked them for their work in bringing bluer skies to the Valley.

Cash said it was done mostly for students. "Our kids sit on these buses sometimes two hours a day. Now they don't have to smell that diesel smell," she said.

## **Ethanol fans hope plant sets off boom**

By DALE KASLER -THE SACRAMENTO BEE

in The Modesto Bee, Saturday, April 2, 2005

GOSHEN -- At a dusty animal-feed plant in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, Rick Eastman and Kevin Kruse are nearing completion of a dream: a large-scale factory, the state's first, that will convert boxcars full of Nebraska corn into the gasoline additive ethanol.

"Every fuel tank needs some," Kruse said with a smile.

After years of struggle, ethanol advocates in California believe their time has come. Ushered in by a controversial U.S. government environmental mandate, ethanol use in California has mushroomed. The additive is now being blended into the gas sold in 95 percent of the state, says the California Energy Commission.

Backers say the \$20 million Goshen plant, two months from completion, could be the opening shot in an ethanol-production boom that will bring investment, employment and economic development to rural California. Developers are close to obtaining financing for big plants in Madera and Pixley, and more could follow.

"Ethanol itself has become a mainstream fuel in California," said former California Secretary of State Bill Jones, an investor in the Madera plant. "It clears the air; it provides jobs when plants are built."

California officials, however, have mixed feelings about ethanol.

They like the idea of a new California industry and acknowledge how prevalent ethanol has become. But though its backers tout ethanol as a cheap and clean fuel additive, state officials say it sometimes can make gas more expensive -- and not always cleaner.

With gas prices in California averaging \$2.37 a gallon and climbing, state officials are pressing the federal government to waive the mandate that requires use of ethanol in most California cars.

"We don't think it's needed," said spokesman Jerry Martin of the California Air Resources Board, the state agency that regulates fuel recipes.

Without the federal mandate, "the bulk of refiners would sharply curtail their use of ethanol," he said.

Ethanol advocates say a sharp cutback is unlikely. In fact, they think ethanol usage will grow. But the state's stance adds to an air of uncertainty that hovers over the fledgling industry.

"It's a question that comes up in every investor meeting," said Jones' business partner, Neil Koehler.

Indeed, some say California could lose the ethanol race to the Midwest, where plants are springing up so rapidly, analysts warn a glut may be coming.

"I'd like to see California get behind this a little more," Kruse said. "The Midwest is building like they're going out of style. California's going to miss its opportunity."

Still, ethanol backers say their pro-duct is gaining acceptance in California with refiners and policy-makers alike. That's giving investors greater comfort, they say.

"The fundamentals of the marketplace require ethanol in California," said Russ Miller, developer of the \$80 million plant in Pixley.

Miller and other advocates say it's a no-brainer: The state will use up to 1 billion gallons of ethanol this year, more than one-fourth of U.S. supplies, but produces only 10 million gallons, at tiny plants in Corona and Rancho Cucamonga.

Meanwhile, California's petroleum refineries can't keep up with gas demand, and ethanol will help them stretch supplies, advocates say. They're lobbying state regulators to nearly double the amount of ethanol permitted in a gallon of gas, to 10 percent -- a move they say would reduce pollution and prices.

The plants in Goshen, Pixley and Madera would be fueled by corn. Ethanol from rice straw and other "biomass" materials, seen by farmers as a gold mine, is another matter. Plants have been proposed, but experts say the technology is still five years away from being commercially viable.

Ethanol has long been controversial, due partly to a tax subsidy pushed through Congress by Midwestern agribusiness lobbyists. But investors are warming up to it. Last week, ethanol futures started trading on the Chicago Board of Trade, and Jones and Koehler's company, a publicly traded firm called Pacific Ethanol Inc., obtained \$21 million in a private stock sale to help finance the Madera plant.

California's ethanol odyssey began when Congress amended the Clean Air Act in 1990. It said gas sold in highly polluted areas, including nearly 80 percent of California, must include an additive from the family of chemicals known as oxygenates.

#### **Initially scorned by state**

California chose MTBE. But in 1999 then-Gov. Davis banned MTBE because it was contaminating groundwater.

That left ethanol. The state scorned it, saying shortages would mean big gas price hikes. It also said chemical properties of ethanol actually made it erode air quality in certain circumstances, especially in summer.

Davis delayed the MTBE ban a year, to December 2003, while asking the U.S. government to waive the oxygenate mandate.

Gov. Schwarzenegger has lobbied, too. His letter last spring to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said the mandate "prevents or interferes with the attainment of the national ambient air quality standards for particulate matter and ozone."

Refiners say they don't mind using ethanol, but the mandate puts them in a straitjacket that sometimes makes blending gasoline more difficult -- and more expensive. David Hackett, a petroleum consultant, said the mandate increases gas prices up to 10 cents a gallon.

But ethanol advocates think resistance is softening, in part because ethanol is about 30 cents a gallon cheaper than gasoline. Refiners are even using ethanol in parts of California where it isn't required, said Pat Perez, manager of transportation fuels at the Energy Commission. The commission says, assuming the mandate stays in place, ethanol use could jump 25 percent by 2012.

And despite its request for the waiver, the Schwarzenegger administration has good things to say about ethanol. California views ethanol "as a very important component" and is "trying to create an ethanol industry," state EPA Secretary Alan Lloyd said at a recent press event.

Eastman, who's leading the Goshen project, has been nibbling around the edges of the ethanol business since he was farming in Winters in the 1970s. The 54-year-old once developed a small plant that could make ethanol from fermented watermelon juice. He made enough fuel to run a tractor, but "the economics of that one didn't work out," he said.

Later, he formed a company called Phoenix Bio Industries, and hooked up with Kruse, president of a Goshen feed-grain manufacturer, Western Milling, which serves the dairy industry.

A lot is riding on the ethanol plant. The two men raised about \$10 million from "friends and family," Kruse said, and borrowed another \$10 million. Kruse and Eastman invested more than \$1 million each, they said.

"This is a passionate personal endeavor," Eastman said. "We're excited -- we're excited about the future of ethanol."

## **Valley report air quality inching up**

### **Progress reported on problems in 1 of most heavily polluted areas**

By MARK GROSS  
THE FRESNO BEE

in The Modesto Bee, Friday, April 1, 2005

FRESNO - The San Joaquin Valley's air, perennially among the dirtiest in the country, might reach a cleanup milestone this year - meeting a health standard for dust, smoke and other small particles.

In decades of regulation, the valley's air never has been healthy under any standard for so-called PM-10, known as particulate pollution.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is hoping for "attainment" this year - meaning the government considers the region's air healthy in regard to particulate matter.

Attainment requires three consecutive calendar years without any one-day violations. So far, so good: The district was clean in 2003 and 2004, and has not had any bad days in 2005.

If the district fails to reach attainment by 2010, the region stands to lose federal transportation money.

Federal officials said the valley's progress on PM-10 standard is a good sign, but the district still needs to make a second, related standard, measured as an average level of dust and other specks over a full year.

"It's good news anytime we see this kind of improvement," said Matt Haber, deputy director of the regional air division for the Environmental Protection Agency. "But until we're clean on both the 24-hour and the annual levels, the job isn't over."

And even then, the job might not be over. A more stringent particulate standard will take effect in the next few years. And the district has more violations than any other place in the country for daylong smog readings.

#### **Sierra Club derides delays**

But a modest success story emerged Wednesday as district officials held a workshop on the district's plan for cleaning up PM-10, or particulate matter 10microns wide. Ten microns is about one-seventh the width of a human hair.

"If we don't have an exceedance the rest of the year, we will be in compliance," Planning Manager Dave Mitchell said.

His comments came after environmentalists criticized the district for how it is amending the cleanup plan. District officials said they were extending deadlines for some rules, but they were compensating with pollution reductions from other actions.

The Sierra Club, Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund, and the Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment said the rules were too important to delay.

One rule would help clean up diesel buses in school fleets. Another would involve controversial fees on developers to pay for pollution coming from traffic at new homes and businesses.

The delays are not acceptable, said Sierra Club member Kevin Hall of Fresno. Residents are enduring a crisis with lung disorders, he said. State research shows about 1,100 residents die each year from problems related to particulate matter.

Hall said the district has been working on the problem for more than 10 years. He accused the district of foot-dragging and watering down rules.

"Delay and dilution are the hallmarks of this crisis," he said.

District officials said they were adjusting deadlines to reflect the reality that a few rules were taking longer than anticipated, though most of the cleanup measures in the plan have been adopted. The workshop was to inform the public.

### **Ozone remains a problem**

Environmentalists, who already have filed one lawsuit against the plan and are threatening a second, said they did not receive notice of the meeting. They added that the workshop lacked detail.

District officials said more detailed analyses would be available by mid-April, and additional comments could be made through May 3.

Spokesman Anthony Presto said new district rules, such as fireplace burning restrictions, have helped reduce the one-day peaks of particulates.

He pointed out that particulate matter is not the only pollutant. "Nitrates and ammonia" are others, he said. "We still do have an ozone problem."

Recent wind and rain have cleaned the air, but when temperatures rise, so do risks.

"Generally, spring is a time of clean air," Presto said. "But when it gets warmer, ozone will creep up."

## **Progress in pollution**

### **Efforts to clean up Valley air paying off, but more work lies ahead**

By Dana Nichols - Record Staff Writer  
Stockton Record, Friday, April 1, 2005

FRESNO -- Despite the fact that many of us living here in the Central Valley are coughing at the moment, local air pollution cops say they are making huge progress in cleaning from the air the tiny particles that make us sick.

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials reported this week that the district has for the past two years met federal standards for so-called PM 10 pollution, airborne particles about the width of a human hair or smaller. If the Valley meets the standard one more year, then it will finally be in compliance with federal law.

Originally, the region was supposed to have met the federal standard by the end of 2001.

And a recent air district report found that the district has either already taken action or will within a few years act on a list of 103 different methods for controlling the particles produced by everything from farm dust to diesel fumes to wood smoke.

California air districts were ordered by the Legislature to review the list of rules already adopted by all the various districts around the state.

But the progress doesn't mean Valley residents' breathing woes are over. The district must next by 2008 come up with a plan for reducing PM 2.5, even smaller particles measuring 2.5 microns or less. The Valley also has failed to meet the health-based limits for PM 2.5.

The sources of a majority of the most toxic PM 2.5 -- cars, trucks, and buses -- are regulated by the state and federal governments and are beyond the control of the local air district.

"Yes, there's a source problem because mobile sources are better than 51 percent of the particulates and probably some of the worst in terms of the diesel and emissions out of smoking cars," said Dr. David Pepper, with the University of California, San Francisco, medical branch in Fresno where he treats many patients with lung ailments.

Pepper is part of Medical Alliance for Healthy Air.

He blamed federal authorities for setting up the local air district for failure.

"We're being forced to clamp down and not being given the tools," Pepper said.

The air district estimates that more than 1,000 Valley residents die each year from air pollution.

But both federal and air district officials said they are cooperating well and expect to see steady improvements in Valley air.

"I think all the elements are in place and it will be getting better," said Kelly Drake, associate director of the air division for the EPA's regional office in San Francisco.

Dave Mitchell, planning manager for the district, agreed. He said state and federal authorities are spending money on a variety of programs to retrofit diesel engines to reduce pollution and replace old vehicles with cleaner modern ones. The federal government also is setting higher standards for new vehicles.

One problem is that diesel engines can last for decades, which means it may take 20 years to get the older polluters out of truck and bus fleets.

"That's where some of our incentive programs come into play to replace them early," Mitchell said.

Bonnie Holmes-Gen, assistant vice president of government relations for the American Lung Association of California, said state government also is doing its part.

She said the state this year is spending \$141 million just to replace or upgrade dirty diesel engines, including many that operate farm pumps in the Valley.

Still, she said a lot more needs to be done, especially since the Valley's growing population and growing number of cars offset some of the gains that come through tighter rules.

"And a lot more needs to be done with smart growth at the local level to reduce vehicle trips," Holmes-Gen said.

She said the state government should be passing laws that give cities and counties incentives to plan their growth in ways that encourage people to walk more and drive less.

The local air district is working on a rule that would charge developers for the pollution impacts of sprawling development.

That money would then be used to reduce pollution in other ways and encourage smart growth.

## **Rural riders filling buses Route through Farmersville, Exeter is busiest**

By Percy Ednalino, Staff writer  
Visalia Times-Delta, Friday, April 1, 2005

The fastest-growing bus route in the Visalia City Coach system doesn't pick up riders along Mooney Boulevard or Lovers Lane, and it doesn't have a stop along Main Street.

Since it began service in November, Visalia City Coach Route 9 - which has stops in Farmersville and Exeter - has averaged about 1,100 riders per week and continues to grow.

Monty Cox, Visalia's transit manager, said Route 9 has exceeded the bus system's expectations. In February, the route served 4,000 riders. In March, the route exceeded that number by at least 500 riders, Cox said.

"Last month ... was the most [riders] we've had on that route," he said. "And it was a slow month."

Despite the route's success, it's unlikely similar services will be started with other nearby communities because Visalia City Coach doesn't have the money, Cox said. It would require the cities to provide the money.

Cox said Route 9 is expected to keep growing in popularity. He also said new bus lines usually take a year to reach their full potential as people adjust their traveling habits.

"There was definitely a need for bus service out in the Farmersville and Exeter communities," Cox said. "Both because of their proximity to Visalia and the socioeconomic base of those communities."

Mike Santana, Farmersville's mayor, said residents there had complained for years that they weren't able to use the county's transit system because the bus pick-up times weren't convenient.

"I think they only came through town four times a day," Santana said.

He added that the Visalia City Coach has faster turnaround times.

"You don't have to wait half a day to get back on the bus, and you have access to the Visalia urban boundary locations," he said.

More riders are expected to use the route this summer because Farmersville's proposed public swimming pool project has been delayed by at least a year, Santana said.

"I'm sure kids, once they figure out how to use the buses, will travel down to Exeter or even to the Visalia recreation area swimming pools," he said.

Santana said he'd like to see Visalia City Coach add another bus to the route to reduce round-trip times closer to 45 minutes. He also said Farmersville could use more bus stop benches and covered waiting areas.

Delora Buckman-Merritt, the Exeter Chamber of Commerce's executive director, said ridership on the route should increase as the price of gas continues to rise.

"And it should help somewhat with our [air pollution](#) problems," she said.

### **Changes ahead**

But changes to Visalia City Coach are planned.

One of the changes being considered is the bus system's name. Cox said transit officials are considering changing the Visalia City Coach name to something that would reflect the system's regional status.

He also said the bus system is currently working with officials from Sequoia National Park to establish a shuttle from Visalia to the park.

"It doesn't look like it's going to happen ... this summer," Cox said. "But it's very possible it'll be running by the summer of 2006."

Part of the delay in establishing the shuttle is the park still needs to develop a viable internal shuttle service.

In the meantime, Cox said, the city has hired a consultant to conduct a study on a shuttle from Visalia to the park.

## **State air board is hoping to stem indoor pollution**

### **Such impurities cost the state \$45 billion per year, study claims**

by Edie Lau - The Sacramento Bee

in the Modesto Bee, Monday, April 4, 2005

SACRAMENTO -- The California agency famous for putting the squeeze on automotive tailpipe emissions is poised to tackle dirty indoor air.

In a hefty report to the Legislature completed this month, the California Air Resources Board asserts that indoor air can be as polluted and dangerous to breathe as outdoor air, costing the state at least \$45 billion a year in lost worker productivity, medical expenses and premature deaths.

Yet, by and large, the government does little to stem indoor air pollutants, which come from sources as disparate as cigarettes, gas stoves and certain types of air purifiers.

"Efforts to reduce indoor pollution are not commensurate with the risk it presents," said Dorothy Shimer, an air pollution specialist and co-author of the report.

Among the findings of the 333-page document, which is based on hundreds of scientific studies: The risk of cancer from breathing toxic air contaminants indoors is comparable to the risk of cancer from breathing diesel exhaust particles outdoors.

"(It's) an astounding finding, and I think that it means that we have to elevate the priority of indoor air pollution," said Bonnie Holmes-Gen, assistant vice president for governmental relations at the American Lung Association of California.

How much state government is able to clean indoor air will depend upon the Legislature, because the air resources board considers the indoors a realm beyond its regulatory reach.

"Our entire authority is outdoors," said Richard Bode, chief of the health and exposure assessment branch of the air board, which is part of the California Environmental Protection Agency.

Air board scientists have studied indoor air quality for 15 years or so, but the research is used chiefly for educational purposes, not regulations.

Cal-OSHA and the state Department of Health Services also have a hand in indoor air quality, but their involvement, too, is limited. Cal-OSHA can set rules on ventilation and emissions in workplaces, but its standards are based upon exposures of healthy people working eight-hour days. The health department does research and surveys on indoor air pollution but lacks regulatory teeth.

Holmes-Gen said someone should be given the job of looking at indoor air comprehensively, and it should be the air board

Industry opposition stymied an effort three years ago by then-Assemblyman Fred Keeley, D-Santa Cruz, to empower the air board to go indoors. Keeley's bill passed after he revised it to require the air board only to produce a report on the subject. That's the report that has just been completed.

Keeley since has been termed out, but other lawmakers may step in. Staff for Assemblywoman Sally Lieber, D-Mountain View, for example, said Lieber is planning a hearing on indoor air.

The hearing, not yet scheduled, would be before the Select Committee on Air and Water Quality, chaired by Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills. Pavley carried landmark legislation in 2002 that authorized the air board to regulate automotive greenhouse-gas emissions -- a first in the country.

Keeley, now treasurer of Santa Cruz County, said given the hazards of indoor air, the state has a duty to step in. "It would be immoral not to act," he said.

## **Proposals to change the California Environmental Quality Act**

### **Proposals to spur more housing by changing the 1970-era California Environmental Quality Act**

The Associated Press

The Modesto Bee, Monday, April 4, 2005

- AB648, By Assemblyman Dave Jones, D-Sacramento: Makes cities considering development projects subject to CEQA analysis identify the eventual owner or user of the project.

- AB1387, by Assemblyman Dave Jones, D-Sacramento: Allows housing projects proposed in downtown or central city neighborhoods to be approved without analyzing traffic impacts if they comply with traffic and transportation policies in the city's zoning and growth plans.
- SB427, by Sen. Dennis Hollingsworth, R-La Mesa: Exempts new freeway overpasses, on ramps and off ramps proposed on existing Caltrans property from undergoing an environmental analysis.
- SB785, by Sen. Tom McClintock, R-Northridge: Requires groups that use the environmental quality act to sue development projects to list all people, associations, partnerships or corporations involved and their financial interest in the controversy or other interest that could be affected by the outcome.
- SB832, by Sen. Don Perata, D-Oakland: Greatly expands areas of central city development exempt from CEQA requirements. Would include projects under 10 acres with fewer than 300 homes in cities with more than 200,000 residents.
- SB948, by Sen. Kevin Murray, D-Culver City: Allows home builders to prepare a short-form environmental impact report rather than expensive full-blown report for residential projects inside cities or unincorporated areas already planned and zoned for houses. Cites the state's housing shortage and need to remove regulatory barriers.
- Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger: Working on draft legislation that says developers who build homes on land already planned and zoned for housing - and analyzed earlier for environmental effects - would not have to do more analyses for impacts. It would also limit lawsuits to whether the project is consistent with growth plans

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Supporters of the environmental act point to numerous "success stories:"

- In 2002, the Antioch City Council shelved a 2,700-acre residential-commercial project near Antioch when the environmental impact report showed it would add 14,000 more car trips to Highway 4.
- In 2003, Hercules developers planning a 123-home project on an old industrial site agreed to more extensive soil sampling tests after newly required environmental studies raised concerns about toxic soils.
- In 2003, Lockheed Martin dropped plans for 18,000 homes and two golf courses in Riverside County's Portrero Valley after a Sierra Club lawsuit proved its environmental impact report inadequate. The land eventually became part of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area.
- In 2003, Dow Chemical agreed to 30 measures to reduce emissions from a proposed pesticide manufacturing plant in Pittsburg, and agreed to donate \$1 million for environmental projects after a lawsuit challenged the city's approval of the plant without environmental studies.
- In 1996, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles abandoned plans to tear down St. Vibiana's Cathedral after courts forced further environmental studies. The archdiocese eventually sold the property to a developer who began a seismic retrofit of the building.

Critics of how the environmental act is used cite examples of abuse:

- In 2003, an environmental lawsuit seeking new traffic impact and air quality studies blocked construction for several months on a 119-unit residential building near a light rail station in downtown Sacramento and within walking distance of thousands of jobs.
- In 2004, environmental lawsuits halted construction on a Bakersfield Wal-Mart Supercenter and blocked the start of construction on a second Supercenter. Developer attorneys, who allege that competitors and labor unions are behind the lawsuits, say delays could range from two to four years.
- In 1994, an environmental lawsuit caused a 1 1/2-year delay for a 40-apartment, low-income housing project approved by the city of West Hollywood for people with AIDS.

- In 1992, an environmental lawsuit produced a 2 1/2-year delay for a low-income housing project in Fairfax.

- In 2000, an environmental lawsuit added six years to the time line to build a 566-lot, equestrian-themed subdivision in rural El Dorado County.

Sources: California Building Industry Association; attorneys for Castle and Cooke, Inc.; Planning and Conservation League; California League of Conservation Voters.

## **State's air quality board wants to take work indoors**

### **Dangers are just as serious inside as out, but no agency seems to have the authority to take action.**

By Edie Lau  
Sacramento Bee, Monday, April 4, 2005

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## **A TALK ON AGRICULTURE AND AIR QUALITY**

Modesto Bee, Monday, April 4, 2005

Air quality challenges and opportunities for Central Valley agriculture are the subjects of a talk by California Air Resources Board member Dorene D'Adamo at 6:30 p.m. April 14 in Turlock. D'Adamo, who chairs the board's Agricultural Advisory Committee for Air Quality, will speak at California State University, Stanislaus, in Demergasso-Bava Hall, Room P166. Admission is free and so is parking in lot No. 4, off Crowell Road. Refreshments will be provided. Appointed in August 1999 by Gov. Davis and reappointed in August by Gov. Schwarzenegger, D'Adamo also serves as a member of the board's Northern District Regional Coordination Committee. She also is senior policy advisor to Rep Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced. For more information on the Turlock event, call Lori Gerhardt, 664-6648.

## **Global warming captured on film**

By Richard A. Lovett -- Special To The Bee  
Sacramento Bee, Sunday, April 3, 2005

Pursuing a passion dating to the early 1970s, Bruce Molnia treks across Alaska, crashing through brush and scrambling over boulders in search of just the right spot.

His goal: capturing images of some of the state's largest glaciers in the same locations where photographers previously shot panoramas - some of them more than 100 years ago. When he finds the right angle, he snaps his own photo, adding it to a collection of "before-and-after" shots.

As part of a study by the U.S. Geological Survey, Molnia is seeking unambiguous proof of global climate change.

In his office in Reston, Va., Molnia has accumulated more than 1,000 glacier photos from 1920 or before. One shot even includes environmental icon John Muir in the foreground. So far, he has duplicated more than 100 of these photos as part of a study documenting the changes in 1,000 Alaskan glaciers.

"If a picture is worth a thousand words, what is the value of a pair of photos that span more than a century?" Molnia asks.

Almost every photo tells the same story. The McCarty Glacier in Kenai Fjords National Park has retreated 10 miles since its earliest photo in Molnia's collection, from 1909. Muir Glacier, in Glacier Bay National Park, for which his earliest photo dates from 1899, also has retreated by many miles.

Other glaciers have shrunk by lesser amounts. In some places, the remaining ice is hundreds of feet thinner than in the old photos. Of the 1,000 glaciers he's studied so far, Molnia says, only about 15 are advancing.

Matt Nolan, a hydrologist at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, has been making a similar study of glaciers in the Brooks Range, Alaska's northernmost chain of large mountains. In one particularly dramatic comparison, he duplicated a 98-year-old image of the Okpilak Glacier, near the range's eastern end.

In the older image, the glacier is a broad tongue of ice, extending far down the valley. Now, it's retreated almost out of sight, around a bend, and thinned considerably, leaving a band of light-colored rocks that were once beneath its surface.

"There is a lot of value to photos like this," says Nolan. "You don't need a background in science; this is something everyone can understand."

Whether these changes are caused by humans is debatable, he says. "But there is no debate about whether the changes themselves occurred."

### **Increased vegetation**

The old photographs in Molnia's collection are startling for the absence of brush. Now, riotous vegetation growth makes it difficult for him to find, let alone get to, many of the locations of the original images. Kenneth Tape, of the University of Alaska's Geophysical Institute, also has found dramatic vegetation changes in Alaska's northern tundra. Revisiting the sites of photos taken in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Tape has found an explosive growth of shrubs such as dwarf willow, alder and birch throughout the North Slope. The plants now cover about 40 percent more land than they did 55 years ago.

Increasing shrubbiness could create a cascade of other changes. Shrubs are darker than tundra plants, absorbing more solar heat. That could speed the rate at which the Arctic is warming.

On the other hand, they insulate the ground better than low-lying plants, possibly protecting permafrost from melting.

### **Tropical concerns**

Nobody expects Alaska's glaciers to disappear. The state has between 60,000 and 90,000 of them, at elevations ranging from sea level to nearly 20,000 feet. Because conditions at the upper elevations continue to be cold and snowy, the high-mountain glaciers appear to be much healthier than those in Molnia's study, which focused only on glaciers reaching to within 5,200 feet of sea level. In the tropics, however, all glaciers are suffering, says Lonnie Thompson of Ohio State University.

Most people don't associate glaciers with the tropics, but many equatorial mountains rise high enough to generate ice caps. Africa's Mount Kilimanjaro, for example, reaches 19,340 feet, only 3 degrees south of the equator.

If you want to see Kilimanjaro's ice, however, you'd better go soon. Thompson has found that 80 percent of the area that was ice-covered in 1919 is now bare, and the rest is thinning so fast it all may be gone by 2020.

Thompson wonders how many climbers will visit when there are no glaciers on the summit.

Elsewhere, he says, Venezuela already has lost two-thirds of its glaciers, and those at the highest peaks in Borneo aren't expected to survive as long as those on Kilimanjaro.

Also melting rapidly is Peru's Quelccaya ice cap, the largest ice cap in the tropics, covering 17 square miles at altitudes up to 21,500 feet.

On the map, the Quelccaya sits astride the Andes like a giant amoeba, drained by outlet glaciers spilling into the valleys on all sides. Like the glaciers of Alaska, these are also retreating, in some cases by as much as 1/8 of a mile per year. As the Quelccaya and other Peruvian glaciers shrink, Thompson worries about the effect on Peru's water supply, for which the ice caps function as natural water towers, storing snow in the wet season and releasing meltwater during the dry season.

Climatically, the shrinkage of tropical glaciers is more alarming than that of northern ones, which have advanced and retreated many times during previous millennia. The tropical climate is noted for its uniformity - meaning that today's rapid melting indicates that a long-maintained balance may have shifted. Not only is that a global concern, it's a factor of enormous significance to the 70 percent of the world's people who live in the tropics.

### **Linking the studies**

The next step, Molnia says, is to fill in the gaps between his Alaskan studies and Thompson's work by duplicating old photos at mid-latitude locations in California and Montana. Including those in Alaska, Molnia says, about 18 U.S. national parks have glaciers. "By the time we are done, we

will have at least a dozen of them with representative photo pairs to fill in what's happened over the last 100 years."

To Thompson, the take-home message from the research - especially in the tropics - is simple.

"Glaciers are disappearing," he says. "They do not have a political agenda. They are the canaries in the coal mine for the Earth's climate system."

## **Chevron Executive Defends High Fuel Prices and Profits Patricia Woertz says refiners are merely rebounding from a rough patch in 2002.**

By Elizabeth Douglass, Los Angeles Times

Monday, April 4, 2005

Few things anger consumers more than high gasoline prices - except maybe soaring profits for the nation's refineries because of high gasoline prices.

The high-price, high-profit combination is on display at ChevronTexaco Corp., which nearly tripled its income from U.S. refineries, fuel sales and transportation operations to \$1.3 billion in 2004.

The results were particularly good news for Patricia A. Woertz. She runs the so-called downstream business of refining, selling and trading fuel for ChevronTexaco, which has two refineries in California and is one of the state's largest fuel retailers. The 52-year-old executive vice president spent the last two years overhauling the San Ramon, Calif.-based oil company's downstream operations, which employ about 18,000 people worldwide. Woertz rejects the notion that recent refiner profits are somehow unseemly. The refining industry is cyclical, she said, and is merely rebounding from a dismal patch in 2002, when post-9/11 energy demand plummeted and Woertz's group at ChevronTexaco lost \$400 million in the United States.

Refining profits today are largely a reflection of high demand for fuel and crude oil, coupled with slow growth in the ability of refineries to process oil, she said. Woertz tackled the issue of refinery earnings and other subjects during a recent interview in San Francisco.

Question: What are your thoughts on the future of refining in the United States and California?

Answer: Demand [for fuel] is still growing at 1% to 2% a year in the U.S., refineries are running at about full capacity, and we're importing about 10% a year. It continues to be kind of a constrained environment. So maybe over the next 5 to 7 years, refining can find itself in a little bit of a higher band [of profit margins]. We certainly saw a very high band in 2004. Will that remain forever? I don't think so, but it will be somewhat of a higher trend than it's been in the past. Things can change very quickly, of course, and we can have sources of demand fall off, the economy could not be as strong as it is today, or you could find new sources of supply, say, from outside the U.S.

Q: But with the supply-demand gap what it is today, wouldn't it require a major economic catastrophe of some sort? Either that, or hybrids take over the world?

A: Any of the opportunities to have demand fall off quickly seems to me to come from current consumer behavior. Will people stop driving? Probably not. Will they drive somewhat less? It depends on both their behaviors and what they've been used to buying. People are still buying vehicles - that's always a good indication that they will continue to drive. They're buying bigger vehicles. So it's hard to imagine that there will be something precipitous, but you can't ever predict the future.

Q: The industry talks pretty openly about California being the most profitable refining market. What makes it so?

A: The West Coast of North America has good weather, it has a strong amount of growth, it has populations that are young and continuing to grow. In general, where you have strong economic growth, most industries tend to prosper, which of course would include the gasoline manufacturing industry. In addition, California has [fuel] specifications that are the tightest in the world. It's like a bull's-eye that you're having to hit all the time . so if you ever have a supply disruption, because it is so difficult to make, it causes a constraint on supply and that has an effect to it.

Q: Operating profit from your U.S. refineries nearly tripled in 2004, despite having to buy crude oil at escalating prices. When you have high gasoline prices, and you post very high refining margins, how do you explain that to the traveling public that is thinking, 'This is more than a nice profit. This is gouging me.' ?

A: I think it's a misinformed question. Actually, prices are lower on an inflation-adjusted basis. They are 28% lower than they were in 1981, for example. We've had high times and low times. If you look at milk prices, or water prices, or electricity prices, or other things that we spend on in our daily lives, I think there should be less irritation about the price of gasoline compared to other commodities. It's a real bargain, actually.

Now you asked that compared to a profitable quarter or a profitable year for an oil company, and I think those rates of return - particularly when compared to those years of zero rates of return - it balances out to quite a bit less than most other manufacturing sectors. But you don't get the same questions about an Intel or a Hewlett-Packard . are they gouging or whatever.

Q: But the public knows that oil is controlled largely by a cartel, and that most commodities are not. Plus, it's a necessity.. How do you counter that?

A: Well, investigation after investigation after investigation, particularly here in California, . has shown that it's a highly competitive industry; there is no collusion. In fact, as taxpayer dollars are spent on additional investigations, you'd almost like to hope that they'd read the last investigation with the same exact data and/or allegations.

Q: What's your reaction to those who think California's refining industry is nonetheless a tight oligopoly - where so few players dominate the market that actions by any one of them can materially affect prices?

A: I think I would probably turn them to the California Energy Commission, or to some of these investigations. They conclude that it's a very competitive market. The independents certainly add to that competitive nature, so it's not just a small group of companies, but it's a very long list of companies. I suggest that those who have a different view go to some of this research material.

## **New planner key to how L.A. grows**

Los Angeles Daily News

By Lisa Mascaro

Sunday, April 03, 2005

As Los Angeles searches for a new planning director, critics of the urban sprawl and traffic jams see a critical opportunity to change the dynamics and landscape of the nation's second most populous city.

But unlike the widely publicized effort three years ago to hire a police chief, the city's search for a planning director is informal and low-key. Consequently, some community residents have demanded a more robust drive to recruit a visionary to help shape Los Angeles, expected to grow by some 6 million people over the next 25 years and already almost 45 percent larger in land area than more populous New York City.

"I think people want to be inspired. I think people want to have a feeling that there can be ways to make L.A. a more livable and exciting place," said Robert Gottlieb, director of the Urban & Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College in Los Angeles.

"The planning director position is a symbol of that. It's not going to solve it, but it's a piece of that."

Gottlieb is among planning, environmental and community leaders who sent an open letter in March to Mayor James Hahn, the City Council and job applicants. It lays out their hopes for a creative administrator who could shape the city's housing, transportation and infrastructure needs around common goals.

"L.A. has a reputation as being an unplanned or impossible-to-plan city, and I think that's wrong," Gottlieb said.

"You need two things with a planning director. You need, on the one hand, somebody who can have a sense of vision. But you need a real organizer, someone who can work with the community."

Similarly, the Valley Industry and Commerce Association has urged the mayor to appoint a director with a stronger, more comprehensive vision.

"We need a planning director who will right a ship that has fallen off course. Los Angeles no longer has a Planning Department; it has a Processing Department," VICA representatives wrote in a letter to Hahn.

The new planning director will succeed Con Howe, who announced in December that he will retire sometime this year from his \$239,952-a-year job.

Howe, hired in 1992, has been praised by some for shepherding major projects through the planning process but criticized by others who say he was less effective in tackling community concerns.

The city has received 30 applications for the job, which will pay from \$169,671 to \$254,402 annually. It will be the first time a planning director is hired under the new City Charter, which gives the mayor the authority to appoint department heads with City Council approval.

Hahn has extended the search until May 20 -- three days after the mayoral runoff election.

He also has convened public hearings before area planning commissions to gather community input about the future planner, and Hahn has said he will have representatives of the city's 80 neighborhood councils interview the finalists.

The mayor also said he would ask planning and architectural leaders, including Frank Gehry and Thom Mayne, suggest candidates for the job.

"The mayor's looking for a planning director that's a visionary leader, with world-class caliber, to balance single-family neighborhoods while still engaging in proactive planning that accomplishes the growth that's expected to come to Los Angeles in coming years," Deputy Mayor Renata Simril said.

"There is no other place like Los Angeles. The future is bright, and we want a partner that will help us achieve that bright future."

Hahn's runoff opponent, City Councilman Antonio Villaraigosa, said choosing the planning director will be a key decision for whoever wins the mayor's race.

"Right now, and for years, it's been a reactive Planning Department, and that needs to change if Los Angeles is going to grow and protect the integrity of its single-family neighborhoods," said Villaraigosa campaign spokesman Nathan James.

"I think it's a good thing that the decision for hiring the planning director has been put off until after the election, because if Antonio becomes mayor, he's going to want to hire a planning director that's committed to his vision.

"And that includes an emphasis on smart growth and someone who is committed to working with community members and neighborhood councils early and often in the planning process."

But, in a change from the way police chief applicants were sought three years ago, no executive-recruiting firm has been hired to lead the process.

Instead, Councilman Ed Reyes -- a former city planner and chairman of the city's Planning and Land Use Committee -- has assigned his staff to call officials in cities around the world and to get out the word about the job opening.

Once the application period closes, a short list of finalists will be selected by Reyes, the mayor's chief of staff, a representative of the Personnel Department and Simril.

The finalists will be interviewed by seven representatives from neighborhood councils who will make recommendations to the mayor. The mayor will then name his choice and ask the City Council to confirm it in a vote.

"I guarantee: If there's an opportunity for us to be involved in this process, we will be," said J.J. Popowich, chairman of the Winnetka Neighborhood Council's land-use committee, which has already submitted comments to the Mayor's Office.

"What's most important is somebody who's going to work with the neighborhood council system, ... somebody who's going to take our thoughts into consideration and somebody who's going to keep us in the process."

Jaime Regalado, executive director of the Pat Brown Institute of Public Affairs at California State University, Los Angeles, said the Planning Department is due for change.

"It needs new blood. (The department) looks like it has played traditional favorites -- those people who have done business with the city for a long time -- and not bothered with those who have not learned to play or not bothered to play in City Hall before.

"You're looking for more inclusive kind of leadership from the top."

Gottlieb said he hopes extension of the application deadline and community involvement will create a richer debate over who will be the next top planner.

"What we would hope is that the search can move along those lines. The 'but,' I guess, is ... we don't know if that's going to happen.

"We can hope it's going to happen and the kinds of ideas we're putting forward can be part of the discussion about the type of planning director the city should have.

"You want the search to be able to attract people who say, 'Ah, what an opportunity.' That's the point."

## **Legislator urges delay on vote for rail system**

Los Angeles Daily News

By Steve Lawrence, Associated Press

Sunday, April 03, 2005

Assemblyman Alberto Torrico thinks California's high-speed rail project is a great idea that's ahead of its time.

The Fremont Democrat has introduced legislation that would postpone a public vote on \$9.95 billion in state bonds that would help pay for the first leg of the project, a line linking Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Planners envision the system eventually stretching 700 miles and linking San Diego, Los Angeles, Fresno, Sacramento and San Francisco with trains running at top speeds of more than 200 mph.

"High-speed rail, intercity rail, light rail, BART all of these mass transit options that get people out of their cars are clearly things that should have been a priority 30 years ago," Torrico said.

But he contends it isn't the right time to ask the public to increase the state debt to begin construction. "If we put it up for a vote and it goes down, the political will to move forward may be gone."

Lawmakers initially placed the bond measure on the ballot last year, then moved it to the November 2006 ballot out of the same concerns expressed by Torrico -- that the state's budget woes would discourage voters from approving the measure.

Torrigo's bill, which is scheduled for a hearing today in the Assembly Transportation Committee, would move the bond measure to the November 2008 ballot.

He says the delay would give the state time to deal with its persistent budget deficits. "Once we do that and turn the corner, we can start to consider long-term infrastructure projects the state needs. This (high-speed rail) is one of them."

But Mehdi Morshed, the executive director of the California High-Speed Rail Authority, says continued delay could make the project prohibitively expensive.

"The longer we wait, the harder it's going to be," he said. "At some point in time, you can't do it. There's too much development (in the way), and your costs keep going up."

One of the Legislature's leading supporters of high-speed rail, Sen. Dean Florez, D-Bakersfield, says he'll try to kill Torrico's bill if it reaches the Senate.

"I think people are ready to vote for a public works project that would produce as many jobs as it would produce," he said. "People are ready to vote for a positive thing. This may well be the only positive thing on the ballot people can get excited about."

## **Former secretary of state back at helm of ethanol company**

The Associated Press

in the Fresno Bee, Friday, April 1, 2005

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) - Former Secretary of State Bill Jones has been named chairman of the board of Pacific Ethanol, a company he founded in 2003, the company announced Thursday.

Jones, a Republican, served as Pacific Ethanol's chairman until March 2004, when he stepped down to mount an unsuccessful challenge to Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer. Jones lost the Senate race to Boxer by 20 percentage points.

"I am grateful to be back as chairman of Pacific Ethanol," Jones said in a statement. "I believe that California is headed toward a transportation fuel supply crisis that could make the electricity crisis seem like a picnic.

"We need more non-petroleum fuels immediately, and I believe that Pacific Ethanol will be a leader in the production of ethanol in California."

In an effort to reduce air pollution, California law requires the use of ethanol, a colorless alcohol made from corn, as an additive to gasoline. During the campaign, Jones came under fire from Democrats for not disclosing his financial stake in Pacific Ethanol when he advocated federal support for ethanol use. He owned 4.8 million shares in company stock worth about \$25 million, according to campaign disclosure forms.

## **Expert Finds Dandruff in Air Pollutants**

By RANDOLPH E. SCHMID, Associated Press Writer

in the S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, March 31, 2005

WASHINGTON, (AP) -- A researcher has discovered unexpectedly large amounts of dandruff and other flaking skin, fur, pollen and similar materials in air pollutants known as aerosols.

Aerosols, tiny particles in the air, are widely studied because they are an important factor in regulating climate, variously absorbing heat to warm the air and reflecting sunlight to cool it. They are also important in forming rain and snow.

But the amount of cellular material — bacteria, plant fragments, spores, fungi and so forth — had been thought to be only a small proportion compared with mineral dusts, clay and sea salt.

Now, Ruprecht Jaenicke of the Institute for Atmospheric Physics at Mainz University in Germany has studied air samples and discovered that biological materials can range up to 25 percent of aerosols in some areas, and as high as 40 percent in others.

His findings are reported in Friday's issue of the journal *Science*.

The source of many aerosols has been unexplained and this could provide the answer, Jaenicke said.

Jaenicke reported that the percentage of biological materials in aerosol pollution topped 40 percent in Mainz in September and 30 percent in October. And a study at Lake Baikal, Russia, showed more than 30 percent in September.

He said he did similar studies of the air over ocean environments, on mountains and in ice cores. There was no strong annual cycle, he said, although pollen was more abundant in spring while decaying cellular matter was more common in fall and winter.

He estimated that the amount of biological particles in the air, worldwide, annually is 1,000 teragrams. A teragram is somewhat more than a million tons.

By comparison, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, established by the World Meteorological Organization and the U.N. Environmental Program, estimated biological particles at 56 teragrams, compared with 3,300 teragrams of sea salt and 2,000 teragrams of mineral dust.

The new finding means researchers should take biological materials seriously in climate modeling, in cloud physics and in hygienic questions such as allergies, Jaenicke said.

"Don't regard that as a minor contribution," he said.

The implications for the global climate are unclear, said Murray V. Johnston, a chemistry professor at the University of Delaware.

"The number concentrations of (biological particles) reported here are much higher than previously thought and merit follow-up research," said Johnston, who did not participate in Jaenicke's research.

James J. Schwab, an atmospheric chemistry research professor at the State University of New York at Albany, isn't so sure Jaenicke's figures are correct.

"He may very well be right. His paper does not convince me that I should believe his estimate, however. He needs to present a more detailed and convincing argument first," said Schwab.

If Jaenicke's estimate is right, Schwab said, "It will have small but important effects on global climate change. It will have a bigger effect on air pollution and air quality for regions of the country and the globe that are out of compliance with air quality standards."

The research was funded by the German Science Foundation.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Sunday, April 3, 2005:](#)

## **Small step forward**

### **The Valley inches along a path toward clearing a clean air hurdle.**

We still have a ways to go, but the Valley is in a rare position: We could actually meet a federal standard for one sort of air pollution. Cross your fingers and hold your breath.

The standard in question is the one-day measure of dust, smoke and debris -- called PM-10 -- that can cause serious lung and cardiovascular problems. Problems arising from particulate pollution kill as many as 1,100 Valley residents each year, according to state officials.

If the Valley can go the rest of this year without a violation of the PM-10 standard, that will mark three such years in a row, and that's regarded as being in compliance.

That's progress, though it doesn't mean we can declare victory in the struggle with air pollution. Not by a long shot. There is still the unmet annual standard for PM-10 as well as more stringent standards for both smog and smaller particulate matter. It will be particularly hard to clean up PM-2.5 pollution. Those are particles much finer than PM-10, and research increasingly shows them to be every bit as damaging and deadly as the larger version, if not more so.

In addition, particulate matter is only one of the major air quality problems we have. We are still very far from cleaning up the gaseous pollution that creates smog, and mostly comes from the vehicles we drive. Some 60% of the ozone-forming chemicals we spew into the air -- which turns into smog -- come from cars, trucks and buses. Until we get a handle on that source of pollution, which won't happen until we undergo some real attitude changes about transportation, we will live under a pall of pollution in the Valley.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has little control over vehicular pollution. That's the province of the federal and state governments. And that's a problem. Sacramento is completely distracted by the state's financial mess. The White House and Congress are busy dismantling the Clean Air Act -- instead of strengthening it -- as fast as they can.

The Valley air district could do better as well. It has been tardy in setting up rules to meet the particulate matter standards, and needs a push from the breathing public.

Other rules have been delayed as well, including efforts to clean up diesel pollution -- a huge problem in the Valley -- from school bus fleets, and charging developers fees for the additional pollution created by the occupants of new homes.

The district's governing board, composed entirely of elected officials, is often criticized for protecting special interests, who wish to maintain the status quo. We can't have that. Lives are at stake.