

Air district chief to retire

Fresno Bee, Friday, Nov. 4, 2005

The largest air quality district in the country will be looking for a new leader after the retirement next year of Executive Director David L. Crow.

The 57-year-old chief of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District announced Thursday he would be leaving his position in February after 14 years.

Crow is the second person to lead the district, which was formed in 1991 and stretches 25,000 square miles from Stockton to Bakersfield. The district's first leader, Larry Odle, left after four months on the job at the end of 1991.

The district will begin recruiting Crow's successor in January.

Crow to retire from air-pollution control district in February

Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Nov. 4, 2005

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's top official is retiring.

David Crow, 57, has been leading the district since 1992, when individual air boards throughout the basin unified into a single organization.

On Crow's watch, more than 500 rules have cut emissions from stationary sources in half, according to a district press release. The San Joaquin Valley air district encompasses 25,000 square miles, more than any other air basin in the country, the press release says.

Crow's future plans were not announced, though the press release said he'd be spending more time with his family. He'll leave the job in February. The district will begin recruiting for his replacement in January.

Senate approves funds for cleaning San Joaquin Valley Air

S.F. Chronicle, Friday, Nov. 4, 2005

Fresno, Calif. (AP) -- Federal lawmakers on Thursday approved funding for research meant to reduce the San Joaquin Valley's long-standing air pollution problem.

The final version of the agriculture appropriations bill included \$401,000 earmarked for studying pollution coming from farms and dairies, and to find cost-effective ways to combat it, officials said.

Farming is the biggest industry in the area, which is plagued by double-digit unemployment. But the valley also has the country's most persistent air pollution. Officials with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District say farming is responsible for much of the smog and the airborne specks that contribute to heart attacks and other fatal illnesses in the area.

"Every day, residents of the San Joaquin Valley are exposed to a serious health threat by breathing the region's polluted air," Boxer said in a statement. "This funding will address the air pollution problem, and help find new ways to improve the quality of the Valley's air."

Now the bill goes to President Bush for his signature.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Friday, Nov. 4, 2005:](#)

Fast track for rail

With EIR approved, high-speed project should move ahead.

High-speed rail for California took another small step forward Wednesday with the approval of the environmental impact report for the project. It's been hard to keep this crucial project on track in recent years, but the need is even greater now — for the state and for the Valley — than when it was envisioned years ago.

The 700-mile project would ultimately tie California together from San Diego and Los Angeles in the south to Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay Area in the north — by way of Fresno and the Valley.

The project carries with it the prospects of enormous benefits:

California's people-moving capacity must expand dramatically in coming years. The high-speed rail system, as costly as it will be, is much less expensive than expanding the existing freeway network and airports.

High-speed rail will be much more energy-efficient than alternatives, especially as fuel costs soar.

A generation of good-paying jobs will be created just to build the system, as well as ancillary industries and technologies that will be needed to support it. That's especially attractive to Fresno and Valley residents — or should be.

High-speed rail will pollute considerably less per mile traveled than the existing system of individual vehicles, buses and slow passenger trains.

There are other benefits to train travel, chiefly the fact that someone else does the driving. Imagine a swift and comfortable ride to that long weekend in the Bay Area, without having to fight the traffic through Altamont Pass and paying a fortune to park once you get there. Imagine a pleasant trip with the kids to Disneyland without the grind of climbing over the Tehachapis and crawling along Los Angeles freeways at rush hour.

There is a \$9.9 billion bond measure already on the ballot for next November. It's been pushed back once, and a bill pending in the Assembly would delay the vote again, until 2008. Rail proponents are afraid the state's woeful budget worries and Sacramento gridlock will put voters off.

That may be, but it also may be that California voters have the savvy to understand what a high-speed rail system could mean to them and to the state. If the project is explained honestly and fully, voters may prove to have more vision than their leaders. This project should go full speed ahead.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Friday, Nov. 4, 2005:](#)

Protect kids' health: Don't light that cozy fire

Everyone should use fireplaces wisely this year. There are times during the winter we are encouraged not to use our fireplace because of pollution. Please help neighborhood kids breathe easier and don't use fireplaces until it gets cold enough to have to turn on heaters.

We can work together at this so we all have lower energy bills and keep the air as clean as possible.

Anyone who has been outside the past two weeks has probably already smelled smoke from a fireplace. It hasn't even been cold enough this season to run a heater, but some of our neighbors are already burning wood in their fireplace. Couldn't we all simply wait until it is truly cold before we burn wood? Our children should be able to breathe clean air.

One more suggestion is that we try not to burn wood the day after a nice rain. Historically, in this area, I have been outside after a nice rain hoping to breathe fresh air and all I can smell is smoke.

Don't burn when the law says we shouldn't, and don't burn unless it is truly cold outside.

Give our kids a break. Let them breathe.

James Ryan, Clovis