

Yokohl Ranch project approved despite opposition

By Tracey La Monica , Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Wednesday, February 8, 2006

The master planned community of Yokohl Ranch was the hot item on the Board of Supervisors agenda Tuesday which drew close to 100 residents to speak about the project.

The 36,000-acre project was unanimously approved which means the J.G. Boswell Company and the Eastlake Company can now file an application for a general plan amendment.

But those who had convened at the supervisors meeting waited five hours to be heard. Most were against the project.

Caleb Layton, who has lived 30 years in the Blue Ridge Mountains, adjacent to the proposed project, spoke against it.

"If you give them a chance to go outside the criteria, you're asking for a can of worms. You have a responsibility to us all," he told supervisors.

Layton said the specific issues are the foothill growth and the opportunity to preserve it for the future.

Kim Loeb, chairwoman of the Sierra Club's Mineral King group, spoke against the project and urged the board not to accept the application.

Meanwhile, Bill Ostrem, president and chief executive officer of the EastLake Company in San Diego, tried to present a picture of a company willing to preserve and protect the surrounding agricultural land of Yokohl Ranch.

The company has other master communities in Arizona and Chula Vista and focuses on detail and planning.

Ostrem explained that the J.G. Boswell and EastLake Company understand long term commitment and financial strength.

"We've been studying the [Yokohl] land for two years now," he told the congregated people.

"We've engaged planners and biologists. We've done some homework."

He stressed the importance of the project's planning and included the 60 percent of open space that would not be developed.

"We know this is the first steps of many," he said. "We'll continue to meet with the public."

Theresa Szymanis, division manager with the Resource Management Agency reviewed the Yokohl Ranch project and urged the board's approval with 10 conditions. They included public hearings with community outreach and an environmental impact report which would be paid for by the developer.

Supervisor Allen Ishida agreed with Szymanis.

There's a thing called smart growth ... which moves development into less productive properties. I'm looking ahead 40 years and things change," he said.

Though Supervisor Phil Cox had concerns about the size of the project, all five supervisors approved the item to allow the companies to file their application.

Outside the board chambers, Bill Ostrem said the approval will allow the companies to begin preparing a concept plan to work with the county and the community.

With regard to those upset with the project, Ostrem said education is the key.

"We'll sit down with those groups and have direct conversation. We understand what it takes," Ostrem said.

But residents remained concerned about the project and its effects.

Rosalie Burnham, who grew up in Yokohl Valley is against the project.

"It's our responsibility. I'm doing this for our future," she said.

Talk of Padre plans grows

Owner of landmark has asked city to OK condo proposal

By James Burger, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, February 8, 2006

Two of the biggest question marks in downtown Bakersfield real estate still hover over the Padre Hotel, the 77-year-old landmark at the corner of H and 18th streets.

What will the Padre, half-renovated and stalled by an asbestos lawsuit, become once work begins again?

And the big one:

When will work begin again?

It's been seven months since owner Pacifica Enterprises settled a lawsuit charging the company with mishandling the removal of toxic asbestos from the Padre.

But it looks like Pacifica, of the San Diego area, is poised to relaunch the Padre's rebirth.

Pacifica spokesman Paul Holling said the company is ready to go -- as soon as the city of Bakersfield is satisfied with the company plans for the Padre.

Next week, the Bakersfield Planning Commission will take up a request from Pacifica to map the building for a maximum of 83 residential condos and 10 commercial spaces.

Holling said construction will begin on the Padre once both the commission and the Bakersfield City Council approve that concept.

City of Bakersfield planner Jim Eggert said Pacifica seems committed to condos, but wants some flexibility on how they market the space.

"They're feeling out the market," he said. "They don't know if they're going to have all studios or whether they're going to do two-bedrooms or three-bedrooms."

Holling said Pacifica will be offering space in the Padre to buyers in 574-square-foot chunks.

Buyers will be able to get "whatever kind of square footage they want in multiples of 574 square feet," he said. "If somebody wants a full floor, we'll sell them a full floor."

Holling also said he has retailers showing "bona fide" interest in the Padre. He said he isn't yet ready to announce who those new businesses might be, but that the announcement is close.

Right now there are only two businesses in the Padre.

Karen Bockman, who leases space in the building for her Hair Works salon, said her business is healthy despite the empty building.

But she does look forward to seeing the Padre inhabited again.

Bob E'dalgo, the only other business person at the Padre, has run his barbershop from the building for 20 years.

He said completing the work on the Padre and opening it to the public again will be a landmark day in the rebirth of downtown Bakersfield's business and entertainment district.

It is something that the Padre's most famous owner, Milton "Spartacus" Miller, would have loved to see, E'dalgo said.

Miller's battles with the city over downtown gentrification and neglect in the 1960s and '70s are the stuff of downtown legend.

Both E'dalgo and Bockman said their customers and random pedestrians off the street often ask what is happening with the building.

"I get asked that 10 times a day," Bockman said.

Right now, they said, they have no answer to give.

But they hope, someday soon, that will change.

April 12, 1928: The Padre Hotel opens.

1954: Milton Miller buys the Padre.

July 15, 1966: Third through eighth floors of the Padre closed to residential occupation for fire safety reasons.

June 9, 1999: Milton Miller dies after a long battle with cancer.

April 16, 2002: The Padre is sold to Pacifica Enterprises by Miller's widow. Work on the hotel begins soon after.

May 29, 2003: Pacifica is sited for removing asbestos from the Padre illegally.

April 2004: Lawsuit against Pacifica is filed by Kern County District Attorney's office.

June 23, 2005: District Attorney's office announces a settlement of the lawsuit.

Feb. 16, 2006: A meeting will be held before the Bakersfield Planning Commission to consider the conversion of the Padre into condos.

Tracy council divisive over plan for project

Allegations made on plan for sports complex

Stockton Record, Wednesday, February 8, 2006

TRACY - Complaint letters focused on the proposed Tracy Youth Sports Complex remain on record at City Hall, despite claims from Councilwoman Irene Sundberg that a pair of administrators have asked the complainers to back down.

Sundberg, at a January council meeting, questioned whether City Manager Dan Hobbs and Economic Development Director Andrew Malik visited public agencies and private businesses to persuade those entities to withdraw or lessen their objections over the planned location of the sports complex.

"It's very important for us to conduct our business out in the public so they know what's going on," Sundberg said, making her allegations. "I have a right to protect my constituents or they won't trust me again, and that trust factor is very important to me."

Hobbs not only denied Sundberg's claims but also lashed back, claiming there are other motives behind Sundberg's allegations besides her duty to her constituents.

Sundberg and other community members believe the proposed location of the complex on a 200-acre site west of Tracy, called the Antenna Farm, is unsafe for children because of its proximity to nearby industrial plants and two natural gas pipelines. Sundberg and others have pushed for the sports fields to be built on another site along Chrisman Road.

This isn't the first time Sundberg has publicly charged city officials with acting illegally. In September, the councilwoman said she and her colleagues broke public meeting laws when they discussed the potential sale of city-owned property to San Joaquin Delta College in private, brief, one-on-one conversations.

"We're seeing a pattern of this obstructionist behavior, and I'm appalled," Hobbs said of Sundberg's actions.

Sundberg said she didn't intentionally question Hobbs and Malik in public to put them on the spot.

"I was asked a question by a constituent. It was on the agenda, so I asked the same question in public, where this is supposed to be done," she said. "All I really wanted was a yes or no answer."

Sundberg wanted to know if Hobbs and Malik asked representatives of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and GWF Energy - the Pittsburg company that manages Tracy's biomass and electrical plants west of town - to withdraw or alter letters of concern about the sports complex they filed with the city. The Tracy Planning Department received 12 comment letters on its sports park proposal.

Hobbs said he and Malik met with representatives of GWF Energy and other companies during the Christmas holidays to explain the benefits of the sports park and let them know the city would provide detailed analysis of all comments and concerns before moving forward with construction. He denied asking the company to withdraw its letter.

Mark Kehoe, GWF Energy's director of environmental and safety programs who wrote extensive comments about the project, confirmed Hobbs' account. He said at no time did Hobbs or Malik ask him to remove his letter from the record.

"Our comments stand as written," Kehoe said.

Hobbs said he and Malik did not drive to Fresno and meet with air district personnel but, "had we done so, it would have been appropriate.

The district's four-page letter was written by senior air quality planner Hector Guerra and dated Nov. 2. It states that the youth sports park will "contribute to the overall decline in air quality due to increased traffic and ongoing operational emissions." Guerra added that the project by itself "would not generate significant air emissions."

The district recommended that a health risk assessment be performed to determine the potential impacts of locating the complex on the Antenna Farm. Tracy planners are in the process of creating that assessment, said Planning Director Bill Dean.

Guerra no longer works for the air district. He mentioned in the letter that the alternative site -- city-owned land at the northeast corner of 11th Street and Chrisman Road -- was environmentally

friendlier than the Antenna Farm. He recommended the city locate the project there to "lessen the possibility of impacts."

The air district's Deputy Director Seyed Sadredin said the agency cannot legally rescind comment letters once they have been sent. It did not do so in this case, he said.

City officials have spent more than two years preparing to build facilities for football, baseball, softball, soccer and a recreational park on the Antenna Farm. The acreage is currently owned by the federal government, but legislation from U.S. Rep. Richard Pombo will allow its sale to Tracy for the sports park. They maintain that the location where Federal Aviation Administration officials transmitted radio communications between 1952 and 1981 using poles that still stick out of the ground is the best location for the park.

Easy environmentalist tip

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, February 8, 2006

If all Americans paid bills online, they'd save:

- ? More than enough energy to power all households in Jacksonville, Fla., for a year;
- ? 18.5 million trees each year, or enough to build 216,054 single-family homes;
- ? 15.8 billion gallons of wastewater annually, more than the city of Fresno generates in a year;
- ? The toxic air-pollutant equivalent of taking 390,326 cars off the road;
- ? 1.7 billion pounds of solid waste each year.

Governor says public works plan would be boon to state's economy

By Paul Chavez, Associated Press Writer
In the S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, February 7, 2006

Los Angeles (AP) -- The multibillion dollar public works program proposed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger will do more than just help California keep pace with a booming population, the governor told a crowd of business leaders Tuesday.

It also will be a boon for construction companies and their workers, providing a long-term boost to California's resurgent economy.

Schwarzenegger combined two of his favorite themes in an address to 250 business leaders who gathered at the University of Southern California to hear him promote his \$222.6 billion public works package: job growth and the need to rebuild California's aging roads, schools, levees, prisons and government buildings.

He said his plan would lead to a construction boom creating thousands of jobs. Every \$1 billion spent on road building, for example, would lead to nearly 19,000 jobs for working families, generate \$750 million in labor income and bring an additional \$65 million in tax revenue to the state, the governor said.

"It's good for the people, and it is good for business," Schwarzenegger said. "... I want to see cranes everywhere, I want to see steel put down, concrete poured and roads built."

Schwarzenegger's plan calls for expanding and repairing highways, improving flood control systems, constructing additional reservoirs, adding jail and prison cells, building schools and upgrading courthouses and other government buildings.

He wants voters to approve the sale of \$68 billion in bonds in a series of elections through 2014 to help pay for the projects. The rest of the money would come from other sources, much of it from federal and local governments and the private sector.

Several legislative committees have been holding hearings on aspects of Schwarzenegger's proposals. They will make recommendations to a two-house conference committee that will try to agree on how much of the governor's plan to enact.

Legislative leaders have indicated that Schwarzenegger will get much less than he's proposed, which likely would translate into a less ambitious jobs and construction program. The legislation approved by lawmakers also is likely to include money for projects not included in Schwarzenegger's plan, such as buying land for parks and wildlife habitat and upgrading hospitals.

The governor's plan has been criticized by state Treasurer Phil Angelides, one of two candidates running for the Democratic nomination for governor this year. A report by Angelides' office said the proposal is full of gimmicks and relies on billions of dollars in uncertain funding sources.

Schwarzenegger defended the plan Tuesday.

"Some call it a fantastic plan for the future, and others call it too big and it is too irresponsible," Schwarzenegger said. "Well, what I say to those critics is that they are dead wrong. In a state with the size and ambition of California, I say it is irresponsible not to have a vision this bold for our future."

Schwarzenegger also said the plan includes \$2 billion to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, an expenditure that he also characterized in economic terms.

"Higher productivity from a better environment should give us an \$8 billion economic benefit from our clean-air investment," Schwarzenegger said.

Tuesday's speech to the business leaders was the latest event by Schwarzenegger designed to promote his so-called strategic growth plan since he announced it in January during his State of the State address.

His audience included representatives from the Black Business Association, the Latin Business Association and the Los Angeles Business Council. Carlos Galvan, a board member of the Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, said the governor's proposal could be a boon for banks and financing companies.

"If you're going to open up a lot of contracts to bidding, these companies will need short-term financing to help them," said Galvan, who works in the banking industry.

But he also called the plan ambitious and cautioned that its final scope remains unclear.

"We'll see how far he gets with the Legislature," Galvan said. "They have their own competing plan, and it looks like there will be a tug-of-war."

Any potential bond package from the Legislature faces a March 10 deadline to make the June primary ballot.

Arnold stumps for plan

By Paul Chavez, Associated Press
in the L.A. Daily News, Tuesday, February 7, 2006

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Ella, left, Jason, Alexis, and Lily were born Dec. 20 and have been keeping parents Amy and Errol Villegas busy ever since. The couple also have a 23-month-old-son.
Tomas Ovalle / The Fresno Bee

On the four front

When you're taking care of quadruplets, life can be a blur.

By Paula Lloyd / The Fresno Bee

Tuesday, February 7, 2006

It's 10 a.m., and it's time for Amy Villegas to feed her 1 1/2-month-old daughter, Ella Jeanne.

Once the bottle is empty and Ella has been burped and her diaper changed, it's time to go through the feeding ritual again.

And again.

And again.

Amy Villegas and her husband, Errol, do everything in multiples of four since their quadruplets — Ella Jeanne, Alexis Ann, Lily Marie and Jason David — were born Dec. 20.

The fraternal quadruplets were born about six weeks premature, delivered by cesarean section within three minutes of each other at Fresno Community Hospital. Jason, the smallest, weighed just 3 pounds, 15 ounces. Alexis tipped the scales at 4 pounds, 11 ounces.

The babies are the first quadruplets born in Fresno County since 2003 and only the 20th in the past 10 years, according to the Fresno County Department of Community Health.

The Villegas babies came home two at a time, a decision based as much on when the babies were ready as on easing the family into quadruplet parenthood. Lily and Alexis came home Christmas Day, and Ella and Jason on Dec. 30.

Since then, their house has been the site of constant feedings and diaper changes — they go through 32 bottles and 40 diapers a day. The parents often have a hard time telling when days begin and nights end.

Errol Villegas, an engineer with the San Joaquin Valley Air District, says his day starts at 6 a.m. — but a cry or feeding could force an earlier start.

At 6:45 a.m., he wakes Tyler, their 23-month-old son, dresses him and then gives him a snack. "We kiss Amy good-bye, and we're out the door by 7," he says.



Amy and Errol tend to the quads during a feeding.
Tomas Ovalle / The Fresno Bee

While Tyler's on his way to day care, Amy Villegas gets ready for the 7:30 a.m. feeding.

"I can usually get two of them at the same time on my lap and keep the other two calm," she says. "It's not so bad so far because they still sleep a lot." Other parents have warned it's going to get worse. And that's why the babies' grandparents sometimes step in to help.

Amy's mother, Cindy Belknap, lives with the family during the week, returning home to Napa and her husband on the weekends. Others, including Amy's father and stepmother and Errol's parents, also lend a hand.

Having quadruplets wasn't Amy Villegas' plan. She wanted a brother or sister for Tyler, and she wanted to finish her doctorate in forensic psychology. Instead, four cribs fill the room she had planned to make her office, and her education is on hold.

An ultrasound in the eighth week of her pregnancy first revealed that her plans needed to change. The test showed she was carrying two babies.

"That was a shock to us because there are no twins in our families," she says, adding that she didn't take fertility drugs, which often are the cause of multiple births.

Later ultrasounds revealed the third and fourth babies.

"That time it was so overwhelming," Amy Villegas says. "It was surreal. But by the time I got out to the car, it hit me. I started thinking of the practical things."

Like feeding four babies eight times a day. And packing up four newborns for doctor visits. And telling four newborns apart.

The quadruplets' cries are different. Jason's is mellow. His sisters' are more demanding.

And they each have their own personalities. Jason and Ella are calm. Lily and Alexis are more aggressive. "They each have a buddy who's sort of more their speed," Amy Villegas says.

Others, though, need help.

"On doctor days, we color-code them," she says. One day, Lily was in pink, Alexis in lavender, Ella in yellow, and Jason, of course, was in blue.

Routines such as this help the Villegases stay on top of the babies' constant care. Their rigorous schedule continues through the night.

At 6:15 p.m., Tyler and Errol Villegas return home, and the quadruplets are in their identical infant seats that vibrate and play soothing music.

"Hopefully all the babies are asleep, so we can have a sit-down dinner and some focus time with Tyler," Errol Villegas says.

By 7 p.m., dinner's over and the babies need to eat again.

Tyler's tucked in bed by 8:30 p.m., and Mom and Dad have a few minutes to themselves.

"We have to have some down time," Errol Villegas says. The next feeding is at 10 p.m. — and then at 1 and 4 a.m. The Villegases take turns with night duty.

"And then it starts all over again," he says.

The feedings, the diapers, the laundry — "The amount of laundry we go through, that's been insane. But I'm down to one load a day just for them," Amy Villegas says.

And raising quadruplets is bound to get more complicated. How do you celebrate four birthdays just days before Christmas? How will three teenage daughters share a bathroom? How do you pay for college?

For now, these questions can wait. It's 11:30 p.m. and all the children are asleep. The Villegases thankfully climb into bed.

"It's deceptively easy when they're all quiet," Amy Villegas says. "We're still waiting to see what happens when they're awake more."

The reporter can be reached at plloyd@fresnobee.com or at (559) 441-6756.



Errol multitasks while feeding Alexis. The quadruplets were a surprise for the couple. Amy hadn't undergone fertility treatments, and there is no family history of twins.

Tomas Ovalle / The Fresno Bee



Between the four infants, Amy and Errol Villegas go through 32 bottles and 40 diapers a day. The two feed and diaper one baby before going on to the next one. Although the quadruplets sleep a lot, their feeding continues day and night.

Tomas Ovalle / The Fresno Bee

[L.A. Daily news commentary, Tuesday, February 7, 2006](#)

Rail wrong way

L.A.'s system costs more than it saves

By Peter Gordon, Thomas A. Rubin and James E. Moore II

With the opening of the Orange Line busway in the San Fernando Valley and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposed state infrastructure bond, suddenly all of Los Angeles is thinking seriously about transit. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has a transit vision that strongly emphasizes rail lines, including a multibillion-dollar Wilshire Boulevard subway. But is this the best way to go to relieve L.A.'s transportation woes?

Already, Villaraigosa is moving quickly in his role as chair of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority board, presiding over the MTA's approval of the Exposition light-rail line, and the beginning of tunnel operations for the Gold Line light-rail extension. He has joined the chorus of U.S. leaders of cities with populations near 1 million or above who see rail transit as an important badge of distinction, and also a way to relieve road traffic problems. Many serious people cling to these and similar ideas, but we now have much experience with new rail-transit systems in Los Angeles and elsewhere that indicates this vision is incorrect.

Over the last 15 years, the MTA has constructed five fixed-guideway transit lines. Collectively, all five serve about a quarter-million boardings per day. Los Angeles County has about 10 million residents, with the average person taking approximately four trips per day. Taken together, these lines account for just over one-half of 1 percent of all daily Los Angeles County trips.

What's more, the Red Line subway and the Blue and Green light-rail lines have all been operating for some years, and are unlikely to gain many more riders. The light-rail Gold Line and the

Orange Line busway are much newer, but have no greater potential to attract riders than their predecessors.

If we are very careful about counting transit trips instead of transit boardings, and recognize that 70 percent of rail-transit trips actually involve multiple boardings, then the share of county travel attributable to fixed guideway transit drops even further, perhaps as low as one-quarter of 1 percent. The 30,000-plus trips per day accounted for by the Metrolink commuter trains account for such a small share of total travel that we have simply ignored them.

The costs of achieving this tiny ridership have been enormous. It cost \$7.6 billion just to build these five fixed-guideway systems, and every year we incur another \$240 million in operating costs.

Transit advocates such as the American Public Transit Association often prefer not to count capital costs when they promote fixed-guideway projects, but the rest of us do. The Federal Transit Administration uses an Office of Management and Budget standard of 7 percent interest to estimate the cost of transit capital. These costs are real: The MTA's fiscal year 2006 debt service is budgeted at \$444 million, almost all for rail-transit capital expenses.

Current interest rates are low. If we give the MTA a break and annualize the cost of the MTA's capital expenditures using an interest rate of 5 percent per year, and add in operating expenses, then the MTA's five fixed-guideway lines incur a net loss of \$575 million per year.

Even if we make the transit-friendly assumptions that these new lines are very successful in diverting auto trips to transit, and thus that 35 percent of all the riders on these fixed-guideway lines leave a car at home; and that every auto trip not taken nets society benefits of 9 cents per mile in pollution, congestion and accident-reduction savings; then the social loss from these fixed-guideway investments is still \$560 million per year.

This is all relatively simple spreadsheet analysis that anyone can do, including the MTA. We can tweak the calculations all day long, but there is absolutely no set of reasonable assumptions that show fixed-guideway transit systems to be economically attractive.

Transportation economists have been making this point for almost half a century, and the evidence grows ever stronger as more expensive rail-transit systems come on line. Yet building these systems remains politically attractive as a kind of jobs program that supports environmental objectives by building systems we hope our neighbors will use, thus freeing up our freeways for us.

Throw in the equity argument that rail dollars squandered elsewhere have yet to be squandered on a line serving the mayor's political base on the Eastside of Los Angeles, and the result seems to be an unbeatable rail coalition.

There is only one way to solve the traffic problem we associate with automobiles. We should require drivers to pay the full cost of their decisions to travel in the form of pollution charges, time-of-day tolls, and (according to UCLA Professor Donald Shoup's new book) proper parking charges. New transponder technologies make all this relatively simple. These approaches work and have proved cost-effective everywhere they have been tried.

An enlightened society does have a responsibility to provide transit service to those who lack mobility options. If we are serious about transit, then the first thing we should do is legalize private transit to the maximum extent possible given public-sector labor-bargaining agreements, and allow owner-operators to compete openly with the MTA. If we continue to use public resources to subsidize transit providers like the MTA, then we should be fair to the taxpayers footing the bill by focusing on cost-effective bus services, and demand responsive services for those residents covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Los Angeles has real, serious transit needs - but rail lines aren't the answer.

Peter Gordon is a professor of policy, planning and development at the University of Southern California. Thomas A. Rubin is a transit consultant based in Oakland and the former controller-treasurer of the Southern California Rapid Transit District. James E. Moore II is chair of the Daniel J. Epstei

[Fresno Bee editorial, Wednesday, February 8, 2006:](#)

Keeping up with cows

Fresno County is wise to begin studying growing dairy industry.

Fresno County is finally going to study the impact of the booming dairy business on the environment. It's about time.

California — and particularly the Valley — has watched the dairy industry mushroom in size and scope in recent years. The growth of Valley dairies has been pushed by urban development in Southern California, as dairies and other farms give way to homes and streets.

This has profound impacts on the environment. Air quality is affected by gases given off by the cows. Water quality can be diminished if dairy waste isn't handled correctly. Manure is a problem, especially when it's being produced in such vast quantities. There can be noise pollution, and no one likes the hordes of flies that are typically found near all those cows.

But the dairy industry in California is worth nearly \$50 billion a year to the state's economy, and the Valley is its center nowadays. It's not going anywhere anytime soon.

That means local governments and state agencies alike must stay on top of the problems that arise from having so many cows. Other counties in the Valley have already taken steps to get a handle on their dairies; Fresno is the last to do so. Supervisor Judy Case proposed recently that a broad environmental study be started to help the county understand the industry and its impacts.

Fresno officials maintained for years that the county's dairy industry — dwarfed by that of adjacent Tulare County — wasn't big enough to merit such attention.

Tulare County now has about 900,000 animals at existing dairies, with many more operations in the planning and permitting stages. Fresno's herd, by contrast, is about 185,000 animals — still in the Top 10 nationally — and it is growing by leaps and bounds.

Fresno County can't wait any longer, or it will find itself badly behind the curve when it comes to handling permits and managing the effects of the industry.

[Letter to the Tracy Press, Wednesday, February 8, 2006:](#)

Asthma from natural sources

Unfortunately, Dianne Johnson's air quality health information is not entirely correct in Friday's "Uncaring congressman" letter.

She correctly states that one out of six children in the San Joaquin Valley suffers asthma but incorrectly attributes this to vehicle and power plant emissions.

While asthma attacks are on the rise in our area, triggers relating to asthma have a lot more to do with genetics and lifestyle, such as what we eat and are exposed to in our homes, rather than pollution caused by automobiles and power plants, according to medical researchers.

Environmental Protection Agency studies indicate the San Joaquin Valley has the poorest air in the nation.

But the EPA admits that natural sources of pollution are not even considered. This is a significant mistake, given natural volcanic activity around the globe virtually dwarfs all emissions created by mankind.

Regardless, if you read the entire report you will learn what every adult asthmatic living here, like myself, has known for many years - dust, pollen and molds, all naturally occurring in our valley's trapped air space, are the biggest triggers of asthma in the valley.

Until you get a handle on the natural problem, the incidence of asthma will continue to rise as our population grows and the genetic information leading to asthmatic problems are passed along to future generations.

I have no problem with people being against Rep. Richard Pombo for whatever reason they choose, but use factual, accurate and verifiable information instead of fabrications and half-truths to make a point against him.

Dave Hardesty, Tracy