

Air district rule doesn't attack ammonia from dairies

BY SARAH RUBY, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Monday, March 13, 2006

The valley's existing dairies aren't being regulated for ammonia emissions. Dairy cows produced 219 tons of ammonia each day in the San Joaquin Valley in 2005, more than all other sources combined, according to the valley air district. Ammonia reacts with nitrogen oxides to form fine particles, which university researchers have repeatedly linked to premature deaths.

Even so, ammonia is not being targeted by a rule released recently by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The rule is aimed at ozone, and it attempts to change dairy practices to reduce ozone-forming volatile organic compounds.

The district would go after ammonia if it would improve air quality, said Dave Warner, director of permit services for the air district.

When manure and urine mix, ammonia results. The compound is a fact of life on a dairy, and it's so widespread that trying to control it doesn't have much impact, Warner said. Regulators would have to cut ammonia emissions by 50 percent in order to make a 10 percent dent in the resulting fine particle pollution, according to the district.

Instead, the district goes after nitrogen oxides -- the other side of ammonia's fine particle equation -- which come from power plants, engines and other combustion sources. The valley's nitrogen oxides emissions have dropped by 30 percent since 1975, according to state air data.

"There is so much ammonia in our air that removing some of it doesn't do much to the dynamics of the chemistry of our valley," Warner said. "If you take (nitrogen oxides) out of the equation you start reducing the amount of particulate that forms."

The district does require ammonia controls on new dairies, Warner said.

Environmentalists aren't swayed by the district's reasoning.

"The law now says (regulators) have to control everything period," said Brent Newell, attorney with the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment.

That law is known as SB 700, which was shepherded through the Legislature by state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter. It was written to include ammonia as one of its target pollutants, according to Florez's staff in Sacramento.

Dairyman aren't wild about the idea of more rules, but John Dunlap III, who lobbies for dairy industry groups, said he'd rather know now if dairymen should expect ammonia regulations in the next few years.

"It's disingenuous to develop a control scheme today and three, four, five years later to come back with something different that's going to be costly," he said.

Dunlap also represents a company trying to market ammonia-cutting technology to dairies.

The proposed rule isn't yet final, and the district is holding two public workshops this week to discuss it. The rule would let dairymen and other animal feedlot operators choose from a menu of pollution-controlling options, from housing animals in emissions-capturing buildings to changing the way manure is collected and stored.

If it's approved, the rule would apply to the valley's large animal feeding operations -- 233 dairies, six beef feedlots, five cattle operations, and a few pig farms. Its controls would cut their smog-forming emissions by more than 20 percent, said the district's George Heinen, who worked on the rule.

The district must adopt the rule by July 1, according to state law.

The law is purposely flexible, Heinen said, because scientists are still trying to figure out if most dairy emissions come from cow digestion, animal feed or elsewhere.

New air rule targets dairies

District to reveal conservative but controversial regulation for livestock.

By Mark Grossi / The Fresno Bee
Monday, March 13, 2006

What: Workshop on new air rule for livestock
Where: 1990 E. Gettysburg Ave.
When: 1:30 p.m. today

A new air pollution rule for barnyard animals does not call for catalytic converters on cows, contrary to a joke circulating last year.

The joke started because local air district numbers showed 2.5 million cows produce more of one smog-making gas than all the passenger cars in the San Joaquin Valley.

But instead of expensive technology, the new rule outlines lists of mostly low-tech options, such as frequent flushing of corrals, scraping of manure piles from concrete and covering feed stockpiles.

The conservative approach does not seem to dampen the controversy over regulating the \$4 billion dairy industry.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will reveal the rule publicly today at a workshop, and criticism is expected from the industry and environmentalists.

Dairy representatives, who already have sued once over the rule process, say they wanted completed research on dairy emissions before the rule. Scientists still are confirming recent research on gases from cows, manure and various parts of dairies.

"We would have rather seen the district follow the 2002 National Academies of Science recommendation to base the regulations on science," said Mike Marsh, chief executive officer of Western United Dairywomen.

Environmentalists say the new rule just doesn't go far enough. They believe state law requires the district to go after all emissions, especially the abundant ammonia from dairies.

By 2008, the district projects farming will be sending 315 tons of ammonia into the air daily, most of it from dairies. The number will rise to nearly 330 tons by the end of the decade as the industry expands.

"What about ammonia?" asked lawyer Brent Newell of the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment. "The state law says they need to adopt a rule for all air contaminants. The district doesn't have a leg to stand on."

Ammonia is not a pollutant that the district normally would regulate. But the pungent, corrosive gas combines with nitrogen oxides from vehicle exhaust to form tiny, lung-irritating specks called ammonium nitrate. The district does regulate the specks.

Air regulators claim two arguments against ammonia controls, one legal and the other scientific.

District counsel Phil Jay said Senate Bill 700, which requires the dairy rule, focuses on ozone, not particle pollution. Ammonia does not form ozone, the main ingredient in smog. "SB 700 simply does not apply to ammonia," Jay said.

District officials said it makes more sense to attack the particle problem by cutting back the amount of nitrogen oxides, or NOx, from vehicles and other sources, which already are being regulated. With less NOx to combine with ammonia, the ammonium nitrate problem should be eased, they said.

"Studies have supported the conclusion," said district planning manager Dave Mitchell.

The new rule, which must be in place by July 1, also applies to beef cattle, chickens, ducks, turkeys, swine, horses and other animal operations.

But, as a practical matter, dairies are the focus. The threshold for invoking the rule on beef feedlots is 3,500 head, and only six operations will be affected. Few other animal operations have enough animals to even trigger the rule.

For dairies, the threshold is 1,000 milking cows, meaning 233 dairies in the Valley are subject to the rule, according to the district.

Fifty years ago, dairies averaged fewer than 50 cows. Now, it is common to see new dairies with more than 2,000 cows, and some have more than 6,000. The industry has expanded 30% since the late 1990s as many dairies have moved to the Valley from Southern California.

The growing numbers raised the air pollution debate, which heated up three years ago. The district was using emission estimates based on science dating back to 1938 because no other definitive studies had been done.

The research has since been updated after the dairy industry filed suit over the rule, but scientists agree a lot more work is needed. Faced with a deadline for the rule, the district last year reviewed the new science, raised the pollution estimate and started a new argument.

The new number — about 19 pounds of gases per animal annually — is 50% higher than the old estimate.

The new estimate shocked industry representatives who suspect it overstates a large, controversial portion of the emissions, so-called volatile fatty acids.

Researchers from the University of California at Davis and a private consultant have spent the last few months looking closely at volatile fatty acids, also called VFAs. Their work has not yet been released to the public.

"They are compiling their results now, and we think we'll see something by the first part of May," said dairy representative Marsh. "We're hearing that the VFAs are practically nonexistent. But they are finding the feed is a bigger source than they first thought. We really think they should have waited for the science to be complete."

Blame is on Bessy

Dairies face new rules for clean air

By JOHN HOLLAND - BEE STAFF WRITER
Modesto Bee, Saturday, March 11, 20056

The science is still not settled when it comes to dairy cows and air pollution, regulators in the San Joaquin Valley acknowledged.

Nonetheless, a deadline for putting new rules on dairies is approaching, and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is seeking public comment on its proposal.

Workshops on Monday and Tuesday will deal with draft rules for dairies that have at least 1,000 milking cows and were built before 2004. Dairies built since then already are held to tight standards.

At issue are volatile organic compounds, part of the smog that experts say is a threat to human health in the valley. Farmers, regulators and environmentalists have debated for years how much of the pollution comes from dairy sources, such as manure, cow belching and fermented feed.

"Throughout the process of developing this rule, we've kept in perspective what we know and what we don't know," Scott Nester, director of planning for the district, said in a news release. "We still have questions and need more research. When the answers are available, they'll be incorporated into the rules."

About 70 percent of the valley's dairy cattle are covered by the proposal, Nester said Friday.

The proposal would let farmers choose a mix of improvements aimed at reducing emissions. They include using pollutant-trapping devices in cattle enclosures, keeping feed covered, promptly tilling manure into fields and controlling moisture in the waste to prevent reactions that add to pollution.

The district board could take a final vote on the rules in June. That would be just before a July 1 deadline in a 2003 state law that dealt with several aspects of valley pollution. That law requires large dairy operators to get permits, which list conditions for controlling emissions.

The rules would remove an estimated 18 tons of smog-forming compounds per day, out of about 372 tons from all sources, Nester said.

Costly, and to what effect?

The rules would be costly to farmers and might not even achieve the desired pollution reduction, said Michael Marsh, chief executive officer of Western United Dairymen, based in Modesto.

There's a scarcity of scientific evidence on how to effectively reduce emissions from dairies, he said.

And farmers would face the costs of implementing new rules just as the price of milk is heading back down after a strong 2005, Marsh said.

Milk is the top farm product in the Northern San Joaquin Valley and statewide. It brought \$1.6 billion in gross income in 2004 to farmers in Stanislaus, Merced and San Joaquin counties, and billions more were made in cheese production and other related businesses.

On another front, air district officials this week praised farmers of all types for major reductions of dust, soot and other particulate pollution.

They said improved farming practices have helped keep the valley within the federal standard for particles that are 10 or fewer microns in diameter for three years. These particles — one-seventh the diameter of a human hair — can get deep into the lungs, health experts said.

Seyed Sadredin, deputy air pollution control officer for the district, called the effort "a great example of public and private interests working together to clean the valley's air."

The workshops on the proposed dairy rules will be at 1:30 p.m. Monday at the air district's Fresno office and 1:30 p.m. Tuesday at its Bakersfield office. A live video link will allow public comment at the district's Modesto office, 4800 Enterprise Way, off Bangs Avenue near Salida. More information is at 557-6400 or www.valleyair.org.

Leaders air Valley concerns Resolutions back helping economy, cutting pollution.

By Dennis Pollock / The Fresno Bee
Saturday, March 11, 2006

VISALIA — The California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley on Friday passed resolutions aimed at addressing the central San Joaquin Valley's poor air quality and also heard a long wish list of recommendations for boosting the sagging economy from Stockton to Bakersfield.

One of the resolutions supported creating Air Quality Mitigation Zones in economically disadvantaged areas with poor air quality.

Creating the zones could provide financial incentives to put clean air technologies in place.

Pete Weber, co-chairman of the Regional Jobs Initiative, a member of the partnership and facilitator for the work group, said incentives could include state income tax credits, accelerated depreciation of equipment, low- and zero-interest loans and loan guarantees.

A second resolution backs a five-year pilot project for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to give incentives for retiring or replacing "high-emitter" or "gross-polluting" vehicles owned by low-income families.

The pilot project is part of a bill introduced recently by Assembly Member Juan Arambula, D-Fresno, who also spoke before the panel Friday and chided fellow Assembly Member Bill Maze, R-Visalia, when Maze said "more money is not the answer" to the region's problems.

"I have to disagree with Bill," Arambula quipped. "Money would help."

Arambula's bill would provide from \$2,000 to \$4,000 for low-income families who retire a model year 1985 or older vehicle and acquire a "low-emission vehicle."

Arambula also has introduced legislation to create Air Quality Mitigation Zones.

The partnership is made up of eight Cabinet members, eight local government officials, eight civic leaders and two deputy chairs. It has been conducting hearings around the state to gather observations from educators, elected officials, farm and other business leaders, those in health care and real estate professionals.

The partnership held a hearing in Bakersfield on Thursday and will hold hearings in Kings and Fresno counties next month.

Members of the governor's Cabinet who are part of the partnership withdrew from voting on the air quality resolutions to avoid a conflict of interest. The panel was formed by the governor to address the region's economic challenges and includes business and local government leaders.

More than 100 people packed a room at the Visalia Convention Center for Friday's meeting.

Members of three panels opened the public meeting with remarks on how they think the partnership is working and what they see as priorities.

Not surprisingly, a need for infrastructure repair, particularly on Highway 99, was a dominant theme.

Sunne Wright McPeak, secretary of the state's Business, Transportation and Housing Agency and head of the partnership, has called the highway the "backbone" and "Main Street" of the Valley. She said the governor is supporting a \$6 billion effort to upgrade the roadway within 10 years.

"[Highway] 99 is overloaded, and we need to expand it safely and efficiently and reduce impacts on air quality," said Steve Worthley, chairman of the Tulare County Board of Supervisors. He added that he believes Valley residents pay a disproportionate share of the costs of addressing air quality and highway needs considering "the goods don't stop at the port."

Several panelists talked of the need to bring a four-year college to Tulare County and also to foster more vocational training, whether at high schools, adult schools, community colleges or elsewhere.

"We need a relevant, sustainable and skilled work force," said Bill DeLain, president of the Tulare County Workforce Investment Board. "One that is competent and confident and can adapt."

Fresno Mayor Alan Autry urged collaboration among county work force investment boards to find work for people who might otherwise leave the region.

"We talk about the brain drain, but I'm also concerned about the brawn drain," he said. "If somebody leaves Fresno, I'd rather he go to Bakersfield than Idaho."

With more coordination, Autry said, perhaps a warehouse worker in one part of the Valley could be pointed, for example, toward a job handling luggage at an airport or hanging drywall in another region.

Visalia Police Chief Bob Williams asked the partnership to look into getting a grant to work on gang "suppression and intervention" in Tulare County.

"We can't arrest ourselves out of the gang problem," Williams said. He added that the county should build on an already effective school-law enforcement collaboration to address gang problems.

Brad Caudill, executive director of the Tulare County Farm Bureau, talked of what he sees as the importance of keeping the Valley's multibillion-dollar agriculture industry alive in the face of residential growth.

Caudill urged use of infill in residential development and keeping alive the Williamson Act, which provides property tax benefits to farmers willing to agree not to develop farmland for a period of 10 years.

He also would like to see utility companies encouraged to purchase excess power from methane digesters on dairies.

Burning issue

Clean-air police nail local residents for using fireplaces

By Ian Holmes, For the Times-Delta

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Saturday, March 11, 2006

David Hale's heating unit was out of commission Dec. 13, so he turned to the only other source of heat in the house: the fireplace.

Hale, 37, a Visalia refrigeration mechanic, says he was just trying to heat his home to 75 degrees for the children in his wife's in-home day-care center.

But an inspector from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District noticed the smoke, and Hale was cited for operating a wood-burning fireplace on a prohibited day.

Hale was one of 20 people cited for burning violations in Tulare County during the 2005-06 burning season, which runs from November through February. There were 159 violations issued for the eight-county district this season, which officially ended at midnight Feb. 28.

Hale said he believes a disgruntled neighbor turned him in.

"The violation said there was somebody in the neighborhood from the Air Pollution Control District, and they spotted smoke coming out of our chimney," Hale said. "But I don't believe that was true because there are like four of our other neighbors that burn all the time, and they were burning on the same day, and no one else received anything."

Kelly Morphy, spokeswoman for the air district, said the Check Before You Burn fireplace and wood stove restriction program is primarily enforced through complaints.

"We received this past season, Valleywide, about 400 complaints from residents who were being impacted by wood smoke on days that wood burning was prohibited in those counties," Morphy said.

When the district prohibits wood burning, or issues mandatory curtailments, inspectors fan out to do surveillance, Morphy said. If wood smoke is observed coming from a home, a notice of violation is mailed to the property owner.

Wayne Clarke, the district's air quality compliance manager, said on days when burning is prohibited, inspectors are required to spend two hours a day doing surveillance for smoke.

"If they are out following up on one complaint and then they smell smoke and notice which way the wind is blowing, they may drive around the next street over to try to determine where it is coming from," Clarke said.

Clarke said inspectors, who do not wear uniforms and do not have personal contact with violators, are asked to take pictures of the smoke if they can.

"We ask them to make sure they can see the chimney clearly and that they have a good view so that they can tell if it is smoke coming out of the chimney," Clarke said. "If it's just heat waves and they don't really see any smoke, then we ask them not to write a violation. They have to observe what they believe is indeed smoke."

Clarke said it's fairly easy for inspectors to identify smoke coming out of a chimney. This winter, however, steam from a dryer vent caused one case of mistaken identity, Clarke said.

"Some people have dryer vents that exit on the roof," Clarke said. "If it's a cold day and someone is running a clothes dryer, you can have water vapor that condenses and shows up, and it looks like steam coming out, but that hasn't happened very often."

The restriction program, started in 2003, discourages wood burning in fireplaces and wood stoves when the Air Quality Index falls between 101 and 150 and prohibits wood burning when the AQI is 151 or higher. Tulare County had nine prohibited or mandatory curtailment days and 28 voluntary curtailments or discouraged burning days this season.

First-time violators can pay a \$50 fine, or they can attend an air quality education class at the air district in lieu of paying the fine, Morphy said.

"Thus far, we haven't seen any repeat violations, but if it were a repeat violation the fines would go up," Morphy said.

Glen Schlaich, 69, a Visalian who was cited for burning wood in his fireplace, said he doesn't believe the rules are necessary.

"I'm just going to send my \$50, no good to argue with them," Schlaich said.

Schlaich, who supplements his Social Security income with carpenter and handyman work, says there are worse sources of pollution.

"We've been burning wood all our lives," Schlaich said. "You need to start with these buses and stuff, look at all these diesel buses they've got in town. Then they pick on us poor old folks out here."

Pegi Handley, a Porterville resident, was cited on Dec. 15 for burning on a no-burn day. Handley, 69, doesn't check the burn days. She said she has a gas furnace in her home but chooses to use her fireplace for economic reasons.

"I'm cheap," Handley said. "Actually, it would be cheaper for me to pay a fine every month, but they won't let me do that."

Morphy said the violations are handled like traffic tickets. A violator can contest the citation by writing a letter or filling out an exemption form. Exemptions are available for homes without access to natural gas, homes at elevations of 3,000 feet or higher and homes in which there is no other source of heat.

Hale said after his wife called the air district to explain about the heater, the couple received an exemption from paying a fine or going to class.

"She contacted the gentleman, and he just wanted proof that our heating unit was out of commission at the time that we were burning," Hale said.

Bob Hales, 70, a Visalia resident, also received an exemption from the air district. His house, built in 1944, has no other source of heat except for the fireplace.

Hales said he was unaware of the prohibited burn day when he got his violation.

"I get up too early for the [newspaper], and I probably started the fire before the [newspaper] arrived," Hales said.

Hales said an inspector with the air quality district drove by, saw the smoke and sent him a citation.

He filled out an exemption form, returned it to the district and got word that he was entitled to an exemption.

"I think the air quality board was awful nice," Hales said.

Hales said he's not sure if the restrictions on fireplace burning are necessary.

"When I was a kid, that's all we had," Hales said. "I do know we have bad air here in the Valley."

Clarke said most violators didn't realize it was a no-burn day, perhaps failing to look in the newspaper that day.

"The newspapers, radio and TV have done a good job making people aware of the fact that there are no-burn days," Clarke said.

Fireplace rules

Here are the rules for fireplaces under the Check Before You Burn program:

- Enforced from November through February
- Burning prohibited when Air Quality Index is 151 or higher
- Applies to wood-burning fireplaces, fireplace inserts, wood stoves, pellet stoves

- Exemptions: Cooking devices, devices that use only natural gas or propane, homes with no access to natural gas, homes that use wood-burning fireplace as the only source of heat, homes at the 3,000 feet elevation or higher.

Source: www.valleyair.org.

Air Quality Index

The Check Before You Burn program ended two weeks ago and begins again in November. During the season, readers will find fireplace restrictions and the Air Quality Index on 2A, and the day's restrictions also on 1C

The air quality index measures the amount of pollution in the air. Five pollutants are used by the Environmental Protection Agency to determine the AQI: ground-level ozone, particle pollution, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide.

The higher the index number, the greater the level of air pollution

Each AQI number range corresponds to a health concern

- 0-50 good
- 51-100 moderate
- 101-150 unhealthful for sensitive groups
- 151-200 unhealthful
- 201-300 very unhealthful

Those most at risk for health effects from exposure to pollutants:

- Ozone: Children and people of all ages who are active outdoors
- Particle pollution: People with heart and lung disease, older adults and children
- Carbon monoxide: People with cardiovascular disease
- Sulfur dioxide: People with asthma who are physically active outdoors

Sources: www.AirNow.org, www.valleyair.org

Election Notebook

Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, March 11, 2006

Two vie for Ashburn seat Two new candidates will try for Republican state Sen. Roy Ashburn's 18th District seat:

Democrat Fred Davis filed papers Thursday in Tulare County.

Davis, a 75-year-old retired probation officer and social worker, said he knows his chances aren't good as a Democrat in the heavily Republican district. He plans to talk about issues and not spend a lot of money campaigning.

He's never held elected office, but previously ran for Congress two years ago against Devin Nunes.

His main focus, Davis said Friday, is universal health care for Californians.

"To me, that single issue overrides almost everything else," he said.

Green Party candidate Matthew Rick also filed in Tulare County. This will be the 22-year-old's first run for elected office. Rick said Friday he is a community college student and serves tables in Visalia.

Rick said he'll focus on air quality, equal rights for Mexican-American immigrants and electoral reform.

No Dems for Parra

Stephanie Campbell announced Friday she'd pulled out of a race against Nicole Parra for Parra's 30th District seat in the state Assembly.

Had Campbell pursued the bid, she would have faced the Hanford Democrat in the June 6 primary.

Campbell said Friday she is changing her party affiliation from Democrat to Republican. The pending switch is the No. 1 reason she is no longer running, Campbell said.

Campbell's departure means two Republicans -- Wesley Crawford Sr. and Danny Gilmore -- will duke it out in the June primary.

The winner will face Parra in November.

Campaigns haunt Wyman

Phil Wyman, the former state legislator from Tehachapi who is making another bid for the state Assembly, has run in so many campaigns that they sometimes come back to haunt him.

That happened this week when a Sacramento campaign consultant, a fellow conservative Republican named Matt Rexroad, heard Wyman was running for the 32nd Assembly District seat being vacated by Kevin McCarthy, R-Bakersfield.

"Will Work for Free," headlined the item on the blog www.calraces.com, authored by Rexroad and other consultants.

"If anyone out there would like to fund an independent expenditure against Phil Wyman I will work for free," Rexroad wrote.

"The resident of Bakersfield, Lancaster, Barstow, Hanford, Victorville, Tehachapi has taken out papers to run for McCarthy's seat," he said in a reference to different cities Wyman has used as residences to run for various offices. "He just will not go away. I believe he is the most prominent person to lose for Assembly, Senate (2x), and Congress.

"This would be my contribution to the people of California. One that will help every single man, woman and child."

Wyman attributed the vitriol to an old grudge.

He said Rexroad managed the state Senate campaign of the late state Sen. Pete Knight, R-Palmdale, when Wyman lost to Knight after a nasty battle in 1996.

"I don't really think it deserves a comment," Wyman said.

Proposed relaxation of dust rules stirs protest

Speakers lash out at EPA plan, cattlemen support it

By MARK GROSSI - THE FRESNO BEE
in the Modesto Bee, Saturday, March 11, 2006

SAN FRANCISCO — Carolina Simunovic this week gave federal bureaucrats a live reason why San Joaquin Valley residents worry about a proposed rollback of dust rules for rural residents.

The Fresno-area resident held her 7-month-old daughter, Isabella, in front of a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency panel Wednesday and asked: "How much can her little lungs take? What you're proposing is a crime against the San Joaquin Valley."

Simunovic, environmental health director for Fresno Metro Ministry, was among dozens of witnesses, most of whom opposed the EPA's proposal to drop federal monitoring for dust and soot in communities with fewer than 100,000 people.

The EPA hearing in San Francisco was one of three Wednesday, the other two occurring in Philadelphia and Chicago. The hearings were intended only to gather response to the proposed adjustment in the dust standard.

Scientists, medical experts, environmentalists and many air regulators across the country assailed the proposed change in so-called PM-10 standards. PM-10 is composed of dust, soot, chemicals and other specks of pollution and is one-seventh the width of a human hair. More than a dozen doctors spoke, many saying that 2,000 studies link particle pollution to asthma, heart problems and even early death.

Activists said the proposed change would protect only 65 million of the 165 million people who live in areas where dust and soot are a problem. The EPA's own scientific review panel opposes the proposal, they said.

Medical groups at the hearing included the American Thoracic Society, Physicians for Social Responsibility and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Activists from Environment Justice Advocacy, Environment California, the Sierra Club and Environmental Defense also testified.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association stood firmly behind the EPA proposal, which would exempt agriculture and mining industries from federal dust monitoring. The cattlemen's group said the research on rural dust is insufficient.

Rural particulates said less significant

Under a court settlement, the EPA is supposed to set a new standard by Sept. 1. The agency startled the scientific community in December by announcing the proposed relaxing of the standard for rural areas, saying there was no conclusive evidence that the rural particulates are as bad as urban particulates.

Lydia Wegman, one of the EPA hearing officers in San Francisco, said the most extensive research focuses on city pollution, which contains many kinds of toxics such as diesel particles.

"But there is much less science available about rural areas," she said. "There are a couple of studies suggesting rural particulates do not have an impact as significant as urban particulates."

A large part of the valley would be affected by the change, said Scott Nester, planning director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The district and state dust rules would still apply, but they do not have financial sanctions as federal rules do.

The federal sanctions, such as withholding billions of dollars in road-building funds, are persuasive, officials have said.

"Forty-three percent of the district's population would be left unprotected," he said. "That's 1.4 million people. This would include two entire counties — Kings County and Madera County."

The EPA proposal would provide increased protections for urban areas, an idea criticized by the California Manufacturers and Technology Association.

"It adds more cost than benefit," said representative Dawn Sanders-Koepke.

The rural rollback and the industry exemptions created the most fireworks at the hearing. The rollback, coupled with the exemptions for farming and mining, would make life miserable in the valley, where agriculture spreads over millions of acres, speakers said.

The valley's PM-10 problem has improved in the last three years, air officials have said. But activists worry that the air quality will deteriorate if federal protections are lifted.

Rey Leon, representing the Latino Issues Forum, said his hometown of Huron, population 6,000, is a place where the dust is laced with chemicals.

"Diesel pollution is a big issue when the lettuce harvest happens two times a year," he said. "There's asbestos in the soil all around the community. There's pesticides. But there's no effective assessment of cancer because we're a small town."

Leaders discuss future

Community members urged to give their input on hot topics

By Tracey La Monica, Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Saturday, March 11, 2006

The issues ranged from health and human services to air quality and higher education. But few residents joined more than 100 civic officials and business people at the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley forum on Friday.

"These are all issues we've talked about before," said Visalia resident Graciela Martinez. "This is a very energetic group. It's a step in the right direction, but we need some more grass-roots and average people here."

Martinez was one of the few residents at the meeting not representing an agency or company.

She was concerned with health and human services, which was one of nine divisions broken down by the partnership to discuss the future of the Valley.

Other issues that concerned health and human services were the shortage of specialty doctors, child obesity, language access and seismic regulations in hospitals.

The California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley forum stemmed from an executive order signed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2005 to ensure the growth and vitality of the Valley.

The 26-member board made up of local officials and business people met at the Visalia Convention Center on Friday to discuss ways to better the Valley. They encouraged area residents to partake in the discussion, though most participants were representative of government offices, utility companies, local businesses and education facilities.

After three panels discussed their ideas, Tulare County Supervisor Connie Conway invited everyone to travel around the room and share their ideas upon their area of interest.

The ideas and concerns were written on a 3-foot tall pad, which will be transcribed for the board.

The areas discussed were: economic development, higher education and workforce development, health and human services, land use, housing and agriculture, telecommunications, transportation, air quality and environmental protection, and water quality, supply and reliability.

Conway co-chaired the event with Mike Crisman, California Secretary of the Resource Agency.

Sunne Wright McPeak, secretary of the state's Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, was also on hand.

The 26-member board was made up of local officials including Farmersville City Councilman Paul Boyer, Hanford City Councilwoman Marcelyn Buford and officials from Lodi, Los Banos, Fresno, Bakersfield, Modesto, Madera, Stockton and Merced.

In the land use and agriculture group, people were concerned with local control and regulations that affect agriculture.

With water quality issues, local control was also the most important component on people's minds.

"We're hearing local input and drive is what needs to be done," said James Tischer, regional program manager of the center for irrigation technology with California State University Fresno.

Michael Lukens is the public affairs manager with Congressman George Radanovich's office.

"It's a positive [event]," he said. "What we are finding ... is collaboration needs to be available. It's a dialogue that can only lead to good things."

An under-educated work force in the Valley was the biggest concern for the higher education group. In addition, adult schools need more funding and junior colleges should offer more vocations.

"I think there needs to be a four-year college," said Larry Fortune with Fortune Associates in Fresno.

The air quality group brought-out people who were concerned about federal and state collaborative efforts

"[The forum] will result in more opportunities," said Mark Keppler, executive director with The Maddy Institute in Fresno. "Those of us involved want to see action to get something done."

The transportation group stressed a variety of issues including the improvement on Highway 99, the improvement of work along the east/west connectors, a future passenger rail system and regional transportation.

In telecommunications, high speed broadband to all districts, as well as exposure to emergency technology, were mentioned.

Assemblyman Juan Arambula, who sat on one panel, said, "Adequate attention needs to be paid to infrastructure improvement to highways, storage for water and education and employment training."

He said other Californians view the Valley as something hot that you drive through.

"We want to make sure California is provided for our future," he said. "It's not a one-night stand, it's a long relationship."

The partnership still has to visit six additional counties and then collect all the data to be turned into an strategic action proposal which will be submitted to the governor.

Carol Whiteside is the president of the Great Valley Center in Modesto.

"We have been working to get the Valley to pull together and address challenges," she said. "It was very productive. We are all looking for the good work to continue."

Great Valley Center founder to speak at Farm Bureau dinner

Friday, March 10, 2006

By Special to the Madera Tribune

The Madera County Farm Bureau will hold its annual recognition dinner Thursday, March 16, at Madera Municipal Golf Course, 23200 Avenue 17.

Cocktail hour will begin at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6:30 and the program at 7.

Featured speaker will be Carol Whiteside of Modesto, founder and president of the Great Valley Center.

She began the nonprofit organization in August of 1997.

The Great Valley Center's mission is to support organizations and activities that promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of California's Central Valley, a fast growing region extending 450 miles from Mt. Shasta to the Tehachapis, and east to west from the foothills of the Sierra Nevada to the crest of the Coast Ranges.

For more than 25 years, Carol Whiteside has worked in public service. Prior to founding the Great Valley Center, she served for seven years on the staff of Gov. Pete Wilson, first as assistant secretary of the California Resources Agency, where she specialized in resource conservation, land use and growth management issues, and then as director of intergovernmental affairs, where she concentrated on community and economic development, land use and natural resources, finance and growth management.

Previous to her work in Sacramento, Carol Whiteside served as a member of the Modesto City School Board, as a member of the Modesto City Council, and as the elected Mayor of Modesto from 1987 to 1991.

Carol is a graduate of the University of California at Davis. She and her husband, Judge John Whiteside, have two grown sons.

Two businesses, Tesei Petroleum and The Madera Tribune, will be honored during the event.

Lawrence Tesei began his service to the community of Madera in partnership with Howard Cook when they acquired an established petroleum company in 1969. In 1979, Lawrence's son, Gail, obtained Cook's interest in the business and Tesei Petroleum was established.

Tesei Petroleum serves the commercial, industrial, residential and agricultural communities with a variety of products and services.

The company employs more than 30 people and opened a second location in Chowchilla in 2001.

Tesei Petroleum created a partnership with the Madera County Farm Bureau in 1990, and has continued to support this mutually beneficial relationship for more than 15 years.

In addition to its ongoing support through regular donations to the Madera County Farm Bureau, Tesei Petroleum offers Farm Bureau members significant savings on fuel and propane purchases.

The Farm Bureau will honor the Tesei family for their long standing support and commitment to the Madera County Farm Bureau and their continued investment in the community.

The Madera Tribune has been serving Madera County for 114 years. The six-day-a-week paper focuses primarily on local news, but also reports state, national and international stories. It includes daily weather reports, comics and features.

The Madera Tribune has been under local ownership for the past two years. Prior to that, it had been owned for many years by out-of-town newspaper groups.

The local owners have re-established the printing production plant, which had been closed by previous owners, and now the newspaper and other products once again are all produced by Madera people.

The Madera Tribune produces the Madera County Farm Bureau News, and is a long-time supporter of agriculture.

Chuck Doud is editor and publisher of the paper, and president of Madera Printing and Publishing Co., Inc., which owns it.

Sponsors of the recognition dinner include Avakian Insurance Services, Foster & Parker Insurance Agency, Inc., J.W. Myers, Inc., and Nationwide Health Plans.

[Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Viewpoint, Saturday, March 11, 2006:](#)
To grow, Valley must consider its identity and place in the world

There are three cities in the Valley that I would live in if I weren't living in Modesto, where I live, and one of them is Visalia. If you want to know who your competition is, Chico is one of them, and Redding. It's pretty hard to replicate Mount Shasta.

But certainly the quality of life in this part of the region is pretty high, and I suspect that's why many of you are here today, because you sense there are big changes afoot and you want to make sure you preserve the things that you think are most important about where you live and about this place.

We would hypothesize that the region is at a tipping point.

The Great Valley Center holds a conference every year, and it's just about the Valley. This is our ninth conference, and this year we have borrowed from Malcolm Gladwell the title of his book, "The Tipping Point," because we believe the time right now is right now to make the important decisions and determine some of the important directions for the region.

Our conference this year will have as one its guest speakers, Henry Cisneros, who is a wonderful, inspirational speaker.

But we are also bringing up a wonderful speaker up from Curitiba, Brazil. Curitiba is a city that in the 1960s was about 140,000 and is now about one a half-million. They went through a period of astronomical growth, maybe faster than we've gone through. And this mayor, Jaime Lerner, was an architect, which is quite an unusual background for a mayor, actually. And the goal of Curitiba, as they faced this growth, was to create a place that provided transportation, that was environmentally sustainable, and that allowed for people of all levels to live in the community. They have a bus and train system that is the envy of the world. People get on and off buses through a Plexiglas tube system. It's a very quick system and very affordable, so everybody uses it.

Someone once accused Jaime Lerner of being against cars, and he said he wasn't against cars at all, he had a friend who owned one. Which won't work here, but they have done a lot of wonderful things in Curitiba, and I am looking forward to his talk.

We do a Central Valley public opinion poll every couple of years with the Public Policy Institute of California, and when we ask people in the region, most people agree that job creation and unemployment are the No. 1 concerns in the area. The unemployment rate in this region is still two or three times the national average, and that is of concern to everyone.

Current economic development theories talk about clusters: In any industry, participants in any single sector tend to organize into groups that contain both primary performers, that visible activities that define the group, and secondary performers. So in Hollywood, the movie cluster is defined by the movie producers the big guys like MGM, Disney and Dreamworks and so on. In Silicon Valley, the cluster is formed around HP and IBM and Apple and Intel.

So what makes a primary industry like movie-making or computer development or manufacturing into a cluster is the presence of an entire array of secondary or supporting businesses. For movies it's the costumers, the stunt men, the animators, the makeup people, the distributors and the dozens of other related businesses. For the technology industry, it's the designers, the packagers, the distribution companies, the systems engineers, the inventors and the other businesses who exist because they provide for the needs of the primary industry: computer technology, manufacturing, development, movie making, whatever it happens to be.

Well, right here in our area there's an industry cluster that generates about \$4 billion in annual income and provides an economic base that generates jobs and revenue every year, instead of an extractive or transition industry that has to keep moving to survive. Agriculture of course provides continuing revenue and repeated returns over time. This industry has the additional benefit of costing very little in public service. In fact, public service for this industry is about 25 percent, one-quarter the cost of serving similar sized areas of urban development.

In addition, the industry and its related cluster businesses provide about 65,000 jobs in this county. These jobs cover a whole range of activities, from entry level up, including businesses, professional positions, research and development, creative, scientific and financial management, global access and international marketing.

This industry or cluster that provides these jobs direct or indirect in this area is about 12 percent of the employment in this area, and the \$4 billion is not always valued. Sometimes it is taken for granted, sometimes by some it is ignored or disdained, and sometimes called out as unsophisticated, uninteresting and unimportant, so much so that sometimes people think the entire industry will just relocated to a more hospitable locale, where it will be more appreciated and valued, maybe even off-shore to South America or China.

The business is agriculture, the foundation and base of our economy. The Great Central Valley of California is one of seven places on the face of the Earth that provide the soil, the water and the climate that can produce the 350 crops that are known in our area. We are blessed with multiple benefits from this amazing industry. Not only is agriculture an important economic engine and job resource, but it provides benefits in dozens of other ways. The oxygen generated by chlorophyll in the leaves of the orchards and vineyards helps clean the air. The fields provide habitat and recharge the water table. Agriculture provides resources for tourism as thousands of people visit farms and dairies or travel throughout the region to see the Blossom Trail or attend one of the hundreds of food-related festivals. The asparagus festival, the bean festival, the chocolate and wine festival, the garlic festival ... there's a festival for fruits and nuts, for peaches, apricots, and if you can't think of any one thing, you can call it a harvest festival, like they do in the small town of Fuson.

And tourism goes way beyond food booths and blossoms. It's big business. The World Ag Expo here in Tulare County brings in shoppers from every corner of the world. More than 35,000 visitors, maybe more this year, arrive in February every year to view the latest farm equipment and technical innovations. In Stanislaus County, just about any night of the week you will find visitors from around the globe staying at the DoubleTree Hotel so they can do business with the Almond Board, which provides marketing and access for global customers of the enormously successful almond industry.

Walnuts, pistachios, chickens, cheese, grape wine ... all bring buyers and customers to the Valley. Agriculture is an industry that we cannot afford to ignore. It supports hotels, the travel industry, restaurants, quick print shops, laundries, mechanics, marketing, distributors and home builders. As we think about that, we have to think about how we consider to give proper consideration to agriculture and its needs as we face the sort of challenges ahead in population growth.

I suggest to you there is a conversation going on right now that is very important to these decisions. The governor appointed something called the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley in July. That partnership is chaired by Secretary Sunne McPeak of Business, Transportation and Housing. It is co-chaired by Fritz Grupe, chairman of Grupe Development in San Joaquin County and by Supervisor Connie Conway from right here in Tulare County. The purpose or the opportunity that is presented by the partnership is to say, look, San Joaquin Valley, we understand there is a lot happening, and you need to talk about it together. You need to have a regional conversation about what your future is going to be and what the challenges are. The governor proposed that his partnership come back to him by the end of 2006 with specific implementable recommendations for things that would make a difference in terms of economic competitiveness and quality of life in the region.

There are eight local government members of the partnership, there are eight members of the governor's cabinet, and there are eight civic-sector appointees, and they are leading eight work groups that cover all the big issues for this region: economic development, air quality, health and human services, education, transportation, telecommunications, and land use, housing and agriculture.

It is in land use, housing and agriculture that not only are we engaged in supporting that effort at the Great Valley Center, but I think that is fundamental to determining how these other issues work. If we don't do a good job with land use, housing and agriculture, it will be hard to have an economic future that is successful. If we don't do a good job with land use, housing and agriculture, certainly there will be negative effects on air quality and on health and human services.

Of course, it's my issue, but I think it's the most fundamental part of the discussion. Each of the work groups in the discussion was given a very specific scope of work for our 18 months' worth of effort. And in the land use, housing and ag work group, we have to develop a macro level concept plan for the San Joaquin by bringing together stakeholders and existing efforts. We need the resources to develop a strategy for integrating related parts of a complex system into a cohesive model for the region. We have other requirements as well, in terms of identifying barriers, looking for incentives, a whole range of things. But basically we are going to try to construct a big vision for the region that will help all of the cities and counties fit together in a way so that at the end of the day this region looks purposeful and not accidental.

So what's happened, the models that the Great Valley presented were used as an early discussion starter, as were some principles for growth that were developed by all the supervisors in the San Joaquin Valley. The principles as you might imagine were things like keeping development compact and close to cities wherever possible, making sure that the fiscal resources for development were identified up front, making sure there is adequate resources to pay for transportation, that there is housing for a variety of kinds of population, all the kinds of things we would like to see in the region.

And they are all based on values: that we want a health environment; that we want communities that work; that we want good air; that we want economic opportunity ...

Now we have a work group that is composed of state agencies, environmental groups, farm bureau representatives, planners, city, county, a wide array of interests, and we would invite anyone who would like to participate to join in the meeting.

They are involved in macro level models, and we've given them some interesting names just so they are easy to remember.

We call the existing status quo Phoenix, which is that will continue to sprawl, without much plan, taking up 26 percent of the farmland.

And there was another one called Brasilia, like the country in Brazil they were facing new growth, so they said, let's plan new cities, let's start from the ground up and plan whole new cities that will bring people a good place to live and services and everything they need.

In our research, and some of the discussions we have had about new cities is that the current pattern of new development might be too small, because what you want is an urban place that is big enough to provide all the services you want: medical care, shopping, government services, education and so on. Because if you build small places, and our vision isn't big enough, people continue to drive to the urban centers for restaurants, and medical and banking and so on, and you make the air quality worse.

So there is a growing body of research, and we are going to try to update it and apply it to the Valley, but it says, "Maybe new towns ought to be rare but big. Maybe they ought to be 100,000 to 150,000 and we ought to be thinking about them in terms of new cities that concentrate new development."

There is another model which is called Portland, which is rigid urban limit lines that contain development within some relationship to the city's growth boundary and sphere of influence.

And the fourth model is called the Maginot Line: absolutely no development on agricultural land, and it takes the form in the model of suggesting that development should be east of 99 and west of Interstate 5. That we have our own fertile crescent between 99 and 5.

So we asked the modelers at UC Davis who are working with us to give us a map so that we could start off, and we said, put the habitat areas, put the publicly opened land, put the farm land, put the existing urban land, put the steep slope, because you can't build a house on a mountain

ledge ... put all these values into the map and come back with us and we'll be able to tell where we can put development without impacting the things we care about.

Guess what? Everything has some value. There aren't any places that don't have some value, as grazing land or habitat or public lands or riparian corridors or whatever. Whatever immediately became obvious and should become obvious to all, that planning for growth in the future requires tradeoffs. Well, we're going to give up this in order to get that. We're going to trade this for that. How is it that we balance all of the values and all the things we care about in such a way to preserve what's most important and still provide for the opportunity for growth and economic development that will make us healthy in the future.

So right now it's beginning to look like maybe that macro strategy will be a combination of things. Maybe it will require increasing density, maybe it will require new cities, maybe it will require moving ranchette development off the Valley floor ... maybe it's a combination of things.

We've asked some of the environmental groups to go off in another group and say, OK, tell us, where are the most valuable lands that you're going to fight to the death over? Because there is no reason we should impact those lands. The Valley is enormous, and right now we have lots of space and lots of opportunity for tradeoffs. So why shouldn't we take the most valuable land and make them mitigation banks and have people buy into them and sustain them and keep them going. What are the farmlands that are sustainable over time and what are the farmlands that for a host of reasons, do we know we can compromise and develop and what are the ones we want to keep and protect?

Those are the kinds of discussion that we are engaged in right now. The reason they are important as you go into your discussions about the general plan and the future of Tulare County is that we operate not by ourselves any longer but as part of a much bigger world. Your highways connect to other places. Your air comes from other places. Your water systems are controlled in part locally and in part by other places. Certainly the impact of your population growth - whether it is birth rates, immigration, coastal people moving in, resort communities, whatever - is something that connects you to the rest of the world.

So we think it is important to coordinate at the regional level with that big picture strategy and then to implement locally, and then through Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) and the other eight councils of government, we hope there will be an opportunity for taking this macro strategy and creating a coordinated, cohesive and hopefully a rational land use and transportation plan for the region.

I leave you with three thoughts:

The time is right now. There are conversations about the future of this region that are absolutely formative and definitional happening all around us partly inspired by the governor, and we've never had a governor say to this region before "Talk to each other and figure out what you want to have happen." This is the moment, we are at the tipping point.

The second thing I would remind everyone is that we have choices. I don't honestly think that one of the choices is not to grow. That's beyond our control, especially when it comes to those birth rates. But we do have choices in terms of what our cities look like, where we put our development, what we do with our resources, and how we make sure that our air and environment is clean and healthy.

And the last thought I would leave you with is my rally to everyone which is that participation matters. If you care about these things, you have to be part of the discussion, you have to be part of the dialogue, you have to read the literature, because right now is the time when we're going to decide what the Valley will look like for the next 30 or 40 years, and I don't believe these moments come around very often. So this is the moment, and your participation is important.

Four scenarios for growth

The Great Valley Center has constructed four scenarios for the future of the region's growth through the year 2040.

Among the characteristics common all: The 19 Great Central Valley counties will grow from 6.3 million people to 13 million in 2040.

California had \$35 billion in agriculture output in 2005, and of that 57 percent was produced in the Valley. If the Central Valley were a state, it would be the No. 1 ag producer in the nation. Tulare County alone is responsible for \$4 billion in ag production.

Three factors

Driving the Valley's population growth are three factors:

10 percent Housing prices: People move here from other areas of California because of the cheaper housing prices. The average home price in California is \$568,000. In the Central Valley it is \$263,000.

35 percent Immigration from other countries.

65 percent Natural growth: birth of children to existing residents.

Four scenarios

The Great Valley Center developed four potential scenarios for growth:

1. Accommodating urban development. This scenario is the status quo or business as usual, incorporating new growth into urban areas more or less without a plan. It would result in 26 percent reduction in farmland through the year 2040.

2. Prime farmland conservation: Make preserving the best farmland a priority. Development would occur in foothill areas and less viable land away from cities. It would result in 8 percent loss of farmland.

3. High-speed rail: The scenario would presume the development of high-speed rail through the Valley and to major urban centers. It would concentrate urban growth along that corridor and result in 19 percent loss of farmland.

4. Auto-oriented growth: This presumes a project to expand the Valley's freeway system by reinforcing Highway 99, adding a new freeway on the east side at Highway 65 and linking the three major arteries, Interstate 5, Highway 99 and Highway 65, with interconnecting cross freeways. It would result in 14 percent loss of farmland.

Four macro models for growth

The land use, housing and agriculture work group of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley has developed four models for the way the Valley might develop through the year 2040:

Phoenix: This model is the same as the Great Valley Center's Scenario No. 1, the status quo, keeping development as it is. It would result in a 26 percent loss of farmland over the next 35 years. It would also do little to improve air quality or transportation problems.

Brasilia: This model would allow for new cities, but large ones. It presumes development on a large scale, in complete cities of 100,000 people. The advantages are that it can keep essential services close to people, reducing the effect on air quality and transportation systems, and it can be situated on marginal farmland, reducing the loss of prime ag land.

Portland: Rigid restrictions on urban growth to maintain existing urban boundaries. This requires growth in existing cities and a up-and-not-out development but does not help with transportation systems.

Maginot Line: No development permitted on farmland for any reason ever. This model would encounter problems in the area of private property rights.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Monday, March 13, 2006:](#)

Our views in brief

Don't step backward

Carolina Simunovic, environmental health director for Fresno Metro Ministry, addressed a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency panel last week in San Francisco about a proposed rollback of dust rules for rural residents.

Simunovic was among dozens of witnesses, most of whom opposed the EPA's proposal to drop federal monitoring for dust and soot in communities with fewer than 100,000 people.

Scientists, medical experts, environmentalists and many air regulators across the country assailed the proposed change in so-called PM-10 standards. More than a dozen doctors spoke, many saying that 2,000 studies link particle pollution to asthma, heart problems and even early death.

We appreciate Simunovic's effort in opposing the proposed rollback. We hope the panel will take into consideration her testimony as well as that of other experts on the issue.

California's tougher dust and soot standards would remain in place even if the EPA adopts this inexplicable proposal. But federal sanctions that have been used as a lever to force compliance with pollution control efforts would disappear. That's a big step backward.