

Day fire brings bad air to south valley

Bee Staff Reports

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, September 19, 2006

A two-week-old wildfire in Ventura County could create air-quality concerns as far north as Merced County. The Day wildland fire has grown to more than 80,111 acres and is only 15 percent contained.

Because of the fire's increasing size, combined with winds continuing to come from the south and southwest, the smoke is expected to mean bad air the next several days in Merced, Tulare, Kings, Fresno, Kern and Madera counties.

"In general, if you can smell smoke, then it's probably at a strong enough concentration to cause health effects," said Shawn Ferreira, a San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District meteorologist.

He added that the duration of the problem depends on wind conditions and how long the fire burns. It might burn until rains arrive in Southern California, in October or November, he said. Exposure to smoke and other particle pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increases the risk of respiratory infections.

In people with heart disease, short-term exposure to particle pollution has been linked to heart attacks and arrhythmias, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Residents in affected areas are advised to use caution when smoke is present.

The valley air district covers eight counties: San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern.

For more information, call the valley air district at 557-6400 or visit www.valleyair.org.

Farmers' Hopes Sprout as Brazil Bets on Biodiesel

The country mandates use of the renewable fuel, with an eye toward helping small growers.

By Marla Dickerson, Staff Writer

LA Times, Tuesday, September 19, 2006

PORTO NACIONAL, Brazil — For the better part of his 64 years, Sebastian Luis de Sousa has scratched out a meager living in the paprika-red soil of central Brazil.

So when offered a chance to grow castor beans to produce an alternative fuel called biodiesel, the rawboned father of nine reckoned he had nothing to lose. The \$200 he earned this summer from his tiny harvest wasn't much. But rising demand for renewable fuels has De Sousa wanting to expand his 7 1/2 -acre farm.

"I want to buy more land," he said, rolling a prickly castor bean seedpod in his calloused palm. "This is an important thing that Brazil is doing."

Already the world's largest producer of ethanol, Brazil is now betting on biodiesel, with an eye to helping small farmers like De Sousa capitalize on what some see as the next big thing in green energy. Derived from animal fats or vegetable oils, this substitute for petroleum diesel is generating ten of millions of dollars from investors.

Major companies, including U.S. agribusiness behemoth Archer Daniels Midland Co., are building

production plants, encouraged by a federal mandate requiring every liter of diesel fuel sold in Brazil to contain 2% biodiesel by 2008, rising to 5% by 2013.

Brazil's state-owned petroleum giant, Petrobras, is already selling a fuel blend with 2% biodiesel at hundreds of its retail gas stations. The company is investing in manufacturing facilities. It is also patenting a fuel known as H-Bio that it says will save millions of barrels of oil by using vegetable oil in the refining process to create a low-polluting petroleum diesel.

Even McDonald's Corp. has collaborated with Brazilian researchers looking to power vehicles with recycled French fry grease from its restaurants.

The involvement of big players is crucial if Brazil hopes to reach its goal of embracing biodiesel on a massive scale. Current production is modest but is projected to jump to 840 million liters by 2008, which would put Brazil among the world's large producers. Still, officials aim to involve more subsistence farmers such as De Sousa, who have yet to profit from the nation's biofuel bonanza.

No country has been more successful at displacing fossil fuels with green energy than Brazil. Hammered by the oil shocks of the 1970s, the nation committed itself to developing a domestic ethanol industry to reduce its dependence on imported petroleum.

Today, 40% of the fuel that powers passenger cars here is made from homegrown sugar cane. That's been a boon for Brazilian agriculture. But the economic fruits have been reaped by a small number of large farmers growing a single crop.

With biodiesel, officials see a chance to spread the wealth from a fast-growing fuel whose demand in Brazil could top that of ethanol.

At present, petroleum diesel accounts for more than half of all the vehicle fuel consumed in Brazil, about 42 billion liters a year, thanks to the country's heavy dependence on truck and bus transport.

By promoting a cleaner-burning alternative made from Brazilian-grown castor beans, soybeans, palm oil and other crops, the government hopes to slash diesel imports and improve air quality in its cities, as well as generate rural income and employment.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who is running for reelection, has touted biodiesel production as a way to spark development in some of the poorest regions of the country, particularly the rural northeast.

Biodiesel producers who want to qualify for hefty tax breaks must purchase 10% to 50% of their raw materials from small growers, depending on the region.

That requirement is how farmer De Sousa got connected with a firm called Brasil Ecodiesel, which provided him with seed and technical advice in addition to purchasing his crop of castor beans.

Rodrigo Augusto Rodrigues, the government's biodiesel coordinator, said the effort could eventually involve 360,000 family farms nationwide, up from about 2,500 at present. He said the varied crops provided by small growers would keep the farmers on the land and provide them a reliable stream of income.

"We don't want to repeat the same mistakes we made with ethanol," Rodrigues said. "The social aspect is critical."

But some energy experts are dubious that peasant farmers toiling on tiny plots will be more than

bit players. Large-scale cultivation and ruthless efficiency were crucial to the nation's success with ethanol. Mass-produced soybeans, though not the most efficient raw material, are fast emerging as the crop with the greatest potential to help producers achieve economies of scale.

"There is a lack of focus in this biodiesel program," said Luiz Augusto Horta Nogueira, former director of Brazil's National Agency of Petroleum, Natural Gas and Biofuels. "One group of stakeholders is looking to substitute large amounts of diesel. Others want rural development.... It's a real problem."

Some observers doubt that the fuel can be cost competitive without fat government subsidies such as those that propped up Brazil's ethanol market for years. Others say the environmental benefits may be overblown.

Biofuels emit fewer greenhouse gases than fossil fuels when burned in combustion engines. But other factors must be considered in making the comparison, such as how much petroleum was needed to plant, harvest, produce and transport the fuels and how many native trees and plants were plowed under in the process.

Soybean farming has destroyed large swaths of Brazil's Amazon forest. The long-standing agricultural practice of burning sugar-cane fields before harvest is a major pollutant.

Renewable fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel are "not as green as we like to think they are," said Joe Ryan, who manages air-quality projects in Brazil for the Menlo Park, Calif.-based William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Still, with the government projecting more than three dozen manufacturing plants to be on line by 2008 with a capacity of 1.7 billion liters, producers here, and across the globe, are bullish on biodiesel.

Worldwide production is surging, led by the European Union, which has adopted a goal of substituting 5.75% of petroleum diesel with biodiesel by 2010 as part of its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The world's top producer is Germany, where biodiesel made from rapeseed is widely available in gas stations.

Asia is fast becoming a major player, with the cultivation of palm oil for use in biodiesel growing rapidly in Malaysia and Indonesia. In the United States, where soybeans are the primary raw material, production is projected to more than triple this year to about 250 million gallons, or almost 950 million liters. The U.S. boasts 86 biodiesel plants, with 62 more under construction, according to the National Biodiesel Board.

The American-made product has gotten a boost from country singer Willie Nelson, a longtime advocate of family farmers. Nelson is a partner in a biodiesel company, marketing his own BioWillie brand to the nation's truckers.

Just as in the U.S. Midwest, soybeans are the principal feedstock for biodiesel refineries in Brazil's heartland. On a recent afternoon near the city of Anapolis, about two hours southwest of Brasilia, the nation's capital, workers with hard hats and torches welded seams on the gleaming steel storage tanks of a \$20-million biodiesel plant rising from the crimson dust.

The plant, which will produce as many as 100 million liters of biodiesel annually, is one of three production facilities that Brazilian soybean processor Granol plans to have running by next year. Company executives see biodiesel as a lucrative new outlet for its soybeans, with domestic sales of its cooking oil and animal feed stagnating and exports hurt by Brazil's strong currency.

"Renewable fuels are the future," said manager Paulo Donato, explaining his employer's \$45-million bet on biodiesel.

Hours to the north in Porto Nacional, farmer De Sousa said he hoped that future would include small farmers like him.

"I'm just one man," he said, poking at the soil with his flip-flop. "But I'm proud to play a part in this."

When day turns to night

BY CHRISTINA SOSA and JASON KOTOWSKI, Californian staff writers
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2006

The Day fire continued to rage Monday, burning up more than 80,000 acres and bringing a contingent of more than 2,000 firefighters to the area.

A huge plume of thick smoke is seen Monday afternoon near Fillmore, northwest of Highway 126 from the Day fire which started on Labor Day.

Oakland City firefighters stage on Lockwood Valley Road Monday afternoon while talking to residents in the area who were asking about the status of the Day fire and possible evacuations. Due to all of the heavy smoke in the area residents and firefighters were all using their headlights in the middle of the day.

Four firefighters from Carmel Valley fire department stage near a structure in the Lockwood Valley area southwest of Frazier Park Monday as the Day fire was expected to head that direction soon.

Kern County Fire Capt. Doug Johnston said Monday evening that the fire was still miles from the Frazier Park area, but it was noticeable even in Bakersfield as a hazy orange glow descended on the city late Monday afternoon.

About 75 Kern County Fire Department personnel were among those working to stop the Day fire before it reached the town of Ojai, which was not considered immediately threatened, Johnston said Monday. "Some have been there from the very beginning," Johnston said. "It's the way the system works once a fire gets to a certain size."

As of Monday night, the fire was only 15 percent contained and had cost almost \$18 million to fight, according to InciWeb, an interagency wildland fire incident information management system.

The Ventura County Sheriff's Office issued a recommended evacuation for Lockwood Valley Road between Highway 33 and Frazier Park Road.

As the fire grew, the Frazier Park Community Center opened up Monday afternoon to provide shelter for evacuees.

No homes or structures had been destroyed by the fire, according to a representative from the Ventura County Fire Department.

The fire began on Sept. 4 and has required the closing of several roads. There are no roads in Kern County affected, according to the Ventura County Fire Department. But Kern County residents heading south should avoid Highway 33 because it is closed from Fairview to Wheeler Gorge.

Pyramid Lake, Hungry Valley State Recreational Area, Oak Flat area, Golden Hill Road and Smoky Bear Road at Interstate 5 are also closed, but I-5 is open.

The wind worked with firefighters battling the fire near Fillmore and Santa Paula Sunday night and Monday morning, according to the fire information center in Goleta.

Forest Service firefighter Galen Young, one of the organizers of the air attack against the fire, said there were 11 heavy helicopters, 12 medium-sized aircraft and four light aircraft in the area

to help contain the fire. The heaviest helicopters are capable of carrying 2,000 gallons of water and can fill their tanks in less than a minute by suctioning water from rivers and lakes.

The helicopters were grounded Monday because heavy smoke reduced visibility to levels where pilots would be putting themselves at risk by flying toward the fire. The sky was a dull yellow by 3:30 p.m. in Frazier Park and the surrounding area, and a mild smoky smell drifted along the air.

Firefighter Jason Megowan of the San Bernardino National Forest Service was watching over the heavy helicopters with other Forest Service firefighters stationed at a private airstrip on Lockwood Valley Road located miles from the fire. He said typically they'll work from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., providing support and following the helicopters on their runs and making sure operations are running smoothly.

Fire crews from different counties lined Lockwood Valley Road, listening to updates and waiting in case they were called into action. Benny Austin, a Forest Service task force leader, said the only spot where the fire had spread to near their location was Mutau Flats, about 12 miles away.

Smoke from the fire is now creating air pollution problems in the San Joaquin Valley and will likely do so for the next several days, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District warns people with heart or lung diseases to follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality when smoke is present. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion.

The fire is primarily affecting burning areas of wild land in the Los Padres and Angeles National forests. For more information, check out www.inciweb.org/incident/475/ <<http://www.inciweb.org/incident/475/>>.

SoCal wildfire pouring smoke into Central Valley

Officials tell residents to try and stay inside

By Jed Chernabaeff, Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2006

As firefighters try to snuff out a two-week-old wildfire in Southern California, smoke is pouring into the San Joaquin Valley, destroying air quality and putting residents with health problems in serious risk, officials say.

The fire, which has scorched more than 116 square miles of chaparral and timber along the Los Angeles-Ventura County line, has been only 15 percent contained and has prompted the San Joaquin Valley Air District to issue health warnings as far north as Merced County.

Meteorologists say the forecast for the next few days will be hazy skies fueled by smoke. Air officials say Tulare County residents should avoid activities outside - if they can.

Kelly Hogan Morphy, spokeswoman for the Valley Air District, said she expects that smoke from the fire will begin working its way further into the Valley today.

Exposure to smoke, she said, can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase the risk of respiratory infections.

"If you can smell smoke, then it's probably at a strong enough concentration to cause health effects," Morphy said.

Dubbed the Day fire, ignited by someone burning debris in the Los Padres National Forest - 75 miles north of Los Angeles - it doubled in size during the weekend, fanned by Santa Ana winds.

Jim Bagnall, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Hanford, said only a change in the weather pattern can prevent the smoke from entering the San Joaquin Valley. Under the

current conditions, the weather pattern is such that smoke will naturally seep into the San Joaquin Valley.

"The wind is our friend right now," Bagnall said. "We are waiting for a change in pattern to help blow it out."

Bagnall said people shouldn't be deceived by what looks like cloudy skies.

"I went out in the morning and it looked like it was cloudy, but it was smoke," Bagnall said. "It looks like a heavy layer of clouds then disperses into a haze as it travels north."

Morphy said people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality when smoke is present.

Older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion.

Study shows packing plant has potential problems

By Jillian Daley, Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2006

A study shows a proposed meat packing plant could have a significant effect on Tulare's southeast side.

The city requested Quad Knopf perform an initial study of the Western Pacific Meat Packing Plant project, planned for 67 acres on the northeast corner of Paige Avenue and Enterprise Street. Agricultural land, [air quality](#), water, noise and traffic could be affected.

However, it is not certain what will be an issue until the \$101,833 environmental impact report is completed by December, said Nicholas Basile, project manager for Quad Knopf, a planning, engineering, biological and architectural firm.

"Water will be the main issue for this project because it's going to use a lot, and groundwater is always an issue in the [San Joaquin] Valley," Basile said.

The plant would initially use 630,000 gallons of water a day and, within three years, would use 1.08 million gallons a day, according to the study. Its cold storage plant would use an additional 50,000 gallons per day.

"To put it into perspective, 600,000 gallons is about what a normal subdivision would use per day," Basile said.

The wastewater from the plant would flow to the Tulare Wastewater Treatment Plant, just east of the proposed project.

West Coast appeals to feds to improve ocean

by Jeff Barnard

Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, September 19, 2006

GRANTS PASS, Ore. — The governors of Oregon, Washington and California announced an agreement Monday to seek greater federal support for state efforts to combat threats to the ocean, such as pollution, climate change and declining fisheries.

Noting two national panels had identified the need to act quickly to protect the oceans, the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health, announced at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry in Portland, said oceans need to be managed on an ecosystem level that crosses political boundaries and demands increased coordination between states and the federal government.

The announcement came as salmon fishermen are coping with sharp cutbacks to protect chinook from Northern California's Klamath River, scientists are studying a growing zone of oxygen-depleted water killing fish off Oregon and Washington that may be triggered by global warming, and the Bush administration is promoting offshore fish farms that would be beyond state control.

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski said the agreement builds on the three states' work setting up a "clean-car corridor" to limit tailpipe emissions that contribute to global warming.

Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire said the agreement gives the three states a greater voice opposing offshore oil and gas drilling and promoting federal research.

"It sends a message to the world that we will stand up for our quality of life," she said.

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, said that the agreement with two Democratic governors would give the states more influence in Washington, D.C.

In the next six months, the governors said they would jointly call on the White House and Congress to provide enough federal funding to implement existing controls on non-point source pollution, identified as a top threat to coastal waters.

One chief source of that pollution is agricultural runoff, which is responsible for dead zones in Washington's Hood Canal and the Mississippi Delta in the Gulf of Mexico.

The governors will formally repeat their opposition to offering federal leases to drill for oil and gas off the West Coast, and support development of a regional research plan for the West Coast, including ocean observation programs and mapping the sea floor and habitats.

They will also ask the White House Council on Environmental Quality to help them get more technical help from federal agencies to address threats to the ocean.

Long-term goals include ensuring clean coastal waters and beaches, restoring healthy coastal habitats, reducing harm from offshore development, expanding ocean research, and promoting sustainable economic development in coastal communities.

After the Pew Oceans Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy identified dire threats to the oceans in 2003 and 2004, respectively, the federal government has been slow to take action, said Mark Abbott, dean of the College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences at Oregon State University and co-chairman of the Governor's Climate Change Advisory Group.

"We are demanding more of our oceans and we are seeing many more complex problems emerge," Abbott said. "We haven't seen the level of federal commitment we need."

Leon Panetta, chairman of the Pew Oceans Commission and former chief of staff to President Clinton, said from Los Angeles that states are far ahead of the federal government in addressing ocean threats.

"Our oceans are in crisis," Panetta said. "Unfortunately there isn't a lot of strong leadership on this issue coming out of Washington, either from the president or from Congress. In that vacuum, we're seeing a lot of leadership being shown at the regional and state level."

People blown away by wind energy

by Janis Mara

Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, September 19, 2006

One of the answers to California's energy problems may be blowing in the wind, at least according to the more than 80 percent of Californians who say they favor the expansion of wind energy production in the state.

More than 96 percent of Californians believe wind power should be a part of the state's future mix of renewable energy resources, according to a survey to be released today of 500 Californians by California State University, Sacramento professor Dennis Tootelian for FPL Energy. The Florida-based energy company is California's largest wind energy producer.

"That's a fantastic result," said Tyson Slocum, director of the Public Citizen's Energy Program in Washington, D.C., of the study. "This shows there is a desire for alternatives."

The FPL study also reported 90 percent of Californians expressed support for the state's mandate to have renewable energy sources provide 20 percent of the state's power needs by 2010.

"We are very supportive of wind power expansion in California and other renewable energy resources," said Gregg Fishman of the California Independent System Operator, a nonprofit corporation that operates the state's power grid.

"Just as it's important to diversify your stock portfolio, it's important for California to diversify its energy portfolio," Fishman said. "Every type of generation has its positives and negatives. The way you overcome the negatives of any form is through diversifying. Wind, solar, geothermal energy all help diversify our portfolio."

California currently has installed more than 2,323 megawatts of wind power — enough electricity to power 700,000 homes, according to the state Energy Commission. The state is known for its leadership in curbing greenhouse gases and creating solar power. California led the nation in installed wind energy for 25 years, but Texas recently just surpassed it.

Wind energy plants use turbines to generate electricity. Such plants generate no emissions, unlike fossil fuel power plants.

Scientist: Ditch fossil fuels soon Stanford hosts conference on energy solutions

by Ian Hoffman

Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, September 19, 2006

The world has plenty of energy, enough for 500 years and probably 1,000 or more.

"And that's the bad news. Because it's fossil energy," Nobel laureate physicist and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory director Steve Chu told fellow scientists Monday at Stanford University.

Left to their present course, industrialized and developing nations are planning to burn vast quantities of fossil fuels, driven increasingly to carbon-rich coal by high oil and gas prices.

China alone is building the equivalent of a Manhattan every year and a large coal-fired power plant every week. It consumed more coal last year than the United States, Russia and India combined.

"China is a coal economy. You don't change that overnight," said Doug Ogden, director of the China Sustainable Energy program for the San Francisco-based Energy Foundation.

That's likely to push the chemistry of the atmosphere past a doubling of carbon dioxide concentrations and toward a quadrupling, trapping more heat at the Earth's surface and pushing average temperatures from an increase of a few degrees to an increase of 15 degrees or more.

People hear about uncertainty in climate change, Chu said, and "the public assumes, 'Well, maybe it's not true.'"

In fact, he said, "the spread is between bad and very, very bad."

What exactly to do about the planet's energy and climate problem has biologists, physicists, geologists and economists assembled this week for a conference held by Stanford's Global Climate and Energy Program and sponsored by Toyota and General Electric, as well as ExxonMobile and oil well-service giant Schlumberger.

Avoiding significantly more warming means drastically cutting releases of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide. Energy analysts John Ziagos and Gene Berry at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory set off to find out what that might mean just for the United States, the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases.

Putting the rest of the nation on California's low-carbon diet could mean replacing the entire U.S. vehicle fleet with hydrogen cars and trucks, capturing carbon dioxide from all fossil-fuel power plants and building 300 nuclear power stations, Ziagos said.

That's building a half dozen nuclear plants every year.

Moving to this massively carbonless future by 2050 also would mean boosting the efficiency of electricity production by 50 percent, covering North Dakota in wind turbines and installing at least 500 square feet of solar panels for every man, woman and child, he said.

That takes time.

If we're going to reach that, we're going to have to turn around soon, Ziagos said. If we expect to achieve these reductions, our emissions have to peak in 2010.

There's a debate among various carbon-free energy sources: nuclear versus capture of carbon from coal-fired power plants and biofuels versus better fuel economy.

The bottom line is we need to do it all, Ziagos said, and we need to get started right away.

Chu is calling for his lab scientists to fail, or at least risk failure, by moving out of their career research and into advanced solar and bioenergy research.

Those scientists will attack the toughest pieces of energy problems, the likeliest showstoppers, as Chu put it, so that they're going to fail often, but you're also going to fail fast.

Massive fire wall planned around blaze

BY ALEX DOBUZINSKIS and PATRICIA FARRELL AIDEM, Staff Writers
LA Daily News, Monday, September 18, 2006

CASTAIC - Hoping to contain the massive 15-day-old Day Fire, firefighters are constructing a 50-mile line around its flanks - defying walls of flame that are devouring wilderness as they charge toward a half-dozen communities.

Tired to the bone, some 2,100 firefighters from 48 departments have fought what, so far, has been a losing battle against a blaze that on Monday was but 15 percent contained after charring rugged wilderness over an area larger than the city of Fresno.

They battle from the ground and the air, but can't keep up with Mother Nature, who has teased with cooler days and some drizzle only to come back with smashing winds, scorching heat and dry desert air. Some of this forest land hasn't burned since the 1920s.

"I've been on fires that are in worse terrain than this, but I haven't been on one that burned as hot and as intensely as this," said Firefighter Kyle Halstead, 21, of Quartz Hill.

For Halstead and the rest of the crew of Engine 37, it's about time to go home.

His U.S. Forest Service engine team has been battling the Day Fire since Sept. 5, the day after it started. The Forest Service normally sends crews home after 14 days - so like many other firefighters, the Engine 37 crew is maxed out.

It's all part of the life of a wildland firefighter during the burn season, and the members of this team have been working for months with only a few full days of rest.

"You get tired but you've still got to get the job done," said Firefighter Adam Stanwood, 23, of Lancaster. "Everyone's tired, you're not the only one. And everyone else is still working so you've just got to keep pushing."

At least a few of the half-dozen crew members haven't taken showers since arriving at base camp two weeks ago. A couple of them have grown beards, all of them have spent hours in food lines.

They've been drinking plenty of water to stay hydrated. A few of them have kept in the game by downing energy drinks.

And they've seen flames swirl in the air and do things that you don't see on every fire.

By Monday afternoon, the fire had burned more than 70,000 acres of the Los Padres National Forest, about 10 miles northwest of Castaic. A fire this large covers huge ground because it's burning on all sides. The Day Fire doubled in size on Saturday, swept by Santa Ana winds that followed a few days of cooler weather in which firefighters had hoped to gain ground.

Engine 37 crew was hiking Monday down into blackened terrain, putting out any lingering hot spots amid the burned brush. That was until they got a radio call sending them closer to the fire line. The fire advanced this time northeast toward state Route 138, the road to the town of Gorman.

On the southern flank, residents in Piru, Fillmore, Santa Paula, Ojai and a handful of specks on Ventura County's map have watched with a cautious eye as this relentless fire advances. Some have fled, others have stayed to protect their homes. Evacuation centers are getting few drop-ins, but that could change.

This fire, still far enough from civilization, has had impacts much farther away.

Choking smoke blanketed the city of Ventura when the winds shifted this weekend and residents were advised to stay inside. Last week, it was the Antelope Valley and eastern Santa Clarita Valley where ash and smoke spewed from a fire 30 to 50 miles away. Enormous brown clouds rise each day, visible from the San Fernando Valley to Bakersfield.

The Ventura County Air Pollution Control District issued a smoke advisory Monday for much of Ventura County including Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, Moorpark, Ventura and the Santa Clara River Valley, which links Valencia to Ventura.

The district warned those with chronic health problems such as asthma or heart disease to avoid the smoky air. Some schools kept children indoors.

Meanwhile, firefighters are working 16-hour days, sometimes a little more, Stanwood said. Often, they get no more than six hours of sleep at base camp - which is back at Castaic Lake, where tents for the firefighters are spread out on the grass.

The crew members use cell phones to call their wives back home. At least they can get reception in the area - on past fires they've had to hike up a hill to make a call.

Taking a shower back at base camp doesn't seem worth it because of the long lines. So they've got another way to stay clean.

"Gold Bond and baby wipes," said Firefighter Matt Snyder, 24, of Lancaster. "It's all you need."

Fires in the area normally burn for just a few days, but the Day Fire has burned for much longer because the steep terrain makes it hard to get to the flames.

"If we could have gotten to it quicker - it was only a couple thousand acres the first couple of days - if we could have gotten to it then we might have had a better chance at it," said Firefighter Colby Stout, 27, of Palmdale. "But the country that it's in is just nasty."

Once they get back home, the Engine 37 crew will have a couple days of rest. Then it could be sent back to the Day Fire.

James Parker, captain of the engine crew, is ready to go home to Palmdale.

"Yeah, I'm going to take a shower, get something better to eat," he said.

SoCal fires send smoke to Valley skies

Haze, additional pollution could be problem for weeks.

By Jim Guy

The Fresno Bee Tuesday, September 19, 2006

The haze visible in the Central San Joaquin Valley sky stems from a large wildfire in Ventura County - and officials warn the smoke may be a problem for weeks.

Smoke from the fire, which started Sept. 4, began working its way farther north Monday afternoon, said meteorologists with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The Day fire has burned more than 74,000 acres since Labor Day and was only 15% contained Monday.

The size of the fire, together with winds blowing into the Valley from the south and southwest, means smoke will likely make for poor air quality the next several days in Tulare, Kings, Fresno, Madera and Merced counties.

"In general, if you can smell smoke, then it's probably at a strong enough concentration to cause health effects," said Shawn Ferreira, a district meteorologist.

The duration of the problem depends on wind conditions and how long the fire burns. Ferreira cautioned the fire might burn until rains arrive in Southern California in October or November.

Exposure to smoke and other particle pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections.

In people with heart disease, short-term exposure to particle pollution has been linked to heart attacks and arrhythmias, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Residents in affected areas are advised to use caution when smoke is present. People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctor's advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality when smoke is present.

Additionally, officials said, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion.

Newsom going to Big Apple for climate summit

Cecilia M. Vega, Chronicle Staff Writer

San Francisco Chronicle Tues., September 19, 2006

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom will join such high-profile leaders as first lady Laura Bush, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan when he attends an environmental summit in New York City this week hosted by former President Bill Clinton.

Newsom leaves for the three-day Clinton Global Initiative conference today and will participate in a panel discussion with mayors from around the world on how local communities can preserve energy.

"Look at who's invited," said Peter Ragone, Newsom's spokesman. "Just to get an invitation is a big deal."

Last month, Newsom appeared with Clinton, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and other leaders to announce an initiative by more than two dozen large-city mayors from around the globe who committed to cut pollutants that are considered the cause of climate change.

"It's an opportunity for us to share with policymakers from around the world what we are doing in terms of environmental policy," Ragone said. "We're going to look for best practices, and we're also going to share San Francisco's successes and strengths."

While in New York, Newsom also will meet with city officials there to study how Central Park operates, including how officials manage the issue of homelessness in the park. Last week, Newsom and leaders of various city departments toured Golden Gate Park in an attempt to shed light on the growing problem of homelessness inside the park's boundaries.

For more than 25 years, Central Park has been managed by a private nonprofit group called the Central Park Conservancy, which raises money to cover more than 85 percent of the park's annual operating budget. City leaders want to learn more about that model and whether it could work for San Francisco.

The New York trip follows Newsom's visit last year to Chicago, where he got the idea to install security cameras as a means of fighting crime and to plant trees and flowers on San Francisco streets in order to beautify the city.

Since taking office in 2004, he also has made official trips to Ireland and London, China and Boston.

Al Gore Urges Action on 'Climate Crisis'

By Beth Fouhy, AP

In the San Francisco Chronicle and USA Today Tues. Sept. 19, 2006

Former Vice President Al Gore stepped up his call for immediate action to halt global warming, urging politicians on both sides of the aisle to "have the courage to do better."

"Each passing day brings yet more evidence that we are now facing a planetary emergency, a climate crisis that demands immediate attention," Gore said Monday.

In an hour-long speech at New York University Law School, Gore, who narrowly lost the 2000 presidential race to George W. Bush, framed the pursuit of renewable energy as an economic and national security issue as well as an environmental imperative.

"When we make big mistakes in America, it is usually because the people have not been given an honest accounting of the choices before us," Gore said. "It also is often because too many members of both parties who knew better did not have the courage to do better."

But he implicitly criticized the Bush administration, which has been accused of editing official scientific studies to downplay the impact of global warming and asking scientists at federal agencies to refrain from speaking out on the phenomenon.

Future generations, Gore said, "deserve better than the spectacle of censorship of the best scientific evidence about the truth of our situation and harassment of honest scientists who are trying to warn us about the looming catastrophe."

A White House spokesman declined Monday to comment on Gore's remarks. While the Bush administration has acknowledged the effects of global warming on the environment, President Bush has rejected mandatory controls on carbon dioxide, the chief gas blamed for the phenomenon. He also has kept the country out of the Kyoto treaty, which called for mandatory reductions of greenhouse gases among the signing nations. He has said the pact would harm the U.S. economy.

In response to Gore's comments, Republican National Committee spokesman Aaron McLearn said: "Under the president's tenure, the air and water have gotten cleaner while we have implemented pro-growth strategies that have created almost 6 million jobs in the past three years."

Gore has brought considerable attention to the global warming phenomenon since last spring, when his documentary film, "An Inconvenient Truth," was released to wide critical praise. The movie has become one of the highest-grossing documentaries, while a companion book on the topic has become a national best-seller.

In his speech, Gore said the challenge of global climate change offered opportunities for innovation and investment.

"We can change this by inventing and manufacturing new solutions to stop global warming right here in America," he said, adding that venture capitalists are eager to put money behind effective technologies to cut greenhouse gases.

Gore, who hasn't ruled out a presidential run in 2008, laid out several policy proposals for reducing global warming. They included:

- _ An immediate freeze on carbon dioxide emissions. He said continued debates on the matter represented "a delusional and reckless approach."

- _ A retooling of U.S. auto giants to manufacture hybrid vehicles instead of gas-guzzling trucks and SUVs. Such a transformation, Gore said, would save thousands of jobs at the car companies.

- _ A shift to a greater reliance on ethanol, wind and solar energy.

- _ An elimination of payroll taxes in favor of pollution taxes. "Instead of discouraging businesses from hiring more employees, it would discourage business from producing more pollution," Gore said.

Group files new casino suit

Sacramento Bee, Sunday, September 17, 2006

Voices for Rural Living, an El Dorado County citizens group opposed to a planned casino on the Shingle Springs Rancheria, announced that it has filed a new lawsuit challenging the state Department of Transportation and California Transportation Commission's approval of the casino and Highway 50 interchange.

The group filed the suit in Sacramento Superior Court on Sept. 7, according to a news release.

The state appellate court previously upheld the group's contentions that Caltrans' initial environmental impact report for the interchange violated the California Environmental Quality Act, because it failed to disclose the project's effect on air quality and failed to consider the alternative of a smaller casino.

The group says that a new lawsuit is necessary, because Caltrans' new environmental report does not disclose whether the project would violate the state's air-quality standards for ozone. Voices for Rural Living also maintains that the new study rejects the option for a smaller casino without adequate explanation.

[Hanford Sentinel, Editorial, Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2006:](#)

Our View: Spare the Valley's air, don't light up

If we were looking for a theme song for Kings County, it would surely be "Dust in the Wind" by Kansas.

The recent high winds throughout the Valley last week prompted the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District - the agency charged with improving air quality from Bakersfield to Stockton - to issue words of caution to the public: Watch out, the strong gusty winds combined with a cold front means a lot of blowing dust.

And they were right.

While it's annoying having to wash off your vehicle every day or two, exposure to dust and other particle pollution can cause serious health problems. These include aggravating lung disease, causing asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increasing the risk of respiratory infections.

The recent blowing dust advisories came on the heels of the district's "Spare the Air" campaign, which urges motorists to drive less and cut down on exhaust emissions which, in the heat of the summer, create smog.

Now, with the first day of fall less than a week away - it's Saturday - the air district is getting ready to turn its focus on another airborne pollutant: Smoke from wood-burning stoves.

Wood smoke accounts for about one-third of particulate matter in the air, and the mandatory wood-burning regulations, which begin in November and usually last until the end of February, target wood-burning fireplaces, stoves and inserts.

During cooler weather, when chimney smoke meets the Valley's chilly fog, ground level air cools and slides down onto the valley floors, trapping smoke and other air pollution close to the ground.

Cutting back on driving in the summer, and foregoing the wood-burning stove in the winter, are surefire ways we all can help improve the quality of the air we breathe.

[Op-ed in The Fresno Bee Mon. Sept. 18, 2006](#)

Good air, good lungs, good health

How we get from here to there has a big effect on our bodies and minds.

By Dr. Robert Duerksen and Kim Thompson

The Measure C Extension Committee has worked for more than a year to assess our current and emerging transportation needs from now until 2027 and beyond. Made up of 24 individuals representing small and large cities, rural areas, environmental, medical, business, industry and other interests, the committee agreed on such concerns as improvement and maintenance of roads and freeways, expanded public transit, reduced air pollution and trail and biking improvements.

Each Valley interest, whether farming, urban business, city planning or rural services has its own viewpoint and concerns about the outcome. For example, from a health perspective, one may ask:

How can we encourage transportation plans that seek to lessen the impact of vehicle pollutants on our air?

How can we provide transit that allows people, especially elders, to get to health care safely? And how can we shape transportation alternatives that encourage people to get from here to there in a way that is good for the body - by biking or by walking?

The resulting plan, with its funding for a variety of modes of transportation, takes these areas of health into account. For example, almost a quarter of the funds will be directed toward public transit programs, which is anticipated to increase bus routes, provide low-emission buses, extend

bus service hours, and provide free fares to seniors locally, as well as to provide farmworker van pools in our region, which increase safety and health on the road. There is also a provision that fosters effective links between mixed-use development and transit centers, as 3.5% of funds will be allocated in ways that will make it easier for people to take the bus to and from urban and residential centers.

Within the city and county, 4% of funds will be allocated toward improving and creating pedestrian, trail and bicycle systems. Measure C funds will also be used to replace 900 old, polluting school buses - the Valley has the highest prevalence of most-polluting buses in the country - and will place our children in low-emission buses with seat belts.

These plans will be enacted not through an additional tax, but through the extension of the half-cent retail sales tax we have already been contributing for 20 years and which has led to significant transportation improvements in Fresno County. This half-cent tax will also leverage hefty matching funds from federal and state sources.

Given our current boom in population, with corresponding expansion in urban/suburban development, transportation planning from 2006 to 2027 is not an easy task. Our region is at a pivoting point - a point crucial to our personal and social health. The Public Policy Institute of California shows that the number of Valley residents who consider air pollution a "big problem" jumped from 28% in 1999 to 45% in 2006. Pollution and air pollution registered as the top Valley concern - over issues like crime, population growth, and immigration.

The impacts of air pollution on our health are well-studied, and we feel this sharply in Fresno County, as one in six children is diagnosed with asthma. A recent report from California State University, Fullerton estimates that the economic cost to the Valley for those who suffer from respiratory illness rides at \$3 billion annually.

As vehicle sources comprise 60% of our Valley's air pollution, it's clear that moving in the direction of future health means moving in the direction of expanded transit opportunities. Since we can't change the map of the mountains or weather systems that create a "bowl" effect, keeping our pollutants close to home, we must change the map of how we move.

Opponents of Measure C say the reauthorization plan doesn't go far enough for transit, or doesn't go far enough for road improvement, and that projects receiving funding in the plan are already within the current realm of responsibility of local/regional governmental funding, among other considerations.

However, it is important to realize that any step toward increased accessibility to transit is a step in the direction of health; and the potential to combine tax dollars with state and federal sources ensures funds for viable transit alternatives above and beyond what each entity could do on its own.

The plan for Measure C recognizes the importance of multiple transportation options as a crucial part of the health of our Valley. Fewer vehicle miles traveled means better air quality, better lungs, better overall health. This fact, beyond Measure C, begs our everyday measure of contribution in how we choose to go from here to there.

Robert Duerksen, M.D., is a Measure C Steering Committee Member representing the Fresno Madera Medical Society. Kim Thompson is air-quality director for the medical society. Dr. Duerksen can be reached at r.duerksen@comcast.net or 439-4450. Kim Thompson can be reached at burllythompson@comcast.net < or at 312-7397.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses other states are prepared to follow California's lead to reduce pollution that leads to global warming. For more information, contact Maricela (559) 230-5849.

Otros estados están dispuestos a copiar plan de anticontaminación de California

Para el 2009 una decena de gobiernos estatales tendría en marcha un reglamento que además de combatir la contaminación y el sobrecalentamiento de la tierra, proporcionaría a los automovilistas ahorro en el consumo de combustibles

Noticiero Latino, Aire Libre, Fresno, CA
Radio Bilingüe, Monday, September 18, 2006

Por lo menos nueve estados del país están dispuestos a adoptar reglamentos similares a uno que California puso en marcha para reducir la contaminación que ocasionan los vehículos automotor.

Pensilvania es el primero del grupo que manifiesta su decisión de igualar a California en un proyecto de exigir a la industria automotriz que fabrique vehículos que consuman combustibles anticontaminantes en el 2008.

Para el 2009 la decena de gobiernos tendría en marcha un reglamento que además de combatir la contaminación y el sobrecalentamiento de la tierra, proporcionaría a los automovilistas ahorro en el consumo de combustibles.

Note: The following commentary in Spanish discusses the findings of a research team from University of Southern California School of Medicine. It found that having dogs in the home enhances symptomatic responses to air pollution in children with asthma. Contrary to what was believed, the same did not occur with cats. For more information, contact Maricela (559) 230-5849.

Medicina al Día: Asma y perros

Dra. Aliza A. Lifshitz
La Opinión, Tuesday, September 19, 2006

Un equipo de investigadores de la Facultad de Medicina de la Universidad del Sur de California encontró que tener perros en casa puede influir negativamente y empeorar la respuesta pulmonar de los niños asmáticos a la contaminación ambiental. Contrario a lo que se pensaba, no sucedió lo mismo con los gatos.

El estudio, realizado en el sur de California entre niños que tenían asma, analizó la relación entre la tos crónica, la producción de flema o la bronquitis con tener un gato o un perro. Todos los síntomas aumentaron significativamente cuando los niños estuvieron expuestos a sustancias contaminantes del aire (como el dióxido de nitrógeno, el ozono, la materia particulada y el vapor ácido).

Los niños que no tenían mascotas, o los que sólo tenían gatos, no experimentaron un aumento en los síntomas al ser expuestos a la contaminación del aire.

Según un estudio realizado en Estados Unidos en cerca de dos mil personas, los que beben jugos de frutas o verduras más de tres veces por semana tienen un 76% menos de probabilidades de desarrollar la enfermedad de Alzheimer.

En contraste, en aquellos que sólo beben un vaso de jugo a la semana el riesgo sólo se reduce en un 16%.

Los resultados de esta investigación fueron publicados en la edición de septiembre de The American Journal of Medicine.

Aunque por mucho tiempo se creyó que las vitaminas antioxidantes —como la C, E o el caroteno— tenían un efecto protector contra el Alzheimer, el estudio pone de manifiesto que hay

otros factores. El doctor Qi Dai, autor de la investigación, mencionó a los polifenoles, sustancias orgánicas antioxidantes naturales presentes en los jugos, el té y también el vino.

El mal de Alzheimer es una enfermedad degenerativa del sistema nervioso que se presenta con más frecuencia en personas de más de 65 años y actualmente afecta a 4.5 millones de estadounidenses.

Mucha gente cree que el café es nocivo para la salud. Sin embargo, cada vez son más los estudios que confirman los grandes beneficios que tiene para la salud y la vida.

En varios estudios que se han hecho sobre el tema, publicados en la revista de la Asociación Médica Americana (JAMA), se concluye que hay evidencias suficientes para afirmar que el consumo moderado de café reduce significativamente el riesgo de desarrollar enfermedades crónicas como la diabetes, padecimientos cardiovasculares y cirrosis.

Sin embargo, varios científicos han recalcado que, a pesar de haberse identificado estos efectos protectores en la salud, nadie ha podido determinar con exactitud el mecanismo mediante el cual el consumo de café genera dichos beneficios.

Algunos creen que pueden estar relacionados con los efectos antioxidantes y antiinflamatorios que se atribuye a la cafeína, pero no se ha verificado ninguna teoría.

Una gran paradoja, ya que mientras la desinformación y las falsas creencias sobre el café crecen, la ciencia y tecnología se encargan de demostrar sus beneficios.