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Open Forum

San Joaquin air cleaner, and becoming more so

By Seyed Sadredin

Air quality in the San Joaquin Valley is better than it has ever been in recorded history. With tough regulations, innovative measures and investment by businesses and residents, air pollution has been reduced significantly throughout the valley. Despite this tremendous progress, the valley's pollution-retaining geography and meteorology make meeting new federal ozone and particulate standards a challenge that is unmatched by any other region in the nation.

Having already reduced valley smog by 80 percent since the 1980s, virtually eliminating the remaining 20 percent will not be cheap and cannot happen overnight. On April 30, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's governing board adopted the first eight-hour ozone plan in California. This overarching and comprehensive plan is designed to help the valley attain cleaner air, as measured by the federal smog standard, as expeditiously as practicable. The regulatory cost to businesses will be about \$20 billion. The governing board members should be commended for their courage, resoluteness and commitment to clean air. Instead, The Chronicle condemns them.

For many of us in the valley, The Chronicle's May 2 editorial ("A smog board that likes smog") is as unfair and as frustrating as the air pollution from the Bay Area that is responsible for 7 percent to 28 percent of the valley's smog problem, with the most impact being in the northern valley.

In fact, given that California's air quality agency has designated the Bay Area as an "overwhelming" contributor to the valley's ozone problem, it would have been fair and balanced for The Chronicle to ask Bay Area residents and policymakers to do what they can to minimize or mitigate pollution that ends up in the valley. Additionally, more than 80 percent of our smog-causing pollutants come from mobile sources (cars, trucks and locomotives), over which local air districts in California have no jurisdiction.

Nonetheless, here are the facts.

A child born today in the San Joaquin Valley breathes air that is 80 percent cleaner than it was 25 years ago and is no longer exposed to unhealthy levels of particulates 10 microns in size and smaller. The San Joaquin Valley is the only "serious" noncompliant area in the state to meet the standard for scrubbing from the air particulates of this size, and we did it five years ahead of the federal deadline. The valley also is on track to meet the one-hour ozone standard by 2010, the only "extreme nonattainment" area in the state on track to do so. Meeting this health-based standard will further diminish the proven respiratory and health-related ailments associated with excessive ozone concentrations.

The district's recently adopted plan to meet the new federal health-based ozone-standard is the first of its kind in the nation. Under the plan, 50 percent of the valley's population will live in "attainment" areas, that is, areas without any recorded violations of the air-pollution standard, by 2015; that number will increase to 90 percent by 2020. By law, the valley cannot claim attainment because in a couple of areas we will still see a few days when the air pollution exceeds the standard.

Undisputed analysis by experts shows, even if money were no object and we ignored all logistical constraints, that the technology available today and in the foreseeable future could not achieve enough reductions in smog-forming emissions for these areas in the valley to attain the clean-air standard any sooner than 2023. In this situation, the only option provided under federal law is to seek an "extreme" designation and incorporate future technology when it becomes available -- thus, the proposed deadline of 2023. All local measures that can be adopted by the air district will be in place by 2010. As a result, every area in the valley will see significant, steady reductions in ozone concentrations and the number of days with poor air quality.

The measures contained in the ozone plan also will help the valley meet the federal standard for fine particulates standard by 2015. (Fine particulates are those 2.5 microns in size or smaller.) This makes the valley the only non-compliant area in the state on track to meet this standard by the deadline. Doing so will eliminate more than \$3 billion per year of the estimated \$3.1 billion per year in health-related costs attributed to particulates in the valley's air.

With public health as the foremost priority, the air district governing board also acted to seek other innovative and creative strategies aimed at cleaning the air. These measures, which focus on alternative modes of goods- and people-movement, as well as alternative fuels and energy, will require broad support from the general public, as well as business and government.

By any objective measure, the plan adopted by the air district is a comprehensive effort that leaves no stone unturned to bring the valley into attainment with federal air quality standards as quickly as possible. Those who champion clean air should refrain from petty attacks and join us on this challenging but fulfilling journey to cleaner air in the valley.

Bowl-like valley traps poor-quality air

California's 240-mile-long San Joaquin Valley has some of the smoggiest air in the nation. Strong winds and sharply ascending mountains to the east trap air pollution in the valley.

Mountains limit air flow into and out of the valley. Most air entering the valley travels through the Bay Area, where it picks up pollutants.

Cool winds from the mountains cause air to move in a circular pattern, or eddy, preventing pollutants from dissipating outward. Layers of warmer air above the cool air also hinder pollutants that would otherwise disperse upward.

During the summer, winds flow in a south-southeasterly direction, allowing some air to escape.

Sources: California Air Resources Board; AP; USGS; ESRI

Seyed Sadredin is the executive director/air pollution control officer of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Federal, state aid vital for Valley air cleanup plan

District lobbies to cut the 80% of smog pollutant NOx emitted by trucks, cars and other vehicles.

By Mark Grossi

The Fresno Bee, Sunday, May 13, 2007

The latest assault has begun on the Valley's nationally known smog mess, but local air authorities acknowledge they don't control the main problem -- diesel trucks, cars, pickups, trains, boats and planes.

The San Joaquin Valley's 3.6 million residents will have to rely on state and federal agencies to rein in so-called mobile sources of pollution, according to a hotly contested cleanup plan that the local air district approved April 30.

Now the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's war on smog becomes an intense lobbying effort for timely enforcement of tough state and federal rules.

Officials also must push for millions of state and federal dollars to help replace older trucks, cars and other mobile sources. The faster the vehicles are replaced, officials said, the sooner residents will breathe healthy air.

But there's no guarantee things will go smoothly. New regulations sometimes have been slowed by bureaucratic red tape and clashes between the government and industries.

"We have to keep their feet to the fire," said Scott Nester, director of planning for the air district. "There is no alternative."

The district staff clashed with air activists and others who argued two weeks ago that the new plan's 2024 cleanup target was too far in the future.

The governing board approved the plan, agreeing there's no chance for a quicker fix without control over mobile sources. The new smog plan is expected to be accepted by the state air board in June and forwarded to the EPA.

Federal, state and local authorities agree smog is a serious health risk. It is mostly ozone, a corrosive gas that forms on warm, sunny days when the wind is almost calm. Ozone is known to trigger asthma and other lung diseases, and it has been linked to early mortality.

Three-quarters of one major smog pollutant must be eliminated to make the Valley's air healthy, the plan said. The pollutant is oxides of nitrogen, or NOx, 80% of which comes from mobile sources that the local air district doesn't control.

With authority over pollution from businesses and areawide sources, such as fireplaces, the air district can directly address 20% of the problem.

District officials are counting on the tough state and federal rules planned for fuels and new vehicle engines.

Reductions also will be needed from truck fleets currently on the road, said a state air board official.

An unprecedented rule for trucks already on the road will come before governing members of the state air board in June for approval, said Lynn Terry, a deputy executive officer of the agency.

"We're proposing a 50% reduction of emissions from existing fleets," Terry said. "It will cost the industry \$3.4 billion, and we will have reductions by 2014 and another set of reductions by 2020."

The proposal probably would lead fleet owners to replace some trucks or install advanced pollution-control devices on other trucks.

On the federal side, by 2010, rules will require all new heavy-duty diesel trucks to have engines that produce 20 times less pollution than their 1998 counterparts.

Such advanced engine technology already is available on the market, and it will become more common in the next three years.

There also are new federal rules requiring cleaner diesel fuel and engines for locomotives, boats and heavy-duty equipment used in construction.

Air district officials know from experience that it takes more than strong regulations, however.

For example, diesel engine manufacturers and the EPA spent much of the 1990s straightening out differences over computerized pollution controls. In a series of court settlements in 1998, the industry agreed to update computer programs on engines. As a result of the delay, though, NOx pollution from the average big diesel truck increased during the 1990s, despite tighter regulations, according to government estimates.

Even if there is no such delay now, it will take time for truck and equipment owners to buy newer models, said Kerry Drake, associate director of the EPA's regional air division.

"Our rules affect the entire country, and that's a lot of stakeholders," he said. "It's hard to move fast when you're talking about the whole country. But I think it's really encouraging that people are bringing pressure on all of us to make this happen."

The Valley cleanup, which covers the 25,000 square miles from Stockton to Bakersfield, also will need almost \$200 million each year to help businesses voluntarily buy new trucks and other equipment, the plan said.

Air officials said much of the money will have to come from state and federal sources, but local district fees also will be used.

Officials have been lobbying in Washington, D.C., for about \$100 million annually in federal funds.

If the district can get the money, half of the Valley's residents are projected to breathe healthy summer air in eight years. By 2020, only northwest Fresno and Arvin in Kern County would suffer bad-air days, the plan showed.

Without the state and federal money, about 35% of Valley residents would have clean air in eight years, and 65% would breathe healthy air by 2020, the plan said.

Environmentalists dispute the timeline, suggesting more dramatic changes would clear the air for the entire Valley by 2017. They wanted the district to delay the smog plan and talk about other solutions, such as a ban on operating the most-polluting vehicles on dirty-air days.

Environmentalists and other activists said delays mean more premature deaths, suffering and expense. A study from California State University, Fullerton, last year showed the health effects of the Valley's air pollution cost more than \$3 billion annually.

The Valley and the South Coast Air Basin, which includes Los Angeles, annually have the most smog violations in the country. Last year, each had 86, far more than any other area.

Smog season generally begins next month as the weather warms up, but the Valley had two violations of the federal standard in March and two in April. Local air officials said it will take years of consistent pollution reduction to see a significant change.

"You can go for years with less and less pollution, and it seems like the air quality isn't changing," said Don Hunsaker, plan development supervisor with the Valley district. "But all of a sudden, you see improvement. There probably will be a lag time."

State's air pollution problem blows in wind

Tri-Valley Herald, Friday, May 11, 2007

CALIFORNIA is considered a national leader in areas ranging from biotechnology to off-beat movie stars. Unfortunately, the state also has maintained its No. 1 status in air pollution.

Los Angeles is the most polluted city in America, according to the American Lung Association's bad air list, but that only tells part of the Golden State's smoggy story. Based on figures from 2003 through 2005, 26 counties in California failed the clean air test, and only one city passed — Salinas.

If you think this problem is exclusive to Southern California, peek over the hazy horizon. Several Bay Area counties, notably Contra Costa, San Francisco and Santa Clara, received F grades in short-term particle pollution. The cities with the worst overall ratings in the Bay Area? San Jose, San Francisco and Oakland — with a combined population of more than 2.1 million people.

Yet, the worst of it can be found in the San Joaquin Valley. Bakersfield led the valley with a No. 3 national pollution ranking. Among the top 17, however, were Visalia, Porterville, Fresno, Madera, Hanford and Corcoran. Did that set off any alarms in the valley? Hardly. On the same day the national report was released, San Joaquin Valley air regulators voted to approve a plan asking the government for an 11-year extension, from 2012 to 2023, to bring the region's smog-laden air in line with federal standards. Talk about bad timing.

The report puts what we know in black and white — that much of the air Californians breathe is polluted. The American Lung Association said studies have shown that the current "safe" levels of ozone pollution are not actually safe. Here's how unsafe it really is:

- State officials estimate 9,000 Californians die annually from diseases caused or aggravated by air pollution.
- One in every 15,000 Californians — about 66 per million — is at risk of contracting cancer from breathing chemicals in the air over his or her lifetime, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment.

The American Lung Association is pushing the Environmental Protection Agency for tougher standards on emissions and air quality. We support this and back the Schwarzenegger administration's crusade to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

Basic standards aren't working in California. It's time to turn the tide so future generations in California can breathe easier and enjoy healthier lives.

Accusations fly after two air panel members elected

By E.J. Schultz / Bee Capitol Bureau

The Fresno Bee, Saturday, May 12, 2007

A feud is brewing over the recent election of two candidates to the local air board, pitting state Sen. Dean Florez against an executive committee of the League of California Cities.

The committee, composed of nine representatives from cities in the southern San Joaquin Valley, is alleging that Florez and his staff bullied some league members into voting two members onto the air board -- a charge that Florez, D-Shafter, calls nothing more than sour grapes.

The league in February elected Henry T. Perea of Fresno and Raji Brar of Arvin to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board. In a vote last week, the two were the only board members who voted against delaying a smog cleanup deadline.

In selecting Perea and Brar, the league's general membership -- in a rare move -- overrode the recommendation of the executive committee, which endorsed Clovis Mayor Nathan Magsig and Woodlake City Council Member Jack Ritchie.

Florez and his staff lobbied hard for Perea and Brar, viewing the pair as more likely to side with environmentalists. But the executive committee says Florez went too far.

"This was a city appointment, and for a state senator to be involved by calling cities and speaking on behalf of a candidate was extremely inappropriate," the executive committee said in a letter to Florez on April 11.

"There were implied statements made like, 'What issues are important for your cities?' " Sandi Niswander, a Selma City Council member and first vice president of the executive committee, said in an interview.

"Some of the membership felt threatened that if they didn't vote in a certain way that there might be a problem" -- meaning Florez might not pursue their interests in the Capitol.

Florez denies the charges, saying his lobbying was fair play.

"Let's get real," he said in an e-mail interview. "No threats were made."

Last week, he made public the executive committee's letter to him and demanded an apology in an accompanying news release.

"I find it almost comical that as elected officials you would feel compelled to write a complaint letter to a constituent for exercising his First Amendment right to free speech," he said in last week's message to Cheryl Wegman, president of the executive committee and a Wasco City Council member.

"These guys think too much of themselves," Florez said in the e-mail. "Some local electeds are just used to operating outside of real public scrutiny, but this time I shined a big spotlight on them and it makes some folks uncomfortable being in the spotlight, I guess."

Perea, a Fresno City Council member, and Brar, an Arvin City Council member, already have made a difference, casting the only two dissenting votes on a controversial plan to delay smog cleanup to 2024, more than a decade beyond the current deadline. The plan passed 9-2. Air advocates say the region can't wait that long. But district officials say the extension is needed because technology will not exist soon enough to clean up smog from diesel engines.

In their letter to Florez, the executive committee said that the senator's actions "could be perceived as illegal." They have not cited what law they think he might have violated.

Niswander, in an interview, said that Florez's staff members -- who watched officials tally the votes in the February election -- made follow-up calls to league members who voted.

"That they made calls after the election really bothered many individuals," she said. "His candidate won -- be happy, walk away, go away from the table and proceed about your business."

Florez said his office did not make calls after the vote.

Bob Stern, president of the Center for Governmental Studies in Los Angeles, said that if Florez lobbied as hard as the executive committee says, his actions are "hardball tactics and probably unusual. I don't think very many legislators get that involved in local decisions."

Ned Wigglesworth, a policy advocate for California Common Cause, a good-government group, said it might make sense for Florez to get involved -- especially on an issue as important as the environment.

"Welcome to politics," he said. "It doesn't seem like Florez did anything untoward here. It doesn't seem like he crossed the line."

Thirty-seven cities -- from Tehachapi to Madera -- were eligible to vote in February's board member election. The board is composed of eight county appointees and three city appointees who rotate between regions and must include a small, medium and large city.

In February's election, Perea won with 20 of the 30 total votes cast and Brar won with 23 of 31 votes.

Niswander said she is not sure whether the committee will take further action on the complaint against Florez: "It would depend on what the general membership might feel or recommend to the board."

Almond burn ban slated for June 1

The Fresno Bee, Friday, May 11, 2007

Almond growers in the San Joaquin Valley as of June 1 will no longer be able to burn removed orchards as part of a ban on open agricultural burning being phased in by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Growers still will have until June 2010 to obtain permits to burn prunings from almond trees.

The June deadline marks the third phase of gradual elimination of open burning in the San Joaquin Valley to manage agricultural products, including prunings.

"This process has been going on for several years, but this is the first phase-out deadline to affect almonds directly," said Gabriele Ludwig, senior manager for global technical and regulatory affairs with the Almond Board of California.

Ludwig said growers will be able to manage stumps and other orchard removal material through open burning after June 1 only under three specific scenarios, and only after obtaining a permit from the air district.

The exemptions to the June ban are:

To remove individual trees that fall in an existing orchard.

For a single block of up to 20 acres annually. This exemption will be available through June 1, 2015, to help growers contend with cost issues related to handling small acreage removals.

To burn diseased trees only when the county agricultural commissioner deems that burning is the most effective way to eradicate or stop spread of the disease.

Ludwig noted that burning orchard materials is no longer permitted under any circumstances without a permit from the air district. The district is made up of eight Central Valley counties from Stockton to Bakersfield.

Trees will be a breath of fresh air for school

By Chris Bowman - Bee Staff Writer
Sacramento Bee, Saturday, May 12, 2007

Arden Middle School just happened to be in the right place at the right time.

Five years ago, the local chapter of the American Lung Association enlisted atmospheric physicist Thomas Cahill to lead a volunteer study on the effects of vehicle exhaust particles in the Sacramento region.

Cahill, an international authority on the invisible but toxic floating specks, began by laying a ruler somewhat arbitrarily across an area map and drawing a line between his hometown of Davis and the foothills community of Shingle Springs, 47 miles northeast. He mounted air monitors along the transect, which happened to cross the Arden school at Watt Avenue and Arden Way.

So began a sparsely funded experiment that has produced brow-raising discoveries and low-tech pollution controls for schools and homeowners along busy roads.

The Arden school, which is sending 20 eighth-graders to Wichita, Kan., as finalists in next week's National Science Olympiad tournament, has become a community science project in itself.

The PTA, the county roads department and even a fraternity at California State University, Sacramento, have helped plant fast-growing evergreen trees to buffer the chronic spew of harmful soot from six lanes of heavy Watt Avenue traffic flanking the school's west side.

"When they see a problem, our parent community gets together and takes care of it," said Peggy Piccardo, who as school principal invested some of her own sweat in the mass tree planting last fall.

The Sacramento Tree Foundation donated the young valley oaks and deodar cedars planted on the Watt Avenue side. The PTA raised \$10,000 to extend the leafy pollution barriers along the campus perimeter.

When fully grown, rows of trees will form a tall green wall that should act as both a filter and a disperser of the particle pollutants, Cahill theorized. The UCD professor emeritus said he knew of no studies supporting his hypothesis when the volunteers embarked on the tree project.

A recent test of Cahill's theory, however, suggests that the green barriers will be effective.

Preliminary results announced Monday of a wind-tunnel study showed the leaves and needles of live oaks, the cedars and redwoods collecting 75 percent to 95 percent of the particles under calm or stagnant conditions.

"It's an extremely efficient way to reduce air pollution," Cahill told Sacramento area members of the nonprofit Breathe California, formerly the local lung association chapter.

Parents and staff mobilized a couple of years ago after Cahill gave them the surprising news that levels of particle pollution next to the school were at least as high during the day as those near Interstate 5 in downtown Sacramento, where traffic volume is four times as high.

San Juan Unified School District officials upgraded the filters in the school's ventilation system and shortened the replacement schedule to four times a year. UCD testing of the indoor air indicated that the electrostatic filters cut the pollution by at least half, Cahill said.

A growing body of studies shows that these "very fine" and "ultra-fine" particles can slip past the body's defenses to reach the bloodstream, potentially causing heart attacks and death. Such particles are far smaller than those in wind-blown dust and typically are produced in the combustion of gasoline and diesel.

The particles, so tiny they stay aloft as an aerosol, stick to the surfaces of the trees' leaves and needles and eventually drop to the ground in concentrations that do not harm the oaks and cedars, Cahill said. These species were selected for their resilience and fast growth rate and because they keep their foliage in the winter when concentrations of particle pollutants peak.

Once tall, the row of trees at the Arden school also should act as smokestacks, channeling the hot vehicle exhausts up and over the school's sports fields, thereby dispersing the plume, Cahill said.

The chimney effect is evident in air-monitoring studies along sections of freeways that run deep below grade or are flanked with sound walls, he said.

While the concrete structures help carry the plumes of exhaust particles aloft, they apparently are no match for trees in removing the specks from the air, according to preliminary results of a recent U.S. Environmental Protection experiment at a high-traffic highway in Raleigh, N.C.

Cahill said the EPA study, which he learned about just this week, is the first he has seen that parallels his own examination of trees and filters of ultra-fine exhaust particles from combustion of fossil fuels.

"The particles seemed to hang up in the trees," he said of the EPA study, which is still under review.

What are your state reps up to?

Assemblywoman Cathleen Galgiani, D-Stockton, 17th District

Modesto Bee, Sunday, May 13, 2007

HEALTH CARE: We are all concerned about our health care crisis. Four proposals are being debated in the Legislature. All look for prevention, health promotion, affordability and cost containment. I believe we will ultimately craft legislation that combines elements of each proposal.

STATE BUDGET: While the deficit has been greatly reduced, thanks to an increase in California's economy, this year's anticipated deficit is \$4 billion. There will not be much money to increase program funding. I will work diligently to keep funding in place for programs that are important to the Central Valley. There are fundamental values I would exercise: I do not want to cut education, health care or public safety. Do I support a tax increase? No. We need "bridge builders" who can bring both sides together so that we can be creative and open to compromise when dealing with our state's budget crisis. That's where I'm going to be -- a bridge builder between both parties.

PRISON CROWDING: I am pleased that we were able to pass a prison reform measure with bipartisan support. The good news is no prisoners will be released early, and the proposal calls for state funding of new jail beds to assist local communities. The plan balances the need for new beds with the need for enhanced rehabilitation and vocational training in order to reduce the rate of recidivism.

LOCAL BILLS: AB 1021 -- The problem facing the California apple industry is the introduction of new exotic pests and diseases. AB 1021 creates a self-help mechanism where the industry, working in concert with the California Department of Food and Agriculture, can reduce the possibility of introduction of new pests and disease by identifying potential threats and implementing treatment standards to be followed prior to apples entering the state. This bill passed the Assembly Agriculture and Judiciary committees unanimously.

AB 1428 -- "Net energy metering" is essentially defined as measuring the difference between electricity supplied through the electric grid, and electricity generated by an eligible customer-generator, and fed back to the electric grid over a 12-month period. AB 1428 would extend net metering to other poultry and livestock operations to generate electricity through the animal waste. This bill will provide a waste disposal option for animal agriculture, thereby protecting surface water, groundwater, and [air quality](#). It will also help keep California producers competitive with out-of-state egg producers. This bill has passed the Assembly Utilities & Commerce and Natural Resources committees.

AB 1475 -- Every time someone commits an act of creating child pornography, a child is sexually abused. Every day children are sexually exploited through the Internet. With today's digital technology, perpetrators are able to easily photograph children in lewd positions, and then download their collection onto their computers. AB 1475 will add commercial computer technicians to the list of mandated reporters of child abuse, who must report any depiction of a child who appears to be under 16 years old being subject to, or involved in, sexual abuse. This will be an important tool in helping to stop the sexual exploitation of children. This bill passed the Assembly Public Safety and Appropriations committees unanimously and has a good chance of reaching the governor.

Sen. Dave Cogdill, R-Modesto, 14th District

HEALTH CARE: It is still early in the session, but there doesn't seem to be much consensus on reform. I am hopeful that any solution will improve access in rural areas, address the affordability of health care, and balance these necessary fixes with the interests of business, local governments and individuals.

STATE BUDGET: We are encouraged that the actual revenue situation is better than earlier forecasts. Once we have examined the May revise, which is due to be released Monday, we will know better what to expect.

PRISON CROWDING: I have concerns about the prison bill approved by the Legislature and signed by the governor. While I agree that we must address our critical crowding problems, I am concerned that the

cost of the measure could have been reduced further and that the measure isn't going before the voters. That said, I plan to continue to work with my colleagues to fine-tune any further issues complicating this solution to our statewide prison woes.

LOCAL BILLS: Senate Bill 59 -- The Reliable Water Supply Bond Act of 2008, sponsored by Gov. Schwarzenegger. The measure proposes improvements to California's aging and insufficient water system as a continuation to the infrastructure bonds approved of by voters last November. SB59 authorizes the sale of \$3.95 billion in general obligation bonds and an additional \$2 billion in revenue bonds for the following purposes: increased surface water storage, groundwater and conjunctive use, improving the delta, encouraging water-use efficiency, and environmental restoration programs. If approved by the Legislature, these bonds would go before the voters in 2008.

SB 59 failed in the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee. However, the governor and I are committed to developing a comprehensive water infrastructure plan, as contained in SB 59. The issue will be a part of the legislative debate through the end of session.

[SB 23 -- The High Polluting Vehicle Replacement Pilot Program would create a pilot program in the San Joaquin Valley to improve air quality by removing high-polluting vehicles from the road and replacing them with clean emission vehicles. SB 23 is being considered by the Senate Appropriations Committee and will hopefully be passed by that committee and considered on the Senate floor in early June.](#)

SB 347 -- Community College Reimbursement Incentive Program would encourage enrollment in the California community college system by reimbursing students for their community college costs upon completion of a degree at a California State University or University of California within seven years of their first enrollment at a community college. This bill would provide cost savings for students and the state and would utilize the wonderful resource we have in our community college system.

SB 347 is a two-year bill. We will continue to build support throughout the rest of this year before the bill is heard in a committee in January.

Bush Set to Announce Air Pollution Rules

By JENNIFER LOVEN, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle and the Washington Post, Monday, May 14, 2007

WASHINGTON, (AP) -- President Bush responded to a Supreme Court environmental ruling by settling on regulatory changes that don't need congressional approval, the White House said Monday.

Bush is announcing the steps he is directing his administration to take in a Rose Garden appearance later Monday.

Last month, the high court rebuked his administration for its inaction on global warming. In a 5-4 decision, it declared that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases qualify as air pollutants under the Clean Air Act and thus can be regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The court also said that the "laundry list" of reasons the administration has given for declining to do so are insufficient, and that the agency must regulate carbon dioxide, the leading gas linked to global warming, it finds that it endangers public health.

Bush has said previously that he recognized the serious environmental problems created by such emissions and other so-called greenhouse gases. But he has urged against anything other than a voluntary approach to curbing emissions, saying regulations could undercut economic activity. The president also says he will accept no global deal on greenhouse gases without the participation of China, India and other high-polluting, developing nations.

In his State of the Union address in January, Bush set a goal of reducing gas consumption by 20 percent over 10 years. Under his plan, this would be accomplished by increasing the use of alternative fuels to 35 billion gallons by 2017 and boosting fuel efficiency standards in new vehicles.

White House press secretary Tony Snow said the president's new announcement is "his latest effort to ensure that the nation's taking aggressive steps to reduce gas consumption and to reduce dependence on foreign energy sources."

"He will ask the administration to start implementing the 20-in-10 program through regulatory action," Snow said. "At the same time, he will continue to urge Congress to pass legislation to advance the goal."

Democrats who control Congress have been pressuring the administration to say when it will comply with the high court's ruling and decide whether to regulate carbon dioxide, the leading gas linked to global warming.

SCIENCE FILE

Biofuels pose risks, U.N. reports

From the Associated Press

In the L.A. Times, Saturday, May 12, 2007

Biofuels like ethanol can help reduce global warming and create jobs for the rural poor, but the benefits may be undone by serious environmental problems and higher food prices, the U.N. has concluded in its first major report on bioenergy.

The report raised alarms about the potential negative effect of biofuels, just days after a climate conference in Bangkok said the world had the money and technology to stabilize global warming.

Biofuels, made from agricultural products such as corn, palm oil and sugar cane, have been seen by many as a cleaner, cheaper way to meet the world's soaring energy needs.

But environmentalists warn that biofuels may be as damaging as fossil fuels - a concern reflected throughout the report, released Tuesday in New York by U.N. -Energy, a consortium of 20 U.N. agencies and programs.

Although the report says bioenergy represents an "extraordinary opportunity" to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it warns that "rapid growth in liquid biofuel production will make substantial demands on the world's land and water resources at a time when demand for both food and forest products is also rising rapidly."

Changes in the carbon content of soils and carbon stocks in forests might undercut some or all of the benefits of the greenhouse gas reductions, it said.

"Use of large-scale monocropping could lead to significant biodiversity loss, soil erosion and nutrient leaching," it said, noting that soaring demand for palm oil has led to the clearing of tropical forests in southeast Asia.

Common chemicals are linked to breast cancer

Of the 216 compounds, many in the air, food or everyday items.

By Marla Cone, Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times, Monday, May 14, 2007

More than 200 chemicals - many found in urban air and everyday consumer products - cause breast cancer in animal tests, according to a compilation of scientific reports published today.

Writing in a publication of the American Cancer Society, researchers concluded that reducing exposure to the compounds could prevent many women from developing the disease.

The research team from five institutions analyzed a growing body of evidence linking environmental contaminants to breast cancer, the leading killer of U.S. women in their late 30s to early 50s.

Experts say that family history and genes are responsible for a small percentage of breast cancer cases but that environmental or lifestyle factors such as diet are probably involved in the vast majority.

"Overall, exposure to mammary gland carcinogens is widespread," the researchers wrote in a special supplement to the journal *Cancer*. "These compounds are widely detected in human tissues and in environments, such as homes, where women spend time."

The scientists said data were too incomplete to estimate how many breast cancer cases might be linked to chemical exposures.

But because the disease is so common and the chemicals so widespread, "the public health impacts of reducing exposures would be profound even if the true relative risks are modest," they wrote. "If even a small percentage is due to preventable environmental factors, modifying these factors would spare thousands of women."

The three reports and a commentary were compiled by researchers from the Silent Spring Institute, a women's environmental health organization in Newton, Mass.; Harvard's Medical School and School of Public Health in Boston; the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, N.Y.; and USC's Keck School of Medicine. Silent Spring Institute Executive Director Julia Brody led the team.

In response to the findings, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, a breast cancer prevention group that funded the work, pledged an additional \$5 million for developing research tools to root out environmental causes.

Reviewing hundreds of existing studies and databases, the team produced what it called "the most comprehensive compilation to date of chemicals identified as mammary carcinogens." No new chemical testing was conducted for the reports.

The researchers named 216 chemicals that induce breast tumors in animals. Of those, people are highly exposed to 97, including industrial solvents, pesticides, dyes, gasoline and diesel exhaust compounds, cosmetics ingredients, hormones, pharmaceuticals, radiation, and a chemical in chlorinated drinking water.

"Almost all of the chemicals were mutagenic, and most caused tumors in multiple organs and species; these characteristics are generally thought to indicate likely carcinogenicity in humans, even at lower exposure levels," they reported.

For many of the compounds, the federal government has not used animal breast cancer data when conducting human risk assessments, which are the first step toward regulating chemicals or in setting occupational standards to protect workers. Companies are not required to screen women who work with the chemicals for breast cancer.

"Regulators have not paid much attention to potential mammary carcinogens," the researchers wrote.

Toxicologists say that other mammals, such as rats and mice, often develop the same tumors as humans do, and that animal tests are efficient means of testing the effects of chemicals. Environmental regulators, however, often want conclusive human data before taking action.

Animal studies generally use high doses of a substance to simulate a lifetime of exposure, and then the results are extrapolated to the lower levels that people are exposed to.

Ana Soto, a Tufts University professor of cell biology who specializes in cellular origins of cancer and effects of hormone-disrupting contaminants, said there probably was a link between breast cancer and exposures to chemicals in the environment, particularly early in life.

"I cannot say I'm convinced, but what I can say is that it's a very likely, very plausible hypothesis," said Soto, who did not participate in the new research. "More and more, cancer looks like an environmental disease."

Twenty-nine of the chemicals are produced in volumes exceeding 1 million pounds annually in the United States.

Seventy-three are present in consumer products or are food contaminants - 1,4-dioxane in shampoos, for example, or acrylamide in French fries. Thirty-five are common air pollutants, 25 are in workplaces where at least 5,000 women are employed, and 10 are food additives, according to the reports.

There are probably many more than 216, the research team said, because only about 1,000 of the 80,000 chemicals registered for use in the United States have been tested on animals to see whether they induce cancerous tumors or mutate DNA. Such tests cost \$2 million each.

Because epidemiological studies are difficult to conduct and full of uncertainties, human data are "still relatively sparse," the researchers wrote. Only 152 studies worldwide have examined whether women

exposed to contaminants are more likely to have breast cancer - compared with nearly 1,500 that have explored the links between diet and the disease - and most of the 216 carcinogens were not included.

"Despite this large remaining gap, research in the last five years has strengthened the human evidence that environmental pollutants play a role in breast cancer risk," the researchers wrote. They said the existing studies suggested "substantial public health impact."

Human evidence is particularly strong for PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls - compounds widely used in the 1940s to late 1970s that still contaminate fish and other foods - and for polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, found in diesel and gasoline exhaust.

Solvents in dry cleaning, aircraft maintenance and other jobs also may increase breast cancer risk.

Some of the chemicals named as breast carcinogens already are regulated to protect public health, but some, particularly those in consumer products, are not.

The scientists conducted the review hoping to lay the groundwork for new human studies, as well as to persuade regulators to use existing animal data to strengthen regulations and require more testing of chemicals.

"Animal models are the primary means of understanding and anticipating effects of chemicals in humans," they wrote. "All known human carcinogens ... are also carcinogenic in animals."

Emerging evidence suggests that the roots of breast cancer are in infancy or the womb. More animal and human research should focus on such early exposure, said Patricia Hunt, a Washington State University School of Molecular Biosciences professor.

But Hunt and Soto urged society not to wait for scientific proof to reduce exposure to the chemicals.

"When you look at their list of chemicals, we are exposed to all of it," Soto said. "We know humans are exposed to mixtures, and studying mixtures is very difficult. We will never have the whole picture, and it will take many, many years to collect epidemiological evidence, so we should take some preventive measures now."

Although virtually all women are exposed to the chemicals, some may be more susceptible because of differing metabolism or ability to repair DNA.

Breast cancer is probably triggered by an interaction of multiple environmental and genetic factors.

Experts have long suspected diet plays a role. But the new research found "no association that is consistent, strong and statistically significant" for any particular foods raising or reducing breast cancer risk. There is substantial evidence, however, that regularly consuming alcohol, being obese and being sedentary increase risk.

About 178,000 new cases will be diagnosed this year in the United States.

Schwarzenegger may be getting on board high-speed rail project

By STEVE LAWRENCE Associated Press Writer
Contra Costa Times, Saturday, May 12, 2007

SACRAMENTO- California's Hummer-driving, motorcycle-riding governor may be getting on board the state's ambitious high-speed rail project after years of coolness toward the program.

In a recent op-ed column in The Fresno Bee, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger extolled the virtues of bullet trains, saying they would help relieve freeway congestion, improve air quality and create greater mobility.

"A network of high-speed rail lines connecting cities throughout California would be a tremendous benefit to our state," the governor wrote.

The column appeared three days after an editorial criticized the Republican governor's "curious coolness" toward rail transit and the high-speed rail project, particularly after the collapse of an Oakland freeway overpass demonstrated the vulnerability of the state's reliance on highways.

It seemed to signal a sharp change in direction for the Republican governor, who in January proposed a 2007-08 state budget that would leave the California High-Speed Rail Authority on life support.

Schwarzenegger also asked lawmakers to remove a \$9.9 billion high-speed and conventional rail bond measure from the November 2008 ballot. The proposal already has been held up twice with Schwarzenegger's support.

Sale of the bonds would help pay for a high-speed rail line between Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay area. It would be part of a \$40 billion, 700-mile system the authority hopes the state will build, linking Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Sacramento and Fresno with trains running at top speeds of more than 200 mph.

Supporters say the project would provide a much-needed alternative to crowded freeways and airports as the state grows by an estimated 17 million residents over the next 50 years.

A Schwarzenegger spokeswoman, Sabrina Lockhart, said the governor "has always believed that high-speed rail has benefits. But his concern is asking taxpayers to mortgage \$10 billion without identifying where the rest of the estimated \$30 billion cost will come from."

In the editorial, Schwarzenegger complained that the state's high-speed rail board had not completed a "comprehensive and credible plan for financing the system so we can get construction under way."

State Sen. Dean Florez, a leading legislative supporter of high-speed rail, suggested the governor's column was "an absolute reversal" brought on by criticism, particularly from Central Valley officials, about the governor's lack of support for the rail project.

"It's a tremendous turn of events, obviously," Florez said.

Mehdi Morshed, the rail board's executive director, said the governor's public expression of support for high-speed rail was "a big benefit for the project."

"For the public to see that the governor's behind it makes it a lot more real than it was before," he said.

He said it was reasonable for Schwarzenegger to want to see a financing plan before moving ahead with the project.

A preliminary report prepared by a team of high-speed rail board consultants suggests the system could be funded through a combination of state, federal and local government support and private investment, with as much as 30 percent of the money coming from private sources.

One way to bring in that private financing would be through the sale of revenue bonds that would be paid off with income from fares. Authority officials predict that high-speed rail, unlike public transit, would not need government subsidies and would attract enough riders at high enough prices to make a profit.

But a significant commitment of government financing would have to be made to attract private investment to help build and perhaps run the system, authority officials say.

The preliminary report also predicts the state could pay off the \$9.9 billion in rail bonds plus another \$43 billion in bonds sought by Schwarzenegger for prisons, schools, university facilities, courthouses, dams and certain other projects without overburdening the state budget.

The authority expects to complete a financing plan in the next couple of months, but probably not before lawmakers and the governor negotiate a state budget for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

Those negotiations will heat up after Schwarzenegger unveils his revised budget proposal on Monday. His new spending plan could reveal how serious the governor is about supporting high-speed rail.

The proposed budget Schwarzenegger released in January included only about \$1.2 million for the authority. That was enough to keep its small staff in place, but left it with nothing to contract for engineering and environmental work that's needed before construction can begin.

"If we're not going to have any work being done, why keep the office open?" Morshed asked.

Instead of the governor's proposal, the authority has asked for a 2007-08 budget of \$103 million—about \$60 million for engineering work and roughly \$40 million to begin buying rights-of-way.

Florez, D-Shafter, predicts lawmakers will press for significantly more high-speed rail funding than Schwarzenegger proposed in January and refuse to take the bond measure off the 2008 ballot if Schwarzenegger continues to balk.

"We're going to say no way," he said. "I think we're going to hold his statements up ... as being an unequivocal supporter of high-speed rail and hold him to that."

[In the Modesto Bee, Commentary, Saturday, May 12, 2007:](#)

Governor shifts gears, wants high-speed rail on track

By Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger for the Fresno Bee

As the recent Bay Area freeway collapse illustrated — and as a recent Bee editorial correctly pointed out — Californians need and deserve a diverse array of transportation options. I absolutely believe high-speed rail should be one of those alternatives.

A network of high-speed rail lines connecting cities throughout California would be a tremendous benefit to our state.

Not only would its construction bring economic development and the creation of hundreds of thousands of new jobs, but once completed, we would also see improvements to our air quality, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, congestion relief on our highways and greater mobility for people living in the Valley and other areas of our state currently underserved by other forms of transportation.

Yet it's been more than 10 years, and the state has already spent more than \$40 million in initial planning for the rail line. But there is still no comprehensive and credible plan for financing the system so we can get construction under way.

The High-Speed Rail Authority, the commission in charge of developing a plan for high-speed rail in California, estimates the cost of building the system to be more than \$40 billion.

Yet so far, the only financing party identified with specificity is the state, which the authority proposes float a \$9.95 billion bond. The remaining 75 percent of the project cost, or more than \$30 billion, has yet to be identified with any specificity or confidence. Before asking taxpayers to approve spending nearly \$10 billion plus interest, it is reasonable to expect the authority and its advisers to identify with confidence where we will find the remaining \$30 billion.

A perfect example of what I'm talking about is my \$5.9 billion water infrastructure package. By using a public-private partnership approach, we've identified a plan that lays out exactly how we are going to pay for every piece of the proposal, from the reservoirs to the groundwater storage to fixing the Delta to our conservation efforts.

For the reservoir portion, the estimated building cost is \$4 billion. We've proposed \$2 billion in general obligation bonds for the public portion and \$2 billion in lease revenue bonds to be paid for by the water users themselves, i.e. water agencies, irrigation districts, cities, etc. And to ensure that this funding materializes, we are requiring that contracts be in place to pay for the lease revenue bonds before public dollars are spent on the projects.

Identifying the exact funding sources for large transportation projects is more problematic, which is why we need the authority to come up with a well-thought out financing proposal before moving forward.

I want to commend the authority for its great progress so far in completing the necessary environmental studies and identifying future rights-of-way that we would need to acquire.

Yet even the authority's executive director, Mehdi Morshed, says the longer the state waits to build a high-speed rail network, the more expensive it will get. I could not agree more.

That's why I have directed my recent appointees to work with the authority and its financial advisers to develop a comprehensive plan for financing the project in its entirety, so we can make high-speed rail a reality in California once and for all.

Last year, my administration increased funds for the authority to continue its work, and this year, my budget proposes additional funding.

I am willing to explore multiple approaches in order to fund the balance and execute this project — whether through federal grants, local participation, vendor support, co-development opportunities, public-private partnerships or any other realistic financing plans in which the authority expresses confidence.

I look forward to working with the authority and reviewing its proposal as soon as possible.

But let me be clear: I strongly support high-speed rail for California, and especially for the San Joaquin Valley. Increasing the Valley's transportation options, especially after voters passed Proposition 1B to repair Highway 99, would better serve the region's growing population and enhance the Valley's critical importance to our state's economy.

The promise of high-speed rail is incredible. Looking forward to the kind of California we want to build 20 and 30 years from now, a network of ultra-fast rail lines whisking people from one end of the state to the other is a viable and important transportation alternative and would be a great benefit to us all.

With a responsible plan in place, we can feel secure in delivering high-speed rail and bringing greater opportunity — and a brighter future — to all Californians.

[Modesto Bee, Guest Commentary, Monday, May 14, 2007](#)

Air board members more worried about business than air

By BRAD BARKER

How long can you hold your breath? If it's less than 17 years, you might be in trouble.

Did you catch a news report buried in a busy news week: "[Pollution district to ask feds for extension](#)" (May 1, Page B-3)?

Officials at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District adopted an extension as part of their "aggressive plan" to attain the federal smog standard "as early as possible." Early as possible for them is the year 2024.

At the public hearing April 30, the vast majority of speakers disagreed with the district's plan. Doctors, public health officials, scientists and others pleaded with them to do more, to set earlier deadlines, to include an impact statement that details health problems caused by this delay. After more than 90 speakers, the governing board bowed to dirty-air lobbyists and voted 9-2 for the wait-until-Judgment-Day 2024 plan.

An editorial in the San Francisco Chronicle chided, "Even by its own lowly standards, the board's action is a stunner."

A dissonant theme in this valley is our tendency to appoint problem makers to positions as problem solvers. It seems self-defeating.

Consider the governing board of our air pollution district. Who are these guys? That Chronicle editorial called them "the smog board that loves smog." Eight members are county supervisors, one each from the counties of the San Joaquin Valley. All eight voted for the 2024 plan, along with a Ceres city councilman, and none seem willing to stand up to Big Ag or Big Sprawl.

Tony Borba, a supervisor from Kings County, is very concerned with regulatory impacts on business. A few years back he said, "How about the people who don't have any lung problems and who are just trying to earn money?" He voted for the 2024 plan.

Mike Nelson is a Merced County supervisor. A Merced Sun-Star editorial said he "lacked the background and ideas to effectively serve" as supervisor. Last year he refused to listen to opponents of the motorsports complex in Atwater. The Sun-Star urged him to vote against the 2024 extension. He voted for it.

Tracy dairyman Leroy Ornellas is a San Joaquin County supervisor. He co-founded a private property rights group with his longtime friend Richard Pombo, the former congressman. A Modesto Bee editorial implored him to ask for a better air pollution plan, but he voted for 2024.

Steven Worthley, a Tulare County supervisor who chairs the pollution board, was an attorney for the forest products industry. He voted for 2024.

And Bill O'Brien was one of three Stanislaus County Supervisors who recently voted to reject the ag element plan as submitted by our county's ag advisory board. The plan required some easements to protect farmland, buffers between development and farmland, and tighter scrutiny on parcel splits. But he supports the fast-tracking of 4,470 new houses in the unincorporated Salida area.

A Bee editorial urged O'Brien and Ceres City Councilman Chris Vierra to wait for "a plan that provides solutions." The proposed 2024 plan condemns thousands of valley residents "to years of asthma attacks, labored breathing and poor health."

O'Brien and Vierra didn't take the advice. They agreed to 17 more years of filthy air. Incredibly, these are the people we have making decisions about public health.

There are no easy answers. But the resource we need the most is something we clearly don't have: Enlightened leaders with the courage to make tough choices.

Barker is the librarian at Mark Twain Junior High School.

[Contra Costa Times, Guest Commentary, Saturday, May 12, 2007:](#)

Funding solutions yield lessons

How many of us can remember the days when driving to work was a breeze? Arriving late for work because of traffic was unimaginable. Times have changed. Our communities have grown, and with them our infrastructure problems.

If there is one thing we can all agree on it's that no one likes sitting in traffic. For the people of Contra Costa County, the recent down payment from the nearly \$20 billion transportation infrastructure bond (approved by voters in November as Proposition 1B) is more than just a historic beginning to ending our traffic woes. It marks a satisfying conclusion to the long struggle to fully fund a fourth bore of the Caldecott Tunnel and the widening of Highway 4 through Antioch.

During the nearly 20 years I have served Contra Costa, we have made the interconnected issues of transportation, land use and air quality among the region's top policy priorities.

I am relieved that the Caldecott Tunnel and Highway 4 are going to be fully funded, and proud to have helped steer these vital projects through the bureaucratic maze.

The fourth bore of the Caldecott Tunnel has been in the works for years, dating back to 1999, when the fourth bore was first recommended as one of several long-term solutions to decrease congestion.

During the years, funds have been generated by the county, through Measure J and other plans, but it just hasn't been enough.

The years-long struggle to cobble together enough cash for the Caldecott Tunnel and Highway 4 projects spotlights the enormous gap between available funds and California's infrastructure needs.

Whether you travel on foot, on bike, behind the wheel or on public transit, it's easy to see that our transportation system is overcrowded, underfinanced and, quite literally, falling apart.

The funds we just received will not solve the state's mobility woes. But it's a solid down payment and marks a clear step in the right direction after decades of neglect.

Everyone involved in making this happen should be very proud of their effort.

We worked as a team -- the public, elected officials, business, labor and environmental leaders -- to present a united front, and it paid off.

From my seat in the state Assembly, I see the pre-eminent challenge for California lawmakers is to keep moving in the right direction.

Voters consistently have shown they're willing to dig into their own pockets to pay for transportation improvements.

Now it's time for those of us in Sacramento to follow the voters' lead.

Through my appointments to the Assembly Committees on Transportation and Appropriations, I will continue to fight for Contra Costa and particularly East County's long-overdue transit extension.

With patience, persistence and a continuing commitment to new investment, we can solve plenty of transportation puzzles -- and protect our quality of life and economic well being while we're at it.

Please join me for a transportation town hall meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday in the Antioch City Council chamber.

We'll discuss future projects in our county, including extending BART into East County and creating ferry service from Antioch to San Francisco.

Mark DeSaulnier is a member of the state Assembly and is a resident of Concord.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Friday, May 11, 2007:](#)

Students spread awareness of environment

The Earth Club at Bullard High School recently planned a weeklong program of lunchtime activities to spread awareness about environmental concerns.

Information was presented on issues such as water and air quality, pollution and renewable energy resources.

The group of students, led by AP Environmental Science teacher Eric Neilson, organized presentations to inform fellow students on environmental issues and provided solutions that can lessen local environmental problems.

To promote environmental stewardship, students who carpoled or rode bikes to school had an opportunity to enter a drawing to win a stylish, nonpolluting beach cruiser bike. Green ribbon bracelets were distributed to encourage Bullard students to participate in the lunch activities regarding the environment.

The Earth Club members campaigned for bettering the environment and found it difficult to get fellow students to engage in these environmentally educational activities. I suppose not all teenagers are interested in changing the current environmental conditions, but the Earth Club members are hoping for change.

Sophie Seiden, Fresno

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Monday, May 14, 2007:](#)

Council uncaring

Congratulations and also condolences are in order. Congratulations to *The Californian* for printing nearly two full pages on San Francisco's "bag ban." And condolences to Bakersfield that you have some small-minded people in office representing you.

Harold Hanson's comment shows how little he cares about solving local environmental problems.

With our valley near the top of the list with bad air, pollution, and all-around environmentally unsound, unsafe and deteriorating conditions, it's a shame that even simple suggestions for improvement are ridiculed and dismissed as having no merit.

Even the "local voices" in *The Californian* were positive or at least open-minded on banning plastic bags. Not so our local reps.

The council needs to get educated about plastic and its negative environmental impact. Plastic is not biodegradable -- it lasts forever. Whether it's in landfills, oceans, underground or anywhere, it will still be around in thousands of years. There's nothing good about it except convenience (sometimes).

The cost of canvas bags in the long run would be miniscule compared to the cost of continuous plastic bag production and controlling their "disposability" (definitely a misnomer) at landfills. Bakersfield could even start a small business producing canvas bags and provide some people with jobs. Nobody loses.

My friends and I have used canvas bags for years. It's a matter of being "conscious" of waste and becoming educated about even the easy, simple things anyone could do to help our environment.

We would welcome a council that cares more about our environment and our well being.

-- JOY KENNEDY, Arvin

[Visalia Times-Delta, Letter to the Editor, Monday, May 14, 2007:](#)

Allensworth would have welcomed a big dairy

After reading several e-mail sites regarding Col. Allen Allensworth Historic State Park, I have come to believe that there is definitely a feel about the place.

Col. Allensworth fought in the Civil War. He fought that war in order to win the right of African-Americans to be free from discrimination. The town of Allensworth was formed so that African Americans could enjoy the right to own property and to achieve their full economic potential.

Now comes the confusing part. The people who are fighting the proposed dairy are not letting a property owner use his own property to its full economic potential. That is not why Col. Allensworth fought in the civil war. That is not why Col. Allensworth established the town of Allensworth.

In its heyday, Allensworth was the home of several businesses. As a matter of fact, one of the brochures promoting the town includes the dairy business and the fact that there were 300 dairy cows in the Allensworth colony.

I know that this does not compare to a 7,500-cow dairy that is proposed, but the methods to control flies and odor are much better now than in 1907. I believe that the fighting over this dairy should stop, the government should stop wasting its money fighting the proposal, and the dairy should move forward. I believe that in the name of property rights, it is what Colonel Allensworth would have wanted.

DAVID CASE, Tulare

[Sacramento Bee, Letters to the Editor, Sunday, May 13, 2007:](#)

The lowdown on Yuba Highlands

Re "Yuba: Anything Goes?" editorial, May 3: The Yuba Highlands Area Plan is a classic example of moronic American urban planning, where a huge car-dependent community is built far from existing infrastructure, employment centers and services, resulting in more traffic, smog and greenhouse gases.

And building a high-speed, paved road through Spenceville Wildlife and Recreation Area will ruin this beautiful and serene nature area.

I urge everyone to tell the Yuba County Board of Supervisors to vote No on this disastrous proposal.

Jeff Utberg, Sacramento

Bike, walk and take transit

Re "Redwood tops at sucking up exhaust, UCD scientist says," May 8: Although trees may be part of our air pollution solution, the real problem for everyone's lungs is this country's addiction to fossil fuel.

The American Lung Association's annual State of the Air Report shows that, although some areas have cleaner air, cleaner is not clean enough, especially when thinking about the more than 100,000 people with asthma living in the Sacramento region. Even healthy people need to breathe air that does not make them sick.

Businesses, individuals, schools and organizations -- all of us -- can pollute less by driving our cars less, and by bicycling, walking and taking transit. We also need to promote lower polluting fuels and choose cars and transportation options that pollute less.

Jim Howard, Sacramento

War on warming won't be easy

Move aside, anti-environmentalists, as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is building a greener California. He is hoping to terminate global warming with his approval of California's Global Warming Solutions Act, which requires a 25 percent cut in the state's greenhouse-gas emissions by 2020. So stop driving your gas-guzzling SUVs and start driving your cute little hybrids. Buy your fluorescent light bulbs and recycle your empty bottles.

Well, you're doing your part, but what about the rest of the people that don't do these things? The people that say just leave it to the next generation to figure out -- besides, we'll be be dead before there's any "serious" problem.

A lot of us think that way, but won't it be refreshing to know that you may live longer? What is California doing to create a greener state? It's building new houses side by side and a Starbucks on every corner.

Schwarzenegger's proposal to promote cleaner technologies -- such as building a solar farm in Oakdale -- is a step in reforming California, but I believe that he is ignoring the fact that emissions reductions will not come easily or cheaply and that we need to change our lifestyle habits in order to have cleaner air.

Andrew Marzan, Sacramento