

[Sacramento Bee, Guest Commentary, Sunday, June 24, 2007:](#)

Air board has plan to cut smog in the Valley

By Seyed Sadredin -- Special to The Bee

While reasonable people can differ on what constitutes good government and proper representation on a regional board, charges that the current board lacks serious commitment to cleaning the San Joaquin Valley's air are baseless.

With tough regulations, innovative measures and investment by businesses and residents, air pollution has been reduced significantly throughout the Valley. In October 2006, the Valley was deemed "in attainment" for PM10, tiny particulate matter linked to breathing problems and other serious health complications, and one-hour periods when the ozone levels exceed health standards are down dramatically.

Despite this tremendous progress, the Valley's pollution-retaining geography and weather make meeting new federal ozone and particulate standards a challenge that is unmatched by any other region in the nation.

Having reduced Valley smog by 80 percent since the 1980s, virtually eliminating the remainder will not be cheap and cannot happen overnight.

Contrary to allegations that the board has "failed" Valley residents, on April 30, the board adopted the first eight-hour ozone plan in the nation. 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. Board members should be commended for their courage and commitment to clean air.

By law, the Valley cannot claim "attainment" because in a couple areas air pollution still will violate the standard on a few days each year until 2023.

Although 90 percent of the Valley's population will have clean air sooner, undisputed analysis by experts shows that even if money were no object, available technology could not reduce smog-forming emissions enough for all areas to attain the standard before 2023. This is not an attempt to "postpone" cleanup of the air.

All local measures will be in place early by 2010, but 80 percent of our smog-causing pollutants come from vehicles, over which the district has no jurisdiction. More than ever, we need the state and federal government to do their fair share by providing funding and regulatory assistance to reduce emissions from cars, trucks and locomotives.

The measures contained in the ozone plan will help the Valley meet the federal standard for fine particles by 2015. Doing so will eliminate more than \$3 billion per year of the estimated \$3.1 billion annual health-related costs attributed to the Valley's air pollution. By any objective measure, the plan adopted by the air district is a comprehensive effort that leaves no stone unturned to bring cleaner air to the Valley as quickly as possible.

About the writer:

Seyed Sadredin, executive director and air pollution control officer for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, is responding to the May 26 editorial "An air of unhealthiness."

Valley regulators issue guidelines to get to clean air faster

By GARANCE BURKE - Associated Press Writer

Sacramento Bee and Bakersfield Californian, Friday, June 22, 2007

FRESNO, Calif. -- Air managers in the San Joaquin Valley issued a list of voluntary guidelines Thursday aimed at cleaning up the valley's smog-laden air before 2023, the year the local air district will need to prove the polluted region meets federal air quality standards.

The unofficial measures issued Thursday - none of which are immediately enforceable - propose to explore new technology, green building tactics and incentives to replace polluting vehicles to curb ozone pollution before then.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will earmark about \$40 million this year for incentives and will direct 20 district staffers to work part-time on the fast-track proposal, officials said.

"We need to bring about change in the way that people and business conduct their daily operations," said executive director Seyed Sadredin. "In the future we may do things like say on certain days you cannot use your leaf blower or restaurants should not have drive through windows open."

During the hot summer months, residents in central California are sometimes encouraged to stay inside to avoid unhealthy levels of ozone, the main ingredient of smog.

Last week state regulators approved a plan asking the federal government for an extra 11 years to bring the farming region in line with federal ozone laws, moving the clean-up deadline from 2012 until 2023 to avoid significant cuts in federal transportation funds.

Environmental groups were disappointed that the bulk of the guidelines were voluntary, and weren't included in the official plan approved by the state last week.

"This isn't the ideal, but at the minimum it's step in the right direction," said Liza Bolanos, coordinator for the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition. "We would have preferred to see these plans going forward as commitments."

The district also voted Thursday to join Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in filing suit against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency if the agency did not act on California's long-standing petition to implement greenhouse gas reductions on automobiles.

If the EPA doesn't act by Oct. 22 on California's request for the federal waiver needed to enact the state's tailpipe emissions law, the governor has said the state will sue.

Valley air board to join suit if EPA won't allow standards

Bakersfield Californian, Friday, June 22, 2007

The agency that regulates air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley has joined the state in its effort to enact tougher greenhouse gas emission standards for vehicles than required by the federal government.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District announced Thursday it would join a possible lawsuit against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency if the agency doesn't grant California a waiver to set its own vehicle emission standards starting with 2009 models.

The air district believes reducing greenhouse gases could also reduce emissions that contribute to the valley's notoriously dirty air.

Only the state and federal government can regulate mobile sources of pollution, such as cars and trucks.

In a letter to EPA in late April, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said the state planned to sue the federal government if the waiver was not granted within six months.

Site 300 meeting rescheduled

Tracy Press, Friday, June 22, 2007

A public meeting to discuss open-air explosions that use depleted uranium has been rescheduled for next month.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District had originally scheduled the meeting for Tuesday. The meeting is now tentatively scheduled for 7:30 p.m. July 19 at the Tracy Council Chambers, 333 Civic Center Plaza.

The district will discuss Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory's plan to increase the amount of explosives used at Site 300 in the hills southwest of town.

Those explosions would include the use of depleted uranium, which is already responsible for soil and groundwater pollution at the site. The air district will study the potential effects of uranium dust from the explosions, as much as 450 pounds every year, and whether winds from the west would carry that dust toward Tracy.

EPA to rule on CA waiver this year

By ERICA WERNER - Associated Press Writer

Fresno Bee, Sacramento Bee, S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Thursday, June 21, 2007, 5:36 pm

WASHINGTON -- The Environmental Protection Agency said Thursday it will rule by the end of the year on California's long-standing petition to implement greenhouse gas reductions on automobiles.

The law can't take effect unless California gets a federal waiver. While the federal government has authority to make air pollution rules, California has unique status under the Clean Air Act to enact its own regulations as long as it receives permission from the EPA. Other states can then follow either the federal or California standards.

At least 11 other states - Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington - are ready to implement California's emissions standards if it gets the waiver.

EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson disclosed the year's-end timeline in a letter to California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. The governor's spokesman said there was no change in plans to sue if EPA doesn't act by Oct. 22 on the request for the federal waiver, which is needed to enact the state's tailpipe emissions law.

California filed the waiver request in December 2005, but EPA put off considering it until the Supreme Court ruled in April that the agency has the authority to regulate carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases blamed for global warming.

At issue is a 2002 California law that requires automakers to cut emissions by 25 percent from cars and light trucks and 18 percent from sport utility vehicles starting with the 2009 model year. Officials estimate this would lead to an 18 percent reduction in global warming emissions from cars in the state by 2020.

In climate change debate, all eyes turn to Calif.

The Associated Press

In the Madera Tribune, Friday, June 22, 2007

SACRAMENTO- In California, environmentalism has never been a dirty word.

It celebrates tree-sitters like Julia Butterfly Hill, who spent two years on top of a giant redwood. And its laws protect geckos, yellow-billed cuckoos and the Mohave ground squirrel.

While sometimes ridiculed for its granola image and left-leaning tendencies, California also has set the agenda for clean air, clean water and other health standards that later become the norm in middle America. It was the first to kick smokers out of bars, order tailpipe smog checks and put warnings on beer.

Today, the state where drivers of hybrid cars cruise solo in the carpool lane serves as the template for other states on global warming policy. Even the federal government has been forced to take notice.

The U.S. Supreme Court recently endorsed California's strategy to regulate greenhouse gases from vehicles. That validates the state's claim that the emissions should be classified as air pollutants over the objections of the Bush administration.

At least a dozen other states are expected to follow suit should the Environmental Protection Agency give California the right to limit auto emissions. A final decision is expected later this year.

Meanwhile, the state is polishing a new law that would bar its utilities from buying electricity from out-of-state coal plants that don't meet certain emissions standards. Coal produces more carbon dioxide than any other commonly used U.S. fuel source.

"California definitely has been an early leader on a wide variety of environmental issues, and I think that leadership has been continuing on global warming," said Judi Greenwald, a director at the nonprofit Pew Center on Global Climate Change, a nonpartisan group based in Arlington, Va.

There's a reason for the state's progressiveness. California, the world's eighth largest economy, is the world's 12th largest producer of greenhouse gases.

Global warming is expected to have a profound effect on the nation's most populous state, home to one of every eight Americans. Rising temperatures threaten to diminish its water supply, increase flooding and fuel more intense wildfires, while parts of its famed coastline will be inundated by rising sea levels. Agriculture, its No. 1 industry, also could suffer, even putting California's famed wine country at risk.

A wide majority of residents support steps to curb the state's contribution to climate change. A 2006 survey by the Public Policy Institute of California found that eight in 10 residents believe global warming will be a very or somewhat serious threat to the state's future economy and quality of life. Two-thirds said the state should address the issue.

"I think all of us can just live a little better," said Julie Cozzolino, a teacher who was loading groceries into her Honda Civic hybrid after shopping at a natural foods co-op in Sacramento. "My biggest concern is people should get their heads out of the sand. It's amazing to me that people don't assume any responsibility."

The state's sheer size, its economic diversity and variable geography present scientists and policy makers with a unique place to observe the changes wrought by climate change, and to craft potential solutions.

It's an influential role that California has demonstrated in the past, becoming the nation's de-facto lab for environmental policy.

California lawmakers enacted the first rules to reduce smog and required utilities to use alternative energy. State standards led industry to develop more efficient refrigerators and air conditioners, as well as the catalytic converter.

Recognizing the state's pioneering status on environmental issues, Congress in the 1960s gave California the ability to set its own air pollution controls. Four decades later, it is using that special authority to make its own strides on global warming.

Last fall, Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed legislation that imposed the first statewide cap on greenhouse gases, garnering worldwide attention for a move that put California at odds with the Bush administration.

The law, written by Democrats, requires California to reduce emissions by an estimated 25 percent by 2020 -- an estimated 174 million metric tons.

Absent federal leadership, at least 15 states are exploring their own strategies for reducing the gases blamed for global warming. They include increasing renewable energy, selling agricultural carbon credits and encouraging energy efficiency. It's a movement Schwarzenegger recently described as "hip" and "sexy."

"What we do in California has unbelievable impact and it has consequences," Schwarzenegger told an audience at Georgetown University this spring. "When you look at the globe, California is a little spot, but the kind of power and influence that we have on the rest of the world is an equivalent of a whole huge continent."

While California has moved aggressively to address climate change, it also has borrowed ideas from others. In the Northeast, for example, seven states began an effort in 2003 to cap emissions from power plants. Europe has been testing carbon trading systems since 2005.

Nevertheless, other states are pointing to California as the next model on global warming. In February, New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine signed an executive order patterned after California's greenhouse gas emissions law.

In May, Utah became the sixth state to join a Western coalition, initiated by Schwarzenegger, that will set a regional target for emissions.

Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., has said she hopes to model federal legislation after California's emissions law.

Meanwhile, Schwarzenegger and California lawmakers want to do even more. The governor has asked state air regulators to adopt a low-carbon fuel standard, while Democrats are pushing for increased use of alternative fuels, issues that have seeped into the presidential campaigns.

The state also is demanding more of its cities and counties. Attorney General Jerry Brown has sued San Bernardino County in Southern California for failing to control urban sprawl in its 25-year growth plan, noting that transportation is the state's major source of greenhouse gases.

Carl Pope, executive director of the San Francisco-based Sierra Club, said California's political leaders have seized on the momentum and don't want to relinquish it.

"Other states are fumbling over each other to catch up with us," he said, "and Washington is brain-dead on the issue."

Council votes for 'blue cans'

By Cindy Ryan

The Madera Tribune, Friday, June 22, 2007

The Madera City Council voted Wednesday to implement the "blue can" recycling program in spite of uncertainty about where the collected materials will be taken and how much the city will pay for the disposal of the recyclables.

"We think we can get a better cost," said Ray Salazar, city engineer.

The charge to dump the recycled goods at the Fairmead Landfill of Madera County, where the city no longer has an agreement, is \$25 a ton. To deposit the load at Sunset Waste Systems at Fresno the city would receive a \$28 per ton rebate.

The blue can program was projected to start in mid-September, but council members voiced concerns that the city would not have enough time to contract with the receiver of the goods.

"I think the timeline is a little unrealistic," said council member Sally Bompreszi.

City Administrator David Tooley said other sites would be more cost effective than the county landfill and said the city will provide the council with negotiation progress updates every 30 days.

"We need to hold ourselves to a timeline that's reasonable," said council member Sam Armentrout, and added that a few more weeks won't change the amount the county landfill will charge.

According to Salazar, the city is under pressure from the State of California to comply with mandatory recycling regulations. State penalties may culminate in a fine of \$10,000 a day for every day the city's recycling program is in non-compliance. Salazar said the state has already given the city a one-year extension to meet its recycling diversion goal.

"We're facing all these challenges," Salazar said.

Tooley said the city needs to demonstrate to the state that it's acting in good faith to resolve the issue.

In other action, the council approved the request of Madera County Board of Supervisors Chairman Vern Moss to draft letters to state legislature representatives in opposition of two state senate bills. The bills would allow lawmakers in Sacramento to appoint board members from cities outside of the Central Valley to the [San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District](#), and would impose additional fees on local polluters.

The council also set June 28 as a workshop to discuss the city's budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1.

Air board acts on greenhouse gas rules

By Bob Pool, Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, Friday, June 22, 2007

State regulators will move cautiously toward reducing greenhouse gases, officials implementing the nation's toughest clean-air standards indicated Thursday.

California Air Resources Board members voted 6 to 3 to adopt "early action" measures that could eventually require cars and trucks to use alternative fuels such as ethanol and bio-diesel, restrict the use of some automobile air-conditioning refrigerants and force landfills to capture methane gas formed by rotting garbage.

But officials ordered staff members to come back in six months with an analysis of concerns raised during six hours of hearings in Los Angeles by business and environmental groups concerned about strategies used to tackle climate change .

Air board members indicated that the emissions restrictions could be expanded -- or eased -- between now and 2010, when the greenhouse gas control rules are scheduled to begin being enforced.

"Global warming is one of the most serious issues we face today," said board Chairman Dr. Robert F. Sawyer in a statement. "These early actions will realize prompt emission reductions while a more comprehensive plan is developed."

The new low-carbon fuel standard, the control of do-it-yourself automotive refrigerants and use of more sophisticated trash dump technology are mandated by last year's wide-ranging California Global Warming Solutions Act, or AB 32

Along with Thursday's three greenhouse gas control rules, the state board is required to adopt 32 other measures designed to protect the climate by the start of 2010.

"It's the first step in realizing goals of that act -- to reduce greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2020," said Gennet Paauwe, a resources board staff member.

Tailpipe exhaust causes more than 40% of greenhouse gas emissions, experts say. California relies on petroleum-based fuels for 96% of its transportation fuel needs, according to a resources board report issued Thursday.

Accidental release of HFC 134a, a canned refrigerant used by vehicle owners to recharge automobile air-conditioning systems, contributes a relatively small amount to climate change, the report noted.

Most of California's landfills are already equipped with gas collection systems, although 41 of them are not, according to the staff analysis.

Board staff members said their six-month follow-up report would address concerns raised Thursday by environmentalists, the South Coast Air Quality Management District and the California Air Pollution Control Officers Assn.

The cautious approach to implementation was met with relief by a coalition of business groups.

"There's certainly a lot of uncertainty - of how it will impact the fuel supply, whether it ultimately will cost the consumer more at the pump, whether the biofuels will be there," said Al Lundeen, a representative of the Western States Petroleum Assn., one of the members of the coalition that calls itself the AB 32 Implementation Group.

"Our group is certainly supportive of the direction we're heading. But we don't know that it's going to be cost-effective or technologically feasible, as required under the legislation."

Others were disappointed in the board's stance.

"Today's vote on early action measures was the first big test of AB 32, the state's landmark climate-change law, and our regulators failed," said state Sen. Don Perata (D-Oakland) in a statement. "The air board's action falls far short of the Senate's expectations and what must be done now to reduce the threat to pollution."

Perata said steps should have been taken to also clean up diesel pollution from trucks, buses and port equipment. He urged board members to "follow the will of the governor, lawmakers and the public."

He complained that the Senate asked for a commitment from air board members during their confirmation proceedings to "take bold actions" toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"Unfortunately, today they flunked the test," he said.

Areas could run afoul of new ozone rules

Counties, cities in Northern California, Texas and elsewhere would need new controls. Even stricter EPA levels had been sought.

By Janet Wilson, Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times, Friday, June 22, 2007

Many areas of the United States that meet existing smog standards could be declared out of compliance under proposed new ozone levels announced Thursday by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Under court order to update ozone standards for the first time in a decade, EPA administrator Stephen L. Johnson proposed tightening them slightly in response to mounting evidence of health risks. The standards would require hundreds of counties and municipalities, including major cities in the Northeast and Texas and inland areas of Northern California, to adopt new smog controls.

"Based on current science, our current health standard is insufficient to protect public health," said Johnson. "Based upon the outstanding input I received from our clean-air science advisory committee, and our world-class environmental staff, I concluded that there was no scientific justification for retaining the current standard."

Still, his proposal falls short of what was unanimously recommended by the science advisory committee as well as his own staff. Medical groups, environmentalists and some members of Congress criticized Johnson and his senior policy advisors for not acting more aggressively.

"In issuing the standard today, EPA is ignoring the advice of their own staff, the advice of EPA advisory committees, the opinion of the medical and scientific community," said Dr. David H. Ingbar, president of the American Thoracic Society. "More importantly, EPA is ignoring all the kids who will be spending part of their summer in the hospital emergency room from asthma attacks caused by ozone pollution."

"Smog kills, and EPA should be doing everything it can to save lives and protect the health of our children and families," said Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), who chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee. "Instead of listening to science, the administrator seems to be intent on listening to the wish lists of polluting industries. The final ozone rule must protect clean air and public health, period."

Ozone is formed when nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds and other chemicals emitted from smokestacks and tailpipes swirl in hot summer sunlight, forming brown smog.

Johnson replied to critics that "the law does not require me to pick the lowest level. It requires me to do what is requisite to protect public health and the environment ... and as our proposal points out, the task before us is to neither over- nor under-regulate."

Johnson also said he would consider arguments for maintaining the current standards, which pleased industry groups that say his proposed regulations could cost billions of dollars. Johnson has until March to make his final decision, which he noted under the Clean Air Act must be based on health risks alone, not the costs of cleaning up pollution.

Industry representatives, including Jeffrey Holmstead, the EPA's former assistant administrator for air and radiation, disagreed that research shows sharply higher risks from ozone. Instead, Holmstead maintained that though new studies show minor increases in lung tissue damage and possible premature deaths, there were no definitive links between mortality and ozone exposure.

Holmstead is now a consultant at the Washington, D.C.-based law firm of Bracewell & Giuliani, which represents power plants, refiners and other businesses that say the current standard is adequate.

"EPA is being prudent by soliciting comments on a range of potential ozone standards, including the possibility that the current standard be left in place," said John Kinsman, director of air quality programs at the Edison Electric Institute. "The agency needs to make sure that any additional requirements imposed on states and local communities will produce real public health benefits. Many states still are struggling to comply with the existing ozone standard. Some areas have indicated that they won't be able to achieve the current standard no matter how hard they try."

But environmentalists said industry made the same claims of intolerable costs a decade ago, and had been proved wrong.

"What in fact happened over the past decade is that cost-effective, sensible measures were adopted that had far-reaching benefits in enabling millions of Americans to raise their families in neighborhoods and communities where the air is now safer to breathe," said Vickie Patton, senior attorney with Environmental Defense.

Urban areas around New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Houston, Dallas and San Francisco could all be affected, said Holmstead, as would Sutter County and Chico in Northern California. "Essentially, any significant city that now meets the standard will probably not meet the new standard, just because it's so low that essentially any urban area will likely fail," he said.

But many local regulators such as the South Coast Air Quality Management and Bay Area Air Quality Management districts in California said they would support tougher regulations.

Greater Los Angeles and the Central Valley already have the nation's worst ozone pollution and have struggled unsuccessfully for years to meet the current rules.

The California Air Resources Board is scheduled to vote today on a state plan for reducing ozone emissions from mobile sources, which environmentalists and Southern California air quality officials say are inadequately regulated.

San Francisco would still meet the tougher standards, but inland communities of Santa Clara County, such as San Martin and Los Gatos, probably would not.

"Where the smog forms are those places where the temperature gets to 112 degrees," said Karen Schkolnick, spokeswoman for the Bay Area district, which oversees air quality for 7 million people in and around San Francisco.

She said the district would work hard to meet any new federal standards.

"I don't think we believe it is impossible. We certainly believe it's a challenge, but it's an important challenge," she said.

EPA Proposes Tougher Smog Standards

By ERICA WERNER, The Associated Press

Fresno Bee, Sacramento Bee, SF Chronicle, Washington Post and other papers, Saturday, June 23, 2007

WASHINGTON -- Pollution standards are too weak to protect people from the air they breathe, the EPA's chief declared Thursday. He recommended tougher limits on the smog that makes children cough and asthmatics wheeze from Los Angeles to Houston to New York.

Still, under pressure from big business, EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson left the door open to keeping the rules as they are. It's the Environmental Protection Agency's first new recommendation since 1997 for ground-level ozone, the principal component of smog _ that noxious combination of car exhaust, industrial emissions and gasoline vapors aggravated by summertime sun and heat.

Johnson recommended reducing current smog standards by 11 percent to 17 percent. Among other benefits, EPA estimated this could reduce by 30 percent to 60 percent the risk of children having trouble breathing normally.

"Based upon the current science I have concluded that the current standard is insufficient to protect public health," Johnson told reporters on a conference call, noting that ozone can harm the lungs and aggravate asthma.

Studies have linked increased ozone levels with higher hospital admissions. EPA will release an impact analysis of its proposal in a few weeks that will detail health benefits and economic costs.

EPA measures smog by calculating the concentration of ozone molecules in the atmosphere over an eight-hour period. The current standard is .084 parts per million. EPA is proposing reducing that to between .070 and .075 parts per million.

The agency will take public comment for 90 days and settle on a final number by March 12, 2008. However, it also is soliciting comments on alternate standards, including keeping the current one or going down to .060 parts per million.

Environmentalists criticized the EPA's decision to consider keeping the current standard, noting that the agency's Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee has said the standard should be no higher than .070 parts per million.

That's also the health standard California established independently last year, though the state's standard has no regulatory impact.

"The science overwhelmingly supports closing the door on the current standard once and for all," said Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., who chairs the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. "Instead of listening to science, the administrator seems to be intent on listening to the wish lists of polluting industries."

Business and industry groups including the National Association of Manufacturers have been lobbying for the smog standard to stay the same, contending that lowering it would be costly and unnecessary. Although EPA says ozone levels have dropped 21 percent nationwide since 1980, states are still working to meet the smog levels set in 1997 because doing so takes years.

"We recognize that the EPA has a duty to protect public health, and studies have shown implementing the current standard will do just that," said NAM President John Engler. "There is still a long way to go to meeting the current standard. Therefore we see no reason to revise the current standard."

Johnson was asked repeatedly to explain why he would accept comment on keeping a standard that he himself, a career scientist, has determined doesn't adequately protect health. Environmentalists contended industry lobbying was the reason, but Johnson didn't respond directly to that allegation.

"Based upon the science, I do not believe there is scientific justification for retaining the current standard. Hence I am proposing to toughen the standard," he said. "But I am taking comment on the full range of what I have heard people ask for."

The EPA, which monitors 639 counties nationwide, says 104 of them are out of compliance with the current standard. If the standard went to .075 parts per million, 398 counties would be out of compliance, and if it went to .070 parts per million, 533 counties would be out of compliance.

States with noncompliance areas must come up with implementation plans to come into compliance or face a loss of federal highway funds. Most of the problem areas are in California, Texas, the Atlanta area, the Northeast, the mid-Atlantic and the Upper Midwest.

Ozone levels measured between 2003-2005, the most recent period for which EPA data was available, show many areas that are compliant with the current levels would be out of compliance with the proposed ones. For example, the Albany-Schenectady-Troy area of New York State recorded .082 parts per million; Fort Wayne, Indiana .083 parts per million; and Phoenix-Mesa, Ariz., .084 parts per million.

Under the Clean Air Act, EPA is supposed to review standards on ozone and other pollutants every five years. When that didn't happen five years ago, a lawsuit by the American Lung Association led to a settlement between EPA and advocacy groups to propose revised levels for smog. Thursday was the deadline for that proposal to be offered.

EPA Chief Proposes Tougher Ground-Level Pollution Standards for Ozone

By Marc Kaufman, Washington Post Staff Writer
Washington Post, June 22, 2007

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Stephen L. Johnson said yesterday that current limits on ozone air pollution do not adequately protect public health as he released a proposed regulation to lower the limit by as much as 20 percent in coming decades. The proposal came under immediate attack by business and industry groups.

"New scientific evidence indicates that the impact of ozone is more significant than we previously thought," Johnson said. "That's why we're proposing to strengthen the ozone standard."

Johnson said, however, that the agency will accept public comments from groups that challenge the proposed change in the standard.

Johnson said research has clearly shown that allowable levels of ozone can lead to disease but added: "I recognize that others don't agree with that, and I want to provide an opportunity for them to provide comments on which we can make an informed decision."

Ground-level ozone smog is created by the reaction of fossil fuel vapors and products of combustion with nitrogen oxide released by industries and some vehicles. The gas is known to worsen, and perhaps cause, asthma attacks; elderly people, children, and those with already damaged lungs are particularly vulnerable to its effects.

The current EPA standard allows up to 84 parts per billion of ozone; the new proposal would lower that to 70 to 75 parts per billion. That level is consistent with EPA scientists' findings but is higher than the standard an independent group of scientific advisers recommended last year.

The president of the National Association of Manufacturers, John Engler, a Republican former governor of Michigan, said the additional costs associated with meeting the new standards would harm many companies and send jobs abroad. He also said his group will challenge the science used by the EPA, which he said overstates the harm from ozone.

But the tougher standard's supporters point out that the advisory group -- which included industry scientists -- concluded unanimously that the current standard does not protect public health.

"The EPA is proposing to tighten the ozone standard significantly, a move that is essential to protecting the public health," said Norman Edelman, medical director of the American Lung Association. The group sued EPA in 2002 to force it to update the ozone standard, as required by the Clean Air Act.

"The agency's plan falls short of the goal recommended by its own scientific experts. We are particularly concerned that the EPA has left the door open to choosing options that are simply not acceptable," Edelman said, referring to the possibility of maintaining the current standard.

The EPA will take comments from the public for 90 days and is planning to hold several public hearings. Its final rule will be announced next March.

Garamendi speaks to local demos

Topics include water, higher ed in SJ valley and Williamson Act

By ADAM ASHTON

Modesto Bee, Friday June 22, 2007

Some problems facing the San Joaquin Valley today are the same ones Lt. Gov. John Garamendi sought to address more than 30 years ago as a rookie assemblyman.

Poverty, access to education and air quality top his list of challenges for the area, just as they did when he represented parts of San Joaquin and parts of Stanislaus counties in the Legislature.

But some of the obstacles are new, namely, adapting California's water system to a warming climate.

"The reservoirs today are operated on historical records. The reality is, tomorrow, everything's different," Garamendi said Thursday before a Central Valley Democratic Club fund-raiser at the McHenry Mansion.

Garamendi, a former U.S. deputy secretary of the interior, said warming weather would oblige the state to rely less on catching snowpack in its reservoirs.

That could require adopting new technology to monitor flood threats, increasing water storage capacity, and retooling the use of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta as a cog in the system of delivering water collected in Northern California to Southern California.

Making those changes could mean less agriculture on the islands in the delta and allowing saltwater to flow further into the delta in dry months, he said.

"We can't hold back the Pacific Ocean," he said.

Garamendi, who won election in November, didn't say directly that he planned to run for governor in 2010, but said, "The natural progression is to the governor's office."

He spoke earlier in the day at a Stockton conference centered on generating venture capital for the San Joaquin Valley. That in itself was a change for the region, he said, noting that those sessions typically take place in the Silicon Valley.

A University of California regent and California State University trustee, Garamendi said the San Joaquin Valley was enjoying improved access to higher education, though he said it remains behind the rest of the state.

He said the odds favor the University of California at Merced in its effort to develop a medical program at the campus, particularly if it works with other hospitals in the region.

"It's very innovative and a whole lot cheaper," he said of the school's pitch to send third and fourth-year students to valley hospitals. His son, John Garamendi Jr., is UC Merced's vice president of advancement.

Garamendi said the Williamson Act, slated for cuts in the governor's budget proposal, "will be funded."

The law, which cuts property taxes for farmers who agree not to develop their land, is "too important for our economy and the future," he said.

Solar-powered beach trash bins are keeping Capitola tidy

Associated Press

In the Bakersfield Californian and Hanford Sentinel, Monday, June 25, 2007

The city is tackling beach trash in a very politically correct way: solar-powered bins that compact trash and keep sands tidy.

Two BigBelly trash compactors, which look like stubby, green mailboxes, are now squeezing discarded pizza boxes, drink cups and other trash to size.

"It's our elegant, beautiful, solar, very politically correct trash can," Mayor Michael Termini said.

Unlike the regular trash bins near the beach entrance, which overflow with debris during busy summertime periods, beachgoers drop trash in and the door shuts. Then, the trash gets compacted.

"Having to put out 30 trash cans doesn't do much for the landscape," the mayor said.

The BigBelly, which carries a price tag of about \$4,500, reduces the need for pickups as well as the air pollution spewed by garbage trucks.

In March, Santa Cruz installed a BigBelly at Church Street by the Santa Cruz Cinema 9 and another in front of the Del Mar movie theater. The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk also owns a BigBelly.

Termini said he wants to add more BigBellies in Capitola Village along the esplanade, where most of the restaurants are located.

[Fresno Bee, Editorial, Saturday, June 23, 2007:](#)

Air board does it again

Members vote against adding medical experts, more city reps.

The Valley air district's governing board voted 6-3 on Thursday to support the status quo, an action that's becoming a habit. The vote sets the district in opposition to legislation that would change the makeup of the board by adding four members -- two medical experts and two representatives of Valley cities.

The arguments offered in favor of the vote were specious, to put it mildly.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board's majority objects to "appointed" members, ignoring the fact that none of them were elected to the air board by voters. They were, in every case, appointed by the city councils and county boards of supervisors on which they serve. And not one of them ran for those offices on a platform centered on air quality issues.

The majority also said they don't believe state-appointed medical experts would represent the interests of Valley residents.

But the legislation, Senate Bill 719, by Sen. Mike Machado, D-Linden, requires that the medical experts added to the board be Valley residents, not strangers from Sacramento.

The board majority also seems to imply that health expertise isn't needed on a board whose sole task is to clean up dirty air that adds more than \$3 billion to Valley health costs each year, costs hundreds of lives and many thousands of hours of illness and lost work, and cripples children and adults alike with respiratory ailments.

It's clear that the board, whose 11 members include eight county supervisors from up and down the Valley, isn't interested in sharing power with more urban representatives. That leaves a majority of Valley residents without effective representation on a board that has great power to affect the quality of life in the Valley -- and to regulate economic behavior.

And that's the crunch. Cleaning up the air will be costly. The status quo is less so, at least for the short term. And there are powerful interests that prefer not to have to pay the costs of cleaner air. That's the constituency the air district board's majority represents -- not the majority of the people in the Valley afflicted by dirty air.

Thursday's action could have a backlash in Sacramento. The state Legislature is trying to come up with spending formulas for bond money that the Valley desperately needs. There is a stiff competition with other regions for the funding, and the representatives of those areas are sure to fasten on this most recent vote as another example of the Valley district being loathe to take bold action.

Air district board members Raji Brar, Henry T. Perea and Susan Anderson (filling in for her Fresno County board colleague, Judy Case) deserve credit for supporting the legislation. The majority -- well, we've come to expect such results.

[Visalia Times-Delta, Editorial, Monday, June 25, 2007:](#)

Leaving out Valley rep was oversight

Thumbs down to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger for making nine appointments last week to the state Commission for Economic Development without naming a member from the San Joaquin Valley.

The governor appointed one person from Sacramento, his only appointment from the Central Valley.

Considering that this is the fastest-growing area in California, as well as the region with the most critical economic development issues, it is difficult to accept this oversight.

To be fair, Schwarzenegger has usually directed a great deal of his attention to the Valley, more than any of his immediate predecessors. Several principal members of his executive team are from Visalia and Tulare County, including Mike Chrisman as secretary of natural resources and Tom Johnson as veterans affairs chief and Connie Conway as member of the Public Employee Post Employment Benefits Commission. Schwarzenegger has also created the San Joaquin Valley Partnership, which contains a number of prominent Valley residents. And he has been attentive to our regional problems, such as [air quality](#) and the freeze.

This is just a reminder to the governor: This area is one of the most attractive locations in the state for new business, with relatively low land, labor and cost of living costs. Having someone from the Valley

wouldn't only benefit the economic development commission and this Valley, it would be a benefit for the state.

[Fresno Bee commentary, Saturday, June 23, 2007:](#)

CLAIRE GIBSON: Growing in 'environmentally considerate' way

Finally, after a few full nights of wheezing and coughing, my mom took me to the doctor. I was about 8, and it turned out I had asthma.

As a kid growing up in the Valley, I didn't think much of it. Lots of people had asthma. In my mind, Fresno kids had bad-air days at school like kids living elsewhere had snow days. Not until I left behind my inhaler, the layer of smog on the horizon and my home in the Valley to start living away at college, did I truly realize the extent of the air problem in Fresno.

Unique geography and weather patterns, agricultural production and rapid population growth all combine to make the Valley arguably the most dangerous place to breathe in the nation. Where do we even begin to fix such an enormous problem? "Begin everywhere," a Fresno Bee editorial suggested in December 2002, "There is no aspect of our lives in this region that isn't touched by the increasingly foul fingerprints of air pollution."

Every time I come home, I am shocked to see houses popping up in places that I once knew as orchards. The Valley, and particularly Fresno, is growing with incredible speed; and it is not handling population growth in an environmentally considerate way. Consequences of urban sprawl are numerous and far-reaching: from social fragmentation to loss of farmland and wildlife habitat, to increased water use and, yes, increased air pollution.

Land is still relatively available and cheap in the Valley, so the influx of people is not surprising. But with housing subdivisions springing up, homes are being built farther and farther away from the city center, prompting more people to drive. Improvement in Valley air quality depends on efforts to curtail urban sprawl and reduce vehicle emissions.

How? Smarter city planning and more sustainable transportation options provide a start. Think-tank organizations all over the country, such as the National Center for Appropriate Technology, have been coming up with ideas for these types of advancements. So while growth may be inevitable, the Fresno area can grow in smarter ways.

Promote downtown infill

First, we can promote urban infill by renovating abandoned areas of downtown so they become not only livable but also desirable.

Second, our adoption of integrated land-use planning principles can encourage the development of less auto-dependent new neighborhoods. Mixed-use, walkable communities with streets, paths and businesses, developed around transit hubs will make driving less of a necessity.

Fresno has to work with what we've already done -- these dense tracts of newly built homes and places like River Park that encourage driving from store to store, have already been built. Faced with that fact, we must also think about improving and maximizing alternative transportation options to improve air quality.

Our community needs to start circulating ideas for how our sprawled area can reduce dependence on cars and once again make public transport, bicycling and walking attractive options.

Although change cannot happen overnight, we need to act now to prevent our air from becoming increasingly polluted and to curb the disturbing growth of childhood asthma rates. Today more than 20% of children in the San Joaquin Valley, ages 0-17, have been diagnosed with asthma, according to the Central Valley Air Coalition. That is one child out of every five who wakes in the middle of the night wheezing.

Too often, when people think of California, they think solely of the Hollywood film industry or the trolley cars of San Francisco, forgetting the vast and important Central Valley region in between.

Away at school now, I am proud to have grown up in Fresno. But it discourages me to come home and see the area around downtown and my high school, Edison, neglected and forgotten while new homes are built to the north.

My heart sinks when I come home and can't see the Sierra because of the hazy smog. We can start making a change, but it will take everyone for it to happen.

Claire Gibson is a sophomore at Stanford University in Palo Alto who is finishing up a course in health and environmental policy.

[Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Friday, June 22, 2007:](#)

Don't take air pollution for granted

Of the myriad actions of which human beings are capable, the noblest of all is self-sacrifice. Be it one's life to save the lives of others or merely one's place in line to benefit someone less fortunate, to give of one's self must be humanity's greatest distinction.

So what does this have to do with the quality of Bakersfield's air?

Everything.

If we are not willing to make sacrifices in our daily lives now, future generations in the San Joaquin Valley will not only be unable to see the surrounding mountains, but probably will be unable to breathe at all.

Most of us who grew up in Bakersfield can remember when we could actually see Bear Mountain to the east and Elk Hills to the west. Now, not only are we unable to see that we live in a valley, but our air has become hazardous to our health.

Diane Bailey of the Natural Resources Defense Council in San Francisco was recently quoted in *The Californian*: "Nobody writes air pollution on the death certificate, but the fact is it is responsible for thousands of deaths in California."

We can no longer take air quality for granted or assume that some government agency or council will take care of the problem for us. It is up to us.

I admit that I, personally, have not done enough. Although our home has two fireplaces, my wife and I have chosen to give up burning firewood, even on "green light" days. We remember to bring our canvas bag to the grocery store to keep another plastic bag out of circulation and we have a "blue" recycle can from the county.

But most importantly, we have adopted an attitude of responsibility to people who will live here in the future a mindset that we must keep alert to and put into practice ways that will decrease air pollution.

If we reflect upon the sacrifices that people have made in the past, what they freely chose to give up so that our quality of life could be preserved, then, it is only fitting and proper that we choose to do the same for our descendants.

Dr. Larry Reider, Kern County Superintendent of Schools once said, "A politician plans for the next election; a statesman plans for the next generation."

We all need to be statesmen fighting for clean air in our city.

Bill McDougle lives in Bakersfield. He is a retired teacher and vice principal of Chipman Junior High School. He is a member of the Opinion section's sounding board.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Friday, June 22, 2007:](#)

Make our voices heard

It is sad that our Valley seems to be getting short-changed regarding our share of funds available for matters like road repair and air quality.

I have heard and read observations that we do not have the population, and therefore the votes, to be treated fairly.

The Bee's June 19 editorial, "Don't delay road funds," contains the answer to this situation. Our legislators, as well as possibly the Council of Governments, should endeavor to obtain commitments for funds before voting (or recommending votes) on bond issues.

The Valley should, in fact, organize as much as possible to form a voting bloc that will be heard.

Darryl F. Gillis, Fresno

[Bakersfield Californian, Letters to the Editor, Sunday, June 24, 2007:](#)

Readers want bad air cleaned up

All talk, no action

As Mark Twain said, everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it. So it is with the foul air in Bakersfield.

I have to ask: Why has the Bakersfield City Council not done the following?

- Stopped the use of motorized leaf blowers. Other cities have.
- Stopped the use of motorized lawn mowers. Electric ones work just fine. In fact, the air quality people offer electric-mower incentives.
- Stopped the use of drive-through fast food and bank lanes? We all know that idling cars contribute to added pollution. Other cities have done that.
- Prohibited the sale and use of fireworks within city limits. Other cities have. The Council had that option a couple of years ago, but due to lack of courage, it backed down.
- Put in use hybrids and electric cars in their automotive fleet.
- Purchased hybrid buses, there is such a thing.
- Prohibit the use of fireplaces. Other cities have. In one city, they are prohibiting the building of new house with fireplaces.
- In Salt Lake City, the mayor has replaced the traffic control motor vehicles with electric ones.

It is my opinion that our City Council will not do anything that is right and necessary for air quality improvement if it is controversial for fear of not getting re-elected. They also, in my opinion, have indirect conflicts of interest. After all, the larger the Bakersfield population, the more their businesses will prosper.

-- KENNETH M. CANNON, Bakersfield

Clean air options

What can be done to clean up the air in Bakersfield? I thought about what I could do to address this issue.

Take public transportation: not convenient for me from where I live to where I work; besides I often need my car for meetings.

Ride my bike: not an option for me. Again, too far -- by the time I got to work, it would be time to ride home.

Car pool? Hmmm, that could work, if I could find someone who lives near me who works the same hours as I do at work.

Change my car: mine isn't exactly the best on gas. I chose luxury/comfort over gas savings -- sorry! Maybe in the future the auto industry will make comfortable cars or mid-size SUVs that are economical, too.

So what am I willing to sacrifice in the name of cleaner air?

I do bring my lunch more often so I don't have to use my car at lunch. I try to get my errands done on the way home from work or on weekends. I also plan out my route for errands, so I'm not driving extra miles and spending more on gas. I choose a health club that is on my way home.

Not only do I feel guilty if I don't stop, but it is convenient and I don't have to drive out of my way to get there. Perhaps if GET had a park-and-ride bus from the southwest to the KMC area, I'd be willing to experience riding the bus -- maybe!

-- KATHY VAN REUSEN, Bakersfield

Bill would help

About three years ago I developed asthma after having lived in Bakersfield for 15 years. Last summer the asthma landed me in a hospital (in fact, an ICU) with pneumonia in both lungs. It has taken me a long time to fully recover, especially after a winter of chronic bronchitis.

Many others, both the very young and elderly, as I am (now 80) suffer asthma and associated problems because of the severe air pollution. I am among those who have moved out of the valley to escape it.

Our air district has done a lot to improve the air; however, there is a lot more it must do.

The Assembly will vote soon on SB719, which would add medical and scientific members to the air board directors. This addition could help develop policies to lessen pollution more quickly.

Right now the board is made up of elected officials from cities and counties.

These officials tend to listen to the pressures of the business and industrial interests of those who contribute to their local elections.

Although the oil and ag industries have agreed, sometimes reluctantly, to change many of the ways they do things so that they add less to air pollution, developers and builders, however, still object to policies the board could adopt which would help reduce pollution sooner.

SB719 is an important bill for residents of the valley. We need to urge our legislators to pass it

-- LAURA DENNISON, Claremont