

## **Air district given \$5.6m for cleaner Valley trucks**

**Funds will help retrofit and replace older diesel engines to curb harmful emissions.**

By Victor A. Patton / Merced Sun-star

In the Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star Thursday, July 10, 2008

MERCED -- The state presented a \$5.6 million check to San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials to help improve the Valley's pollution as part of Wednesday's California Emerging Clean Air Technology Forum at the University of California at Merced.

The check, which was presented by Cindy Tuck, undersecretary for environmental protection with the state Environmental Protection Agency, will go toward retrofitting and replacing older diesel truck engines in order to decrease harmful emissions.

The dollars are the first to be distributed by the state under Proposition 1B, a 2006 transportation bond measure that includes funding for \$1 billion in air-quality projects in the state's primary trade corridors, which includes the Central Valley, San Francisco Bay Area, the Inland Empire and the San Diego border region.

Over the next few years, about 25% of that funding is expected to go toward projects in the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said Leo Kay, spokeswoman for state EPA.

Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said the funds are important because up to 80% of the Valley's air pollution comes from mobile sources like cars, trucks and buses.

Sadredin said about 50% of the region's pollution comes from trucks -- many of which routinely travel on Interstate 5 and Highway 99.

The Valley's air quality is also considered one of the nation's worst.

Trucks are "a huge source that we have to go after," Sadredin said.

Officials said the district will use the funds to retrofit between 100 and 300 trucks with diesel particulate filters -- and replace the engines of 70 to 100 trucks.

The dollars will help fund up to \$50,000 for new diesel or alternative trucks -- for trucks that use the state's major trade corridors, said Cynthia Marvin, the Air Resources Board's assistant division chief for planning and technical support.

The efforts by the state to cut down on harmful emissions come a few months before the state Air Resources Board is scheduled to review new truck regulations.

Those regulations, which the board will vote on in October, would require truckers to retrofit pre-2007 trucks with soot filters. The regulations would also require a gradual modernization of trucks beginning in 2012.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District covers San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern counties.

## **San Joaquin Valley residents gasping for clean air**

**High temps and smoke from fires equal misery**

By EMILIE RAGUSO

Modesto Bee, Thursday, July 10, 2008

Record temperatures and fires around the state continue to leave Northern San Joaquin Valley residents sweltering and gasping for fresh air, officials say.

Modesto hit 106 degrees Wednesday, setting a record for July 9. The previous record was 105, set in 1961, Modesto Irrigation District spokeswoman Kate Hora said.

Wildfires around the state have left air quality worse than the average for this time of year, said Anthony Presto, a district spokesman for the eight-county San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"We're seeing poor air quality around the clock, as long as fires and hot, stagnant days continue to push pollutants down to ground level," he said.

Today's air quality forecast shows slight improvement, said Shawn Ferreria, senior air quality specialist for the district. The air quality index is scheduled to be unhealthy for sensitive groups in Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties, unhealthy for all residents in Madera and Merced counties, and very unhealthy in Fresno.

Ferreria said a high-pressure lid that has hovered squarely over California appears to be shifting to Nevada.

"That's going to allow for this lid not to be as strong," he said. "The huge wild card right now in this whole forecast is, if the winds change, we could then be impacted by smoke again. It would offset the weather, and cause emissions to go back up."

Another scorcher

National Weather Service forecaster George Cline said today's high could be 107 degrees at the airport. Friday should be cooler, with a high of 102. Weather Underground, which uses a downtown forecast, estimates 106 for today and 101 for Friday. Cline said Modesto could see a downward trend through the weekend, with temperatures dipping below 100.

Modesto has a heat advisory in effect through this evening, Cline said.

Tuesday, the city broke its record for the warmest overnight low, dropping to 76 degrees downtown. The previous record low was 71 degrees, Hora said. Warm nights can cause spikes in utility bills, she said.

"There's no delta breeze blowing, so people keep their air conditioner running longer at night," she said. "That really adds up in the next month's bill."

The MID reported a power loss in the 300 blocks of South Santa Cruz and South Santa Ana avenues Wednesday evening. Hora said this type of failure is common when it's extremely hot. The transformer that failed was one of 18,000 run by the district. The power loss was fixed by 6:10 p.m.

The county's Health Services Agency has seen nothing out of the ordinary this week, said spokesman Ken Fitzgerald. The organization monitors emergency room visits and calls to Emergency Medical Services and the 911 dispatch center.

"Nothing above normal for this time of year has been reported," he said. "It may be cooling off a bit, but it's still important for people to find ways to stay healthy in the heat. But, at this point, it's been relatively quiet."

For more information about air quality, visit [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org).

## **A little relief from Valley heat**

**Fresnans take advantage of free swimming as volunteers fan out to help people.**

By Denny Boyles / The Fresno Bee

Fresno Bee and Merced Sun-Star Thursday, July 10, 2008

Dozens of volunteers swarmed a Fresno neighborhood Wednesday, alerting residents of dangerous temperatures and urging those without air conditioning to use cooling centers.

It was a timely message, with Fresno's high on Wednesday reaching 108. That came after a record overnight low of 81 Wednesday morning, breaking a record of 79 set in 1896.

Heat wasn't the only problem. [Air quality](#) went from bad to worse on Wednesday. The Valley air district reported Wednesday's Air Quality Index for Fresno was 208, or very unhealthy. The forecast calls for another day of unhealthy air today, with an expected AQI of 204.

As the temperature climbed, Fresno officials announced they had waived fees at city pools on Wednesday, and pushed back closing time to 7 p.m. from 5 p.m. The pools open at 1 p.m.

Community response to the free swimming was strong. The pool at the Mosqueda Community Center, one of the city's busiest pools, reached capacity of 250 swimmers early in the afternoon and had a line of people waiting to come in.

"We are keeping a close eye on the forecast and the intensity of this heat wave," said Heather Heinks, a Fresno city spokeswoman. "We'll be evaluating our cooling-center plan in the coming days to ensure we are meeting the needs of Fresno residents."

Heinks said pool fees could be waived again today depending on the forecast. Normal fees are \$2 for adults, and 75 cents for children.

The forecast today calls for sunny skies and a high of 108. Friday, expect highs of 105, dipping to 100 by Saturday.

The free access to city pools and the volunteer outreach were part of a plan to protect residents as temperatures reached hazardous levels, officials said.

"In 2006, a heat wave killed 24 people in Fresno," said Karen Baker, state secretary of service and volunteering, speaking to volunteers on Wednesday at the Ted C. Wills Community Center. "What you are doing today is literally going to save lives."

Baker and other state officials were in Fresno to share tips on how residents could protect themselves, and talk about how volunteers could help their community.

High temperatures are especially dangerous to the elderly and disabled, Baker said. Volunteers were urged to ask those two groups whether they were OK and needed help.

"Tell those who are elderly or who have a disability that they need to think about their health," said Richard Devylder, a special adviser in the state Office of Emergency Services. "Although we are encouraging some residents to power down their air conditioners to save energy at night, those who are disabled should keep it on. They need to stay cool."

The goal of Wednesday's volunteer sweep was to visit 1,000 homes, starting with the neighborhood around the Ted C. Wills center, near San Pablo and Olive avenues.

Over the next few weeks, hundreds of volunteers will continue the effort across the city, trying to reach as many residents as possible and encourage them to not only take care of themselves, but their neighbors.

Carla Glazebrook, a member of the Community Emergency Response Team, said several organizations were participating in the effort, including AmeriCorps and the California Citizens Corps.

"We've trained 570 volunteers in Fresno, and 100 in Clovis," Glazebrook said. "It's something we've done the last several years, but never on this scale."

Dave McKinney, a Fresno resident visited by volunteers, said he thought it was a great idea.

"We're in pretty good shape at my house, but I can understand that a lot of people aren't," McKinney said. "I have a 94-year-old neighbor that people check on every day. You have to watch out for people, especially when it gets this hot."

The heat also continued to affect residents of The Californian, an eight-story apartment building in downtown Fresno. A broken air-conditioning system drove many residents out of the building on Tuesday evening, and they were still waiting for repairs on Wednesday. A new compressor for the system was expected today, spokeswoman Trudy Moxley said.

Moxley said three of the facility's 250 residents became ill Tuesday after the compressor broke down and were taken to Community Regional Medical Center.

### **Bad air quality forecast cancels Bike to Work day**

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, July 10, 2008

Bad air quality has forced cancellation of a Friday clean-air event.

The valley air district is rescheduling Bike to Work Day for an unknown date because air quality will be at its worst when most riders would be on their way home, said spokeswoman Brenda Turner.

She acknowledged the irony that canceling the event would worsen air quality as people drive instead of bike. People's health is more important, Turner said.

"People can still carpool or do other things" to limit poor air quality, she said.

Some 150 to 200 people were expected to participate.

When the Air Quality Index hits higher than 151, it's unhealthy for people to do strenuous activity outside for more than an hour. The forecast for Bakersfield Thursday was 195.

### **Bad air is a triple threat**

**High-pressure system will continue to trap an unhealthy brew of heat, smog, smoke in Valley.**

By Chris Bowman

Sacramento Bee and Modesto Bee, Thursday, July 10, 2008

Another triple-whammy of dense wildfire smoke, heavy smog and stultifying heat is forecast for the southern Sacramento Valley and Sierra foothills today as a high-pressure system cuts off fresh marine air.

Smoke from the nearly 50,000-acre Butte Lightning Complex of fires northeast of Oroville and other blazes is expected to continue drifting into the Sacramento area under a thermal lid that traps and concentrates pollutants close to the ground, like a jar.

Today also is forecast to be the fourth consecutive day of triple-digit heat, with a high of 103 degrees – 4 degrees cooler than Wednesday's high – and a National Weather Service heat advisory in effect through 8 p.m. Slightly lower temperatures are expected Friday through Sunday, with highs in the mid to high 90s.

Particle pollution registered high throughout metropolitan Sacramento on Wednesday as a result of the smoke. Visibility was poor enough in some areas that drivers used headlights at midday.

Roseville and Folsom got the brunt of the haze with hourly Air Quality Index readings peaking in late afternoon at the "very unhealthy" levels of 255 and 215, respectively. Monitors in Auburn and Colfax have been out of commission since Sunday.

The conditions could result in more than mere discomfort.

Smoke contains invisibly tiny specks of soot and other matter that pose a breathing hazard. While the lungs clear nearly all of these particles, some can end up deep in the airways and migrate into the bloodstream, potentially inducing heart attacks.

The smog, mostly from vehicle exhaust, compounds the assault with its corrosive ozone gas further irritating the eyes, throat and lungs, and shortening breath.

Both ozone and particle pollutants can trigger asthma attacks.

"One alone is bad; two is probably worse," said Dr. Glennah Trochet, Sacramento County public health officer.

If only it stopped at two stressors. Public health officials also have been issuing advisories this week on heat exhaustion, which causes people to turn red-faced, weak and dizzy.

Last week, the Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services asked local hospitals to record the number of people seeking care for problems potentially related to bad air, including asthma and heart attacks, chest pains and shortness of breath.

So far, the incidence of such ailments does not appear to be elevated for this time of year, Trochet said.

The high pollution and heat wave prompted health workers Wednesday to check on hundreds of vulnerable residents enrolled in county programs for abused and neglected adults and those dependent on in-home caregivers and life-support equipment. Out of 2,200 calls, only a handful of problems surfaced, said Laura McCasland, health department spokeswoman.

Five cases required immediate response, including a 65-year-old woman short of breath and an elderly homebound man without working air conditioning, McCasland said.

Ozone and, to a lesser degree, particle pollutants cause their greatest harm in the twigs of the respiratory tree, narrowing those tiny airways at the critical point where oxygen is delivered to the blood, said Kent Pinkerton, a UC Davis professor and expert on the health effects of air pollutants.

"Most people won't notice, but they will have a reduction in lung function, less ability to take deep breaths," Pinkerton said. "But in some, it will be significant" – mainly toddlers and the elderly with respiratory or heart conditions.

The smoky siege began almost three weeks ago when a series of dry lightning storms ignited hundreds of wildfires in exceptionally dry terrain across California.

At a time when many people usually take to the outdoors, public health officials have been advising almost daily that they stay inside as much as possible.

"We've never had numbers this high for this long," Joe Fish, assistant executive officer of the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District, said of particle pollution readings in the Grass Valley-Nevada City area.

The heavy smoke has a silver lining worth noting, but not touting, said Larry Greene, executive officer of the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District. The haze filters out the sun's ultraviolet rays, which drive the production of harmful, ground-level ozone.

"This makes ozone lower than it otherwise would be," Greene said. "But then you have very high particle pollution from the smoke, which is probably more dangerous."

## **Valley celebrates Healthy Air Week**

BY ROXANA SAMANO - Staff Reporter  
Turlock Journal, Wednesday, July 9, 2008

Businesses, organizations and individuals living in the San Joaquin Valley are participating in Healthy Air Living Week in an effort to reduce emissions by making daily changes.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District kicked off their inaugural Healthy Air Living Week on Monday. The program was developed to encourage Valley residents to become part of a solution by focusing on improving the health and quality of life through efficient, effective, and entrepreneurial air quality management strategies.

"Healthy Air Living Week is designed to get people to think about what they do everyday and to put air quality at the forefront of their daily decision making," Anthony Presto, public information representative for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said. "If everyone does this it will make a huge impact on air quality in the Valley."

According to the air district, residents of the San Joaquin Valley air basin breathe some of the most polluted air in the nation. The air basin fails to meet federal and state health-based standards for ozone and particulate matter. Although ozone is primarily a problem in the summer when chemicals from vehicle and other emissions cook in sunlight and heat to form smog, particulate matter occurs primarily during fall and winter.

"Healthy Air Living Week is going to be a way for businesses to showcase what they can do all year long and for individuals to really think about what they can do all year long," Presto said. "We want as many people as possible to get out of their cars and explore alternative methods of transportation. We at the district are trying to get 100 percent rate in alternative modes of transportation that week that includes carpooling, bicycling, taking the bus and staying in at lunch time."

Healthy Air Living partners with eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and San Joaquin Valley air basin portions of Kern to encourage Valley residents to participate in the week long events.

Turlock Community Fellowship, a faith-based organization, has participated in environmental friendly practices for several years.

"We have made a conscience effort to recycle for years," Michael Wright, pastor of the Turlock Community Fellowship, said. "We recycle office materials, for example any printer ink, cans and bottles. We are also trying to use green friendly window cleaner and things like that."

Both Valley residents and businesses are encouraged to take part in the week-long events that include bike-to-work days and a community forum on clean energy technology at UC Merced. Those who choose to take the Healthy Air Living pledge are eligible to win a Toyota Prius.

For more information on air quality and alternative transportation, educational activities and games, interactive discussion forums and emission calculators visit [www.healthyairliving.com](http://www.healthyairliving.com).

## **Bad air could delay major freeway projects**

BY JAMES BURGER and JAMES GELUSO, Californian staff writers  
Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, July 10, 2008

Dust storms that fouled Kern County's air in May could mean months of delay for two major Kern County freeway projects.

A project to widen Highway 46 from Holloway Road west to Highway 33 at Blackwells Corner will almost certainly be delayed for five months or more, said Ron Brummett, executive director of the Kern Council of Governments.

And the Westside Parkway in Bakersfield, a freeway that's to run west from a point near Highway 99 to Heath Road, might also be delayed if dickering over air quality standards goes on too long.

The Environmental Protection Agency, Brummett said, is worried the dust storms pushed the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District out of attainment with air pollution standards.

State air officials are being forced to delay a pollution analysis while EPA looks at the situation.

And KernCOG can't ask the state to release road-building money to a project until that analysis process is complete and blessed by the EPA, Brummett said.

The Highway 46 project - part of a multi-phase widening of the two-lane freeway from Highway 99 to San Luis Obispo County - was due to have a groundbreaking in January 2009 and a construction start in March, Brummett said.

Those dates will likely be delayed five months.

A second phase of the widening, from Kecks Road to the county line, was planned to follow the first phase and could be delayed as well.

Delays on the Westside Parkway are not as certain.

City of Bakersfield engineer Ted Wright said he doesn't expect the move to affect progress on the Westside Parkway. The first phase - extension of Mohawk Street across the Kern River to Rosedale Highway - is slated to be bid out in September, with construction starting around January.

The money for that is from the state, he said, not federal ones passed on through the state.

Joe Stramaglia of KernCOG said it is still possible the federal government could block the project when the city goes to the California Transportation Commission in August to ask for the \$69 million it needs to build the Mohawk Street extension.

If that happens, the Westside Parkway could face an even longer delay than Highway 46.

Brummett said the projects could face more than simple delays if the EPA rules that Kern County is out of containment with air pollution standards.

KernCOG would then have to revise its funding scheme to flow more money to low-pollution projects like transit. Brummett said it isn't likely such a re-drafting of road priorities will happen.

## **StanCOG keeps road tax moving**

### **Board asks county to put the half-cent measure on November election's ballot**

By GARTH STAPLEY

Modesto Bee, Thursday, July 10, 2008

With no buffer for dissent, transportation officials Wednesday kept a Stanislaus Countywide road tax chugging toward the November ballot.

Rules required approval from 11 of the 17 members of Stanislaus Council of Governments' policy board, composed of elected officials throughout the county, and only 11 attended Wednesday's meeting.

But no one spoke in opposition during a public hearing, and all 11 said "aye" at the appropriate moment.

Specifically, StanCOG members:

Approved an ordinance that would raise sales tax throughout the county by one-half of 1 percent, if two-thirds of voters countywide agree in November.

Formalized a request to county supervisors to schedule the vote.

Certified an environmental study required by state law for major projects.

The environmental impact report predicts that more transportation projects will accommodate more vehicles, causing more [air pollution and climate-changing greenhouse gases](#). Also, improved circulation could "induce future population growth," the study concludes.

A majority of voters in 2006 agreed with Measure K, a similar transportation measure. But that 58 percent approval fell short of the two-thirds mark.

This year's measure would raise about \$700 million in 20 years, officials say. A spending plan reserves \$350 million for local improvements and maintenance, \$343 million for three regional east-west corridors in the north, central and south parts of the county and \$7 million for administration.

Brochures outlining what people might expect from the road tax, depending on where they live, should be mailed next week to registered voters. A second wave would go out in a few weeks.

Representatives from the county and its nine cities endorsed the measure recently, all by unanimous votes.

"This is really a huge hurdle to get over," said StanCOG director Vince Harris.

Slowing down growth plan

Voting "yes" Wednesday were county supervisors Bill O'Brien, Dick Monteith, Jim DeMartini and Jeff Grover; Hughson City Councilman Henry Hesling; and mayors Farrell Jackson of Oakdale, John Fantazia of Newman, Becky Campo of Patterson, Anthony Cannella of Ceres, Chris Crifasi of Riverbank and Jim Ridenour of Modesto.

Absent were county Supervisor Tom Mayfield, Modesto Council members Janice Keating and Brad Hawn, Turlock Councilman Ted Howze, Waterford Councilman William Broderick and Ken Baxter of the California Department of Transportation, an ex officio member.

Also Wednesday, StanCOG members voted to slow down and take a good long look at a countywide growth vision now being developed with very little input from regular people, despite a battery of public workshops offered in two languages throughout the county.

"This is not at all a professional planning process," said Grover, claiming that a small number of people are imposing their will by attending multiple San Joaquin Valley Blueprint meetings sparsely attended by others.

StanCOG members agreed with Cannella to add another layer of public scrutiny by asking all nine city councils and the Board of Supervisors to sign off on preferred growth scenarios.

DeMartini said he was suspicious that state officials will somehow use visions developed by the valley's eight counties to steal local control of land-use decisions, despite numerous promises to the contrary. Blueprint and regional cooperation advocates say officials can learn much from each other and can plan more effectively if they know what others are doing.

"It's a flawed process at best," DeMartini said. "To me, this looks like nothing more than a state takeover of our local planning. They say it's not true but I don't believe it. We've been lied to over and over again."

Ridenour said state officials have threatened to withhold transportation money from regions that don't engage in the Blueprint process.

Stanislaus is among the last of the valley's eight counties to finish developing its growth scenario. The eight are expected to be melded into one in January.

## **Power Plant Ponderings**

By Jennifer Wadsworth

Tracy Press, Thursday, July 10, 2008

What would be one of California's three biggest power plants could still be built eight miles west of Tracy and a mile outside Mountain House, if state regulators approve an extension of the construction deadline, set for August.

Calpine Corp. asked the California Energy Commission in May to push that timeline back to 2011, because it had trouble lining up customers to buy the electricity it plans to generate through the proposed plant, according to the company's recent petition.

"They just had trouble financing it," commission spokesman Percy Della said. "The company doesn't have the money right now."

San Joaquin County Supervisors asked last month for an update on how plans have changed since the county first brought up its worries about the plant's pollution, water use and its proximity to Mountain House.

The 44-acre, \$500 million East Altamont Energy Center would light up 1 million homes, according to Calpine, which went bankrupt five years ago and recovered from its Chapter 11 filing earlier this year.

The power plant would sit just outside San Joaquin County in Alameda County on a swath of farmland and generate 1,100 megawatts of natural-gas-powered electricity.

Since San Joaquin lawmakers and locals got wind of the proposed plant seven years ago, the controversial generator has riled concerns about pollution, water use and public safety.

County supervisors are slated to vote on a resolution this month to oppose the plant's construction. Some supervisors argue that it would suck up water that could be used for farming, sit too close to schools and increase air pollution, among other things.

Since the beginning, Calpine has maintained that the new plant would actually generate 40 percent fewer emissions than old gas-powered plants.

Supervisors Ken Vogel and Leroy Ornellas — who represents Tracy — asked last month for more information about how the corporation would curb pollution before it voted for or against the project.

"It'd like to find out more about this," Vogel said, "beyond what I saw in the resolution."

a similar resolution seven years ago, when the power plant was first proposed for the Mountain House area along with another plant roughly the same size called the Tesla Power Plant. Tesla's permit to build expires next year.

Californians for Renewable Energy and Tracy activist-and-businessman Bob Sarvey called six years ago for the state Supreme Court to demand that the plants enact stricter pollution controls or just cancel construction.

The higher court never looked into the East Altamont project, and state regulators in 2003 gave Calpine the go-ahead to build, soon before the company halted construction on 33 other plants nationwide because of financial troubles.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District reached a settlement soon after, in which Calpine would pay \$1 million once construction started to replace diesel engines on Central Valley farms and buses. About \$600,000 of that amount was earmarked for Tracy.

Tracy was also slated to get \$250,000 after construction starts for a new fire engine and \$25,000 every year after for fire protection — in part to cope with the risk of having a massive power plant so close to city limits — under an agreement reached by Calpine, the city and Californians for Renewable Energy.

But that agreement's five years old now.

"Things have changed," Sarvey said, echoing what he wrote in a letter to the state energy commission last month.

The nonprofit, county supervisors and the local eight-county air district likewise want to renegotiate.

Sarvey also pointed out in his letter that the Mountain House population has significantly grown since the state agreed to the Calpine plans.

The air district on Wednesday also drafted a letter to the commission requesting a rewrite of the 5-year-old \$1 million agreement.

"As more than five years have passed without starting any construction, the (agreement) needs to be revisited," the letter reads.

Tracy and the district would likely get more money than promised in the last agreement, said Jim Swaney, who manages permits for the air district and helped draft the original settlement.

Because the power plant property lies in Alameda County, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District approved Calpine's now-expired air permit. But the San Joaquin air basin would be more affected by the plant's emissions, Swaney pointed out, which is why the settlement is so important, he said Wednesday.

"Since then, we've just learned more about pollution in the area and the plant's effects," he said. "We need to re-visit the agreement."

County supervisors will vote on the resolution to oppose the power plant's construction at a July 27 board meeting.

## **New rule bans burning wood some winter days**

Jane Kay, Chronicle Environment Writer  
S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, July 10, 2008

San Francisco -- Burning wood in the Bay Area's 1 million stoves and fireplaces will be banned on winter days when health officials forecast dirty air, under a new rule adopted Wednesday.

Air-quality regulators voted unanimously to enact the first mandatory controls on indoor residential wood-burning in the region to reduce fine particles swirling in the air. The microscopic pollutants are linked to lung and heart disease.

Under the new regulation, parts of which go into effect immediately, it is against the law to use fireplaces or stoves burning wood, pressed logs or pellets on days determined unhealthy by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

The bans will apply from November to February and will be posted on the district's Web site and advertised as Check-Before-You-Burn Days in the same way that Spare the Air Days are now publicized.

Up to 20 days each winter could be subject to burning bans, based on past levels of airborne smoke. Inspectors will follow up on complaints and warn first-time offenders. Those who continue ignoring the ban are subject to fines up to \$1,000 a day. Officials say they will likely impose much lower fines.

The ban had elicited hundreds of comments from the public, perhaps more than any other rule before the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

Strong opinions ranged from those who didn't think the government had the right to control activities in people's houses to those who begged the regulators to clamp down on smoky fires that blanket low-lying areas on foggy winter nights.

Some asked for exemptions for the use of pellet or government-certified stoves, and others wanted waivers in cases where wood provided the only heat. The latter exemption was granted for people who have no sources of heat other than wood-burning, or live in areas where natural gas or electricity is not available.

"We clarified the previously proposed regulation to allow for essential burning, which means for people who burn to stay warm in contrast to folks who burn for the ambience or entertainment," said Eric Pop, a district air-quality specialist who worked on the regulation.

Before the vote, the board heard additional testimony from doctors who treat asthmatics, people who have moved from areas where smoke hangs near the ground and others who compare wintertime smoke to the fallout of the wildfires now sweeping California.

Susan Goldsborough of Woodacre, who attended the meeting, particularly praised the part of the new rule that prohibits smoky chimneys year-round. "The chief enforcement officer pledged to me that the new regulations would be enforced, and that's our best chance to clean the air of wood smoke."

Vernon Huffman, manager of a ranch outside of San Anselmo, was disappointed in the final rule. He supported allowing the use of EPA-certified stoves during bad-air days. Offering that alternative as an incentive would ultimately improve air quality, he said.

The air reaches an unhealthy designation when there are large concentrations of fine particles of solids and liquid droplets measuring less than 2.5 microns in diameter --one-seventieth the width of a human hair. They can penetrate deep into the lungs and even enter tissue and organs, ending up in the bloodstream. The federal government set a new standard in 2006, deeming air unhealthy if amounts of fine particles surpassed 35 micrograms per cubic meter of air, averaged over 24 hours.

According to health officials, during the winter months and under certain weather conditions, wood-burning contributes up to one-third of total fine airborne particulate matter in the Bay Area and threatens health.

In recent years, studies have shown that mortality and hospital admissions related to lung and cardiovascular disease increase on days with high particulate air pollution. The EPA cites studies showing a link between exposure to particulates and increased respiratory symptoms, decreased lung function, aggravated asthma, irregular heartbeat and nonfatal heart attacks as well as development of chronic bronchitis.

Here are some provisions of the new rule:

- Limits excessive visible emissions from wood-burning at all times.
- Requires cleaner burning technology such as EPA-certified wood-burning devices, pellet stoves, low-mass fireplaces or masonry heaters in new construction or when the stoves are sold, resold or installed.
- Prohibits the burning of garbage, plastics, chemically treated wood, waste petroleum products and other inappropriate materials.

-- Requires labeling and disclosure of the moisture content on wood sold for use within the nine-county district, including instructions on how to dry the wood if it has a moisture content greater than 20 percent by weight. Sellers of seasoned firewood must properly label it as seasoned.

Fires used outdoor for residential cooking won't be regulated.

The Bay Area's rules follow similar measures taken in the San Joaquin Valley and Sacramento. The cities of Fremont, Gilroy, Los Gatos, Martinez, Mill Valley, Oakland, Rohnert Park, San Pablo and Union City have already cracked down.

### **Bay Area wood burning banned on bad nights**

In the S.F. Chronicle, Wednesday, July 9, 2008

San Francisco, CA (AP) --Air regulators in the San Francisco Bay area are banning the use of wood-burning stoves on winter nights when air pollution is particularly bad.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District approved a measure Wednesday that will force one million residents to go without their fireplaces for about 20 nights per winter.

People who use fireplaces or wood-burning stoves as their sole source of heat are exempt from the new rules.

Regulators say they will publicize the rules as "Spare the Air Tonight," similar to the district's "Spare the Air" days in summertime, when drivers are asked to take public transportation on high-ozone days.

The wood-burning ban takes effect in November and will last until February each year.

### **SSJID solar farm takes equivalent of 202 cars off road**

Dennis Wyatt, Managing Editor  
Manteca Bulletin Thurs., July 10, 2008

Smoke-laden skies aren't stopping South San Irrigation District on its relentless drive to maintain its status as a 100 percent green power generator with the goal of reducing energy costs across the board to those they serve.

The solar array farm that SSJID installed at the South County Surface Water Treatment plant near the base of Woodward Reservoir that it operates for the cities of Manteca, Lathrop and Tracy has been online since April 17.

As of Wednesday at 6 p.m. it has:

- generated enough electricity every day to power 88.8 homes.
- reduced pollution to such a degree that it is the same as taking 202.2 cars off California's roads every day.
- avoided greenhouse gasses so far to the tune of 459,721 pounds of carbon dioxide and 137 pounds of nitrogen oxide. A typical household generates 22,750 pounds of carbon dioxide a year.
- generated 7,592 kilowatt hours of electricity to date and was generating 633 kilowatts at 6 p.m. Wednesday.

And it is doing all that while essentially flat-lining energy costs to operate the treatment plant while avoiding buying electricity from PG&E that generates significant amount of power burning natural

gas and coal.

"It is generating electricity at a better level than we projected," said SSJID General Manager Jeff Shields.

The solar farm is being dedicated on Friday, July 18, at 9:30 a.m. adjacent to the surface water treatment plant at 5855 Dodds Road near Woodward Reservoir 16 miles northeast of Manteca.

Congressman Jerry McNerney, a leading advocate of solar power, will be the guest speaker.

The solar farm was designed to accommodate a megawatt of power to run the plant. The SSJID opted to go solar after being left at the mercy for a number of times by spotty - and expensive - PG&E power.

The solar project as it sits now locks in energy costs for the plant. When it is paid off, the cost of generating power goes to almost nothing. In addition, the water treatment plant customers - residents of Manteca, Lathrop, and Tracy - won't be subject to every increasing PG&E rates that will impact retail water costs.

The SSJID in the past has indicated if the laws change or if they takeover the PG&E retail system in Escalon, Manteca, and Ripon that is a good possibility the solar farm could be expanded to generate more clean power.

The SSSJID has a 100 percent portfolio of renewable green energy from hydro power it generate in partnership with the Oakdale Irrigation District on the Stanislaus River watershed, a Woodward Reservoir generator, and now the solar farm.

### **California Should Adopt San Joaquin Valley New Development Rule Statewide to Help Meet Global Warming Law Requirements, Study Shows Environmental Group Urges State Officials to Resist Industry Opposition to Rule Before Fresno Public Workshop on Law Implementation Plan**

StreetInsider.com, Wednesday, July 9, 2008

FRESNO, Calif., July 9 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A landmark regulation proven in the San Joaquin Valley to reduce air pollution from new development projects could help meet a state law requirement to dramatically cut global warming pollution statewide, according to a new peer-reviewed study released today.

The study, released a few days prior to a June 14 public workshop in Fresno by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) on its draft scoping plan for implementing the Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32), shows there are proven measures the state can use to capture more global warming pollution, while diversifying housing and transportation choices. The study affirms the value of the rule known as the Indirect Source Rule, adopted by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District in 2005.

"We can't afford to discount any effective tool to cut global warming pollution," said Kathryn Phillips, manager of the California Clean Air for Life Campaign for Environmental Defense Fund, which sponsored the study. "CARB officials must resist industry opposition to an indirect source rule and other proven land use measures that could cut millions of tons of greenhouse gas emissions statewide."

The new study, "Reducing Global Warming and Air Pollution: The Role of Green Development in California," (<[http://edf.org/documents/8046\\_ISR-CO2review-FINAL-070208.pdf](http://edf.org/documents/8046_ISR-CO2review-FINAL-070208.pdf)>) was prepared by Lawrence Frank and Company, Inc. (LFC). It focuses on a literature review of building and site design decisions and their connection to air pollution, including greenhouse gas emissions, and evaluates the value of the indirect source rule for reducing those emissions.

CARB's AB 32 draft scoping plan, released last week, notes that an indirect source rule is "under consideration" to cut California's carbon dioxide emissions by up to one million metric tons by 2020. However, the agency's plan stops short of including the rule among actions that must be adopted and applied to get emission reductions around the state.

The Indirect Source Rule (ISR) was adopted by the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District in December 2005 and took effect in March 2006. It requires development projects that exceed size thresholds to reduce nitrogen oxides (NOx) and particulate matter (PM) during construction (20 percent of NOx and 45 percent of PM10 from construction equipment exhaust) and after occupancy (33 percent of NOx and 50 percent of PM over 10 years of operation). Mitigation measures may include low-emissions construction equipment, buildings designed with energy efficiency measures, building and site design measures, and a mitigation fee.

A statewide developer trade association, the California Building Industry Association, has tried to prevent local air districts from adopting and implementing indirect source rules and unsuccessfully challenged the San Joaquin Valley rule in court. The group has also worked to limit any application of the rule to meet the state's global warming pollution reduction goals.

"This new study should convince CARB and the governor to follow the lead of a Fresno County Superior Court judge who rejected the California Building Industry Association's efforts last February to require developers to cut pollution when they build housing," concluded Phillips. "The next draft of the scoping plan should include a clear path for applying the indirect source rule without delay. There's no time left to waste."

The new study concludes:

1. An indirect source rule can effectively be applied to reduce greenhouse gas emissions such as carbon dioxide (CO2).
2. There is a measurable link between new development and vehicle-based (indirect source) air pollution.
3. Because of the link between land use decisions and travel behavior, developers can play a role in reducing indirect source pollution from vehicle travel.
4. The indirect source rule is an appropriate mechanism to reduce pollution created by new development projects.

Environmental Defense Fund, a leading national nonprofit organization, represents more than 500,000 members. Since 1967, Environmental Defense Fund has linked science, economics, law and innovative private-sector partnerships to create breakthrough solutions to the most serious environmental problems. For more information, visit [www.edf.org](http://www.edf.org).

SOURCE Environmental Defense Fund

### **Eco study OK'ed for bullet train**

By Erik N. Nelson, Oakland Tribune

In the Tri-Valley Herald Thurs. July 10, 2008

SAN FRANCISCO — The \$42 billion to \$45 billion enterprise to create the nation's first high-speed rail network reached a major milestone Wednesday as the California High-Speed Rail Authority's governing board approved an environmental impact assessment of the 800-mile system's entry into the Bay Area.

The decision is seen as the end of years of rancor over the panel's original choice — affirmed Wednesday in unanimous vote — of a route that comes up from Southern California through the San Joaquin Valley, then cuts westward through Merced and Santa Clara Counties and stops in Gilroy before continuing to stops in San Jose and San Francisco's Transbay Terminal.

The decision also signaled the end of hopes that the route might go through the Livermore Valley and the Altamont Pass through eastern Alameda County. The authority's plan is to provide unspecified improvements on the Altamont route that would speed up and perhaps electrify existing rail access such as the lumbering diesel-powered Altamont Commuter Express and perhaps even spur the extension of BART to Livermore.

The next step toward building the train system would be the passage of the \$10 billion Proposition 1 bond measure on the Nov. 4 ballot, which would pay nearly a third of the cost of the system's "spine" from Anaheim to San Francisco. High-speed rail officials promise that the remaining money will come from private investment and federal high-speed rail legislation that Congress is now considering.

While a four-year-old version of the ballot measure, delayed by state leaders before the 2004 and 2006 elections, is set for the fall vote, much of its support hinges on wholesale changes contained in a bill now going through the state Senate.

Before the vote, board Chairman Quentin Kopp read passages from the environmental report that described problems with the Altamont route. Those included the environmental, engineering and funding challenge of building a new rail bridge across the Bay near the Dumbarton Bridge and adding time to the main rail line's central attraction: A 2½-hour trip between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

At a board hearing Tuesday, the last of 11 on the environmental study, a few supporters of the alternative had their final say.

"When I look at Pacheco, I think this is going to generate huge amounts of sprawl," said Len Conly, a Berkeley public transit advocate.

Altamont backers urged the board to "follow the lights" of a nighttime satellite photo of the Bay Area, which glowed with pre-existing development through the Livermore Valley and around Tracy, while the Pacheco route was largely dark. Building through Altamont, they argued, would serve existing residents, bring more riders to the system and not foster the development of farmland into subdivisions.

But they were drowned out by a parade of Pacheco Pass supporters, led by San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, who noted that even the management of San Francisco International Airport supported the program as a way of reducing a glut of inefficient, short-haul flights to Southern California.

Even some who had misgivings about the choice of route said that debate needed to end so the project could move forward.

"We feel a great deal of urgency in getting this project going forward as gas prices keep going up and we need to reduce our global warming pollution," said Emily Rusch, an advocate for the California Public Interest Research Group.

The group has organized hundreds of college students to campaign for the project this summer, although it has yet to take a position on the ballot measure.

### **Key developing nations reject G-8 climate plan**

By TOM RAUM, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, Madera Trib. and other papers Wednesday, July 9, 2008

TOYAKO, Japan (AP) -- China, India and other energy-guzzling developing nations on Wednesday rejected key elements of a global warming strategy embraced by President Bush and leaders of wealthy nations. And the U.N's top climate official dismissed the G-8 goals as insignificant.

The sharp criticism emerged at the close of a summit here of the Group of Eight industrial powers that was dominated by the issue of how to address the warming Earth. The G-8 leaders invited their counterparts from fast-growing, pollution-emitting nations to sideline talks on the topic, but the session merely showcased a widening rift over the best approach.

It was the final G-8 summit of Bush's presidency and he said "significant progress" had been made on fighting global warming when the leaders agreed to slash greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2050 and to insist that developing nations be part of any new international agreement.

"In order to address climate change, all major economies must be at the table, and that's what took place," Bush said before boarding Air Force One to return to Washington.

The "major economies" are the world's 16 largest-emitting nations, accounting for 80 percent of the world's air pollution. The expanded meeting that included all of them was the first time their leaders had sat down together for climate discussions.

But it ended with only a vague reference in their final declaration to a long-term goal for reducing global emissions and a pledge for rich and poor countries to work together. Only a few of the emerging powers — Indonesia, Australia and South Korea — agreed to back the 50 percent by 2050 reduction target.

The five main developing nations — China, India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa, who together represent 42 percent of the world's population — issued a statement explaining their split with the G-8 over its emissions-reduction goals. They said they rejected the notion that all should share in the 50-percent target, since it is wealthier countries that have created most of the environmental damage up to now.

"It is essential that developed countries take the lead in achieving ambitious and absolute greenhouse gas emissions reductions," said the statement. Chinese President Hu Jintao went a step further in separate remarks. While acknowledging that developing nations must act, he said "developed countries should make explicit commitments to continue to take the lead in emissions reduction."

"China's central task now is to develop the economy and make life better for the people," he said. "... China's per capita emission is relatively low."

Yvo de Boer, who leads United Nations negotiations to forge a new climate change treaty, also challenged Bush's optimistic assessment of the meetings.

"I don't find the outcome very significant," de Boer told The Associated Press in an interview in the Netherlands. He said the target for reducing carbon emissions by 2050 mentioned no base line, was not legally binding and was open to vastly different interpretations.

Bush called the gathering in this resort city on the mountainous northern Japanese island of Hokkaido "very productive" on a range of issues. But he returned home with a mixed bag, reflecting a president with fewer than 200 days left in his term, low approval ratings at home and waning influence abroad.

The G-8 countries — the U.S., Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy, Canada and Russia — pledged to follow through on commitments made earlier to increase global economic aid to Africa by \$50 billion from the 2005 level by 2010, with half of it to go to Africa. Bush had complained that

G-8 partners were not living up to a pledge they originally made at the 2006 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland.

He also won support for a deal for using international food reserves to help the poorest countries cope with soaring grain prices.

And summit partners heeded Bush's plea to do more to help fight AIDS, malaria and infectious childhood diseases, particularly in Africa.

Bush also played a big role in getting a strong G-8 statement designed to increase pressure on negotiators to resume long-stalled global talks to ease trade barriers.

On Zimbabwe, G-8 participants rejected the legitimacy of Robert Mugabe's presidential election in what has been branded a sham by the international community. They proposed a special UN envoy and said they would take financial and other steps against those "responsible for violence." But the statement stopped short of endorsing the U.S.-sponsored resolution now before the U.N. Security Council that proposes to sanction Zimbabwe and freeze the assets of Mugabe.

The summit participants did little that would help bring down record oil and gasoline prices in the short or immediate-term, nor to support the tumbling U.S. dollar, a six-year slide that has hurt most of their economies as well. Then again, Bush didn't ask for their help in propping up the dollar, despite repeating his support-for-a-strong-dollar mantra.

Bush also struck out a few times on the sidelines of the summit.

He was rebuffed by Russia's new president, Dmitry Medvedev, in his efforts to win Moscow's support — or at least neutrality — on his proposal to base parts of a U.S. missile-defense system in nations of Eastern Europe that used to be part of the Soviet bloc.

They met for an hour and vowed closer cooperation on a range of issues. But Medvedev later told reporters that his chat with Bush yielded "no particular progress" on issues dividing the countries, particularly the missile shield. "We will be studying countermeasures," if the U.S. goes ahead with such plans, Medvedev said without elaborating.

"We will continue to have a dialogue with the Russians on this matter," said White House national security spokesman Gordon Johndroe.

Bush did score a few wins in the climate-control debate. In addition to drawing reluctant developing nations into the process, he got fellow G-8 participants to pledge to annually dedicate \$10 billion to technology research and development.

*Associated Press writer Arthur Max contributed to this report from Amsterdam.*

## **Division at G-8 Over Climate Goal**

By Sheryl Gay Stolberg

N.Y. Times, Thursday, July 10, 2008

RUSUTSU, Japan — Rich nations and emerging powers on Wednesday declared climate change "one of the great global challenges of our time." But they set no short-term goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, with the largest developing countries demanding more action by wealthy nations before moving.

The declaration grew out of an unprecedented meeting that brought together 16 nations, rich and poor, and the European Union on global warming. The session, organized by President Bush, took place here on the northernmost Japanese island of Hokkaido, where leaders of the Group of

8 pledged Tuesday to “move toward a carbon-free society” by seeking to halve worldwide emissions of heat-trapping gases by 2050.

But a group of the largest emerging economies, led by India and China, now the leading source of greenhouse gases, refused to sign on to that goal. They are holding out until rich nations like the United States take more aggressive steps to cut pollution over the next decade.

That fissure prevented the 16 countries from “reaching any meaningful understanding” in the special session on Wednesday, said Alden Meyer, who is tracking the talks for the Union of Concerned Scientists. Others said the declaration was important at least symbolically and could set a course for action. Phillip E. Clapp, of the Pew Environment Group, said the declaration helped prepare the way for the next American president to grapple with climate change when the United Nations negotiates a binding treaty in Copenhagen in 2009.

“It is good that the developing countries have embraced the principle of a global target that they will participate in,” Mr. Clapp said. “It would have been better if the United States and the other G-8 countries would have been willing to step up to the plate and make a strong commitment about what they would do over the next 10 years.”

Early in his presidency, Mr. Bush rejected the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, which set emissions limits, saying the cuts would hurt the American economy and the limits did not apply to large developing countries. Since last year, he has pushed an effort to cut emissions that would include all “major economies.”

The meeting on Wednesday did not produce a long-term emissions goal accepted by all those countries, which was the Bush administration’s aim since announcing the “major economies” effort in May 2007. Mr.

Bush still claimed success. “In order to address climate change, all major economies must be at the table,” he said before returning to Washington. “And that’s what took place today.”

For Mr. Bush, who is trying to salvage his legacy on climate change after years of international pressure to move more aggressively, the back-to-back declarations were an important step.

“This is an enormous movement for a man who questioned the science on global warming, who was opposed to international treaties and who was opposed to international targets,” Mr. Clapp said. Although the meeting put the United States on record for the first time as embracing a specific long-term goal, environmentalists complained that the declaration by the Group of 8 did not go far enough. “Major economies meeting turns into major embarrassment meeting for G-8,” the WWF, formerly the World Wildlife Fund, said in a statement.

Together, the countries that issued the declaration are responsible for more than 80 percent of the greenhouse gas emissions that scientists have said are warming the planet. But rich and poor nations are disputing how to set targets, and who should bear most of the responsibility.

The starting point for the Group of 8 plan to halve emissions by 2050 is also in dispute. Advocates say the cuts should be pegged to 1990 emissions levels, but Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda of Japan said Wednesday that the starting point would be “the recent situation.”

The Group of 8 declaration did not mention a base line. But Mr. Fukuda said, “I think we have everyone’s understanding on this.”

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Thursday, July 10, 2008:](#)

**Keep high speed rail moving**

California's long-proposed bullet train survived the Senate Transportation and Housing Committee last week, maintaining its place on the Nov. 4 ballot in the form of a \$10 billion bond measure.

High speed rail critic Roy Ashburn, the Republican state senator from Bakersfield, voiced valid concerns about the bond measure, but in the end, state senators did the right thing in advancing the project by approving AB 3034, which refines the measure in part to win more voter support.

The \$10 billion bond is necessary to keep the 800-mile project - which will cost between \$42 billion and \$45 billion - alive. Now more than ever, with fuel prices making air and highway travel increasingly expensive, California - a leader in so many other ways - needs to set the standard.

Ashburn demanded that the High Speed Rail Authority put together a new business plan, and the committee agreed - although it won't be ready until early October. That would be too late for voters who cast early vote-by-mail ballots to consider.

Ashburn said that was grounds to remove the existing 5-year-old bond measure from the ballot.

But if the 800-mile Anaheim-to-San Francisco line (via Tehachapi, Bakersfield and the Central Valley) is to be completed within the lifetime of middle-aged Californians, it needs to keep moving ahead - as quickly and efficiently as possible.

"The can has been kicked down the road from ballot to ballot to ballot," Sen. Christine Kehoe, D-San Diego, told the committee, referring to removal of the bond measure from the 2004 and 2006 ballots.

The people-moving efficiency and air-quality potential of the project demand California keep making progress on the project.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Thursday, July 10, 2008:](#)

### **Our L.A. good neighbor**

Give the City of Los Angeles a big hand for seeking innovative ways to get rid of its garbage. But why does it have to involve *-yet again-* a scheme to dump it on Kern County?

The city has launched a pilot project in North Central and South Los Angeles to recycle food waste - table scraps - by mixing it into the green-waste cans.

An estimated eight to 20 pounds of food garbage per household each week could be diverted from the city's landfills and into the yard waste composting stream.

Under the pilot program, 8,700 homes would be given a two-gallon, covered kitchen pail, according to the *Los Angeles Daily News*. As the pail gets filled during the week, the resident would mix the scraps into the container holding yard trimmings.

*Now here's where it gets interesting.*

Los Angeles Councilman Tony Cardenas said he supports the concept, but has concerns if the program goes citywide. Cardenas' Northeast Valley district is home to many of the city's green-waste processing (composting) plants. He's worried his constituents might protest the smelly garbage-laden yard clippings being taken to plants in his district.

"Look, I'm sensitive to the fact that when they do that, there's a potential impact on the community," Cardenas said in the newspaper report.

Not to worry. During the pilot program, the smelly brew of table scraps and yard waste will be trucked to a composting facility south of Bakersfield.

Cardenas and his Los Angeles City Council colleagues didn't sound a peep about being concerned that there could be a "potential impact" on Kern County residents from the smell.

Another example of Los Angeles' good-neighbor policy.

[Modesto Bee Editorial, Thursday, July 10, 2008](#)

### **SHORT TAKE: It's a sad irony that the air's too bad for biking**

<http://www.modbee.com/local/story/172379.html> There's nothing funny about this week's temperatures and smoke, but there is a certain irony that the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District had to cancel its Bike to Work promotion day, intended to relieve smog, because it was unhealthy for people to breathe outside. Obviously, the cancellation was the right decision, but bicycling to work is also a good choice. After the worst of the smoke clears -- by next week, we hope -- we strongly encourage more people to try two-wheeled transportation. Much of this week's haze can be blamed on fires, but typically the pollution is the result of vehicle emissions. And we're collectively responsible for those. For more information, go to [www.healthyairliving.com](http://www.healthyairliving.com).

[N.Y. Times editorial, Thursday, July 10, 2008:](#)

### **Good Intentions, Vague Promises**

This week's summit meeting of major industrialized nations in Japan yielded two important firsts on global warming. For once, the Bush administration was not in full foot-dragging mode, joining in a pledge to halve global greenhouse gases by midcentury. And the big emerging nations, including China and India, agreed to long-range (if unspecified) cuts in emissions.

For all that good news, summits are usually about vague promises and good intentions, and this one was no different. The final agreement establishes no interim goals that would require prompt and meaningful investments in cleaner energy. Many scientists believe that cuts of at least 25 percent in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 are necessary to prevent emissions from reaching a point of no return. And as the South Africans dyspeptically but accurately observed, without short-term targets the long-term goal is an empty slogan.

Nor should anyone put too much store in the promises from the emerging countries.

China and the others made it clear that mature industrial economies like the United States and Europe — whose per capita emissions greatly exceed those of the developing world and who have contributed the most to the man-made emissions already in the atmosphere — must do most of the heavy lifting. They also warned that they could not move forward without significant capital investment from the West.

This was tough talk but, as the industrialized nations conceded, not without a certain historical justice. Unfortunately, without the full participation of China, India, Brazil and other fast-growing economies, there is no hope of stopping and reversing global warming.

China may have already passed the United States as the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. And according to some calculations, the world's rich countries could shut down their carbon dioxide emissions entirely and still not keep atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases from reaching unacceptably dangerous levels.

Last December, the world's nations, large and small, agreed in Bali to negotiate a new and comprehensive global treaty by the end of 2009 to replace the Kyoto Protocol. As the Japan summit suggests, this will not be easy. But at least the biggest emitters seem willing to sit down in the same room.

The United States must finally step forward. Much has been made of President Bush's plodding evolution on climate change — from denial to acceptance to, finally, vague pledges to help — but the truth is, the Bush years have been wasted years.

Until the United States is willing to make an unambiguous commitment to reducing America's emissions, with clear targets and timetables, the rest of the world will keep finding excuses not to do the same. The next president and the next Congress must provide that leadership.

[Lodi News Sentinel Letter to the Editor, Thursday, July 10, 2008](#)

### **Is there really a difference in fees?**

Starting in July of this year the DMV Smog Abatement Fee increases from \$12 to \$20. Sounds reasonable, doesn't it? But, just what is this fee and why is it charged?

When a new car is sold in California it is required to meet or exceed the state's emissions control laws. Happily for new car owners for the first six years of ownership their cars do not need to make the bi-annual visits to one of those smog testing facilities. Yet for each of those first six years this little fee is added to the registration costs for those new vehicles. Smog Abatement Fee (SAF) defined: "The Smog Abatement Fee is the annual \$20 fee that must be paid upon registration renewal in lieu of the bi-annual smog inspection." What this means is that because new car drivers are not required to pay for smog testing their vehicle every "two" years (because it is assumed that these vehicles are not violating any smog emissions laws), they are hit with this fee until they must begin visiting a facility to test for smog problems. So, what is really happening is this — because new car owners enjoy not having to pay for the "certificate" that is generated when a car passes a smog test (although we never actually see this certificate anymore; it is electronically transmitted to the DMV computer), the State of California still exacts its pound of flesh by charging \$20 for something that is not required.

More ridiculous however, is the owners of automobiles older than six years need only pay the smog test fee every two years; those of us with new cars less than six years old get to pay this SAF "each" year. Just when do we stand up against this incessant pummeling by the government after our money? These "fees," "surcharges," "levies" and other costs add up quickly. I certainly don't mind paying my share — but to be required to pay one fee because I don't have to pay a different fee is moronic and immoral.

I've written to Alan Nakanishi requesting that he look into this matter before he leaves the State Assembly next year. I'm not holding my breath.

Jerome Kinderman, Lodi

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, July 10, 2008:](#)

### **Don't punish valley for bad air**

The sweeping smoke from wildfires in the north is clear evidence that the real culprit for the accumulation of smog year-round in the southern tip of the San Joaquin Valley is the smog produced by cities such as San Francisco, San Jose, Sacramento, etc., in the north.

Hence, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District should convince these cities to strictly control smog instead of imposing restrictions such as fireplace and lawnmower operation in the southern valley.

SAJJAN SINGH BAJWA, Porterville

[Letters to the Fresno Bee, Thursday, July 10, 2008:](#)

### **'Sky is not falling'**

Laura Wass [letter July 2] wants to "ban" fireworks as does The Bee's Editorial Board. The rationale for this ban is a typical liberal smoke screen: bad air, fires and burn victims, all of which could be avoided if we just did away with fireworks.

I am guessing that both would also approve of a gun ban, fireplace ban and barbecue (charcoal) ban. They probably don't want to drill offshore or in Alaska for oil, and don't approve of nuclear power. Well, according to The Bee's own report July 6, there were no fireworks-caused fires

reported in the city of Fresno, no change in air quality, no reports of emergency rooms becoming overwhelmed with burn victims. In other words, the sky is not falling.

Nor will the sky fall if we use our fireplaces, cook on our barbecues, keep our guns, drill for oil and build nuclear power plants. I believe our Founding Fathers intended to create a nation of individual freedoms not restrictions. Unfortunately, individuals like the Editorial Board members and Ms. Wass are trying to restrict mine.

*Kenneth Farr, Fresno*

### **Leave fireworks alone, go after leaf blowers**

What is it with the reactionary attitudes in our Valley? For one day people want to celebrate the birth of our nation and the air gets a little extra particulate matter.

Why don't they react the same way to leaf blowers operated by gardeners daily throughout the Valley? I believe they contribute far more particles to pollution than fireworks.

Why don't the city or the county mandate that all leaf blowers run on electricity and not blow, but vacuum up debris? Not only would this reduce pollution from gasoline engines, but would also create a good neighbor policy, because debris would not be blown back and forth between properties.

This is a long-term, proactive solution instead of canceling Fourth of July celebrations. Next thing you know we will not be allowed to travel on holidays just because others can't and it adds to the particulate matter index.

*Bill Long, Fresno*