

City Plans to Sue County

Written by John Saiz

Patterson Irrigator, Tuesday, May 13, 2008

The Patterson City Council has unanimously decided to sue Stanislaus County and its potential partner in developing the Crows Landing Air Facility, Sacramento-based PCCP West Park LLC.

Council members announced their decision Friday evening following a special closed-session meeting.

The suit responds to the county board of supervisors' April 22 decision to extend its partnership with West Park for another year. The council has consistently opposed the developer's plans.

"It's not terribly surprising," County Counsel John Doering said.

At the April 22 meeting, the City Council's legal representative, Steve Herum, told supervisors it would violate state law to enter into the proposed agreement with West Park, because a thorough environmental impact review had not yet been conducted. The county's legal representative disagreed and assured the board it would be on stable legal ground if it extended the agreement.

Supervisors voted 4-1 in favor of moving forward with West Park's plans. West Side representative Jim DeMartini cast the lone dissenting vote.

"There's a lack of attention to our true concerns," Patterson Mayor Becky Campo said. "It wasn't an easy decision, but it was unanimous."

The council and DeMartini have been constant critics of the project since it was proposed more than a year ago. West Park's plan is to transform the defunct military base at Crows Landing into a 7.5-square-mile industrial center connected to the Port of Oakland by rail.

Opponents have said it would destroy thousands of acres of productive farmland, impose increased rail and road traffic on the West Side and imperil local air quality. Proponents counter that the industrial park would provide about 37,000 jobs to a growing county and could improve the Central Valley's overall air quality.

Herum said the April 22 decision by the supervisors amounted to a "binding" agreement. Under the California Environmental Quality Act, an environmental impact report must be conducted before any such agreement is struck, he said.

"The project is far enough along," he said.

The county's attorney said he had not had a chance to review the council's announcement. He added that he hopes to continue working with the council.

"We're somewhat disappointed that Patterson has chosen litigation," Doering said. "But, regardless of all that, we will continue to have outreach."

West Park's lead developer Gerry Kamilos echoed that notion.

"We're going to continue the dialogue," Kamilos said.

The council expects to have the suit filed before the end of the week.

Monitoring the air

More days will be named 'unhealthful' under new labeling system

By David Castellon

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, May 14, 2008

The number of Valley days dubbed "unhealthful" because of high ozone levels will no doubt rise in the year ahead - but that may be a good thing.

Earlier this month, the Environmental Protection Agency changed its grading system for "good," "moderate" and "unhealthful" air days. Under the new system, days that previously would have

earned the "moderate" label will be slapped with the more serious one, alerting residents to potential danger.

Before the change, the eight-hour presence of between 85 and 104 particles per billion of ozone was required for an "unhealthy for sensitive groups" announcement. Now, the standard is 76 and 95 parts per billion.

"That's good for a lot of patients," said Dr. Sudeep Singh, an allergist in Visalia for 15 years.

The EPA issues a daily Air Quality Index, listing air-quality levels for communities across the country. Those with asthma, allergies and other air-sensitivity issues can look to see whether they should avoid walking, jogging, gardening, sports and other outdoor activities.

Check the index

Singh encourages patients to check the index every day in newspapers or online, as high amounts of ozone can irritate their conditions.

"They will have a better awareness what happens outside, and then they should plan their activities accordingly," Singh said.

The Times-Delta includes the projected AQI levels in its daily weather report.

Schools across the county also check the AQI, which can affect student and teacher activities. For example, "sensitive" students and adults are encouraged to avoid outdoor activities, including physical education, on "moderate" and "unhealthful" air days, while on hazardous air days it's recommend that everyone avoid outdoor activities, according to the Visalia Unified School District.

The method of measuring ozone has not changed. Machines positioned throughout the Valley, including one atop a North Court Street building in Visalia, suck in air and measure various particles as they hit filters, said Stephen Shaw, supervising air quality specialist for San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Similar machines are located near the entrance to Sequoia National Park and on Lookout Peak inside the park. There are plans to install another machine in the Porterville area within a year, Shaw said.

"We find that the dirtiest [air quality] areas of Tulare County are often in the national park," he said.

Ozone - an odorless, colorless gas that can irritate the lungs, nose and eyes - forms when hydrocarbons from evaporating gas, drying paint, solvents and other items combine in the air with nitrogen oxides from engine combustion and sunlight.

The EPA changed its grading system for ozone because recent studies show human health damage occurs at lower levels of ozone than was previously understood, Shaw said. But while the AQI might inspire some people to avoid some activities on "moderate" or "unhealthful" air days, Singh warned that ozone's not the only thing people with breathing issues should consider.

The AQI doesn't factor in mold, pollen, wind stirring up dust or the effects sudden temperature changes can have in irritating lungs, sinuses and allergies, he said.

Truckers feel the squeeze

By Gerald Carroll

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Tuesday, May 13, 2008

Jim Ganduglia sounded more like a revival preacher than the owner of a major trucking company. But instead of biblical Armageddon, he was prophesying another type of apocalypse - the end of California's trucking industry.

"Look around, guys," Ganduglia said to about 300 truckers and truck-company owners Dec. 15 at an emergency meeting at E.M. Tharp's Peterbilt dealership and parts store near Porterville. "By 2014, the state of California wants to see all of this, all of these trucks, gone. Even the new ones."

On an overhead projector, Ganduglia showed a photo collage of the 27 drayage trucks - those who pull large cargo trailers, or massive flatbeds - he owns through his Fresno-based firm, Ganduglia Trucking.

"This is my fleet today," Ganduglia said.

Then, he showed the next slide, blank, with all the truck photos removed.

"This is my fleet in 2014, if the state of California has its way," Ganduglia said.

Standing beside a brand new Peterbilt truck that might go for as much as \$114,000, Ganduglia said: "Even this truck is gone by 2014. The state wants to take all trucks 7 years old and older off the freeways of California."

Bruce Greer, general manager of E.M. Tharp, acknowledged that the resale value of his current used-truck lineup would plummet to almost nothing if the state goes through with its plan - set for passage in October 2008 - to phase out older, more polluting trucks in favor of newer, more expensive rigs.

The state air board's emissions plans have run into considerable opposition at the federal level, with the EPA coming out against such extreme guidelines.

However, the state is pressing forward to get the old trucks off the road - much sooner than truckers or their suppliers say they can accommodate.

"We are familiar with the difficulties the trucking industry will likely have in adhering to these new guidelines," said Patricia Rey

of the air board. "The older equipment, though, puts out uncontrolled amounts of [diesel] pollution" that ends up collecting in such areas as the Central Valley.

"There are still a lot of unanswered questions," said Greer, whose truck-selling arm of his business would benefit from new-truck sales as the new guidelines unfolded. Greer added that sales to out-of-state trucking companies - and even foreign trucking firms from places such as Mexico, China or India, where clean-air standards are very low or nonexistent - would be unaffected, or could skyrocket. But even that has its downside, Ganduglia said.

"The state also wants to block any truck that doesn't comply with these new emissions standards from even entering the state," he said. "Can you imagine the lines of trucks being checked at the state borders? It's ridiculous and unenforceable."

Ganduglia said diesel-fume pollution from big rigs has been reduced by 98 percent since 1976, and that the state is "going overboard" trying to reel in the final 2 percent.

Ron Faulkner, owner of Tulare-based Faulkner Trucking, has 27 trucks in his fleet - the same as Ganduglia. All are threatened, because none is new.

"My whole fleet is going to be wiped out," Faulkner said. "And see that independent operator over there?" Faulkner said, pointing to one of the seven independent drivers he hires on a contract basis. "He's done."

Faulkner has already installed soot traps and a number of other devices on his trucks, and they have all been legally cleared in state smog tests.

"What else are we expected to do?"

State regulators, though, are simply following federal directives, said state Assemblyman Bill Maze, R-Visalia.

"If these guidelines aren't met, then California loses federal highway dollars," said Maze, who is sympathetic to the truckers' concerns, but said there was nothing the state could do about the new rules.

Even advocates for clean air are, strangely, siding with the truckers on this latest push.

"A smog-check audit [using existing laws] would cut toxic emissions by half," said Charlie Peters of Clean-Air Performance Professionals, which lobbies the state on behalf of shops that do smog inspections on cars and trucks. Such an audit would ensure that older cars and trucks are kept off highways without any more new laws, Peters said.

None of this helps part-time, independent truckers like John Stewart of Visalia, who just spent \$25,000 buying a 1994 Peterbilt rig, and \$15,000 more refitting it with computerized equipment to help reduce fuel consumption.

"I thought with the computer I would be all right," Stewart said. "Turns out I'm not," and his truck would be targeted as early as 2010 with elimination from California roads.

Hopefully, new regulations continue to protect "historic vehicles," such as an exotic collection of vintage, fully restored farm tractors owned by Stewart.

Wind fans flames at Ceres recycling plant

By Rosalio Ahumada

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, May 14, 2008

CERES -- Firefighters spent most of Tuesday afternoon putting out smoldering fires at a recycling plant where a blaze erupted earlier in the day hurling a thick plume of black smoke into the air and torching large piles of paper, plastic, cardboard and 10 acres of grass in a nearby field.

The fire didn't damage any structures or cause any injuries, Ceres Fire Battalion Chief Bryan Hunt said.

The fire started about 10:30 a.m., Hunt said, in a pile of paper on the north end of Bonzi Recycling LLC at 2070 Morgan Road, just north of East Whitmore Avenue.

The business experienced a similar fire in September 2006, when a piece of wire scraping along concrete sparked a blaze that burned several tons of paper and plastic products at the plant.

Strong winds pushed Tuesday's fire southeast beyond the plant's boundaries onto a grass field, threatening businesses along Rockefeller Drive. Fire crews stopped the flames within several feet of reaching the commercial property.

Hunt said employees initially tried to put out the fire themselves with a water hose and extinguishers, but the wind spread embers.

"The wind spread the fire and the embers not only into the different bins (of recyclable materials) but also to the adjacent property," Hunt said. "It just carried the embers right into the grass."

He said about 40 firefighters spent the next two hours containing the blaze. Police closed Whitmore as firefighters worked to stop the grass fire from spreading. The street was open to traffic about 2 p.m.

Morgan, however, remained closed between Rockefeller and Whitmore until Tuesday evening.

At least 15 firefighting vehicles were at the scene, including some that are used to battle wildfires. Hunt said the biggest obstacle was the wind pushing the flames around.

"Had it been a calm day, it wouldn't have been as bad," Hunt said. "Mother Nature always throws you a curve ball."

He said fire investigators had examined the site of the blaze, but the cause of the fire had not been determined. He did not have an estimate of how much recyclable material was burned Tuesday or the cost of the fire damage.

Fire officials said the blaze that burned materials at the plant in 2006 started when a forklift moving a bale of recycled newspaper had a wire hanging from beneath its load. The wire scraped the concrete and caused sparks that ignited the paper as the bale was moved next to other bales.

Like the 2006 fire, Tuesday's paper fire quickly spread to the other materials at the plant and [sent black smoke billowing into the air](#).

Management officials from Bonzi Recycling were at the plant Tuesday afternoon, but they declined to comment for this report. They said they would comment publicly after the company conducted its investigation into the fire.

Hunt said several fire departments assisted Ceres Fire Department in battling the blaze including Modesto, Salida, Turlock, Mountain View, Stanislaus Consolidated, Keyes, Burbank-Paradise and Hughson.

About 5 p.m., several fire crews remained at the recycling plant searching for hot spots as a large pool of water collected on the south end of the plant.

An employee used a bulldozer to pull apart large piles of paper at the plant as three firefighters hosed down the smoldering contents. Five-foot flames in the center of the property were visible from the customer entrance.

"You have to drag the materials out to get to where the fire is," Hunt said. "Sometimes, where the smoking is coming from and where the fire actually is are two different places."

Air Quality District unveils new fleet for Bike-to-Work Day Legal, liability concerns shows cycling has graduated from recreation to a serious mode of transportation, advocates say

By Erik N. Nelson and Denis Cuff, Staff Writers

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Wednesday, May 14, 2008

It seemed preposterous that the Bay Area's smog control agency was telling its employees not to ride bikes on the job.

It was ridiculed on Bay Area blogs, but the Bay Area Air Quality Management District had a serious explanation: Insurance wouldn't cover bike accidents on the job.

As the East Bay's 15th Bike-to-Work Day dawns Thursday, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District will officially resolve its bicycling quandary. It will unveil its new fleet of bikes and helmets — including a fold-up bike to take on BART during peak hours — to satisfy its insurance company that it has control over bike safety on the job.

What the puzzling episode illustrates is more than an abundance of legal caution. To the minds of bicycling advocates, it shows that cycling may have graduated from mere recreation to a serious mode of transportation.

The organizers of Bike-to-Work Day were compelled to purchase \$5 million worth of liability insurance for their monthlong Team Bike Challenge, which partners new, experienced and well-known bike riders to see how many days they can ride to work in May.

In Emeryville, police are cracking down and issuing tickets to bicyclists who run red lights or stop signs. One area environmental advocate said he received a \$300-plus fine after being ticketed recently.

"I dream of the day when police will pull over a kid, pull over an adult or a bike and say, 'You have all the same responsibilities, you have all the same rights, and you should have to pay the same penalties,'" said Robert Raburn, executive director of the East Bay Bicycle Coalition.

It's not that Raburn, police, judges or actuaries want people to suffer for the sake of cycling. They say it's that they want to see bicycle travel, commuting in particular, become less of a fringe activity.

In a grave coincidence, organizers were dismayed by the air district's forecast of unhealthy air quality for some of the Bay Area's eastern communities. Air pollution regulators advise people biking home from work to delay their trip until 6 p.m. to avoid the highest smog concentrations, which usually are recorded in late afternoon.

"Bicyclists should be fine in the morning," said Karen Schkolnick, an air district spokeswoman, "but may want to delay their trip home to reduce their exposure to pollution."

The threat of smog could also be an opportunity for cyclists, Raburn said, to show that they can make a difference when it comes to getting cars off the road.

"I would like to see Bike-to-Work Day have a major impact on air quality, on traffic," he said.

Besides fretting about air quality, the air district will have a chance to show off its new fleet of company bicycles.

To deal with insurance and safety concerns, the agency recently purchased a fleet of seven new bicycles that workers can check out and ride to work-related appointments or business.

The bicycles, to be delivered Thursday to the district's San Francisco headquarters, are hybrid bikes with thick tires that are well suited for bumpy rides on city streets, Schkolnick said.

The district's self insurance policy will now cover workers while pedaling on district time, she said, eliminating earlier liability concerns.

Workers checking out the vehicles, though, will be required to attend a bicycle safety training session to make sure they know "the rules of the road," Schkolnick added.

While it may seem a little much for veteran bike commuters, the fuss over liability makes sense to Mark Gerlach, an insurance consultant who deals with worker compensation issues.

"I think it's a matter of growing pains at this point," Gerlach said of the bike-at-work trend. "As you get more and more of this, the chance that something's going to happen, and somebody's going to end up looking for a liable person, is more and more likely."

Bike-to-Work Day

Organizers are expecting 100,000 commuters will pedal to work Thursday in observance of Bike-to-Work Day, launched 15 years ago in Oakland with the now-traditional pancake breakfast at City Hall, from 7 to 9 a.m.

Commuters can stop at any of 225 Energizer Stations along bike routes all over the Bay Area. For a list of locations, visit www.bayareabikes.org/btwd/.

Bicyclists heading for San Francisco (BART prohibits bikes during peak hours) can load their bikes onto the Oakland-Alameda Ferry and ride for free from Alameda's Main Street pier or Jack London Square to the Ferry Building.

If you're commuting into Oakland, the East Bay Bicycle Coalition offers free valet bike parking and free breakfast while the hotcakes last.

Firms ride Bike to Work popularity

By Janis Mara, Staff Writer

Contra Costa Times, Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Every morning, Crescent Diamond hops on her silver three-speed Trek bicycle and pedals 2½ miles to work at Berkeley-based solar energy company Sun Light & Power. On Thursday, tens of thousands of Bay Area workers are expected to do the same for Bay Area Bike to Work Day.

With gas prices topping \$4 a gallon and concerns about global warming soaring even higher, biking to work is looking more appealing all the time. And a number of Bay Area employers are offering incentives to employees to bike, bus, BART, carpool, walk or even skate to work.

This is the 14th year the Bay Area has celebrated Bike to Work Day, and one firm that's pulling out the stops is Berkeley-based Clif Bar. The energy bar maker has launched "the 2 Mile Challenge" (<http://2milechallenge.com>), specifically directed at getting folks to ride bikes. On the

Web site, you can map a bike route to movies, banks and other locations within a 2-mile radius of your house.

Clif Bar's Cool Commute program gives employees up to \$500 cash to buy a bike. The program also helps with purchases of alternative fuel cars with forgivable loans. Clif Bar employs 216 people, 75 of whom are signed up with program, said Jeff Johnson, the company's director of experience marketing.

While Sun Light & Power has no official incentive program, as a solar energy firm, the company is committed to alternative energy, and many of its employees bike to work. Diamond, an administrative assistant at the firm, spent at least \$160 a month on a 20-mile-a-day round-trip commute before she came to the firm. Her commute costs now: "Zero," Diamond said. Workers who jump on their bikes Thursday will find free bananas, bagels and other treats at 150 stations along local bike-commute routes in all nine Bay Area counties. The national event is sponsored in this region by ridesharing site www.511.org and Oakland-based health maintenance organization Kaiser Permanente.

Clif is not the only company going all out for the day. Employees at South San Francisco-based Genentech Inc. will compete in tricycle races, chow down on barbecue, get free bike tune-ups and have their bikes parked by bicycle valets at the company's South San Francisco, Vacaville and Oceanside locations. About 30 to 40 workers bike to work at headquarters, spokeswoman Kelli Wilder estimated.

Employees at headquarters get \$4 per day for using alternative transportation — motorcycling, bicycling, carpooling, vanpooling or taking BART, Caltrain or the company bus. Genentech has about 11,000 regular full-time employees, most of whom are based in San Mateo County. Though the Bike to Work events are national, Californians have a special interest in reducing carbon emissions. California's legislature approved the broadest restrictions on carbon dioxide emissions in the nation in the fall of 2006, mandating a 25 percent cut in carbon dioxide pollution produced within the state's borders by 2020, although the mandate is currently being held up by federal opposition.

If you're thinking about giving Bike to Work Day a whirl, calls to local bike shops including Berkeley's Velo Sport indicate that a tune-up costs around \$70, depending on how much needs to be done, and takes two to five days. If that doesn't leave you enough time, the entire month of May is Bike to Work Month. And, if you just need a blast of air in the tires and a quick look-over, many bike shops will help you on the spot for free.

Gray Williams, a podiatrist at Kaiser Vallejo, has been riding 10 miles roundtrip to work for the past five years. He estimates that he saves some \$2,000 a year. Williams said depending on the route, pedaling commuters can get a good cardiovascular workout.

The doctor takes it easy on the way to work, "so I can be fairly fresh when I get here and not have to shower," Williams said. "I do a training ride on the way home."

Workers who arrive at work via bicycle at Kaiser stand a good chance of getting lucky with the company's informal commuter rewards program.

"We do on-the-spot rewards or recognitions," said Linda Hofman, senior transportation systems management specialist at Kaiser.

"I'll come to work and stand outside, and anyone I see getting out of a car and kissing the driver gets a \$5 'kissing carpool' recognition gift certificate," Hofman said. "If we see someone riding up on a bike, we give them gift certificates."

Spare the Air Days won't bring free transit rides

By Denis Cuff

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Thursday may be the first Spare the Air Day of the season, but there will be no free public transit rides that day even if smog reaches unhealthy levels — unlike past years.

Changing course in its battle against air pollution, the region's clean air agency has decided to hold just one day of free rides this year and to announce it weeks in advance.

The free ride day is tentatively scheduled for June 19, subject to final approval later this month by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. Rides will be free all day on buses, and until mid-day on BART, trains and ferries.

The region had two free fare days in 2007 and six days in 2006.

Pollution and transit officials say the grant money for free ride days is drying up, and those funds could be spent more effectively if diverted to other activities that promote pollution reduction year round, not just on smoggy days. One idea is to finance coupons for school children to ride public transit buses to school.

"We want to spare the earth every day," said Mark Ross, a Martinez city councilman who serves on the Bay Area Air Quality Management District board. "We want to reduce emissions of global warming gases throughout the year."

It costs about \$2 million a day to offer free transit rides. Critics complained about the air district and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission spending that much money to reimburse transit agencies for fares.

Air Pollution Linked to Blood Clots in Legs

By Ed Edelson

Washington Post, Monday, May 12, 2008

(HealthDay News) -- Long-term exposure to the tiny, dirty particles in polluted air seems to increase the risk of deep vein thrombosis, which are blood clots in the thighs or legs, an Italian study finds.

"It is well-established that air pollution causes myocardial infarction [heart attack] and stroke," said Dr. Andrea Baccarelli, who led the study while at the Harvard School of Public Health. "This is the first time that anyone has connected air pollution with deep vein thrombosis."

Previous studies have suggested such a connection, said Baccarelli, who is now an assistant professor of environmental health at the University of Milan. "Several studies in animal models and in humans have shown that particulate matter, inhaled into the lungs, causes inflammation in the lungs," he said. "The inflammation can expand the cell body, so that the incidence of coagulation is increased."

Coagulation is the formation of clots that can block blood vessels.

Baccarelli and his colleagues assessed the effect of air polluted with particulate matter smaller than 10 micrometers in diameter -- about one-40th the width of a human hair. Such particles come from the exhaust of vehicles, especially those with diesel engines, and burning of fossil fuels, the researchers said.

The scientists compared the exposure to such pollution on 870 residents of the Lombardy region of Italy who had been diagnosed with deep vein thrombosis, and 1,210 residents who did not have deep vein thrombosis. The researchers used the average concentration of particulate matter measured by monitors at 53 sites.

Compensating for other environmental and health factors, the researchers found that the risk of deep vein thrombosis increased by 70 percent for every increase in particulate matter of 10 micrograms per square meter. Tests showed that the blood of people more exposed to such pollution took less time to form clots.

"This makes a very strong case that air pollution is connected to deep vein thrombosis," said Dr. Robert D. Brook, an assistant professor of internal medicine at the University of Michigan, who wrote an accompanying editorial in the journal.

"But it is a first study and a single study," he added, "and I would be cautious about making generalizations and drawing conclusions on the basis of one study."

Still, "the results are very positive," Brook said. "Even if they are overestimating the effect, the effect, which is relatively so robust, is there. But how strong it is requires further studies."

"If future studies corroborate their findings and address some of the limitations, it may be proven that the actual totality of the health burden posed by air pollution, already known to be tremendous, may be even greater than anticipated," Brook said.

Baccarelli agreed with Brook's assessment, saying, "clearly the finding needs to be confirmed in additional studies."

"We are working on that," he said. "We are seeking additional populations in which the same link between air pollution and deep vein thrombosis can be evaluated. We also hope that some of our colleagues elsewhere will be pushed to conduct other studies."

The findings are published in the May 12 issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine.

More information

Learn more about the health risks of air pollution from the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

SOURCES: Andrea Baccarelli, M.D., assistant professor, environmental health, University of Milan, Italy; Robert D. Brook, M.D., assistant professor, internal medicine, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; May 12, 2008, Annals of Internal Medicine

No Link Between Coarse Air Pollution, Hospitalizations

Washington Post Tuesday, May 13, 2008

TUESDAY, May 13 (HealthDay News) -- Exposure to coarse airborne-pollution particles, such as those found in windblown dust or stirred up by agricultural work and mechanical grinding, does not appear to be linked to hospital admissions, a new study finds.

Coarse particulate matter, or PM10-2.5 for short, is between 2.5 and 10 micrometers or microns (thousandths of a millimeter) in size -- much smaller than a pinhead.

To date, research into health risks posed by coarse particulate matter pollution has been mixed, according to background information in the article, printed in the May 14 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5), which is smaller than 2.5 micrometers, has been studied far more extensively in the past decade and researchers have linked it to a higher risk of illness and death. Fine particulates, which are more likely to result from engine combustion, can reach the smaller airways and air sacs within the lungs.

In the study, researchers at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, in Baltimore, analyzed data that included daily cardiovascular and respiratory disease admission rates at hospitals, temperature and dew-point temperature, and coarse- and fine-particulate concentrations from 108 U.S. counties from January 1999 through December 2005.

During that time, 3.7 million cardiovascular disease admissions and 1.4 million respiratory disease admissions occurred; however, this number was barely affected (by less than 1 percent) on days when coarse particulate concentrations were high and the amount of fine particulate was factored out, according to the findings.

"We did not find statistically significant associations between same day PM10-2.5 concentration and emergency hospital admissions for cardiovascular or respiratory diseases when we adjusted for PM2.5," the authors wrote.

The authors recommended that monitoring of coarse particulate matter for future studies continue and that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency consider the findings the next time it updates its National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

More information --The American Academy of Family Physicians has more about [possible health effects of air pollution](#).

McCain casts himself as environmental steward

By Glen Johnson , Associated Press Writer
Modesto Bee, Wednesday, May 14, 2008

NORTH BEND, Wash. — John McCain on Tuesday cast Democratic rivals Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton as latecomers to the environmental battle, saying he would be willing to debate the issue with either of them in the general election to underscore his experience with the issue.

"People will trust my stewardship not only because of my background and knowledge, but also my vision for the future," he told reporters during a news conference at a nature center in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains.

"They have never, to my knowledge, been involved in legislation nor hearings nor engagement on this issue."

McCain cited his travels to global warming hotspots, as well as his work in his home state of Arizona with Native Americans, who control broad swaths of property. He also said the Democrats' plan to auction greenhouse gas emission permits - rather than giving them away, as he proposes - would lead to higher prices for consumers.

"My proposal is doable," said McCain. On Monday, he had sketched out his action plan for global warming.

"You can dictate a lot of things, but you have to unleash the innovative power and entrepreneurship of America in order to achieve these goals," he said.

In another nod to the cause, McCain's campaign office announced it was selling eco-friendly T-shirts and polo shirts made from biodegradable fabric, as well as organic cotton hats and shopping bags.

McCain proposes to cut greenhouse gas emissions 60 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. Obama and Clinton have committed to an 80 percent cut in emissions by 2050, a level favored by many scientists.

"While Barack Obama has brought Republicans and Democrats together around plans to raise our fuel standards and invest in renewable energy, John McCain's 'long history' involves opposing countless measures to invest in renewable fuels and alternative energy technology," said Obama spokesman Hari Sevugan.

Clinton spokesman Phil Singer said: "Sen. McCain is welcome to rewrite history if he likes, but the reality is that Senator Clinton has been very active on the issue of climate change. She's even traveled with Sen. McCain a few times on trips that dealt with the issue."

[N.Y. Times editorial, Wed., May 14, 2008:](#)

The Post-Bush Climate

John McCain has been engaged in the fight against global warming for years, even at the expense of breaking with Republican orthodoxy and with President Bush on the issue. But it was still an important moment this week when Mr. McCain, the presumed Republican presidential nominee, decided to raise the profile of climate change in the 2008 campaign. We have clearly entered the post-Bush era of policy and politics on climate change. However this election turns out, the United States will have a president who supports mandatory cuts in greenhouse gases. It is possible to begin to believe in the prospect of serious Congressional action.

Politically, of course, Mr. McCain could also be helping himself. Endorsing an aggressive and potentially expensive effort to reduce carbon emissions will not win him friends on the right wing. But it allows him to make the case (at little cost given his well-known record on the issue) that he is not a Bush clone, even as he embraces the president's views on taxes, the federal judiciary and the war in Iraq.

Like the two Democratic candidates, Mr. McCain proposes a market-based "cap and trade" system in which power plants and other polluters could meet steadily stricter limits on gases like

carbon dioxide — either by reducing emissions on their own or by buying credits from more efficient producers. His plan seeks to stabilize emissions in several years and then cut them by 60 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

Some Democrats and environmentalists pounced quickly on the fact that Mr. McCain's goals are less ambitious than the 70 percent target contained in a bill sponsored by Senators Joseph Lieberman and John Warner that is expected to reach the Senate floor next month, or the 80 percent target proposed by Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton.

His plan differs in other respects, too. He decided at the last minute to delete from his speech a proposed tariff on countries like India and China that defy international agreements on emissions, partly because the tariff could be misconstrued as hostile to free trade, which Mr. McCain supports. The Senate bill contains such a provision. Meanwhile, Mr. McCain is much more enthusiastic, and in our view rightly so, about nuclear energy as a cleaner power source than the Senate sponsors or the two Democratic presidential candidates are.

At this stage, it would be a mistake to make too much of these differences, including the overall targets. With emissions continuing to rise, and the demand for energy expected to grow, any plan that calls for a big downward wrench in emissions will demand huge investments in cleaner ways of producing energy and far more fuel-efficient vehicles. Above all, it will require determined and courageous leadership from a president capable of conveying hard truths and asking a lot of the country.

Assuming that Mr. McCain and the two Democratic candidates mean what they say, on this issue at least, we seem assured of such a president.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the State of Arizona signs an environmental law, replica of California's legislature to reduce air pollution and global warming. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Firma Arizona ley ambiental, réplica de la legislación de California

Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino
Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, May 13, 2008

La gobernadora de Arizona, Janet Napolitano firmó una ley ambiental que es réplica de una legislación de California, y que busca reducir la contaminación del aire y de los gases que sobrecalientan la tierra.

La nueva ley de Arizona exige a la industria automotriz una reducción de 37 por ciento a los actuales niveles de contaminación.

El 40 por ciento de la contaminación del aire en ese estado proviene del consumo de combustibles de los vehículos. La ley considera que ahora incluso el aire del desierto está contaminado.

Dicha ley pide a las industrias automotrices un rendimiento promedio de 36 millas por galón para modelos de vehículos de los próximos años.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses there is more CO2 than ever before.](#)

Más CO2 que nunca

Se duplicó gas de efecto invernadero

Univision, Wednesday, May 14, 2008

MADRID - En marzo de 1958, Charles Keeling lanzó un globo aerostático sobre Mauna Loa (Hawai) para medir la concentración de dióxido de carbono en la atmósfera. Este profesor de Química del Instituto Tecnológico de California buscó ese monte, de más de 2 mil metros de altitud, un lugar alejado de cualquier fuente de contaminación.

Se batió el récord

No estaba claro para qué serviría, pero comenzó a medir con regularidad la concentración de dióxido de carbono (CO2) en la atmósfera.

Justo 50 años después, su serie ha servido para dejar claro que el CO₂ (principal gas causante del efecto invernadero) está disparado.

La NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, organismo del Gobierno de Estados Unidos que, entre otras cosas, se encarga de las mediciones) acaba de confirmar que en 2007 se batió de nuevo el récord.

Si en la primera medición de Keeling la concentración de CO₂ era de 315 partes por millón (ppm), actualmente supera los 387 ppm.

El récord era previsible, lo que no lo era tanto es la velocidad.

A paso acelerado

Thomas Conway, uno de los responsables de la División de Monitorización Mundial, explica por teléfono: "La serie es lo suficientemente larga como para decir, sin lugar a dudas, que el dióxido de carbono en la atmósfera está aumentando. No hay datos comparables más fiables en el mundo. Pero lo más importante es que la concentración atmosférica crece mucho más rápido que antes".

En la década de los 60, el CO₂ aumentó a un ritmo medio de 0,84 partes por millón al año; en los 70 a 1,26; en los 80 a 1,59; en los 90 a 1,5, y desde 2000 se incrementa cada año en una media de 2,01 partes por millón, el doble que hace 50 años.

Este CO₂ es el principal gas que está tras el cambio de clima. Retiene parte del calor que emite la Tierra y calienta el planeta.

Conway afirma que seguirá aumentando su presencia en la atmósfera mientras siga "la quema de combustibles fósiles como el gas, el carbón y el petróleo".

El mar está cansado

Hasta ahora, gran parte del dióxido de carbono emitido era absorbido por los océanos, pero estos ya "no pueden asumir tanto como emitimos, así que seguirá aumentando", añadió Conway.

Y aunque 50 años es un buen indicador sobre el impacto de la actividad humana, no es nada para estudiar el clima. Los científicos han buscado en la profundidad de los hielos cuál ha sido la concentración de CO₂ en el pasado.

Esos bloques -se han estudiado hasta profundidades de más de 2,500 metros en la Antártida- se forman con una nueva capa de nieve al año. Y cada capa guarda burbujas de aire de esa época. Según el último informe del Panel Intergubernamental de Cambio Climático (IPCC, en sus siglas en inglés), "la concentración atmosférica de dióxido de carbono supera, en gran medida, su margen de variación natural durante los últimos 650 mil años".

Más allá del límite

En este periodo, el CO₂ ha oscilado entre 180 y 300 partes por millón, lo que significa que actualmente está un 29 por ciento por encima del mayor nivel en cientos de miles de años.

Pero con los bloques de hielo los científicos también pueden reconstruir la temperatura del pasado y concluyen que existe una relación entre la cantidad del dióxido de carbono en la atmósfera y la temperatura.

Nadie duda de que la concentración va a seguir subiendo -con China e India construyendo plantas de carbón a todo ritmo-, pero la ONU pide que al menos que se pongan límites.

La Unión Europea quiere que no supere las 550 ppm, nivel a partir del cual considera que la influencia sobre el clima sería peligrosa, pero para ello las emisiones tienen que tocar techo antes de 2020 y reducirse drásticamente en 2050.

Algo tan difícil de conseguir como predecir en 1958 la importancia que tendrá hoy la curva de Keeling.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses forest fires in Florida has called for a state of emergency.

Fuegos forestales azotan a Florida

Vaticinan fin a la larga sequía

Diario Las Americas, Tuesday, May 13, 2008

Mientras el centro de la Florida sufre una catástrofe debido a una serie de fuegos malezas y bosques, y Miami-Dade, Broward y Palm Beach también han sufrido en menor escala estos incendios provocados por la larga sequía, llegan vaticinios alentadores: las condiciones de escasez de lluvia que han prevalecido desde 2006 en todo el estado, podrían estar llegando a su fin.

La situación en la región central de Florida es tan grave que el gobernador Charlie Crist, decretó estado de emergencia por los varios incendios forestales que han devorado mil 215 hectáreas, destruido al menos tres casas y obligado a evacuar más de 500 hogares en el centro y el norte del estado.

Crist dijo que los incendios amenazan con causar un desastre mayor y como consecuencia de "este peligro se ha declarado un estado de emergencia".

La división forestal del Departamento de Agricultura de Florida informó que desde el 1 de enero hasta el 30 de abril se han registrado 1.056 incendios forestales que han consumido 11.343 hectáreas, sin contar estos de ahora.

No obstante, las perspectivas sobre la temporada de lluvias son más optimistas que este último año, dijo Ben Nelson, meteorólogo de la estatal División de Manejo de Emergencias. "Si tenemos una temporada de lluvias típica, Podríamos salir de la sequía para fines de este año", agregó.

Al menos, en Miami, Broward y Palm Beach, ha llovido algo más del promedio durante los tres últimos meses, aunque todavía no se anuncia que se eliminen las actuales restricciones al regadío.

Durante los últimos 22 meses, los cielos de la Florida han estado mayormente secos y los condados del sur de la Florida han experimentado los años consecutivos más secos desde que en 1932 comenzó a llevarse cuenta del volumen de las precipitaciones en esta región. En todo el estado el "déficit de lluvia" es el más severo desde mediados de 1950, según estadísticas oficiales.

En julio de 2007 el nivel del agua en el Lago Okeechobee llegó a su punto más bajo en la historia, 8,82 pies. Pero las lluvias recientes han mejorado algo la situación. Por ejemplo, el nivel del agua en el Lago Okeechobee está ahora en 10,09 pies, aunque eso es 3,5 pies por debajo del promedio para este mes.

En enero de 2007 el Distrito de Administración de Aguas del Sur de la Florida impuso la restricción de regar los jardines sólo una vez a la semana. Hace tres semanas alivió esa orden, permitiendo el regadío dos veces por semana.

En la mañana del martes, las autoridades anunciaron que los fuegos en Daytona Beach y Cocoa Beach estaban bajo control.

La orden dada por el Gobernador al decretar estado de emergencia, permite coordinar todas las operaciones de evacuación, activar planes de emergencia con las agencias locales, estatales y federales, y la apertura de refugios para las personas que tengan que dejar sus casas.

La sequía que sufre Florida, combinada con la presencia de viento y baja humedad, son factores que han incidido en la propagación del fuego en varios condados del estado.

Uno de los mayores incendios se registra en Malabar, en el condado de Brevard, que comenzó el domingo y ha destruido al menos tres residencias, mientras cerca de Daytona Beach más de 100 bomberos batallan contra las llamas.

En el condado de Broward, al norte de Miami, también se desató un fuego de maleza y el denso humo está impidiendo a los conductores transitar por la zona.

Entretanto, un tramo de la carretera interestatal 95 y la US1 en Brevard estaban cerradas por el mismo motivo, según la Patrulla de Carreteras.

Una situación similar se registraba en el suroeste del estado, en el condado de Charlotte, debido a un incendio forestal.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses hundreds leave their homes due to Florida's forest fires.](#)

Cientos de personas huyen de sus casas por incendios en Florida

AP

El Sentinel de Orlando, Tuesday, May 13, 2008

Las autoridades ordenaron el lunes a cientos de personas que evacuen sus viviendas en la costa atlántica de Florida debido a la propagación de incendios forestales voraces, mientras los bomberos luchaban por contenerlos, en terrenos resecos y con fuertes vientos.

Varios helicópteros lanzaron agua sobre algunos puntos de las llamas que han arrasado más de 200 hectáreas de terreno en Daytona Beach, dijo Timber Weller, portavoz de la División de Forestales.

Las autoridades anunciaron que los residentes del noroeste de la ciudad iban a tener que evacuar unas 500 viviendas. No se informó de daños a casas, aunque los funcionarios advirtieron que las brasas podían volar hasta más de dos kilómetros de distancia del lugar del incendio. Se ha contenido casi un 20% de las llamas, destacó Weller.

"Las condiciones meteorológicas son extremadamente favorables para los incendios", indicó Weller. "Lo que estamos viendo es algo bastante típico para esta época del año en la Florida, casi al final de la época de sequía", agregó.

En el condado de Brevard, un incendio de una extensión de 800 hectáreas destruyó dos viviendas en Malabar, dijeron los bomberos. No se informó de víctimas.

Se supone que una persona es responsable del incendio, afirmó Ernie Dieble, un investigador de incendios intencionales de Palm Bay.

También en el condado de Brevard, un incendio de unas 100 hectáreas ardía cerca de Cocoa. Decenas de personas fueron desalojadas.

"Hemos estado rociando los techos con agua", dijo el propietario Joey Byer a la estación WKMG-TV en Orlando. "Estamos haciendo pleno uso de todas las mangueras a nuestra disposición para rociar las casas y ayudar a los bomberos a luchar con el fuego", destacó.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses clouds and algae. When algae are under stress, it contributes to coastal formation of clouds with the release of iodine, which neutralizes the ozone levels and other oxidants in the air.](#)

Nubes y algas

Las algas, cuando están bajo estrés, contribuyen con la liberación de yodo a la formación de nubes en las costas.

NeoFronteras, Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Ya vimos en esta Web algún ejemplo de cómo la vida sobre la Tierra cambia y altera las condiciones físicas de este planeta. Ahora unos científicos proporcionan un ejemplo más de este tipo de fenómenos al haber ayudado a demostrar que la presencia de grandes cantidades de algas en áreas costeras puede influir en el clima local.

Este estudio internacional ha encontrado que las algas pardas, cuando se encuentran bajo estrés, desprenden grandes cantidades de yodo en forma de iones cargados a la atmósfera, yodo que finalmente contribuye a la formación de nubes.

Así por ejemplo, durante la marea baja, cuando el kelp es expuesto a la luz intensa, a la desecación o al ozono atmosférico, desprende rápidamente grandes cantidades de yodo, elemento que normalmente es almacenado en sus tejidos.

Este yodo neutraliza el ozono y otros oxidantes que normalmente dañarían el kelp, y en el proceso se produce yodo molecular.

Los datos obtenidos por estos científicos explican por qué se registran en el aire que cubre los bosques de kelp grandes cantidades de óxido de yodo y otros halogenuros orgánicos. Estos productos químicos actúan además como núcleos de condensación alrededor de los cuales crecen las gotitas de agua que forman las nubes.

El kelp necesita de rocas intermareales para prosperar, siendo las playas arenosas poco apropiadas para su desarrollo. No hay kelp en cualquier costa. Estos resultados se pueden aplicar a las regiones costeras del reino Unido donde haya grandes regiones de kelp, como en las Hébridas o en la bahía de Robín Hood. Es de suponer que también se apliquen a la costa oeste de los EEUU, donde hay este tipo de algas, y a otras regiones del mundo.

El aumento del número de núcleos de condensación debido a este proceso hace que la formación de gotitas dé lugar a nubes más gruesas. Estas nubes son brillantes y reflejan mucha luz del sol hacia arriba, alcanzando la superficie del agua (o del suelo) solamente una pequeña parte de ella. Dentro de cada nube hay una miríada de gotitas de agua en suspensión. En este tipo de nubes las gotitas son más pequeñas que en otros tipos de nubes, que en comparación contienen gotas más grandes y, por tanto, más susceptibles de agregarse para así formar lluvia.

El aumento de núcleos de condensación por parte del kelp proporcionaría, por consiguiente, nubes más grandes y duraderas sobre las regiones costeras.

Los investigadores encontraron además que el kelp libera grandes cantidades de yodo en el agua del mar a consecuencia del estrés oxidativo como un mecanismo de respuesta frente al ataque de patógenos.

Estos investigadores sugieren que el kelp, por tanto, juega un papel importante en el ciclo bioquímico del yodo y en la eliminación del ozono de baja altitud que, al contrario que el de alta altitud que filtra los rayos ultravioletas del sol y es beneficioso, produce trastornos en los seres vivos, incluido el hombre.

Este descubrimiento se da casi 200 años después de que se identificara el yodo como elemento químico, precisamente en las cenizas del kelp.