

## **Bighorn Fire fully contained**

Fresno Bee, Sunday, May 18, 2008

Firefighters fully surrounded a wildfire Sunday that burned 490 acres of parched brush land amid a heat wave in the San Gabriel Mountains.

The Bighorn Fire on the flanks of Mount Baldy was declared 100 percent contained at 6 p.m., according to the U.S. Forest Service. No injuries or building damage were reported.

The cause of the fire, which began early Tuesday, was under investigation.

It was among several small but dangerous wildfires that broke out in five Southern California counties within the week as the region withered under the influence of a high-pressure system expected to last into Monday. The National Weather Service issued a weekend heat advisory warning of temperatures reaching up to 105 degrees in some areas.

## **Fire Season Arrives Quickly in Foothills**

By Staff Writer

Valley Voice Newspaper, Monday, May 19, 2008

Tulare County - Nearly 100,000 more acres burned last year in California than in 2006 and fire officials are already gearing up for what they expect to be another busy fire year. With temperatures expected to be near 100 degrees this week, the fire threat will intensify in Tulare County.

Paul Marquez, Prevention Battalion Chief for CalFire in Tulare County, said the eight wildland stations in the county have already been staffed as a lack of rainfall the past two months, warm temperatures and windy conditions have brought the fire season upon us.

"Things are drying out pretty fast. The recent winds we've been having have increased the drying," said Marquez, noting that the early abundant rainfall helped the lower elevation vegetation to grow, but the drought-like conditions of the past two months have already dried out that growth. He said the grasses below 3,000 feet are already dry and the county saw a control burn escape two weeks ago, but it only burned a few acres. On Monday, county firefighters responded to four small grass fires.

Unlike last year when less than 6 inches of rain led to little vegetation growth, this year the region saw almost 10 inches of rain by the end of February. However, it has practically been bone dry since.

"What that did is it allowed the grasses to grow so we have more fuel," said Marquez. "It is deceiving in wet years and what that does is it makes the grass grow and it makes more fuel. Ladder fuels and light-flashy fuels are most dangerous," said Marquez.

On Friday, the county announced it was transitioning into its summer preparedness season. The county fire department has put on about 40 seasonal firefighters and now there is an engine and a three-man crew at each of the wildland stations: Fountain Springs, Badger, Woodlake, Three Rivers, county headquarters, Porterville, Bear Creek and Tyler Creek.

The county is also encouraging foothill residents to take preventive measures, such as creating a 100-foot defensible space around their property and to take extra precautions when operating equipment.

"Mow lawns before 10 a.m. and have a hose readily available in foothills areas," stressed Marquez.

## **Mountains**

Brent Skaggs, fire management officer for Sequoia National Forest, said nearly all of the seasonal fire crews will be in place by the end of this month, and the air attack base in Porterville is already operational.

"Locally, we haven't had any measurable rain since March, that's abnormal," said Skaggs. He added the snowpack is close to normal. "Higher elevations should be less of a concern for crown fires – above 7,000 feet. Below that, it's really dry for this time of year. A lot of the grass is drying out. A couple back-to-back hundred days and it won't take that grass long to dry out. There's a good grass crop. It's going to keep us busy."

While the forest saw several wildfires last year, only about 8,000 acres were burned, "nothing really big."

He said they want be able to allow some higher elevation lightning fires to burn, a key management tool on the forest. "We have high hopes the snowpack will be good for keeping fire behavior manageable so we can take advantage of some lightning-caused fires, but manage them for resource benefit." Last year, he said, they only could do that a couple of times because of the extreme dry conditions.

According to the state, last year saw 7,665 fires burn 371,176 acres. In 2006, there were 11,270 fires burning a total of 272,810 acres. Both '06 and '07 were much worse than 2005 when there were only 4,909 fires that burned just 74,004 acres.

## **Farm Bill best ever for Valley growers**

By Alex Cantatore

Turlock Journal, Saturday, May 17, 2008

Members of the United States House of Representatives and Senate seemed to have the interests of California in mind when they were drafting this year's \$300 billion Farm Bill. More than \$2 billion, the most ever, will be directed towards specialty crops like fruits, vegetables, nuts and berries that make up the heart of San Joaquin Valley agriculture.

"We must recognize the importance of the historic achievements for specialty crops in this legislation," said Rep. George Radanovich (R-CA 19). "California agriculture may never again benefit so greatly from a Farm Bill as they will from this legislation."

Among the highlights for local specialty crop farmers include \$466 million in block grants, \$377 million for a new program to combat pests and disease, \$230 million for research, and \$59 million for trade groups and marketing. An additional \$1 billion is reserved for a pilot program set to provide fresh fruit and vegetables as snacks to students in schools across all 50 states, giving farmers an additional avenue to sell their crops.

"For the first time in the history of the Farm Bill, specialty crops-that comprise the majority of California agriculture-are being given the attention they deserve," Radanovich said. "Specialty crop farmers put the fruit, vegetables, nuts and berries in the mouths of millions of Americans and warrant the same treatment as commodity crop farmers."

Members of both legislative branches overwhelmingly supported the bill, which passed by nearly a three-to-one ratio in both houses. President Bush, however, has voiced his intention to veto the bill, which he terms as irresponsible spending that subsidizes rich farmers in the face of increased food prices.

The President had sought an income limit of \$200,000, above which farmers could not qualify for subsidies. The Farm Bill as passed sets that threshold at a total farm income of \$750,000, or an individual income of \$500,000.

"Any bill like that, there's a lot that you don't like," said Radanovich, "but the benefits to California agriculture are pretty overwhelming so I supported it. It looks like it's going to be very difficult for the President to sustain a veto."

The House and Senate can overturn the President's veto by way of a two-thirds majority vote. Should the expected veto be overridden, it will be only the second time that President Bush's veto

has not stood during his two terms in office.

"This bill threads the needle," said Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-CA 18). "While people didn't get everything they wanted, the country got what it needed. That speaks volumes about the quality of this bill and tells me we ended up in exactly the right place. For the first time in the history of the farm bill lawmakers, conservationists, nutrition advocates, and farmers from all regions of the country support the overall bill."

The vast majority of the projected Farm Bill cost will go towards domestic nutrition programs, which account for almost \$200 billion, or two-thirds of the total price tag. The food stamp program, renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, will provide expanded service to ten million Americans, while additional emergency food assistance will be provided to food pantries and other needy groups.

In addition to the usual money reserved for conservation programs, crop insurance, subsidies, livestock, and alternative fuels such as biodiesel and ethanol, this year Stanislaus County residents may also benefit from the Environmental Quality Incentives Programs. More than \$150 million has been set aside to improve air quality issues in the most polluted areas of the nation, including the Central Valley.

"The San Joaquin Valley has some of the worst [air quality](#) in the nation, yet we also supply the country with food," said Radanovich. "The funds provided in this bill allow our farmers to continue their important work while cleaning up the Valley's dirty air by helping retrofit old pumps and engines or assisting in the purchase of new, clean farm equipment."

## **Supporters rally businesses behind Plaza Drive project City Council members vote Monday on business park in west Visalia**

By Gerald Carroll

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Saturday, May 17, 2008

Supporters call it an environmentally sound gateway to the Visalia Industrial Park.

Opponents say it's the first step in a west Visalia growth boom that could overwhelm the city's ability to provide infrastructure to support it.

The Plaza Business Park, a 29.4-acre academic, business and highway-service development north of Highway 198 at the Plaza Drive exit, is up for approval before the Visalia City Council Monday night.

Business groups, such as the Visalia Chamber of Commerce and the Visalia Economic Development Corp., have been rallying members to attend.

A hearing on the issue is scheduled for the end of the meeting, slated to start at 7 p.m. at the Visalia City Council chambers, 707 W. Acequia Ave., Visalia.

One of its opponents is City Councilman Greg Collins. "People need to realize this is but one of four quadrants in that area,"

Collins said Friday. "What is presented with this development will soon be replicated three more times."

That presents [air pollution](#), traffic and violation of the "spirit and interpretation" of the city's General Plan, Collins said. The project also would have a negative economic effect on the "core areas" of Visalia, he said.

"All you need to do is look at the map," Collins said. "It's obvious. As the old cliché goes, it's the tip of the [growth] iceberg."

**View from supporter**

But Jim Claybaugh of the Visalia Economic Development Corp. said the plan - spearheaded by the Mangano Company, which already has an auto mall in that general area - is "the most environmentally sound plan ever proposed" in the area, he said.

"It's unanimous to everyone I know who has seen this plan," Claybaugh said. "This becomes a gateway to the industrial park to the north, and includes many services needed by visitors who come to Visalia on business."

But Collins and others warn that the road system - particularly the already crowded intersection of state Highway 198 and Plaza Drive - wouldn't be improved in time to handle an avalanche of new, traffic-intensive businesses - including a satellite campus of Fresno Pacific University, which would anchor the proposed complex.

Claybaugh says the evidence favors a major development - now.

"Engineers have already analyzed the traffic and reported [that] existing roads and planned improvements are enough," he said.

### **Planning Commission already approved it**

In any event, the council takes up the proposal after its 5-0 April 14 approval by the Visalia Planning Commission. The vote capped a two-month Mangano Company lobbying effort that included individual presentations of the plan to each Planning Commission member, without public comment.

Downtown business interests, at first opposed to rapid expansion of the far west of Visalia because it might draw retail business dollars from central Visalia, have reversed their position.

## **The Big West debate: Who's right?**

By Stacey Shepard

Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, May 18, 2008

In a television ad promoting the Big West of California refinery expansion, the company's fire chief says modified hydrofluoric acid, a chemical the company would use, is as safe as sulfuric acid.

Yet state Sen. Dean Florez and a citizens group backed by firefighters, nurses and police officers have launched a public campaign in recent weeks claiming just the opposite - that sulfuric acid is safer.

The war of words over the two chemicals has become the most polarizing issue in the refinery's effort to get approved a \$700 million expansion to boost gas and diesel output - something Big West says is essential to keep the facility operating long-term.

So who's right?

The risks are equal, with modified HF acid perhaps a bit safer, according to one of the few studies ever done comparing the risks of both substances. The comparison was done by an independent, court-appointed safety advisor more than a decade ago after the south coast city of Torrance sued a Mobil refinery in order to make it operate more safely.

"There are more similarities than differences," said Steven Maher, a risk and safety expert the court appointed to conduct the study.

Big West recently hired Maher's firm, Risk Management Professionals, to conduct a similar study on both acids for the Bakersfield refinery. Maher said this week that a separate evaluation is a good idea since risk can vary based on numerous conditions, including the refinery's design plans, the type of modified HF to be used, and wind and weather conditions in Bakersfield.

The Torrance safety study is one of the few documents available directly comparing the risks of modified HF versus sulfuric acid. But other experts familiar with the chemicals have agreed the risk of the two acids are more similar than many think.

## LESSER OF TWO EVILS

Controversy over Big West's plans to introduce a new chemical first began early last year when an environmental report showed the proposed expansion would involve the use of pure hydrofluoric acid, or HF. The plans immediately drew attention from national chemical and safety experts because of the notoriety the chemical had gained in recent years.

Soon after the uproar, Big West decided to instead use modified HF, which is widely seen as a safer form of the chemical.

Like ammonia, HF has a low boiling point and can instantly vaporize if spilled, forming a toxic cloud that can travel downwind and injure or even kill people exposed to it.

Around the same time, the refining industry began researching ways to make HF safer. The result was modified HF, which contains an additive that nearly eliminates the acid's ability to vaporize when spilled.

But many were still leery of the reformulated chemical.

"The public wanted to know if this was safe enough and there wasn't a lot of information out there about modified HF," said R. Scott Adams, retired Torrance fire chief.

Following a series of accidents, the city of Torrance sued the Mobil refinery in 1987, seeking to compel the facility to operate more safely. The refinery was already using pure HF and the public pushed for the refinery to switch to sulfuric acid. Mobil had proposed a switch to modified HF.

A court settlement eventually was reached that allowed the refinery to use modified HF if the independent safety advisor found that it was as safe as sulfuric acid.

Adams was charged with peer-reviewing the court-ordered report on behalf of the city council. To do so, he hired a Ph. D chemist and several other scientists to assist him. In the end, the department concurred with the report and endorsed the refinery's use of modified HF.

A surprising finding was that sulfuric acid could also form a mist of toxic gases that can travel downwind if spilled, according to Adams.

"That gets ignored sometimes in the counter arguments and that needs to be compared," he said.

Sulfuric acid is relatively stable on its own but can become more volatile when mixed with petroleum compounds, studies have shown.

## OTHERS PROMOTE HF

The South Coast Air Quality Management District also endorsed the use of modified HF in place of pure HF at another refinery in Wilmington.

Again, environmental groups advocated for a switch to sulfuric acid, according to Sam Atwood, a spokesman for the air district. But after assessing the risks involved with the transport of sulfuric acid, the district decided modified HF was as safe, if not safer, Atwood said.

About 100 times more sulfuric acid than HF is needed in the alkylation process. In addition, spent sulfuric acid must be trucked away to a regeneration facility. Modified HF doesn't require regeneration.

"You have to then be concerned about trucking in large quantities (of sulfuric acid) and the potential for a truck spill or rail car spill," Atwood said.

The risks of transporting sulfuric acid were not assessed in Torrance's study.

Big West has said that modified hydrofluoric acid would require just 35 truck trips a year, versus 14,600 for sulfuric acid.

In a 2005 report about the public danger and potential terrorist target that pure HF at refineries posed, the non-profit U.S. Public Interest Research Group recommended modified HF along with sulfuric acid as safer alternatives.

The study noted that both acids are concerning but did not endorse one over the other, or compare risk factors. For sulfuric acid, the risk factors were related to transporting high quantities by truck or rail. The downside of HF, modified or not, the report said, is that it's a chemical identified by the Department of Homeland Security as a potential terrorist target.

Big West officials recently stated that HF, when modified, is not on the list but Homeland Security spokeswoman Amy Kudwa confirmed Friday that it is.

#### ALTERNATIVES AND THE POLITICS

Opponents of the use of modified HF at the Bakersfield refinery say the transportation risks of sulfuric acid could be mitigated. Don Hall, who managed the refinery when it was owned by Texaco in the early 1990s, said other refineries have built a regeneration plant on-site to get around this hazard.

Fred Millar, a Washington D.C.-based chemical consultant who's been assisting locals opposed to modified HF, warned that decisions can also be influenced by politics. He pointed to the South Coast Air Quality Management District's decision to endorse modified HF as an example. Millar said the air district's board at the time had become more business-friendly.

"Basically, what the (district) was doing was balancing risk and looking at various economic factors," Millar said. "I heard from people in L.A. who preferred sulfuric acid that they only accepted modified HF because it's the best they could get."

When it comes to the costs of either acid, HF is known to be less expensive for refiners.

The risks posed by the two chemicals is now being studied by the Kern County Planning Department, which is working with its own consultant to determine worst-case scenarios in the event of a release of modified HF and sulfuric acid.

The analysis is not complete yet, but results will become part of the revised environmental impact report on the refinery expansion due out in early June.

Lorelei Oviatt, a county planner overseeing development of the report, said last week that the analysis wasn't yet complete but "we're finding that every chemical has it hazards."

#### ABOUT THE PROJECT

Big West's "Clean Fuels Project" would allow the facility to nearly double gasoline production and increase diesel output by 60 percent without increasing crude oil coming into the facility.

The refinery would add equipment to convert an intermediary petroleum stream, called gas oil, into transportation fuel. Currently the refinery can't convert all its gas oil to fuel so it sells the product to other refineries in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas.

Big West's parent company, Flying J, said when it bought the refinery from Shell Oil in 2005 that an expansion would be needed to ensure the facility's long-term viability.

The project is expected to cost the company about \$700 million.

The project requires the Kern County Planning Commission to approve a conditional use permit for additional storage tanks and a zone variance for equipment that will exceed height requirements.

It requires an air permit from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and a separate environmental permit from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The expansion would create about 100 new jobs at the refinery paying an average of about \$70,000 a year, double the facility's property taxes from about \$1.5 million to \$3 million annually, and create 1,200 construction jobs, refinery officials say.

Opponents have raised concerns about the use of a controversial chemical called modified hydrofluoric acid, as well as increased air pollution and truck traffic on Rosedale Highway.

#### **KEY FINDINGS IN THE TORRANCE STUDY:**

HF, when modified, was significantly less likely to vaporize.

In the refining process, sulfuric acid can form a similar cloud capable of travelling downwind.

Both acids form clouds that are far smaller than a cloud formed by pure HF.

Both modified HF and sulfuric acid clouds would "rain out" - meaning form heavier droplets that would fall to the ground - before it could impact refinery employees or travel off-site.

## **ABOUT THE CHEMICALS**

Refiners use hydrofluoric and sulfuric acids as a catalyst to make alkylate, a key component in producing clean-burning fuels.

Alkylate has increased in demand due to state and federal laws requiring cleaner gasoline and diesel.

HF is less expensive to use than sulfuric acid. Some industry experts say it produces better quality alkylate.

But after several deadly refinery accidents in the 1980s, HF gained a bad name and many in the industry came to believe sulfuric acid was a safer way to produce alkylate.

Around the same time, the refining industry launched numerous projects to make HF safe. The result was modified HF, which contains an additive that nearly eliminates the acid's ability to vaporize when spilled.

## **Tulareans can voice race-track concerns**

### **Planning Commission to host meeting to hear residents' opinions**

BY LUIS HERNANDEZ

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Saturday, May 17, 2008

Tulare residents will have their first chance to make comments on the draft of the Environment Impact Report for the proposed Tulare Motor Sports Complex on Monday.

The Tulare Planning Commission, as part of their regular scheduled meeting, will host a public hearing on the topic, and city officials are encouraging residents to make their feelings known.

"We want to hear from you," Mayor Craig Vejvoda said. "You have that opportunity. We'll address every single comment. We want you to be part of this decision."

Proposed by Fresno developer Bud Long, the sports complex, which will feature a race track, hotels and retail shops, will sit on 711 acres off South Laspina Street. Fully developed and operating at capacity, the project would generate \$1.6 billion in yearly tax revenue and create 16,000 full time jobs, city officials say.

Vejvoda said the track's economic impact would be huge. However, he also said the project would bring negative environment impacts such as traffic, noise, [air and water pollution](#) - some of which are unavoidable.

City Manager Darrel Pyle said draft copies are available for viewing at the Tulare City Hall and the Public Library. After a 45-day public comment period, the project will come before the planning commission and the city council for a vote.

## **Green politics could help valley investors**

By Frank Davies - Mercury News Washington Bureau

Tri-Valley Herald, Monday, May 19, 2008

WASHINGTON - Boosted by all three presidential candidates, an ambitious plan to combat global warming is about to take center stage for the first time in Congress.

After years of government inaction despite mounting public concern, senators will consider rules intended to slash greenhouse gas emissions and wean the economy from its addiction to fossil fuels.

The coming debate on the Climate Security Act represents a major turning point for the U.S. government, which is better known for denying global warming than doing anything about it.

The stakes are high for Silicon Valley, epicenter of clean-tech investment. Last year, \$1 billion was invested in clean energy technologies in the valley, and investors are looking for a sea change in government policy to crank up the progress.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nevada, has scheduled the bill for the first week in June. Republicans are unlikely to block it because they don't want to undercut their presidential nominee, John McCain, who has distanced himself from President Bush by recognizing that climate change is a serious problem. Democratic contenders Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton also support the bill.

"Our bill will be the Manhattan Project, the Apollo Project, the major energy independence program we should have adopted 25 years ago," said Sen. Joe Lieberman, an independent from Connecticut, who co-sponsored the bill with Sen. John Warner, R-Va. "I think it is that big."

But opponents of the bill, including many utilities, manufacturers and the coal industry, say the emissions limits will result in higher energy costs for consumers and businesses. Some surveys back up that warning, while other economic models see a minimal effect and growth in "green jobs" that could benefit the Bay Area.

For those trying to put the nation on a low-carbon diet, the timing is right. In odd-couple-style TV spots, Nancy Pelosi joins Newt Gingrich, and Pat Robertson sides with Al Sharpton, in urging Congress to take action. Time magazine has struck up the drumbeat, trading its red border for green with a recent cover story called "How to Win the War on Global Warming."

Tucker Eskew, a Republican strategist who worked in the Bush White House, sees a shift among Republicans on the issue: "A number of Republican senators are now looking very hard at this legislation, and there's latent opportunity for doing something."

Even if the bill doesn't get the necessary votes this year, the Senate could lay the foundation for eventual passage under a new, receptive president, Eskew said.

The bill is a major test for Sen. Barbara Boxer, the California Democrat who chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee. Boxer and the bill's sponsors, Lieberman and Warner, have spent weeks in one-on-one meetings with senators on the bill.

While "going green" has become a mantra of popular culture, Congress has lagged in taking action. This year Congress is struggling just to extend tax credits to boost solar, wind and other renewable energy industries. Silicon Valley business leaders lobbied for that issue last week on Capitol Hill.

Given that recent history, the Lieberman-Warner bill is breathtaking in its scope. Its centerpiece is a complicated cap-and-trade system designed to harness market forces to shift energy use to clean technology and encourage greater efficiency. The goal is to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions to 19 percent below 2005 levels by 2020, and 71 percent below by 2050.

The legislation would set limits - growing more stringent each year - on the amount of carbon dioxide that utilities, manufacturers and refiners could emit. Companies that emit less than this cap would earn carbon credits they could sell, and those that emit more could buy these credits to comply.

This cap-and-trade system, by setting a price on carbon, would create incentives to invest in ways to cut emissions, and a government auction of some credits could generate more investment in clean tech.

One difficult issue is deciding how many credits - worth billions of dollars by most estimates - will be given away, and how many will be auctioned. Some environmental groups say a weak bill could end up rewarding polluters.

The plan builds on the efforts of California and other states to enact limits and create effective market mechanisms that would drive up the price of carbon and eventually lower the cost of clean energy. Several major corporations, including General Electric, Alcoa and Pacific Gas & Electric, support a cap-and-trade system.

But half the nation's electricity is generated by plants that rely on cheap coal, and a rapid shift from that dependence could increase the average annual household energy bill by \$30 to \$325 by 2020, according to the Energy Information Administration.

"This legislation will have a devastating impact on our economy," said Keith McCoy, vice president of the National Association of Manufacturers.

Seriously debating the bill will be a big step, Reid's energy adviser, Chris Miller, said at a recent forum on renewable energy.

"This will send a signal to the world that we're done with business as usual," he said. "This will be the most fleshed-out version of climate change legislation the Senate has ever debated."

## **Bay Area pollution board to consider first fees on global warming**

By Denis Cuff

Contra Costa Times, Saturday, May 17, 2008

Environmentalists and regulators say the Bay Area's air pollution district is taking a small but important first step toward saving the Earth by proposing to charge businesses for global warming gases they emit.

Oil refineries say the agency is jumping the gun and threatening to set a bad precedent that could lead to a patchwork of local fees and rules that could disrupt state efforts to combat global climate change.

Those conflicting views move to center stage Wednesday when the Bay Area's air pollution board considers what is thought to be the first pollution fee in the nation aimed expressly at global-warming gases from oil refineries, power plants, factories, gas stations, bakeries and other businesses.

The annual fee — up to \$190,000 for a large oil refinery, \$85 for a large bakery, and \$1 for a service station — would pay for district efforts to estimate and study sources of global warming gases, and consider ways to reduce them.

The biggest fees would be imposed on the biggest emitters of carbon dioxide, a global warming gas from fossil fuel combustion.

"I think the best place to institute strong policy is at the federal level, but we do not have leadership from the Bush administration on global warming," said John Gioia, a Contra Costa County supervisor from Richmond and member of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District board. "The hope here is that we will have a model that can be adopted on the federal level, or by other regions and states."

An industry trade group representing five oil refineries in the region contends that the local intervention could confuse and disrupt the California Air Resources Board's efforts to carry out an historic 2006 state law to reduce global warming gases by 25 percent by 2020.

"We're committed to working with the state on a thoughtful program to address climate change," said Tupper Hall, spokesman for the Western States Petroleum Association. "What's troubling is if (the Bay Area proposal) leads to a patchwork of local programs with their own fees and goals. It's very hard for the state to meet its goals, and this could make it more difficult."

The petroleum association questions whether the Bay Area pollution board — 22 county supervisors and members of city councils — has clear authority to raise the fees.

Hall also said the group worries that any new fee imposed on gasoline refineries could lead to higher prices for gasoline, already near \$4 a gallon.

The five refineries in the trade association include Chevron in Richmond, Shell in Martinez, Tesoro between Martinez and north Concord, Conoco-Phillips in Rodeo, and Valero in Benicia.

Jack Broadbent, the air district's chief executive officer, said oil refiners would pay the largest share of the proposed fees because they are the largest carbon dioxide emitters.

The district would collect \$1.1 million in greenhouse gas fees annually from 2,500 Bay Area businesses that already have district permits and pay fees for emissions of other pollutants, such as smog-forming reactive gases.

Nearly two-thirds of the businesses would pay less than \$1 per year, according to a district report. About 850 would pay \$1 or more. Five oil refineries and the two power plants in Antioch and Pittsburg each would pay in excess of \$50,000 because of their large carbon dioxide emissions from burning fuel.

"The fees are very modest," Broadbent said. "Tackling climate change is a big challenge. We need the combined efforts of federal, state and local agencies."

Broadbent said the Bay Area air district would be the first to collect fees to recover the costs of regulating global warming gases, but he asserted his agency has authority to do so. His and other pollution agencies commonly collect fees to recover costs of regulating smog and soot, pollutants that have been regulated for decades, he said.

To determine the proposed fees up for a vote Wednesday, the air district divided the \$1.1 million it spends annually on global warming studies and regulation by the 4.4 million metric tons of global warming gases emitted annually in the Bay Area. The result is a fee of 4.4 cents per ton.

Motor vehicles account for about half the global warming gases in the Bay Area, but they are regulated by the state rather than local districts.

The Bay Area district already has taken measures to limit global warming gases from home water heaters and industrial boilers, which burn less fuel than oil refineries but still produce global warming gases.

Global warming fees set by the Bay Area board will be integrated into any state fees the California Air Resources Board may adopt to curb global warming gases statewide, said Jerry Hill, chairman of the Bay Area pollution board and also a member of the California Air Resources Board.

Linda Weiner, a spokeswoman for the American Lung Association of California, applauded the proposed fees as a significant first local step toward reining in a worldwide problem.

"We've taken too long to deal with global warming," she said. "There is no time to waste."

If you go

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District meets at 9:45 p.m. Wednesday at its headquarters, 939 Ellis St., San Francisco, to hold a hearing and consider approving global warming fees for businesses.

## **After 18 months, ports say air plan is working**

By Kristopher Hanson

Contra Costa Times, Saturday, May 17, 2008

It's been 18 months since port authorities in Los Angeles and Long Beach set aside their long-standing rivalry and jointly promised bold environmental improvements in future harbor operations.

Their Clean Air Action Plan, or CAAP, set a goal to slash toxic air emissions in half by 2012. Emissions are blamed for increased asthma, cancer and heart-disease rates.

Since then, they've been blasted and praised for adopting a number of controversial CAAP initiatives, including fees on cargo containers shipped through the ports and a forced \$2 billion turnover of diesel trucks serving the waterfront.

And while the jury's still out on whether the clean air plan will lead to a truly greener San Pedro Bay in years to come, many community and industry leaders took pains at an annual conference Friday to show progress is indeed being made.

"Some of this stuff, like the truck program, is going to take time to see results, but some of it is already making a difference in emissions on the docks and from rail in the harbor, for example," said Robert Kanter, director of environmental affairs and planning at the Port of Long Beach.

"Once these programs get well under way, you'll see greater and greater improvements, even with growth. The new technologies are so much cleaner."

One could only take Kanter at his word Friday, as both ports are currently wrapping up an emission inventory to compare pollution levels from the past year to levels recorded from July 2006 to June 2007.

He expects the survey to show lower emissions from cargo-handling equipment, on-dock rail operations and other dockside equipment, where electric and alternative fuel technologies have replaced diesel-powered engines in recent months.

Results for trucks, however, are not expected to show much, if any improvement, as fleet turnover doesn't begin until Oct. 1.

Once truck turnover begins and ships start burning cleaner fuels in port (another CAAP initiative set to begin this year), pollution levels may drop below 2005 levels, he said.

"It's a big part of the (overall pollution) problem that hasn't been fully implemented yet," Kanter said. "But it's right around the corner."

Kanter was joined by city officials, port executives, business leaders and environmentalists for the second annual FuturePorts conference.

Organizers paired past adversaries for a number of lively panel discussions and presentations on port goals and their effect on the shipping and transportation industries.

Engaged in the debate were attorneys from Natural Resources Defense Council, representatives from international oil companies, railroad giants Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe and port authorities from throughout California.

The groups have often faced off in court in recent years.

"I think everybody realizes that lip service isn't going to work anymore," said event organizer Elizabeth Warren, FuturePorts president. "There needs to be trust, despite past differences, and this looks like a positive start to the beginning of an open, honest dialogue between all sides."

Ralph Appy, the Port of Los Angeles' lead environmental engineer, said that as clean air programs come online and air quality improves in coming years, harbor authorities need to ensure projected growth in volume doesn't outstrip environmental benefits.

"You (don't want to) succeed in pulling pollution levels down through emission controls, and then cargo growth comes back and eclipses progress," Appy said. "It's a challenge."

## **Hybrid boat waves hello to S.F. Bay**

By Carl Nolte

San Francisco Chronicle, Saturday, May 17, 2008

Green technology came to the blue waters of San Francisco Bay on Friday, when what the manufacturer calls the world's first hybrid recreational boat was introduced to two of California's top resource officers.

The super-fast, super-sleek 25-foot speedboat uses a combination of electric and diesel engines to produce a low-emission vessel that should warm the hearts of the greenest motorboat sailor.

"Everybody knows about hybrid cars, but hybrid boats are different," said Michael Frauscher, managing director of the company that built the boat.

Most [air pollution](#) from motor boats comes in the harbor, when the boat is idling or running at low speed, said Michael Chrisman, California's secretary of resources, who went for a demonstration ride on the bay and under the Golden Gate Bridge.

The hybrid solves the problem by starting and running in the harbor under electric power. The demonstration boat's electric motor was so quiet Friday that no one could hear it.

Once out of the harbor and in the bay, a flick of the switch turned on the diesel, which powered the boat up to 20 or 30 knots, the boat jumping over the waves, so that Chrisman and Linda Adams, the state's environmental protection secretary, had to hang on.

"It's very smooth," Chrisman said. "It's a hoot."

It turns out that high-end speedboats are not a major source of air pollution - unlike container ships, tugs and ferries, which use old-fashioned diesels. The smaller water-ski boats one sees zipping around lakes and up in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta used to be powered by noisy, smelly engines, but those older engines have mostly been phased out, Chrisman said.

The hybrid boat shown off Friday has a price tag of \$185,000 and is made by Frauscher Bootswerft. It's equipped with 256-horsepower Steyr engines. Both are Austrian firms, which might explain the presence of the two California officials.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the most famous Austrian this side of Sigmund Freud, was expected at the event, held at the St. Francis Yacht Club, but did not show up.

## **Long-awaited Naval Weapons Station environmental documents released**

By Tanya Rose

Contra Costa Times, Sunday, May 18, 2008

CONCORD — When it's finally developed, the shuttered Concord Naval Weapons Station could have between 14,700 and 30,600 new residents and between 2,400 and 6,725 new houses, which will push more cars onto streets and freeways and more pollution into the air, according to a new environmental study.

A lengthy document detailing how the community could develop 5,028 acres at the former military base — and the impact it would have on the rest of the city — is out this week.

Through the detailed environmental impact report, residents for the first time can get a close look at seven land-use alternatives and how they will affect the surrounding environment. They range from intense development in Alternative No. 1, with the most new residents, to little development and 80 percent open space in Alternative No. 7.

The city hired consultants to put together the document, which took almost seven months to complete. Residents will have until July 11 to read it and submit comments to the city.

"There aren't any big surprises," said Mike Wright, Concord's reuse project director.

"We've got some traffic issues that everyone knew would be key but I don't think there's anything extreme or that we didn't expect," he said.

Initially, the city was going to try to get its ultimate land-use plan to the Navy, which still owns the base, by June. Instead, that will likely happen in January.

To accommodate that longer timeline, the city has asked the Navy for a six-month extension.

"We're asking for more time so that we can have a good, thorough dialogue with the community and build a consensus on what we want to see out there," Wright said.

In the study, all of the alternatives preserve the Los Medanos Hills where the slope is 30 percent or greater and include a 300-foot-wide buffer along Mount Diablo Creek. They also include biking and hiking trails, youth and adult sports complexes and fields, a relocated golf course and green "transition zones" between existing, built-out parts of Concord and any new building at the weapons station site.

Room has also been made for schools, police stations, performing arts centers, museums and other things.

The study says that all seven alternatives would result in extra traffic on Concord Boulevard west of Denkinger Road.

There are also traffic snarls likely at the Olivera Road/Port Chicago Highway intersection and the Bailey Road/Concord Boulevard intersection, but a new lane would fix that, according to the report.

Some of the other development effects contained in the study:

- New development would add cars on Highway 4 and Interstate 680 during peak commuting hours. To combat that, the city would require future developers at the weapons station to pay for improvements.
- All seven options would result in more car emissions than what the Bay Area Air Quality Control Management District allows. To fix this, the city would plan to include public transit, peak-hour shuttle services and bike lanes.
- There could be an effect on migratory birds, the Western pond turtle, the California tiger salamander, Western spadefoot toad, American badgers, Golden eagles and other animals.
- Development would lead to an effect on wetlands of Mount Diablo Creek and surrounding ponds and could lead to the introduction of invasive species to the wetlands.
- The Navy or a developer will have to pay to remove any hazardous materials left behind by the military, which is required by law.
- Traffic and rail noise along BART lines, Highway 4, and Willow Pass and Bailey roads would increase significantly with all seven alternatives. To fix this, the city would require developers to conduct noise studies and use setbacks and grading or other noise insulation.

Ultimately, city leaders and the community will choose one of the alternatives, or a mixture of several, and that will become the base reuse plan submitted to the Navy.

Mayor Bill Shinn said the Navy hasn't signed off on the six-month extension but he doesn't expect problems. And the community, he said, seems to be on the same page.

"No one's come in yet and said that our heads are someplace they shouldn't be," Shinn said.

Initially, there were five alternatives, but Concord leaders in October added Alternatives 6 and 7 after pressure from the Greenbelt Alliance and Save Mount Diablo. Those are the most open-space-friendly options, with Alternative 7 offering 80 percent open space. Alternative 1, which has the most intense development, calls for 47 percent of the land to be set aside for parks and open space.

Shinn said he sympathizes with concerns about open space and the potential for overdevelopment, but worries that too much open space would be too costly.

City leaders have said all year that they're making a potent effort to build consensus among the diverse interests in the region — and that's partly the reason for the extension, Wright said. A public hearing in early July will be held for entering comments into the formal record. Congress

voted in November 2005 to close the weapons station and open it to development as part of a cost-cutting measure.

The Navy bought the inland portion of the base in June 1944, which up until then had been home to a dairy and granary and other farming utilities. In the past, Wright has said residents could start seeing development at the base as early as 2009.

Whatever alternative is chosen, the most intense development will likely happen near the North Concord BART station and along Highway 4. Each scenario has differing levels of intensity on the west side of the property.

To comment on the report

- Write to Director Michael Wright, Community Reuse Planning, City of Concord, 1950 Parkside Drive, M/S 56, Concord, CA 94579
- Attend a yet-to-be announced hearing in early July
- Comments are due by July 11

To see the entire report, visit [www.concordreuseproject.org](http://www.concordreuseproject.org) or the Concord library. To view maps of the seven alternatives, visit [ContraCostaTimes.com](http://ContraCostaTimes.com).

## **Reduce diesel emissions - our health depends on it**

By Camille Kustin

San Francisco Chronicle, Monday, May 19, 2008

Some state Senate leaders are pushing for a roll back in clean air protections, including giving older diesel trucks more time to emit the most deadly pollutants.

This push to slow state air quality protection in the face of a burgeoning health crisis linked to air pollution is irresponsible at best, negligent at worst.

California's children are the real victims of the dismal air quality and this latest political posturing. Nearly 1 in 10 California children suffers from asthma compared to 1 in 20 nationally. In the San Joaquin Valley, 1 in 6 youngsters has problems with this respiratory disease. Since 1980, the national asthma death rates among children under 20 years of age have increased by nearly 80 percent, and California asthma death rates have contributed more than its share to this dramatic rise.

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) is working to clean up the source of the most dangerous pollutants: diesel trucks. The agency, however, is encountering staunch resistance from a coalition comprised mainly of the California Chamber of Commerce and the California Trucking Association. Last week, the hurdles were reinforced by a small group of state legislators, led by the Senate Republican Caucus, who argue that postponing the pending truck regulations would help the state address its budget deficit. This couldn't be further from the truth, as the costs of health care, lost productivity and loss of life caused by diesel pollution far outweigh the costs to clean it up.

Diesel trucks emit nearly 40 percent of the toxic particulate matter and half of the nitrous oxide pollution that create California's smoggy air. This pollution alone is responsible for 1,500 deaths statewide annually, according to a CARB study. A University of Southern California eight-year study showed that Southern California children exposed to higher levels of particulate matter (microscopic-sized soot that infiltrates the lungs), nitrogen dioxide, acid vapor and elemental carbon had significantly lower lung function by age 18, a lung function deficit that is unlikely to be reversed.

These health problems are not unique to Southern California and the San Joaquin Valley. A recent CARB study showed that diesel pollution in the area surrounding the Port of Oakland is responsible for an estimated 18 premature deaths, eight hospital admissions for respiratory and cardiovascular problems and about 290 cases of asthma-related and other lower respiratory

symptoms annually. Of the increased health risks in the West Oakland area studied, 71 percent were attributed to diesel truck emissions.

In addition to the health risks posed by these toxic truck fumes, there are also looming federal deadlines that require California to meet national air quality standards or risk losing highway funds.

CARB is aiming to reduce particulate matter pollution dramatically by almost 70 percent by 2014 and to reduce 36 percent of nitrogen oxide pollution by 2020. CARB will bring the rule to its board for a vote this October. However, the truckers' coalition argues that the new cleaner diesel truck standards will bankrupt businesses and send the prices of products and food soaring.

These claims are not entirely factual and gloss over the options available to truckers. More than \$370 million from the Proposition 1B bond funding has been dedicated to cleaning up diesel trucks. In addition, truckers have access to \$140 million a year from Carl Moyer program incentive funding and other pots of state and federal money.

Several retrofits for diesel trucks are now available that make it easier and cheaper to reduce truck pollution without buying a whole new truck. Raley's Supermarkets, for example, has installed an exciting new technology, known as selective catalytic reduction, on many of its trucks. This new technology would bring the Raley's fleet into compliance with the new regulation at a cost of between \$25,000 and \$30,000 per truck.

The changes proposed by CARB are good for our health, our environment, and there are resources to mitigate the setbacks that retrofits could otherwise pose for some truckers. Postponing the retrofits would only keep state health spending high and needlessly continue serious human suffering from air pollution.

*Camille Kustin is a policy analyst for Environmental Defense Fund. She specializes in air pollution issues and is based in the organization's Sacramento office.*

## **Researchers warn of nitrogen hazard to environment**

By Associated Press

Modesto Bee and other papers, Friday, May 16, 2008

WASHINGTON — While carbon dioxide has been getting lots of publicity in climate change, reactive forms of nitrogen are also building up in the environment, scientists warn.

"The public does not yet know much about nitrogen, but in many ways it is as big an issue as carbon, and due to the interactions of nitrogen and carbon, makes the challenge of providing food and energy to the world's peoples without harming the global environment a tremendous challenge," University of Virginia environmental sciences professor James Galloway said in a statement.

"We are accumulating reactive nitrogen in the environment at alarming rates, and this may prove to be as serious as putting carbon dioxide in the atmosphere," said Galloway, author of a paper and co-author of a second on the topic in Friday's issue of the journal *Science*.

While nitrogen alone is inert and harmless, reactive nitrogen compounds - such as ammonia - have been released by its use in nitrogen-based fertilizers and the large-scale burning of fossil fuels.

Various forms of nitrogen contribute to greenhouse warming, smog, haze, acid rain dead zones with little or no life along the coasts, and depletion of the ozone layer in the stratosphere, the researchers concluded.

The researchers propose ways to reduce nitrogen use, ranging from encouraging its uptake by plants to recovering and reusing nitrogen from manure and sewage and decreasing nitrogen emissions from fossil fuel combustion.

## **State workers urged to telecommute**

By Rachel Gordon

San Francisco Chronicle, Saturday, May 17, 2008

Sacramento -- Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger issued an executive order Friday calling for state workers in Sacramento to telecommute, take transit or alter their work schedules when feasible to help ease the expected congestion on Interstate 5 during a roadway improvement project.

The three-quarter-mile stretch of I-5 through downtown Sacramento is set to get a new roadbed and drainage system, and construction will force the periodic closure of lanes and ramps.

The \$27 million project is scheduled to start at 8 p.m. May 30 and take about seven weeks to complete.

That portion of I-5 is used by 200,000 commuters a day.

"To create a faster and safer commute here in Sacramento during construction, I'm encouraging all state agencies to promote creative options for state workers," Schwarzenegger said.

"By getting more cars off the road, we can help relieve traffic headaches while also cutting down on air pollution from idling cars."

## **Schwarzenegger urges Congress on emissions**

By Frank Davies - MediaNews Washington Bureau

Tri-Valley Herald, Monday, May 19, 2008

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — Frustrated by the paralysis in Washington over combating climate change, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and officials from 17 other states signed a pledge Friday to pressure Congress and the next president to quickly adopt aggressive limits on greenhouse gas emissions.

"Washington is asleep at the wheel, and we can't wait for them," Schwarzenegger told a large crowd at a Yale University climate conference that included three other governors, the premiers of two Canadian provinces and officials from Mexico and Europe.

The 18 states represent more than half of the U.S. population, and state officials said their declaration would help build momentum toward national adoption of emissions controls similar to what California and other states already have adopted. More states will soon join, predicted Terry Tamminen, an adviser to Schwarzenegger and former director of the California Environmental Protection Agency.

Besides California, the states signing the pledge Friday were Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Virginia and Washington.

Schwarzenegger, a featured speaker at the event, showcased his feel-good environmentalism and business sensibility, insisting "the environmental cause would be unwinnable without technology and capitalism. That shift is happening, and it's not a fairy tale," the Republican governor said, adding that support from Republicans and business leaders for emissions controls was crucial.

A big supporter of John McCain, Schwarzenegger has fought the Bush administration over several high-profile issues, including the Environmental Protection Agency's decision to block the state's bid to set its own tailpipe emissions standards.

The governor praised the three remaining presidential candidates and said much would change in January, when a new president takes over: "President McCain, President Obama, President Clinton — all three candidates would be great for the environment," Schwarzenegger said. The conference was held at Yale to mark the 100th anniversary of President Theodore Roosevelt's conference of governors that helped launch the modern conservation movement and greatly

expand the network of national parks and forests. Several participants said that, just as Roosevelt did in 1908, it was important to blend idealism and pragmatism in fighting global warming.

Gov. Kathleen Sibelius of Kansas, a Democrat, highlighted one goal of the states' declaration — that an effective state-federal partnership must build on the agreements and compacts that states have already signed.

The Western Climate Initiative, for example, signed last year by California, six other states and three Canadian provinces, sets a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 15 percent below 2005 levels by 2020.

State leaders said the timing of the conference was important to counter the impact of President Bush's announcement Wednesday that he still resists mandatory emissions controls.

"This keeps the momentum going and will take on a bigger life as other governors sign on," said Mary Nichols, chairwoman of the state's Air Resources Board, who spoke at the Yale Law Center. "This also generates some counter-pressure on Congress to get moving on national legislation."

Bush called for a national goal of stopping the growth of greenhouse gas emissions by 2025, but critics say that voluntary target falls far short of what many scientists say is needed to prevent damaging climate change.

In their report last year, scientists on the United Nations climate panel warned that carbon dioxide and other emissions must begin to drop by 2015 to avert serious damage.

The Senate is expected to take up an ambitious climate bill in June that has the goal of stopping the growth of greenhouse gas emissions in 2012 — 13 years before Bush's goal. Obama, Clinton and McCain say they support the earlier target and the trading and selling of carbon credits to help meet that goal.

But the declaration the states signed Friday does not take that for granted: "We will reach out to major presidential candidates as a means of shaping the first 100 days of the next administration. We have no time to lose." R.J. Pachauri, the head of the UN climate panel, said in a speech that he often cites the actions of California and other states when he travels the world and is asked about the Bush administration and its policies.

"I say, 'look at California,' " Pachauri said. "That saves my skin, because otherwise I'd have to say something critical, and that would get me in trouble."

Schwarzenegger warned that sometimes environmental concerns can delay large-scale renewable energy projects, such as massive solar power plants in California's Mojave Desert.

"If we can't put that in the Mojave Desert, I don't know where the hell we can do it," he said, as Yale students cheered.

"What we have is a case of environmental regulations holding up environmental progress," Schwarzenegger said. "We have to make some trade-offs. I think both the environmental activists and their opponents cannot let perfect become the enemy of `possible.'"

## **EPA easing rules on power plants near national parks**

### **Rank-and-file staff, managers who oppose Bush administration plan spread the word**

Juliet Eilperin

San Francisco Chronicle, Friday, May 16, 2008

Washington -- The Bush administration is on the verge of implementing new air quality rules that will make it easier to build power plants near national parks and wilderness areas, according to rank-and-file agency scientists and park managers who oppose the plan.

The new regulations, which are likely to be finalized this summer, rewrite a provision of the Clean Air Act that applies to "Class 1 areas," federal lands that currently have the highest level of protection under the law. Opponents predict the changes will worsen visibility at many of the United States' most prized tourist destinations.

Nearly a year ago, with little fanfare, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed changing the way the government measures air pollution near Class 1 areas on the grounds that the nation needed a more uniform way of regulating emissions near protected areas. The agency closed the comment period in April and has indicated it is not making significant changes to the draft rule, despite objections by EPA staff members.

Jeffrey Holmstead, who now heads the environmental strategies group at the law firm of Bracewell & Giuliani, helped initiate the rule change while heading EPA's air and radiation office. He said agency officials became concerned that EPA's scientific staff was taking the most conservative approach in predicting how much pollution new power plants would produce.

The move is the latest in a series of administration efforts going back to 2003 to weaken air quality protections at national parks, including failed moves to prohibit federal land managers from commenting on permits for new pollution sources more than 31 miles away from their areas and to only protect air resources for parks that are big and diverse enough to represent complete ecosystems.

For 30 years, regulators have measured pollution levels in the parks, over both three-hour and 24-hour increments, to capture the spikes in emissions that occur during periods of peak energy demand. The new rule would average the levels over a year so that spikes in pollution levels would not violate the law.

Many National Park Service and EPA officials have challenged the rule change, arguing that it will worsen visibility in already-impaired areas, according to internal documents obtained by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

In one set of comments, EPA's regional computer modeling staff wrote that the proposal would allow for significant degradation of the parks' air quality. An e-mail from National Park Service staff called aspects of the plan bad public policy that would make it much easier to build power plants near Class 1 areas, which include some Fish and Wildlife Service-protected land.

When committee Chairman Henry Waxman, D-Los Angeles, asked the EPA whether the rule would lead to construction of more power plants near protected areas, Robert Meyers, principal deputy assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Air and Radiation, replied in an April 24 letter that this was not the intention of the rule, but he could not rule it out.

"We developed this proposal based on the need to clarify how increment consumption must be addressed, and not whether or not it would be easier to build power plants," Meyers wrote. "In the absence of any data or evidence provided by the National Parks Service, we are unable to conclusively confirm or deny their suggestion."

On Thursday, the National Parks Conservation Association, a lobbying group, issued a report estimating that the rule would ease the way for the construction of 28 new coal-fired power plants within 186 miles of 10 national parks.

In each of the next 50 years, the report concludes, the new plants would emit 122 million tons of carbon dioxide, 79,000 tons of sulfur dioxide, 52,000 tons of nitrogen oxides, and 4,000 pounds of toxic mercury into the air over and around the Great Smoky Mountains, Zion and eight other national parks.

"It's like if you're pulled over by a cop for going 75 miles per hour in a 55 miles-per-hour zone, and you say, 'If you look at how I've driven all year, I've averaged fifty-five miles per hour,' " said Mark Wenzler, director of the National Parks Conservation Association's clean air programs. "It allows you to vastly underestimate the impact of these emissions."

Don Shepherd, an environmental engineer at the National Park Service's air resources division in Denver, said of the new rule: "I don't know of anyone at our level, who deals with this day to day, that likes it or thinks it's going to make sense.

"We really want to have clean air at national parks all the time, and not just at average times," Shepherd said. "All of our national parks have impaired visibility. ... It would really be a setback in trying to make progress."

### **Group: Air pollution threatens Nevada park**

By Brendan Riley

In the Contra Costa Times and other papers, Friday, May 16, 2008

CARSON CITY, Nev. -- A national conservation group lists Great Basin National Park in eastern Nevada as one of 10 such parks most threatened by new or proposed coal-fired power plants.

The National Parks Conservation Association has urged the Bush administration to halt efforts to roll back clean air protections for national parks, saying Great Basin is among 10 national parks at risk from pollution from such power plants.

The association said that despite objections from Environmental Protection Agency scientists and the National Park Service, the EPA is preparing to finalize a rule that weakens pollution standards and makes it easier to build new coal-fired power plants near the parks.

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., who opposes a coal-fired plant that Sierra Pacific Resources wants to build near Great Basin National Park, said Friday he'd continue his fight against the project. He said the NPCA report shows the need for tougher standards instead of eased laws.

While the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection has said emissions from the 1,500-megawatt plant, about 70 miles west of the national park, would meet all state and federal air quality standards, Reid has said Sierra Pacific's own analysis estimated that the power plant's particulate and sulfur dioxide emissions would exceed the top standards "by more than 300 percent."

Michael Yackira, Sierra Pacific Resources president and chief executive officer, has said new coal technology planned for the Ely project will meet or exceed air quality requirements and when completed "will be the cleanest coal plant in the nation."

The Ely project is one of three currently in the works in Nevada. The opposition to the projects mirrors fights by environmental groups across the nation against at least four dozen coal plants.

Coal plants provide just over half of the nation's electricity. They also are the largest domestic source of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, emitting 2 billion tons annually, about a third of the country's total.

### **More towns jump on 'green' bandwagon**

#### **Environmental issues top priority in many suburbs**

Geoff Mulvihill, Associated Press

San Francisco Chronicle, Sunday, May 18, 2008

Cherry Hill, N.J. -- This town, with its vast housing developments and miles of shopping centers lining every thoroughfare, was not designed to go easy on the Earth, but that isn't stopping local officials from going green.

Cherry Hill, once a desolate farmland and now a bustling Philadelphia suburb of 70,000, is one of the latest examples nationwide of a movement of local governments committing to make environmental issues a priority.

The township is switching to lower-energy traffic lights, offering residents incentives to recycle and even looking into putting solar panels on a municipal building.

"For far too long we have waited for other government agencies to act on these issues," Mayor Bernie Platt told the township council before it adopted a plan in March to reduce carbon emissions and waste. "This elected body will act to provide leadership, guidance and immediate action."

Many local governments across New Jersey and the nation are also taking formal steps to "go green."

Some examples: Westwood, N.J., is converting its fleet of police cars to gas-saving hybrids. Austin, Texas, is planning to power all city-owned buildings with renewable energy by 2020 and require new single-family homes to do the same within a decade. Warwick, R.I., is using more efficient LED lights in all its traffic signals.

Former Vice President Al Gore deserves part of the credit for raising awareness of the idea - backed by many scientists - that people's activities are responsible for global warming, according to Annie Strickler, spokeswoman for the Oakland-based U.S. offices of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives. The organization's U.S. membership, consisting of local governments trying to be more sensitive to the environment, has nearly doubled in the past year.

Cynthia McCollum, president of the National League of Cities and a member of the City Council in Madison, Ala., says the jurisdiction of cities gives them good reason to be thinking green.

"We control the building codes," she said. And in most places, local government controls the roads and planning regulations, she noted.

McCollum's group is lobbying Congress to allocate \$2 billion a year to help local governments with environmental initiatives.

"I think it's a good thing in that towns are at least talking about going green," said Peter Kasabach, executive director of New Jersey Future, which promotes sustainable land-use planning. "The concept of going green has gone mainstream."

Cherry Hill isn't exactly a granola-crunching town that you might expect to strive for greenness.

Before it was Cherry Hill, it was Delaware Township, a mass of mostly farmland and a few suburban neighborhoods just east of Camden and Philadelphia.

Starting in the late 1950s, development took off with waves of ranches, split-levels and, later, Colonials, condos and McMansions until by 1985, practically every lot in the 24-square-mile town was developed. Population swelled to about 70,000, making it one of New Jersey's largest suburbs.

The town's claim to fame was having the first large, enclosed shopping center on the East Coast. The Cherry Hill Mall opened in 1961 and the same year, the township changed its name, picking a moniker that matched the mall, which remains a shopping hub.

Platt, a funeral director long involved in local politics, looked at recycling as a way to save money. The cost of taking trash to a landfill was rising relentlessly.

Township officials calculated that by using RecycleBank, a program that gives residents gift certificates in exchange for recycling, it could save \$2 million in landfill fees over the next five years.

Lori Braunstein, chairwoman of the advocacy group Sustainable Cherry Hill, said Platt turned out to be an easy sell on the goal of reducing and even mitigating carbon emissions, which scientists say lead to global warming.

The 10-point plan the township developed calls for modest measures like annual tree planting, and ambitious ones such as exploring offering builders incentives to do earth-friendly construction.

There are some environmental concerns in Cherry Hill that might be harder to fix because of the spread-out nature of a suburb built for people expected to commute by car.

"One of the challenges still faced is being able to define green broadly enough," said Kasabach. "How people use their land, and get around your town."

His ideal would be relatively dense, walkable villages surrounded by farms and green space and amenable to mass transit. That does not describe present-day Cherry Hill, or many of the suburbs that sprung up across New Jersey at the same time.

"Previous planners in Cherry Hill have to take almost all the blame," Platt said. "We inherited this sprawling suburban community."

Platt said he's seeing progress on the land-use front. There's a building boom going on at the former site of the Garden State Park horse track. While part of the development consists of big-box stores in a sea of parking lots, Platt likes to point out that it's bringing homes and offices within walking distance of a train station.

"It's sort of ironic to green one of the biggest examples of suburban sprawl in the country," said Jeff Tittel, executive director of the Sierra Club in New Jersey. "If you can do it in Cherry Hill, you can do it everywhere."

## **5 Steps To Energy Efficiency**

Daniel M. Kammen

San Francisco Chronicle, Sunday, May 18, 2008

This simple list recognizes the elements needed to harness the innovative power of the superpower economy.

THE STEPS ARE

1. Make a national commitment to save money and energy through efficiency measures.
2. Increase standards for renewable energy - in the spirit of California's law requiring the state's three major utilities to have 20 percent of energy sold come from renewable energy sources by 2010 - to expand the number and type of clean energy producers.
3. Adopt low-carbon fuel standards that reflect not only greenhouse gas emissions, but also the demand for water, land and fertilizers, as well as the impacts on communities in the developing world.
4. Impose carbon taxes.
5. Reposition the United States as a leader for a low-carbon future, as opposed to its current position as leader of the "dirty dozen" most polluting and least responsive industrial powers.

Carbon numbers

ITEM: The price of carbon dioxide emissions in Europe, as traded on a growing carbon market, is roughly \$38 per ton of carbon dioxide.

ITEM: The price of carbon on the Chicago Climate Exchange, the voluntary U.S. market, is about \$6 per ton.

SIMPLE ADDITION: Economic analyses suggest carbon prices need to rise to about \$30 to \$40 a ton in the United States to encourage clean energy sources in the electricity market.

FINAL NOTE: A price of \$60 per ton of carbon dioxide would be needed to significantly impact vehicle emissions. The run-up in gasoline prices since 2003 is equivalent to a carbon price of more than \$300 per ton of CO<sub>2</sub>. The goal of progressive pricing, however, is to not impose net added costs.

## **Nissan-NEC to make lithium-ion batteries**

By Yuri Kageyama

San Francisco Chronicle, Sunday, May 18, 2008

TOKYO, Japan (AP) --Nissan's joint venture with electronics maker NEC Corp. will invest 12 billion yen, or \$115 million, to start mass-producing lithium-ion batteries — a technology widely viewed as key for next-generation "green" cars.

Nissan Motor Co. Executive Vice President Carlos Tavares told reporters Monday the Japanese automaker wants to be a global leader in "zero-emission vehicles."

Lithium-ion batteries are now more common in laptops and other gadgets, although all the world's major automakers are working on applying the batteries for their cars.

The new batteries will be more powerful than — and half the size of — nickel-metal hydride batteries that are now commonly used in ecological cars today, Nissan officials said.

Nissan's joint venture called Automotive Energy Supply Corp. plans to make advanced lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles, hybrids and fuel cells — all important technology to reduce pollution as well as gases linked to global warming.

"Nissan firmly believes the ultimate solution for sustainable mobility lies in zero-emission vehicles," Tavares said at a Tokyo hotel.

A plant for the batteries, set to be running by 2009, will have annual production capacity of 65,000, and starting capacity of 13,000, Nissan said. The investment will cover three years, it said.

The first commercial products with the new batteries are Nissan forklifts in 2009, but electric vehicles for the U.S. and Japanese market will follow in 2010, Tavares said.

Tokyo-based Nissan has been sometimes criticized as falling behind Japanese rivals such as Toyota Motor Corp. and Honda Motor Co. in ecological technology.

Toyota has a big hit with its gas-electric hybrid, Prius, which has already crossed the 1 million sales mark worldwide over the decade it has been on sale. Honda also has its own hybrid and fuel-cell models.

Nissan has said it will introduce its own hybrid in 2010, besides the electric vehicles planned for the U.S. and Japan.

By 2012, Nissan plans to mass-market electric vehicles to consumers globally. It is also planning to make available on a wide scale zero-emission electric vehicles in Israel and Denmark in 2011.

Nissan said it will market its lithium-ion battery to other automakers and customers, an effort that will help cut costs by boosting production numbers.

But Nissan has competition in this race. Toyota has said it will start mass-producing lithium-ion batteries for plug-in hybrids in the next few years. Japan's top automaker is working with Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., which makes Panasonic brand products.

Massive global recalls in recent years of laptops reportedly suspected of catching on fire because of faulty lithium-ion batteries have raised fears about their safety.

Nissan said it did tests to ensure safety, performance and reasonable costs of its new battery. Nissan declined to give details of the electric cars in the works, including pricing. The joint venture is 51 percent owned by Nissan and 49 percent by NEC and its subsidiary.

[Opinion, Fresno Bee on Sunday, May 18, 2008:](#)

### **High-speed rail gets a boost from Congress**

**Bill would appropriate funds for matching state investments.**

One of the obstacles raised in the path of California's proposed high-speed rail system could be addressed by legislation introduced in the House of Representatives last week. That's very good news for proponents of the long-delayed project.

And it's another reason to vote for the rail bond measure on the November ballot. Californians will be asked to authorize \$9.95 billion in spending for high-speed rail and improvements to other rail

services that connect to the high-speed system. The total cost of the 700-mile project is pegged at \$40 billion -- but we won't have to bear that cost all by ourselves.

The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (HR 6003) would provide \$14.4 billion over five years to match state costs for high-speed systems. The Senate passed a similar bill last year. Even better news: The match would be 80% of state investments, the same as federal highway funds. Currently, public transportation projects are eligible for only a 50% match - a reflection of the 1950s highway mindset we can no longer afford.

The prospect of serious federal investment in high-speed passenger rail also answers one of the objections raised by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, whose strong statements of support for the system often have been larded with caveats. One of those has been his insistence that federal and private funding be found to help pay the cost of the system. Now that the federal government is getting on board -- in a big way -- the governor should be at least partly mollified.

And the prospects for private investment are good. The biggest reason is that the high-speed system pencils out as a money-maker, as has been the case in other nations that are far ahead of the United States in this area. Projections of annual revenue for the system by 2030 range from \$2.6 billion and \$3.9 billion. That's a pretty large and attractive pie.

High-speed rail makes sense for a number of reasons -- economic development, environmental improvements, reducing highway congestion, smarter growth patterns -- but here's one more: The cost of not building the system would be much greater than \$40 billion.

Opponents of the high-speed system often sound as if this is a choice between spending the \$40 billion or spending nothing. That notion is just dead wrong.

Take just one instance. Expanding existing highways and airports to meet the transportation needs projected to come with growth in the state's population would cost two or three times as much -- and would make air quality and congestion even worse. In some cases -- San Francisco, Los Angeles -- existing airports can't be expanded. Bigger and better freeways? Expanding Highway 99 in the Valley to an eight-lane interstate would cost as much as \$25 billion alone -- and that's just to serve the Valley, not the entire state.

With gasoline at \$4 per gallon and headed higher, degraded air quality and increasing congestion at airports and on our highways, high-speed rail just makes too much sense for Californians -- especially those of us living in the Valley -- to pass up.

[Opinion, San Francisco Chronicle, Sunday, May 18, 2008:](#)

### **Dan Kammen: Clean energy and America's future**

Daniel M. Kammen

Retooling America for a low-carbon and environmentally responsible future has been long in coming and will take decades to achieve, but clean energy industries have already become a major economic force in Europe and are poised to do the same here.

The explosion of financial and political interest in energy is overdue. As a start, Congress and the next president will have to address that the federal government has underinvested in energy research for decades. As a nation, we invest less in energy R&D and deployment than do a few large biotechnology firms. This is unacceptable.

Clean, low-carbon energy systems - energy efficiency, renewable energy, nuclear energy and fossil fuel systems with carbon capture and storage - today provide about 12 percent of global electricity. In 2007, an estimated \$71 billion was invested in new renewable energy capacity worldwide. Clean energy is now the third-largest slice of all venture capital investment, with almost 40 percent of this "cleantech" funding flowing through California.

Politically, global warming and clean energy legislation is big business, with about 200 members of the House and Senate now signatories on bills in this area. Presidential candidates Barack Obama, Hillary Rodham Clinton and John McCain are all running on platforms of energy autonomy. Each has significant plans to address global warming.

Over the next five decades, progress to meaningfully address the risk of significant climate change will require an estimated 80 percent - or greater - reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions. The United States and China together account for almost half of all greenhouse gas emissions, so the work needs to begin here.

At the same time, no nation is better positioned to adopt a low-carbon energy diet than we are. The United States not only has tremendous clean energy resources, but it has major companies looking to take advantage of a change in federal policy to compete in the global clean energy economy. The United States must mobilize the world's largest R&D if we are to address climate change.

The central challenge of the 21st century will be to replace the vast fossil-fuel infrastructure with a new economy based on low-carbon technologies. The issue on the table is the need to finance clean energy research programs and to build markets where low-carbon technologies are rewarded. In other words, we must begin to price pollution.

Courageous experiments can form the basis of needed federal legislation and leadership. The Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB32) here in California is an example. The Midwest is developing what promises to be an aggressive policy in a region with exceptional wind and biofuel resources.

The Democratic presidential candidates have each committed to a national energy portfolio of at least 25 percent of electricity from clean energy sources by 2025, and all three candidates are in favor of cap-and-trade systems to build greenhouse gas markets. It is vital, but politically challenging, to make sure that all emissions credits are auctioned, not given away to large polluters. We are now in a moment - perhaps a first - where a growing view exists that energy and climate could be front-burner issues for candidates and voters. The time is right to focus on the energy system we want, not on the one we had, and sadly, still have.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Sunday, May 18, 2008:](#)

### **Tejon agreement a 'great conservation achievement'**

Applaud the Tejon Ranch agreement for its promise to preserve about 90 percent of the largest private landholding in California and the largest private parcel of wilderness land in Southern California.

Applaud the company for its forward thinking protecting the habitat of endangered species and the public's access to what Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger described as a "vast California treasure."

Applaud for the landowner's enlightened approach to negotiating with citizens and environmental groups crafting an agreement that will allow Tejon to build homes and businesses on the remaining 10 percent of the ranch.

In return for those concessions, Tejon has received assurances from several major environmental groups that they will not oppose development plans.

That does not mean Tejon will get a "free ride" with these development plans. Many hurdles remain for the company to obtain local, state and federal approval for its Mountain Village housing and commercial project along I-5 and the expansion of its industrial project, which already includes the IKEA distribution warehouse in Kern County. Approval also will be needed for its 23,000-home Centennial planned community in northern Los Angeles County.

Elected and appointed officials in Kern and Los Angeles counties will take the lead on these projects protecting taxpayers' interests and helping shape the projects to enhance and protect the region's resources and quality of life. Tejon officials have promised to consult the company's environmental partners as they proceed with development plans. There also will be plenty of opportunities for the public to express concerns.

Tejon officials could have taken a different approach to moving forward with its development plans. Facing threatened opposition from environmental groups, they could have pumped up their chests, flexed their "private property rights" muscles and engaged in political and judicial warfare.

Too often we have seen this approach, even in Bakersfield's own backyard, leaving the landowner and public losers.

Instead, Tejon officials reached out to environmental groups, seeking to craft a project that would achieve a range of goals protecting species, wilderness land and the environment; clearing the path for limited development; and creating what Joel Reynolds, an attorney for the National Resources Defense Council, called "one of the great conservation achievements in California history."

"Owning so much land, there's certainly a duty," Robert A. Stine, president and chief executive of Tejon Ranch Co., told *The Californian*. "To whom much is given, much is expected. Where does development go? How do we take care of what nature has provided? That's what we've tried to do -- keep a balance, while moving forward for our shareholders."

In a nutshell, Tejon has agreed to set aside 178,000 acres, providing an option for public purchase of 62,000 additional acres 49,000 to create a state park, 10,000 to realign a segment of the Pacific Crest Trail and the rest to provide tours of sensitive habitat. Funding for land acquisition and maintenance must still be acquired.

Tejon officials also agreed to set back building in its Mountain Village from several sensitive cliffs to protect the endangered condors.

"When forward-thinking people are willing to sit down and make something positive happen, those old battle lines can be terminated," Schwarzenegger noted at a press conference announcing the agreement.

The promise of this agreement is great. Californians should hope for its success.

Tejon's enlightened approach should serve as a model for all landowners who must clear environmental hurdles and other public concerns in order to develop projects.

[Patterson Irrigator, Editorial, Saturday, May 17, 2008:](#)

### **City lawsuit may be necessary but costly**

The announcement last week that Patterson City Council plans to sue the county because of its agreement with the would-be developer of Crows Landing's former military base may have come as a shock to some. In many ways, however, the suit was more than a year in the making.

Repeatedly, Stanislaus County supervisors have refused to give weight to the West Side's frustrations while making decisions that will shake the entire region.

At issue is PCCP West Park, the 4,800-acre industrial development proposed by developer Gerry Kamilos and his partners. The project would eventually employ 37,000 people, with a container facility that would be linked by rail to the Port of Oakland.

City Council members oppose the project because of its size, the potential impact of trains and the consequences for local traffic and air quality.

Again and again, county leaders have said such issues will be addressed in the environmental phase, but they appear willing to cement a deal before knowing what those impacts are. And that's where the city's lawsuit comes into play. City leaders apparently think legal action is the only way to have their point of view addressed.

Regardless of the merits of the suit, the council should be conscious of the Pandora's box it has opened.

Litigation is always a serious matter. It is often costly - with taxpayers footing the bill, in this case - and never leads to improved relationships. One must hope that before taking this weighty step,

city leaders made sure they had exhausted all other means of dialogue with county staff and supervisors.

Nevertheless, it may be the only way to get the county to pull its head out of the sand and realize that Patterson and the communities of the West Side have legitimate issues that need to be resolved.

Ironically, the developer of the project city leaders oppose seems more willing to work with the city than the supervisors charged with overseeing the county and its residents. Council members said they were pleased to meet with Kamilos this week, when he discussed the possibility of trenching Las Palmas Avenue under railroad tracks to alleviate problems with trains.

Moving forward, it will be particularly important to see whether the firm charged with completing the environmental review of West Park has ties to the developer or is a non-biased third-party entity.

A proper report will truly determine whether the proposal is an asset or a liability for the West Side. If there is any way for the county to make that happen before the final developer agreement is in place, perhaps that could lead the city to drop its lawsuit - that is, unless the city is just using the suit as a stall tactic.

Dialogue is always better than litigation, and there appears to have been little two-way discussion between the city and the county from the get-go.

Kamilos seems to be setting a good example by meeting with city leaders. Perhaps if county leaders followed suit, a compromise could be reached that would benefit all parties involved. It could never hurt to try.

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Monday, May 19, 2008](#)

### **City not only 'smog' producer**

About the article "Choosing compost or clean air: Rule to lessen smog would hurt efforts to reduce trash at landfill," (May 10, Page A-1): I guess this means that Grover Environmental (part of Grover Landscape) will have to start using these new air filters, too. Grover has 67 acres out in Vernalis that they use to turn green waste into compost. I'm sure that they produce a lot more smog-producing agents than the city of Modesto does on its 30 acres.

I used to drive a big truck for them. My truck and three others and a couple subhaulers would go to Berkeley every morning and bring back 20 to 25 tons of green waste, five days a week. You do the math. They have trucks coming in there from all over the Bay Area all day, long-hauling in green waste.

CRAIG SAWYER, Modesto

[Letters to the editor, Fresno Bee, Sunday May 18, 2008:](#)

### **Don't waste gas**

How long did you have to look to find the woman on the front page of the Business section (May 16)? She fills up her car three times a week at \$83 a pop and is not a truck driver or salesman? A stay-at-home mom, who drives her preschooler around town? Is this really news or should it be in the funny papers?

My husband and I are on a fixed income, and, yes, gas prices are hurting. We do not stay at home, but just combine trips. Everyone I know is cutting back, which is not a bad thing. Andrea Williams can carpool, combine trips and maybe stay at home one day a week. Perhaps these tips could cut her fill-ups down to twice a week.

Until we are allowed to drill for our own oil, build refineries, build nuclear power plants and are able to quit buying refined gasoline (yes, gas, not just oil), we will have these problems.

The Bee needs to focus on why oil prices are so high. A series with objective reporting would help. Instead, you trot out the most extreme example of foolishness to make a point.

Mairi Wallace

Tulare

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses obesity contributes to climate change due to the need of more energy intake, use of petroleum and CO2. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

## **Obesos contribuyen al cambio climático**

### **Necesitan mayor energía y alimentos**

Notimex

Univision, Monday, May 18, 2008

Las personas con obesidad podrían ser un factor que contribuye a la crisis mundial de alimentos y al cambio climático, de acuerdo con un estudio de una universidad británica.

### **Más petróleo y CO2**

Expertos de la Escuela de Higiene y Medicina Tropical de Londres afirman que las personas obesas necesitan 20 por ciento más calorías que el resto de la población para satisfacer sus necesidades diarias de energía.

El mayor consumo de alimentos tiene un efecto doble, según el estudio publicado en la revista científica *The Lancet* y reproducido por la cadena BBC.

En primer lugar, señala, el aumento en la demanda alimentaria eleva la producción y ello significa que los procesos agrícolas usan más petróleo para satisfacerla, lo que contribuye a elevar el costo del combustible.

El costo del combustible luego pasa al costo de los alimentos y hace más difícil para las áreas de economía adquirirlos.

Además, según el estudio, las personas con obesidad tienden a usar más los transportes y su peso requiere más combustible, lo que tiene un impacto ambiental y eleva los precios de los alimentos, ya que el transporte y la agricultura usan petróleo.

Phil Edwards, coautor del estudio, considera que las políticas de transporte urbano que promueven caminar y usar bicicletas podrían ayudar a reducir los precios de los alimentos, al disminuir la demanda global de petróleo e inducir a tener un peso normal.

Agregó, en extractos del texto reproducidos por la BBC, que un uso menor del automóvil reduciría la emisión de gases de efecto de invernadero, aunque "no se debe pasar por alto la importancia de una política de transportes y alimentos".

Por su parte, el doctor David Haslam, experto en obesidad afirmó que es exagerado y discriminatorio culpar de todo a las personas obesas, pues las causas del cambio climático y del aumento de los precios de los alimentos son "algo mucho más complejo".

Datos de la Organización Mundial de la Salud pronostican que el número de obesos en el mundo llegará a los 700 millones en 2015.