

## **Tree study clears the air**

**UC Davis researchers find tall evergreens, planted in rows, filter toxic auto exhaust and disperse it.**

By Chris Bowman

Sacramento Bee, Tuesday, May 6, 2008

UC Davis researchers say they have confirmed in laboratory experiments that certain trees are highly effective in filtering and dispersing some of the most toxic particles in auto exhaust.

The findings suggest health risks in neighborhoods and schools near heavy traffic can be cut significantly by flanking the roadways with tall evergreens.

If the cleansing effect holds under further testing, roadside tree "walls" could be a relatively inexpensive, low-tech and aesthetic strategy for mitigating the sooty aerosols wafting off urban freeways, according to Breathe California, a nonprofit public health advocacy group that sponsored the University of California, Davis, study.

"We would like to do more studies and test it in the real world, to show that it works for a lot of people in lots of places," said Koro Titus, spokeswoman for the group's Sacramento chapter.

The Davis study is considered the first to test the theory that certain trees can protect people from inhaling invisible exhaust specks, said Thomas Cahill, a retired UC Davis atmospheric physicist who led the volunteer study.

"The very factors that make these particles dangerous to breathe make them stick to needles and leaves," said Cahill, an international authority on analyzing air pollutants.

The particles are small enough to evade the lung's defenses and enter the bloodstream, raising the risk of heart disease as well as respiratory illness.

The tree research stemmed from a 2006 Cahill study showing that the levels of exhaust particles from six-lane Watt Avenue bordering Arden Middle School were as high as those near Interstate 5 in downtown Sacramento.

Cahill said he had a hunch that rows of trees, when fully grown, would capture and disperse the soot. At his suggestion, parent and community volunteers planted walls of redwoods, live oaks and deodar cedars donated by the Sacramento Tree Foundation.

Cahill, meanwhile, tested his hypothesis at UC Davis' air pollution sampling and analytical laboratory. Researchers put fresh cuttings of the same evergreens species in a 60-foot wind tunnel.

Highway safety flares generated pollution similar to diesel exhaust. The particle levels were recorded before and after the dirtied air passed through the branches.

"They stick better than expected," Cahill said of the particles.

He plans to present the test results at the Air and Waste Management Association annual meeting in Portland, Ore., June 24-27.

The UC Davis study found redwood trees to be the most effective of three species tested at removing particle pollutants, followed by the longer-needled deodar cedar and the broad-leaf live oak.

These species were selected for their resilience and fast growth rate and because they keep their foliage in the winter, when concentrations of particle pollutants peak.

In a breeze of less than 3 mph, branches from all three tree types removed 65 percent to 85 percent of the particles, according to the test results.

The particles, so tiny that they stay aloft as an aerosol, stick to the surfaces of the trees' leaves and needles and eventually drop to the ground in concentrations that do not harm the oaks and cedars, Cahill said.

Once they become tall enough, the trees planted in rows should act as smokestacks, channeling the hot vehicle exhausts up and over Arden Middle School's sports fields, thereby dispersing the plume, Cahill said.

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

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

### **Trees show cleansing powers**

By Chris Bowman / McClatchy Newspapers  
In the Fresno Bee, Tuesday, May 6, 2008

SACRAMENTO -- University of California at Davis researchers say they have confirmed that certain trees, including the coast redwood, are highly effective in filtering out some of the most toxic particles in vehicle exhaust.

Studies have shown that planting these trees along busy roads and in median strips would be an inexpensive way to keep neighboring schoolchildren and residents from breathing exhaust particles. That pollution is known to increase the risk of heart and lung disease.

Davis researchers have been probing connections between such particles and public health.

A growing body of studies shows that "very fine" and "ultra-fine" particles from vehicle exhaust can slip past the body's defenses to reach the bloodstream, potentially causing heart attacks and death.

But with a defense line of tall trees, researchers said, the particles can stick to leaves and needles and eventually drop to the ground in concentrations that do not harm other trees, such as oaks and cedars.

### **Vegetable oil fuels cars -- and tax bills**

**Drivers who use cooking grease to run their diesel vehicles often don't realize they're supposed to obtain permits and pay a state tax on each gallon. Even the governor has to comply.**

By Evan Halper, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer  
L.A. Times, Tuesday, May 6, 2008

Dave Eck, a Half Moon Bay mechanic, had attracted a media spotlight with his fleet of vehicles fueled by used fryer grease from a local chowder house. So when Sacramento called, he figured officials wanted advice on promoting alternative fuels.

Not at all. The government rang to notify Eck that he was a tax cheat. He was scolded for failing to get a "diesel fuel supplier's license," reporting quarterly how many gallons of grease he burns, and paying a tax on each gallon.

"All of a sudden they nailed me for a road tax," said Eck, who drives a Hummer converted to run on vegetable oil. "I said, 'Not a problem. I'll do my part. But what do I get? At least let me into the carpool lane.' "

No such luck. The state offered Eck only a potentially large fine -- and not just for failing to pay taxes. He can also get in trouble for carting kitchen grease away from eateries without a license from the state Meat and Poultry Inspection Branch.

Or for not having at least \$1 million in liability insurance, in case he spills some of the stuff. Or for not getting permission from the state Air Resources Board to burn fat in the first place.

The regulations are so burdensome that even Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, trying to set an example for Californians by driving a Hummer that burns cooking oil he buys at Costco, had not complied.

Schwarzenegger, who has said that the exhaust from his Hummer smells so much like French fries that his passengers get hunger pangs, was unaware that he was required to send Sacramento an 18-cent road tax for every gallon of kitchen oil he burned, according to spokesman Aaron McLear. After The Times raised the issue, McLear said the governor would pay the taxes he owed.

The governor's staff says it is working on making it easier to drive using vegetable oil without being an outlaw.

"We are very interested in making sure people who have these kinds of vehicles are able to comply as easily as possible," McLear said.

But environmentalists are frustrated. "It is ridiculous that we live in what is presumed to be one of the greenest states in the nation, yet we have the most antiquated laws to deal with green energy," said Josh Tickell, an alternative-fuels advocate and filmmaker whose documentary "Fields of Fuel" recently won the audience award at the Sundance Film Festival.

"Everyone I know wants to do the right thing by the law," he said. "But the state is not set up to even clearly provide information to folks."

The veggie oil crowd is hardly on the radical fringe anymore. Garages report being overwhelmed with conversion business, and restaurants throughout the Southland are contending with raids on their used-grease tanks.

Advocates say more than 250,000 Americans are running their vehicles on cooking oil, with the biggest concentration in California. Drivers do it for different reasons: to protect the environment, to reduce dependence on foreign oil or to save money. Those using vegetable oil say they do so for as little as \$1 a gallon, even though grease yields better mileage than gasoline and about the same as diesel fuel.

Almost all of them are doing it underground. The state tax board has processed fewer than 70 of the required "fuel supplier" licenses, according to a spokeswoman. Most of those are for businesses selling commercial biodiesel, a more mainstream fuel that is typically mixed with as much as 80% petroleum.

State agencies say they have reasons for doing things the way they do. Tax authorities say biofuel drivers need to pay for using California's roads, just like everyone else, and there is no simple way to collect from those who don't go to the gas pumps, where road taxes are normally levied.

The meat and poultry agency is worried about toxic spills. Officials with the air board are troubled by kitchen-grease emissions, especially when spewed by vintage diesel Mercedes-Benzes, the make of choice for many vegetable oil converts.

Matthew Tiffany, a 26-year-old student and environmentalist in Monrovia, tried to help some 20 veggie oil drivers go legal and found the task nearly impossible.

Tiffany, who fills his 1981 diesel Mercedes with fryer grease from a neighborhood Japanese restaurant, launched a cooperative called Good Earth Grease Haulers. His mission was to bring veggie oil drivers into the mainstream.

But Good Earth Grease Haulers quickly collapsed, after Tiffany got tangled in red tape trying to help members comply with license requirements.

"They want us to follow all these rules that were set up to regulate people who transport hundreds of gallons a day," Tiffany said.

He recently appeared before a legislative committee to urge lawmakers to exempt veggie oil users from having to pay for a license after the Meat and Poultry Inspection Branch raised the cost from \$75 to \$300.

Assemblyman Doug LaMalfa (R-Richvale), a rice farmer who is handy with car engines, expressed bewilderment at the hoops Tiffany had to jump through to get permission to transport a few gallons of used fryer grease.

"Why do you even tell anyone you are taking it?" he asked.

Tiffany reminded the assemblyman that it was required by law.

Although most drivers burning kitchen oil have managed to evade enforcement -- government agencies say they have handed out few citations -- those who attract attention to themselves by promoting the alternative fuel tend to hear from regulators.

Craig Reece, owner of PlantDrive in Berkeley, which sells kits to convert diesel engines to run on vegetable oil, said he got a call from state officials about paying the road tax. He has since been sending the tax forms to all his customers, but he figures only a few are actually registering with the state and keeping logs of how much oil they burn.

"A lot of my customers think this fuel should be exempt from taxes," he said. "They feel they ought to get something for the climate-change-neutral aspect of it."

Illinois, North Carolina, Texas, Rhode Island and Indiana have exempted drivers burning kitchen grease from paying such a tax. In North Carolina, the move came at the behest of a state senator who motors around in a small car powered by soybean oil. The legislator said it wasn't paying the taxes that bothered him so much as the hours required to do the paperwork.

Terry Tamminen, an advisor to Schwarzenegger on energy and environmental policy, acknowledged that California has been slow to adapt.

"When you go through a period of change, there is always a clunkiness to the bureaucracy," he said.

But he said the state should not overlook the value of alternative-fuel pioneers.

"Our mentality is to look for the next silver bullet" to replace petroleum, Tamminen said by telephone while driving a car fueled by compressed natural gas. "But there is no silver bullet, only buckshot. We are going to need every one of these silver buckshots to be developed as best it can."

## **Visalia gets Vi-Cycle pilot program rolling** **Reconditioned bikes will be available to local businesses**

BY GERALD CARROLL

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Tuesday, May 6, 2008

Visalia bicycles — now known as "Vi-Cycles" — have become a reality, but is it possible to keep them from disappearing?

"I remember the city of Fresno tried something like this, using yellow bicycles, and quickly most of the bikes came up missing," said Amy Shuklian, one of four Visalia City Council members who voted unanimously Monday to approve the year-long pilot program to recycle unclaimed, donated and recovered bicycles, paint them green and sell them for \$25 each to downtown businesses for use by employees and customers.

Councilman Bob Link was absent from the meeting.

Shawn Ogletree, who came up with the name "Vi-Cycle" and the head of the city's natural resource conservation division, has an answer for the potential theft problem.

"These bikes really stick out the way they're painted and marked," Ogletree said. "Police can easily spot them."

But even if they are stolen, they would likely be recovered again and simply recycled right back into the program, Ogletree added.

The plan calls for taking adult-size bicycles turned in to or found by Visalia police or other city agencies, waiting 90 days for owners to claim them and — if they aren't claimed — sending them to the California Department of Correction's Substance Abuse and Treatment Facility in Corcoran to be repaired and painted by inmates "all free of any charge to the city," Ogletree said.

Using the bikes would cut air pollution downtown from cars the downtown workers using the bikes might otherwise use to get around downtown, Ogletree said.

In addition, officials said, businesses may opt to allow some customers to use their Vi-Cycles.

"Use of the bikes will also save parking downtown," said Nathan Garza, a technician who will be helping to implement the program for Visalia.

Businesses will have to apply in writing to be a part of the program.

A local pawn shop has agreed to donate 30 bicycles immediately, and a local bicycle-repair shop has offered to check the restored bicycles to ensure they meet safety standards, he added.

Further, the Jeff Barnes Brain Injury Organization has donated 50 bicycle helmets for the program. All bicycle riders younger than 18 are required by state law to wear protective headgear.

An odometer on each bike will track miles as it is used. Statistics will be compiled by Ogletree's office to estimate air-pollution reductions and fuel savings.

### **GETTING A VI-CYCLE**

To apply to buy Vi-Cycles, call 713-4530.

There's a limit of two per business.

### **VI-CYCLES ELIGIBILITY**

Businesses located in downtown Visalia are eligible for a one-year pilot program to acquire reconditioned "Vi-Cycles" for use by employees and customers. "Downtown" is defined by areas:

- South of Murray Avenue.
- North of Mineral King Avenue.
- East of Conyer Street.
- West of Ben Maddox Way.

### **Pollution, noise could accompany race track**

Staff reports

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Tuesday, May 6, 2008

Air pollution and noise would accompany a 711-acre motor sports complex planned for southeast Tulare, according to a draft environmental impact report released Monday.

The project, which would cost between \$300 million and \$400 million, is planned for land next to the International Agri-Center. According to the draft of the environmental impact report for the Tulare Motor Sports Complex, significant, unavoidable effects to the environment would go beyond air and noise issues and include:

- Added light and glare.
- Loss of farm land.
- Substantial amounts of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Added traffic.

The problems would lead to costly upgrades, according to the report, which will be open to public comment for a 45-day period before it moves on to further review by city officials.

Mark Kielty, Tulare's planning director, said nothing in the report took him by surprise. The report includes measures that could ease noise and air pollution, he said.

Those steps include working with experts in those fields to develop detailed plans to minimize the effects.

"It's self-explanatory," Kielty said.

The report, however, adds fuel to the debate over the controversial motor sports project.

Supporters point to thousands of new jobs and millions in added revenue dollars annually. Opponents point to a perceived loss of Tulare's small-town, farming culture and, now, environmental effects.

### **Air**

The complex has the potential to emit toxic air contaminants, which can ultimately lead to serious illnesses and even cancer, the report states.

But the report also states that the emission of toxic chemicals does not automatically lead to illness — and the word "potential" is used throughout the section on health risks.

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District spokeswoman Brenda Turner said the agency usually doesn't take a stance for or against projects like race tracks.

"[But] generally, a race track is going to kick up dust and create nitrogen oxides, not only from the racing but from people attending," she said.

### **Noise**

Naturally, vehicle and crowd noise created at the complex would have the greatest effect on nearby workers and residents.

Tony Nunes III, whose family dairy is just southeast of the proposed site, had not read a copy of the draft report as of Monday.

Nunes & Sons Dairy is named exclusively in the report because, when major racing events are held at the complex, the noise at the dairy would exceed city noise standards.

"It's a huge thing," Nunes said, "and most Tulare residents don't know how close it is to being done."

He declined further comment until after he reads the report.

Plans for the complex plans also include 350 condominiums to be built next to the race tracks. But occupants would be expected to know what they're getting into, according to the report.

"The condominiums are targeted for people interested in living in the track environment who would expect exposure to racing-related noise," the report states.

Staff writers Luis Hernandez, Victor Garcia and Mike Hazelwood contributed to this report.

## **Debris burning suspended**

By The Record

Stockton Record, Tuesday, May 6, 2008

SAN ANDREAS - All yard debris burning is suspended in Calaveras and Tuolumne counties as well as on the eastern edge of San Joaquin County effective at 8 a.m. today.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit announced the closure as necessary because of an unusually dry spring and the large number of debris burns that have escaped and caused larger fires in recent weeks.

"Experience has shown that suspending debris burns is an effective way of preventing wildfire escapes, especially as California enters a period of hotter and drier weather," Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit Chief Mike Noonan said in a written statement. "Although all fires cannot be prevented through a burning suspension, their numbers can be significantly reduced."

Noonan's declaration suspends all burning permits for homeowners and contractors. Property owners who wish to burn debris would have to prove to CDF officials that the burn is necessary for public health or safety. Any such burning sites would have to be inspected and approved before the permit would be issued.

## **Supervisor hopeful blasts Rosedale development**

BY JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, May 6, 2008

Cliff Thompson took the offensive Monday against his opponent in the race for the 4th District supervisor's seat.

The Taft city councilman rounded up some Rosedale-area ranch residents and hosted a campaign news conference near the site of a home development recently approved by the county on Nord Avenue near Johnson Road.

Thompson said Supervisor Ray Watson, whom he's trying to beat in the June primary, blew it when he approved quarter-acre home lots for the Soper Homes project.

There are old oil sumps and kit fox dens on the property, Thompson said.

And, he argued, Watson should have agreed with a Kern County Planning Commission recommendation for one-acre lots on the 79-acre property.

"I believe we need to develop our community," Thompson said. But "not on the back of our [air quality](#)."

Thompson said Soper's 79 acres —and three companion projects that go before supervisors today — would produce less air pollution and traffic congestion if fewer homes were built.

Thompson is wrong, Watson later fired back.

Low-density development, Watson said, "eats up farmland at four to 10 times the rate ... it should be eaten up." Thompson doesn't consider the larger picture, Watson said.

Lower-density development forces people to move farther away from shopping, schools and jobs to find housing, he said. That means more miles driven, more air pollution and more traffic congestion.

Higher-density development is always the better environmental option, Watson said.

"You're not going nearly as far out in the hinterlands to serve the needs of people who need a home," he said.

As for the oil and kit foxes, Watson said, the county's environmental studies of the project did not find the problems Thompson says are on the property.

Thompson said that's because the consultants studied other sites to find out what this project was like.

Kern County Planning Director Ted James said there are processes by which any oil or kit foxes found on the site can be removed prior to construction of homes.

Monday's debate isn't likely to end. Watson and the other four county supervisors take up the four companion projects to the Soper Homes plan this afternoon.

Thompson said he will be there to comment.

And neighbors irked by Watson's approval of the Soper project plan to be there, too.

Watson said he disagrees with the Kern County Planning Commission's decision to reject the other three projects out-of-hand.

It's true Bakersfield has approved 50,000 to 60,000 unbuilt home lots.

But people who want to move forward with their projects should be allowed to make their shot in the current market, he said.

"Why should we deny their development? We still are operating in a market-driven economy," Watson said. "This is not Russia."

Thompson, despite his critique of Watson, said he wouldn't agree with a complete ban of even the Soper Homes plan.

"I believe in growth but I believe it had to be good," he said.

## **Supervisor candidate now fighting with ideas, not fists**

BY JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, May 6, 2008

Cliff Thompson is a fighter.

When he was younger, his fights were the kind you settled with fists.

But somewhere around the time he became a Taft city councilman, Thompson stopped using his fists and started working with words and ideas.

Now Thompson, 57, wants to take the 4th District supervisor's seat away from incumbent Ray Watson.

And he plans to do it by fighting.

### **A COLORFUL PAST**

Thompson is a Taft native, a former oil rig worker and, most recently, an infill homebuilder.

He's built up a colorful past, a household name and reputation as a bulldog in his hometown.

Thompson sees that history — so different from his opponent's career as a television station executive — as his strength. But it's also a liability.

Thompson's passionate, fire-filled nature have gotten him into no small amount of trouble.

He has a criminal record stretching from 1970 to 1998, filled with a little too much booze, a fair amount of bad judgment and a brawl or two.

Thompson was once arrested for building a high-powered pellet gun and shooting it off in his garage. The charge — negligent discharge of a firearm — was dismissed.

In 1998 he put fist to face when his wife's ex-boyfriend started talking trash one evening.

Thompson said he asked the guy twice, nicely, to respect Caroline. When the gentleman didn't offer up the requested respect, he said, the pushing started and the punching followed.

The conviction for fighting in public was expunged from his record after he served a quiet year of probation.

Thompson said he has tried since that last scrap to re-direct his energy into positive channels.

Politics, he said, has been life-changing for him.

"I think I directed my passion to being on the city council," he said. "Being on the council has made me a better person."

Watson said he hasn't made much of Thompson's past.

"I'm focused on (sharing) my own record," Watson said.

### **TAFT CITY COUNCIL**

Thompson's scrappy nature hasn't disappeared with age and the addition of some wisdom.

He was elected to the Taft council in November 2000 and immediately plunged into the middle of a bitter controversy that split the community.

He still calls that period the toughest of his political career.

It all started after Taft hired consultant Gretchen Belli in July 2000 to help Taft City Manager Eric Ziegler flesh out a plan to rehabilitate the Sunset railroad line between Taft and Bakersfield. Ziegler believed the move would revitalize the city's economy.

Thompson and fellow council freshman Les Clark III started asking questions about the bills Belli, a former San Francisco socialite, was submitting to Taft for her work.

Bills, it was discovered later, corresponded to personal payments she was making for political contributions, house furnishings, legal bills and lavish hotel stays.

Thompson, Clark and Mayor Ron Waldrop eventually fired Ziegler and ended the relationship with Belli.

"That year I got death threats. My wife lost her job over it," he said.

Voters booted Thompson out of office in a November 2001 recall.

But Thompson wasn't done.

"When one door closes, some people quit," Thompson said. "I never do."

## REBOUND

One year later, as criminal charges and a civil case launched by the city of Taft against Belli hit the courts, Thompson ran for Taft City Council again.

He won.

Belli was convicted of bilking Taft and Taft won its civil case against her.

Thompson felt vindicated.

But winning wasn't the reward, he said.

What makes him proud is how far Taft has come since then.

"When I got re-elected in 2002, the community was split down the middle," Thompson said. "Six years later we're all pulling together because we all think we have a future."

Current Taft Mayor Paul Linder doesn't always see eye-to-eye with Thompson but said he can still respect the man he calls a "bulldog."

"I think Cliff is extremely passionate about his community service," Linder said. "Sometimes he gets so involved, and we all do this, that he can't see the forest for the trees."

But Linder said Thompson's passion is a critical part of a good mix of viewpoints on the current Taft council.

## THE RACE

Thompson has raised the issues of roads, air quality and public safety as his top causes on the campaign trail. He's called for Highway 119 improvements, [worried about dairy impacts on air](#) and says he helped hire more police officers in Taft.

But much of his campaign so far has been aimed at pointing out the things that he thinks Watson is doing wrong.

He calls Watson a "drive-by supervisor," accuses him of supporting dairies that pollute Kern County air, questions Watson's decision to support a county lawsuit against former Sheriff Carl Sparks and his commitment to improving Highway 119 between Taft and Bakersfield.

Watson responds with a long list of things he's accomplished, including supporting a group environmental report on all dairy projects in the county and asking Kern Council of Governments, in the past couple weeks, to move forward on funding a widening of Highway 119. He said suing Sparks was the hardest thing he had to do on the board, but it had to be done to protect the county's constitutional powers.

As for the "drive-by supervisor" moniker, Watson has said being a supervisor is about getting results, not visiting communities just to shake hands.

Thompson thinks his spit-fire reputation might fit well with the Kern County Board of Supervisors. But he's got to beat Watson first.

And that, even with an endorsement from state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, won't be easy for Thompson.

Kern County's 4th District covers the west end of the county — basically everything from western Bakersfield to the San Luis Obispo County line.

But to win the district you have to compete in Bakersfield, where most of the votes are.

And Bakersfield is considered Watson's turf.

## **Senate passes global warming bill**

By Susan Haigh, Associated Press Writer

In the Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, May 06, 2008

HARTFORD, Conn. - Connecticut moved closer Monday toward becoming the fifth state to adopt mandatory limits on global warming pollution.

The Senate, by a 35-0 vote, gave final legislative approval to a bill that puts caps on emission levels. The bill, already approved by the House of Representatives, moves to Gov. M. Jodi Rell's desk for her signature.

Proponents acknowledged that a small state like Connecticut passing such legislation won't solve the problem, but said they hope it will start a trend.

"This is another state initiative that we hope will become a leading light toward federal policy," Senate Majority Leader Martin Looney, D-New Haven, said.

In a written statement, Rell, a Republican, said she'll consider signing the bill.

"This measure prescribes laudable goals, but as is the case with every piece of legislation, I will review it in its final form to ensure that the goals are achievable in a cost effective manner," she said.

Connecticut passed legislation in 2004 that established benchmarks for air pollution reduction. But that law was voluntary and has not produced the needed cuts.

The new bill would require total emissions to be capped at 10 percent below 1990 levels by 2020. It would also require emissions levels to be cut 80 percent below 2001 levels by 2050. State agencies would be required to adopt policies to meet the new caps.

California, New Jersey, Hawaii and Washington State have passed similar measures.

Connecticut's bill also requires the state's Department of Environmental Protection to take an inventory of emissions and recommend ways to reduce the emissions. Beginning in 2012 and for every three years, DEP must list specific actions that have been taken.

Other parts of the bill require the Department of Transportation to investigate expanding high-speed and light rail systems in Connecticut; requires DEP to study low-carbon fuel standard in the state to reduce carbon content of fuels; and directs the Governor's Steering Committee on Climate Change to assess the impact of climate change on the state and recommend ways to mitigate the effects.

"This legislation creates a critical mechanism for Connecticut to better prepare for the very serious impacts that sea level rise and other effects of climate change will have on our human and natural communities," said David Sutherland, director of government relations for The Nature Conservancy.

He said the state is likely to lose neighborhoods and coastal wetlands over the next few decades because of the rising sea level.

The Nature Conservancy is part of a coalition of environmental organizations pushing for the bill.

--

On the Net: <http://www.cga.ct.gov> House Bill 5600

## **Exxon to build carbon-capture test plant \$100 million project set to start this summer in gas-rich Wyoming**

The Associated Press

MSN News, Monday, May 05, 2008

HOUSTON - Exxon Mobil Corp. plans to spend more than \$100 million to build a plant in Wyoming that will allow it to finish developing and test technology that could make capturing and storing carbon dioxide more affordable and open up vast new sources of natural gas.

The Irving, Texas-based company said Monday it will build the plant near LaBarge, Wyo., beginning this summer. Startup is scheduled for late 2009 and testing is expected to take place over a couple of years.

The plant will employ Exxon Mobil's Controlled Freeze Zone technology, which uses cryogenics to remove carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide and other unwanted compounds from methane — a costly undertaking at present.

Exxon Mobil said CFZ technology involves a single-step removal process, which makes it far simpler and, as such, far less costly.

The company has been working on the technology for about 25 years. It would be particularly useful in "sour gas" fields in places such as Wyoming where high concentrations of carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulfide make methane recovery an economic challenge.

"This technology will assist in the development of additional gas resources ... and facilitate the application of carbon capture and storage to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," said Exxon Mobil senior vice president Mark Albers.

State officials in Wyoming, which has benefited significantly from a natural gas boom, have been keenly interested in capturing carbon dioxide emissions, which are widely blamed for global warming.

The Wyoming Legislature this year passed bills hashing out landowners' rights to store carbon dioxide and similar gases underneath the ground and setting a regulatory framework for carbon management.

In Exxon Mobil's CFZ process, the carbon dioxide and other components are discharged as a high-pressure liquid stream for injection into underground storage. In some cases, Exxon Mobil will sell the carbon dioxide to oil and gas companies that use it underground to recover fossil fuels that can't be brought to the surface using conventional drilling practices.

The goal, Exxon Mobil said, is to use the Wyoming plant to advance the technology to commercial application. Exxon Mobil operates a natural gas processing plant in LaBarge.

## **Vog casts haze over Hawaii**

### **Crops, humans suffering from exposure to toxic gas**

By Audrey McAvoy, AP

MSN News, Monday, May 05, 2008

OCEAN VIEW, Hawaii - For eight years, Tony and Sam Bayaoa have grown thousands of bright red, yellow and pink protea flowers on their farm. Then last month, Kilauea volcano opened a new vent and began spewing double the usual amount of toxic gas.

Now about 70 percent of their crop is dried, brown and brittle.

"The first reaction was — did someone poison the plants?" said Tony Bayaoa, whose two-acre farm is 35 miles from the volcano. "I've lost my livelihood."

Big Island crops are shriveling as sulfur dioxide from Kilauea wafts over them and envelops them in "vog," or volcanic smog. People are wheezing, and schoolchildren are being kept indoors during recess. High gas levels led Hawaii Volcanoes National Park to close several days this month, forcing the evacuation of thousands of visitors.

Residents of this volcanic island are used to toxic gas. But this haze is so bad that farmers are thinking about growing different crops, and many people are worrying about their health.

Kirk Brewer, 33, an electrician who moved to the Big Island in 2006 from Southern California, blames his headaches and wife Tracy's itchy skin, sore throat and runny nose on the vog.

"It's a bummer when you go to the other islands and see how clear and blue it is, but we'll just deal with it," Brewer said.

When educator Ann Peterson of Kona went the bank last week, she and the teller were making the same noises in their throats. They looked at each other and said in unison, "Vog!"

Kilauea on the Big Island has been erupting continuously since 1983. But in mid-March, a new vent formed at the summit, giving Kilauea two large sulfur dioxide outlets instead of one.

[Sulfur dioxide, a pollutant that is also generated by burning coal and oil, can lead to asthma and other respiratory illnesses and aggravate lung and heart disease. When combined with dust and sunlight, it makes vog. Mixed with atmospheric moisture, it produces acid rain.](#)

Exceptionally thick gray-white vog has hovered over parts of the Big Island for weeks, particularly those areas downwind of the crater. The wind has blown vog to Oahu, some 200 miles to the north, bathing Honolulu in a light haze. (The vog is no threat to the U.S. mainland, some 2,500 miles away.)

Some crops are doing fine. Coffee and macadamia nuts, two of the Big Island's mainstays, appear unaffected. Koa and ohia trees are healthy, but eucalyptus leaves are turning brown, as are Asiatic lilies.

Protea may be the hardest hit, though experts don't know why. The hand-size blossoms are used in tropical floral arrangements and are a \$1.8 million-a-year business in the islands.

Kelvin Sewake of the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture said he is not sure if it is the gas or acid rain that is killing the plants. He said Big Island protea growers have always suffered sulfur dioxide "burns," but he has never seen it this bad.

Dan Wegner, the biggest protea farmer in Ocean View, with about 15 acres, said he usually records \$70,000 in annual sales. This year, he is not sure if he will reap half that.

"This is taking my viable business right now and putting it right in the dumper. I don't know what I'm going to do," Wegner said. "It's frightening."

One reason the vog is worse is that the new vent is farther inland than the older Puu Oo vent on the mountain's seaside slope. While gas from the Puu Oo vent often blows out to sea, the new plume is more likely to hit farms and communities in concentrated form.

The county has issued only two temporary, voluntary evacuation advisories for Ocean View and Pahala, which have a combined population of just over 4,000. The vog that has settled over the Big Island has little or no odor.

The emergency room at Ka'u Hospital in Pahala is seeing an average of three people a day — up from two — with symptoms such as coughing and shortness of breath.

Dr. Cliff Field, ER director, said he is more concerned about the potential long-term harm. Large amounts of vog may cause emphysema and chronic lung disease over time. Still, he questioned whether living next to Kilauea is any worse than living in a city like Los Angeles.

Sally Ancheta of the American Lung Association of Hawaii said people should stay inside when the vog is bad. But she added: "I would not recommend anybody leaving. It's too good of a place to live."

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, May 6, 2008:](#)

### **It's common sense, warming is real**

I have a question regarding global warming and man-made pollution. If a person were to lock themselves in a garage with the car running, would you ask if the death was caused from the degradation of the air quality or was it a natural death because all humans die? If you dump garbage in your home, your home

becomes a garbage dump. It's not fear and panic or a scam ("Distracted from real environmental issues," April 30 and "Global warming not a crisis," April 28, Letters); it's plain and simple common sense. Open your eyes and your mind.

JOYCE SMITH, Riverbank

[Sacramento Bee, Letters to the Editor, Tuesday, May 6, 2008:](#)

### **Environmental claims lack merit**

Re "How acting locally can effect global change," May 5: How can Roger Dickinson and Larry Phillips see Sacramento as ready to face global warming?

We have not complied with the EPA Air Quality Standards that were to be met by 2005. We have steadily increased traffic commute times by allowing developments to be built away from the city core. Sacramento will face water shortages. Where is Sacramento acting on its commitments as a member of the Climate Communities?

One hundred trucks driving on natural gas, 9,000 homes using methane, and one office using solar does not make a dent in our air quality. These three things do not make up for the supervisors allowing thousands of homes to be built away from services and away from jobs.

It is time Sacramento acted responsibly and locally to counter the effects of global change.

- Jacqueline T. DeLu, Sacramento

### **Put the brakes on drive-thrus**

Re "Fast track to poor health," April 29: Millions of Americans use fast-food drive-thrus every day because they are too lazy to get out of their cars to pick up their artery-clogging, high-fat food.

Our government tells us that money from oil is the No. 1 funding for terrorists. Our own citizens either don't know that they are contributing to the death of our soldiers, or they don't care. Plus they pollute the air when using the drive-thru -- billions more for health care, asthma, etc.

Please do not use the fast-food drive-thrus. Help save the lives of our armed forces. It could be someone from your family, or a neighbor.

- Ed Zajac, Orangevale

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the effects of the Chilean volcano ashes on Patagonia, Argentina. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

### **Cenizas de volcán chileno afectan Patagonia argentina**

Houston Chronicle en Español, Tuesday, May 06, 2008

Una densa nube de ceniza, proveniente del volcán chileno Chaitén, en erupción desde el 2 de mayo, cubría el martes a un tercio de la provincia del Chubut, en la Patagonia argentina, y podría llegar hasta la provincia de Buenos Aires, informó el martes la agencia oficial Télam.

La agencia privada Noticias Argentinas informó, desde Chubut, que la Gendarmería Nacional (policía fronteriza) había enviado varios autobuses para recoger a pobladores de la localidad chilena de Futaleufú, evacuados por la erupción del Chaitén.

La agencia agregó que la presidenta Michelle Bachelet había acordado el traslado en la víspera, en comunicación telefónica con su colega argentina Cristina Fernández.

El gobernador de Chubut, Mario Das Neves, partió nuevamente el martes desde la capital provincial de Rawson, sobre la costa atlántica, rumbo a la zona Oeste, afectada por el fenómeno volcánico, para ponerse al frente del Plan de Contingencia preparado para hacerle frente.

En declaraciones a la prensa el lunes por la noche, Das Neves dijo que el fenómeno "puede durar una hora, un día, una semana, un mes. Tenemos un tercio del territorio de Chubut cubierto de cenizas".

La agencia Télam, citando un informe del Servicio Meteorológico Nacional, informó que la ceniza, impulsada por un cambio en la dirección del viento, podría alcanzar el sur de la provincia de Buenos Aires.

El geólogo Alberto Caselli, del grupo de estudio y seguimiento de volcanes activos de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, declaró al diario La Nación que "la columna de cenizas expulsada por el volcán tiene una altura de más de 15 kilómetros".

La ciudad turística de Esquel, al pie de la cordillera de los Andes, a 2.000 kilómetros al sudoeste de Buenos Aires, es la más afectada por el fenómeno. Sus calles y casas están cubiertas de ceniza.

El director de defensa civil de Chubut, Evaristo Melo, recomendó a los vecinos de Esquel y otras poblaciones cercanas que si salen de sus hogares, lo hagan con mascarillas sobre boca y nariz.

"La prolongada exposición ante el material en suspensión puede provocar complicaciones en las vías respiratorias", explicó.

Melo indicó, sin embargo, que "no hay gases tóxicos en el aire ni materiales contaminantes en el agua. A pesar de la preocupación de la gente, quiero aclarar que el agua que se consume en la región es potable y no fue contaminada, ya que se captada en napas subterráneas".