

Air District review of confined animal facilities continues

By Alex Cantatore

Turlock Journal, Wednesday, March 11, 2009

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's plans to tighten regulations on farmers who raise chicken, sheep, goats, swine, horses, and cows are moo-ving along, as the Fresno District office held the first scoping meeting to discuss new confined animal facility rules Tuesday morning. About 10 area ranchers were in attendance for the meeting's video teleconference at the Modesto District office, which marked the first chance for public feedback in a complicated rulemaking process that should wrap up in the first quarter of 2010.

Information gathered through public participation in scoping meetings will be used to devise a preliminary version of the new rule, intended to reduce ozone levels by requiring more farms to comply with tougher regulations. Ozone levels in the Valley currently exceed the eight-hour ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards set by the federal government to protect public health and welfare.

Labor-intensive tasks such as removing wet manure from cow freestall beds, once required biweekly of dairies with more than 1,500 milking cows, could soon be required daily of farms as small as 476 milking cows. Similarly, daily adjustment of drinkers could be required in poultry houses with as few as 30,000 birds, previously a bi-weekly task only required of 650,000 bird farms.

"If we were in attainment (of federally mandated ozone levels), we would not be having this discussion," said Sandra Lowe-Leseth, the Air Quality Engineer with the District who ran Tuesday's meeting.

A second scoping meeting will be held 10 a.m. Thursday at the District office in Fresno. Local ranchers can participate via video teleconference at the Modesto District office, located at 4800 Enterprise Way.

A public workshop will be held to discuss the first draft of the new rule in late May. A second workshop and a socioeconomic focus group, intended to determine costs of the regulation, will meet in August. The final workshop will be held in November to discuss what is expected to become the final version of the rule, which could be enacted at a public hearing in the first quarter of 2010.

Smog: When thoughts turn to ozone

By Mark Grossi, FresnoBee.com, Wed., March 11, 2009

It's almost spring when my thoughts turn to ozone. But, really, the San Joaquin Valley sometimes starts violating ozone standards in late winter.

Ozone, as you recall, is a corrosive gas that forms when nitrogen oxides combine with volatile organic compounds. It's a photochemical reaction, meaning it happens in sunlight on warm, fairly windless days -- pretty much describes Valley weather.

Over time, breathing this stuff will affect even healthy lungs. Folks here are exposed for longer periods of unhealthy ozone than anywhere in the country.

Two years ago on March 12, Arvin in Kern County recorded the first ozone violation of the year. I don't think that will happen tomorrow.

I checked the National Weather Service stats online for March 12, 2007. It was 85 degrees in Bakersfield that day, and 82 in Fresno.

Fresno's forecast is at least 15 degrees cooler tomorrow, but the warmth and the ozone are right around the corner.

Regional transportation center planned

By Lorie Ham, Staff Reporter

Reedley Exponent Wednesday, March 11, 2009

Kings Canyon Unified School District (KCUSD) has been working on a project with the City of Reedley for the past five years that will put them at the forefront of new green technology and save the District and City money.

They are developing a state of the art, high performance, LEED certified, solar powered Central Valley Transportation Center that will promote good jobs and clean energy technologies, according to Mark Garza KCUSD Director of Construction and Modernization.

Among the many reasons the project began was the need of both entities for more space, stated Russ Robertson, Public Works Manager for the City of Reedley.

There was also a concern that the Valley is the second worst region in the state for air quality, said John Clements, KCUSD Director of Transportation. This facility will address both of those issues using combined resources.

The Transportation Center will be completely green, said Garza. There will be high efficiency solar panels over the covered carport structures; high performance HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) units; energy management systems; lighting with day lighting and reflective floors; storm water recovery system for vehicle wash operations that will reduce city water usage, and drought-tolerant landscaping. Building roofs will be white to reflect heat and all buses will eventually run on alternative fuels such as compressed natural gas (CNG), electricity, and hydrogen. "By moving to this facility we could reduce our carbon footprint by almost three quarters."

The Center would also be completely self sustaining. "What we're looking at is one megawatt of solar and that's huge in the industry," continued Garza. They would then be able to support the facility, plus hopefully be able to 'back meter' which would give them credit with PG&E they could use for their other sites and possibly the new Sports Park.

Other green areas they are working on include a trail that connects Reedley to the Dinuba Golf Course, promoting bicycling and walking. They are also considering partnering with the current County transit system to use school buses to expand service to other local cities such as Orange Cove, stated Clements.

Another component will be education where they will be able to train the next generation of clean green vehicle technicians. Garza reported that they will be working together with higher learning centers and work force programs to provide training for high school, college and adult learners—something he feels could be especially beneficial to communities like Orange Cove whose workers are hard hit during a freeze. They would also be providing classes to their ag partners on how to farm in more green-friendly ways.

The City plans to relocate its Public Works Yard to the Center. By partnering with KCUSD, resources and facilities can be shared, thus saving money. "The two entities will share vehicle and equipment fueling facilities as well as washing facilities," said Robertson. He went on to state the school district will also be able to provide the City with mechanics experienced in CNG vehicles. The City plans to purchase garbage trucks that run on CNG.

The facility would also save the City money on electricity and utility costs. "It would be a huge plus for the entire community." Reedley is looking into the possibility of green and bio waste recycling at that location in the future.

There are other possible partnerships in the works for this project, stated Garza. Possible partners would include other school districts. "We have been asked by our surrounding districts for help due to the economic times and the inability to keep up with the new Air Resource Rules coming down the pike."

"We would be able to help smaller school districts that may have not previously participated in any of the clean air programs because there's been too much cost involved," said Clements. They could potentially help the districts obtain those buses and provide warranty service and fueling stations for them.

The Center will also serve as a regional fueling station for alternative fuels that are not currently available locally. They also hope to help other partners including ag and the trucking industry to meet local and state clean air regulations.

“There is strong Central Valley support to cultivate partnerships from our surrounding school districts, communities, and public agencies to pool limited and diminishing resources spawned by the fiscal crisis facing the Central Valley, the state and the nation,” said Garza. He believes by doing this they will be able to collectively maximize funding and increase the ability to construct a model transportation facility for the community and state.

Garza continued that he is currently pursuing possible funding on Federal and State levels with great optimism that it will be obtained. They already have letters of support from Senator Florez and Assembly member Juan Arambula, with more on the way. One advantage Garza feels they have -- besides the fact that it is a green project -- is that they are shovel ready, capable of starting the project within 90 days of receipt of funding. He hopes to begin construction within the next 18 months. The project would be completed in three to four phases as different types of funding is obtained.

According to Garza, the estimated cost is \$45 million. They already have \$1 million secured jointly through a grant for the CNG infrastructure. It will be located on East Huntsman where KCUSD already owns nearly 40 acres.

The Center will be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified. Garza hopes to achieve Platinum certification, which he stated is one of the highest certifications possible. LEED certification provides independent, third-party verification that a building project is environmentally responsible, profitable and a healthy place to live and work. To date the only Platinum certified buildings are government sites in Sacramento.

Garza and Clements will address the KCUSD governing board and Reedley City Council on March 24 with an update on the project. Their presentation will feature new videos which provide a 3D look at the facility. They will also be discussing possible partnerships.

Fire breaks out at Inergy LPG plant

By Doug Keeler

Taft Midway Driller, Thursday, March 12, 2009

Fire broke out at the Inergy North Coles Levee LPG facility near Tupman Wednesday evening sending a large plume of black smoke over the area.

The Kern County Fire Department reported the fire broke out in a 115-foot tall natural-gas fired heating unit at 6:44 p.m.

The unit heats product in a gas fractionator for the production of liquid petroleum gas, a KCFD press release said.

The facility's staff quickly shut the unit down when the fire broke out and isolated the unit from the rest of the plant.

Firefighters at the scene monitored the situation while the remaining material in the unit was allowed to burn off.

There were no injuries and the cause of the fire hasn't been determined.

Low-level ozone exposure found to be lethal over time

An 18-year study shows an increased annual risk of death from respiratory illnesses, depending on the pollution level. It goes beyond studies that linked brief ozone spikes to short-term effects.

By Thomas H. Maugh II

L.A. Times, Thursday, March 12, 2009

Ozone pollution is a killer, increasing the yearly risk of death from respiratory diseases by 40% to 50% in heavily polluted cities like Los Angeles and Riverside and by about 25% throughout the rest of the country, researchers reported today.

Environmental scientists already knew that increases in ozone during periods of heavy pollution caused short-term effects, such as asthma attacks, increased hospitalizations and deaths from heart attacks.

But the 18-year study of nearly half a million people, reported today in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, is the first to show that long-term, low-level exposure to the pollutant can also be lethal.

Current standards for ozone pollution cover only eight-hour averages of the colorless gas, but even with that relatively relaxed rule, 345 counties with a total population of more than 100 million people are out of compliance.

The Environmental Protection Agency "has already said that it will revisit the current ozone standards in the country," said Dan Greenbaum, president of the Boston-based Health Effects Institute, one of the study's sponsors.

"Undoubtedly, when it happens these results are going to be a very important part of that review," said Greenbaum, who was not involved in the study.

The EPA may need to implement an annual standard, said University of Ottawa environmental health scientist Daniel Krewski, one of the paper's authors.

Coauthor Michael Jerrett of UC Berkeley said the findings could have profound implications because they show that ozone worsens conditions that already kill a large number of people.

Deaths from respiratory diseases, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, emphysema and pneumonia, account for about 8.5% of all U.S. deaths, an estimated 240,000 each year. Worldwide, such conditions account for 7.7 million deaths each year.

Ozone is what is known as a secondary pollutant. It is not formed directly by the burning of fossil fuels. Rather, nitrogen oxides produced by such combustion react in the presence of sunlight to form ozone. It is thus the biggest problem in areas that are sunny and hot, Jerrett said.

As an oxidizing agent, ozone reacts with virtually anything it comes into contact with. In particular, it reacts with cells in the lungs, causing inflammation and a variety of other effects that lead to premature aging.

Jerrett and his colleagues studied 448,850 people over age 18 in 96 metropolitan regions who enrolled in the American Cancer Society Cancer Prevention Study II in 1982 and 1983. The subjects were tracked for an average of 18 years. During that follow-up period, there were 48,884 deaths, 9,891 of them from respiratory diseases.

The researchers found that every increase of 10 parts per billion (ppb) in average ozone concentrations was associated with about a 4% increase in dying from respiratory causes.

Riverside had the highest ozone average (104 ppb), and the risk of dying from respiratory causes was 50% greater than it would have been if there were no ozone.

Los Angeles had the second-highest ozone level and a 43% increase in risk.

In contrast, San Francisco had the lowest average ozone level (33 ppb) of the 96 regions studied and only a 14% increased risk, probably because of the fog and prevailing winds, which reduce ozone formation. The Pacific Northwest also had low levels of ozone, again because of rain and cool weather.

Cities in the East like New York and Washington had an average increased risk of about 25% to 27%.

The researchers found no increase in deaths from cardiovascular disease associated with ozone levels -- those deaths are caused primarily by the fine particulates present in air pollution.

They also found no increase in overall mortality, suggesting that ozone is causing deaths in people who were probably going to die in another year or two anyway, according to epidemiologist Joel Schwartz of the Harvard School of Public Health, who was not involved in the study.

"We do know that ozone is particularly dangerous for people living with existing asthma or lung disease," Jerrett said. And it didn't matter what someone's weight, income or education was. "It seems to affect a lot of people relatively equally."

Scientists warn of 'irreversible' climate shifts

By Jan M. Olsen, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, N.Y. Times and other papers, Thursday, March 12, 2009

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) -- Hundreds of leading scientists warned Thursday that global warming is accelerating beyond the worst predictions and threatening to trigger "irreversible" climate shifts on the planet.

Saying there's no excuse for inaction, the nearly 2,000 climate researchers meeting in Copenhagen urged policy-makers to "vigorously" implement the economic and technological tools available to cut emissions of heat-trapping greenhouse gases.

Their stark message came at the end of a three-day conference aimed at updating the findings of a 2007 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change before U.N. talks in December on a new global climate treaty.

"The worst-case IPCC scenario trajectories (or even worse) are being realized," the scientists said in a statement. "There is a significant risk that many of the trends will accelerate, leading to an increasing risk of abrupt or irreversible climatic shifts."

The climate change panel predicted a sea level rise of 7 to 23 inches (18 to 59 centimeters) by the end of the century, which could flood low-lying areas and force millions to flee. But more recent research presented at the conference suggested that melting glaciers and ice sheets could help push the sea level up at least 20 inches (50 centimeters), and possibly as much as 39 inches (1 meter).

"Recent observations show that societies are highly vulnerable to even modest levels of climate change with poor nations and communities particularly at risk," the statement said.

It noted that policy-makers already have a range of tools to mitigate global warming. "But they must be vigorously and widely implemented to achieve the societal transformation required to de-carbonize economies," it said.

The conclusions of the congress will be presented to politicians when they meet in Copenhagen in December to discuss a new global agreement on greenhouse gas emissions to replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

"We know from scientific evidence that climate change is a reality and that climate change will have damaging effects on the economy all over the world," said Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, one of the politicians attending the scientific conference. "Therefore we need an agreement and we need an agreement this year."

Earlier Thursday, British economist Nicholas Stern, the author of a major British government report detailing the cost of climate change, told the conference that the global recession presents an opportunity to build a more energy-efficient economy.

"Coming out of this we have got to lay the foundations for a low-carbon growth, which is going to be like the railways, like the electricity, like the motorcars, this is going to be over the next two, three decades the big driver in investment," Stern said.

Stern said green investments make sense because energy-efficient economies will be more sustainable in the future.

"We know from this crisis that if we postpone looking risk in the face, it will bite us much more deeply," he said.

California panel urges 'immediate action' to protect against rising sea levels

Global warming is projected to cause ocean levels to rise 55 inches or more by the end of the century. Report recommends phased abandonment of coastal areas and moving state infrastructure inland.

By Margot Roosevelt

L.A. Times, Thursday, March 12, 2009

As California officials see it, global warming is happening so there's no time to waste in figuring out what to do.

California's interagency Climate Action Team on Wednesday issued the first of 40 reports on impacts and adaptation, outlining what the state's residents must do to deal with the floods, erosion and other effects expected from rising sea levels.

Hundreds of thousands of people and billions of dollars of Golden State infrastructure and property would be at risk if ocean levels rose 55 inches by the end of the century, as computer models suggest, according to the report.

The group floated several radical proposals: limit coastal development in areas at risk from sea rise; consider phased abandonment of certain areas; halt federally subsidized insurance for property likely to be inundated; and require coastal structures to be built to adapt to climate change.

"Immediate action is needed," said Linda Adams, secretary for environmental protection. "It will cost significantly less to combat climate change than it will to maintain a business-as-usual approach."

Few topics are likely to be more contentious than coastal development. But along the state's 2,000-mile shoreline the effects would be acute, particularly in San Mateo and Orange counties, where more than

100,000 people would be affected, according to the 99-page state-commissioned report by the Oakland-based Pacific Institute.

Detailed maps of the coastline, published on the institute's website, show that residential neighborhoods in Venice and Marina del Rey could find themselves in a flood zone. Water could cover airports in San Francisco and Oakland, parts of the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, and large swaths of Huntington Beach and Newport Beach.

Roads, schools, hospitals, sewage plants and power plants may have to be relocated. More than 330 hazardous waste sites are at risk from floods.

"The rising sea level could be California's version of Hurricane Katrina," said Michael Woo, a Los Angeles planning commissioner and urban planning professor at USC. "Taxpayers and insurance ratepayers might question their responsibility to help homeowners and businesses which knowingly build in high-risk coastal areas."

California's far-reaching adaptation initiative reflects an emerging global consensus: Scientists can argue over how fast the Earth is heating up and diplomats can wrangle over emissions caps, but politicians must begin planning for the certainty of climate change.

Dozens of world-class scientists and economists, many from the University of California and state research institutes, are examining potential effects of warming on snowpacks, wildfires, crops and electricity demand.

Further reports will examine climate effects on hospital admissions, mortality rates, pollution and the habitats of the state's animals and plants. Dutch experts have been consulted on how to

armor the coast with improved dikes and sea walls -- controversial measures that some experts contend will only increase erosion.

Detailed studies, now undergoing peer review, are to be released over the next month. Then the Climate Action Team is to send a comprehensive report to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Sea levels along California have risen an average of about 8 inches in the past century. According to the Pacific Institute report, 260,000 Californians already live in flood zones, but are assumed to be protected by existing levees and sea walls. A rise of 1.4 meters (55 inches) would increase the population at risk to 480,000. Currently, 1,900 miles of roads and highways are at risk of flooding, which would grow to 3,500 miles under the sea level rise projections.

The report estimated that one adaptation strategy, armoring the coast with 1,100 miles of new or modified sea walls and levees, would cost at least \$14 billion to construct, and another \$1.4 billion a year to maintain.

The report's estimate of 1 to 1.4 meters of sea level rise by the end of the century was calculated using two scenarios envisioned by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a gathering of the world's top climate scientists. One scenario assumes countries will cut their emissions of planet-heating greenhouse gases, and another assumes a business-as-usual release level.

Despite more than a decade of warnings from scientists, global emissions continue to rise, fueled by rapid population growth and economic development in such nations as China and India. Unless greenhouse gases are cut significantly, Earth's temperature is expected to increase between 4 and 6 degrees Celsius by the end of the century, according to the U.N. panel.

As water warms due to rising air temperatures, it expands, causing the sea level to rise. But another major factor, the melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, was unaccounted for in the U.N. panel's models because of uncertainty over effects and timing. Those models were designed in the mid-1990s.

Ice sheet melting has since accelerated. Dan Cayan, a researcher at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and a lead scientist on the state's action plan, said the 55-inch estimate in the report is "probably conservative. . . . As temperature climbs, melting is going to proceed at a greater pace. It is not necessarily going to proceed linearly, in the same proportion as it did in the past, because melting begets more melting."

Low-income people will be disproportionately vulnerable to sea level rise, according to the report.

In Alameda County, 66,000 residents would be affected by flooding, of whom 60% are African American, Latino and Asian, the report said.

Mary Nichols, chairwoman of the state's Air Resources Board, which is charged with implementing a statewide plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions, called the sea level report "blunt but realistic."

"The recommendations are sensible: Defend what is worth protecting, move what can reasonably be moved, try to avoid doing further harm, consult affected communities, prepare to respond to emergencies."

Environmentalists hailed the report as a call to action.

"We can't pretend that the future will behave like the past," said Matt Vander Sluis of the Planning and Conservation League. "The ostrich has to take its head out of the sand or, in this case, it's going to be underwater."

Dire scenarios presented on global warming

By Tom Knudson

Sacramento Bee, Thursday, March 12, 2009

Global warming is likely to take a greater toll on California than previously believed unless strong measures are taken to combat it, a state panel was told Wednesday.

The potential impacts – according to a flurry of new scientific studies – include major property damage along the coast from rising sea levels, worsening drought, widespread crop damage, increasing wildfires and a diminished Sierra Nevada snowpack.

The gloomy scenarios were presented to the Climate Action Team, a group of state officials established to monitor global warming and help the state meet its goal of reducing [greenhouse gas emissions](#) to 1990 levels by 2020.

"These reports confirm that the consequences of [climate change](#) will be in the billions of dollars, and it will cost significantly less to combat climate change than it does to maintain a business-as-usual approach," said Linda Adams, the California Environmental Protection Agency secretary, who chaired the meeting.

The findings, presented by scientists and state officials, are expected to be published later this month in a report to the governor and the Legislature. They are more exhaustive – and more dire – than those contained in the first Climate Action Team report in 2006.

"We are getting much more detailed information that puts the hair on the back of my neck up," said panel member Tony Brunello, deputy secretary for climate change at the [California Resources Agency](#). "It's going to be a brave new world."

Among other things, panel members heard about potential havoc on the coast associated with a sea level rise of 55 inches, which some climate models forecast could occur by the end of the century.

Up to now, sea level has risen nearly 8 inches over the past century at the Golden Gate Bridge, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"There is \$100 billion in infrastructure at risk and 500,000 people who currently live in areas that are at risk," said Peter Gleick, president of the Pacific Institute in Oakland and co-author of the report.

Wastewater treatment plants, schools, fire stations, railroads, power plants, wetlands – all are threatened with inundation, the report said.

"We have never fully understood the risks before to our coast," Gleick said after the meeting. "This assessment gives us a much better sense of what really faces us if we don't take aggressive action."

Daniel Cayan, a climate researcher with the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, said the new studies are the most thorough yet presented to the state climate team.

"We've gone deeper and more broadly, so there is more ground covered," he said.

But he also cautioned that the projections are not predictions.

"Uncertainty is a big part of all this," he said. "This is a scenario exercise. This represents a possible outcome that is important for California to assess."

3rd Reactor Would Hurt Air Quality, Residents Say

Issues Aired at Hearing On Plans for Lusby Plant

By Christy Goodman, Washington Post Staff Writer

Washington Post Thurs. March 12, 2009

Air quality in Calvert County would suffer if a third nuclear reactor is built at the Calvert Cliffs plant in Lusby, some local residents said this week during a public hearing.

Residents questioned the amount of emissions that would be produced by a third reactor's cooling tower and its backup diesel generators. They said they want UniStar Nuclear Energy,

which wants to build the reactor, to use data from working plants rather than projected information about air quality. They also called for more state air monitoring near the plant.

The hearing, held Monday night in Solomons, was the last one scheduled for state regulatory agencies on UniStar's application to build a third reactor along the shores of the Chesapeake Bay. The company says the reactor would nearly double the plant's capacity as the need for electricity in the region grows.

Several state environmental and health agencies have agreed to issue permits to build the reactor. Federal regulatory authorities are reviewing the company's request. A state hearing Thursday in Solomons focused solely on air quality.

Julia Clark, with the Southern Maryland Citizens Alliance for Renewable Energy Solutions, or Southern Maryland CARES, said the project is "nothing but an environmental injustice."

She said that the plant emits 1,000 tons of particulate matter every year and that a third unit would put out an additional 300 tons a year. Clark and others suggested that the permit process be halted until air quality monitors are installed throughout the county and data are collected for three years.

But Robert Iwanchuk, an air quality expert hired by UniStar, said the plant emits 2.5 tons of particulate matter each year. Iwanchuk also said that 97 percent of the emissions from the plant's cooling tower "consists of sea salt that is evaporated from the bay." He said the plant's potential emissions are "a very small fraction of the natural salt emissions that are now occurring from Chesapeake Bay airborne sea salt."

Calvert Cliffs monitors its air quality, but residents called for more rigorous state-regulated monitoring throughout the area. State and federal officials have said that Calvert's air quality has never triggered the need for such testing.

David Rogers, the county's health director, said there have been no studies directly examining the plant's effects on residents' health, but he said that cancer rates have declined in the county since it began operating in 1975. "Many people do not want to believe there have been no ill health effects," he said.

But some residents were not swayed by the data. "Calvert County is the worst place you can add another reactor, from a safety standpoint and a health standpoint," said June Sevilla, a Cove Point resident who is also a member of Southern Maryland CARES.

Norman Meadow, a representative of the Maryland Conservation Council and a former biochemist at Johns Hopkins University, said that to generate the amount of electricity the plant is trying to produce, nearly 2,000 wind turbines would be needed. He said that such renewable energy is experimental, uses more fossil fuels and is too expensive.

"Nuclear power has proven that it can deliver electricity safely, more reliably, more cheaply and with less environmental damage than any other technology," Meadow said.

Ozone pollution amplifies risk of fatal respiratory illness

By Liz Szabo

USA TODAY, Thursday, March 12, 2009

For the first time, a large study shows the deadly effects of chronic exposure to ozone, one of the most widespread pollutants in the world and a key component of smog, according to a study in today's *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Doctors have long known that ground-level ozone — which is formed when sunlight interacts with pollution from tailpipes and coal-burning power plants — can make asthma worse. This study, which followed nearly 450,000 Americans in 96 metropolitan areas for two decades, also shows that ozone increases deaths from respiratory diseases.

This ground-level ozone has very different effects than the ozone layer high above the Earth, which helps filter out harmful ultraviolet radiation, says lead author Michael Jerrett, an associate professor of environmental health sciences at the University of California-Berkeley.

Although Jerrett found there was no safe level of ground-level ozone, some cities fare worse than others. People in Riverside, Calif., the highest ozone city, were 32% more likely to die in a given year of respiratory diseases compared with people in San Francisco, the city with lowest average annual ozone concentrations.

Ozone pollution likely translates into thousands of additional deaths every year across the USA, Jerrett says. About 240,000 Americans a year die of respiratory illnesses.

Controlling ozone — one of the main greenhouse gases involved in global warming — may both save lives and also fight global climate change, Jerrett says.

The study shows yet another way that air pollution can harm public health, says Janice Nolen, assistant vice president of national policy and advocacy for the American Lung Association.

"It doesn't have to be a peak ozone day to be a problem," says Nolen, who wasn't involved with the new study. "If you're breathing it day in and day out over a longer period of time, the risk of premature death increases."

The study also suggests the Environmental Protection Agency may need to reconsider its safety standard for ozone, Nolen says. Instead of just looking at the effect of being exposed to peak ozone levels, the agency may need to look at long-term exposure to lower levels of the gas.

Last year, the EPA changed its air quality standards for ground-level ozone from an average of 84 parts per billion to 75 parts per billion over an eight-hour period, although the agency's scientific advisers had urged an even tougher standard of 60 to 70 parts per billion.

One in three Americans lives in a city that's in violation of the EPA's current ozone standard, Jerrett says.

President Obama's new EPA chief, Lisa Jackson, told USA TODAY last month that the agency should reconsider the ozone standard. "We need to go back to the basics here: science and the law," she said.

Planning for future must consider climate change

By RANDOLPH E. SCHMID - AP Science Writer
Modesto Bee, Thursday, March 12, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Despite years of study and analysis, the world is unprepared for climate change and needs to rethink basic assumptions that govern things as varied as choosing cars and building bridges, the National Research Council reports.

Current building, land use and planning practices assume a continuation of climate as it has been known in the past.

"That assumption, fundamental to the ways people and organizations make their choices, is no longer valid," the Council, the working arm of the National Academy of Sciences, said in a report released Thursday.

The Earth's average temperature has been rising over the last century and scientists attribute much of the increase to greenhouse gases added to the air by industrial processes and burning fossil fuels, such as in automobiles.

Indeed, last year the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which collected the work of more than 2,000 scientists, said climate change is "unequivocal, is already happening, and is caused by human activity."

Government agencies need to step up their efforts to provide guidance to decision makers, including the establishment of a national climate service, the report said.

The report said the national climate service should be linked closely to research. It noted there has been discussion of such an agency within, or led by, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which is the parent of the National Weather Service.

Last year, leaders in the earth science community proposed creation of a new Earth Systems Science Agency by merging NOAA and the U.S. Geological Survey.

"The United States faces unprecedented environmental and economic challenges in the decades ahead. Foremost among them will be climate change, sea-level rise, altered weather patterns, declines in freshwater availability and quality, and loss of biodiversity," the group warned at the time.

Facing such challenges at a time when the climate is changing means officials can no longer rely on the assumptions of the past, the new study says.

"Moreover, climatic changes will be superimposed on social and economic changes that are altering the climate vulnerability of different regions and sectors of society, as well as their ability to cope," the Research Council said.

The new study looked at the New York metropolitan area as an example, noting that decisions involving climate change include proposals for a 30 percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

"Accomplishing the goal will take literally thousands of individual decisions in order to upgrade existing municipal buildings, including firehouses, police precincts, sanitation garages, offices and courthouses," the report said.

Such decisions include choices of energy-efficient lighting, refrigeration units, boilers, office equipment and heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems.

New York also faces complex challenges adapting regional transportation to potentially more damaging coastal floods, protecting water services, health and energy production.

Meanwhile, a British researcher was warning that climate change will mean higher medical costs, taxes, insurance rates and other costs.

"The hike in costs will be shared, climate change will affect all of our wallets," Alistair Hunt, a researcher at the University of Bath, said in remarks prepared for an international climate conference under way in Denmark.

As warmer than average summers are becoming more common, Hunt said, costs will rise for health care and maintenance of parks and highways and even because of property subsidence.

In addition to establishment of a climate service, the Research Council report made other recommendations, including focusing research on users' needs, building connections across disciplines, monitoring foreign research and expanding the work of NOAA, the Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies.

The World

BULLISH ON WIND

Washington Post Thurs. March 12, 2009

Windmills in Spain harvest a non-polluting source of electricity. Scientists are meeting in Denmark this week to share research on carbon emissions and climate change. Here are comparisons of 2006 carbon emissions in selected places:

	<i>Pounds CO₂ per capita</i>	<i>Pounds CO₂ per \$1,000 GDP</i>
Africa	2,549	2,935
Brazil	4,422	1,084

Denmark	23,917	737
United States	46,603	1,152

SOURCES: Bloomberg News, U.S. Department of Energy

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something ... green?

By Metro Creative Services

Lodi News Sentinel, Thursday, March 12, 2009

If you have a hybrid car parked in your garage, recycle rain water to irrigate backyard plants and have replaced just about every bulb in your home with compact fluorescents, there's a good chance that you're environmentally conscious. But what if you've just gotten engaged and want to impart some of these green ways of thinking to the wedding? What can you do to be earth-friendly when tying the knot?

Wedding industry insiders say that the trend of going green with weddings is growing exponentially. David Cooperrider, a business professor at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, says that going green is one of the great business opportunities of the 21st century, and there is much potential for the wedding industry. He offers that wedding vendors that are not going green will be at a competitive disadvantage to those who do.

Going green for your wedding day doesn't mean you have to compromise on the elements that will make the day special. It just means you can take a look at the details and the bigger picture and develop strategies that will minimize the impact on the planet.

- **Go local:** From food to flowers, choose vendors that use locally grown and raised products. This reduces the amount of smog generated and fuel consumed to bring items in for your wedding. Many caterers are now collaborating with local farms and other vendors to offer organic, locally grown menu items. It pays to ask about availability.
- **Go to your guests:** Figure out where the greatest number of your guests reside and then hold the wedding nearby. For example, a couple from the Northeast who has relocated to the West coast, but has all of their family still in the east, may want to hold their wedding in the east. It is less expensive and more environmentally friendly for the couple to simply fly to the wedding, rather than having hundreds of guests drive or fly west.
- **Be mindful of wardrobe choices:** Choose items that really can be worn again. Skip the rented tuxes and ask groomsmen to wear a similar styled suit that they can add to their work wardrobe. Bridesmaids can wear a simple black cocktail dress so that they're not left with a taffeta creation that will only hang in the closet afterward. If you decide to go more traditional with wardrobe, find out if gowns can be recycled or donated so that they can be reused in another way.
- **Choose recycled materials for wedding invitations and announcements:** There are an increasing number of suppliers creating invitations from recycled materials. Some will do all the assembly for you; other less expensive items may be more hands-on. Cut down on further use of paper by creating a wedding Web site where you post directions, maps, party times, and other essential information so you avoid extra slip-in sheets with your invitations.
- **Create car-pool options:** Bus guests to your venue to save on gas. It is also a safer option for those who will be indulging in alcoholic beverages at the party since they won't have to drive on the return trip home.
- **Investigate ecologically responsible wedding jewelry:** According to Greenkarat, purveyors of ecologically responsible engagement rings and wedding bands, 2,500 tonnes of gold are mined each year, even though there is enough gold above ground (already mined) to satisfy all demands of the jewelry industry for the next 50 years. Much of it sits in bank vaults and in the form of old and unused jewelry. See if you can recycle old jewelry into something new. Or embrace the sentimental hand-me-down rings from a grandmother or other relative.

Merced Sun-Star, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, March 12, 2009

Letter: Decide promptly

Editor: I am writing in reference to Henry Xiong's letter in the Sun-Star on Tuesday, "No translation needed."

I couldn't agree more strongly. It would be a waste of valuable tax dollars when the unemployment statistics are making history, people are being laid off and authorized positions going unfilled.

Our Merced City Council and county supervisors are elected to make decisions in the best interest of their constituents.

I strongly support approval of the Wal-Mart distribution center, considering their commitment to hire approximately 1,000 locally. I understand that it will contribute additional smog to our environment, but that's a part of the trade-off.

I also believe if it is not established in Merced, the distribution center will be built in either a county north or south of us. Either way, Merced County will still have to deal with a significant increase in truck traffic and air pollution.

The City Council needs to deal with the Wal-Mart decision promptly without hiring some outside agency to tell them which way to go.

LEEMAN R. PIERCE, Merced