

## **Lawsuit may affect clean air**

By Stacey Shepard, staff reporter  
Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, April 9, 2009

A major air pollution rule limiting emissions from dairies will be suspended in May, just as the San Joaquin Valley enters its peak smog season.

And local air regulators on Wednesday pointed the finger at a Shafter-based environmental group that sued them.

The situation is a result of a lawsuit brought by the Association of Irrigated Residents (AIR) that claimed an air district rule limiting emissions from dairies wasn't tough enough.

A court rejected the group's main argument but agreed the air district had failed to properly analyze the rule's public health benefits, which is mandated by state law. As a result, the rule will be revoked while the health study is done. The rule suspension could last anywhere from one month to several.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which adopted and enforces the rule, says it tried to keep the rule in effect until then but AIR refused.

"It's really unfortunate they insisted the rule be rescinded. I'm hoping the people living by these dairies won't be impacted by rolling back these rules," said Seyed Sadredin, the air district's executive director.

AIR said repealing the rule is necessary so a stronger rule can be developed. It disputed the district's claims that air quality could be impacted, saying the rule was so weak it didn't achieve any real pollution reductions.

"What the rule requires dairies to do are things the dairies were already doing before the rule came into play," said Brent Newell, an attorney for the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment who represents AIR.

### **Rule in limbo for now**

The rule in dispute applies to all large confined animal facilities, which include hundreds of dairies in the San Joaquin Valley and a smaller number of beef, cattle, swine and poultry facilities.

These facilities are considered one of the state's largest source of volatile organic compounds, a key ingredient in smog. The air district says the rule's impact on VOCs is equivalent to removing 1.3 million cars from the road each day.

The air district board is tentatively scheduled to revoke the rule May 21. It will remain suspended until the district completes a health study. After reviewing the study, the board will decide whether to reinstate the rule or start the process of drafting a new one, a process that could take months. That decision on how to proceed is expected at its June 18 meeting.

AIR wants the board to decide in favor of a new rule. It sees it as its only chance to require dairies to do more to reduce pollution.

"Our main hope now is the health study will point out the inadequacy of the rule and the board will agree we have to make the rule stronger," said Tom Frantz, president of AIR.

### **Dueling opinions**

State Senate Majority Leader Dean Florez, who authored state laws requiring the district to regulate agriculture, said Wednesday he supports AIR's actions. If the air district adhered to the law and did the health analysis in the first place, it wouldn't have to repeal the rule, he said.

"Environmentalists sued and they were right to do so," said Florez, D-Shafter.

Frantz and other critics have contended the rule is too weak since it was first proposed. They say most dairies didn't have to change a thing to comply with it and the air district was playing a numbers game to appease industry while claiming phony pollution reductions.

A trial court and appellate court disagreed, however.

In a November ruling, the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals concluded that aside from elaborating on the health benefits of the rule, it found no evidence that the rule didn't achieve its goal.

"AIR has not provided any science to refute the (pollution reduction) estimates assigned by the district," the ruling said, adding that state law leaves "the number crunching and the science" to the air district and the court "cannot say that the district's assumptions are arbitrary and capricious."

Kern County Supervisor Ray Watson, an air district board member, said criticism of air district rules often boils down to "dueling scientists" but in this case, he sides with the district.

"In the end, we have a bunch of very good scientists on the district staff. I'm going to believe them until someone proves them wrong," he said. "That hasn't been done yet."

### **Has your company gone green?**

The Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, April 8, 2009

With Earth Day approaching, The Californian would like to hear from local businesses and organizations that have invested in ways to [reduce pollution](#), waste or energy and water use.

It doesn't matter how big or small the change, as long as it has some noticeable impact on the environment.

Has your company installed solar panels or an efficient lighting system? Have you committed to buying recycled products, purchased hybrid vehicles for the company fleet or cut down on product packaging?

If so, please contact environment reporter Stacey Shepard at 395-7272, or [sshepard@bakersfield.com](mailto:sshepard@bakersfield.com). Companies and organizations that contact us may be featured in an Earth Day story.

### **Costa earmark request list out**

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, April 8, 2009

(NOTE: The following is excerpted from a longer story.)

Want to know what bacon Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, is trying to bring home?

Below is a list of Costa's 2010 earmark requests as released by his office. More detail is available by going to his Web site, [www.costa.house.gov](http://www.costa.house.gov), and clicking on the FY10 Appropriations Request link.

Costa's 20th District includes Arvin, Delano, McFarland, Shafter, Wasco and parts of Bakersfield.

Interior and Environment

[Project: San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Reduction Program](#)

[Description: Incentive program to reduce mobile and agricultural source pollution. \(\\$10 million\)](#)

### **Corcoran discusses re-entry**

By Eiji Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel, Wednesday, April 8, 2009

Hanford residents detest the idea of having it near them. Lemoore city leaders wouldn't even consider it. But would Corcoran be willing to accommodate a location for a state prisoner re-entry facility?

"That's what we are here to find out about," said Corcoran City Councilman Dick Haile. "I really don't believe that citizens of Corcoran really realize what we gain from having it here. There's a

lot of fears. I don't know if I'm going to vote for this. I would say that I'd rather have 500 new families instead of 500 inmates. But we need to weigh what everybody feels about this."

Haile was among nearly 50 local government and business leaders and concerned residents who showed up to Tuesday night's special Kings County Board of Supervisors meeting held in Corcoran to learn about and discuss a variety of issues, including the controversial proposed re-entry facility.

The state is looking for counties that are willing to commit to building the facilities, which give inmates who are serving the final year of their sentence an opportunity for job training and mental health treatment to help them transition back to society.

In exchange, counties can receive funding to improve local jails.

Kings County lost its \$30 million funding back in September after officials ran out of time to find a site for the state prison facility designed to help motivate prisoners to go straight and reduce recidivism.

But with several counties now backing out of the deal and leaving \$164 million unspent, state prison officials are expected to allow more counties to compete for the remaining funds, presenting Kings County with a second chance.

County officials expect another request for proposal could go out sometime in May.

In this economy, this might be the single hope for Kings County to expand in the foreseeable future without raising taxes.

Having burned out from a great amount of public opposition they met last year, supervisors are leaving it to the people to decide whether they want to take advantage of the opportunity.

"We were here to receive feedback," said Rebecca Campbell, county management analyst.

They got what they wanted.

Some said re-entry makes economic sense because of how many high-paying jobs it would create for the area. But others saw having another state prison facility coming to Corcoran as a burden with little direct benefit to the community.

Still, others said they agree with the re-entry approach to corrections, but they were tired of being "dumped upon."

"I'm not opposed to re-entry. I'm not opposed to giving people a second chance," said Paul Smart, a resident and business owner in Corcoran. "My personal thing with this is if we're going to carry this burden, should there not be some benefit to us as a community? Not just the business owners, not just the people that get the few jobs it's going to create, but the town as a whole."

City Councilman Jim Wadsworth said he hasn't formed an opinion yet but tried to weigh pros and cons.

"What do we get from this? The city will get about \$50,000 in subvention funds ... We'll get about 60 good jobs in Corcoran. That's the plus side as I see it," Wadsworth said. "But the downside is, you're dumping another one of these in Corcoran -- [increased traffic and increased pollution.](#)"

The re-entry facility, if built in Kings County, would bring 300 state jobs as well as construction jobs and service contract to the area -- a boost to the local economy, Campbell said.

Former Supervisor Jon Rachford advocated for the facility, telling the audience that Corcoran has greatly benefited from the presence of two prisons and it will gain benefits from the presence of a new state corrections facility.

Corcoran City Council officials said they will continue to weigh public opinion on the issue before they take a stance on the matter.

Campbell said once a new request for proposal is issued, the county will have 60 to 90 days to submit it with a definite location for the facility.

"We'll continue to wait for feedback from the community. In the meantime, we'll also continue to look and accumulate more properties we can show to the state. More community outreach will be done as well."

### **Smog: Ethanol from city waste**

By Mark Grossi, FresnoBee.com, Wed., April 8, 2009

For those keen on finding alternatives to fossil fuels, how about ethanol for about a buck a gallon? And how about creating the ethanol from municipal waste?

A new University of California, Riverside study makes it sound pretty enticing.

Municipal waste is basically wood, grass, cardboard and other paper products.

Since it is not cheap to deal with city waste and it's not cheap to buy gasoline, why not turn the waste into a fuel? Nice idea, but read the paper and decide for yourself if this sounds reasonable.

### **Bad economy helps cut CO2 emissions**

By Traci Watson

USA Today, Wednesday, April 8, 2009

The worldwide economic slowdown is having an unexpected positive impact in the fight against global warming: [Emissions of carbon dioxide](#) are falling, records collected by governments show.

From the United States to Europe to China, the global economic crisis has forced offices to close and factories to cut back. That means less use of fossil fuels such as coal to make energy. Fossil-fuel burning, which creates carbon dioxide, is the primary human contributor to global warming.

A recession-driven drop in emissions "is good for the environment," says Emilie Mazzacurati of Point Carbon, an energy research company. "In the long term, that's not how we want to reduce emissions."

As carbon dioxide builds in the atmosphere, it traps heat and warms the Earth. The result: melting glaciers, rising seas and fiercer droughts.

The lower emissions are caused partly by milder weather — which means less energy is needed for cooling and heating — and by policies that promote energy efficiency, but experts agree that economic problems play a role.

The emission decreases are unusual and in some cases unprecedented:

- Carbon dioxide from U.S. power plants fell roughly 3% from 2007 to 2008, according to preliminary data from the Environmental Protection Agency analyzed by the Environmental Integrity Project. That's the biggest drop since 1995-1996, the first two consecutive years for which data are publicly available.
- Carbon dioxide from industrial facilities in 27 European nations in 2008 plummeted 6%, according to Point Carbon's analysis of data published last week by the European Commission.
- Electricity production by Chinese power plants has been lower every month since September compared with the same months a year earlier, says Richard Morse, a Stanford University energy researcher. A drop in power generation translates to a drop in carbon-dioxide output. These are the first such drops in Chinese power production since the Chinese economic boom in the 1990s.

European nations face a 2012 deadline to cut their emissions under the Kyoto Protocol, a global-warming treaty written in 1997 and renounced by President George W. Bush in 2001. The recession could make it easier for countries to meet their goals, says David Doniger of the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group, but "I wouldn't recommend recession as a way to deal with this problem."

Some experts fear lower emissions may make companies and governments less likely to spend money to cut carbon output. "There's a risk that it will push back needed investment into ... cleaner production," Mazzacurati says.

## **Temples go solar**

The OC Register, April 8, 2009

Rabbi Ken Milhander knows a thing or two about renewable energy. He has contracted to have solar panels installed in his home. And he is bringing his passion for alternative energy sources to the celebration of Passover, which begins at sundown today.

This morning, Milhander is hosting a ceremony known as the Blessing of the Sun at Temple Beth Tikvah in Fullerton. On Wednesday, yom rev'i in Hebrew, or the Fourth Day, was when, according to the Book of Genesis, God created the sun, moon and stars.

The Talmud – an ancient compendium of Jewish law and tradition – seeks to track the 28-year cycle of the sun's return to its original position in the sky on the day of their creation.

Every 28 years, that moment is marked with the Blessing of the Sun, or Birkat HaHammah in Hebrew, in conjunction with Passover.

Although the rite is not widely known, it has come to the forefront with the recent attention paid to [alternative energy sources](#).

"It seems like everything now is interconnected, and there's a much bigger focus on renewable energy," he said.

The synagogue had solar panels installed Friday to channel the sun's energy into lighting the temple's "eternal light," known as ner tamid. In most temples, the ner tamid is placed above the ark, where the Torah scrolls are stored. Traditionally, they were first lit by oil, then electricity, and now in Orange County, solar energy.

Using a \$10,000 grant from the South Coast Air Quality Management District, the Board of Rabbis of Southern California distributed funds among synagogues across four counties for the installation of solar panels, including Temple Beth Tikvah in Fullerton and Temple Beth Sholom in Santa Ana.

"We think it's a great way to highlight environmental awareness," said Rabbi Mark Diamond, vice president of the board.

He said it's part of a broader initiative to use alternative energy sources. In addition to harnessing solar power, synagogues are recycling, using biodegradable items and distributing reusable shopping bags.

About a year ago, Temple Beth Sholom participated in a grant program in which nearly all of the lighting was switched from incandescent bulbs to more efficient fluorescent lighting.

"We're excited to be a part of this movement, and anything we can do to bring attention to using renewable sources of energy is a positive thing," said Rabbi Heidi Cohen of Temple Beth Sholom.

Her temple's Blessing of the Sun ceremony will include traditional readings from the Talmud and the Book of Genesis, as well as Psalm 148, which talks about the creation of the sun. The temple's new ner tamid will be dedicated and blessed before the congregation and an assembly of preschoolers.

The Blessing of the Sun will take place next on April 8, 2037.

"I hope that 28 years from now, we will have even better solutions for greening our homes and synagogues," Diamond said.

## **Managers buy O.C. firm, save 140 jobs**

Jan Norman, small-business columnist

The Orange County Register, Wednesday, April 08, 2009

Some managers of FMI, a long-time fireplace manufacturer in Santa Ana, have bought the business from bankrupt DESA in Kentucky.

The move saves 140 jobs in Santa Ana and 38 in Russellville, Ala., said Mark Klein the new president/CEO who had managed the factory under DESA since 2000. The deal closed March 22.

The new company will be named FMI Products LLC with headquarters in Santa Ana, where it has 150,000-square-foot factory. Its Alabama plant is 106,000 square feet.

"They were going to shut it down," Klein said. "I had been negotiating to buy it before the bankruptcy (filed in December)."

Klein and two other managers plus several other investors paid \$7.4 million cash for the company that makes [gas and wood fireplaces](#), primarily for the home building industry. Although they make a full line of fireplaces and accessories, they specialize in high-end fireplaces.

DESA had bought FMI in 1998 for \$23 million after it had languished as a publicly traded company. It was originally founded by Willard Harris in Long Beach and his son ran the Santa Ana operations.

Back in the old days when the Register's real estate guru Jon Lansner was a columnist, he wrote about FMI almost going under in the early '90s recession because so much of the home building business disappeared. The same has been the problem lately, Klein said.

FMI had expanded its market to contractors, manufactured housing, small specialty retailers and a few larger retailers in the Midwest. Still, all those markets - and just about everyone else - is hurting in this recession.

Revenues have been cut in half to \$35 million, he said.

Why put up good money for a business that caters to an industry that's going to take years to recover?

"It's a great time to buy a business because the market is so bad," Klein said

"I believe in the business. We have a great group of people," he continued. "One motivation I had was that it would be hard for this management team to get other jobs without college degrees. Their understanding of the business is very good."

He foresees economic improvement by the end of the year.

"We have to run the business very lean, especially for the next 12 months and when the market turns around we will be positioned for growth."

The company uses very strict financial controls: Keep no inventory, build to order and with quick turnaround and no waste, Klein said, adding that is the only way a manufacturer can survive in high-cost California.

How costly? Here's a hint: FMI's lease on 150,000 square feet in Santa Ana is \$70,000 a month; the 106,000 square feet in Alabama cost \$8,000.

## **Company wants to ring Atlantic City with gondolas**

USA Today, Thursday, April 09, 2009

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — They would seem more at home in the Alps or at amusement parks.

But a company wants to ring Atlantic City with a \$350 million sky ride system that would link casinos with major attractions and the train station.

Doppelmayr CTEC says the "Atlantic City Chariots of the Sky" gondola system could get millions of vehicles off the streets made famous by the Monopoly game and [reduce air pollution](#).

The company says it ideally could be built without taxpayer expense.

The company says tickets, which could cost about \$8 for all-day traveling, would help repay the investment costs.

City Planning Director William Crane says the project would be difficult to build because it would require environmental permits.

## **Obama looking at cooling air to fight warming**

By Seth Borenstein, AP Science Writer

In the N.Y. Times, S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Thursday, April 9, 2009

WASHINGTON, (AP) -- Tinkering with Earth's climate to chill runaway global warming — a radical idea once dismissed out of hand — is being discussed by the White House as a potential emergency option, the president's new science adviser said Wednesday.

That's because global warming is happening so rapidly, John Holdren told The Associated Press in his first interview since being confirmed last month.

The concept of using technology to purposely cool the climate is called geoengineering. One option raised by Holdren and proposed by a Nobel Prize-winning scientist includes shooting pollution particles into the upper atmosphere to reflect the sun's rays.

Using such an experimental measure is only being thought of as a last resort, Holdren said.

"It's got to be looked at," he said. "We don't have the luxury ... of ruling any approach off the table."

His concern is that the United States and other nations won't slow global warming fast enough and that several "tipping points" could be fast approaching. Once such milestones are reached, such as complete loss of summer sea ice in the Arctic, it increases chances of "really intolerable consequences," he said.

Twice in a half-hour interview, Holdren compared global warming to being "in a car with bad brakes driving toward a cliff in the fog."

He and many experts believe that warming of a few degrees more would lead to disastrous drought conditions and food shortages in some regions, rising seas and more powerful coastal storms in others.

At first, Holdren characterized the potential need to technologically tinker with the climate as just his personal view. However, he went on to say he has raised it in administration discussions.

"We're talking about all these issues in the White House," Holdren said. "There's a very vigorous process going on of discussing all the options for addressing the energy climate challenge."

Holdren said discussions include Cabinet officials and heads of sub-Cabinet level agencies, such as NASA and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The 65-year-old physicist is far from alone in taking geoengineering seriously. The National Academy of Sciences is making it the subject of the first workshop in its new climate challenges program for policymakers, scientists and the public. The British Parliament has also discussed the idea. At an international meeting of climate scientists last month in Copenhagen, 15 talks dealt with different aspects of geoengineering.

The American Meteorological Society is crafting a policy statement that says "it is prudent to consider geoengineering's potential, to understand its limits and to avoid rash deployment."

Last week, Princeton scientist Robert Socolow told the National Academy that geoengineering should be an available option in case climate worsens dramatically.

Holdren, a 1981 winner of a MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant, outlined these possible geoengineering options:

Shooting sulfur particles (like those produced by power plants and volcanoes, for example) into the upper atmosphere, an idea that gained steam when it was proposed by Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen in 2006. It would be "basically mimicking the effect of volcanoes in screening out the incoming sunlight," Holdren said.

Creating artificial "trees" — giant towers that suck carbon dioxide out of the air and store it.

The first approach would "try to produce a cooling effect to offset the heating effect of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases," Holdren said.

But he said there could be grave side effects. Studies suggest that might include eating away a large chunk of the ozone layer above the poles and causing the Mediterranean and the Mideast to be much drier.

And those are just the predicted problems. Scientists say they worry about side effects that they don't anticipate.

While the idea could strike some people as too risky, the Obama administration could get unusual support on the idea from groups that have often denied the harm of global warming in the past.

The conservative think tank American Enterprise Institute has its own geoengineering project, saying it could be "feasible and cost-effective." And Cato Institute scholar Jerry Taylor said Wednesday: "Very few people would rule out geoengineering on its face."

Holdren didn't spell out under what circumstances such extreme measures might ever be called for. And he emphasized they are not something to rely on.

"It would be preferable by far," he said, "to solve this problem by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases."

Yet there is already significant opposition building to the House Democratic leaders' bill aimed at achieving President Barack Obama's goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions 20 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050.

Holdren said temperatures should be kept from rising more than 3.6 degrees. To get there, he said the U.S. and other industrial nations have to begin permanent dramatic cuts in carbon dioxide pollution by 2015, with developing countries following suit within a decade.

Those efforts are racing against three tipping points he cited: Earth could be as close as six years away from the loss of Arctic summer sea ice, he said, and that has the potential of altering the climate in unforeseen ways. Other elements that could dramatically speed up climate change include the release of frozen methane from thawing permafrost in Siberia, and more and bigger wildfires worldwide.

The trouble is that no one knows when these things are coming, he said.

Holdren also addressed other topics during the interview:

The U.S. anti-ballistic missile program is not ready to work and shouldn't be used unless it is 100 percent effective. The system, which would be used to shoot down missiles from countries like North Korea or Iran "needs to be essentially perfect ... that's going to be hard to achieve."

Holdren said NASA needs some changes. He said the Bush administration's plan to return astronauts to the moon was underfunded so money was taken from science and aeronautics. Those areas, including climate change research, were "decimated," he said.

The administration will "rebalance NASA's programs so that we have in space exploration, a suitable mix of manned activities and robotic activities," Holdren said. Doing that "will only get under way in earnest when a new administrator is in place."

Holdren, who advises the president on such decisions, said he hopes Obama will pick a new NASA boss soon.

## **Greenhouse gases must be cut, Obama aide says**

By Jane Kay, environment writer  
S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, April 9, 2009

In sharp contrast to the low priority the Bush administration gave to global warming, President Obama's new science adviser said Wednesday that the world's industrialized nations must immediately cut greenhouse gas emissions to ward off the most extreme effects of climate change.

"We are already experiencing increased heat waves, drought, wildfires, floods and pest infestations - all of that is at today's levels," said physicist John Holdren, director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

"In my judgment, climate change is already dangerous, and the question is, 'Can we stop short of a completely unmanageable degree of climate change?' " he said.

Holdren called for deep cuts in emissions, more climate research and greater preparation for inevitable planetary change. He also is pressing for large investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy.

"The scientific evidence has increasingly supported the idea that the risks rise rapidly above an increase of 3.6 degrees in the global average surface temperature," said Holdren, 65, who was confirmed last month, told The Chronicle in an interview.

The world's temperature has already risen 1.4 degrees over the past century or so. But greenhouse gas emissions already discharged into the atmosphere by coal, oil and natural gas combustion and deforestation are projected to cause an additional rise of nearly 1 degree in the coming years, Holdren said.

### **Preparation necessary**

"There is nothing we can do to stop climate change in its tracks" because emissions already in the atmosphere will eventually raise ocean temperatures, said Holdren, a former longtime UC Berkeley professor who grew up in San Mateo.

Nations must begin to prepare for the changes in store for the planet, he said, and U.S. scientists need better tools to assess changes taking place on land and at sea so the country can adapt.

"We need to strengthen the monitoring system. You can't do climate change science without adequate observational data," Holdren said.

But the constellation of old satellites used to measure changes in Arctic and Antarctic ice as well as vegetation on land is in a fragile state, he said. On-the-ground monitoring also is lacking, he said.

### **Wide range of experience**

Holdren's duties will go beyond climate change. Obama's science adviser has been an outspoken advocate for energy efficiency and renewable energy for the past 35 years.

He is also a specialist in nuclear arms control and nonproliferation as well as science and technology policy. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering.

Since he went to Washington, he has worked for stimulus money to help businesses develop renewable energy technology, and he supported legislation that made permanent tax credits for research and experimentation.

The administration is guiding \$50 billion toward investment in science and technology that drives innovation and helps the economy, he said. Another \$50 billion is directed toward loan guarantees and other incentives for the deployment of advanced technologies to address energy and environmental issues, he said.

In 1973, at age 29, Holdren co-founded the Energy and Resources Group at UC Berkeley, launching a cutting-edge academic program that turned out students of engineering, environmental science, economics and political science. In 1981, he received a MacArthur "genius" award.

### **Worked at Harvard**

In 1996, he took a position at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, from which he is on leave. He has resigned as director of the Woods Hole Research Center in Falmouth, Mass.

Holdren was co-chairman of the bipartisan National Commission on Energy Policy and served as president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In both groups, he offered solutions to political leaders and engaged in public policy debate, often writing newspaper opinion pieces and letters to the editor countering deniers of global warming.

"This president is committed to science and technology and their role in addressing our great challenges," Holdren said. "He wanted someone to speak out on issues."

### **Analysis: Climate talks to move to smaller forum**

By Arthur Max - Associated Press Writer

In the Merced Sun-Star, Contra Costa Times and Modesto Bee, Thursday, April 9, 2009

BONN, Germany -- With a digital clock ticking in giant red numbers, U.N. climate negotiators ended another round of talks this week, nibbling at the edges of a new climate change treaty but frustrated - again - at failing to reach the heart of an accord.

After 16 months of talks by thousands of delegates from some 190 countries, it's time to try something else.

Later this month, the spotlight shifts from the unwieldy negotiations involving nearly every country on earth to the world's 17 most powerful economies. Among them, they are responsible for most of the man-made greenhouse gas emissions that scientists say are causing the Earth to overheat.

The aim is to draft a new agreement to regulate carbon emissions, replacing the 1998 Kyoto Protocol that expires in 2012.

The new accord is due to be concluded at a U.N. conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December, which begins - according to the digital countdown - 242 days, 12 hours some minutes and seconds after the talks in Bonn adjourned Wednesday night.

Haggling over every detail and concept, the U.N. talks are drawing the general outline of a Copenhagen agreement. But they have made little headway on the core issues: fixing mandatory emission reduction targets for industrial countries, setting objectives for developing countries to rein in their own rapidly expanding emissions, and raising some \$100 billion a year to help poor countries adjust to changing climate conditions.

A deal requires political decisions from both industrial and developing nations, but each group is waiting for the other to put its cards on the table.

So last month, President Barack Obama announced he was reviving a Bush-era gathering of the key players on both sides, now called the Major Economies Forum. The first meeting is scheduled for April 27-28 in Washington, with more leading up to a July summit in Italy.

The idea of the more intimate forum is to "try and generate a new level of political will," said Jonathan Pershing, the new chief U.S. delegate to the U.N. talks.

"We look at the last couple of years in this negotiation. It has made only very modest progress," Pershing told reporters.

Environmental activists, who monitor U.S. moves with a critical eye, agree the smaller group holds out some hope for a breakthrough.

"Because it's a heads of state forum, and they can bring in finance ministers and other players ... perhaps they can break the logjam," said Alden Meyer, of the Washington-based Union of Concerned Scientists.

Among those invited are the swiftly developing economies of China, India, Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia and South Africa. Korea and Japan join the U.S., Russia and several European countries from the industrial world, as well as representatives of the European Union. Denmark won an invitation as host of the decisive Copenhagen meeting.

Possibly of equal importance, the world's two biggest polluters will go head-to-head on climate issues when Obama visits Chinese President Hu Jintao in the second half of the year.

But what about the rest of the world?

"We're confused," said Kevin Conrad, the delegate from Papua New Guinea. "Does it help the negotiations? Or is it a distracting side show?"

Conrad said Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, first summoned the major economies meeting to skirt the U.N. process.

Although Obama has announced ambitious domestic plans to reverse Bush's laggard climate change policy, he has yet to establish his international credentials, said Conrad, who is a vocal advocate for small island countries that will be among the hardest hit by climate change.

If the major political decisions will be made by what's becoming known as the MEF, what will happen to the U.N. talks?

They go on at an even more intensive pace. Delegates in Bonn decided to add more two more sessions to the two previously scheduled rounds before convening in Copenhagen. U.N.

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also has called a climate summit to coincide with the annual General Assembly meeting in September.

No matter where the deal is struck, it all has to come together in Copenhagen.

"None of us cares what the MEF agrees. They still have to bring it back here," Conrad said.

The U.S. doesn't disagree.

"Our intent is to use this process, the U.N. forum, to create an agreement," Pershing said.

## **Researcher ranks mutual funds by carbon footprint**

By Chris Kahn - AP Energy Writer

In the Merced Sun-Star, Wednesday, April 8, 2009

NEW YORK -- Quick: How green is your 401(k)? If you can't tell, you're not alone.

Mutual funds rarely provide details about the greenhouse gas emissions that are tied to their investments - an oversight that could become costly as cap-and-trade laws gain a foothold in the United States.

On Wednesday, environmental researcher Trucost published what it says is a first-ever ranking of mutual funds according to their carbon footprints. Trucost's analysis of 91 funds is meant to help investors gauge how emissions laws could affect a fund's holdings.

"Carbon emissions are a real financial issue that will soon have a real price in the U.S.," said James Salo, a Trucost researcher who wrote the report. "Investors can use this to protect their assets."

The report, which examined 75 major equity funds and 16 sustainability/socially responsible investment funds with a combined value of \$1.55 trillion, will feed a growing appetite for emissions data from Wall Street.

Aside from environmental concerns, investors say they need help identifying who could be hit the most as companies start to pay for the amount of carbon they send into the atmosphere.

The U.S. hasn't established a national cap-and-trade system, though regional initiatives are set to begin in the next few years. A recent plan by Democratic lawmakers also proposes cutting greenhouse gases by a fifth over the next decade.

"Investors are keenly interested in seeing companies be more transparent" about how they'll be affected, said Mindy Lubber, president of Boston-based Ceres, a network of investors and environmental groups.

Ceres started the Global Reporting Initiative, which asks multinational companies to volunteer information about environmental sustainability. It now wants the Securities and Exchange Commission to require companies to disclose their climate risk in regulatory filings.

"When it's mandated by the government, everybody's got to do it," Lubber said.

An alliance of faith-based groups known as the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility also has partnered with Trucost in compiling "climate risk profiles" of major companies.

ICCR members, who control about \$100 billion in investments, use the climate profiles to judge if they've put money in the right places, said Patricia Daly, executive director for the tri-state coalition.

"Asking companies to be socially and environmentally responsible, to plan their future in a sustainable way, is a critical piece of how they're going to perform financially," Daly said.

For its ranking system, Trucost used an extensive database that included environmental information on 4,500 companies around the world. It analyzed nine greenhouse gases, and rated companies based on the number of metric tons of carbon dioxide, or equivalent emissions, relative to sales.

For each fund, Trucost adjusted carbon dioxide figures according to the amount the fund invested in a particular company. Thus, a fund that invested in a tiny percentage of an oil company would only be tagged for an equally tiny amount of carbon.

The Trucost report, which used data from 2007 and 2008, showed wide variations in the carbon footprints for leading mutual funds. The fund with the biggest footprint was 38-times more carbon intensive than the fund with the smallest footprint, the report said.

The ranking also showed that funds with the smallest carbon footprints naturally steered away from power companies and the oil industry, investing instead in financial services, banks and health care.

The Financial Select Sector SPDR Fund topped the list with the smallest footprint. Its investments, which were worth \$7.8 billion at the end of 2008, emitted an equivalent of 40 tons of carbon dioxide per \$1 million in revenue. It was followed by the Vanguard Health Care Fund and PowerShares QQQ Trust.

The fund that was the most carbon intensive was the iShares FTSE/Xinhua China 25 Index Fund. Its investments, worth \$5.9 billion at the end of 2008, emitted 1,549 tons of greenhouse gases per \$1 million of revenue, according to Trucost.

That was roughly double the footprint of the next largest emitter, the Fidelity Capital Appreciation Fund, which had 758 tons of carbon dioxide, or equivalent gases, per \$1 million in revenue.

The report also noted that Sustainability/SRI funds, which typically screen investments for ethical and environmental practices, posted a variety of carbon footprints. They filled out the middle of Trucost's ranking system with neither the best nor the worst performances when it comes to keeping low carbon emissions.

Salo said he expects some of them to re-evaluate their investments now in the future.

"This data hasn't been available before," he said. "They've been flying blind."

Trucost Chief Executive Simon Thomas said the report will be the first in a series of carbon footprint rankings. The purpose, he said, is to give investors and fund managers enough information to fine tune their investments in emerging carbon economy.

"Our hope is that investors start referring to this habitually in their investment decision making," Thomas said. "We think they should."

## **What will global warming look like? Scientists point to Australia Drought, fires, killer heat waves, wildlife extinction and mosquito-borne illness -- the things that climate change models are predicting have already arrived there, they say.**

By Julie Cart

L.A. Times, Thursday, April 9, 2009

Reporting from The Murray-Darling Basin, Australia -- Frank Eddy pulled off his dusty boots and slid into a chair, taking his place at the dining room table where most of the critical family issues are hashed out. Spreading hands as dry and cracked as the orchards he tends, the stout man his mates call Tank explained what damage a decade of drought has done.

"Suicide is high. Depression is huge. Families are breaking up. It's devastation," he said, shaking his head. "I've got a neighbor in terrible trouble. Found him in the paddock, sitting in his [truck], crying his eyes out.

Grown men -- big, strong grown men. We're holding on by the skin of our teeth. It's desperate times." A result of climate change?

"You'd have to have your head in the bloody sand to think otherwise," Eddy said.

They call Australia the Lucky Country, with good reason. Generations of hardy castoffs tamed the

world's driest inhabited continent, created a robust economy and cultivated an image of irresistibly resilient people who can't be held down. Australia exports itself as a place of captivating landscapes, brilliant sunshine, glittering beaches and an enviable lifestyle.

Look again. Climate scientists say Australia -- beset by prolonged drought and deadly bush fires in the south, monsoon flooding and mosquito-borne fevers in the north, widespread wildlife decline, economic collapse in agriculture and killer heat waves -- epitomizes the "accelerated climate crisis" that global warming models have forecast.

With few skeptics among them, Australians appear to be coming to an awakening: Adapt to a rapidly shifting climate, and soon. Scientists here warn that the experience of this island continent is an early cautionary tale for the rest of the world.

"Australia is the harbinger of change," said paleontologist Tim Flannery, Australia's most vocal climate change prophet. "The problems for us are going to be greater. The cost to Australia from climate change is going to be greater than for any developed country. We are already starting to see it. It's tearing apart the life-support system that gives us this world."

### **Deadly fires**

Many here believe Australia already has a death toll directly connected to climate change: the 173 people who died in February during the nation's worst-ever wildfires, and 200 more who died from heat the week before. A three-person royal commission has convened to decide, among other things, whether global warming contributed to massive bush fires that destroyed entire towns and killed a quarter of Victoria state's koalas, kangaroos, birds and other wildlife.

The commission's proceedings mark the first time anywhere that climate change could be put on trial. And it will take place in a nation that still gets 80% of its energy from burning coal, the globe's largest single source of greenhouse gases.

The commission's findings aren't due until August, but veteran firefighters, scientists and residents believe the case has already been made. Even before the flames, 200 Melbourne residents died in a heat wave that buckled the steel skeleton on a newly constructed 400-foot Ferris wheel and warped train tracks like spaghetti. Cities experienced four days of temperatures at 110 degrees or higher with little humidity, and 100-mph winds. In areas where fires hit, temperatures reached 120.

On the hottest day, more than 4,000 gray-headed flying foxes dropped dead out of trees in one Melbourne park.

"Something is happening in Australia," firefighter Dan Condon of the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade wrote in an open letter. "Global warming is no longer some future event that we don't have to worry about for decades. What we have seen in the past two weeks moves Australia's exposure to global warming to emergency status."

The possibility that a high-profile royal commission may find a nexus between climate change and the loss of human life is significant for many scientists here.

"That will be an important moment in its own right," said Chris Cocklin, a climate change researcher at James Cook University in Townsville, in Queensland state, and lead author on the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

"It may mean that climate change will be brought to the fore in a way that has never happened before."

### **Dust Bowl scenes**

Australia's climate change predicament is on depressing display in the Murray-Darling Basin, where the country's three largest rivers converge, and where Eddy runs a shrinking 100-acre orchard.

The rivers -- the Murray, Darling and Murrumbidgee -- flow from the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range and nourish the valleys of Australia's fruit and grain basket, as well as a diverse system of wetlands, grasslands and eucalyptus forests.

Like scenes from a modern Dust Bowl, mile after mile of desiccated fields lie fallow, rows of shriveled trees that once bore peaches and pears are now abandoned orchards, and small businesses are shuttered, fronted by for-sale signs. The dingy brown of the landscape rearranges in a cloud of dust with every hot wind that blows.

Farmers who once grew 60% of the nation's produce are walking off their land or selling their water rights to the state and federal government. With rainfall in the region at lower than 50% of average for more than a decade, Australia is witnessing the collapse of its agricultural sector and the nation's ability to feed itself.

In rural Victoria, one rancher or farmer a week takes his own life. Public health officials say hanging is the preferred method.

"Fourteen dairy farmers in the valley have committed suicide in the last five years," Eddy said matter-of-factly, staring at his hands at his long, wooden dining room table. "Hangings, they are common but they are not made public. It's really depressing, it's really tough going.

"Fruit growers are abandoning their orchards. It's their life's work, and it's gone to dust. They are at their wits' end. The small growers haven't got the money to replant. Haven't got the time to wait five years for a return. The machinery they have is not salable. They have thrown their arms up and walked away. They are broken people."

### **Pulling up trees**

Those who remain continue bulldozing apple and peach trees too stressed to produce marketable fruit. Each fall, orchard owners burn the trees in a massive bonfire, forlornly "toasting" their failed crops with cans of beer. More than 20% of the fruit trees in the Goulburn Valley have been pulled up in recent years. Few new trees take their place.

Local dairy farmers live a similar definition of unsustainability, concluding they can make more money selling their water to cities than they can selling milk.

"That's what got us through last year," said Di Davies, Eddy's neighbor. "We parked our cows and sold our water."

Santo Varapodio, 73, is the patriarch of a family that runs one of the largest fruit operations around the nearby agricultural center of Shepparton. The area's annual rainfall used to be 19 to 21 inches a year.

"Now we're lucky if we get 6 to 7 inches," Varapodio said, displaying the stunted pears picked from under-watered trees. He said this summer's heat wave "cooked" his fruit. "When we bring the pears in, about 15% will have burn on them," Varapodio said. "The apples will have anything up to 50% sunburn on them."

Rainfall patterns have been frustratingly uncooperative. Gentle winter showers that replenished groundwater have been replaced by torrential summer onslaughts that turn the fertile topsoil into a slough.

Most of the country is in the grip of the worst drought in more than a century. Every capital in Australia's eight states and territories is operating under considerable water restrictions. In urban areas, "bucketing" has become a common practice -- placing pails in showers and using the gray water on lawns or gardens. In some cities, such as Brisbane, residents drink recycled water, a process nicknamed "toilet to tap."

In rural areas, the lucky tap their own wells, provided they still function. Others survive on rainwater or what they can scrounge or buy.

Meanwhile, the tropical north's rainy season, known as the Big Wet, is longer and wetter than ever. Warming tropical waters in the Coral Sea and the Gulf of Carpentaria spawn ever more powerful cyclones, while rainfall and heat records are broken every year.

The coastal city of Darwin, in the Northern Territory, swelters through 20 to 30 days of temperatures above 95 degrees, with high tropical humidity. Government scientists project that by 2070, Darwin will experience such conditions as many as 300 days a year.

Communities on the Cape York Peninsula accustomed to being flooded for days are commonly cut off for weeks. Throughout February, the Queensland government airdropped supplies to citizens, who had to wait to reemerge when the water recedes in the Southern Hemisphere's autumn, in late March or early April. In the meantime, in-ground burials are on hold.

Climate change researcher Cocklin lives in the far north, where the new regime of intensified monsoons scarcely gives Queenslanders a break.

"You might get punched and get up again," he said. "The second time it's harder to get up. The third time, you can't be bothered. How many times can you get punched?"

Australians in the south would see water as heaven-sent; in the north, it's a curse. In March, a young girl playing by a rain-swollen river was carried off by a crocodile, the second child lost to crocs in a month.

The region is beset with twin epidemics of malaria and a dangerous form of hemorrhagic dengue fever, from mosquitoes that breed in the standing water. Such diseases are expected to become more common in the tropics with climate change.

### **Reef is withering**

Not far from where Cocklin lives, the north's two largest tourism draws, the Great Barrier Reef and the Tropical Rainforest Reserve, are withering under climate extremes. Higher ocean temperatures are bleaching expanses of coral and affecting fish and plant species. A report issued last year by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change projected that the Great Barrier Reef will be "functionally extinct" by 2050.

Cocklin was just back from giving a presentation at a climate change conference in Europe, showing the degradation of the reef as well as photographs of the bush fires and floods. "The audience was a little bit in awe of what's going on in Australia," he said.

Inland, tropical forests are retreating up mountainsides as species of towering trees die off at lower altitudes and reestablish themselves in cooler climes. Rare and unique animals are on the move, competing for scant space atop Australia's modest topography. In most areas, the vertical distance from the tree line to a mountain's peak is less than a quarter-mile.

"If you are at the top of the mountain, it will only take a couple of degrees to push you off the top," said Stephen Williams, director of the Center for Tropical Biodiversity and Climate Change in

Townsville. Scientists paint a bleak picture of wildlife competing for space on peaks in the country's alpine region. Williams and other biologists predict as much as 50% animal extinction in the region by the end of the century.

Chief among the candidates for extinction is the rare white lemuroid ringtail possum, a singular species that Flannery, the paleontologist, describes as "our panda." The pale creatures live high in trees in the 4,000 square miles of moist forest in northeast Queensland. They can't tolerate, even for hours, temperatures above 86 degrees. Williams' research found that the possum was gone in one of the animal's two historical ranges, and in the other it "has declined dramatically, to the point where you can barely detect it."

Williams said that when he shares his research illustrating the degree to which the continent's biodiversity is at risk, "people's jaws drop."

Scientists are frustrated that such dramatic anecdotal and empirical evidence hasn't sparked equally dramatic action from Australia's government. They suspect the inaction can be partly explained by examining the nation's relationship with coal. Australia is the world's largest exporter of coal and relies on it for 80% of its electricity. That helps make Australia and its 21 million people the world's highest per-capita producers of greenhouse gases in the industrialized world.

Climate change researcher Cocklin, who is deputy vice chancellor at James Cook University, said the power of the coal companies and the massive receipts they bring in render the industry politically untouchable.

"The nature of our energy profile is one where coal features significantly," he said. "There's no denying it's a massive problem. I don't think in the public-political arena it is being challenged with the tenacity that you would want. No Labor [Party] government is going to challenge that."

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd says climate change is high on his agenda, but many here are disappointed by his pledge to cut overall greenhouse gas emissions by only 5% by 2020.

Scientists and policymakers now agree that even drastic cuts won't halt climate changes already underway. In response, some Australians are considering whether outback settlements should be abandoned.

"We are already very flat and very dry as a continent," Flannery said. "There is just this little margin that is inhabitable. We don't have a lot of options."

Most Australians live on the coast, where they are vulnerable to flooding because of rising sea levels, projected to increase by 6 1/2 feet this century.

"Some places are pretty close to being bloody unlivable anymore," Cocklin said.

"When you start talking about places where 45 degrees [113 Fahrenheit] is commonplace, that raises the question of 'Can you really live in that?'"

[Reedley Exponent commentary, Wed., April 8, 2009:](#)

### **Notions of a small town editor**

By Cheryl Lingo

Interesting news that crossed my desk this week:

- Assemblyman Danny Gilmore (R-Hanford) is part of a group of legislators sponsoring emergency legislation that will give gas station owners a one-year break on the requirement to replace gas nozzles with new fuel nozzles that are supposed to improve [air quality](#). Gilmore said the action is needed because of the risk that many gas station owners may be forced to shut

down if they cannot pay for the estimated \$50,000 average cost of the upgrade. Gilmore wants to protect jobs. Good for him.

[Hanford Sentinel commentary, Wednesday, April 8, 2009:](#)

## **California Focus: Obama makes a change, but states' rights battle not over**

By Thomas Elias

There was a time when the term "states' rights" stood for trampling on the rights of individuals. Many states asserted during the great civil rights battles of the 20th Century that they had the right to prevent some citizens from voting, eating in the restaurants of their choice, drinking from public water fountains or sitting where they pleased on buses and trains.

But issues of states' rights were essentially turned on their head by a U.S. Supreme Court bent on restricting some items (like medical marijuana, okayed in 1996 by California voters) and by the former George W. Bush administration, which was willing to claim almost anything to further its agenda of favoring big business over consumers and the environment.

That began to change after Barack Obama became the 44th president. For one thing, despite a few raids early in Obama's term, his attorney general Eric Holder has now made it clear he will no longer prosecute medical marijuana dispensaries operating according to California's 1990s-era law.

But other signals indicate the Supreme Court remains a states' rights opponent.

The most prominent of those came in a decision involving the U.S. Navy and the dolphins and gray whales that migrate annually along the California coast. The Navy and the marine mammals generally coexist happily, but not in the strait between San Clemente and Santa Catalina islands off the California coastline.

The Navy uses that strait to practice submarine detection because it boasts currents and other conditions similar to those in the Strait of Hormuz, the strategic entrance to the Persian Gulf. Trouble is, environmental groups say naval mid-frequency active sonar has killed and injured whales and dolphins by interfering with their own sonar-like communications.

The state Coastal Commission and several private wildlife protection organizations sued last year to prevent the Navy from conducting exercises in the strait at times when marine mammals are near. U.S. District Judge Florence Marie Cooper went aboard several naval vessels to observe maneuvers and later found in favor of the whales and the Coastal Commission, instructing the Navy to shut down its sonar when within 2,200 yards of whales or dolphins.

The Navy appealed immediately to then-President Bush, who responded with the first and so far only presidential order exempting military maneuvers from environmental rules. The Natural Resources Defense Council and others took the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, which held by a one-vote margin that the Navy can do as it likes and never mind the state or the animals.

The ruling implies that even with Bush long gone, and with Obama reversing or about to overturn several Bush stances -- including his refusal to allow California to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from cars and trucks -- the states' rights battle will continue.

The biggest change so far is Holder's indication that the long federal campaign to harass or shut down medical marijuana clinics and cooperatives in California is over. A profusion of clinics sprang up after passage of Proposition 215, which allows use of medipot with a doctor's recommendation. Some of the clinics and co-ops have long been suspected of selling pot to anyone, not just those with notes from doctors. They also are accused of accepting almost any piece of paper as a recommendation, without bothering to check authenticity. Now, Holder says only those suspected of such wrongs will be prosecuted.

Under both Bush and his Democratic predecessor Bill Clinton, raids were frequent on clinics and arrests of growers who maintained they are supply only legitimate patients. The justification

always was that federal law banning marijuana use takes precedence over any state law -- even though more than a dozen other states have voted to legalize medipot since the California vote.

But despite Obama's hands-off medipot policy, the anti-states' rights Supreme Court majority remains. It's a majority that has insisted the federal government can override state decisions on siting of liquefied gas terminals, controlling pollution at ports and many other items.

So long as that majority survives, one principle long upheld by California's highest state court will be in jeopardy: That's the one which holds that while states may not grant their citizens (or animals, in some cases) fewer rights than guaranteed under the federal Constitution, they can grant more rights.

This was the principle at work last spring when the state Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage, a decision narrowly reversed months later by the voters via Proposition 8 and now back before the same court.

It's a principle that has furthered the fight against smog, led to legalized abortion here long before the Roe v. Wade decision did it nationally and helped equalize revenue among school districts, among many important steps.

Bush eroded that principle, with consistent backing by the federal justices.

Obama has not yet shown he can reverse that tide.

*Thomas D. Elias is a syndicated columnist on California issues.*

[Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register commentary, Thursday, April 9, 2009:](#)

### **Landfill project will improve service to county**

Concerning the editorial regarding improvements to the Visalia Landfill: Government regulations have brought profound changes in how we deal with our garbage. Daily operations at a landfill are carried out under stringent state regulations designed to protect the environment, public health and safety. We must operate environmentally safe landfills. There are no fewer than 10 state or local regulatory agencies involved in the design, construction and management of landfills.

In order to improve the safety of the access to the Visalia Landfill, the entrance on Road 80 will be relocated to Avenue 328. Road 80 is a major roadway planned to carry in excess of 20,000 vehicles per day in the year 2030. Eliminating access to the landfill from Road 80 to slow-moving solid-waste vehicles will reduce the conflicts between these heavy vehicles and the other passenger cars and trucks traveling at 55 miles per hour.

Tulare County owns and operates three sanitary landfill sites along with seven transfer stations, one of which is on the Valley floor and six in the foothill and mountainous areas of the county.

To the casual observer, one might see these facilities as "dumps" — simply a hole in the ground where you place your garbage. While historically that might be true, many owners of dumps now have to live with very costly cleanup projects to deal with groundwater contamination. Sanitary landfills are very complex facilities that oftentimes require rigorous environment review.

The new entrance project is also intended to improve our service to the citizens of Tulare County as well as improve our stewardship of solid waste. The project provides for a three-scale system to improve access into and out of the landfill. The intent is to also automate the scale process for those who are daily users of the landfill to minimize their time in line, making them more productive. In addition, the project includes a wheel-wash facility to wash dirt and mud off of vehicles to avoid tracking it out onto the roadway and thereby improving air quality.

The days of simply bulldozing a new access route to a landfill have gone the way of building homes without building permits. While the proposed changes seem expensive, they are designed to meet current environmental standards to which government is legally required to adhere.

*Britt L. Fussel is an assistant director with the Tulare County Resource Management Agency which has the responsibility for the permitting, construction, operation and long-term maintenance of landfills in Tulare County.*

[Blog in The OC Register, April 8, 2009:](#)

## **Cooler heads prevail in global warming? Don't count on it**

By Mark Landsbaum

It's good to see in these dire economic times when the world faces upwards of another half degree (maybe) of temperature increase over the coming 100 years that our nation has capable and well-reasoned leadership. Well, not exactly.

"The president's new science adviser said Wednesday that global warming is so dire, the Obama administration is discussing radical technologies to cool Earth's [air](#).

John Holdren told The Associated Press in his first interview since being confirmed last month that the idea of geoengineering the climate is being discussed. One such extreme option includes shooting pollution particles into the upper atmosphere to reflect the sun's rays."

It's good to know that Flash Gordon science is in full bloom at the White House. "Let's make the sky dirty!" That'll cool things off.

Of course, won't that mean NASA will need a waiver or permit from the EPA? Hey, with the requisite EIR study and the inevitable Sierra Club challenge because of the falling particles disrupting ground squirrel migration patterns, we don't expect the sky-blackening approach will happen any time too soon.

And by then, who knows, the old earth just may have even cooled off. Oh, wait. It's already cooled off. For a decade or more now.

Well, at least the Associated Press assures us that "Holdren said such an experimental measure would only be used as a last resort."

On the other hand, Holdren also said, "It's got to be looked at. We don't have the luxury of taking any approach off the table."

Alas, the days of luxury are over. We've gotta ruin the economy in the name of saving us from a sweltering increase of about a half degree in the coming century. Unless it cools off.

[Commentary in the O.C. Register, Tuesday, April 07, 2009:](#)

## **Gas: back to the future**

Columnist George Will avoids the obvious about how to get Americans to buy our president's vision for "the cars of tomorrow" ["The car designer in chief," Commentary April 5]: raise the federal gas tax to get gasoline back to \$4 or even \$5 a gallon. It is clear that we prefer the more jazzy SUVs whenever gasoline prices moderate.

Sure, it's regressive and, of course, it will hit the economy, and, unavoidably, more people will die in accidents, but think of all the oil we won't have to buy from foreign sources and the reduction in greenhouse [gas emissions](#).

"The car of tomorrow" will be more expensive than today's Prius and the like since the high-margin SUVs and pickup trucks that fund the auto companies will go away, but we will all feel better for it. I have hope.

*Forrest Bonner, Huntington Beach*

[Intelligencer Journal editorial, In the Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, April 9, 2009:](#)

## **Grass mowing isn't greener on environmental side:**

Did you know there is an 80-pound gorilla sitting in your garage (or shed)?

Equipped with wheels and a long handle, it probably has a two-stroke engine that emits a sound most of us have come to associate with warmer months.

The lawnmower is a part of Americana. Many people relish the smell of fresh-cut grass, and a surprising number actually enjoy mowing the lawn. And a significant number are likely to begin the ritual anew this weekend.

But that enjoyment overshadows an unpleasant fact: Lawnmowers are big polluters.

On average, 54 million Americans mow their grass each weekend. Although newer lawnmowers meet more stringent EPA emissions requirements, over the course of a year, older mowers can produce as much as 80 pounds of carbon dioxide as well as nitrous oxides and particulate matter. Multiply 54 million lawnmowers times 80 pounds of carbon dioxide and you get 4.3 billion pounds of carbon dioxide annually. That accounts for 5 percent of the nation's air pollution.

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, one lawnmower running for one hour emits as much pollution as five new automobiles driving 55 mph for the same amount of time. Multiply that times the 54 million weekend mowers and you have the equivalent of 270 million cars being driven for one hour each.

Alternatives do exist. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that if just 5,000 gasoline-powered mowers were replaced with non-motorized mowers, it would reduce the amount of hydrocarbons by 2,120 pounds and the amount of nitrous oxides by 17 pounds. An additional 56 pounds of particulate matter also would be eliminated.

Electric mowers are not non-polluters—their emissions take place at power plants rather than in neighborhoods—but they are a viable alternative.

Most homeowners, however, are not about to trade their trusty 3.5-horsepower rotary mower for a non-motorized reel mower.

However, they, too, can reduce pollution by performing simple maintenance—changing the motor oil, replacing air filters, sharpening blades and cleaning beneath the mower deck to improve efficiency.

A newly mowed lawn adds to curb appeal. A little maintenance or changing to an electric or reel mower could curb pollution as well.

[Editorials in USA Today, Thursday, April 9, 2009:](#)

## **GRASS MOWING ISN'T GREENER ON ENVIRONMENTAL SIDE:**

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A newly mowed lawn adds to curb appeal. A little maintenance or changing to an electric or reel mower could curb pollution as well.

--(Lancaster) *Intelligencer Journal*

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Wed., April 8, 2009:](#)

### **'Important role'**

In response to Don Werum's letter [April 2] stating the electric car is at this time "just an expensive toy": Mr. Werum is correct in that narrow context. I view it as a practical and important role for the electric car in this stage of development.

The manufacturers should market the vehicle for what it is ideally suited for, a daily commuter car.

If owning an electric vehicle is within reach of your budget, then you can be the proud owner of a non-polluting vehicle that doesn't contribute to the foreign oil market. Then take the entire family in your SUV on vacation.

*Clay K. Comer, Fresno*

[Letter to the Sacramento Bee, Thursday, April 9, 2009:](#)

### **Global warming is just politics**

Re "C'mon, conservatives: Admit it" (Letters, April 4): Liberals like to deride those who don't believe in global warming. Global warming is an unlikely belief set that asserts the cause as man-made, the consequences as 100 percent catastrophic, and the only solution as government control of the American economy or we are doomed.

Here are just some of the reasons why we are suspect:

- The thousands of scientists who are in active opposition to the conventional theory.
- There has been no measurable warming in the last 10 years.
- Proponents seem to care only about American CO2 emissions and not about those coming from China, India and other industrial giants.
- The believers like the issue of global warming too much. It's an effective political issue that puts Republicans in a box and fits hand in glove with their desire for more government control of the economy.
- You don't see liberals selling their coastal properties, giving up their cars or making significant sacrifices on their own. The issue is purely political.

The real devastation from global warming will occur if the "cap and trade" proposal becomes law. This would tangle American business in bureaucracy and punitive taxation that would make the current recession seem like the 1990s.

*Charles Hummer, Latrobe*

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses hydrogen stations for vehicle fuel will be constructed in various cities throughout California. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

### **Construye California estaciones de hidrógeno para vehículos en principales ciudades del estado**

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, April 09, 2009

La Oficina de Recursos del Aire de California informó que invertirá cerca de siete millones de dólares en instalar por lo menos cuatro nuevos expendios de hidrógeno para vehículos de este tipo en las principales ciudades del estado. La presidenta de dicha oficina, Mary Nichols dijo que el hidrógeno es uno de los combustibles del futuro de California, y que hay que facilitar su consumo desde ahora. Los expendios estarán en lugares estratégicos como el aeropuerto de San Francisco y la Universidad de California en Los Ángeles. También las otras estaciones dos estarán en esas ciudades. Por ahora la Universidad de California en Irvine cuenta con algunas de las primeras estaciones de hidrógeno.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses environmental contingency that provokes health problems and concerns. CO levels have registered above 100 points on the IMECA index soon after four factories were in flames.](#)

### **Provoca el siniestro contingencia ambiental y problemas de salud**

Pedro Sánchez Briones/ Horacio Carrasco

El Diario, Thursday, April 09, 2009

El incendio en cuatro plantas maquiladoras del Parque Industrial Aeropuerto que aún continuaba ayer, provocó una contingencia ambiental en la frontera al exceder los índices de contaminación permisibles por las autoridades de salud.

Héctor Sandoval Quesney, director de Normatividad Ambiental, indicó que se registraron más de 100 puntos Imeca (índice Metropolitano de la Calidad del Aire) de monóxido de carbono (CO), por lo que su nivel es considerado no satisfactorio.

Ante la problemática, la Comisión Estatal para la Protección contra Riesgos Sanitarios (Coespris) inició un estudio sobre posibles daños a la salud en un radio de dos kilómetros de las compañías MCS de México, Foxconn, Cormex y Dometik.

Carlos Ortiz Márquez, titular de la instancia, explicó que las muestras podrían extenderse hacia otros sectores de la mancha urbana en caso de encontrarse situaciones de gravedad.

Los materiales que se consumieron en las maquiladoras fueron principalmente plásticos y resinas, por tanto, las personas que lleguen a sentir problemas de deficiencia respiratoria o irritación en los ojos deben acudir al médico, dijo Homero Navarro Fraire, coordinador de la Unidad Estatal de Protección Civil.

El incendio lanzó muchas toneladas de contaminantes a la atmósfera de manera importante, pues se cumplieron más de 24 horas con una capa de humo sobre la ciudad, indicó.

A su vez, la secretaria de Desarrollo Industrial, Martha Lara, informó que a través de la Jurisdicción Sanitaria se realizan mediciones de contaminación, además de que brigadas médicas están atendiendo a los residentes de seis colonias que pudieran resultar más afectadas por las emanaciones.

Además, desde ayer 16 verificadores iniciaron con el proyecto de evidencia de riesgo, lo cual permitirá observar qué grado de afectación se produjo tanto en el aire como en el agua, indicó Ortiz Márquez.

En los colonos se centrarán en examinar si tienen dificultades para respirar.

Tras los resultados que encuentren, se implementarán acciones de prevención o de remediación, aunque solicitó a la comunidad no alarmarse debido a que son programas para que la población tenga certidumbre.

“Hasta ahorita no tenemos un dato específico en cuanto a riesgo específico”, detalló, aunque precisó que el personal de los Servicios Estatales de Salud está listo para actuar si así lo amerita.

Ortiz Márquez señaló que las colonias cercanas son seis, entre ellas la Campestre Virreyes, que se localiza a un lado del Aeropuerto de Ciudad Juárez, al sur de la ciudad.

“Está a la vista que la contaminación es muy grave”, dijo el titular de la Coespris durante una visita al área siniestrada, donde confió en que los vientos que se registraron ayer ayuden a dispersar la polución.

A su vez, óscar Villalobos, secretario de Fomento Social, señaló que de acuerdo con reportes que le entregaron las brigadas médicas, los habitantes que residen cerca del lugar ya presentan irritaciones en los ojos, náuseas u males respiratorios.

En tanto que Sandoval Quesney recalcó que desde ayer realizan mediciones de contaminantes de Partículas Menores a 10 microgramos (PM 10), así como de monóxido de carbono.

En ese punto incluso se cuenta de forma permanente con un medidor de PM 10, pero el análisis lo reforzarán con más equipo.

El funcionario pidió a la comunidad no realizar actividades al aire libre para no exponerse al humo que generaron las empresas incendiadas.

Navarro Fraire dijo a su vez que debe verificarse el impacto que puede haber en cuanto a enfermedades de las vías respiratorias, porque ese tipo de humo ataca estas partes del cuerpo y el nivel de intoxicación es importante.

Por lo tanto, las personas que lleguen a sentir alguna deficiencia respiratoria o irritación en los ojos, deben acudir con su médico porque eso es lo más recomendable, agregó.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses climate change dialogue passes through the tiniest forum.](#)

## **Diálogo sobre cambio climático pasa a foro más pequeño**

Por Arthur Max

La Raza, Thursday, April 09, 2009

Enviar Imprimir Con un reloj digital mostrando gigantescos números en rojo, negociadores de las Naciones Unidas que analizan el cambio climático concluyeron esta semana otra ronda de conversaciones, orillando los bordes de un nuevo tratado sobre cambio climático, pero frustrados por los obstáculos que deben superar para alcanzar un acuerdo.

Luego de 16 meses de conversaciones por parte de miles de delegados de unos 190 países, llegó el momento de intentar otra cosa.

En los próximos días, el foco pasa de las negociaciones inflexibles que involucraron a prácticamente cada país del planeta, a otras donde participan 17 de las economías más poderosas del mundo. Entre ellas, son responsables por la mayor parte de la emisión de gases causantes del efecto invernadero.

El propósito es redactar un nuevo acuerdo para regular las emisiones de carbono, a fin de reemplazar el Protocolo de Kioto de 1998, que expira en el 2012.

El nuevo acuerdo debe concluirse en la conferencia de la ONU a realizarse en diciembre en Copenhague, Dinamarca.

Tras discutir cada detalle y concepto, las conversaciones de la ONU están trazando el esbozo general de un acuerdo en Copenhague. Pero hasta ahora se han hecho escasos progresos sobre temas claves. Entre ellos establecer reducciones obligatorias de emisión de gases por parte de los países industrializados, fijar objetivos a países en desarrollo a fin de que controlen la expansión de sus emisiones, y recaudar unos 100.000 millones de dólares al año para ayudar a países pobres a adecuarse a las cambiantes condiciones climáticas.

El acuerdo requiere que tanto los países industrializados como aquellos en desarrollo pongan las cartas sobre la mesa.

Fue por eso que el mes pasado, el presidente Barack Obama anunció que estaba reviviendo una reunión, esbozada durante el gobierno de George W. Bush, para congregarse a importantes países de ambos lados. En esta ocasión, la cumbre es denominada Foro de las Economías más Importantes. La primera reunión debe realizarse entre el 27 y el 28 de abril en Washington.

Habrán otras antes de la cumbre a efectuarse en julio en Italia.

La idea de este foro menos concurrido "es tratar de generar un nuevo nivel de voluntad política", dijo Jonathan Pershing, el nuevo jefe de la delegación de Estados Unidos a las conversaciones patrocinadas por la ONU.

Defensores del medio ambiente señalaron que en el grupo, más pequeño, podría haber más avances.

"Debido a que se trata de un foro de jefes de estado y éstos pueden traer a ministros de finanzas y a otros funcionarios ... tal vez pueda romperse el impasse", dijo Alden Meyer, del grupo Unión de Científicos Preocupados con sede en Washington.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses "No Circulation Today" is suspended April 9-11 as expected weather forecasts cleaner air in the region.](#)

### **Suspenden 'Hoy no Circula' del 9 al 11 de abril**

Esmas, Wednesday, April 08, 2009

Condiciones meteorológicas influirán en la dispersión de contaminantes, por lo que se aplicará el programa, el cual reactivará su operación normal el 13 de abril

CIUDAD DE MÉXICO, México, abr. 8, 2009.- La Comisión Ambiental Metropolitana suspendió la aplicación del programa "Hoy no Circula" los días jueves 9, viernes 10 y sábado 11 abril, por lo que todos los vehículos podrán transitar sin restricción alguna.

En un comunicado señaló que el programa reactivará su operación normal el lunes 13 abril con la restricción a la circulación en los vehículos con engomado color amarillo y terminaciones de placa 5 y 6.

Los análisis atmosféricos indican que un sistema anticiclónico sobre la zona sur del país provoca entrada de aire cálido tropical al valle de México, situación que genera altas temperaturas, cielo soleados y ventilación moderada, principalmente por la tarde, indicó.

En ese sentido, de acuerdo con los pronósticos meteorológicos se espera que en los próximos días se presenten condiciones atmosféricas similares que influirán en una adecuada dispersión de los contaminantes.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses poor air quality passes permitted air pollution levels. Smoke from burning factories were not able to be under control soon enough which caused pollution levels to rise.](#)

### **Calidad del aire rebasa límites de contaminación permitidos**

Staff

El Diario, Wednesday, April 08, 2009

Aunque el incendio ya está controlado, aún no logran sofocar las llamas lo que causó que se elevaran los índices de la calidad del aire y rebasaron los límites permitidos, según la oficina de Normatividad Ambiental de la Dirección de Ecología y Protección Civil del Municipio.

El índice Metropolitano de la Calidad del Aire, mejor conocido como IMECA, ya sobrepasó los 100 puntos, según informó Salvador Quemsey director de dicha oficina.

Se recomienda a la población evitar las actividades al aire libre, estar atento a la información de calidad del aire y acudir al médico si presenta síntomas respiratorios o cardíacos.

Cuando los IMECAS pasan los 100 puntos existen posibles efectos adversos a la salud, en particular niños, adultos mayores y personas con enfermedades cardiovasculares o respiratorias.

Esta es la primera vez en el año que se registra este nivel de contaminación en Ciudad Juárez. El principal contaminante que se registra es monóxido de carbono.

Debido a la contingencia ambiental que causaron los incendios, autoridades de los tres niveles de gobierno se encuentran reunidos en la Presidencia Municipal para analizar la situación y crear un Comité que le de seguimiento a los hechos.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses “green” technology is preferred in order to cut down on costs. Countries such as Mexico and Brasil are implementing new green IT Solutions in order to reduce air pollution.](#)

### **Prefieren la tecnología “verde” para ahorrar gastos**

Dalia De Paz

El Universal, Wednesday, April 08, 2009

A fin de disminuir costos en sus operaciones, las compañías mexicanas y brasileñas están optando por usar tecnologías verdes, según el estudio Green IT de la consultora IDC.

Actualmente, 69% de las empresas en México y 68% en Brasil cree que el principal impulsor para la adopción de Green IT o Tecnologías de la Información (TI) “verdes” es la reducción de costos, sumada al posicionamiento de marca y su reputación.

En el país, después de invertir en infraestructura de data centers para acelerar su crecimiento, las empresas comprendieron que la única manera de progresar es a través de la incorporación de esquemas de virtualización y actualización de redes, dentro de la cual se considera a los proveedores green.

Según IDC, en la región latinoamericana, el gobierno mexicano es el más comprometido con la adopción de tecnologías verdes, y en algunas ocasiones logra transmitir la misma filosofía a las empresas.

El estudio que encuestó a 157 empresas mexicanas y 176 brasileñas, por ser los mercados más importantes de América Latina, reveló que 70% de estas firmas considera a la ecología como una prioridad. Pero sólo 25% de ellas están dispuestas a comprar tecnologías verdes premium.

El 49% de las firmas encuestadas creen que el IT supplier's greenness (conciencia ambiental del proveedor de TI) influye considerablemente en el proceso de decisión de compra. Las compañías creen que las principales acciones que los proveedores de TI deberían adoptar para colaborar con el medio ambiente son las de reducir sus propias emisiones de carbono y aumentar el uso de materiales reciclados en la obtención de sus productos.

México se pondrá “verde”

Será en septiembre cuando se presente en el país The Green Expo, una muestra en la que se tocarán temas del medio ambiente, energía, agua y ciudades sustentables, con la participación de 200 empresas locales e internacionales y funcionarios de gobiernos extranjeros. Y es que, México, Guadalajara y Monterrey son las ciudades del país que registran niveles de contaminación del aire superiores a los 100 puntos y en varios días del año.