

Drive a clunker? Air district has a deal for you

By Alex Breitler

Stockton Record, Thursday, July 9, 2009

STOCKTON - Valley residents can trade in their belching ol' Betsies for cash or credit toward a cleaner car under a program unveiled this week.

Qualifying car owners can receive either \$1,000 in cash or \$5,000 toward the purchase of a cleaner car, the [San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District](#) says.

"Either way, they'll be helping to cut emissions in the Valley and clean up our air," said Samir Sheikh, director of emission reduction incentive programs.

The Polluting Automobile Scrap and Salvage (PASS) program is not unlike "cash for clunker" plans in other regions of California. And, later this month, officials are expected to finalize the details of a \$1 billion federal trade-in program.

Experts have said that transportation accounts for 70 percent to 80 percent of the air pollution in the Valley, which fails to meet key federal air quality standards.

That's why it's so important to recover the grossest polluting vehicles and crush them, said Kevin Wing, an air quality specialist with the district.

"We want to find those cars that have recurring problems and get them off the road," Wing said.

Last year, officials scanned state databases to target vehicles that frequently fail smog tests and then undergo repairs that may not last two years until the next test.

About 5,000 letters went out offering financial assistance to get rid of the cars and buy new ones, but in the end, just 45 cars were crushed, Wing said.

So this year, district officials not only sent out letters but also launched a public campaign inviting residents to call in to see if their cars might qualify. It's not a question of how old your car is, or its make and model, but how your car has fared during those all-important smog checks, Wing said.

Ultimately, \$2 million is available, enough to assist hundreds or perhaps more than 1,000 car owners Valley-wide. The money comes from special fees Valley residents pay when they register their cars with the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The federal program, approved by Congress and President Obama, has a somewhat different aim: to put people behind the wheel of more fuel-efficient cars, and to pump some life into new-car sales. Residents cannot take advantage of both the federal and local programs, Wing said.

How it works

If you'd consider getting rid of your car for \$1,000 or \$5,000 toward a newer, cleaner car, see if you qualify for the Polluting Automobile Scrap and Salvage program. Here's what to do:

- Call (877) 900-5865 to see if you qualify. Your car must have been registered for the past 24 months and must be in drivable condition. In other words, you can't buy a clunker now and get cash for it, nor will you be rewarded for a car that isn't operable.
- If you're eligible, you'll be sent to a smog station for tests. The district will then decide whether to give you an incentive.
- If you qualify for the \$5,000 option, you must keep the cleaner vehicle for at least three years and fill out annual reports. Those who receive \$1,000 can use the money for any purpose.

Central Valley gets \$6 million in recovery funds

By Gerald Carroll

Visalia times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Thursday, July 9, 2009

Federal stimulus funding of \$6 million has been allocated to the Central Valley for air-pollution-control measures, the regional air district announced Wednesday.

The funding is part of \$25 million the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is distributing to local pollution-control districts. The stimulus was provided by the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009.

"We've worked hard to apply for this funding," said Samir Sheikh, director of emissions control for the Fresno-based San Joaquin Unified Air Pollution Control District. "It's great to finally receive some of it."

The district has applied for more than \$100 million in stimulus funding.

"We hope to get even more in the near future," Sheikh said.

Sheikh said \$4 million of the just-allocated money will go toward installation of 190 diesel-particulate filters on school buses built in or after 2001.

The filters cost \$20,000 each, installed, Sheikh said.

"They are being required to protect the health of children riding the buses," he said.

It is not yet known exactly which school districts' buses will get the refits, or whether any will be in Tulare County.

The other \$2 million will go toward refitting agricultural-equipment engines with more pollution-free models, Sheikh said.

Laura Yoshii, acting regional administrator for the EPA, said equipment and services produced by the funding will generate 3,000 jobs nationally.

"With this Recovery Act funding for clean diesel projects, we'll be able to significantly improve air quality in areas in California with the worst air pollution," she said.

Tulare and Kern counties have long been among counties with the nation's most-polluted air, studies show.

EPA awards \$25M to Calif to clean air projects

The Associated Press

In the Modesto Bee, Tri-Valley Herald, Merced Sun-Star and other papers, Thursday, July 9, 2009

SAN FRANCISCO -- More than \$25 million in federal grants are being awarded to help reduce diesel pollution in California by school buses, trucks and industrial machinery.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Wednesday it chose to fund eight projects in California that would have the most dramatic effect on reducing harmful diesel emissions.

The Port of Long Beach receives more than \$4 million to upgrade cargo handling gear, and the Port of Oakland gets \$2 million to retrofit trucks with cleaner diesel equipment.

San Diego County is being awarded \$1.5 million for 125 polluting school buses, and the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District receives \$6 million to retrofit dirty school buses and farming equipment.

Feds award grant to clean up dirty diesel school buses in S.D. County

San Diego Union-Tribune, Thurs., July 9, 2009

The Obama administration has awarded \$1.56 million to help clean up 125 dirty diesel school buses in San Diego County.

The San Diego Air Pollution Control District has not identified which neighborhood fleets are a priority.

But the county's Barrio Logan neighborhood with 14 schools has been identified as an area with toxic air pollutant concerns. Also, agencies note that 41 public schools in San Diego County are within 1,500 feet of major interstates used by trucks emitting large amounts of toxic diesel fumes.

The San Diego district will collect and distribute the grant. Furthermore, it will add \$2 million of its own money to help cover the full cost of \$3.62 million.

Under the program, the district will replace 12 buses and retrofit the rest. Work is scheduled to be completed by September 2010.

The local grant was part of a \$25 million statewide disbursement announced Wednesday and financed by the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. The economic stimulus money is largely targeted toward retaining and creating jobs.

Activists want Kettleman industrial plans halted

By Eddie Jimenez

The Fresno Bee, Wednesday, July 8, 2009

Activists said Wednesday that Kings County should halt industrial development around Kettleman City until it investigates concerns that pollution has caused a rash of birth defects and infant deaths.

Environmental advocates and several Kettleman City parents said they believe that industrial pollutants and poor water and air quality have created a health emergency. Their comments came in front of the Kings County Government Center in Hanford.

Five of 20 babies born in the area over a 14-month period that ended in late 2008 had birth defects, including four with cleft palates, the activists said. Three died, they said.

Local business and health officials say they have no evidence of a connection to industry. But the environmentalists and parents want a halt on all new industrial construction -- including the proposed expansion of Waste Management's Kettleman Hills landfill and the proposed Avenal Energy Power Plant -- until government agencies commission an independent investigation into the birth defects and deaths.

Bradley Angel, executive director of Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice, an environmental group based in San Francisco, said his group documented the problem by conducting a survey. Kings County, state and federal health officials are ignoring the birth defects, he said.

"That's criminal, in my opinion," Angel said. "Because they are brown-skinned and speak Spanish does not mean they are second-class citizens," he said of the Kettleman City residents.

But county officials have no evidence of an unusual number of birth defects and have not even received a copy of Greenaction's survey, said Keith Winkler, Kings County's director of public health services.

"They have not provided us with any information or report," he said. "We can't ignore what we haven't received."

A Waste Management spokesman said the company is aware of the health concerns and is trying to work with Kettleman City residents.

The company has pledged \$100,000 for a health study to be conducted by Kings County officials or an independent agency, officials said.

"The health and safety of the local community is of the utmost importance to Waste Management," said Bob Henry, the senior district manager of the hazardous waste facility, which is about three miles west of Kettleman City.

However, Kettleman City residents are skeptical of any study funded by the company.

"The community is so used to being bought off," said Maricela Mares Alatorre, a Kettleman City resident.

Kettleman City was one of several U.S. communities where residents settled multimillion-dollar claims with Pacific Gas & Electric over a cancer-causing chemical that wound up in ground water wells.

About 15 parents and relatives holding signs and photographs of the five children born with birth defects were the backdrop of Wednesday's news conference.

One mother, Maria Salcedo, whose daughter Ashley Alvarez had a cleft palate and died in January when she was 10 months old, said she fears for the unborn child she is now carrying.

"I don't want this child to pass away like my first child," Salcedo said.

Obama broadens push for climate change pact

By Ben Feller - Associated Press Writer

In the Modesto Bee, Thursday, July 9, 2009

L'AQUILA, Italy -- President Barack Obama and his G-8 summit partners wrestled anew with global warming amid tense discussions Thursday about how rich and emerging nations alike can live up to new clean-climate goals adopted by leading industrialized nations.

Nearing six months on the job, Obama has seen a flicker of progress: the chance for a new agreement among developed and developing nations to cap rising global temperatures, plus goodwill from his peers for repositioning the U.S. as an aggressive player in the debate.

Yet when Obama thrusts himself foursquare into this discussion, he will run smack into the same old problem: Neither the wealthy nor the countries in search of their own footing think the other side is doing enough. And only when the pollution emitters work together on a binding plan will a climate strategy work, experts say.

Even victory came with a setback on Wednesday. The Group of Eight set a goal of cutting all greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2050, but developing nations refused to go along.

Confronting global warming - a trend scientists say could unleash devastating droughts, floods and disease if left unchecked - is a dominant theme again at this year's G-8 summit of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said Thursday the G-8 countries must come forward with financing for poorer nations to change their carbon-heavy growth patterns and adapt to the effects of global warming. He said the G-8 must do both if developing countries are to cut their own emissions.

The G-8 on Wednesday recognized for the first time that average global temperatures shouldn't exceed 2 degrees Celsius from preindustrial times. But the leaders made no commitments to do anything in the nearterm to reach that goal and they made no firm financial or technological commitments for poor countries.

In another development, a draft declaration obtained by The Associated Press shows that leaders assembled here want to resume stalled trade talks by 2010 and head off protectionist policies - a position that Obama has embraced. Completing the so-called Doha round has risen up the agenda due to fears that the economic crisis will lead to an upsurge in protectionist policies like the ones that helped cause the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Obama was taking part in discussions all day on climate and a host of economic issues, and the number of countries represented at the table will just keep growing.

First, the traditional industrialized powers will expand their forum to other strategic economies: Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, plus a special invitee, Egypt.

And Obama later will help lead a forum of major economies that also includes Australia, Indonesia and South Korea. Together, including the U.S., the represented countries account for about 80 percent of the emissions of the heat-trapping gases blamed for global warming.

The results this week will be a pivotal marker of what could happen in talks in December in Copenhagen, when the United Nations tries to conclude a new worldwide climate deal.

"This will also be an opportunity for the president and the other leaders to discuss what they can do collectively to add political momentum to the negotiations," Mike Froman, a national security aide leading the administration's G-8 efforts, said ahead of Thursday's events.

The two blocs - the richest countries and the fastest growing ones - did strike an important agreement Wednesday. Their unified position now is that global temperature should be kept from rising by more than 3.6 degrees (2 degrees Celsius).

Schools halfway to safer bus fleet

By Jaimee Lynn Fletcher

O.C. Register, Thurs., July 9, 2009

GARDEN GROVE-The South Coast Air Quality Management District is nearing the halfway mark on its goal to make Orange County school buses safe for children to ride, district officials said.

The Environmental Protection Agency in 2000 introduced a clean bus program to replace diesel buses with natural gas models or retrofit old buses with filters to limit the amount of fumes entering the cabin. Studies have shown that children who are exposed to diesel fumes can suffer side effects, including respiratory complications and an increased chance of being diagnosed with cancer later in life, the EPA reported.

District officials said they'd like to see all school buses either replaced or retrofitted but have not yet set a year for their goal because it depends on funding, said spokesman Sam Atwood. The goal is to eventually have only compressed natural gas buses transporting children, he added.

The air district, which oversees Orange County and parts of some surrounding counties, has earmarked nearly \$12 million for Orange County schools since the clean-bus program began. Nearly 300 particulate traps have been placed on buses and 72 of the new buses have been purchased.

However, there are about 400 school buses in the county that have yet to be replaced or retrofitted, which still could pose a health threat to students. Atwood said funding for retrofit or replacement comes from a state program that awards money to schools via the air district.

Capistrano Unified School District tops the list with 64 retrofitted buses and 20 new models, 10 of which were purchased in December, said Joe Feldman, transportation services manager. The district has a fleet of 164 and runs 64 routes during the school year.

Garden Grove Unified School District comes in second with 24 of the new buses and another 31 that have been retrofitted, the air district reported. The district has a fleet of 110.

Air quality district board members on Friday will consider freeing up about \$45 million for the clean air program, which was put on hold in December in light of the state budget crisis, Atwood said.

The program focuses on buses that are at least 10 years old because they are more dangerous than more recent models, the EPA reported. The district requires schools with at least 15 buses in their fleets to purchase the natural gas buses when trading an old bus out for a newer model.

The air district also receives \$24 million each year as part of a program to reduce diesel emissions in a variety of vehicles and boats on Southern California roads and in harbors.

"Replacing old school buses is definitely a high priority for the board," Atwood said. "That money is to only be spent on reducing diesel emissions."

Studies showed children exposed to diesel fumes have a risk of developing respiratory problems, especially in asthmatic students, and may be related to bladder cancer, according to a report from Yale University's Environment and Human Health.

However, school buses are still safer than cars in terms of traffic risks, the EPA reported.

Climate impasse at G-8 summit leaves nations mired Developing countries refuse to back targets set by the Group of 8, which balk at any swift moves of their own.

By Christi Parsons and Jim Tankersley, staff writers
L.A. Times, Thursday, July 9, 2009

Reporting from Washington and L'Aquila, Italy -- Developing nations led by China and India refused Wednesday to back lofty but long-term targets proposed by the Group of 8 industrial nations to cut greenhouse gas emissions, balking at reluctance by leaders of the world's biggest economies to move more quickly on their own.

Inability to bridge the gap between rising carbon-emitting countries such as China and the longtime polluters within the G-8 underscores the steep challenges involved in attempting to strike a comprehensive bargain to contain global warming.

The impasse comes down to the politically sensitive issue of who goes first.

President Obama and his counterparts in the G-8, who are holding two days of meetings in the central Italian

mountain town of L'Aquila, offered broad agreements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The statement pledged to slash global emissions by 50%, led by reductions of 80% by the G-8 countries.

They also prepared to offer new financial incentives for developing nations to join the effort. But the G-8 stopped well short of pledging to take aggressive action that could curb emissions more quickly -- at the cost of higher energy prices and a feared worsening of the global economy.

And neither the broad promises of future action nor the relatively modest financial incentives were likely to break the standoff between the most advanced economies and the emerging powerhouses. Countries such as China, India and Brazil are unwilling to take the first steps to cut emissions that could choke off economic growth, instead demanding that wealthier nations take the lead.

"China's not going to do anything until the developed countries send a signal that they're going to do something," said Michael Oppenheimer, a geoscientist at Princeton University and a longtime participant in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The standoff at the summit perpetuates a divide that must be bridged this year if there is to be a global agreement on curbing emissions.

The United Nations is convening a meeting in Copenhagen in December aimed at forging a binding consensus on targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But unless China and other developing nations can be persuaded to sign on to an accord, Obama may find it difficult -- if not impossible -- to convince Congress to go along.

The stalemate on the international stage mirrors Obama's problem at home. Though the House approved a major climate bill last month, Republicans and other critics have unleashed a hailstorm of criticism. They argue that emissions limits by the United States and other advanced economies alone would have relatively little effect on global warming, while potentially harming the domestic economy.

Obama's climate bill, which narrowly passed the House, could send a strong signal if it becomes law, said Dirk Forrister, who was chairman of the White House climate change task force under President Clinton and now is managing director of the financial firm Natsource LLC.

But, he said, "the U.S. Senate will not go along with anything unless it sees some pretty serious action from developing countries." That, analysts say, sums up Obama's conundrum as he tries to push for a meaningful climate agreement during formal treaty negotiations in Denmark this winter.

"It looks like it's going to be a pretty tough fight [in Copenhagen], based on what happened in these meetings in Italy," Forrister said.

U.S. leaders hinted that a broad coalition of developing and developed nations could announce agreement today to team up on research on renewable energy and technology to scrub and store greenhouse emissions from coal.

Michael Froman, Obama's point man at the summit and lead staff negotiator, argued that the major industrial nations' joint statement favoring an 80% reduction in their emissions by 2050 represented "significant cooperation" -- even though it came up short of the draft language that the White House had supported.

The G-8 targets roughly followed those in Obama's domestic climate bill.

The G-8 countries also set a global goal of 50% emissions reductions by mid-century, and declared that they recognized "the broad scientific view that the increase in global average temperature above preindustrial levels ought not to exceed" 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit).

They did not announce any specific plans to cut emissions or adopt any short- or mid-term reduction targets. The United States pushed, and failed, to get developing nations to join in the reduction pledge.

"In any negotiation, you put in a number of points," Froman said. "Sometimes they make it in and sometimes they don't."

The statement that did not come -- the one that would have included China, Brazil and other developing countries -- is the one that matters, he acknowledged. But both Froman and chief Obama climate negotiator Todd Stern argued that there was plenty of room to work out an agreement before the Copenhagen summit.

"It's a negotiation. Countries may make concessions further down the road," Stern said in an interview.

Obama will chair a meeting of the world's largest emitters, including both developing and developed nations, today in Italy.

Analysts said the Obama administration could strengthen its hand in future negotiations with another victory or two at home -- Senate approval of a climate bill and, even better, passage by Congress of a conference version of the bill that Obama could sign into law before the Copenhagen talks.

"His most powerful weapon is a piece of signed legislation," said Melinda L. Kimble, senior vice president of the United Nations Foundation and a former climate negotiator in the Clinton administration.

"If he has that in his pocket," she added, "everything else he has is icing on the cake."

G-8 summit's global warming stand falls short of environmentalists' hopes

By Steven Thomma

Sacramento Bee, Thursday, July 9, 2009

L'AQUILA, Italy – President Barack Obama and leaders of seven other economic powers agreed Wednesday to broad goals for reducing global warming, but they stopped well short of measures that environmentalists call critical to stopping the problem and also failed to get developing nations such as China and India to go along.

The Group of Eight industrial democracies agreed to a statement setting the goal of holding global warming to an increase of 2 degrees Celsius – 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit – by 2020, as measured since 1900.

They also set a long-range target of cutting emissions of greenhouse gases that cause warming by 50 percent worldwide and by 80 percent among industrialized nations by 2050.

Obama and the other leaders, however, didn't discuss prominent proposals urging a timetable for quicker emission cuts by 2020.

And they acknowledged that their draft declaration for a larger meeting today, when China, India and other developing nations will join the G-8 leaders, will not include any targets for emissions cuts. The eight nations at the table Wednesday were Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Russia, Britain and the United States.

At a dinner Wednesday evening, the eight leaders turned to other issues, including Iran's recent election and North Korea's drive for nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. Among talking points at the dinner:

- White House aides said there was unanimous agreement – including Russian President Dmitry Medvedev – that Iran was a matter of concern.
- Obama announced he will host a summit of 25 to 30 nations in Washington in early March 2010 on the spread of nuclear weapons.

Global warming, however, dominated the day's discussions.

White House aides said the G-8 agreements marked important progress toward the broad target of an international treaty to cut emissions.

"They pledged to confront the challenges of climate change and committed to seek an ambitious global agreement" later this year in Copenhagen, Denmark, said Michael Froman, the deputy national security adviser for international economic affairs.

Environmentalists lauded their recognition of the 2-degree goal but said the leaders fell woefully short of what is needed to meet it.

"This was a missed opportunity," said Alden Meyer of the Union of Concerned Scientists. "The G-8 countries are not putting a credible target on the table."

Scientists believe the 2-degree Celsius limit – which global warming is already close to hitting – is critical, and that any warming beyond that would have grave consequences.

"The need for urgent action to address climate change is now indisputable," said a joint statement from the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, along with counterpart agencies from around the world.

The National Academy of Sciences also urged the international community to commit to cutting emissions of heat-trapping gases by 50 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2050.

The G-8 agreed a year ago to set a target of a 50 percent cut by 2050, but it didn't stipulate whether the cut would be measured from 1990 or from the much higher levels in 2005. The leaders hedged again Wednesday, saying the nonbinding cuts would be measured against "1990 or later years," Froman said.

Environmentalists say the long-term goal is good but that faster cuts are critical. They pressed for a statement urging cuts by 2020, but came away empty-handed.

"If the 2-degree target is not going to turn into an empty promise, they have to tell us how much they'll reduce emissions by 2020," said Kathrin Gutmann, the head of policy at the World Wildlife Fund's Global Climate Initiative.

Sacramento considers parking meters till midnight

By Bob Shallit

Sacramento Bee, Thursday, July 9, 2009

Metered parking at night? In an effort to curb congestion and pollution, city officials are considering putting an end to a long-standing freebie in midtown Sacramento: onstreet parking after 6 p.m.

The goal: To encourage use of nearby parking garages and lots – and discourage drivers from endlessly circling the block in search of free parking spaces.

Due to the concentration of new restaurants and entertainment venues, "midtown has become a victim of its own success," says Christina Ragsdale, a spokeswoman with the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District.

Her boss, AQMD Executive Director Larry Greene, started the discussion with a letter in May to City Councilman Steve Cohn proposing to extend metered parking until midnight. His concern: Drivers cruising for parking spaces are contributing to gridlock and air pollution.

That letter prompted a series of informal meetings involving various city departments and midtown business leaders.

There's no official proposal yet but "the data suggests we should look at this further," says city transportation official Linda Tucker.

Her department's studies show that on-street parking in midtown's most heavily congested areas is 98 percent occupied on many Friday evenings, while nearby garages and parking lots sit virtually empty.

Currently, parking meters charge \$1.25 per hour, but are free after 6 p.m. and on Sundays.

Extending those fees into the evening could drive more business to public and private parking garages and lots.

But so would reducing fees at those facilities, which now charge anywhere from \$2 to \$10 a night, says Rob Kerth of the Midtown Business Association.

He says Sutter Health, for instance, is considering lowering evening and weekend parking rates at its 28th and N street garage. Other private garage operators might follow suit.

Says Kerth, "I think we can show them that if they lower their rates, they'll get more business."

Artistic cover-up

Local artist Stephanie Taylor says she went "ballistic" when she discovered a large event tent blocking the view in front of Scott's Seafood Grill & Bar at the Le Rivage Hotel on the Sacramento River.

She offered her friend, Scott's restaurant co-owner Alan Irvine, a solution: She'd paint the tent to whimsically represent the obscured river view.

Taylor recently completed the monthlong job, which involved painting 4-by-10-foot fabric grids in her backyard, then laminating them onto the tent's exterior – "like wallpaper."

She's happy with the trompe l'oeil result – a 700-square-foot mural depicting the hotel's marina and the Sacramento Yacht Club across the river.

"It still (obscures) the view," she says of the tent. "But at least now you're looking at a landscape."

Goode times

The top 10 finalists have been named for the coolest of job openings: a six-month stint as social marketing guru for the Murphy-Goode Winery in Healdsburg.

Sadly, while two locals made the top 50 cut two weeks ago, neither got to the final 10.

The finalists travel to Sonoma County later this month for several days of "hijinks, excursions and poker," says winery spokesman Mark Osmun, along with more traditional job interviews. The temporary position pays \$10,000 monthly and includes free lodging.

One of the two local runners-up is Kris Vera-Phillips, 31, a KCRA producer.

The self-described wine novice works behind the scenes at KCRA. Submitting a video application for the winery job gave her a rare chance to be in front of the camera.

She's taking the job rejection in stride. "I was tickled," she says, "to get this far."

Home and garden news and notes

What's New: Fireplace is 90 percent energy-efficient

By Mary Beth Breckenridge - Akron Beacon Journal

In the Modesto Bee, Thursday, July 9, 2009

You can warm up in style, indoors or out, with the EcoSmart Fire Tower.

The contemporary fireplace was designed by Milanese architect and designer Celeste Dell-Anna and Simona Righi from Italian design studio Intentions. It burns denatured ethanol, a form of alcohol that creates no harmful emissions and doesn't require ventilation. Because it burns with 90 percent efficiency, the fireplace qualifies for the federal government's 30 percent energy-efficiency tax credit for biomass stoves.

The portable fireplace stands about 4 feet high, with an elevated flame set atop a base of black or white powder-coated steel.

Its suggested retail price starts at \$3,700. Retailers nationwide can be found at <http://www.ecosmartfire.com>.

Water and air quality conservation practices on dairies focus at Tri-County Seminar

From the Chowchilla News

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

Dairy owners and operations in Fresno, Madera and Merced counties who want to learn how to address new water and air quality requirements being imposed by the state are invited to attend a seminar on Thursday, July 23, at the Madera County Farm Bureau. The Farm Bureau is located at 1102 S. Pine Street in Madera.

The event runs from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. and includes a free lunch. It is co-sponsored by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Chowchilla-Red Top Resource Conservation District, the Center for Irrigation technology at California State University, Fresno and the Madera County Farm Bureau.

Participants will discover practical steps they can take to evaluate their facility and where to get advice on how to proceed. Presenters include Dr. Aziz Rahman, an NRCS agronomist. He will explain how his agency's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) will help dairy operators comply with Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board regulations.

Typically, such assistance comes in the form of planning, designing and installing facilities that store, treat, and utilize manure.

This can include manure storage ponds, tail water return systems, manure separators, sediment basins, composting facilities, flow meters, irrigation systems, irrigation water management, and nutrient management.

Bill Green, an education manager with the center for Irrigation Technology, will speak about water pump maintenance and ways to conserve energy.

Other speakers include Dr. Gerald Higginbotham, a University of California Cooperative Extension dairy farm advisor who specializes in dairy nutrition. He will address feed management. A presentation will also be made about manure injection, one of the NRCS air quality initiatives included in EQIP.

Participants interested in attending the workshop are encouraged to pre-register by July 20. For more information and to register, contact NRCS Soil Conservationist Dr. Gerry Ford at 674-2108, ext. 115 or email him at garry.ford@ca.usda.gov.

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Wed., July 9, 2009:](#)

Maybe we'll have less than 100 bad ozone days

This has been one of the cleaner spring and early summer periods on record for the San Joaquin Valley's air.

Through Tuesday, there have been only 32 bad days. The cleanest warm season I could find was 2005. It had 31 bad days through July 7.

When I make this point, colleagues remind me that the ozone season extends to October here. There is plenty of time for the Valley to reach 119 violations, which is this region's average over the last three years.

And they quote my own reminder: The goal is zero.

True, but it would be interesting if the Valley dips below 100 bad days this year.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses G8 has agreed to reduce 80% of emissions by 2050; China and India are not in agreement. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

G8 acordó reducir 80% de las emisiones

China e India no están de acuerdo

EFE

Univision, Thursday, July 09, 2009

L'AQUILA, Italia - La cumbre del "Grupo de los Ocho" (G8) comenzó este miércoles en la ciudad italiana de L'Aquila con la apuesta de las grandes potencias mundiales por una reducción en la emisión de CO2 de al menos un 80% para el 2050.

Choque con países emergentes

Los líderes de las siete potencias económicas, más Rusia, así como representantes de la Unión Europea (UE) se reunieron el miércoles en la ciudad italiana con la mirada puesta en el medioambiente y en la crisis económica, dos de los asuntos principales de esta cumbre que concluirá el viernes.

De hecho, el calentamiento mundial fue el asunto más controvertido de la primera de las tres jornadas de la cumbre, con India y China, en calidad de potencias emergentes, que no esconden su escepticismo ante las propuestas sobre medioambiente que ha llevado la presidencia italiana del G8 al encuentro.

Este escepticismo, que en un primer momento amenazó con hacer saltar cualquier tipo de acuerdo entre los países del G8 y las llamadas potencias emergentes, fue dejado a un lado por el "Grupo de los Ocho", quien a última hora de la tarde divulgó su propia declaración que dista, en parte, de la postura china e india.

En esa declaración, los líderes del G8 confirman "su voluntad de compartir con los demás países el objetivo de alcanzar una reducción de al menos el 50% de las emisiones mundiales antes de 2050".

"En este ámbito, nosotros mantenemos incluso el objetivo de los países desarrollados de reducir las emisiones de gas efecto invernadero en un 80% o más antes de 2050, comparado con 1990 o incluso años más recientes", reza la declaración.

China en India, en contra

Esta apuesta va contra la postura de China e India, que se niegan a aprobar ese 50% porque, dicen, los "grandes" no han cumplido sus compromisos de ayudas financieras y tecnológicas para dar el paso a las energías limpias. Y todo ante la reunión que el G8 tendrá con las potencias emergentes mañana sobre este asunto.

En lo que sí hay acuerdo es en el techo de los dos grados centígrados de aumento de la temperatura media del planeta con respecto a la de la época pre-industrial que apoyan tanto los líderes del G8 como China e India.

El G5 no refrendó el acuerdo

El Grupo de los Cinco países emergentes (G5) no refrendó la meta de reducir las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero a la mitad hasta el 2050, en una reunión que celebró el miércoles en el marco de la cumbre del G8.

El G5, integrado por México, Brasil, China, India y Sudáfrica, declaró sólo de manera genérica "la importancia de avanzar en las negociaciones sobre el cambio climático para asegurar el éxito de la Cumbre de Copenhague" a finales de este año.

El mandatario mexicano, Felipe Calderón, leyó una declaración en una conferencia de prensa, en que no se aceptaron preguntas.

En Copenhague se efectuará la cumbre climática de Naciones Unidas, convocada para firmar un ambicioso acuerdo multilateral contra el calentamiento global, en sustitución del Protocolo de Kioto, que llega a su fin.

"Refrendamos, en cambio, nuestro compromiso con el principio de responsabilidades comunes, pero diferenciadas para enfrentar a este problema global", dijo Calderón.

Los líderes subrayaron "la urgencia de poder encontrar cuanto antes acuerdos porque precisamente los países menos desarrollados, que han sido los menos responsables en el calentamiento global y en el cambio climático, son los que más están sufriendo las consecuencias".

Además, se mostraron decididos "en seguir trabajando en favor de nuestro medio ambiente" y en buscar "una salida a este problema".

México presentó a los miembros del G5 una propuesta de crear un Fondo Verde para aumentar los recursos con el objetivo de apoyar los esfuerzos de los países en desarrollo en sus medidas contra el cambio climático.

Se prevé que la declaración final que dará a conocer el G8 el viernes, al término de la cumbre, haga referencia a metas específicas de reducción de emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero.

En la reunión del G5 participaron además el presidente de Brasil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, el presidente de Sudáfrica, Jacob Zuma, el primer ministro de India, Manmohan Singh y a un asesor del presidente chino Hu Jintao, quien regresó a su país.

Hu viajó el miércoles a su país por las fuertes tensiones que se viven en la región de Xinjiang, donde disturbios y protestas han dejado 156 muertos.

El G5 expresó también su preocupación "por el surgimiento de prácticas proteccionistas, particularmente en los países desarrollados, que obstaculizan las posibilidades de recuperación económica".

"Las medidas proteccionistas debilitan aún más las economías de los países en desarrollo y prolongan y retrasan la recuperación económica nivel internacional", afirmó.

Acordó, por otra parte, promover la seguridad alimentaria, que "no sólo tenga una dimensión económica, sino humanitaria, de derechos humanos, social y de medio ambiente".

Se pronunció también en favor del "diseño de una nueva arquitectura internacional que impulse un desarrollo económico más equitativo y sustentable, que permita una participación corresponsable y responsable de los países en desarrollo en las instituciones financieras internacionales".

Al término de la conferencia de prensa, Lula regaló a los miembros del G5 la camiseta de la selección brasileña autografiada por sus jugadores.