

Alaska sends big cool bluster

By Pablo Lopez / The Fresno Bee
The Fresno Bee Wed., Sept. 30, 2009

A cold front from the Gulf of Alaska brought cooler air and gusty winds to the Valley on Tuesday, and sprinkles to Fresno and Clovis, the National Weather Service said.

Fresno's high of 76 degrees Tuesday was 22 degrees cooler than Monday's high. Normally at this time, Fresno's high temperature is 85 degrees.

"It's packing a big punch," Kevin Durfee, a NWS meteorologist, said of the cold front that also brought northwest winds up to 29 mph in the Valley on Tuesday.

The gusty winds made for low visibility in such places as Hanford and along Interstate 5 on the west side, he said.

Blowing dust prompted the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to issue a health warning. Exposure to particulate pollution can aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and exacerbate respiratory conditions, the district said.

The cold front, however, didn't carry much precipitation, Durfee said. Sprinkles were reported in Clovis and Fresno, but nothing measurable, Durfee said.

The forecast today calls for sunny skies and a high around 78 degrees. Winds from the northwest should be between 15 and 18 mph, but gusts could reach 22 mph.

The Valley should start heating up again Thursday, with temperatures reaching the 80s. Skies should remain sunny through Sunday, the weather service predicted.

Trash talk: Air quality = higher rates

Manteca may need new place to buy garbage in future

By Dennis Wyatt, Managing Editor
Manteca Bulletin Sunday, Sept. 27, 2009

Manteca residents are recycling more and generating less garbage.

That – along with the switch to the automated Toter-system and one of the most efficient collection crews in the Northern San Joaquin Valley - has keep solid waste rates flat for years.

There are, however, two big rate buster issues looming on the horizon – tougher new air pollution control standards that would force replacement of expensive garbage collection trucks and the need to find a future place to bury Manteca's garbage when room runs out at the Austin Road facility just north of the city.

Manteca had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars placing particulate filters on existing trucks and buying cleaner burning diesel refuse trucks to comply with tougher San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District rules. Now, after bringing the fleet into compliance, the air regulators are proposing changing the rules in the coming months.

If they do, it will require Manteca spending \$1 million annually in 2010, 2011, and 2012 to buy trucks that meet new emission standards that are proposed to go into effect by the start of 2013. The new trucks would either be hybrid diesel or possible compressed natural gas (CNG) trucks.

That alone could put pressure to raise rates.

Then there is the issue of burying garbage.

The landfill site on Austin Road about eight miles north of Manteca is nearing capacity in the coming years. Tough California laws and the fact no one wants a landfill near their property makes it extremely tough to create new landfills.

"If we need to look for other options such as finding a place to burn the garbage or ship it to be buried in Nevada," noted Public Works Director Mark Houghton.

Right now, Manteca's routes are efficient since the landfill is so close. It allows more pick-up collections per hour.

Should it have to be shipped to garbage burning operations or shipped out of state Manteca would have to come up with a transfer station where refuse trucks can dump garbage and then have it loaded on to large trucks or rail. In addition to that cost, there would be the actual cost of transporting Manteca's garbage.

It is why Houghton said it is important that recycling efforts continue as anything that goes into the brown Toters that isn't garbage will end up costing ratepayers even more to get rid of in the coming years.

2nd Governors' Climate Summit convenes in LA

The Associated Press

In the Merced Sun-Star, Sacramento Bee & other papers Wed., Sept. 30, 2009

LOS ANGELES -- Government and business leaders are gathering in Los Angeles for the second Governors' Climate Summit hosted by California's Arnold Schwarzenegger and chief executives of other states.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson is scheduled to deliver the keynote address at Wednesday's opening ceremonies.

Jackson is expected to discuss EPA initiatives on green jobs, air pollution around schools and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The meeting comes as world leaders prepare to convene for climate talks at a U.N. conference in Copenhagen in December

Senate climate-change bill would cut greenhouse emissions 20% by 2020

The measure seeks stricter limits than those approved by the House. But it puts many details off for later -- an indication that top Democrats are willing to negotiate to ensure a bill will pass.

By Jim Tankersley, staff writer

L.A. Times, Wed., Sept. 30, 2009

Reporting from Washington - The Senate's environment committee will take up an energy and climate-change bill today that calls for a 20% cut in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, according to a draft copy of the bill.

The measure, co-sponsored by Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and John F. Kerry (D-Mass.), will serve as the starting point for what promises to be a long and complicated series of negotiations. The Senate may not produce a final bill until next year.

A House measure passed this summer calls for a 17% reduction in greenhouse gases.

Both the Senate proposal and House bill seek to curb global warming by limiting the amount of

heat-trapping gases poured into the air by power plants, factories and others, which would be required to obtain permits for their emissions.

At least in the beginning, some permits might be free, reducing the likelihood of higher energy costs being passed on to consumers. The number of permits would shrink over time, creating pressure to reduce pollution.

The proposed Senate bill preserves the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to regulate emissions unilaterally. And it offers new incentives for nuclear power plant construction -- a provision many Republicans have sought and one that could be crucial to attracting bipartisan support for climate legislation.

Democrats have been pitching climate legislation as a tool to spur clean-energy job creation, but many Republicans and industry critics have warned that it could impose crippling costs on the U.S. economy.

The Senate proposal puts off several key decisions, such as how to allocate emissions permits under the cap-and-trade system, for future discussion. In doing so, Boxer and Kerry -- and indirectly the Obama administration -- were signaling their willingness to cut deals in order to pass a climate bill.

The unresolved issues, however, drew criticism from the top Republican on the environment committee.

Sen. James M. Inhofe of Oklahoma told Boxer in a letter Tuesday that until the details are set, "farmers, families and workers have no way of gauging how acutely they will be affected from job losses, higher electricity, food, and gasoline prices."

But the details that are spelled out in the plan send an important signal to international delegates preparing to negotiate a global warming treaty in December: They suggest the outer limits of how far the United States might be prepared to go in curbing its emissions over the next decade.

Environmentalists hailed the draft bill as a major step toward Senate action on climate, and expressed hope of a vote before climate negotiations open in Copenhagen in a little more than two months.

"This appears to be a very solid start, one we hope will get the attention of the entire Senate and galvanize action this year," said Frank O'Donnell, president of the Washington-based group.

Clean Air Watch

Curtain Rises on Senate Struggle Over Climate Legislation

By John M. Broder, staff writer

N.Y. Times, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2009

WASHINGTON — A draft of a climate bill that Senate Democrats will formally introduce on Wednesday suggests that the legislation will include a more ambitious greenhouse gas emissions target than one passed by the House.

The measure, sponsored by Senators Barbara Boxer of California and John Kerry of Massachusetts, seeks to achieve by 2020 a 20 percent reduction from 2005 levels of carbon dioxide emissions, compared with 17 percent in the House bill, according to the 801-page draft, which circulated on Tuesday. The House and Senate bills both include a long-term target of an 83 percent reduction by 2050.

The Senate bill will be the focus of a broad political and lobbying struggle, as industry groups, environmental lobbies, local government officials, universities and advocates for the poor all scramble for advantage in legislation that would rewrite the rules of the domestic energy economy. Groups are already spending millions of dollars in organizing, mailing and advertising campaigns to influence the legislation.

The battle has exposed deep rifts within the Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and other business lobbies, with companies leaving their trade organizations almost daily in disputes over climate change legislation. The Chamber of Commerce opposed the House bill and will almost certainly work to weaken or defeat the Boxer-Kerry measure.

The Senate debate will also significantly affect the American negotiating position at climate talks, sponsored by the United Nations, that are scheduled for December in Copenhagen.

The bill would set up a cap-and-trade system to achieve the emissions targets, allowing industry and other entities to buy and sell permits within an overall emissions ceiling. The House bill, which narrowly passed in late June, would establish a similar program.

But the Senate measure so far leaves a number of crucial questions unanswered, chief among them how the permits to emit carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases would be distributed to utilities, manufacturers, agribusiness and other interests. The allocation of such permits, worth billions of dollars annually, was a subject of intense horse-trading in the House and is certain to touch off a major battle as the Senate debates its own version of the bill.

The Boxer-Kerry bill will be considered in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which Mrs. Boxer heads. Several other Senate panels, including the Finance Committee, led by Senator Max Baucus, Democrat of Montana, will also play a major role in whatever climate change debate the Senate engages in this fall. A Boxer aide cautioned that the bill was still evolving.

While Mrs. Boxer is promising to begin hearings on her bill on Oct. 20, there is no certainty that other committees will act as quickly. The Finance Committee, where the permit allocation issue and trade questions will be decided, is in the middle of the difficult health care debate and appears to be in no hurry to take on another hugely contentious matter.

The Senate bill reflects months of discussions among Democratic members to address their concerns with the House measure, sponsored by Representatives Henry A. Waxman of California and Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts, both Democrats. The latest draft of the Senate legislation includes a system somewhat different from the House bill's to ensure that the price of emissions permits does not rise or fall too quickly. The Senate measure provides what one senior aide called a "soft collar" to keep permit prices within a specified range from year to year.

The Senate bill would also alter the House approach to so-called offsets, which are ways that polluting industries can get credit for emissions reductions by paying others, like farmers or timber growers, to adopt practices that reduce the overall level of carbon dioxide put into the atmosphere.

In addition, the Senate bill would provide greater incentives for construction of nuclear power plants and for low-emissions transportation systems, an aide working on the measure said.

David Doniger, climate policy director of the Natural Resources Defense Council, said the introduction of the Boxer-Kerry bill on Wednesday would signal the beginning of Senate debate on climate change.

Despite predictions that health care and other matters will consume all of the Senate calendar before members get a chance to turn to the issue, Mr. Doniger said: "The Senate can engage and get it done this fall. There's still time."

Sierra Club wants to join lawsuit against Westar

By John Hanna - Associated Press Writer

In the Merced Sun-Star, Modesto Bee & other papers Wed., September 30, 2009

LAWRENCE, Kan. -- An environmental group said Tuesday it wants to intervene in an anti-pollution lawsuit filed by the federal government against Kansas' largest electric company, a case the utility hopes to settle.

Sierra Club attorney Bob Eye said the group would file a request in federal court to intervene. He said the Sierra Club won't raise new issues but offer its expertise and support the claims made against Westar Energy Inc. by attorneys for the U.S. Department of Justice and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The lawsuit, filed in February, deals with pollution controls at Westar's biggest coal-fired generating complex, the Jeffrey Energy Center, about 30 miles northwest of Topeka. Government attorneys allege Westar is violating the federal Clean Air Act by not installing proper pollution controls, which the utility disputes.

The Sierra Club had a news conference as part of a national anti-coal "Day of Action," with about 40 people standing behind Eye. Organizers chose a Lawrence Park overlooking the Kansas River because steam could be seen rising in the distance from another Westar coal-fired complex, the Lawrence Energy Center.

"It takes a fair amount of legal horsepower to deal with these issues," Eye said. "One of the functions of a case like this is to get utilities, generally, to back up and ask themselves some hard questions about whether or not they are in compliance with the Clean Air Act across the board."

Westar has denied the lawsuit's allegations that it failed to obtain proper permits for modifications at the Jeffrey complex and the changes were inadequate for controlling emissions.

Westar spokesman Nick Bundy noted that the company has invested about \$460 million in upgrading the complex. He said the changes will significantly reduce pollution, including cutting sulfur dioxide emissions by 95 percent.

Also, Westar announced in May that it would spend another \$380 million upgrading controls at the Lawrence center.

The lawsuit over Jeffrey is scheduled to go to trial in April 2011, but Bundy said Westar is talking with EPA and Justice officials about settling.

"We hope that the Sierra Club's involvement in this case will ensure that all parties can reach an agreement," he said.

EPA spokesman Chris Whitley said the agency takes no position on the Sierra Club's involvement because the issue will be decided by U.S. District Judge Julie Robinson. He also said the EPA typically does not say whether it's having settlement discussions in a lawsuit.

"It's a pending matter, and we're continuing to pursue the case," Whitley said.

[Sacramento Bee, Letter to the Editor, Wed., September 30, 2009](#)

Carpool doesn't mean just one

Re "Who'll get carpool access?" (Business, Sept. 27): Carpool lanes were started as a way to encourage more than one person to ride in a car, removing vehicles from the road. Taking vehicles off the road reduces the amount of pollutants put into the air and reduces the amount of oil consumed.

These are called carpool lanes, not high-mileage lanes. The Legislature should keep them that way!

Ted Wood, Rancho Cordova

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses EPA is considering regulating trains in California. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Consideran regular la contaminación de trenes en California

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Wednesday, September 30, 2009

La Agencia federal de Protección Ambiental (EPA) informó que esta semana desarrolla consultas en San Bernardino para decidir si impone nuevas restricciones a la contaminación de los trenes de carga comercial en California.

La Administración Distrital de Calidad del Aire del Sur de California convocó a consulta al sugerir que los trenes de carga cambien sus máquinas por nuevos equipos eléctricos que no ocasionan contaminación.

Las dos principales empresas ferrocarrileras argumentan que es costoso cambiar las máquinas, pero residentes y grupos en San Bernardino dicen que son más costosas las muertes por cáncer debido a la contaminación.