

## January air hard to breathe

By Seth Nidever

Hanford Sentinel, Saturday, Jan. 24, 2009

Been having a hard time breathing this month? If so, there's a good reason for it. For 19 of the first 21 days of January, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District exceeded the federal 24-hour standard for PM 2.5 -- tiny particles (or particulate matter) 2.5 microns and smaller that are considered to be the most dangerous to health.

The grit can lodge deep in the lungs and raise the risk of lung disease, heart attacks and strokes.

Dairies and farm fertilizer are the biggest contributors in rural areas. Both produce ammonia nitrate, a big component of PM 2.5 pollution, according to Stephen Shaw, supervising air-quality specialist at the air district.

Major urban sources include vehicle exhaust and lawn fertilizer, Shaw said.

During the winter months, fireplace burning can contribute up to 30 percent of the PM 2.5 in Valley air, Shaw said.

Kings County reported 11 days in January over the federal limit of 35 micrograms per cubic meter of air.

Over-limit measurements ranged from 64 micrograms to 38 micrograms, Shaw said.

The Valley district includes Kings, Fresno and Tulare counties and the western part of Kern County.

The measurements dovetail with a federally funded study printed Thursday in the New England Journal of Medicine that links cleaner air with longer life.

Researchers looked at 51 cities and determined that life span increased almost five months over a two-decade stretch, thanks to an average reduction in PM 2.5 levels from 21 micrograms to 14 micrograms.

The study didn't include any cities in the Valley.

At least one local activist noted the relatively high levels in the Valley compared to the levels measured in the study.

"We're just living in this life-shortening pollution day and night for most of the winter," said Tom Frantz, a Wasco High School teacher and president of the Association of Irrigated Residents, which Frantz said includes members from five Valley counties, including Kings.

November to February is when Valley PM 2.5 reaches its highest levels -- higher on average than Southern California's most polluted areas.

A measuring station in Riverside -- typically the city with the worst pollution in the South Coast Air Quality Management District -- had an estimated 43 days over the limit in 2007.

In contrast, a station in downtown Fresno had 65 days over the limit.

The district's real-time monitoring sensor in Corcoran recorded 55 days over the limit.

In the last three years, from Nov. 1 to Jan. 20, the Valley air district has averaged 60 days over 30 micrograms of PM 2.5 per day, Shaw said.

The district adopted a PM 2.5 reduction plan in 2008 that includes restrictions on industrial practices and open burning of agricultural waste. The plan also reinforced a "check before you burn" program that limits or prohibits fireplace burning on high-pollution days.

Dairies are regulated under a separate ozone reduction plan that controls dairy emissions that contribute to smog.

Environmentalists characterized Thursday's study as hard evidence that any regulation to bring down the Valley's high PM 2.5 concentrations is worth it.

Kings County will save money in the long run with cleaner air strategies, said Bradley Angel, executive director of Greenaction, a San Francisco-based environmental group with an office in Hanford.

*The Associated Press contributed to this story.*

## **Local reaction mixed to federal air study**

By Seth Nidever

Hanford Sentinel, Friday, Jan. 23, 2009

Cleaner air during the past two decades has added nearly five months to the average life expectancy in the United States, according to a federally funded study released Thursday.

Researchers looked at 51 U.S. cities in which small particle pollution levels from 1978 to 2001 dropped from an average of 21 micrograms per cubic meter of air to 14 micrograms per cubic meter. During the same period, residents lived an average of 2.72 years longer -- with 4.8 months of that attributed to cleaner air, scientists concluded.

The study did not include the San Joaquin Valley, which in wintertime has some of the highest levels of small particle pollution -- called PM 2.5 -- in the nation.

Reaction from local health officials and environmentalists was mixed.

While supporting efforts to clean up the Valley's air basin, Kings County health officer Dr. Michael MacLean expressed some disappointment that there wasn't a greater increase in life expectancy connected to cleaner air.

"It's a big effort that people are making to clean up the air, and you'd kind of like to see more improvement," he said.

Environmentalists praised the study as hard evidence of the harm air pollution does to Valley residents.

It confirms regional studies that have estimated the annual health costs of air pollution in the billions of dollars, according to Tom Frantz, a Wasco High School math teacher and president of Association of Irrigated Residents, which includes members from five Valley counties including Kings.

Frantz noted that the Valley has particulate matter 2.5 levels significantly higher than those measured in the study.

"I think the true cost of our pollution has not been fully accounted for in this Valley," Frantz said.

"This is a bombshell study that confirms what most people using their common sense have known for years, that pollution is not healthy," said Bradley Angel, executive director of Greenaction, a Bay Area environmental group with an office in Hanford.

The study is "timely" considering a proposed expansion to the hazardous waste capacity at the Chemical Waste Management Inc. disposal site near Kettleman City as well as plans to build a natural gas power plant near Avenal, Angel said.

"I think that almost every Kings County resident would agree that health is the most important thing. I think this really needs to be looked at seriously," he said.

*The Associated Press contributed to this story.*

## **'Green school' contest offers bus as prize**

In the Modesto Bee, Sunday, January 25, 2009

School bus manufacturer IC Bus is looking for America's Greenest School, and will award that school a plug-in hybrid bus.

Students can enter by visiting [www.americasgreenestschool.com](http://www.americasgreenestschool.com), where they can learn more about making their school more environmentally friendly and submit a 500-word essay that describes what makes their school "green." Activities such as setting up in-school recycling programs, keeping lights turned off when not in use, using environmentally smart landscaping and encouraging students to ride school buses instead of driving to school are all ideal solutions for creating a greener school.

The essay submission should describe how the school shows its commitment to going green, how it teaches its students the value of green living, how it shows its dedication to green transportation or how it embodies the spirit of a greener planet.

"This program can help students, teachers and parents learn that they do have the power to make greener choices that will positively affect the environment," said Terra Wellington, author of the new book "The Mom's Guide to Growing Your Family Green: Saving the Earth Begins at Home" and one of the essay contest judges. "Making America's schools greener is a winning lesson plan for everyone."

Here are some of Terra's tips for greening your school:

**Ride the bus:** Riding the school bus is a great way to reduce your school's carbon footprint. The American School Bus Council estimates that each diesel school bus takes 36 cars off the road, which significantly reduces fuel use, emissions and traffic congestion. In fact, 3.1 billion gallons of fuel are saved annually by students who ride school buses instead riding in cars.

**Use both sides of the paper:** Ask your teacher if you can print reports and other homework assignments "double-sided" to save paper. By printing double-sided, your paper consumption is halved, significantly reducing waste.

**Become a light monitor:** Ask your teacher to use the classroom's natural light whenever possible. When the classroom is empty, make sure lights are turned off and computers are in standby mode. A standby setting can reduce power over 90 percent, helping to conserve energy.

**Pack a litterless lunch:** Don't use any disposable containers to pack your lunch, from brown bags to plastic baggies. Instead, use containers that can be washed and reused. In a litterless lunch, the only items left over should go to compost, like a banana peel.

**Recycle:** Ask your teacher or principal about setting up a recycling bin for paper, plastic bottles and cans. If your school already has a program, encourage others to participate.

Contest finalists will be announced after Earth Day and the public will be able to vote for their pick to win the title of America's Greenest School. The winning school will receive a plug-in hybrid school bus from IC Bus, which can increase the fuel efficiency of standard school buses by up to 65 percent and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 40 percent. The hybrid school bus has an estimated retail value of \$200,000. The student who submits the winning essay will win a \$5,000 scholarship. Sponsoring teachers may receive \$3,000 to use toward educational materials.

## **Region's leaders seek solutions**

By Garth Stapley

Modesto Bee, Saturday, January 24, 2009

San Joaquin Valley leaders are stepping up requests from state and federal officials for transportation and air quality money.

Members of the valley's Policy Council last year lobbied for a day in Sacramento. They plan to spend two days next week at the state Capitol and will add a trip to Washington, D.C., in February.

Next week's trip will come on the heels of a valleywide Blueprint Summit to be held Monday in Fresno, where attendees are expected to weigh in on a growth plan for the eight-county region stretching from Lodi to Bakersfield.

"We are learning that the eight counties have a much greater impact together," said Bill Spriggs of Merced in a news release. "By leveraging our swing vote position we can get things done politically as a region that none of the eight counties can get done individually."

Lobbying delegates support lowering the threshold for road tax passage from two-thirds' voter approval, or 66.67 percent, to 55 percent. Stanislaus County's Measure S, a half-cent sales tax proposal that might have raised \$700 million, failed in November by less than one-quarter of 1 percent.

Delegates support raising the state gas tax and want to see an air quality enterprise zone established in the valley to bring more state and federal funding. They also favor relaxing environmental regulations for transportation projects that reduce climate-changing emissions.

## **El Tejon's Proximity To I-5 Not Addressed**

By Patric Hedlund and Richard Hoegh  
Mountain Enterprise, Friday, Jan. 23, 2009

The El Tejon Unified School District Board voted January 14 for a \$927,100 contract with an architect to move to the next step in planning new classrooms for El Tejon and Frazier Park Schools.

Board President Ken Hurst said there is no plan for ETUSD Trustees, their architects and Superintendent Shelley Mason to address potential hazards to students due to El Tejon School's proximity to Interstate 5.

ETUSD's Master Plan for the future (prepared by Phillips, Metsch, Sweeney and Moore Architects for about \$68,750 in 2007) does not include any mention of a need to address the impact on children's health of growing air pollution from increased diesel emissions along I-5, or the danger of potential spills of hazardous materials on the freeway.

This summer a big rig carrying hazardous materials overturned near the school. On New Year's Day a truck carrying corrosive hazardous materials lost its brakes near the school and injured 11 motorists. On January 17 another big rig accident occurred near the school.

In October of 2007 a Mountain Communities Town Council forum heard a panel of experts on air quality. One advised that the school needs to be moved, asking "Is the school within 500 feet of the freeway?"

The answer was that the El Tejon playing fields are within 50 feet of the northbound lanes. Existing buildings are about 300 feet from the northbound I-5 lanes. Proposed new buildings will be about 270 feet from the northbound lanes.

Last month, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District staff said the school is "too close to the freeway" to even place an air monitor there, according to guidelines from the the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

When a reporter asked about the EPA rule, saying the monitor could not be placed at the school because of "bad air" from freeway emissions, Hurst said "it wasn't because of bad air, it was because the school is too close to the freeway."

Hurst suggested that perhaps trees could be planted on the playground next to the freeway "to create some protective barrier." Trustee Anita Anderson reminded the board that she had asked the trustees to address the location of El Tejon School several months ago.

When a reporter asked what response there had been to the request, board members and the superintendent agreed that no action had been taken.

Hurst said the bond funds were intended to replace portable classrooms with permanent structures, not to address problems with the location of the existing campus.

When a reporter asked when and where the architect, district administration and board had discussed limiting investment of bond funds in a school site that might have to be abandoned, Hurst said such a conversation had never taken place.

Now that it is known that the bond funds will cover only a fraction of what was originally promised, some community members had speculated that bond investment would be concentrated on the Frazier Park School, which does not have a site problem. Max Williams of Frazier Park said locating a new school site in this region would be difficult.

The board voted to approve spending \$532,900 on architect's fees for Frazier Park Elementary School and \$394,200 for El Tejon School.

## **Central Valley leaders seek funds for transportation, air quality in Washington, D.C.**

Merced Sun-Star, Monday, January 26, 2009

San Joaquin Valley leaders are stepping up requests from state and federal officials for transportation and air quality money.

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## **California shows 'green' emerging as contributor to growth, group says Eco-industry jobs are expanding faster than other areas, according to a report by Next 10.**

By Marla Dickerson

L.A. Timse, Monday, Jan. 26, 2009

Note to President Obama: Energy efficiency and clean technology can help jump-start the U.S. economy.

That's the message of a report released today by Next 10, a nonprofit research group in Palo Alto, which says California's experience underscores how the green sector is emerging as a key component of growth.

Among the findings: Green-collar jobs are growing faster than statewide employment. Clean-tech investment in the state hit a record last year, despite steep stock-market declines. California leads the nation in patent registrations for green technology. Efficiency measures pioneered here over the last three decades have created 1.5 million jobs and allowed California businesses to generate many more goods and services per unit of energy consumed than other states.

"California, like the rest of the nation and world, is caught in a financial perfect storm at the same time it has committed to dramatic reductions in global warming emissions," said Doug Henton, co-founder of Collaborative Economics, a Silicon Valley firm that prepared the report for Next 10. "This [data] provides evidence that moving to cleaner and more efficient energy use must be part of the economic solution."

The report contains the first detailed analysis of the number of "green" jobs in California. National estimates have varied widely. Working from a database of known firms, Collaborative Economics concluded that the Golden State had slightly more than 100,000 green jobs in 2007. That's about as many as the biotech sector.

Those green jobs encompass a variety of occupations, including research scientists, wind-energy technicians and solar panel installers. Such positions are growing fast, the report showed. Green employment was up 10% between 2005 and 2007. Statewide job growth was 1% over the same period.

While the industry isn't large enough to be the sole jobs engine that pulls California and the nation out of the ditch, investments in clean energy and efficiency will help spark growth, according to Noel Perry, a venture capitalist and founder of Next 10.

He said he's certain because California has already proved it by adopting the toughest energy efficiency standards in the country. The result is that the state's energy productivity -- energy consumed compared with economic output -- is 68% higher than that of the rest of the country, according to the report.

"If the rest of the country were as . . . productive as [California], America's GDP would be significantly greater," Perry said.

Perry said tough state mandates to boost California's use of renewable energy and lower greenhouse gases are attracting entrepreneurs and funding.

Venture capital investment in clean technology in California totaled \$3.3 billion in 2008, more than double the amount invested in 2007. Between 2002 and 2007, 607 green-technology patents were registered in California, the study said. That's more than any other state.

## **California may get emissions waiver**

By John M. Broder and Peter Baker, The New York Times  
In the L.A. Daily News, Monday, January 26, 2009

WASHINGTON - President Barack Obama will direct federal regulators today to move swiftly on an application by California and 13 other states to set strict automobile emissions and fuel efficiency standards, two administration officials said Sunday evening.

The directive makes good on an Obama campaign pledge and signifies a sharp reversal of Bush administration policy. Granting California and the other states the right to regulate tailpipe emissions would be one of the most emphatic actions Obama could take to quickly put his stamp on environmental policy.

Obama stopped short of ordering the agencies to reverse the Bush administration policy, but they are widely expected to do so.

Once they act, automobile manufacturers will quickly have to retool to begin producing and selling cars and trucks that get higher mileage than the national standard, and on a faster phase-in schedule. The auto companies have lobbied hard against the regulations and challenged them in court.

Beyond acting on the California emissions law, officials said, Obama will announce that he is moving forward with nationwide regulations requiring the automobile industry to increase fuel efficiency standards to comply with a 2007 law - rules that the Bush administration decided at the last minute not to issue.

He will also order federal departments and agencies to find new ways to save energy and be more environmentally friendly. And he will highlight the elements in his economic plan intended to create new jobs around renewable energy.

The announcements will begin a week of efforts to get the economic stimulus plan through Congress. The White House hopes the Senate will confirm Timothy F. Geithner as Treasury

secretary today, and Obama plans to travel to Capitol Hill on Tuesday to meet with both Senate and House Republican caucuses and lobby for his stimulus package. Obama's aides expect the House to vote on its plan on Wednesday.

But the centerpiece of today's anticipated announcement is Obama's directive to the Environmental Protection Agency to begin work immediately on granting California a waiver, under the Clean Air Act, which allows the state, a longtime leader in air quality matters, to set standards for automobile emissions stricter than the national rules.

California has already won numerous waivers for controls on emissions that cause smog, as opposed to global warming.

The Bush administration denied the waiver in late 2007, saying that recently enacted federal mileage rules made the action unnecessary and that allowing California and the 13 other states the right to set their own pollution rules would result in an unenforceable patchwork of environmental law.

The auto companies had advocated the denial, saying a waiver would require them to produce two sets of vehicles, one to meet the strict California standard and another that could be sold in the remaining states.

The Bush administration's environmental agency director, Stephen L. Johnson, echoed the automakers' claims in denying California's application, ignoring the near-unanimous advice of agency lawyers and scientists that the waiver be granted.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California, a Republican, wrote to Obama last week asking him to swiftly reconsider Bush's decision. The head of California's Air Resources Board, Mary D. Nichols, also wrote to the new director of the environmental agency, Lisa P. Jackson, asking for a quick reversal of the Bush policy.

The California law, which was originally meant to take effect in the 2009 model year, requires automakers to cut emissions by nearly a third by 2016, four years ahead of the federal timetable. The result would be an increase in fuel efficiency in the American car and light truck fleet to roughly 35 miles per gallon from the current average of 27.

The emissions standards are part of an ambitious California plan to reduce emissions of the gases that are blamed for the heating of the atmosphere.

## **Obama to let states set car emission standards**

USA Today, Monday, January 26, 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama is poised to let California and other states control their own car tailpipe emissions.

An official familiar with Obama's decision said the president will reveal the policy Monday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the decision has not been publicly announced.

California and at least 13 other states want waivers from the federal Clean Air Act so that they can impose stiffer air pollution standards than the federal government.

The Bush administration denied the states that permission. Obama's move would empower the Environmental Protection Agency to reverse that conclusion.

## **States may gain power over emissions standards**

By BEN FELLER - Associated Press Writer

In the Fresno Bee, Washington Post, Monday, Jan. 26, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Plunging into energy policy, President Barack Obama is poised to give California and other states a freer hand in curbing emissions from cars, and to get his government moving on fuel-efficiency standards that could remake the auto industry.

Obama will announce his plans Monday at the White House, according to officials familiar with the details who spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid pre-empting the president.

The attention to energy comes as Obama heads into his first full week as president, with an agenda dominated by economic woes and a push to get a huge stimulus plan through Congress.

In one key move, Obama is aiming toward letting California and other states set their own tailpipe emission standards, a tool for reducing the gases that contribute to global warming.

And in the other, Obama will order the Transportation Department to enact short-term rules on how automakers can improve fuel efficiency of their new models based on a 2007 law.

On car emissions, California needed a waiver from the Clean Air Act to pursue its own course; the Bush administration's Environmental Protection Agency denied that permission, which affected at least 13 other states that have followed California's lead.

Last week, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, sent a letter to Obama asking him to give California and other states permission to implement tough tailpipe-emission standards. Schwarzenegger said Obama "has a unique opportunity to both support the pioneering leadership of these states and move America toward global leadership on addressing climate change."

Obama will direct EPA regulators to re-examine California's case. The formal process will take time but is expected to end up in the states' favor. The Bush administration had rejected the request on grounds that a national fuel-efficiency strategy would work better.

As a candidate for president, Obama pledged to overturn the EPA's denial.

"By beginning this process and directing EPA to review the Bush administration's lack of action, President Obama is turning the federal government into a force for positive change instead of a roadblock," said the Sierra Club's executive director, Carl Pope.

Obama is also expected to order new guidelines on fuel economy. The law requires that by 2020, new cars and trucks meet a standard of 35 miles per gallon, a 40 percent increase over the status quo. But the Bush administration did not set regulations in support of that law.

The president on Monday is also expected to tout proposals that he says would boost clean energy supplies while also producing badly needed jobs in so-called "green" industries.

## **Obama clearing way for California emissions waiver**

**The president will ask the EPA today to allow states to set their own, stricter rules for auto emissions, sources say.**

By Ken Bensinger and Jim Tankersley

L.A. Times, Monday, January 26, 2009

Reporting from Washington and Los Angeles -- President Obama will direct the EPA today to reconsider a Bush-era decision that stopped California and more than a dozen other states from setting their own stricter limits on auto emissions, according to sources familiar with the matter.

Should the agency allow a waiver from federal rules, states could require automakers to increase the fuel efficiency of cars and trucks far above current limits. It also would fulfill a long-held goal of environmentalists, as well as one of Obama's campaign promises.

A waiver would be another dramatic rebuke of Bush administration policies, as well as a swift statement that the new president intends to put his own stamp on environmental issues.

"This should prompt cheers from California to Maine," said Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch, who praised Obama as "a man of his word" for the decision.

Tim Carmichael, senior policy director at the Coalition for Clean Air, hailed the decision as a vital step for the administration and the world in the fight against global warming.

Passenger vehicles are estimated to emit 25% of the greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S.

"I think Obama got a clear message that this is a priority not only for California state protection but also for planetary protection," Carmichael said.

A waiver would be a bitter defeat for the auto industry, which had for years hotly contested the implementation of the California rules and had applauded the Bush administration decision in December 2007 to deny a state waiver for California.

A spokesman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers said Sunday that the industry group did not have a comment on the matter. Mike Moran, a spokesman for Ford Motor Co., said the company would not release a statement until Obama made a formal announcement.

At least 17 other states have adopted or are considering California's rules, and a waiver also would allow them to regulate tailpipe emissions. Altogether, those states, which include New York and Florida, represent about 40% of the population, according to auto industry estimates.

That has provoked considerable anxiety among carmakers. They could be forced to spend billions of dollars to comply with the California emissions rules, which are distinct from -- and more rigorous than -- federal fuel standards passed in 2007.

The federal standards would raise the national fleet average to 35 miles per gallon by 2020.

Bush's waiver denial provoked California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to sue the federal government. Separately, Congress launched an investigation on the decision-making process at the Environmental Protection Agency, which must grant California the waiver before the state may regulate emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

Last week, Schwarzenegger sent a letter to President Obama asking that the agency reconsider the matter. "Your administration has a unique opportunity to . . . move America toward global leadership on addressing climate change," the letter said.

Also last week, Mary Nichols, chairwoman of California's Air Resources Board, asked the EPA to open a "reconsideration process" in a letter she sent to Lisa Jackson, that agency's new administrator.

In December, Nichols indicated that the state board had been in close contact with Obama's transition team to help plan a way to pass the waiver and adopt specific rules on rolling out the regulation.

Earlier this month, Jackson pledged to reconsider the request -- and hinted that she supported granting it -- during a Senate hearing into her nomination.

After Obama turns the matter over to the EPA, the agency is expected to take several months to reach a final decision on whether to reverse the Bush denial.

News of Obama's expected statement won quick praise from Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), who said it was "more than welcome news."

As chairwoman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, she said, she plans to work with the EPA to move a waiver through quickly.

"An immediate EPA review of the waiver decision shows respect for California" and the other states, Boxer said, while they wait for the "green light to address global warming pollution from motor vehicles."

In 2002, California passed a law to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for vehicles, but couldn't enforce it, as a series of lawsuits filed by the auto industry held it up.

Last year, judges handed down several rulings that would allow the rule's adoption, but an EPA waiver was still required.

The California rules don't strictly limit mileage. But by setting caps on carbon emissions, they would effectively require vehicles to reach as much as 42 mpg by 2020, according to some estimates. Currently, only two mass-produced vehicles, the Toyota Prius and the hybrid Honda Civic, average at least 42 mpg.

To reach that level on a fleetwide basis, automakers would likely have to invest in costly new technologies such as hybrid drive trains. Industry estimates put the per-vehicle cost of compliance as high as \$5,000.

The Bush administration had been charged with developing final rules for the new federal mileage requirements, but elected to pass that task on to Obama, citing the auto industry's deep economic woes. Those rules must be published by April, and it is expected that the administration will make an announcement on them as soon as today.

In taking up the tailpipe emissions issue after less than a week in office, Obama is sending a signal about the importance his administration places on environmental matters, environmentalists said.

There had been some expectation among them that Obama would instruct the EPA to grant the California waiver immediately, using the existing regulations.

But by sending the matter back to Jackson, Obama also indicates that he is aware of the auto industry's difficulties and willing to develop rules that would accommodate some of its immediate concerns.

Last month, the Bush administration agreed to give General Motors Corp. and Chrysler \$17.4 billion in emergency loans.

The two automakers, which suffered the worst sales declines in a quarter-century last year, have until Feb. 17 to submit restructuring plans to the federal government, which will evaluate those plans by the end of March.

In addition to technological concerns, automakers worry that having the California rules in place would create regulatory chaos, with two separate rules on the books. They have argued that if government is going to regulate carbon emissions, as is the case in Europe, there should be one national rule.

That's a position echoed by environmentalists, who believe that California's regulations would open the door for serious discussion for a new countrywide standard.

"It's not going to happen overnight," said Spencer Quong, a senior analyst at the Union of Concerned Scientists. "This is a huge notice that the administration is going to deliver on its promise to clean up the environment and fight global warming."

## **Obama pushing stronger fuel-efficiency standard**

By BEN FELLER, Associated Press Writer

Tri-Valley Herald, Modesto Bee, Contra Costa Times and other papers Monday, January 26, 2009

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama ordered the government Monday to re-examine whether California and other states should be allowed to have tougher auto emission standards, a clean break from Bush administration policy.

Jumping into the seemingly never-ending national energy debate, Obama also directed his administration to get moving on new fuel-efficiency guidelines for the auto industry in time to cover 2011 model-year cars.

"For the sake of our security, our economy and our planet, we must have the courage and commitment to change," Obama said in his first formal event in the ornate East Room of the White House.

"It will be the policy of my administration," he said, "to reverse our dependence on foreign oil while building a new energy economy that will create millions of jobs."

California and at least a dozen other states have tried to come up with tougher emission standards than those imposed by the federal government, but Obama said that "Washington stood in their way." The president wants the Environmental Protection Agency to take a second look at a decision denying California - and the other states that want to follow its model - permission to set its own tailpipe emission standards.

More broadly, Obama sought to show he was not waiting to put his stamp on energy policy, which has both near-term implications on the sagging economy and long-range effects on pollution, climate change and national security.

"Year after year, decade after decade, we've chosen delay over decisive action," Obama said. "Rigid ideology has overruled sound science. Special interests have overshadowed common sense. Rhetoric has not led to the hard work needed to achieve results - and our leaders raise their voices each time there's a spike on gas prices, only to grow quiet when the price falls at the pump."

The Clean Air Act gives California special authority to regulate vehicle pollution because the state began regulating such pollution before the federal government got into the act. But a federal waiver is still required; if the waiver is granted, other states can choose to adopt California's standards or the federal ones.

In 2007 the Bush administration's Environmental Protection Agency denied California's waiver request, gaining praise from the auto industry but touching off a storm of investigations and lawsuits from Democrats and environmental groups who contended the denial was based on political instead of scientific reasons.

Obama on Monday directed the EPA to re-examine the decision. That does not yet overturn anything. But still, the states' wanting their own power considered it a victory.

"The federal government must work with, not against, states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," Obama said. He added: "The days of Washington dragging its heels are over. My administration will not deny facts; we will be guided by them."

## **Obama OKs tougher emission standards**

By Margaret Talev, McClatchy Newspapers  
Sacramento Bee, Sunday, January 25, 2009

WASHINGTON - President Barack Obama is expected as early as Monday to give California and other states the green light to impose their own, stricter fuel emissions standards.

Obama was scheduled to make a significant announcement on climate change midday at the White House, press aides said Sunday. Aides declined to confirm details.

An e-mail from the White House public liaison office to interested parties, including environmental activists, invited their representatives to attend an "important" ceremony to mark "the first environment and energy actions taken by the president helping our country move toward energy independence."

"This is a presidential trifecta less than one week in office," said David G. Hawkins, director of climate programs for the Natural Resources Defense Council who received the e-mail.

"This will cut global warming pollution, reduce oil dependence and help build a stronger auto industry," he said. Automakers, who pushed to keep the Environmental Protection Agency under President Bush from signing off on California's higher standards, "have got their eyes on the rearview mirror, but if they'd look ahead they'd see this is exactly the medicine they need," Hawkins said. "This is Dr. Obama saying, 'Here's the exercise regime you need.'"

Activists and officials from at least 14 states seeking waivers from the federal Clean Air Act have been urging Obama since he took office last week to move quickly on such a change. California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger wrote to Obama last week asking him to move forward. A spokesman for the governor declined to comment Sunday on the anticipated step by the Obama administration, saying the governor would wait until formal action was taken to react.

The anticipated step by the president would reverse President Bush's policies and pave the way to force carmakers to sell more fuel efficient vehicles. California's law, enacted in 2002, would require new cars to reduce emissions by roughly 30 percent and translate to a comparable increase in fuel economy, Hawkins said.

The standards had been due to start with the 2009 model year but were delayed by automaker lawsuits and the Bush administration's denial of the California waivers. The other states have sought to adopt California's standards.

Obama also was expected to direct the Department of Transportation to complete rulemaking for higher national fuel efficiency standards.

The president's campaign platform included promises to tackle global warming and greenhouse gases, through stricter auto emissions standards, more renewable energy and initiating a cap-and-trade program affecting high-emissions producers such as power plants.

He also has said the federal government's buildings and fleets should be more energy efficient, and on Saturday, in his first weekly address as president, said some of the money in the \$825 billion-plus economic stimulus package under consideration by Congress would go toward making federal buildings and individual homes more energy efficient.

## **Obama to order review of state's emissions bid**

Zachary Coile, Robert Selna, Chronicle Staff Writers  
S.F. Chronicle, Monday, January 26, 2009

Washington -- President Obama, in his first major environmental act since taking office, will order the Environmental Protection Agency today to move swiftly on a request by California and other states to set the nation's toughest vehicle emissions standards.

Obama plans to make the announcement at a White House ceremony, according to congressional sources briefed on the plan. The move signals a sharp break with the Bush administration, which rejected California's request to enforce its rules limiting greenhouse gases from cars and trucks.

While Obama's order only requires the EPA to reconsider California's request, all sides expect the agency will approve it. His new EPA administrator, Lisa Jackson, must finish a formal review before making the decision, but environmentalists were already cheering the likely outcome.

"These are monumental decisions that will have an immediate impact in reducing global warming pollution in the United States," said Frances Beinecke, president of the Natural Resources Defense Council. "Just days into office, President Obama is showing America and the world that he will lead our country in a bold new direction to protect the environment and fight global warming."

Obama's presidential directive could ultimately transform the entire U.S. auto fleet. If the EPA approves California's request for a waiver to enforce its rules, any state can opt for either the federal or the state's emissions standards. Thirteen states have adopted California's rules, covering about half the nation's population, and a half-dozen more, including Florida, are considering doing so. Automakers probably would be forced to sell more fuel efficient cars and trucks in every showroom nationwide.

California Sen. Barbara Boxer, who chairs the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and has lobbied Obama to approve the state's request, called his expected announcement "more than welcome news."

"An immediate EPA review of the waiver decision shows respect for California and the 18 other states ... who are waiting for the green light to address global warming pollution from motor vehicles," Boxer said.

"When the waiver is signed, it will be a signal to Detroit that a huge market awaits them if they do the right thing and produce the cleanest, most efficient vehicles possible."

The auto industry opposes California's rules and has fought a long-running legal battle to block the standards. Automakers have warned of the perils of creating a patchwork of vehicle emissions rules and have lobbied Congress instead for a single national standard.

California's rules would require vehicles to reduce their greenhouse gases by 30 percent by 2016. The transportation sector is the single biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the state, at about 38 percent of total emissions.

The state's regulations are much more stringent than even the higher fuel economy standards passed by Congress and signed by Bush in 2007, which requires vehicles to reach an average fuel economy of 31.5 miles per gallon by 2015. The state's rules require automakers to meet a fleetwide average of 36 miles per gallon by 2016.

Obama's directive is also expected to force the Transportation Department to complete interim fuel economy standards to implement the 2007 law, which the Bush administration chose not to do. The goal is to speed the shift to more efficient vehicles, and the new rules would be issued by March so automakers would have time to update their fleet for the 2011 model year.

The East Room announcement is expected to be attended by Jackson, top EPA and Transportation Department officials and environmentalists, among others, Capitol Hill sources said.

Obama's decision is a victory for California leaders, including Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and California Air Resources Board Chairwoman Mary Nichols, who wrote letters last week urging the president to take action. Schwarzenegger's spokesman, Aaron McLearn, said Sunday night that the governor was "withholding comment until the president has something to say."

California's landmark law limiting greenhouse gas emissions was written by former Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills (Los Angeles County) and passed by the Legislature and signed by then-Gov. Gray Davis in 2002. It was supposed to go into effect starting in the 2009 model year. One thorny issue the EPA may decide is in which model year California's rules would now take effect to give automakers enough time to transition.

Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento, who was in the Assembly when the law was passed, said Obama's announcement "represents the beginning of a very different and much more positive relationship between California and the federal government."

"California did not get a whole lot of attention in the past eight years," Steinberg said. "This is an important signal that things will be different."

Derek Walker, director of the California Climate Initiative for the Environmental Defense Fund, said Obama's move also suggests that the new president rejected the automakers' assertions that California's rules would hurt the industry and the economy.

"This is a tremendous out-of-the-gate move by the new president and shows that he is taking a fresh look at environmental and energy policy from the perspective of sound science," Walker said. "It also shows that he understands the strong nexus between economic stimulus and environmental protection."

**Sources: Clinton to name climate change envoy**

By MATTHEW LEE, Associated Press Writer  
Tri-Valley Herald, Monday, January 26, 2009

WASHINGTON—Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton on Monday will appoint a special envoy for climate change as the Obama administration moves to restore America's credentials in environmental policy, U.S. officials familiar with the decision said.

Clinton will name Todd Stern, a former White House assistant who was the chief U.S. negotiator at the Kyoto Protocol talks in her husband's administration, to the post, the U.S. officials said. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity ahead of a planned midday State Department ceremony where Clinton will announce the appointment.

The appointment comes as President Barack Obama announced new policies to allow states greater latitude in limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

The Bush administration had come under fire for failing to act on climate change, walking away from the Kyoto Protocol on grounds it favored large developing nations like China and India, and refusing to allow states to bolster some environmental regulations.

Stern, currently a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and a partner in the WilmerHale law firm, served in the Clinton administration from 1993 to 2001. He first worked in the White House, handling the Kyoto Protocol and follow-up talks in Buenos Aires and coordinating the president's Initiative on Global Climate Change. He later worked at Treasury, where he was a senior adviser to the secretary.

After his Clinton administration stint, Stern taught at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

## **Environmental Protections Take Hit in Fiscal Crunch**

By David A. Fahrenthold  
Washington Post, Monday, January 26, 2009; B01

One in a series of reports exploring the impact of budget cuts being contemplated by elected officials in Maryland and Virginia.

The state of Virginia has eliminated more than one-fifth of its air-pollution inspectors -- who police everything from massive power plants to neighborhood dry cleaners -- as part of its attempt to make up a budget shortfall estimated at \$3 billion or more, officials said.

Gov. Timothy M. Kaine (D) wants to cut about \$12 million this fiscal year from the \$420 million budget of the state secretary of natural resources, who oversees state parks, Chesapeake Bay restoration and anti-pollution efforts.

Under Kaine's plan, some of the cutbacks would come through deferring maintenance, eliminating training and replacing quarterly surveys of state-park visitors with annual ones. Kaine also proposed cutting 43 positions.

One small section of the secretary's domain -- the air-enforcement division of the Department of Environmental Quality -- has already made serious cuts. A spokesman for the department said 14 of the roughly 54 inspector positions had been eliminated.

No inspectors were laid off, department spokesman Bill Hayden said. He said most had left the department through voluntary early retirement programs and a handful were moved to other jobs.

Air inspectors oversee about 5,000 sites statewide, checking their paperwork and the emissions from smokestacks and exhaust. At power plants, those emissions can include soot and the building blocks of smog. At dry cleaners, they can include cleaning chemicals that irritate lungs.

State officials said the inspectors will still be able to check Virginia's largest air polluters, about 500 power plants and factories, as often as U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rules require. That's once every two years for the very largest, and once every five years for the rest.

But officials said that the rest of the sites would be checked much less often.

Jerome Brooks, who oversees the air compliance division, said that in previous years, inspectors were able to check 1,400 sites a year.

This year, he said, they will check fewer than 800.

He said they would try to target sites with a history of violations and those that draw complaints from neighbors.

"If [polluters] are out of compliance, we may or may not find it as quickly or easily as we once did," said L. Preston Bryant Jr., state secretary of natural resources.

S. William Becker, executive director of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies, said the loss of inspectors could embolden Virginia's polluters to bend or break rules.

"This is akin to having pollution-control cops on the beat. When sources of air pollution know that their facilities are being inspected, they will . . . do a better job" of controlling emissions, Becker said.

Becker said he fears other states will also lay off inspectors this year as the national recession cuts into the tax revenue that makes up state budgets. Becker said it is too early to know how many jobs might be lost nationwide.

Two jobs were also lost from the Department of Environmental Quality office in charge of policing water polluters, Hayden said, although he said this was also done without layoffs.

In Maryland, Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) released his proposed budget last week and actually added money for the oversight of power plants.

The state's Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund, a new program that funnels money into efforts to stop pollution on farms and in suburban neighborhoods, did not fare as well.

The fund, which draws from a tax on fuel and car rentals, was heavily raided this fiscal year. As the state's budget tightened, \$25 million was shifted into the state's general accounts. Only about \$9.6 million was left.

For the next fiscal year, O'Malley proposed taking money from the trust fund again, this time about \$6.5 million. The rest of the fund, projected to be about \$25 million, will be spent on the Chesapeake, according to state officials.

O'Malley "has made a huge commitment to bay restoration here," said Mark Hoffman of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. "He could have very easily said, 'We'll continue to take \$25 million.' "

## **Study Pinpoints Main Source of Asia's Brown Cloud**

By Henry Fountain

N.Y. Times, Friday, Jan. 23, 2009

South Asia has a cloud over its head — an unpleasant, unhealthy and climate-affecting soup of sooty haze that envelops the region, particularly in winter.

Scientists have studied what's called the "brown cloud" for years, yet there has always been uncertainty about it. How much of the soot and other carbon-containing aerosols that make up the haze comes from the burning of fossil fuels in cars, power plants and the like, and how much comes from burning wood and other biomass for cooking and agriculture?

Orjan Gustafsson of Stockholm University in Sweden and colleagues have now removed the cloud of uncertainty hanging over the brown cloud. Burning of biomass, they report in *Science*, is the greater culprit.

The researchers used carbon-14 dating of atmospheric soot sampled in early 2006 at Sinhagad in western India and Hanimaadhoo island in the Maldives. They made use of the fact that fossil fuels are millions of years old, and thus the carbon-14, a radioactive isotope with a half-life of 5,700 years, has decayed away. On the other hand, vegetation that is burned when fields are cleared, and wood and dung that are used for cooking, contain "young" carbon, with plenty of C-14.

They found that biomass combustion produced about two-thirds of the pollution, a much larger proportion than found in earlier studies that used different methodologies.

The findings suggest that controls on agricultural burning and improvements in cookstove technology to allow for more complete combustion could make as much of a difference, if not more, in lightening the skies over South Asia as efforts to restrict cars or build cleaner-burning power plants.

The researchers also note that because soot persists in the atmosphere for a relatively short time, efforts to reduce the amount of soot may have an immediate positive impact on the regional environment.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Monday, Jan. 26, 2009:](#)

### **Air district's burn rules hypocritical**

An Oct. 29 editorial touting restricting residential fireplace burning ("Valley no-burn days are working") states that residential wood burning is the largest source of fine particulate pollution in the valley. Really.

The Jan. 11 front page of *The Californian* reported the on-going agricultural burning of hundreds of acres of green, unseasoned wood and material on days when fireplace burning is prohibited ("You shiver, they burn"). The AQI no-burn for residences is 80; for agriculture, 150. Scott Nestor of the air district stated three reasons as a justification for this inequity ending with a farming-biased quote, "It's the most cost-effective way." That's it, isn't it? Needed air quality control? No, money/cost!

How many fireplaces make 2,610 acres of agriculture burning (based on San Joaquin Valley Pollution Control District data, since Nov. 1)?

Air quality people are being politically hypocritical/preferential. Days fireplaces can't burn when the AQI is less than 150, wind-driven agricultural burning, mostly northwest of Bakersfield, pushes pollution toward us and Lamont and Arvin.

Nestor says, "(Agricultural) burns are generally in remote areas, limiting the impact on population-dense areas." Yet, they admit that most southern valley pollution comes from "up north." That was proven last summer when smoke from the Big Sur fire drifted directly toward us. Other northwest pollution "remotely" moves toward us the same way.

Nobody likes regulation, but if we are going to really improve our air quality, then, as the editorial stated, sacrifices must be made by everyone. Pollution regulators need to stop focusing on fireplace burning and start enacting and enforcing uniform standards of pollution for all burning impacting valley air quality.

WILL WINN, Bakersfield

[Fresno Bee editorial, Sunday, Jan. 25, 2009:](#)

### **Overturn EPA's bad decision**

***California should get waiver for new greenhouse gas emissions standards.***

The Obama administration isn't wasting any time getting to work, and we'd like to add one more chore to the fast-track list: Overturning the Bush administration's opposition to California's aggressive attempt to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The state passed the law in 2002. It sets new fuel standards for autos and trucks in an effort to reduce those emissions blamed for global climate change. California is the world's 12th largest producer of the emissions, and its efforts to reduce that pollution can have real consequences.

The standards the state has adopted are more stringent than federal rules, which California -- alone among the states -- is allowed to do under the terms of the 1967 Clean Air Act.

That's because California was already regulating air pollution when the Clean Air Act was passed. Under the federal law, other states may adopt California's standards or obey the less stringent federal rules; they may not strike out on their own.

But California must get a waiver from the federal Environmental Protection Agency when it wishes to adopt stricter rules. In the past, the EPA never flatly denied such a waiver request. This time it did, despite the fact that legal and scientific experts at the agency recommended approval.

It was pretty clear that pressure from the auto industry was behind the move, although the EPA and the Bush White House denied that. The automakers and the Bush administration said they wanted a single, nationwide standard for fuel efficiency in vehicles instead of many different ones.

That was a specious argument. What California proposed to do would probably amount to a de facto national standard, because so many states are choosing the California proposal. At last count, 13 had adopted the more stringent standards, and three others were getting ready to do so. Those states account for about half the nation's population, meaning that there would be, at most, two standards -- and probably only one, since the automakers have already lost this battle in court, and would be well advised to throw in the towel and just build cars to the stricter California standards.

California's rules could, in fact, help the beleaguered automakers, if it means they build more fuel efficient cars that are more attractive to consumers.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger sent a letter to the new president just the day after the inauguration, asking him to move quickly to reverse the Bush administration's denial of the EPA waiver. Obama's nominee for the top job at EPA, Lisa Jackson, hasn't been confirmed by the Senate yet, but that's likely to happen soon. When it does, we hope she will move quickly to do the right thing and give California the permission it needs to proceed.

How quickly is up in the air. California Air Resources Board chairwoman Mary Nichols -- herself on the short list for the EPA job that Jackson will fill -- believes the process can be put on a fast track, since the EPA already has an "ample record" to help it reconsider the Bush administration decision.

The signs are good. During the presidential campaign, Obama backed California's approach, and while in the Senate he was a co-sponsor of a bill by Sen. Barbara Boxer to force EPA approval of the waiver.

And Jackson told Boxer at her confirmation hearing last week that, "If I'm confirmed, I will immediately revisit the waiver."

What the EPA did in 2007 was a mistake. The new administration should move as rapidly as possible to repair the damage.

[Sacramento Bee, Letters to the Editor, Sunday, January 25, 2009](#)

**Homebound burned by ban**

The Sacramento County action to prohibit wood burning this winter may have been a good spare the air action and a profitable situation for the gas companies, but it is detrimental to people who are homebound, like retirees and the disabled. The gas companies make a huge profit from the homebound because they heat their homes for more hours each day. Fresh air is nice, but so is food and warmth.

Andrew Barnard, Rio Linda

### **How about fireplace permits?**

As of Sunday we have had seven consecutive "no burn days" in Sacramento County. We couldn't have a fire in our fireplace on Thanksgiving or the day after. My question is: Has this made a significant improvement in our pollution? I find it ironic that my friends in Roseville (one mile away) burn in an open fireplace every night.

A suggestion: Let people with fireplaces in the county apply for a use permit allowing them to burn when they want to up to a certain number of days. The permit should cost only what it would take to defer expenses. The advantage to the county would be to identify those with approved stoves and allow the residents to pick and chose when they could burn.

Glenn Nichols, Orangevale

[Modesto Bee, guest commentaries, Sunday, January 25, 2009](#)

### **The best way to save farmland**

The Blueprint Process is an unprecedented effort to bring together public and private leaders and resources to make a difference for the San Joaquin Valley. The eight valley counties -- San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern -- have embarked on a program to enhance regional and local decision making through the involvement of all segments of the population.

When the pieces are assembled into a valleywide view, the "blueprint" that should emerge is one that will suggest how to foster more efficient land use patterns, which support improved mobility and reduce dependency on single-occupant vehicle trips; accommodate an adequate supply of housing for all incomes; reduce impacts on productive farmland, valuable habitat and air quality; increases resource efficiency and results in safe and vibrant neighborhoods.

From several growth scenarios will emerge one that promotes the best regional growth and a foundation for prosperity, livability and continued agricultural abundance. Farmland Working Group supports the hybrid alternative growth scenario. It would save almost 175,000 acres of productive farmland. Compared with recent growth trends, it offers a wide range of benefits to the people of its region struggling to improve their quality of life.

*JEANI FERRARI, president, Farmland Working Group, Turlock*

### **Valley must grow less**

While the debate within the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint process centers on different visions of housing densities, squeezing the same number of people into a smaller space only forestalls the huge problems facing the valley. Instead of debating the form that future growth will take (18 people per acre vs. 31), we should ask ourselves what amount of growth is appropriate.

At the heart of the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint process are assumptions about future population growth. According to [www.valleyblueprint.org](#).

[www.valleyblueprint.org](#), "Our Valley is predicted to almost triple by 2050 to more than 9 million people. This new population is equivalent to adding 11 new cities the size of Fresno."

Today, we face major air quality issues and have a growing shortage of water. We are fooling ourselves if we think we can mitigate the problems caused by a tripling of our population with good urban planning.

The blueprint process is based on the idea that this massive influx of population is inevitable, that we can do nothing to slow or stop it, that our only option is to attempt to limit urban sprawl by agreeing to higher population densities.

Yes, higher density housing is needed. Yes, we need a smart regional plan for the future. But in order to secure a cleaner, brighter tomorrow for our region, we must also limit the growth of our cities. We must face the fact that there is a limit to the number of people this valley can house without ruining our quality of life.

*Dwain Zack, walnut farmer in the Escalon area.*

[L.A. Daily News Commentary, Sunday, Jan. 25, 2009:](#)

### **Sun can offer L.A. a world of benefits**

By Dave Freeman, Columnist

AS a very young man, I witnessed how a renewable-energy project - building dams to harness the hydropower of the Tennessee River - provided a powerful economic stimulus that created thousands of what we now call green-collar jobs.

The Tennessee Valley Authority, which I chaired under President Carter, transformed the most poverty-stricken part of America into a thriving middle- class region.

Now President Obama and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa have the same basic idea: by harnessing the sun and the wind, we can create new, green-collar jobs.

The L.A. Solar Initiative, Measure B, on the March 3 ballot is a splendid example of how to put thousands of Angelenos to work while simultaneously combating global warming.

In L.A., where more people die each year from air pollution than car crashes, we have the opportunity to act. We can lead the nation in the use of solar energy to actually replace fossil fuels that cause global warming.

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power is the largest and one of the dirtiest public utilities in the nation. Nearly 50 percent of its electricity comes from coal, while less than 1 percent is produced from solar.

The Coalition for Clean Air, Coalition for Solar and Clean Energy, Los Angeles Federation of Labor AFL-CIO, and the American Lung Association have formed a coalition to support the mayor's plan to install 400 megawatts of solar power on commercial rooftops here in L.A. - more than any other city in the nation.

Unfortunately, the discussion and coverage thus far has dwelt on the clumsiness of the process in which this plan was presented to the voters. In fact, much of what has been said is misinformation that fails to connect this plan to the problem we all want to solve - global warming.

This is just the kind of action that is urgently needed to help solve our climate crisis.

Faced with a global-warming crisis that threatens life as we know it, the opponents say it will cost too much. They are wrong - they can't even count the beans correctly. They estimate using numbers based on what the small solar companies are charging to put panels on individual homes - about \$9 a watt.

Today, the going wholesale price is at or below \$3 a watt, and going down, for the thin film product the DWP will be using in its solar panels. The best estimate of DWP installed price is \$3.75 a watt.

When Measure B is implemented, DWP will be buying large quantities of modules and installing them on large commercial flat rooftops. It's a basic rule of economics: Prices come tumbling down when big purchasers leverage their power in the marketplace.

It is my considered judgment that Measure B is the lowest-cost option available for action now to combat global warming. The sun's energy is free and infinitely renewable, and the costs of capturing its power are largely borne on the front end.

Solar panels, over their 25-year life, will be cheaper than the natural-gas power they will replace when they are owned by the utility. After the initial panel installation, it is much like a hydroelectric dam. If the city owns the equipment, it gets steadily lower in cost each year as the original investment is depreciated.

Solar panels just sit there making clean power, and only the inverters that convert it to usable electricity require replacement over time.

With the reduced interest rates for tax-free municipal bonds combined with tax credits in the early years, the costs of the solar panels are essentially the same as their value during the daylight peak hours.

Finally, with this solar program we will have inflation-proof power for 20 years - something that fossil fuels or even privately owned solar can't deliver because private power purchase contracts have escalation clauses in them that make them more expensive over time.

Public ownership that doesn't charge the customer to make a profit is another reason this is such a good deal for L.A. That is also why the DWP's rates are significantly lower than Edison's rates in L.A. County.

But there are other major benefits of Measure B.

Measure B will help stimulate our economy by creating thousands of well-paying, green-collar jobs on which people can raise a family.

It includes a preference for solar manufacturers based here in Los Angeles. This means the DWP, by switching to solar, invests directly back into L.A. It also means solar manufacturers, who are building facilities and creating tens of thousands of jobs across the country, will have a significant incentive to locate in L.A. and bring those new jobs here.

Using solar power instead of gas-fired power will significantly reduce air pollution - an important benefit hardly mentioned in the debate thus far.

Solar power installed on rooftops in Los Angeles will help the DWP reduce power failures throughout the city because it will supply power at the load center where these failures typically occur during peak usage, when the sun is hottest. Strategic placement of the solar panels in places where the distribution system is weak will improve the power reliability, something that is worth a lot to those who would otherwise suffer blackouts on hot summer days when the solar panels will be strong.

As the former general manager of the DWP who got rid of two coal-fired power plants while avoiding rate increases and blackouts, it is my considered opinion that Measure B is the lowest-cost option available for action now to combat global warming.

It is a giant step forward in the mayor's promise of a green Los Angeles.

*Dave Freeman is the former general manager of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Sacramento Municipal Utility District and the New York Power Authority.*

[Merced Sun-Star Commentary, Saturday, Jan. 24, 2009:](#)

**David Hosley: County's vital role in Valley Blueprint**

A milestone in planning for the future of the San Joaquin Valley comes Monday when a Valley-wide Blueprint Summit is held in Fresno.

Two years of efforts have led to the advisory vote that will occur at this public event and the Merced County Association of Governments has played a key role in planning for unprecedented growth in our region.

MCAG Deputy Executive Director Marjie Kirn has directed the blueprint process on behalf of the eight counties in the Valley.

It's been hard work, complicated by new state laws on global warming and regional cooperation. And building a vision for the Valley has been done during the worst economic environment since the Great Depression that brought many of our local families here.

The blueprint process has provided the eight counties of the Valley an opportunity to work together to develop better land use and transportation patterns by producing a regional guide for the next four decades.

In my view, Merced County will change more in that time frame than any of the other counties in the Valley because of UC Merced.

Having lived in Gainesville, Fla., and Palo Alto and Davis in California, I've seen the impact of growing universities on the surrounding area. The economy, the social life and local politics will all be transformed as the university becomes a mature institution.

A demographic change will be equally evident.

Almost all of the Valley's population growth in the next four decades will be Hispanic, and not so much from immigration but family size.

Merced County's population is already majority Hispanic. The whole Valley will be that way by 2050.

How well we plan for the next few decades will affect health issues that especially affect Hispanics, such as high blood pressure, diabetes and asthma.

Community health is affected by air and water quality, whether our communities encourage people to walk and get outdoors, as well as having a mix of transportation from bike paths to high speed rail.

Following next week's summit the San Joaquin Valley Policy Council, consisting of two elected officials from each county, will decide whether to accept the recommendations from the summit and the Blueprint Regional Advisory Council, which selected a scenario in November that favors compact growth and more transit choice.

After the policy council action, each county's supervisors and all of the city council members in the Valley will vote on ratification of the final regional blueprint.

The outcome could be a framework for the future of the region, but the blueprint is not binding in itself and local land use decisions will ultimately be up to local officials.

To register for the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Summit and view the scenarios go to [www.valleyblueprint.org](http://www.valleyblueprint.org).

*David Hosley is president of the Great Valley Center.*

[Letters to the Contra Costa Times, Friday, Jan. 23, 2009:](#)

### **Beware of plan's impact**

By now, I am sure most residents in the vicinity of Blair Park on Moraga Avenue are aware of the plans which the Piedmont School Board is considering to place portable classrooms there while Havens School is re-built, and, following that, the plan which the Piedmont City Council is

considering to develop Blair Park into a sports facility consisting of two soccer fields, 80 parking spaces and a concession stand.

Residents may not be aware of the cumulative impact that either of these proposals could have on our neighborhood.

The major impact would be to traffic on the already heavily traveled Moraga Avenue. The roadway is narrow and winding and offers very little in the way of easy egress in the event of an emergency. If the temporary school proposal were adopted, parents dropping their children at school would then be forced to use the quieter side streets to get off Moraga Avenue to return to Piedmont. These streets will become heavily used and could become dangerous. A sports facility would ensure that even on the weekends, Moraga Avenue would continue to be heavily trafficked and dangerous. Moraga Avenue already supports one sports facility, Coaches Playfield, which greatly increased the number of cars using the avenue.

In order to make the school site or the second sports facility possible, the trees would all be removed and a 40-foot high retaining wall would be built to hold back the

hillside which, naturally, would have to be cut away to accommodate the development of fields, the concession stands and the parking lots. The scale of either project is so large and inappropriate for that tiny sliver of beautiful, peaceful, natural open space, that it is actually ridiculous.

This temporary solution for a Piedmont school, or the proposed sports fields, would mean the permanent destruction of a small but magnificent ecosystem, and the last piece of unspoiled, undeveloped open space in the area.

The resultant permanent, cumulative impact to neighbors would be traffic congestion, noise pollution, air pollution, and a great loss to dog owners and wildlife.

I urge all residents on Moraga Avenue and surrounding areas to contact their City Council members and the traffic departments and ask them to seriously consider the "cumulative impact" on Moraga Canyon if they were to allow either of these travesties to occur on our street.

*Peggy Esposito, Oakland*

## **Oppose Blair Park idea**

Blair Park has been front page news for several weeks now as a potential portable/soccer field complex site. It has been taken off the table as a portable site for the 2009-10 school year, as it cannot be made ready in time. Blair Park is the last green open space in Piedmont. I live above it and know it well — it is full of all sorts of wildlife, as the environmental impact report will show. It is not a suitable site for portables or a sports complex because:

- There are no sidewalks or traffic lights — you cannot walk to it, you must drive.
- Traffic on Moraga Avenue is fast and furious and already backed up. Any development will bring more cars, more traffic, more delays. Many Oakland residents will be impacted. The air quality down there will not be good with all those cars. Moraga Avenue also is the evacuation road in emergencies for emergency vehicles.
- If we had an earthquake, the water from the nearby Blair reservoir will flood Moraga Canyon.
- In the event of fire, Moraga Canyon is an evacuation area and will not be saved.
- There is no public path leading down to it; there is only Moraga Avenue.
- Moraga Canyon lies next to the Hayward fault. The hillside is very steep. Development plans call for a 40-foot retaining wall after the steep hill is dug out. The hill will be unstable, and there are many houses perched atop the hill. (When was the last time anyone in Piedmont got permission to build a 40-foot wall?)

- Blair Park, as a natural wildlife asset to Piedmont, will be forever destroyed. There are over 150 trees, mature oaks among them.
- The narrow flat part of Blair Park is landfill from the Bay Bridge/BART construction.
- Blair Park is north facing, windy, cold, wet and in perpetual shade. No development can change this. It is not a nice place to spend a lot of time—that hat's why the animal life is so abundant.

I don't think many Piedmont people have actually walked in Blair Park. I urge everyone to do so before they decide that the place is a safe, good bet for temporary housing or a soccer complex. You cannot fit a square peg in a round hole just because you want to!

*Lynn Dee, Piedmont*

### **Increase traffic problems**

I am an Oakland hills resident who drives down Moraga Avenue from Montclair Village to Piedmont Avenue daily. I've been concerned about increasing traffic problems along this route for some time, and was considerably dismayed to learn that Piedmont is considering putting temporary classrooms in Blair Park.

I strongly oppose this idea. It will intensify the already serious traffic problems along that route, as well as expose students to potential hazards from that traffic. Please select another site in a more appropriate, safer location.

*Karen Silverberg, Oakland*

### **Safe site for relocation**

We would like to speak up in favor of the Emeryville site for the temporary Havens School relocation, and in favor of Emeryville generally, as a great community.

Before moving to Piedmont in 2006, we lived for five years in Emeryville, two blocks from the proposed site. We lived in a small, older bungalow, very similar to our Piedmont house. We walked, rode bicycles, chatted with neighbors and played in the pocket park across from the school site, much like we do in Piedmont. Although the setting was a bit more urban (fewer and newer trees, alas!), it was not a scary place; the small town experience was very much like what we found when we moved here. Police and fire service response time and professionalism were outstanding—Very much like Piedmont. Our neighbors were mostly working and professional people who participated in their community (the city council, school board and planning commission meetings would feel very familiar to you all) and appreciated and respected each other's diversity, again very much like Piedmont.

Considering that safety seems to have emerged as a big part of the discussion around the Anna Yates site, it's worth pointing out that during our five years in Emeryville, no one we knew was ever a victim of a crime.

Unfortunately, this is one area where our experience of Emeryville is not very much like Piedmont: Our cars have been rifled, our house has been burglarized (during a school day), multiple gunpoint muggings and a tragic shooting all have occurred within a few blocks of our Piedmont house in the past few years.

The Bay Area is made up of many communities, large and small, more and less affluent, more and less diverse. Where they meet and intersect friction, and yes, crime, can occur; but this is clearly as true for Piedmont as it is for Emeryville, Oakland or any community. The safety question is moot at best.

The Emeryville site is our best opportunity, it seems to us, to keep our school communities together during this difficult relocation period. We urge the board, parents and staff to let facts, not fear, inform the decision on this important question.

*Jon Davies and Anne Hauss, Piedmont*

## **Support burning ban**

The Jan. 9 editorial ("We must work at cleaning our air") praised the action of the California Air Resources Board for issuing a plan to meet the goals of AB32, California's cutting edge effort to reduce green house gas emissions to 1990 levels. Your editorial correctly acknowledged that there will be costs to this initiative, especially burdensome in this economy, but you properly ask the larger question — when do we start moving toward cleaning our air? Bay Area residents and businesses will be leaders in this effort and could set a good example by cleaning up its own air.

In December the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency cited the Bay Area Air Quality Management District for failure to meet the particulate matter (soot) standard and determined wood smoke to be a primary cause. As a result, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District is obligated to implement programs to meet the standard by 2012 that may lead to mandatory bans of wood burning stoves. Bay Area communities could lead the way by banning the operation of wood burning stoves now. This will reduce particulate matter pollution and reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.

*Garrett Keating, Piedmont*

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses cleaner air helps improve quality of life in the United States. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

## **Un aire más limpio mejora la vida en EEUU**

ALICIA CHANG / Associated Press

La Opinión, Monday, January 26, 2009

LOS ANGELES (AP).- Un aire más limpio en las últimas dos décadas ha añadido casi cinco meses a la esperanza de vida promedio en Estados Unidos, dice un estudio federal.

Los investigadores dijeron que este es el primer estudio en mostrar que reducir la contaminación del aire alarga la vida.

Entre 1978 y el 2001, la esperanza promedio de vida en Estados Unidos aumentó casi tres años, a 77 años, y hasta 4,8 meses de ello son atribuibles a un aire más limpio, dijeron científicos de la Universidad Brigham Young y de la Facultad de Salud Pública de la Universidad de Harvard en un artículo en la revista New England Journal of Medicine.

Algunos expertos no vinculados al estudio dijeron que la ganancia es substancial.

"Muestra que nuestros esfuerzos como país para controlar la contaminación del aire han valido la pena", dijo el doctor Joel Kaufman, estudioso de salud ambiental para la Universidad de Washington.

Los científicos han sabido desde hace tiempo que las partículas en el aire contaminado pueden alojarse en lo profundo de los pulmones y aumentar el riesgo de enfermedades pulmonares, ataques cardíacos y apoplejías. Esas partículas provienen de fábricas, plantas de electricidad y vehículos que emplean diesel.

En 1970, el Congreso aprobó una Ley de Aire Limpio, que dio a la Agencia de Protección Ambiental la autoridad para establecer y hacer cumplir normas nacionales para proteger a la población de partículas contaminantes, monóxido de carbono y otras sustancias.

Se considera que esa ley ha mejorado la calidad del aire en el país, por medio de convertidores catalíticos en automóviles y "scrubbers" en nuevas fábricas.

Para el estudio, los científicos usaron datos gubernamentales para seguir los niveles de contaminación durante dos décadas en 51 ciudades estadounidenses. Compararon entonces esos cambios a la esperanza de vida, calculada a partir de los registros de muerte y los datos de

censo. El estudio ajusta los resultados para tener en cuenta otros factores, como el hábito de fumar, los ingresos, la educación y la migración.

Como promedio, los niveles de partículas nocivas cayeron de 21 microgramos por metro cúbico de aire a 14 microgramos por metro cúbico en las ciudades estudiadas. Al mismo tiempo, los estadounidenses vivieron 2,72 años más.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses donations of trees begin; they plan to plant over 20 thousand trees to help with air quality.](#)

### **Inicia donación de árboles; planean plantar unos 20 mil**

El Diario, Sunday, January 25, 2009

Palmas, truenos, cipreses y lilas, comenzaron a ser donados a la comunidad por la Dirección de Parques y Jardines, que proyecta tener plantados unos 20 mil árboles en la primavera.

Desde este mes de enero han sido otorgados a escuelas, asociaciones civiles y a la población en general.

Recientemente, la dependencia recibió una donación de vegetales plantados en viveros de la ciudad de Delicias, indicó el titular Mario Terminel.

“Nos estamos preparando ya de manera muy intensa hacia la nueva temporada, nosotros ya tenemos en este momento disponibles, probablemente 20 mil árboles, que son los que hemos empezado a donar”, dijo el funcionario.

Agregó que los conseguidos en Delicias fue gracias a una constructora que gestionó la entrega de las especies.

“Nosotros los vamos a hacer extensivos hacia la comunidad”, subrayó, a la vez que expuso que aquí en Ciudad Juárez también se plantan en los viveros municipales vegetales como mesquite, palo verde, huisache, palo blanco, así como olmos y álamos.

“Tenemos una gran cantidad ya de árboles”, afirmó.

Para todo el 2009 la meta es plantar más de 40 mil árboles.

Mientras, se informó que será a partir de la primera semana de febrero cuando las direcciones de Normatividad Ambiental y de Parques y Jardines, inicien con una campaña de forestación, que tiene como objetivos disminuir los índices de contaminación ambiental, y evitar la erosión del suelo.

Héctor Sandoval Quesney, director de Normatividad Ambiental, manifestó que esa campaña estará enfocada principalmente en las instituciones educativas que carecen de plantas en sus terrenos, y que están asentadas en sectores donde se registran altos niveles de contaminación de partículas PM10 (partículas menores a 10 micras), entre otros contaminantes.

“Vemos que esto es un problema en nuestras escuelas, por ello tenemos que establecer algunas soluciones prácticas que hemos visto en los casos de otras ciudades, y evitar que los alumnos estén respirando estas partículas que son tan dañinas también”, explicó el funcionario.

Indicó que serán cerca de 10 mil árboles, entre pinos afganos, plantas ornamentales, álamos plateados, entre otras variedades, provenientes del vivero municipal, las que se colocarán en los inmuebles.

“Para nosotros tienen prioridad las escuelas, poder empezar a forestarlas, y eventualmente a través de otro programa estaremos trabajando en la forestación de las colonias o de los parques públicos”, mencionó.

Agregó que durante el próximo mes se empezarán a plantar y trasplantar esas especies en el Colegio de Bachilleres 11, que se ubica en el Parque Industrial Américas, al suroriente.

Posteriormente se hará lo mismo con al menos otras diez escuelas de todos los niveles y que de igual manera carecen de áreas verdes para proteger a los jóvenes de la incidencia de los contaminantes.

“El criterio que hicimos para este proyecto fue que las mediciones de la Unidad Móvil de Monitoreo Atmosférico (UMMA) arrojaban cifras muy altas y cerca de los 100 puntos IMECA (índice Metropolitano de la Calidad del Aire)”, resaltó Sandoval Quesney.

Las normas de salud indican que para que haya una calidad del aire satisfactoria no deben rebasar los 100 puntos Imeca.