

## **More options for fireplace incentive program**

By Jordan Guinn

Lodi News Sentinel, Thursday, January 21, 2010

Lodi's Master Sweep-N-Clean and Stockton's Heavenly Spa & Stove, Inc. are two more local organizations participating in San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's incentive program aimed at getting residents to rid themselves of their free-standing wood stove or open fireplace for a cleaner burning wood, pellet or gas stove or insert.

The incentive program is offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Those who qualify can earn vouchers of \$100 to \$500. Extra incentives are available for low-income residents as well. Applications can be obtained on the district's Web site, [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org), or by calling them at (559) 230-5800. Click on the "Grants and Incentives" tab on the left side of the home page.

Heavenly Spa & Stove, Inc.'s is located at 1810 W. Fremont St. in Stockton; contact them at 467-7727. Master Sweep-N-Clean is located at 15296 N. Highway 88 in Lodi; contact them at 367-0443.

## **Program helps you help the air**

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, January 20, 2010

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has begun its fourth annual "Burn Cleaner" program, which offers incentives for upgrading wood-burning devices.

Participants can get \$100 to \$500 to switch out an old stove or fireplace. Low-income residents can get up to \$1,500.

For more information, go to [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) or call 559-230-5800.

## **Air quality forecast and woodburning rules**

Sun-Star Staff

Merced Sun-Star, Wednesday afternoon, January 20, 2010

### **MERCED**

AQI Forecast for 1/20/2010: 33 Good (O3)

AQI Forecast for 1/21/2010: 31 Good (O3)

School Flag color for 1/21/2010: Green

Fireplace/Wood Stove Burning Status for 1/20/2010: Please burn cleanly

Fireplace/Wood Stove Burning Status for 1/21/2010: Please burn cleanly

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

Daily Air Quality Forecast

More information about the Daily Air Quality Forecast can be found at:

<http://www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/forecast.htm>.

More information about the Fireplace/Wood Stove Burning Status can be found at:

<http://www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/WoodBurnPage.htm>.

## **Environmental justice groups sue to block landfill expansion**

In the Hanford Sentinel, Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2010

A coalition of environmental justice groups announced today that it will sue Kings County over its December decision to approve the landfill expansion proposed by Waste Management at its Kettleman Hills Facility through a process which they allege was discriminatory to nearby residents.

The announcement was made in a press conference held inside the county administration building, where residents from Kettleman City and activists stood side by side holding demonstration signs.

The suit will be filed Thursday, because the court was closed today for a furlough day, the groups said.

The lawsuit, which seeks to block the project, alleges a range of issues, which had been previously raised by project opponents, including the fact that the decision was made before any investigation into a birth defect cluster reported by residents over the past year. The suit claims the county decision violated state law.

## **Measure R on right track for rail deal**

by Reggie Ellis, Staff Writer

The (Exeter et al) Sun-Gazette, Wed., Jan. 21, 2010

At its Jan. 12 meeting, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors approved an amendment to the Measure R expenditure plan that will allow the county to purchase railroad fixtures including ties, ballast, tracks and signals to ensure that the property is maintained for rail use.

The money is generated from a half-cent sales tax increase approved by voters in 2006 to fund transportation projects throughout the county. Supervisor Phil Cox said he would vote in favor of the amendment with one concession: 'I will never support using government money to buy anything out there [along the railroad].' However, Cox said he believed that the amendment was prudent because it included a clause stating any agency requesting rail funds must submit a plan demonstrating the economic viability prior to receiving funds.

The vote passed 3-1, with Supervisor Pete Vander Poel the lone dissenting vote.

'I want to give TCAG the opportunity to preserve rail at the lowest cost, but I don't agree that [Measure R] money should be used to purchase railroad ties, ballasts, tracks and signals,' Vander Poel said. 'I can't support this whole package.'

Supervisor Allen Ishida did not vote because he left the meeting to travel to Florida for a meeting with RailAmerica executives. Ishida said he, along with Rail Advisory Chair Tom Sparks and Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) Director Ted Smalley would be discussing the company's future use of San Joaquin Valley Railroad right-of-way, tracks, ties, ballast, etc. in eastern Tulare County.

'Short-haul rail is a priority in all eight counties of the Valley from Kern to San Joaquin,' Ishida said. 'But because of the abandonments here, Tulare County has been pushed to the center of the push to make sure the Valley has rail in place.'

Ishida said that it was likely this meeting was the last time that county officials would be able to publically speak about the railroad issue, because RailAmerica would only negotiate if the county were to sign a confidentiality agreement going forward.

County Counsel Kathleen Bales-Lange clarified that approving the amendment does not give TCAG the authority to spend money on any railroad assets without appropriate public discussion and input.

In order to fully enact the amendment, at least half of the county's eight cities representing half of the county's population have to approve the document. During a special meeting last Thursday, Exeter became the last of the foothill cities to approve the amendment. Farmersville, Lindsay and Woodlake all approved the amendment in December. Tulare and Visalia also approved the amendment in December, giving the amendment enough cities to satisfy the population requirement.

Measure R was originally amended to allow for the Right Of Way acquiring and/or preservation of rail corridors in November 2008 after the San Joaquin Valley Railroad filed for abandonment of a 30-mile segment of rail between Jovista, near Delano, and Lindsay and an adjoining 10-mile segment from Lindsay to Exeter. In June 2008, the Surface Transportation Board (STB) - an independent quasi-governmental body that oversees rail abandonment, mergers and rates - approved the abandonment of the 30-mile section saying that SJVR would lose \$110,878 if it continued to operate the rail line for another year.

While TCAG argued that the loss of the rail line would negatively affect air quality by increasing truck transportation and deny businesses needed rail access, the STB countered that 'no traffic has moved over the line since October 2006, and there is no credible evidence in the record showing that shippers have made a commitment to resume rail shipments to the extent necessary to warrant requiring SJVR to continue to provide rail service over this line,' despite serving historical rail users such as Tri K Truss, Sierra Forest Products and Britz Fertilizer.

STB denied SJVR's second proposal to abandon the 9-mile stretch of rail, citing SJVR's own evidence that Tulare Frozen Food's traffic on the Line had increased dramatically since 2005. In addition, TFF provided evidence that there would be a substantial increase in traffic once its new storage facility is completed. 'Thus, it appears that Tulare Frozen Food's traffic levels and the resulting revenues for SJVR are increasing and that they may continue to increase.'

TFF in Lindsay is a manufacturer and distributor of frozen foods and is highly dependent on rail transportation for delivery of frozen spinach and greens to distant markets on the East Coast and in the Midwest and South.

TFF stated that truck transportation would add significant costs: approximately \$250 per truckload to Fresno, and approximately \$330 per truckload to transfer at Fresno, totaling an additional \$580 per truckload.

At three truckloads per rail carload, the total added costs of truck transportation would be \$1,740 per rail carload and would have cost the company an additional \$261,000 in the next year.

STB said that part of their decision was based on incomplete information regarding the section of track and that the railroad could re-apply for the abandonment, which officials agree SJVR will likely do.

SJVR has also hinted that they may apply to abandon another segment of the line running from Exeter to Dinuba. And recently, Tulare Valley Railroad filed for abandonment of 3-mile long line from Ducor to Ultra, east of Terra Bella.

According to SJVR, the track was completed in 1897 by the San Francisco and San Joaquin Valley Railroad. A year later, it was purchased by Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company. Eventually, the rail was purchased by Southern Pacific and Kyle Railways in 1992. States Rail acquired Kyle in 1997 and then States Rail was purchased by RailAmerica in 2002.

SJVR line is still owned by RailAmerica, Inc. Based in Boca Raton, Florida, RailAmerica operates 41 short line and regional railroads along 7,800 miles of track in 25 states and three Canadian provinces. Union Pacific owns the land and 100-foot right-of-way on which the line runs.

## **Port of Oakland trucker strike averted**

### **Dellums tells drivers aid may be coming**

By Cecily Burt, Oakland Tribune

Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, Jan. 21, 2010

OAKLAND — A planned strike Wednesday by frustrated Port of Oakland truckers was narrowly averted when Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums appealed to the drivers for patience.

The Northern California Rail and Port Truckers Association had called for the work stoppage after hundreds of drivers were prevented from entering the port's marine terminals Tuesday, the deadline to comply with new state air-quality rules.

All drivers were required to have radio frequency identification, or RFID, tags that verified the truck's compliance with the California Air Resources Board truck registry database. But hundreds of drivers were turned away because the transmitter units were faulty, or because there was a discrepancy between the vehicle identification numbers entered in the CARB database and the RFID database. In some cases the vehicles hadn't been registered at all.

The drivers were forced to wait in line for hours to talk to someone at an RFID testing kiosk. The people in the kiosk said they were helping about 25 drivers an hour. Between 50 and 100 trucks were still waiting when the kiosk closed about 7 p.m.

Lakhbir Bhambra, the association's vice president, said that was the last straw. Drivers cannot make up the money they lose waiting in line, he said, and they have to work to pay bills and truck expenses. The drivers are also feeling stressed from having to come up with cash to buy diesel filters for their trucks, he said, but that will never happen if they can't work.

But Bhambra said late Tuesday night that the drivers had agreed to delay any action until the mayor returns from Washington, D.C., Part of the trip will be spent trying to secure federal funding to help the drivers obtain low-cost loans, said Margaretta Lin, a senior aide to Dellums.

Lin said the mayor's staff was continuing to meet with representatives of the port, CARB, Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the truckers to monitor the problems and find solutions.

"Everyone is united in the same interests, which is getting the trucks in and out as expeditiously as possible," she said. "Everyone is stepping up."

There were fewer reported problems and much lighter traffic at the terminals Wednesday, but there were still some glitches.

On Tuesday, Eddie Moreira got a green light to enter at three different terminals, Evergreen, TraPac and TTI/Hanjin. But when he tried to enter APL Wednesday morning to drop off a container, he got a red light. APL looked up his record on the CARB database and helped him identify his problem, which had to do with a new license plate. The company also let him in to drop off his load.

Unlike some terminal operators who turned hundreds of trucks away on Tuesday, a few accepted other documentation.

APL took the time to check the CARB database and let most of them in after giving the drivers a flier instructing them where to go to get the problem fixed.

In most cases, there was a discrepancy between the vehicle identification number entered in the CARB database and the RFID database, an easily correctable problem, said Jack Murphy, APL's environmental and security manager.

"We're letting them in today, but starting tomorrow, unfortunately, they are going to have to deal with (getting the problems resolved)," Murphy said. "These truckers are pulling for our customers, these truckers are an extension of the shippers. They are trying to make a living, too. Although I have to turn them away when they are not compliant, I don't enjoy it."

Bruce Wargo, representative for the terminal operators' RFID program, said 92 percent of the trucks were allowed to enter the terminals Tuesday, and he expected that the problems would be resolved within a few days.

"The terminal operators are confident that the process will become smoother in coming days as all parties become more familiar with the port's new requirements," Wargo said in a statement.

Some trucking companies disputed those figures and said that several of their trucks were turned away.

## **Study links Asia to smog component in Western US**

By Jeff Barnard, AP Environmental Writer

In the N.Y. Times, S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2010

Grants Pass, Ore. (AP) -- Ozone blowing over from Asia is raising background levels of a major ingredient of smog in the skies over California, Oregon, Washington and other Western states, according to a new study appearing in Thursday's edition of the journal Nature.

The amounts are small and, so far, only found in a region of the atmosphere known as the free troposphere, at an altitude of two to five miles, but the development could complicate U.S. efforts to control air pollution.

Though the levels are small, they have been steadily rising since 1995, and probably longer, said lead author Owen R. Cooper, a research scientist at the University of Colorado attached to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Earth System Research Laboratory in Boulder, Colo.

"The important aspect of this study for North America is that we have a strong indication that baseline ozone is increasing," said Cooper. "We still don't know how much is coming down to the surface. If the surface ozone is increasing along with the free tropospheric ozone, that could make it more difficult for the U.S. to meet its ozone air quality standard."

The study is the first link between atmospheric ozone over the U.S. and Asian pollution, said Dan Jaffe, a University of Washington-Bothell professor of atmospheric and environmental chemistry.

He contributed data from his observatory on top of Mount Bachelor in Oregon to the study.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is considering lowering the current limit on ozone in the atmosphere by as much as 20 percent, and has been working with China to lower its emissions of the chemicals that turn into ozone.

Ozone is harmful to people's respiratory systems and plants. It is created when compounds produced by burning fossil fuels are hit by sunlight and break down. Ozone also contributes to the greenhouse effect, ranking behind carbon dioxide and methane in importance.

Ozone is only one of many pollutants from Asia that reach the United States. Instruments regularly detect mercury, soot, and cancer-causing PCBs.

Jaffe said it was logical to conclude that the increasing ozone was the result of burning more coal and oil as part of the Asia's booming economic growth.

The next step is to track the amounts of Asian ozone reaching ground levels on the West Coast, said Cooper.

Work will start in May and end in June, when air currents produce the greatest amounts of Asian ozone detected in the U.S. Weather balloons and research aircraft will be launched daily to measure ozone closer to ground, where it affects the air people breathe, Cooper said.

The study to be published in Nature looked at thousands of air samples collected between 1995 and 2008 and found a 14 percent increase in the amount of background ozone at middle altitudes in springtime. When data from 1984 were factored in, the rate of increase was similar, and the overall increase was 29 percent.

When ozone from local sources was removed from the data, the trend became stronger, Cooper said. Using a computer model based on weather patterns, the ozone was traced back to southeastern Asia, including the countries of India, China, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

The ozone increases were strongest when winds prevailed from southeastern Asian, Cooper said.

In a commentary also published in Nature, atmospheric chemist Kathy Law of Universite de Paris in France said the study was "the most conclusive evidence so far" of increasing ozone over the Western United States.

Law noted that natural sources of ozone could contribute to the increases, and there were limitations to the computer model used to trace the sources of the increases, but the study remained a "vital benchmark" that could be used to test climate change models, which have been unable to reproduce increases in ozone.

William Sprigg, a research professor at the University of Arizona who studies the global movement of airborne dust, said in an e-mail that he agreed with Law's comments, adding that studies like this one make it possible to really control air quality.

"Part of the solution to controlling emissions from abroad is to show the negative consequences and our own efforts to lower emissions," he wrote.

**Winds carry Asian smog component to Western U.S., study finds**  
**Experts say that baseline ozone, the amount of gas not produced by local vehicles and industries, has increased in springtime months by 29% since 1984.**

By Margot Roosevelt, staff writer  
LA. Times, Thursday, Jan. 21, 2010

Ozone from Asia is wafting across the Pacific on springtime winds and boosting the amount of the smog-producing gas found in the skies above the Western United States, researchers said in a study released Wednesday.

The study, published in the journal Nature, looks at a phenomenon that has puzzled scientists in the last decade: Ground-level ozone has dropped in cities thanks to tighter pollution controls; but it has risen in rural areas in the Western U.S., where there is little industry or automobile traffic.

The study, led by Owen R. Cooper, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Colorado, examined nearly 100,000 observations two to five miles above ground -- in a region known as the free troposphere -- gathered from aircraft, balloons and ground-based lasers.

It found that baseline ozone -- the amount of gas not produced by local vehicles and industries -- has increased in springtime months by 29% since 1984.

The study has important implications both for the curbing of conventional pollution that damages human health and for controlling greenhouse gases that are changing the planet's climate, experts said.

It shows the need for a transformation of global energy and transportation systems, said Mary Nichols, chairwoman of the California Air Resources Board.

"Atmospheric scientists keep finding more evidence that pollutants travel around the globe and move up and down as they travel," she said. "There is not a bright line separating greenhouse gases from regular air pollution."

The study, co-written by researchers from nine institutes in the U.S. and abroad, is only a first step in understanding cross-border pollution, Cooper said. More research will be needed to investigate how much of the ozone from the troposphere reaches the ground and how much flows across borders at other times of the year. The researchers began with the free troposphere because it is easier to eliminate local sources from baseline ozone calculations.

They chose April and May because that is when winds from Asia are strongest.

"Ozone is a difficult gas to pin down," said Cooper, who works at the Earth System Research Laboratory of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Boulder, Colo. "The study of intercontinental air pollution has been going on for a decade, but whether it was increasing overall was uncertain.

"And in places where it had spiked, along coasts and in national parks, we didn't know how much was from local sources and how much was from Asia."

Cooper said scientists had not determined how much of the ozone increase comes from Asia, but they found that the increase was about twice as much when prevailing winds came from South and East Asia. (Emissions of nitrogen oxides, a key ingredient for ozone formation, have increased more than 50% in China over the last decade while decreasing in the U.S. and Europe.)

Still, the study offers "the most conclusive evidence so far of increasing ozone levels in the free troposphere over North America," wrote atmospheric chemist Kathy Law, an expert in long-range pollution transport, in a Nature commentary on the paper.

Moreover, she added, the increases "certainly have implications for climate change, causing warming either at the mid-latitudes where ozone forms, or in sensitive regions such as the Arctic to which ozone might be transported."

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, ground-level ozone is linked to serious health problems, including aggravation of asthma and increased risk of premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

In Southern California, which has some of the highest pollution levels in the U.S., smog levels exceed health standards more than 80 days a year. Based on new studies, the EPA announced this month that it may tighten federal ozone rules.

## **Climate change accord at risk of unraveling**

By John M. Broder, Elisabeth Rosenthal, New York Times

Also in the S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Thursday, Jan. 21, 2010

Washington - -- Just a month after world leaders fashioned a tentative and nonbinding agreement at the climate change summit meeting in Copenhagen, the deal already appears at risk of coming undone, the top U.N. climate official warned Wednesday.

Facing a Jan. 31 deadline, major countries have yet to submit their plans for reducing emissions of climate-altering gases, one of the major provisions of the agreement, according to Yvo de Boer, the Dutch official who is executive secretary of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, which organized the climate meeting.

Fewer than two dozen countries have even submitted letters saying they agree to the terms of the three-page accord. And there has been virtually no progress on spelling out the terms of nearly \$30 billion in short-term financial assistance promised to those countries expected to be hit hardest by climate change. Still unresolved are such basic questions as who will donate how much, where the money will

go and who will oversee the spending.

After a contentious two-week conference in the Danish capital last month, representatives of more than 190 nations issued a skeletal document, known as the Copenhagen Accord, that sets climate-related goals for developed and developing countries, but without enforceable targets or timetables. The participants failed to agree to even the minimum expectation of the meeting: setting a firm deadline for negotiating a binding international climate change treaty.

In his first news conference and interview since the conference, de Boer said he remained hopeful that the near-failure at Copenhagen would produce meaningful results as the year progressed and the parties resumed negotiations.

After a month during which many participants expressed disappointment at the outcome and ascribed blame to various actors, de Boer described the next several weeks as a "cooling-off period that gives countries useful time to work with each other."

Next week, for example, the major developing countries that helped fashion the agreement - China, India, Brazil and South Africa - will meet in New Delhi to review the Copenhagen agreement and plan for the next phase of talks. None of them have yet inscribed their plans for reducing carbon dioxide emissions in the Copenhagen document, de Boer said. Without a commitment to such plans, a major accomplishment at Copenhagen - pledges by large polluters in the developing world to cut emissions - will have been thwarted.

De Boer said several officials from those countries had told him that they negotiated the accord with the understanding that it would be formally adopted by all the nations at the conference. But in a raucous conclusion to the meeting in the early hours of Dec. 19, the conference agreed only to "take note" of the accord, not to endorse it. And five nations dissented even from that.

## **Vt. lawmakers weigh crackdown on truck idling**

By Associated Press

In the S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Thursday, Jan. 21, 2010

Montpelier, Vt. (AP) -- Aiming to cut air pollution, a panel of Vermont lawmakers is considering a bill that would crack down on idling by trucks.

The House Natural Resources and Energy Committee this week is taking testimony on the bill, which would require that trucks weighing more than 10,000 pounds not idle for more than 5 minutes.

The committee would make exemptions for public safety vehicles, those delivering oil and other energy products, and trucks with cabs designed for drivers to sleep in them.

Backers of the measure say they want to cut down on air pollution, especially particulate matter that can trigger health problems.

They say Vermont is the only northeastern state without such a law.

## **Sierra Club names new executive director**

By Jason Dearen- Associated Press

In the Merced Sun-Star, Modesto Bee and Stockton Record, Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2010

SAN FRANCISCO -- Environmental group Sierra Club has named its first new leader in 18 years - an activist who once took over the intercom of a Home Depot to tell customers not to buy lumber from ancient forests.

Michael Brune, 38, replaces Carl Pope in March. Pope served as executive director for the nation's oldest environmental group since 1992 and will remain with Sierra Club as chairman focusing on the group's work battling climate change.

Most recently, Brune worked as executive director of the Rainforest Action Network, where he earned a reputation for successfully working to get corporations such as Home Depot and financial companies like Citigroup and Goldman Sachs to adopt more environmentally friendly policies.

Brune now brings his aggressive style of activism to the cherished, 118-year-old environmental group, which is focused on lobbying to speed the country's transition to more reliance on renewable energy and passage of greenhouse gas reduction legislation.

"The Sierra Club has long been a grass roots force, and has been creative at finding ways to pressure and inspire business and political leaders to do the right thing," Brune said.

Sierra Club, which said it has 700,000 paying members, was founded in 1892 in San Francisco by legendary conservationist John Muir.

The group was created to help lobby the federal government for the creation of national parks, including Yosemite and Yellowstone, and has evolved into a powerful organization with an influential lobby in Washington.

Brune - who lives with his wife, son and daughter in Alameda, Calif. - often used tactics while at Rainforest Action Network more dramatic than Sierra Club has traditionally undertaken.

"While we ... are sad to see Mike go, it is tremendous for our movement and for America's future to have a young, bold environmental leader take the helm of the country's largest membership organization," said Andre Carothers, Rainforest Action Network's chairman.

In a campaign to stop Home Depot from buying lumber from a company that was clear-cutting rainforests in British Columbia, Brune entered one of the company's stores in Atlanta and took over the intercom, telling customers they were buying wood cut from ancient California redwoods and forests in Indonesia.

He credited that campaign with spurring Home Depot to change its corporate policy change in 1999, which Brune said saved 5 million acres of forest in British Columbia.

"We have a mantra at Rainforest Action Network to be hard on the issues and soft on the people," he said. "We wanted to always run a grass roots campaign that would seek to provoke and inspire corporate leaders to do the right thing."

Of the many issues Brune sees Sierra Club emphasizing are plans to build new coal-fired power plants.

Saving natural places has long been Sierra Club's goal, but the organization is also planning to continue increasing its efforts to combat climate change.

"Some of Sierra Club's most successful work to date has been the successful opposition of new coal fired power plants. There have been more than 100 proposals defeated," he said. "It's one of the few areas of dramatic success the environmental movement has enjoyed over the past decade. We will accelerate that work. There are a couple dozen more coal-fired power plant proposals on the books."

Joe Lucas, director of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, has sparred with Brune about the future of coal power in the U.S. but believes the two can work together.

"In past personal conversations with me, Michael has shown a willingness to understand that environmental progress must be balanced with the need to provide affordable, reliable energy to fuel our economy and the American way of life," Lucas said in an e-mail. "We can bring cost-effective technologies to the marketplace to reduce carbon emissions while continuing to rely upon our nation's most abundant energy resource American coal."

"I look forward to a constructive dialogue with (Brune) in his new role as executive director of the Sierra Club."

[L.A. Times column, Thursday, Jan. 21, 2010:](#)

**Climate change camp experiencing a cooling-off period  
Global warming's heyday of 2006 and 2007 is long gone. With temperatures dropping recently, skepticism may be rising.**

By Meghan Daum

Climate change just isn't what it used to be. Case in point: The number of otherwise intelligent people who are saying that all the cold weather (in the East) and rain (here at home) are causing them to lose faith in the gospel of global warming.

To their way of thinking, it's fine and good to be bellyaching about rising sea levels when it's 100 degrees outside. It's easy to remember to carry around your reusable tote bag when drought begets parched hillsides, which beget wildfires, which beget air that smells like rotisserie chicken minus the chicken.

But guess what? It's been pouring all week. In Florida, the oranges are perishing under frost. The temperature bottomed out at minus 52 in North Dakota earlier this month, and Beijing recently had its biggest snowfall since 1951.

Remember back in 2006 and 2007? Everyone was talking about "An Inconvenient Truth," parading those eco-bags around and coveting hybrid cars. Laurie David, who'd previously been known chiefly as the wife of Seinfeld co-creator Larry David, was suddenly a quasi-famous person, palling around with Sheryl Crow and ranting about CO2 emissions on the Huffington Post. In fact, back then, it seemed like the entire world was buddies with Sheryl Crow and blogging on the HuffPo.

We spent 2006 suspicious that Hurricane Katrina was a manifestation of global warming. In 2007, it was California wildfires. Then Gore won the Nobel Peace Prize and the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report concluded that humans were almost certainly responsible for rising temperatures. To top it off, Laurie David filed for divorce and made the pages of People. Those were the days!

Maybe the financial crisis has diverted our attention from the melting Arctic ice cap. Maybe Sarah Palin effectively redirected all liberal indignation straight in her direction. Maybe there were just too many eco-related marital conflicts. (A trend story in the New York Times recently reported that therapists are seeing an increase in couples who clash in their approaches to recycling and organic gardening. Did we learn nothing from the calamitous breakup of the Davids?)

Or maybe the conditions now are just too conducive to climate change skepticism. Not that anyone who's ever gazed out at a blizzard and thought, "This is global warming?" deserves to be labeled a denier. We all know (we do, don't we?) that weather is not the same as climate. It's not that we don't want to save the planet anymore; it's just that it somehow doesn't seem quite as urgent.

Results from a Gallup Poll released last March showed that 41% of Americans think global warming is exaggerated -- an increase from 2006 and the highest since Gallup began asking

about it in 1997. Meanwhile, the December climate change summit in Copenhagen was done few favors by the Climategate scandal -- the incident in which a number of e-mails were made public that suggested climate scientists were cherry-picking data and tampering with peer review procedures in an effort to downplay anything that might serve as ammunition for global warming skeptics.

Maybe we shouldn't be too quick to mythologize the verdure of years past, or to castigate ourselves for taking a few extra minutes in the shower or for not wanting a Prius the way a little girl wants a pony. Consider this about good old 2006: It was a scorcher. It was febrile. It was partly sunny with a chance of Hades.

Moreover, it came on the heels of something even hotter: 2005. That year is tied with 1998 as the hottest ever. In fact, NASA reports that the first seven years of the decade were among the warmest on record for average global surface temperature. Remember how on July 22, 2006, the thermometer hit 112 degrees in downtown L.A.? Remember going to see "An Inconvenient Truth" several times not necessarily because it was so compelling but because the theater was air-conditioned?

This year's weather may be less convenient for the global warming cause, but it doesn't change the facts -- the climate is changing. Here's the rub, though: In order for a cause to resonate, people need simple, clear evidence. They need tangibles. And what could be more tangible than opening your door and being hit by a blast of fiery air?

Science, alas, is complicated and weather has always been as predictable as, well . . . the weather. Maybe that's why, if we're really interested in the truth -- about global warming or anything else -- it helps to get beyond what's outside our own doors and windows.

Just not this week. It's nasty out there.

[Letter to the Hayward Daily Review, Thursday, Jan. 21, 2010:](#)

### **Need clean air**

Everybody breathes air. Everybody needs clean air. Even lobbyists and politicians benefit from it.

We must not allow politicians in Washington to weaken protections of our air quality. One of the first proposals our senators will be voting on this year is an effort to undermine the Clean Air Act and let the biggest polluters off the hook.

We need resolute leadership in Washington to protect decades of progress on clean air and prevent any effort to roll back our progress. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to continue the fight we've made to leave them a legacy of cleaner air.

Tell our senators we're counting on them to be leaders in the fight to protect clean air.

*Jana Lane, Oakland*

[Letter to the Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Jan 21, 2010:](#)

### **Don't punish producers**

This is in response to the Jan. 17 article, "Group's 'green' facade crumble."

Thank God for polluters. If we didn't have polluters -- I call them producers -- we wouldn't have an economy. They are the goose that lays the golden egg.

For too long we've been passing laws and regulations that either put them out of business or drive them out of the state.

Thank God for the AB 32 implementation group. It's high time that producers united in an effort to save our state from excessive environmental regulations. We all want a clean environment, but

we can't build wind and solar farms, etc., without these producers supplying the necessary raw materials.

I don't know how our state is going to get out of the mess we're in, but I do know that passing excessive environmental regulations will only keep us going down the wrong road.

*Ira Cleveland, Bakersfield*

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses how emissions from Asia are polluting the western U.S., making it more challenging to reach its objective of reducing toxic gases from the troposphere. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

### **Emisiones de Asia contaminan el oeste de Estados Unidos**

La Opinión, Thursday, Jan. 21, 2010

LONDRES, Inglaterra (EFE).- Las emisiones contaminantes procedentes de Asia afectan al ambiente en el oeste de Estados Unidos, por lo que será más difícil para este país alcanzar sus objetivos de reducción de gases tóxicos en la troposfera.

Así lo indica un estudio publicado hoy en la revista "Nature", que demuestra por primera vez lo que hasta ahora era una sospecha, que los niveles de ozono en la troposfera libre en esa zona de EEUU podrían estar subiendo como resultado de las emisiones asiáticas.

El ozono en la capa atmosférica superior de la Tierra ayuda a filtrar los rayos ultravioleta nocivos, pero cuando se encuentra en la atmósfera baja -la troposfera- puede actuar como gas tóxico y causar enfermedades respiratorias y afectar ecosistemas.

Desde el siglo XIX, las emisiones industriales han provocado un aumento de los niveles de ozono, y actualmente Asia oriental es la zona con mayor crecimiento de emisiones del mundo.

Desde que empezó a medirse la incidencia de estos gases, en los años 70 del siglo pasado, se especulaba con que el incremento de la producción asiática podía hacer aumentar los niveles de ozono en la troposfera estadounidense, pero esto no se había comprobado.

El estudio dirigido por Owen Cooper recabó mediciones de ozono desde diferentes plataformas en el occidente de EEUU y descubrió un significativo aumento de la proporción de ozono en el ambiente entre 1995 y el 2008.

El ritmo de crecimiento de la presencia de ozono era mayor cuanto más influidas estaban las mediciones por polución directamente transportada desde Asia.

Los expertos sugieren que ese aumento de ozono observado puede perjudicar los objetivos de limpieza atmosférica a los que aspira Estados Unidos.