

Kettleman dump won't accept hazardous waste

The Valley Voice, Thursday, Feb. 18, 2010

Waste Management Inc. announced it will not take nuclear waste at its Kettleman Hills landfill. In a letter to the California Environmental Protection Agency, Robert Henry, Waste Management's senior district manager, said the company had voluntarily decided not to accept solid or hazardous wastes from any portion of the Santa Susana Field Lab.

West Park unafraid of ports Kamilos welcomes their stimulus grant

By Garth Stapley

Modesto Bee, Thursday, February 18, 2019

A \$30 million grant to Northern California ports is no cause for competitive worry among those pushing a robust business park near Crows Landing, supporters say.

Wednesday's announcement of the federal stimulus grant to the Ports of Oakland, Stockton and West Sacramento should rally barge traffic among them much sooner than West Park could establish a short-haul rail link between Oakland and Crows Landing.

But West Park developer Gerry Kamilos said perceived competition means little next to the larger goal of boosting Northern California trade. The stronger the regional capacity, the better for Stanislaus County, he said.

In other words, it's a struggle between Northern and Southern California, not boats versus trains.

Not everyone buys that reasoning.

The \$30 million grant will allow the Port of Stockton to buy cranes able to lift 100-ton-plus containers compared with its current 30-ton capacity, said port Director Rick Aschieris. The money also will build a 30-acre storage facility, improve rail spurs and buy a new barge, he said.

Tankers steaming into Oakland soon could transfer more and larger containers to barges heading for Stockton and West Sacramento, where contents can be shipped by rail all over the continent. Establishing that "marine highway" takes large trucks off highways, reducing traffic and [air pollution](#), the ports say.

"The grant would probably make for more efficient movement of cargo here than running down to Crows Landing, then back up to here," Aschieris said.

West Park and Stanislaus County should have considered a Stockton link instead of insisting on Oakland, attorneys for Patterson argued in a lawsuit demanding more environmental study. Both sides await an appellate court ruling.

"This certainly should cause the county to ask themselves where they're going with West Park, if indeed the largest port in Northern California just received a grant to do this someplace other than Stanislaus County," said attorney Steve Herum, who represents Patterson. Herum also is a 10-year Port of Stockton commissioner heavily involved in the tri-port "California Green Trade Corridor" grant application.

Kamilos, a suburban Sacramento developer, said such skepticism takes too short of a view. Building Oakland's reputation as a first port of call for ships from Asia is fabulous for Crows Landing's long-term goals, he said.

"Our project is a multidecade project," Kamilos said. "Projects like ours and the marine highway are setting strong foundations for us to address capacity requirements over the next several decades."

Keith Boggs, county deputy executive officer and its project manager for Crows Landing, said Northern California's goods-movement system is fragmented. Stimulus money correcting that helps everyone, he said.

Crows Landing represents a "powerful Northern California jobs center and hub that can complement those other areas and bring quality jobs to the Central Valley," Boggs said.

Religion rejuvenates environmentalism

By Courtney Woo - News21

In the Modesto Bee, Thursday, February 18, 2010

Evangelical pastor Ken Wilson's environmental conversion began a few years ago with goose bumps, watery eyes and an appeal for help.

"I heard Gus Speth, the dean of forestry at Yale, say to a group of religious leaders, 'I used to think the top environmental problems facing the world were global warming, environmental degradation and ecosystem collapse, and that we scientists could fix those problems with enough science,' " Wilson recalls. "But I was wrong. The real problem is not those three items, but greed, selfishness and apathy. And for that we need a spiritual and cultural transformation. And we scientists don't know how to do that. We need your help.' "

Back home, Wilson thought more about passages in the Bible containing messages of stewardship for the Earth. He began preaching about a Christian duty to protect the environment, or "creation care," at the Vineyard Church of Ann Arbor, Mich., where he is senior pastor.

"It was like I was popping a cork," Wilson says. "People came up to me in the lobby after the lectures actually with tears in their eyes, saying thank you for speaking to this issue."

Wilson was surprised to see that many of those people were new to the church.

"There was a Ph.D. in evolutionary biology who came to the church for the very first time for the creation care series, and he said to me, 'Here's a church that is finally talking about science in a positive way and actually cares for the environment.' "

While only 21 percent of Americans report being active in the environmental movement, a 2008 survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that nearly 90 percent of Americans described themselves as religious.

"Simply based on the numbers, the faith community could be critically important to the environmental dialogue," says Jerry Lawson, national manager of the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star Small Business and Congregations Network, a division of EPA that helps congregations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Energy Star estimates that if each of the more than 300,000 houses of worship in the United States cut energy consumption by 10 percent, congregations would save \$200 million and would eliminate greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 400,000 cars.

Because of their large numbers, American evangelicals could be a critical component of the burgeoning eco-religious movement. About 59 million Americans identify as evangelical Protestants, according to the 2008 Pew study.

Evangelical attitudes toward environmentalism are complex. As early as 1970, the National Association of Evangelicals equated preservation of natural resources and ecological balance with preservation of God's creation.

But around that time, evangelicals began to clash ideologically with scientists and leaders of the early environmental movement over issues of population control and evolution, Wilson says. Environmentalists advocated abortion as a solution to population control, while evangelicals opposed abortion. Meanwhile, political conservatism began to dominate evangelical thought and environmentalists became associated with liberalism.

Executive Pastor Don Bromley of the Vineyard Church of Ann Arbor counts himself a former skeptic of the environmental movement.

"I used to believe stereotypes that environmentalists didn't care about human beings as much as they did the natural world," Bromley says. "They were anti-progress."

Today, those divisions still hold.

The evangelical-oriented Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation questions the science of catastrophic climate change. (Mainstream scientists have concluded that the evidence of warming is unequivocal.) The Alliance argues that mandated reductions of greenhouse gas emissions will cause more harm than good because raising energy prices and cutting consumption will retard the economic development of poor regions plagued by disease, premature death and short life expectancies.

Still, signs of conversion are emerging.

Tri Robinson, 61, is senior pastor of the Vineyard Boise church. Five years ago, he revisited the Bible when his two adult children questioned the absence of environmental messages in the church. Robinson says he, like Wilson, suddenly saw environmental messages everywhere.

"I realized that issues of the environment were killing the poor and were stimulating things like human trafficking," Robinson recalls. "I'd tapped a whole new world I'd never seen before."

Also like Wilson, Robinson preached this message to his congregation. Instead of getting "tarred and feathered," as he'd feared, he received a standing ovation - his first in 25 years.

"It was like he was filling a gap," says parishioner Jessie Nilo, who heard Robinson speak that day. "It strengthened my relationship with God, connecting me to his creation in a new way. It's very freeing to be able to embrace another part of who God is."

Robinson represents a growing number of Christian leaders who, in recent years, are engaging in dialogue at a national level through conferences and interfaith coalitions.

In 2006, 86 evangelical leaders, including Robinson and Wilson, signed the Evangelical Climate Initiative; two years later, 46 Southern Baptist leaders signed a declaration for action on climate change. The Southern Baptist Convention is the country's largest Protestant denomination, with more than 16 million members and 42,000 churches.

Religious leaders from other traditions are also witnessing transformations of attitude among their membership.

"When I first started talking about environmental issues 13 years ago, there were folks who got up and walked out," says the Rev. Sally Bingham, an Episcopal and founder of Interfaith Power and Light, a national interfaith organization promoting energy efficiency and conservation. "Today, these messages are bringing people into the church."

Membership in Interfaith Power and Light has exploded.

The organization has grown from 100 congregations in 2000 to more than 10,000 congregations in 29 states in 2008.

"We go to mosques, churches and synagogues, and we talk about the connections between faith and the environment and why it's important to be good stewards of the earth," says Allison Fisher, the program director for the greater Washington division of Interfaith Power and Light. "Faith gives congregations a vision that this work is possible."

But with more than 300,000 houses of faith in the country, advocates are now trying to preach a little bit louder - and perhaps a little more strategically. To resonate with Christian churchgoers, for example, Christian leaders have developed language that frames environmental messages in a biblical context.

"As soon as I say, 'warming' or 'global warming,' people in the audience begin to eye me with suspicion," Bromley says. The term "creation care," on the other hand, is less politically loaded because it connects care for the environment to scripture.

Nevertheless, polls indicate that the message is not getting out to Christians at large. A 2008 Barna poll found that 85 percent of U.S. Christian church attendees had not heard of "creation care," and 64 percent of active attendees claimed they'd never heard a sermon on the topic.

Cultural and ideological divides remain a challenge to promoting collaboration between the Christian and secular worlds.

"American society has been in a 30-year culture war. Some groups believe the Earth was created 10,000 years ago, the others, 4.5 billion. We can't move forward as a society unless we bridge that divide," Wilson says. "Getting people of faith concerned about environment is a big part of that."

Robinson is attempting to bridge the gap with his personal blog, Timber Butte Homestead, which he launched in late 2008 to chronicle his family's experiences living and working on an environmentally friendly ranch.

Robinson writes about baling hay, building a chicken coop and using a solar water system. With few references to God and faith, he hopes to attract readers outside the church.

"If you're truly an evangelical Christian, you care about the un-churched," Robinson says. "The environment has given me a voice outside of the church." He says his site receives more than 4,000 visits a week.

Robinson also blogs about religion and the environment for the Huffington Post, a liberal-leaning news Web site that he says he previously did not read, because, he says lightheartedly, "I'm a Christian."

But there are pastors and churchgoers who remain skeptical.

In 2007, 25 conservative leaders requested the resignation of evangelical lobbyist Richard Cizik for promoting creation care.

"I get lots of e-mails from pastors and church leaders who wonder how I could be duped into the climate change lies," Bromley says. "And I get an e-mail a week or every two weeks questioning why we're even talking about global warming on our Web site."

Some leaders worry they'll lose members if they speak out.

"I've had pastors from conservative states tell me that if they talk about these things, people will walk out of the church," Bromley says.

But environmental messages could also attract new members.

Sixteen-year-old Lillie Slaughter joined St. William's Catholic Church in Louisville, Ky., in June. Although she was raised Catholic and attends a Catholic high school, this soft-spoken teenager has only recently begun attending Mass again.

"I come here because my Environmental Concerns teacher goes here," Slaughter says. "My parents don't come with us. My sister and I come on our own."

Some religious leaders are hopeful the environmental movement might change the demographics of religious institutions, bringing in young people who care about the environment.

"As the faith community becomes engaged in environmental issues, it will change the church," Wilson says. "It will change the people we're able to reach, it will change the mix of the church, and it will change the feel of the church."

According to a 2007 Pew survey and a 2009 Trinity College report, Protestant and Catholic populations are growing smaller and older.

But in churches with environmental programs, "I'm gradually beginning to see these older folk being replaced with young families who are interested in environmental stewardship," Bingham says.

Bromley observes similar views among young evangelical pastors.

"I don't meet pastors my age that have those super skeptical views," says Bromley, who is in his mid-30s. "Now almost every person under 35 is talking about the environment and global warming. I didn't see that 10 years ago."

As environmentalism changes faith, faith is also changing the environmental movement.

In 2006, the Center for Health and Global Environment at Harvard Medical School and the National Association of Evangelicals held a first-of-its-kind retreat to unite 28 faith leaders and scientists on issues of climate change and global warming. Participants wrote and signed a call to action, which they

presented to President George W. Bush, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, congressional leaders, and national scientific and evangelical organizations in 2007.

Best, worst California counties for healthy living ranked in study

By Sandy Kleffman

Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, Feb. 18, 2010

The healthiest place to reside in California is upscale Marin County.

The least healthy is Del Norte County and other sparsely populated, rural areas in the northernmost reaches of the state.

For the first time, researchers released health rankings Wednesday for more than 3,000 counties nationwide.

The rankings enable residents to compare how their county stacks up against others within each state based on how long people live, how healthy they are, the quality of medical care, access to healthy food, air pollution, percentage of residents who smoke or are obese, and numerous other categories.

Several Bay Area counties ranked among the healthiest in California, including Santa Clara County at fourth-best, and San Mateo County at fifth.

Contra Costa County came in at 19th, Alameda County at 23rd, and Solano County at 28th. Researchers analyzed 56 of the 58 California counties.

The study, by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute, found wide disparities.

Many of the lowest-ranked counties had premature death rates two to three times higher than other counties. The deaths often were caused by preventable conditions.

"These rankings demonstrate that health happens where we live, learn, work and play," said Dr. Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

She said that she hopes communities will use the rankings to help mobilize leaders to improve health in their area.

Many factors contribute to the disparities, health leaders say, beyond whether residents adopt healthy behaviors.

"It's easier for people to lead a healthy lifestyle when they live in a healthy community, such as one that has expanded early childhood education, enacted smoke-free laws, increased access to healthier foods, or created more opportunities for physical activity," said Dr. Patrick Remington, associate dean for public health at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

The findings mirror on a county level the Bay Area News Group report in December that revealed wide health disparities among East Bay ZIP codes.

The series, titled "Shortened Lives: Where You Live Matters," noted a 16-year difference in life expectancy among those living just a few miles apart. The series also revealed wide differences in rates of asthma hospitalizations, heart disease and cancer death.

Scott Morrow, a San Mateo County health officer, said he was not surprised by his county's high ranking in the study.

"That's reflective of our affluence," he said. "San Mateo County has few pockets of poverty."

Morrow noted that in the United States, the healthiest areas are typically the wealthiest. "It's a reflection of U.S. social policy as much as anything else," he said.

The study found that those living in the healthiest counties tend to have higher education levels, are more likely to be employed, have access to more health care providers, and have better access to healthy foods, parks and recreational facilities.

The least-healthy counties are more likely to have high poverty and unemployment rates, more liquor stores and fast-food outlets, and higher obesity and smoking rates.

Despite San Mateo County's relative affluence, Morrow noted that it has a 15-year difference in life expectancy based on residents' race and where they live in the county.

A Contra Costa County health leader praised the study but said it does not reveal the entire story because it misses the differences that exist within each county.

"There are wide health disparities within Contra Costa," said Dr. Wendel Brunner, the county's public health director.

He noted that children living in San Pablo and Richmond have much higher asthma hospitalization rates than other youths in the county.

The study ranked Contra Costa County as the best in the state for physical environment, including air quality, access to healthy food and lower rates of liquor stores.

But Brunner noted that neighborhoods near busy freeways in Contra Costa still suffer health consequences from diesel emissions.

The rankings "underscore the need for local health departments to continue their important work to delve even deeper to address health disparities and inequities for all people living in a county," Brunner said.

County's health above average, with sore spots

By Keith Darcé, staff writer

San Diego Union-Tribune, Thursday, Feb. 18, 2010

People in San Diego County are healthier on average than those in other California counties, but the region falls far short of most other areas when it comes to air quality, access to nutritious food and environmental health in general, according to a new report that ranks counties within all states.

Most of California's highest-ranking counties are in a band running from the Bay Area to the Sierra Nevada. The least healthy ones are in the Inland Empire, Central Valley and Northern California.

The top counties in terms of overall health outcomes were Marin, San Benito, Colusa, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Placer, Orange, Santa Cruz, Sonoma and El Dorado. The least healthy were Modoc, Madera, Tulare, Inyo, Kern, Yuba, Trinity, Lake, Siskiyou and Del Norte.

Two of the state's 58 counties — Sierra and Alpine — weren't included because statistics based on their small populations weren't mathematically reliable for comparison purposes.

"This report shows us there are big differences in overall health across California's counties due to many factors," said Dr. Patrick Remington, associate dean of public health at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

Researchers at the school conducted the study for the nonprofit Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. They said the report is the first of its kind; other studies have compared entire states to one another.

Nationwide, the least healthy counties generally were rural, lacked access to healthy foods and had significantly higher-than-average rates of premature death, smoking, preventable hospital stays and poverty among children.

"Those were the indicators that really stood out as differentiating the least healthy counties from the most healthy ones," said Bridget Booske, one of the report's lead authors.

It's no coincidence that higher-ranking counties are among California's most affluent areas, said Dr. Wilma Wooten, San Diego County's public-health officer. The correlation reinforces earlier studies linking health to wealth, employment, education and other socioeconomic markers.

"This speaks clearly that where you live matters," Wooten said.

The Wisconsin scientists chose not to compare counties on a national level because such an analysis would have focused attention on a much smaller number of healthy and unhealthy communities in only a handful of states, Booske said.

"We believe health is a local issue," she said. "We're trying to encourage communities in all 50 states to take action."

San Diego County ranked 15th in the category of overall health outcomes, which looks at levels of various diseases, the rate of deaths before age 75 and the prevalence of babies born underweight. Orange County ranked seventh, and Los Angeles County ranked 26th.

In addition, San Diego County ranked 15th for social and economic factors such as education, unemployment, poverty and violent crime; 20th for medical care; 23rd for health behaviors such as tobacco use, diet, exercise and risky sexual activity; and 40th for physical environment.

In recent years, the region has received failing grades from the American Lung Association for daily particulate pollution and ozone, which is also known as smog.

Local health officials also have noted a lack of access to grocery stores and markets that sell fresh produce in poorer communities.

San Diego County would have fared better in the study had researchers expanded the physical environment category to include access to parks and sidewalks, Wooten said. Those features, which are widespread in the region, make it easier to take walks, jog and do other physical activity.

Wooten noted ongoing efforts in La Mesa, Chula Vista and other cities to upgrade public green spaces and create sidewalk routes linking neighborhoods to schools.

Meanwhile, the Network for a Healthy California has worked in recent years to establish more farmers markets that accept food stamps in poor communities.

About 38,000 people shopped last year at the farmers market in the City Heights neighborhood of San Diego, said Michelle Zive, executive director of the network in San Diego and Imperial counties.

"Fifty-five percent of them came for the fresh fruits and vegetables, and 30 percent of residents within City Heights that we surveyed actually had shopped at the farmers market," Zive said.

Report data came from a range of government and academic sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Center for Health Statistics, The Dartmouth Institute and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The University of Wisconsin researchers said the results should prompt action — not just from local public-health officials but also from leaders in government, business, education and law enforcement.

"We're trying to let people know that health is everyone's business," Booske said.

Protesters march over West Coyote Hills plan

By Barbara Giasone

O.C. Register, Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2010

FULLERTON - About 75 of supporters of the Friends of Coyote Hills, a grass-roots organization formed to protest a proposed housing development in West Coyote Hills, marched from the Fox Fullerton Theatre to City Hall on Tuesday evening.

The group, which has been organized for nine years, is fighting to preserve the Chevron property as a wilderness nature park in what member Kathleen Shanfield calls "park-poor north Orange County."

She said she was pleased with the turnout and saw a number of new faces taking part in the protest.

Among the protesters was Rasik Patel, 62, who has lived in Fullerton more than 25 years. He said he drives Beach Boulevard and Bastanchury Road frequently.

"Developing everything, we will become Los Angeles tomorrow," Patel said. "We want to maintain a quality of life. More income for the city creates more problems."

Maya Boehmke, 12, of Orange, said she was concerned about the impact on the environment.

"I ride the Fullerton Loop (trail) with my dad," she said. "More housing would mean more cars and it would take away the nature in Fullerton."

The proposal is expected to go to the Planning Commission in several months.

"At least it shows people can come out and express their passions and their freedom," Councilman Shawn Nelson said of the protest.

Pacific Coast Homes, a real-estate arm of the Chevron Corp., has submitted plans to build 760 homes, a commercial village and an open space preserve as part of the development.

Potential greenhouse gases, mostly from automotive emissions, remain one of the public's major concerns over the project, a city consultant said.

Planning Consultant Joan Wolff said residents' concerns collected in November in response to a draft environmental report led the staff to return to the report and revise four of the most controversial issues: air quality; flood control; public health and safety in clearing the site; and wildlife habitats.

"Most of the findings (in the report) can be mitigated except the greenhouse gases and air quality," Wolff said.

Pacific Coast Homes Project Manager Jim Pugliese said last month he had read the comments and there were few substantive comments regarding greenhouse gases.

It's going to be up to the City Council, he said, to decide if the project is right for Fullerton.

Pugliese said there would be a 28-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions over "business as usual."

Business groups challenge EPA on greenhouse gases

The Associated Press

In the Merced Sun-Star and Modesto Bee, Thursday, February 18, 2010

WASHINGTON -- Several prominent business groups have joined a growing list of organizations and states challenging the federal government's finding that climate-changing pollution from cars, power plants and factories is dangerous to people.

The Environmental Protection Agency said in December that carbon dioxide and other [greenhouse gases](#) endanger human health, setting the stage for future rules restricting such [emissions](#).

At least three states - Texas, Virginia and Alabama - have challenged the EPA finding, claiming it is based on flawed science. The National Association of Manufacturers filed a challenge this week, joined by groups including the American Petroleum Institute, National Association of Home Builders and the Corn Refiners Association.