

Wood-burning restrictions end

By The Record

Stockton Record, Thursday, March 4, 2010

Wood-burning restrictions in the San Joaquin Valley have ended for the 2009-10 season, and officials report air quality has improved.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District noted a 57 percent decline in "unhealthy" days this season compared with 2008-09.

San Joaquin County saw 21 days on which wood burning was prohibited this year, fewer than the 24 prohibitions last year. A total of 65 citations were issued, compared with 24 last year.

San Joaquin Partnership looks ahead More communication, less regulation keys to future

By Jordan Guinn, News-Sentinel Staff Writer

Lodi News Sentinel, Thursday, March 4, 2010

State regulations, budget restrictions, partisan gridlock and a lack of collaboration are the biggest problems facing San Joaquin County, a non-profit business group said today at its annual meeting.

The San Joaquin Partnership, a patchwork of elected officials, entrepreneurs and private sector workers, agreed there are reasons for optimism in 2010, but a realistic outlook must be the priority of the region.

"A budget crisis is what happens in a deep recession," said Jim Mayer of California Forward, "California had a budget crisis going in. We haven't truly balanced our budget in a decade."

Inside the Stockton Golf and Country Club, more than 100 participants treated themselves to a breakfast buffet before a seven-person panel spoke about issues facing the county. Members congregated near the assorted fruits sculpted as flowers and sipped coffee prior to the morning presentation. The San Joaquin Partnership finished 16 client locations, retentions and expansions last year.

Examples include the Trinchero Family Estates West Side Winery in Clements and the Electric Vehicles International headquarters in Stockton.

While small surges of revenue and jobs crept into the county, speakers didn't sugarcoat anything about the significant hurdles the area faces.

"We don't rule it out; everything is on the table," said Ann Johnston, Stockton's mayor, about the city possibly filing for bankruptcy someday. "It's been on a lot of city's radar screens."

The mayor spoke about how it's ideal but impossible to run Stockton like a business. She said state contracts and regulations are frustrating and have hamstrung efforts to move the city forward.

"We have to look at a whole new way of doing business," she said. "Stockton didn't know how to act during the good times."

Renegotiating city contracts would be helpful to getting the city back on a solid fiscal footing, Johnston said.

To dig itself out of the hole, the panelists said the county needs to embrace innovation, creativity and networking. Kevin Huber of the San Joaquin Partnership and county supervisor Leroy Ornellas spoke about building coalitions with the surrounding communities and counties. The state government passes laws that are detrimental to the area because the Central Valley doesn't have a unified caucus that can influence lawmakers, they said.

"San Joaquin County is always looking to the Bay Area and Sacramento," said Ornellas. The region's proximity to the Capitol and the powerful Bay Area has historically been the reason San Joaquin County hasn't had more success in developing a caucus, he said. The panelists also aimed their frustration at the state's regulation.

They agreed air and water quality issues would be central to the area's development in the future, but disagreed with the hurdles some legislation puts on business.

Assembly Bill 32 and Senate Bill 375 were subjects of intense scrutiny by the panel. Both bills attempt to alleviate the effects of climate change by reducing greenhouse gases. Multiple speakers said California's regulations are often one-size-fits-all by design, but complicate efforts for counties because of their diversity and makeup.

"San Joaquin County has an air quality problem because of the failed housing policy in the Bay Area," said Huber.

It's unrealistic to hold all 58 counties in the state to the same regulatory standards because of their complexity, he said.

Dubbed the "No-Spin Panel," the participants spoke and took audience questions for more than two hours.

Afterward, the leader of a program said he agreed with the speakers' assessments of the region and ideas for collaboration.

"We need to work on issues together," said Fran Aguilera, economic development director of the county and manager of the San Joaquin County Enterprise Zone. "We're past the point of pointing fingers."

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Thursday, March 4, 2010:](#)
Your neighbor will turn you in for burning illegally
By Mark Grossi

There's a clear message coming from wood-burn bans this year: If you defy the order, your neighbors do not appreciate it and will turn you in.

Bans on wood-burning in fireplaces ended Feb. 28, and the local air district says the Valley had a third less ban days throughout the eight counties. Stormy weather has helped quite a bit.

But there were nearly 40% more violation notices written.

The epicenter of this eruption was Fresno County, where more than 150 tickets were written compared to a little more than 100 in the previous season.

Officials at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said they concentrated more on responding to complaints, especially in areas where there are chronic offenders and lots of fireplaces.

People are noticing when you light up on a no-burn night.