

Some residents evacuated for Canyon Fire, but no mandatory evacuation for Havilah

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2010

A mandatory evacuation was in effect for some residents near where the Canyon Fire had burned more than 5,000 acres as of Tuesday evening, but the town of Havilah was still under only a precautionary evacuation as of 8:30 p.m.

The area of Meyers Canyon south of Bodfish Canyon Road and Rocky Road was being evacuated, said Bob Poole, a spokesman with the U.S. Forest Service. Also, Caliente Bodfish Road was closed at Clear Creek Road, according to the California Highway Patrol website.

The fire, which began Sunday afternoon in the upper section of the Kern River Canyon, had grown to 5,100 acres and remained 10 percent contained, according to an interagency news release.

The blaze, which has charred rugged forest terrain on both sides of Highway 178, is expected to be fully contained by Friday, the release said.

More than 1,000 personnel and 22 aircraft are working to keep the flames south of the highway, west of Caliente-Bodfish Road, east of Cow Flat Road and north of Breckenridge Road.

The Kern County Fire Department as well as the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management are involved in the response effort.

Evacuations have been called for Hobo and Sandy Flat campgrounds, Black Gulch South and Miracle Hot Springs day-use sites and all water activities between Keysville and Democrat roads.

Two American Red Cross shelters have been opened for evacuees or people impacted by [air quality](#) or safety issues, according to a Red Cross news release. One is at the Lake Isabella Senior Center at 6409 Lake Isabella Blvd. in Lake Isabella, the other at Twin Oaks Community Church at 16115 Caliente Creek Road in Caliente.

Neither injuries nor structure damages have been reported, and the fire is believed to be human-caused and is under investigation.

Southeast Visalia shopping center proposal stalls

By Gerald Carroll

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2010

Plans for a huge southeast Visalia shopping center have been placed on hold following a Visalia Planning Commission meeting that drew more than 400 opponents.

The commission voted to revisit the idea Nov. 8.

"[The delay is] a positive step but this is far from over," said Katherine Singh, a member of the Stonebridge Neighborhood Steering Committee, which has been fighting the project since 2008. "The developer, unfortunately, has not changed the plan at all."

The proposal was the subject of a four-hour vetting Monday at the Visalia Convention Center's main ballroom.

Thomason Development wants to reserve space at Walnut Avenue and Lovers Lane for 127,918 square feet of assorted business and commercial purposes, including a 72,000-square-foot grocery store. The name "FoodsCo" appears on artist renderings of the proposal.

The Stonebridge committee, however, sees FoodsCo as a regional draw rather than a neighborhood store. The project, which would include 24-hour businesses, would bring traffic problems, [pollution](#) and noise, opponents say.

"There will be noise from refrigerator-truck compressors, semi-trucks idling and unloading, forklifts incessantly beeping and other vehicles resounding through the neighborhood," said area resident and committee member John Lehman.

Michael Thomason of the Fresno-based development company said the proposal is "100 percent compliance with all ordinances and codes."

Keith Tonooka owns a restaurant in the Mary's Vineyard shopping center on Noble Avenue, about two miles northwest of the proposed center. He warned about potential crime in any shopping center.

"My own vehicle has been broken into three times, employees' vehicles [have been] broken into three times and bicycles [have been] stolen while chained up," Tonooka said.

Vagrants and panhandlers also are common, he said.

Dave Francis said the proposed Thomason project is not as buffered from the surrounding neighborhood as a similar shopping complex on the west side of Walnut Avenue near Akers Street. That project backs up to El Diamante High School athletic fields and undeveloped property at the College of the Sequoias farm, he said.

Thomason said he'd planned to provide a multimedia presentation Monday but instead answered questions when the delay became inevitable.

"There's a lack of knowledge," Thomason said.

An 8-foot wall with one 10-foot section would encircle the center and help mitigate noise at a truck-unloading bay, he said. Existing walnut trees might also be kept as landscaping, decorating a planned channel that would incorporate Packwood Creek into a proposed walking and bicycling trail, Thomason said.

The Modesto City Council took the following action Tuesday:

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2010

- Approved a five-year lease for the U.S. General Services Administration to use offices at the Modesto airport for transportation security staff. The federal agency leases airport office space under an agreement scheduled to expire March 1, but wants to move to a different location at the airport. The new lease provides for payments to the city of \$74,400 over five years.
- Approved an environmental study and adopted the 2010 water system engineer's report, a document that determines future water rates. The engineer's report calls for water system improvements that will induce growth and have effects on agriculture, noise and [air quality](#), the study says.

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2010:](#)

Should air district board turn down this freebie?

By Mark Grossi

The Valley's air district chief has been invited on an expenses-paid trip to Germany on a fact-finding mission about bioenergy centers.

Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, clearly does not think it's a good idea.

The district has a policy of not accepting free trips -- this one would be paid for by the Betaseed/KWS, a company based both in Shakopee, Minn., and Einbeck, Germany.

But the issue will come before the district board on Thursday. Sadredin is advising the board not to accept the gift.

It's an important public issue because the district would probably wind up regulating the business that is investigating the technology in Europe. It has the appearance of a conflict.

The technology would be used in a bioenergy center in Mendota where the old Spreckels Sugar plant closed down. It would ultimately produce electricity, ethanol fuels and biomethane from almond prunings and locally harvested sugar beets.

It too is important in the Valley, as [Tuesday's story] pointed out.

Will the air district board avoid any appearance of a conflict by turning down the gift?

[S.F. Chronicle commentary, Wed., Sept. 15, 2010:](#)

Wanted: Fresh thinking about future transportation

By Jack Broadbent

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With 30 million automobiles choking our roads and a transport system that relies mainly on fossil fuels to bring us everything we purchase and use, from food and clothing to personal electronics, how California resolves its transportation challenges will hold the key to the kind of lives our children lead.

For that reason, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the West Coast Corridor Coalition are inviting the public to attend the Climate Policy and West Coast Transportation Conference, which will be held Thursday and Friday at Stanford University.

This conference will bring together the people who make the rules that govern transportation and the people who are subject to them, to begin planning the green transportation network of the future. The fact that this discussion will occur in a public forum will give consumers unprecedented access to express their opinions and hear the dialogue about how the green transformation will occur.

The crux of our transportation problem is two-fold and simple: We're running out of oil, and our dependence on foreign oil is detrimental to both our national security and our national pocketbook. Ninety-five percent of the U.S. transportation sector is fueled by oil, at a cost to the U.S. economy of \$1 billion a day.

Our dependence on oil also has a debilitating environmental impact. For every gallon of gas we burn, we create 20 pounds of carbon dioxide - plus another 5 pounds already released by pumping, refining and processing that gallon. In the Bay Area, transportation is our largest single source of greenhouse gases, smog-producing pollutants and health-crippling fine particles that increase overall mortality rates.

But new legislation from federal and state governments is in the works to reform our use of oil. In April, the United States adopted new rules for fuel economy and greenhouse gas emissions. In May, President Obama ordered even tougher fuel-efficiency standards for cars and trucks. Recognizing the central role our state will play in this effort, the president also directed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Transportation to work with California to develop an assessment on incentives and reforms needed to encourage "new and emerging technologies" and the "infrastructure for advanced vehicle technologies."

Additionally, three West Coast governors announced a green highway action plan for the I-5 corridor this year that has brought about immediate results via the deployment of an extensive electric charging network that will power the vehicles of the future. The upcoming Climate and Transportation conference will address these and other issues.

Help us to start thinking the transportation thoughts of the future. In so doing, we can pave the way for the green highways that will join us together in good health and economic vitality for years to come.

Jack Broadbent is the executive officer of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. Steve Marshall, West Coast Corridor Coalition Conference chair, contributed.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2010:](#)

Tree Fresno celebrates 25th anniversary

It's amazing the difference mature trees make. Compare the stark, bare feeling of a new home with freshly planted saplings to the majestic shade provided by the same trees 25 years later.

Multiply that effect across the greater Fresno area and you begin to get an inkling of the impact Tree Fresno has had in its first quarter-century of service. More than 37,000 trees have been planted, greatly magnifying the tree canopy of our community.

Since 1985, Tree Fresno members have worked to make Fresno a greener, cooler and more colorful community by planting trees in neighborhoods, parks, on city medians, on school campuses, along pedestrian/bike trails and for other nonprofit organizations.

Increasing the number of trees in a community makes it more livable by providing shade to cool asphalt, improving air quality, lowering energy bills and creating more walkable neighborhoods.

The group has taught hundreds of people here about the importance of trees and all they can bring to our community when we work together.

Tree Fresno leaders said about 1,500 to 2,000 volunteers help the organization each year. A particularly ambitious effort took place 10 years ago: Thousands of volunteers planted 4,400 trees in one day for the Rail Trail Project, which took place along a 13-mile stretch of an abandoned rail corridor between Fresno and Clovis.

More plantings are to come. On Oct. 23, "Make a Difference Day," Tree Fresno and the California Urban Forest Council will plant more than 1,000 trees in the Central Valley at more than 10 different locations including University High School.

In November, 300 trees will be planted in the Tarpey Village neighborhood to replace some 50-year-old Modesto ash trees that are showing signs of distress.

Just imagine how different all of those trees will look in Tree Fresno's second quarter-century.