

Air board skips free trip to German bioenergy plant

By Mark Grossi / The Fresno Bee

Thursday, Sept. 16, 2010

The board of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District turned down a free trip to research bioenergy production in Germany, saying the gift had the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Board members on Thursday said the district instead would pay for executive director Seyed Sadredin to join the fact-finding mission to Einbeck, Germany. He will see technology from the company Betaseed/KWS, which had offered to pay for the trip.

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

Air officials said they needed to investigate the air-quality benefits, but the project already is important because it would provide 100 jobs. About 200 people lost jobs when the Spreckels plant closed two years ago.

The Mendota Advanced Bioenergy Beet Cooperative, a group of growers, is trying to start up the project, which is considered a biorefinery. Aside from making ethanol, electricity and compressed natural gas, the plant would treat urban and agricultural water for use on farms, parks and commercial landscaping.

Cooperative officials are planning the German trip to see the technical process by Betaseed, and an invitation was extended to the air district to learn more about it. The trip would be useful, air officials said, but the district must pay for it.

Canyon Fire grows, but so does containment

By Steve E. Swenson, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Sept. 17, 2010

The Canyon Fire grew more than 2,000 acres from Wednesday to Thursday to 8,149 acres, but the containment also increased from 50 percent to 65 percent, firefighters said Thursday.

Some of the growth was backfires purposely set to increase the width of firebreaks and protect the communities of Havilah, Myers Canyon and Bodfish, fire spokesman Sean Collins said.

Full containment of the fire, which began Sept. 12, is expected Sunday, officials said.

Wind and temperature conditions were good Thursday for fighting the fire, officials said.

An evacuation was still in effect in Havilah, but evacuations in Myers Canyon and parts of Bodfish were lifted Thursday, officials reported.

Bodfish Canyon Road was reopened Thursday and Caliente Bodfish Road from Bodfish to Havilah was opened to one lane Thursday for residents only. Old Kern Canyon Road remains closed.

One house and a travel trailer were destroyed Tuesday when winds picked up and the fire spread quickly north of Havilah, but adjacent homes were saved, firefighters reported.

More than 1,500 firefighters are working to further contain the fire with the help of bulldozers, helicopters and air tankers, officials said.

The air attack played a key role in keeping the fire away from high-risk areas, firefighters said.

Power companies worked Wednesday and Thursday to restore downed powerlines along Caliente Bodfish Road.

The Red Cross shelters at the Lake Isabella Senior Center (661-333-0265) remains open and staffed, and the other shelter, the community church in Twin Oaks (661-867-2550), has been put on "standby" status and can reopen if needed.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger declared a state of emergency Wednesday to free up resources to battle the fire.

The Kern County Fire Department has asked anyone who took photographs at about 2 p.m. Sept. 12 from Highway 178, about 1.5 miles east of Democrat Hot Springs, to submit them to fire investigators at fireinfo@co.kern.ca.us. The fire was human caused, Collins said.

Sheep Fire spreads to 6,191 acres, contributes to air quality alert in San Joaquin Valley

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare-Advance Register, Friday, Sept. 17, 2010

Smoke from the Sheep Fire in Cedar Grove in Kings Canyon National Park is contributing to bad air quality beyond the park borders into the foothills and mountains in the San Joaquin Valley.

An air quality alert has been issued by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District until 11 a.m. today due to smoke from the Sheep Fire in Fresno County and the Canyon Fire in Kern County.

The 6,191 acre Sheep Fire began with a lightning strike in mid July. No life or property has been threatened, said Deb Schweizer, fire education specialist with Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Firefighters are patrolling the Kings River and roads to keep the fire south of the Kings River and firefighters are slowing the spread of the fire west, she said.

"These actions will slow fire spread and help reduce smoke impacts as the fire continues to grow," she said.

Several trails have been closed until further notice including:

- The Don Cecil Trail and the Rattlesnake Creek Trail in Kings Canyon National Park
- The Kanawyer Trail in the Sequoia National Forest.

Air quality alert in effect in Tulare County due to smoke

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare-Advance Register, Friday, Sept. 17, 2010

An air quality alert has been issued by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District in the San Joaquin Valley and eastern Kern County due to smoke from the Sheep Fire in Kings Canyon National Park and the Canyon Fire in Kern County.

The air quality alert is in effect until 11 a.m. today.

Unhealthy air quality is present in the foothill and mountain areas of the San Joaquin Valley and eastern portions of Kern County, officials warn.

Older adults and children should avoid strenuous activity and prolonged exposure outdoors.

Feds give Chem Waste a deadline to fix PCBs

Hanford Sentinel, Friday, Sept. 17, 2010

Federal regulators are giving the Kettleman Hills hazardous waste facility at the heart of birth defect controversy more time to clean up the release of cancer-causing chemicals found earlier this year.

In a recent letter issued, officials with the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency gave Chemical Waste Management until Oct. 28 to address all problems with the facility's handling of PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, transformer oil banned in 1979. Chem Waste is in the process of renewing its PCB permit.

Market Intelligence: More workers commuting 30 minutes-plus

Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Sept. 17, 2010

Summer road repair and other construction projects, like the Westside Parkway, Kern River Parkway Bike Path and Mohawk Street Extension, are causing extra congestion and delays on key commuter routes, motivating local drivers to find the "road less traveled."

While Highway 99, Ming Avenue and California Avenue continue to top the list of roadways traveled weekly by Bakersfield adults, Calloway Drive, Ashe Road and Olive Drive have experienced the highest growth in traffic over the past three years.

Top 10 roads traveled - past week ... % of metro adults 2007 ... % of metro adults 2010

Highway 99 ... 60% ... 65%
Ming Avenue ... 56% ... 60%
California Avenue ... 57% ... 60%
Rosedale Highway ... 56% ... 57%
Stockdale Highway ... 52% ... 54%
Truxtun Avenue ... 47% ... 54%
Highway 58 ... 49% ... 54%
Chester Avenue ... 47% ... 49%
Coffee Road ... 44% ... 45%
Union Avenue ... 41% ... 43%

Top 5 roads - traffic growth ... % of adults 2010 ... % growth 2007 vs. 2010

Calloway Drive ... 35% ... 149%
Ashe Road ... 26% ... 144%
Olive Drive ... 32% ... 131%
Gosford Road ... 40% ... 102%
Panama Road ... 29% ... 82%

Market growth and construction projects have also impacted time spent traveling to work. Adults who spend less than 30 minutes traveling one-way to work dropped 18 percent, while those traveling 30-59 minutes doubled and commutes of one hour or more rose 27 percent. (The percentage of metro adults working outside of Kern County remained steady at 2.4 percent compared to 2007.)

Work commute time - one-way ... % of metro adults 2007... % of metro adults 2010

Less than 10 minutes ... 15% ... 12%
10 to 19 minutes ... 22% ... 18%
20 to 29 minutes ... 11% ... 9%
30 to 59 minutes ... 8% ... 16%
One hour or more ... 4% ... 5%

Businesses located near long-term construction projects may want to consider additional signage, advertising, special promotional offers, or a change in operating hours to accommodate and attract customers.

Source: Scarborough Research 2007 and 2010, The Bakersfield Californian Market Research Department

[Bakersfield Californian, Steven Mayer Blog, Friday, Sept. 17, 2010:](#)

Lung Association: “Smart Growth” can cut premature deaths and asthma attacks

The American Lung Association in California released new data today showing significant public health benefits from pursuing a smart growth future for California.

The data shows health benefits, including reduced asthma attacks and premature deaths linked to the Vision California “mixed growth” and “growing smart” scenarios in 2035 that include more compact, sustainable development patterns.

The California Air Resources Board is expected to adopt regional carbon pollution reduction targets on Sept. 23 in Sacramento to help drive regional and local action to build more sustainable communities. The targets are intended to encourage more walkable neighborhoods built closer to jobs, with better transportation options that reduce congestion and cut consumer costs.

“If doctors and other health experts designed our cities, they would look quite different than the sprawling

communities we see today," said Dr. Sonal R. Patel, an Association board member and director of White Memorial Pediatric Medical Groups Division of Allergy and Immunology in Los Angeles.

"Cities would provide more healthy choices, more opportunities for walking and biking, better access to transit, less congestion, more housing close to workplaces and more parks for kids and families to enjoy," he said.

The analysis concludes that more sustainable community development and more diverse transportation options will improve the air, reduce pollution-related illness and death, and avoid significant health costs. Specifically, the analysis found that by 2035, less driving annually avoids:

- \$1.66 billion pollution-related health costs
- 140 premature deaths
- 260 heart attacks
- 215 acute bronchitis incidents
- 95 cases of chronic bronchitis
- 2,370 asthma attacks
- 101,960 other respiratory symptoms
- 205 respiratory ER trips and hospitalizations
- 16,550 lost work days
- 132,190 tons of criteria pollutants

The numbers are conservative, according to the Association, and would be higher if they included the additional benefits of increased physical activity from communities that encourage more walking and cycling.

The smart growth law, SB 375, requires the adoption of regional greenhouse gas emission reduction targets to encourage better land-use and transportation planning. Thoughtful strategies to reduce vehicle miles traveled will provide both economic and air quality benefits by linking transportation investments with the planned construction of a range of housing options.

The American Lung Association in California supports the adoption of effective standards by CARB to implement AB 32, SB 375 and other clean energy and clean air policies. For more information, go to <http://www.lungusa.org/assocations/states/california>.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Friday, Sept. 17, 2010:](#)

Where's open-mindedness among UCLA researchers?

Lois Henry's columns regarding UCLA's dismissal of researcher James Enstrom ("UCLA letting researcher remain -- for now," Sept. 1) struck a chord with me. Enstrom has spent 34 years conducting research in UCLA's environmental health sciences department. The results of his research on PM2.5 diesel emissions differ from his supervisors; they believe it causes "premature death" and he doesn't, so he had to go.

I'm an 83-year-old retiree from the California Highway Patrol. Most of my life has been around big rigs. I drove them in the '40s and '50s. I've ticketed them. I spent years at the old Wheeler Ridge truck inspection facility at the foot of the Grapevine.

I have been subjected to nearly a lifetime of diesel exhaust and have not yet suffered a "premature death." I've attended too many funerals, and PM2.5 did not contribute to a single one of those deaths. I've never even heard of a PM2.5-related death. Have you?

I'm bothered that UCLA's research staff may have a few "green" agenda-driven souls motivated to cause a "premature death" to diesel engines.

Diesel powers the trucking industry. Is their agenda to regulate the trucking industry into extinction? Who would ever question UCLA's research team? Professor Enstrom?

Open-mindedness, altruism and total honesty should be among all researchers' goals as they practice their trade.

Why doesn't UCLA recognize Enstrom's research even though it differs from their own? Good question!

Ed Trogdon, Bakersfield