

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District ponders tighter rules

By Bee Staff Reports

Modesto Bee and Sacramento Bee, Thursday, Oct. 21, 2010

Air quality officials today will consider expanding rules aimed at reducing emissions from dairy farms and other livestock operations.

The board of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will take up the issue at its Fresno headquarters. People in the north valley can address the board via a video feed in Modesto.

The rules, adopted in 2006, deal with volatile organic compounds, which mix with other pollutants and sunlight to form smog. Affected farmers can choose from a list of practices designed to reduce emissions from manure and other sources.

Under one proposed change, a dairy farm would fall under the rules if it has at least 500 milking cows. The threshold has been 1,000. The change would mean that 94 percent of the valley's dairy farms would be covered, up from 73 percent.

The threshold for chicken operations would drop from 600,000 birds to 450,000. It would stay at 100,000 for turkeys.

Another proposed change would require careful handling of silage, a dairy feed made by fermenting corn, hay or other crops in air-tight conditions.

District officials said recent research has shown that silage is a bigger source of smog-forming compounds than manure storage sites. Under the proposal, dairy farmers would have to handle silage in a way that minimizes contact with the air.

The board will meet at 9 a.m. The video feed will be at the district branch office at 4800 Enterprise Way, off Bangs Avenue.

The meeting also can be viewed online at www.valleyair.org.

Hanford to get \$200,000 for planning

By Seth Nidever

Hanford Sentinel, Thursday, Oct. 21, 2010

Hanford has been approved for a \$200,000 grant to plan smart-growth strategies.

The Smart Valley Places grant was announced last week by the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley. It goes to 14 regional cities, including Hanford, that banded together to pull down \$4 million in Housing and Urban Development money through the grant.

Hanford is the only coalition city in Kings County. Other cities include Fresno, Clovis, Visalia, Tulare, Porterville and Delano.

"We're real happy to get it," said Cathy Cain, Hanford community development director. "We hope that this is the start of a good collaboration between all the cities."

The money will go to one of two things: the "Downtown East" revitalization plan, formed earlier this year, or to an update of the city's general plan, the document that covers development and zoning decisions for all of Hanford. The last time the city updated the plan was in 2002.

Since then, new smart-growth and [low-pollution laws](#) have been passed, and those need to be incorporated into the plan, Cain said. Among them is AB 32, the landmark anti-global warming 2006 law that requires cities to [reduce car trips](#).

Smart-growth principles are incorporated into the Downtown East plan, which has a grand vision of entertainment, dining and business focus areas in the area between Harris Street, 10th Avenue and Sixth and Ninth streets. Harris Street is the unofficial dividing line between the higher occupancy rates of western downtown and the more prevalent empty buildings and vacant lots of eastern downtown.

So far, the plan is on the books, but hasn't been boiled down to a very specific level. The city could use some of the grant money to develop a more precise plan that would streamline the permit application process for new developers, making it easier for them to bring in new projects, Cain said.

The grant isn't enough, however, for the city to give direct monetary incentives to developers, Cain said.

Because the grant has just been announced, the City Council hasn't dealt with the issue yet. The council needs to decide what to do soon, because the money needs to be spent by January 2011, Cain said.

"I've very excited about it," said Mayor Dan Chin.

Cain said she hopes the 14 cities can collaborate again to obtain other grants. She said the Valley often gets overlooked because the cities are smaller.

City Manager Hilary Straus and Deputy City Manager Mary Lindsay couldn't immediately be reached for comment.

Worth noting: Ikea's rooftop solar panels

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, Oct. 20, 2010

Ikea plans to install rooftop solar energy panels at its Tejon distribution center near the Grapevine, one of eight such installations the company plans to finish by early next year.

The distribution center contains 1.8 million square feet of space spread over 60 acres. Its solar panels would cover 216,000 square feet with nearly 8,000 panels generating 2.8 million kilowatt hours a year of energy, enough to power 251 homes.