

CSUB fires up solar project

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Feb. 10, 2011

Cal State Bakersfield and Sun Edison LLC officials "flipped the switch" Wednesday to the 1.2 megawatt, \$9.5 million solar parking canopy on campus.

The parking structure will generate more than 1.6 million kilowatt hours of clean energy in its first year and more than 30 million kilowatts in 20 years. That is enough energy to power more than 3,100 average U.S. homes for one year, according to CSUB. It will offset more than 29 million pounds of carbon dioxide in the first 20 years -- the equivalent of taking 2,800 cars off the road.

It will provide about 30 percent of CSUB's energy (CSUB will still rely on energy from other utilities). The solar canopy was made possible through an agreement between CSUB and SunEdison that required no upfront costs.

SunEdison owns the equipment, and CSUB for 20 years will buy the power produced at a predictable and slightly lower rate than power it buys from PG&E. CSUB will also retain the renewable energy credits generated by the production of clean energy from the solar parking canopy.

The solar structure is just one step CSUB is taking in the name of environmental sustainability. CSUB this month is making its first appearance in the annual RecycleMania, a student-led competition that pits colleges against each other to see who can recycle the most waste. It will also roll out a campus-wide bike-share program called CSUB Cycles in the spring.

"CSUB is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and we are taking tangible steps in several areas to enhance our environmental sustainability," CSUB President Horace Mitchell said in a statement.

House panel plans to overturn EPA's finding on climate change

By Renee Schoof - McClatchy Newspapers

Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Thursday, February 10, 2011

WASHINGTON -- Republicans on the House of Representatives energy committee on Wednesday aired their proposal to block the Environmental Protection Agency from reducing greenhouse gases and to reverse the agency's scientific finding that climate change is dangerous.

While the plan might be blocked in the Senate or vetoed by President Barack Obama, the comments during Wednesday's hearing were a fresh indication of the depth of opposition in Congress to action on reducing U.S. carbon pollution. Supporters of the measure to revise the Clean Air Act to take away the EPA's authority to regulate this type of pollution said that curbing emissions would be too costly.

The EPA's planned regulations "would boost the cost of energy, not just for homeowners and car owners, but for businesses both large and small," said Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich., the author of the legislation. "EPA may be starting by regulating only the largest power plants and factories, but we will all feel the impact of higher prices and fewer jobs."

The EPA's main plan so far is to write regulations that would set standards for heat-trapping gases emitted by new or upgraded power plants and refineries. The standards would be met mainly through efficiency improvements.

Congressional opponents of EPA action haven't offered an alternative plan to cut emissions.

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson testified that the agency would estimate the costs after it wrote the regulations. The Clean Air Act requires the agency to show that its plans are cost-effective and technologically feasible.

Jackson said Congress would be wrong to overturn the EPA's 2009 "endangerment finding" that greenhouse gases are a threat to American health and welfare.

"Politicians overruling scientists on a scientific question - that would become part of this committee's legacy," she said.

She cited the National Academy of Sciences, the government's chief science advisory body, which has reported that "there is a strong, credible body of evidence, based on multiple lines of research, documenting that the climate is changing and that these changes are in large part caused by human activities."

Scientific organizations have said in recent years that global temperatures are rising as a result of the accumulation of heat-trapping gases, mostly from fossil fuel use, and that the risks to the planet will increase if these emissions aren't cut.

Upton has said that global temperatures may be rising but he's not convinced that human actions are the cause.

The Supreme Court ruled in 2007 that the EPA must regulate greenhouse gases under the law if it found they endangered human health and welfare.

Then-EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson recommended in a letter to President George W. Bush in 2008 that the administration impose curbs similar to the ones the agency now plans.

"The latest science of climate change requires the agency to propose a positive endangerment finding," Johnson wrote. Committee Democrats released his letter Tuesday.

The Bush administration in the end rejected greenhouse gas regulations and didn't allow the EPA to make its endangerment finding public.

Rep. Jay Inslee, D-Wash., predicted that Obama would veto the bill if it cleared Congress and that he and other opponents of the legislation would have enough votes to sustain the veto.

The American Lung Association on Wednesday released a letter to Obama and Congress from more than 1,800 doctors, nurses and other medical professionals urging them to reject Upton's bill.

Committee Republicans pressed Jackson for more information about the costs of greenhouse gas curbs.

Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, challenged her to refute his assertion that millions of jobs and hundreds of billions of dollars per year would be lost. "This regulation is going to skyrocket electricity costs," said Rep. John Shimkus, R-Ill.

Barton and other Republicans cut off Jackson repeatedly, speaking over her attempts to reply. She told the panel the benefits of Clean Air Act regulations historically outweighed the costs by large amounts.

At a briefing before the hearing, Dick Munson of Recycled Energy Development said greater efficiency could cut emissions profitably. Recycled Energy Development installs equipment to capture waste heat in order to make power without additional fuel. Munson said the EPA's rule would "drive the installation of proven technologies that will enhance American competitiveness."