

## **Bay Area power producer pays to offset valley air pollution**

Bee Staff Reports

Modesto Bee, Sunday, Dec. 11, 2011

The owner of a Bay Area power plant fulfilled a commitment to help offset emissions in the regional air basin last week by providing the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District a check for \$644,503 for pollution-reduction projects in the Northern San Joaquin Valley.

Mariposa Energy LLC, owner-operator of the Mariposa Power Plant in Alameda County, reached the agreement with the air district in 2009.

Although the power plant is just outside San Joaquin County in the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, expected emissions from the plant may produce impacts in the San Joaquin Valley's northwest area.

The money will be used to support clean-air projects in the valley to offset this potential impact.

"We do believe in being good neighbors and in building the cleanest, most environmentally sensitive projects we can," Mariposa President Yasuyuki Asakura said.

"As air emissions do not respect county borders, we approached this issue from a regional basis and reached out to San Joaquin."

The plant, which will be operated on an on-call basis during peak power consumption as determined by the California Independent Systems Operator, is seven miles northeast of Tracy and 2½ miles west of Mountain House in San Joaquin County.

Potential emissions from the plant, which will begin operation in late 2012, include nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds and particulate matter, all of which are pollutants of concern in the valley.

Similar to past emission reduction incentive programs sponsored by the air district, the funds from this agreement will be used to the extent possible to support clean-air projects near Mountain House and Tracy.

## **Dirty air triggers Valleywide ban on burning**

By Mark Grossi, staff writer

The Fresno Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Friday, Dec. 9, 2011

The air this week was filled with soot and tiny specks, triggering a wood-burning ban Friday for all eight Valley counties from Stockton to Bakersfield. It was the first Valleywide burning ban this fall.

The bad-air episode is expected to continue through the weekend, said the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. It is the result of stagnant weather that allows fine particles to build up over many days.

"There's not a lot of wind," said Errol Villegas, program manager for district air quality analysis. "It has also been cold, and people have been burning wood."

A burning ban makes it illegal to ignite wood, pellets and manufactured fire logs in fireplaces and other devices, such as wood-burning stoves, according to the district.

Residents are encouraged to check with the air district before lighting a fire at home.

The buildup of soot, chemicals and other fine particles began last weekend, creating federal air violations in Fresno. By Thursday, violations were recorded in Fresno, Clovis, Hanford, Bakersfield, Modesto, Turlock and Sequoia National Park.

Fine particle pollution is linked to early mortality, asthma and heart ailments.

Children, senior citizens and people with lung problems should limit their time outside when such pollution spikes.

And Valley residents should refrain from burning wood during district-ordered bans, officials said.

"Particulate emissions from wood-burning not only can re-enter your home and affect your indoor air quality, but they also directly affect your neighbor," said district executive director Seyed Sadredin.

## **No Wood Burning For All Valley Counties**

By Janet O, KCRA

KCRATV.com, Friday, Dec. 9, 2011

MODESTO, Calif. (KCRA) -- The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is offering a cash incentive to people who switch out to a cleaner burning unit.

The cash-back program ranges from \$500 to \$1500 for low-income families.

Qualifying units include gas stove, gas insert, freestanding pellet stove or insert and certified wood stove, or insert.

Experts said older wood-burning stoves and inserts, along with open-hearth fireplaces, emit substances that pollute the air basin.

The no burn rule is in effect Friday and Saturday. Health experts said that the air is stagnant and there is already pollutants in the atmosphere that is making it tough for those with breathing problems.

The penalty for those who don't follow the rule is \$50 for first time offenders and as much as \$1,000 for repeat offenders.

The air district has patrols out looking for offenders, but officials say neighbors often call it to make reports.

Charity Bridegroom and her 12-year-old son Josiah suffer from asthma and said they see people turning on their wood fireplaces when they're not supposed to.

"It's frustrating when you see people around here, people just burning anyways. They don't take other people into consideration," said Bridegroom.

## **Fireplace burn ban to continue**

By The Record

Stockton Record, Saturday, Dec. 10, 2011

A ban on fireplace burning in San Joaquin County that lasted much of the week will continue at least through today, officials said Friday.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District bans burning on days when air quality is expected to be poor. The stagnant conditions and lack of storms have contributed to the current problem.

The only exceptions to the burn ban are for homes that have no other way to heat their homes or have no access to natural gas.

To find out if burning is prohibited this weekend or any other day, visit [valleyair.org](http://valleyair.org) or call (800) 766-4463.

## **Modesto's dry December will continue over next few days**

Bee Staff Reports

Modesto Bee, Friday, Dec. 9, 2011

It looks like the Modesto area's frosty spell is petering out, meaning the only white stuff will be what's sprayed on some Christmas trees.

The National Weather Service forecasts areas of frost before 10 a.m. today. Temperatures are expected to drop to 36 degrees tonight, so there's a good chance San Joaquin Valley residents won't be scraping ice off windshields Sunday morning.

It still will be cold, however, and residents might not be able to light their fireplaces to ward it off. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District banned fires Thursday and Friday and indicated that the ban could last through the weekend because of poor conditions.

This prohibition applies to burning wood, pellets and manufactured fire logs indoors or outdoors. It does not apply to homes that do not have natural gas.

Residents can check on the status of the ban at (800) 766-4463 or [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org).

Sunday night will bring a 30 percent chance of rain, according to the weather service. There also could be rain later in the week.

The same storms could bring snow to middle and upper parts of the Sierra Nevada.

December has been dry, putting the area below average for rain and snow. But the main part of the storm season has just begun and will run through March, so there's plenty of time to catch up.

The past two years have brought plenty of rain and snow, leaving reservoirs higher than average.

Don Pedro Reservoir on the Tuolumne River is at 120 percent of its historical average, the California Department of Water Resources reported.

New Melones Reservoir on the Stanislaus River is at 149 percent.

### **Greenaction campaign to conduct outreach on impact of diesel emissions EPA awards grant to environmental group**

By Eiji Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel, Saturday, Dec. 10, 2011

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded a \$25,000 grant to activist group Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice for a campaign focused on reducing residents' exposure to diesel pollution in western Kings County.

Greenaction is among four California organizations that received the federal grants totaling \$99,988. The grants allows these groups to conduct research, education and projects to develop solutions to local health and environmental issues in communities overburdened by pollution.

In the Valley, Greenaction got the money for its project entitled "Kings County Diesel Education, Emission Reduction and Environmental Health."

The campaign, at work in Kettleman City and Avenal, aims to conduct outreach to educate parents, trucking companies and drivers on the impact of diesel emissions on their community, and encourage equipment changes that will lead to emission reduction. Greenaction is expected to engage in discussion at least 1,000 residents, 75 drivers, 10-20 businesses and three school administrators about the air pollution impacting those communities, EPA said.

"Community-based action and participation in environmental decision making are critical to building healthy and sustainable communities," said Lisa Garcia, EPA's senior advisor to the administrator for environmental justice, in a statement. "By supporting local environmental justice projects in underserved communities, we are expanding the conversation on environmentalism and advancing environmental justice in communities across the nation."

Another Valley organization that received a \$25,000 grant was Community Water Center, which proposes to educate disadvantaged rural communities in the Valley, including Kings County, about ways to prevent contamination of the region's drinking water.

This year, EPA awarded more than \$1 million in grants to 46 nonprofit and tribal organizations working to mitigate toxic exposures in poorer communities.

The 2012 grant solicitation is now open and will close on Feb. 29.

Applicants must be incorporated nonprofit or tribal groups working to educate and empower their communities to understand and address local environmental and public health issues. EPA will

host four pre-application teleconference calls on Dec. 15, Jan. 12, Feb. 1 and Feb. 15 to help applicants understand the requirements.

## **EarthTalk: How does eating less meat help the environment?**

By E, The Environmental Magazine

In the Scarmento Bee, Monday, Dec. 12, 2011

Dear EarthTalk: I heard that the less meat one eats, the better it is for the environment. How so?

- Jason K., Sarasota, Fla.

Our meat consumption habits take a serious toll on the environment. According to the Environmental Working Group (EWG), the production, processing and distribution of meat requires huge outlays of pesticides, fertilizer, fuel, feed and water while releasing greenhouse gases, manure and a range of toxic chemicals into our air and water. A lifecycle analysis conducted by EWG that took into account the production and distribution of 20 common agricultural products found that red meat such as beef and lamb is responsible for 10 to 40 times as many greenhouse gas emissions as common vegetables and grains.

Livestock are typically fed corn, soybean meal and other grains which have to first be grown using large amounts of fertilizer, fuel, pesticides, water and land. EWG estimates that growing livestock feed in the U.S. alone requires 167 million pounds of pesticides and 17 billion pounds of nitrogen fertilizer each year across some 149 million acres of cropland. The process generates copious amounts of nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas 300 times more potent than carbon dioxide, while the output of methane - another potent greenhouse gas - from cattle is estimated to generate some 20 percent of overall U.S. methane emissions.

"If all the grain currently fed to livestock in the United States were consumed directly by people, the number of people who could be fed would be nearly 800 million," reports ecologist David Pimentel of Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. He adds that the seven billion livestock in the U.S. consume five times as much grain as is consumed directly by the entire U.S. population.

Our meat consumption habits also cause other environmental problems. A 2009 study found that four-fifths of the deforestation across the Amazon rainforest could be linked to cattle ranching. And the water pollution from factory farms (also called concentrated animal feeding operations or CAFOs) - whereby pigs and other livestock are contained in tight quarters - can produce as much sewage waste as a small city, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). Further, the widespread use of antibiotics to keep livestock healthy on those overcrowded CAFOs has led to the development of antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria that threaten human health and the environment in their own right.

Eating too much meat is no good for our health, with overindulgence linked to increasing rates of heart disease, cancer and obesity. Worldwide, between 1971 and 2010, production of meat tripled to around 600 billion pounds while global population grew by 81 percent, meaning that we are eating a lot more meat than our grandparents. Researchers extrapolate that global meat production will double by 2050 to about 1.2 trillion pounds a year, putting further pressure on the environment and human health.

For those who can't give up meat fully, cutting back goes a long way toward helping the environment, as does choosing meat and dairy products from organic, pasture-raised, grass-fed animals. "Ultimately, we need better policies and stronger regulations to reduce the environmental impacts of livestock production," says EWG's Kari Hammerschlag. "But personal shifting of diets is an important step."

[Commentary in the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Monday, Dec. 12, 2011:](#)

**Bill Lockyer: Air board must not back down on clean fuel standards**

The Gas Guzzling Age is receding into the past. California can be proud of the prominent role it has played in making that happen.

Our state has long been a leader in pushing for cars and trucks to burn less gasoline and produce less pollution. For the past two years, we've also become a world leader in encouraging the development of clean fuels.

In 2009, California established the world's first Low Carbon Fuel Standard. The rule requires oil companies to gradually phase out dirtier fuels, and it promotes investment in cleaner fuels. It's a market-based policy that doesn't mandate the use of any particular technology or fuel. As a result, the standard promotes innovation while providing companies with flexibility in reaching it.

The California Air Resources Board plans revisions to improve the standard and will consider the changes at a meeting Dec. 16. The oil industry has voiced concerns about the rule. But the board should keep the standard strong.

The low carbon standard has a simple goal: By 2020, reduce global warming emissions produced by California's transportation fuels by 10 percent. The policy makes sense, since moving people and goods accounts for about 40 percent of our state's total greenhouse gas emissions.

However, cleaner fuels are important for reasons that go beyond protecting the environment, reducing our dependence on oil and diversifying California's fuel supply. Cleaner energy is crucial to our state's economic future.

From my position as state treasurer, I glimpse that future every day. In addition, I see how decisions made in Sacramento or Washington can make a real difference to California's economy. Policies that promote clean fuels, clean cars and clean energy will help our economy grow faster, more securely and more sustainably.

By reducing the carbon intensity of transportation fuels, California's standard boosts alternatives to oil, including next-generation biofuels, vehicles powered by clean electricity and hydrogen fuel cells. This sends a clear market signal that clean fuels represent an investment opportunity. A strong standard -- combined with the state's efforts to promote the sale of the cleanest cars -- tells investors California is a good place to start or grow a clean fuels, energy or automotive business. That means more good jobs for our workers. In addition, it positions California to be a global leader in developing the clean fuels of the future.

Globally, despite the world's economic struggles, investment in clean energy and carbon markets in 2010 grew 30 percent to a record \$243 billion, according to Bloomberg New Energy Finance. Clearly, there is worldwide interest in cleaner energy sources. The smart money is taking note.

California's leadership in information and computer technology has meant good jobs for generations of residents. Our state's clean fuels, energy and vehicles leadership can do the same for decades to come.

*Bill Lockyer is California's state treasurer. He wrote this for this newspaper.*