

Nearly \$900K provided for cleaner SJ Valley trucks

Business Journal staff

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's West Coast Collaborative has awarded \$898,833 to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to replace at least 35 heavy-duty, long haul waste transporting diesel trucks in the San Joaquin Valley.

The vehicles will be replaced with trucks powered by newer model year engines that meet or exceed 2011 emission standards. The trucks operate in areas that receive a disproportionate amount of air emissions such as Kettleman City.

Besides replacing trucks with newer engine models, truck owners may choose to purchase alternative fuel, hybrid, SmartWay certified zero-emission replacement trucks.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will be sending out solicitations to local truck companies with applications to apply for grants. The district will provide up to \$50,000 per truck replacement, said Todd De Young, manager of grants and incentives for the district.

The truck owner will cover the remainder, he said. To qualify, the truck owner must operate 75 percent of the time within California and 50 percent within the San Joaquin Valley district.

In addition to the EPA grant money, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and its project participants are providing \$4.8 million for the truck cleanup project.

The EPA grants are part of the agency's ongoing national campaign that provides \$30 million to reduce harmful diesel exhaust that can lead to asthma attacks and premature deaths.

The lower-emission truck engines will reduce particulate matter by up 97 percent and nitrogen oxide by up to 94 percent.

Tractors are also the targets of air cleanup efforts and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is offering funds for the replacement of old off-road tractors. Eligible equipment includes, but is not limited to wheel loaders, balers, combines, graders or tractors.

Funding amounts are based on a dollar per horsepower table as determined by the horsepower of the engine in the new tractor, not to exceed 80 percent of the eligible costs. The district began accepting applications for tractor replacements on Oct. 15.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District can be reached at (559) 230-6000.

Fresno Co. supervisors to rule on Carmelita mine

By Pablo Lopez, staff writer

The Fresno Bee, Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2012

By Pablo Lopez The Fresno Bee

The Fresno County Board of Supervisors grappled Tuesday morning with whether to approve a rock mining operation on prime farmland five miles north of Reedley and near the Kings River.

Proponents say the Carmelita operation will crush rock to make cement and asphalt to help ease the shortage of construction material needed for future growth in Fresno County.

Critics say the operation will cause significant pollution from frequent truck trips, create odor and noise, and take out of production about 600 acres of peaches, nectarines and other tree fruit.

About 100 people have showed up for the discussion at the Fresno County Plaza Ballroom, 2220 Tulare St. in downtown Fresno. The public will get to weigh in Tuesday afternoon before the supervisors vote on the project.

Momentum to dig in the Kings River area comes as mines along the county's San Joaquin River, to the north, run dry. Once the area's nearly exclusive source of mined rock and home to more than a half-dozen digs, just three quarries on the San Joaquin operate with county permits today.

But just six weeks ago, the supervisors rejected gravel mining plans for 824 acres across Jesse Morrow Mountain, an iconic foothill about 20 miles east of Fresno with its link to the ancestral home of American Indians.

Jesse Morrow Mountain is less than five miles from the proposed Carmelita mine.

Currently, there are three gravel mining operations in the Kings River area, said Will Kettler, manager for the county's Development Services Division.

The proposed Carmelita mine is generally bounded by Reed, Annadale and Central avenues. It is south of Highway 180 and just east of the Kings River. If approved, it is expected to yield 1.25 million tons of aggregate annually over its 100-year life.

On Aug. 9, the county Planning Commission overwhelmingly approved the 886-acre Carmelita operation proposed on a 1,500-acre site owned by the agricultural company Gerawan Farming.

Planning commissioners cited the county's need for construction material as grounds to permit the project, despite opposition from more than 100 people.

But attorney Marsha Burch, who represents the opposition -- Friends of the Kings River -- told supervisors Tuesday morning that the county's analysis for future crush rock demands is flawed.

She also said that the post-mining plan would create "holes in the earth" that will fill with water -- of which 600 acre-feet will evaporate each year, she said. This loss of water will affect the surrounding groundwater table and neighboring wells, Burch said.

Though the plant will operate mostly during the day, if approved, the county's approval plan will allow Carmelita to operate at night if Caltrans needs the material, or 24 hours a day during emergencies.

Speakers criticize air pollution rules at local oil conference

By John Cox, staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Wed., Oct. 17, 2012

Consumers may end up paying the price when pending state and federal air regulations hit California's energy industry, a pair of speakers warned at Tuesday's 2012 Oil & Gas Conference in Bakersfield.

The two speakers -- one a leading West Coast oil industry representative, the other the Central Valley's top air quality regulator -- said there is little chance that refiners and industry in general will be able to comply with rules pending at the state and federal levels.

As a result, steep new costs and far-reaching penalties may be inevitable unless policymakers can be persuaded to delay implementation of new pollution control measures, both speakers said.

The industry representative, Tupper Hull of the Western States Petroleum Association, took aim at a complementary set of regulations, the "cap and trade" carbon credits law known as AB32 and California's Low Carbon Fuel Standard. The regulations are intended to reduce carbon

emissions by promoting widespread transition to cleaner forms of energy and having refineries and other facility operators pay for the right to emit pollutants.

The problem with the rules, Hull said, is that technology that would allow refineries to comply with the regulations is not yet commercially viable. That means that by 2017, he said, California refineries will bear nearly three-quarters of the cost of pollution credits.

"We don't think that's an equitable distribution," he said, adding that refiners will somehow have to recover new costs amounting to between 33 cents and \$1.06 for every gallon of fuel they refine.

His proposal: Delay a state auction of pollution credits set for Nov. 14 until alternative technologies become practical.

The regulator who spoke against federal emissions rules, Seyed Sadredin, director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, focused on what he called "unintended consequences" of the Clean Air Act. He said the act fines Central Valley motorists despite the region's significant progress in reducing emissions by stationary sources of air pollution.

New standards about to be issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will leave the valley with only two options, he said: Ban fossil fuel combustion in the Central Valley or allow only fuels with zero emissions -- neither of which he considers a viable alternative.

Sadredin specifically called for amending the Clean Air Act to allow additional time for compliance and development of better technology, or loosen the legislation to recognize that different fuels present different health threats.

Otherwise, he said, motorists across the region will continue to be penalized with higher vehicle registration costs.

"Put this on your radar," Sadredin said. "This is going to be tougher than AB32, and a lot sooner."

Both speakers' comments won praise from industry members gathered at Tuesday's conference, which discussed other, lesser threats, including public concerns over the safety of the oil field technique known as hydraulic fracturing.

Nick Ortiz, a WSPA representative based in Bakersfield, called air regulations a "major challenge" for local oil companies. Although refineries are expected to be hit more directly than oil producers, companies that drill for oil need refineries to buy their product, hence their shared interests.

Ortiz added that what comes of the new Clean Air Act standards could depend on what happens with next month's national elections.

Chevron Corp. spokeswoman Carla Musser said after the meeting that the industry has worked closely with the air pollution control district to reduce emissions using the "best available (pollution control) technology out there." She called it "amazing" that federal regulators have not fully recognized the progress being made locally.