

[Commentary, Bakersfield Californian, Sat. Nov. 3, 2012](#)

LOIS HENRY: Air monitor problems go way beyond location

If the Arvin-Edison Water Storage District board of directors doesn't want to put the infamous "lost" air monitor back on district land along Bear Mountain Boulevard, it absolutely should not.

Arvin-Edison should stick to its guns no matter how much Mary Nichols, California Air Resources Board (CARB) chairman, stamps her little feet and tries to blame the water district for a \$30 million fine valley motorists are now paying. (A fine based on the valley not coming into compliance with a long-ago abolished federal ozone standard, by the way.)

That's all just bluff and piffle.

First, it's the district's land. Air regulators do not control it, the district does.

Second, CARB could have worked this all out last year with another land owner but dropped the ball.

Third, and most important, it turns out these air monitors don't tell a consistent tale about our air quality, which should be the real focus of anyone who is truly interested in the status of air quality rather than all this bureaucratic nonsense.

As I said, CARB could have moved last year to resolve the issue by putting the monitor on Nazar Kooner's land, a stone's throw from the old Arvin-Edison site.

Kooner told me he spoke with a CARB official last year and let them know he was happy to rent them space. He had all the amenities they would need including electricity.

"They said they would be calling me, but I never heard back," Kooner said.

A matter of geography

Kooner's site is a half mile from the old site. Repeat: One half mile.

With no mountains, massive walls, or a phalanx of industrial fans between the Kooner site and the old Arvin-Edison site, I can't imagine the air would be significantly different at that little distance.

Interestingly, though, that's exactly why CARB didn't go forward with that site.

It, and the Environmental Protection Agency's air division, which sets the rules and has approval power over monitor sites, were afraid that even that close to the old site, the ozone readings would be significantly different.

If that were the case, they fretted, then when the valley did come into compliance with the ozone standard, air activists could sue over that one monitor saying its readings couldn't be counted, so the whole valley should be considered out of compliance.

In essence, I was told, activists could accuse CARB and the EPA of shuffling monitors to make it seem like the valley's air was in compliance. Of course, that's not true. Everyone knows the monitor had to be moved because the water district kicked it out, so I don't know how that would hold up in court.

But so great was the EPA and CARB's fear of such a lawsuit that they didn't even bother testing the Kooner site. Instead they opted to send a threatening letter to Arvin-Edison claiming the state has ultimate control over its lands and suggesting its next move would involve lawyers.

Both EPA and CARB told me getting Arvin-Edison to knuckle under was "the most appropriate solution."

I don't think so.

I was more curious about these gradients in ozone where, apparently, you can be out of compliance with the federal standard on one side of a street and in compliance on the other side.

Is it the monitors?

Partly, according to Seyed Sadredin, director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, who's been peripherally involved in "monitor-gate" since it began in 2009 when Arvin-Edison told CARB it wasn't renewing its lease.

Sadredin told me you can have two air monitors side by side and get different readings by as much as 10 percent. That's a pretty big margin of error. But Sadredin said such is the accuracy range of these monitors.

CARB spokesman Stanley Young said the agency's "accuracy target for ozone is to be within +/- 7%." That doesn't answer what the actual accuracy range is but it's closer to 10 percent than not.

In fact, the new monitor placed at Di Giorgio Elementary School, about three miles as the crow flies from the old site, did read 10 percent lower than the Arvin-Edison monitor during a dual reading period in 2010. A mobile monitor in the City of Arvin, also about three miles from the Arvin-Edison site matched the Di Giorgio readings.

And those monitors were placed where people are actually breathing the air.

The old Arvin-Edison site is next to a busy road and the district's motorpool/heavy equipment yard. Not to mention there's a gravel mine about a mile away. Oh, and the monitor would actually get sprayed from time to time as it was adjacent to a vineyard.

Differences of opinion

Kerry Drake, associate director for the EPA's air division, said the monitor was appropriately placed when CARB put it there in 1989. The rules state you have to put monitors in areas where populations could be breathing the air and where models show the worst air quality.

"You can't put monitors on every block," he said. "So, if monitors showing the highest concentrations of pollution attain the standard, you can be assured the entire area has attained the standard, so it is a public health issue."

Sadredin countered that the rules say monitors should be in the worst areas that people are exposed to, not just where they could be exposed. Otherwise, why not put monitors at only high elevations where the ozone is typically far worse, he asked.

Sadredin has been frustrated by the stalemate created by EPA and CARB. After all, this isn't the first time a monitor has had to be moved in nation, he said. It should have been settled more than a year ago.

"This is all driven by activists and their misguided hope that if they put the monitor back at the Arvin-Edison site, which they think is the worst air quality, it will lead to tougher regulations," Sadredin said.

But in the last seven years, he said, Fresno/Clovis has had the highest number of peak ozone readings in the valley, not Arvin-Edison.

Sadredin can't do much about the standoff over the Arvin-Edison monitor.

But he's planning a full-court pollution monitoring press next summer, putting monitors all over the area to see how pollution moves, an effort that was spurred by the lower readings at Di Giorgio school.

That actually sounds useful. More useful than the past three years have been thanks to CARB and EPA.

How we got here

In 2009, the Arvin-Edison Water Storage District board of directors opted not to renew a lease with the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to host an ozone air monitor on district land along east Bear Mountain Boulevard.

The monitor had been there since 1989 and until 2005 had consistently produced some of the highest ozone readings in the valley.

The water board had become frustrated by what it felt were draconian regulations on diesel equipment by CARB based on flimsy science.

The board gave CARB a year to relocate the monitor. CARB put a new monitor at Di Giorgio Elementary school, about three miles to the north of the Arvin-Edison site in late 2009. For the following 18 months dual readings were taken at the Di Giorgio and Arvin-Edison sites. The Di Giorgio monitor had ozone readings 10 percent lower than the old site.

In October 2011, Arvin-Edison general manager Steve Collup was contacted by representatives of the Environmental Protection Agency's air division in San Francisco asking to replace the monitor. The water district declined but put the EPA in touch with adjacent land owner Nazar Kooner who was agreeable to putting a monitor on his land a half mile from the original site.

Though a CARB official spoke with Kooner in October 2011, no one ever followed up. CARB subsequently sent a letter to Arvin-Edison in October of this year demanding it allow the agency to replace the monitor.

Collup said he will bring the issue to his board at its next meeting Nov. 16.

West Hills smog checks clean up polluting vehicles

Hanford Sentinel, Sunday, Nov. 4, 2012

LEMOORE — During the Tune In & Tune Up event on Saturday at West Hills College Lemoore, cars who failed a free onsite emissions test were given a \$500 voucher to a Gold Shield smog shop to help pay for repairs in an effort to clean up the Valley's air.

Nearly 500 cars went through the screening, equaling nearly \$250,000 in vouchers. The event is conducted by Valley Clean Air Now in partnership with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Participants had to wait up to two hours to get through the testing due to high volume, with some cars lining up about four hours before the testing was set to begin.

Besides the free emissions testing, the event also offered free food, music and information booths.

Legal Notices : Legals

Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Sunday, Nov. 4, 2012

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY UNIFIED AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT. NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED 2012 PM2.5 PLAN FOR THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY AIR BASIN. NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a public hearing will be held on December 20, 2012, at 9:00 AM, or as soon thereafter as may be heard, at 1990 East Gettysburg Ave., Fresno, California. At the hearing, the District's Governing Board will consider the following action: Adopt the 2012 PM2.5 Plan. This action will affect sources in the counties of Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare. All interested persons desiring to be heard or to present evidence on this matter may appear at the hearing in person or via video teleconference at the District's regional offices at 34946 Flyover Court, Bakersfield, California and at 4800 Enterprise Way, Modesto, California. The public hearing will be presented live via webcast at <http://www.valleyair.org/webstreaming/webcast-meetings.htm>. NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that the adopted 2012 PM2.5 Plan will be submitted through the California Air Resources Board to the United States Environmental Protection Agency for incorporation as part of the California State Implementation Plan (SIP). Said proposed actions would constitute a SIP revision. NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that all interested persons desiring to be heard or to present evidence on said matters may appear at said hearing. Interested persons may view the proposed plan at the District offices and on-line at: http://www.valleyair.org/Air_Quality_Plans/PM25Plans2012.htm. The proposed 2012 PM2.5 Plan documents will be made available on and after November 20, 2012. To obtain copies of the documents, please call (559) 230-6100, or FAX your request to Mr. Donny Hockett at (559) 230-6064. You can receive news for this plan via email by subscribing to the District's email notification list at: www.valleyair.org/lists/list.htm. Para solicitar servicios de interpretacion en Espanol, por favor pongase en contacto con Maricela Velasquez al (559) 230-6000 por lo menos 7 dias antes de la fecha de la reunion. Written comments should be submitted to: Attention PM2.5 Plan at SJVUAPCD, 1990 E. Gettysburg Avenue, Fresno, CA 93726 or via email at pmplans@valleyair.org. Written comments received by 5:00 PM on December 04, 2011 will be ensured consideration ahead of the December 20, 2012 Governing Board public hearing. Comments may also be submitted at any time prior to or during the December 20, 2012 hearing. For additional information, contact staff at (559) 230-6100.

Fuel burning to begin in forest

Sierra Star, Thursday, Nov., 1, 2012

U.S. Forest Service District Ranger Dave Martin recently announced that the Bass Lake Ranger District is preparing to implement its fall/winter burning program.

"Projects will consist of three activities: pile burning, broadcast and underburning and have objectives to introducing low intensity fire to the ecosystem," Martin said.

Two underburning projects are proposed for the fall/winter. The Lone Sequoia Underburn is located west of Highway 41 near the Westfall Fire Station. The Kinsman Underburn is located south and west of Clearwater station in the upper Clearwater Creek drainage. The Batterson and Jerseydale administrative burns are located at each of these stations.

Burning will be conducted in moderately unstable atmospheric conditions and on burn days to provide optimum smoke dispersal.

Pile burning objectives are to remove fuels created during timber harvest, reforestation and fuelbreak construction. The removal of these fuels provides a benefit by reducing the potential of a wildfire that would cause damage to wildlife habitat, commercial timber land and private property.

Pile burning projects are widely dispersed throughout the ranger district. While many of the projects are located at the higher elevations of the district, some are near populated areas, and may result in a temporary reduction in air quality in the communities of Oakhurst, Fish Camp, Bass Lake, Ahwahnee, North Fork, and surrounding areas.

Burning will be conducted on burn days as determined by the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, and the Mariposa County Air Pollution Control District.

"The objective of underburning is to reintroduce low intensity fire to the ecosystem on a rotational basis," Martin said. "Prior to European settlement, lightning and Native Americans provided ignition sources resulting in a short interval fire regime of low to moderate intensity fires. These frequent fires maintained surface fuels at low levels and reduced small trees and other vegetation in the understory that could form fuel ladders, which are conducive to crown fires. It is believed that under these conditions, ecosystems were more resistant to high intensity, stand replacing fires. In addition to reducing the risk of catastrophic fire, underburning improves wildlife habitat by promoting the sprouting of forage species."