

[Bakersfield Californian Commentary, Sunday, Nov. 24, 2013:](#)

Study proves Arvin's air is improving

By Lois Henry

The last time I wrote about the great Arvin air monitor scandal, I said the focus ought to be on why monitors out there had such different ozone readings.

Tantrums by state air officials and environmentalists trying to force the Arvin-Edison Water District to put an air monitor back on its land were missing the point, I wrote last November.

I was right. (What? You thought I'd write a column about how I was wrong?!? Sillies.)

Results from a "saturation" study prompted by the different ozone readings was completed earlier this fall and will be analyzed to track how ozone moves in the Arvin area to better inform residents when and where to expect the worst air.

It was called a saturation study because the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which conducted the study, saturated the Arvin area with more than 20 monitors. To put that in perspective, the entire South Coast Air Quality Management District, which covers all of Orange and parts of Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties, has about 30 monitors total.

The idea behind the Arvin study, which measured ozone during August and September, typically the worst months for ozone, was to establish air patterns so the district could build models showing how ozone moves within that area.

"Right now, when we tell Kern County residents what their air quality is, it's based on two or three monitors designed to measure the worst air quality that could be 10 miles or more from their house," explained Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the air district. "Ultimately, we hope to give people neighborhood-by-neighborhood air quality information."

The Arvin saturation study was so beneficial, he said, the district plans to take it on the road, so to speak, and conduct more saturation studies in other key areas.

"Arvin has been a hot spot for ozone so it was a good place to start," he said.

Great way to take a controversy and not only get some answers, but provide a more useable service to residents.

Oh, and not incidentally, the study also showed, undeniably, that the old Arvin air monitor site had lower ozone readings than the new official site at Di Giorgio Elementary School.

The district put two monitors not 60 feet away from the old water district monitor site. Those monitors had lower readings every single day for two months than the Di Giorgio monitor.

For those of you who missed some aspects of "monitor-gate," I'll explain why that's relevant.

Back in 1989, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) plunked air monitors all over the state per EPA requirements.

It put the Arvin monitor at the Arvin-Edison Water Storage District next to its heavy equipment yard, about three miles outside of town on Bear Mountain Boulevard.

In 2009, the water district notified CARB it no longer wanted to host the air monitor and gave state officials a year to find a new site. The new site was located at Di Giorgio, also about three miles from the old site.

The water district allowed the old monitor to stay in place during 2010 while the new site was established and ozone readings from Di Giorgio were about 10 percent lower than the old water district site.

Air quality activists howled that the old monitor needed to be replaced, otherwise residents would, essentially, be tricked into thinking their air is better than it really is.

In response, the air district put a mobile monitor in Arvin that matched the Di Giorgio readings. It was pointed out that both those monitors were closer to where people actually breathe the air, unlike at the water district, which is more remote.

But the howling continued.

Meanwhile, EPA and CARB officials fretted that if the valley were ever to come into compliance with ozone standards, activists would sue because that one monitor had been moved.

CARB tried to cajole and then threaten the water district into replacing the monitor, even eschewing an available spot right across the street.

The water district stood its ground and, as I predicted, CARB's threats frittered away. Interestingly, CARB finally did respond to a question from the district about what sort of suitability study was done to put the monitor on the district's land in the first place.

None. CARB just put monitors in places it thought would have the worst air quality and went with it. Well, thanks to all the monitor brouhaha, we finally do have a comprehensive study of Arvin's ozone. No one is being tricked. Our air is improving and the new monitor is accurately reading Arvin's air quality.

News of the study's findings, however -- and the fact that the valley is finally in compliance with the old one-hour ozone standard -- was met with threats of lawsuits and angry rebukes by a number of environmental groups and air activists at the air district's meeting earlier this month.

You'd think those who are supposedly so concerned with the health effects of air pollution would now focus their energies on the new, tougher standard, which requires even smaller ozone concentrations as measured over an eight-hour time frame.

But no. The fight against acknowledging that the valley's efforts are finally paying off continues. Just another day in paradise.

Supervisor Wheeler announces demolition of 2T's Coarsegold wall to begin

Sierra Star, Friday, Nov. 22, 2013

Thanks to the commitment and determination of the County, area residents, and impacted parties, the crumbling 2T's Coarsegold Wall will finally be torn down, returning the hillside to its natural state. Work on the 3-tiered retaining wall is expected to begin Monday, Nov. 25.

"Repairing the notorious Coarsegold Wall has been a top priority of mine since I came into office," said Supervisor Tom Wheeler, who represents the Coarsegold area. "After years of lawsuits, court orders, and delays, I am very pleased to say that this eye sore and safety concern will finally be removed."

On Monday, Jay's Construction Inc. of Lemoore is expected to begin mobilizing equipment and preparing the site, which is located on the southwest corner of Highway 41 and Road 415. The unused storage building above the highest tier will be removed; eliminating the need for a retaining wall. Actual demolition of the 3-tiered wall should begin as soon as Monday, Dec. 2. The entire demolition process is expected to take no more than two weeks, weather permitting.

"I know I am not alone when I say that this demolition is long overdue," Wheeler said. "County staff has been committed to seeing the wall repaired for the safety of all Highway 41 travelers. However, the process has been daunting due to numerous lawsuits and delayed court dates."

The County's concern regarding concrete blocks falling onto Highway 41 resulted in a March 2011 court order from Madera Superior Court, requiring the property owner to immediately install barriers to prevent falling blocks from entering Highway 41. The property owners went into bankruptcy soon after, only further delaying the owners fully abating the safety hazard; until now.

Over the last few months, access was granted to the contractor, and construction plans were submitted and quickly approved by the County, Caltrans, and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"It was very important to me to keep the ball rolling on this so I must acknowledge our County Counsel, Engineering, and Building Departments for all their hard work," Wheeler said.

Wheeler also wanted to commend the commitment of Michael and Cynthia Graham, 2T's creditors now in legal possession of the property, and the neighboring property owners for ensuring the repairs came to fruition.

[Modesto Bee Editorial, Friday, November 22, 2013](#)

Promising sign No. 1 – better air

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District believes it has met the federal one-hour ozone standard, so the Valley should be relieved of the \$29 million annual fine that is paid primarily through higher vehicle registration fees. It could take a year to learn whether the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will remove the penalty, but we think the progress is worth applauding. For the first time on record, the Valley did not record a violation of the one-hour ozone standard during the warm months when the problem occurs.

Credit for the achievement goes largely to businesses that have invested \$40 billion in clean air technology since the 1980s and to motorists and other residents for cooperating with air alerts.

There are two kinds of air problems in the Valley: ozone levels and PM, the particulate pollution usually associated with dust. A few years ago, the Valley achieved the federal PM-10 standard. Meeting the standard in either category does not mean that the Valley can relax. We have to maintain the efforts.

That's a good segue to a request for residents to check before burning. You can look on the daily weather report in The Bee or go to the air district website, www.valleyair.org. The district will even send you daily updates if you request.

[Merced Sun-Star Editorial, Friday, November 22, 2013](#)

Our View: Good news in the air over the Valley

Many of our region's most vexing problems don't get cured per se, but sometimes we do see signs of progress. It's important to acknowledge the improved outlook on two fronts:

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Promising sign No. 2 – ethanol reconsidered

Ethanol seemed like a useful way for our country to reduce its dependence on foreign oil. Instead, the move to blend higher amounts of ethanol, distilled from corn, with gasoline had the unintended consequence of skewing feed prices for dairy farmers. The federal EPA decided last week to reduce the amount of ethanol blended into fuel in 2014. Good, but not enough, say both Democratic and Republican politicians.

Said Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, whose district includes all of Merced County: "There is still more that needs to be done to restore stability to our energy and ethanol policies, but this is the good-faith effort we needed to continue the conversation about the future of the Renewable Fuel Standard."

With the number of dairies in our region, we agree with Costa that more must be done.