

Manteca facing greenhouse gas reduction rules

Dennis Wyatt, staff writer

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Sacramento wants the City of Manteca to reduce its greenhouse gas generation as calculated in 2005 by 15 percent within seven years.

That means Manteca must find ways to shave 1,098 metric tons of carbon dioxide it generates through various municipal operations. A survey in 2005 placed Manteca's greenhouse generation at 7,321 when all municipal operations are taken into account. Powering the city's streetlights alone in 2005 produced 506 metric tons of carbon dioxide. That is one of the reasons why Manteca is switching to the higher energy efficient lighting to reduce energy costs and energy production.

Reducing city government's carbon footprint isn't the most daunting task of Assembly Bill 32 known as the Global Warming Solutions Act signed into law in 2006.

Every California city as a whole - private and public sectors - have to find ways to reduce greenhouse gas levels they create to 1990 levels by the year 2020. It is that requirement that has drawn lightning from critics who contend it will send the cost of doing business sky high in California and ultimately will kill jobs.

Cities are required to make sure that the build out of their general plans - state mandated blueprints directing growth - won't hamper or delay implementation of Assembly Bill 32.

The Manteca Planning Commission on Tuesday will be given an update on the air quality general plan update's draft climate action plan. The commission meets at 7 p.m. at the Civic Center council chambers, 1001 W. Center St.

The greenhouse gas emissions aren't the only air quality mandate coming down on cities on the San Joaquin Valley. Manteca, Lathrop, and Ripon and other jurisdictions are also under federal mandates to rollback air pollution. An Environmental Protection Agency mandates require further reductions of emissions in the San Joaquin Valley by nearly 90 percent carry with them draconian sanctions.

Even tighter air quality standards may end up banning new businesses from opening and prevent the expansion of existing businesses throughout the San Joaquin Valley including Manteca, Ripon, and Lathrop.

Other potential sanctions for failing to meet new federal air standards include losing all federal highway and federal takeover of the air quality control district.

Population in the valley has almost doubled since 1980 while emissions have been slashed by more than 50 percent.

The San Joaquin Valley during the past 10 years has:

- reduced emission from stationary sources by 83 percent.
- scored an 83 percent reduction in unhealthy days.
- recorded the cleanest winter on record in 2010 with only two unhealthy days.
- enjoyed the cleanest summer on record in 2011 with over a 50 percent reduction in the number of times ozone levels exceeded standards by 8 hours or more.

The valley averages 625 tons of nitrogen oxides being released in the air on any given day. The new standard is to get it to 80 tons a day or less.

Heavy duty trucks account for about 250 tons daily. Passenger vehicles and off-road equipment each account for about 80 tons while off-road equipment is about another 70 tons. Other off-road sources such as trains account for around 30 tons. The balances - or nearly 120 tons - are from stationary and area sources that the district has control over establishing rules. Mobile sources generate 500 tons a day and are under state and federal regulations.

Working against the valley are the surrounding mountains and meteorology create ideal conditions for trapping air pollution. Chronic poverty and unemployment rates hamper efforts as well as the high population growth.

Oil group pushes for separate fracking rules

By John Cox, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, March 7, 2013

Oil producers in western Kern County could escape some proposed fracking regulations under an industry plan that has drawn a skeptical response from environmentalists.

A trade group is talking with state lawmakers about drawing a distinction between modern hydraulic fracturing in highly populated areas and the kind of less-intensive fracking that has gone on for decades in western Kern.

The proposal, still in exploratory stages, is based on the idea that places like the Belridge area have only undrinkable groundwater and no nearby residents or commercial farming.

The California Independent Petroleum Association, which last month floated the proposal with members of the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee, said fracking in western Kern is also distinct in that it consumes much less water than is used in other places such as the Shafter area.

CIPA CEO Rock Zierman estimated that more than three-quarters of the fracking done in California happens in western Kern.

"All this debate about water quality, seismology and people living on the surface is moot in 80 percent of all (California) hydraulic fracturing to date," he said.

Legislators declined to address the proposal until they have seen details, although Sen. Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, said in a written statement that she is "willing to listen" to CIPA's ideas.

"As a CSU Fresno graduate, I know that San Joaquin Valley residents share a concern about local air and water quality impacts. Agricultural interests also want to make sure that their water supply is protected. But until (CIPA) or a member of the Legislature releases an actual proposal, we cannot comment."

Zierman shied from calling the idea an "exemption" for western Kern, saying it would merely create two sets of fracking rules. He said the group has not decided what special provisions -- for example, well testing proposed under draft fracking rules released in December -- should apply elsewhere but not in western Kern.

Fracking has been done in western Kern County since the 1950s. It injects water, sand and sometimes toxic chemicals underground at high pressure to release hard-to-get petroleum deposits. The practice has gained many foes because of its potential to contaminate groundwater, pollute the air and induce seismic activity.

Reaction from environmentalists

Environmentalists contend that California's fracking rules should be uniform across the state.

A representative of the Environmental Defense Center, which has been active on the California coast but not in Kern, said CIPA's proposal would amount to an inappropriate "carve-out."

"Generally speaking, we would advocate for a level playing field of protections," said Brian Segee, a staff attorney for the center.

Bill Allayaud, director of government affairs for the Washington-based nonprofit Environmental Working Group, was also skeptical of the proposal, which was new to him.

"I think there's a lot of questions before we say, 'Sure, why not?'" Allayaud said.

Zierman said his group's idea was partly inspired by comments from statements by Democratic lawmakers that perhaps more stringent fracking rules should apply in areas near drinkable water, residents and commercial activity.

"Perhaps," he said, "there needs to be higher level of regulation in those areas."