

Rebate offered for buying new lawn mowers

by Simon Birch, staff writer

Lodi News Sentinel, Friday, June 7, 2013

San Joaquin County residents can get back up to \$250 if they trade in their gas-powered mower for a new electric model.

The Clean Green Yard Machines Rebate Program helps clean the Valley's air by offering incentives for residents to retire their old gas lawn mowers in favor of nonpolluting, cordless electric lawn mowers.

Valley residents can receive up to \$250 as a rebate for the purchase of an eligible new cordless electric mower from approved providers. To be eligible for a rebate, electric mowers must be purchased on or after the program launch date of June 4, 2013. Purchases made prior to June 4 are ineligible.

Rebates will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis until program funds are exhausted. For questions regarding the program and its requirements, please contact staff at 559-230-5800.

Caltrans awards nearly \$250 million to improve public transit and air quality

Central Valley Business Times, Thursday, June 6, 2013

The California Department of Transportation has awarded nearly \$250 million to improve public transit and air quality across California.

The money will go to 127 projects to upgrade transit service, purchase eco-friendly buses, modernize transit stations, and create jobs throughout the state.

The Central Valley is getting \$28,159,000 of the total.

"These projects give Californians a viable alternative to using their cars," says Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty. "Public transit reduces traffic congestion and protects the environment by lowering greenhouse gas emissions."

Some of the largest Central Valley projects awarded funding include the following. The comments are from Caltrans:

- Modesto: \$4.1 million. Includes new flooring, paint, windows and seats for the 1998, 2001 and 2003 transit bus models. "This will extend the life of the buses and provide a more enjoyable traveling experience for the public."
- Stanislaus County: \$2.4 million to purchase four new "low floor" buses that "make boarding and exiting more convenient for people with disabilities."
- Clovis: \$459,000 to the City of Clovis Transit Agency for the purchase of two new clean diesel buses and three new small buses or wheelchair accessible vans "replacing aging less efficient vehicles."
- Clovis: \$100,000 for improvements to bus stops located throughout the city; "improving mobility and safety for the public."
- Fresno County Rural Transit Agency: \$4.3 million to purchase 24 new "low floor" passenger vehicles, providing easier and safer boarding for passengers, and four vehicles with heavy duty wheelchair lifts; including the purchase of four shuttle vehicles to provide service to work and school locations that established routes do not currently cover.
- Kern County: \$2.9 million for the purchase of two 47-passenger buses; four midsize buses to replace less efficient vehicles and three 41-passenger buses for longer routes, which will expand service operations.
- Butte County Association of Governments: \$4.5 million toward design and construction of a transit facility.
- Sacramento Regional Transit District: \$9.4 million to purchase vehicles and buses.

The funding comes from Proposition 1B, the 2006 voter-approved transportation bond, which is providing \$3.6 billion over a 10-year period to improve public transit in California. To date, Proposition 1B has provided more than \$2 billion in funding to nearly 900 transit projects statewide, with 340 completed.

Heat wave on tap for Tulare County's weekend Near-record high expected Saturday

By Kyle Harvey, staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Friday, June 07, 2013

Time Out Pizza & Fun Center in Tulare is home to an arcade, pizzeria and batting cages, but Thursday afternoon not one of the 30 students from Tulare Christian School was anywhere near the batting cages. They were all at the park's water slides. That's where kids and families will be for the rest of the summer, says lifeguard Allison Lawrence, 19.

"It's just too hot," she said.

A trip to the water slides at Time Out is an annual tradition for children at Tulare Christian, but many of the students say they come out with family or friends often during the hottest months of the summer.

"I normally come here when it's really hot," Delaney Petty, 13, said. "The water slides are really fast and fun."

While some students and parents say they have in fact become accustomed to triple-digit temperatures, still others say the heat is a shock every year.

Dave Burley, a history and science teacher at Tulare Christian who moved up to Tulare County from the Los Angeles area, struggles every year.

"I'll never get used to it," he said.

With just two weeks until the official start of summer, today marks the first day of 100-plus temperatures. And the mercury is only going to rise.

Scott Borgioli, a meteorologist with *WeatherAg.com*, says a high pressure system settling in above Central California is to blame for temperatures well above seasonal averages. Highs on Thursday climbed to the high 90s, but today's could reach between 100-105. On Saturday, highs could reach between 103-110.

Today and Saturday's highs threaten the record of 111, set back in 1902. Overnight temperatures will feel a lot like a spring day, with lows about 70. For those who enjoy the heat, the weekend forecast includes mostly clear skies with a few passing clouds.

Hot weather does bring its own issues, though. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District elevated the alert for Tulare County Thursday to "unhealthy for sensitive groups." Of the eight counties which are monitored for air quality, Tulare County was the only one to be given the air district's "unhealthy for sensitive groups" rating.

Ana Reyes, a spokeswoman for the air district, said the rating is based on ozone levels. And ozone rises in the summer because more people are on the road, lawns are being cut regularly and temperatures are high. She added that in the past few years, air quality levels have improved, as there's been a push to make people aware.

"We live in a bowl and we have to continue to make changes to help air quality," she said. "The southern counties in the Valley feel it the most."

Reyes said the cause that southern counties feel it the most, is mainly because of location to the mountains. But a main factor is wind, she added. Wind is blowing more ozone particles at the ground level into the Visalia and Tulare areas.

Relief isn't far away though. By the start of the work week, a low pressure system from the south will cool temperatures by up to 10 degrees, bringing the highs back into the low-mid 90s, Borgioli said.

The cities of Visalia and Tulare have planned cooling centers to operate throughout the weekend to provide residents a place to get out of extreme heat.

The Visalia Transit Center, located at 400 E. Oak Ave., will be available as a cooling center Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. In Tulare, the Woman's Clubhouse, located at 88 W. Tulare Ave., will be open to residents from 2-7 p.m.

The Tulare Fire Department advises residents to avoid excessive physical exertion during the worst of the heat, and always remember to stay hydrated. When out and about, do not leave children or pets in unattended vehicles.

If you have elderly family members or neighbors nearby, check up on them periodically.

California Highway Patrol Officer Ryan Pedersen advised the public to reduce their speed and check tire pressure when traveling in excessive heat. Be sure to carry water in the vehicle, and keep a watchful eye on your vehicle's temperature gauge. If the engine is getting hot, turn off your air conditioner.