

Sierra Club chapter honors The Bee's Mark Grossi for environmental coverage

Staff reports

The Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Wednesday, March 26, 2014

Fresno Bee environmental reporter Mark Grossi has been recognized with the Environmental Service Award by the Tehipite chapter of the Sierra Club for his work educating the community with in-depth reporting over many years.

The Sierra Club presents the award for contributions to raise environmental awareness and contribute to resource protection.

"I'm honored with the Sierra Club's recognition," Grossi said. "I'm also very thankful for the opportunity to cover the environment for The Bee."

Grossi is a 27-year veteran of The Bee, both as a reporter and an editor. He has been environment reporter since 1993. Among the myriad topics he has covered, Grossi has written about the San Joaquin River restoration, the high Sierra and the San Joaquin Valley's notorious air quality.

Last year, he wrote a 10-part series called "Living in a Toxic Land" about the risks of living in the Valley. The series broke the news about the state Environmental Protection Agency naming west Fresno the riskiest place to live in California.

On Thursday, the "Toxic Land" series was named a finalist for environmental reporting in the annual California Newspaper Publishers Association's Better Newspapers Contest. The series will either be first or second in that category; final results will be announced at the annual CNPA luncheon later this year.

Previously, Grossi was recognized with two Meade Prizes for air quality coverage, Investigative Reporters and Editors for Outstanding Reporting and California Newspaper Publishers for six environmental reporting awards.

He also won a science writing fellowship at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, spending the academic year of 1996-97 at MIT

Wood burning in Valley to be discussed at air district meeting

By Ana B. Ibarra

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The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will hold a public meeting this evening to present and receive comments on strategies to further reduce emissions from wood burning in the Valley.

The workshop will take place at 5:30 p.m today in the Valley air district office in Fresno and will be video-teleconferenced at the Bakersfield and Modesto district offices.

Officials said the meeting's purpose is to get community input on new adjustments being made to the district's Rule 4901, which limits emission of carbon monoxide and particulate matter from wood-burning fireplaces.

Among the strategies being considered is establishing a lower prohibition level that would allow the use of clean wood-burning devices. The district is also considering increasing the number of "no-burn" days for all other residential wood-burning devices.

According to Valley air district spokesman Anthony Presto, discussing these changes with the public is necessary to further reduce the Valley's wintertime wood-burning pollution and protect public health.

"The main thing we want is input from the public," Presto said. "This is an opportunity for people to give their comments and opinions and add to the strategies we're working on."

The district also plans to enhance its “Burn Cleaner” incentive program, which provides funding to Valley residents to replace their old wood-burning devices with newer and cleaner hearth options, such as natural gas inserts or Environmental Protection Agency-certified devices.

Over the years, the San Joaquin Valley has been able to improve its air quality through regulatory measures and incentive programs. Since its adoption in 2003, the wood-burning rule has been able to decrease wintertime emissions significantly, but there is still room for improvement. According to the Valley air district, residential wood-burning is the largest contributor to harmful fine-particulate emissions, which have been associated with lung disease, heart attacks and strokes.

Anyone interested in watching tonight’s workshop through a webcast may do so at www.valleyair.org.