

Valley farmers get more money to buy cleaner-burning tractors

By John Holland

Modesto Bee, Saturday, Nov. 14, 2015

It's crunch time for farmers who want to replace tractors with cleaner-burning models.

A \$2.48 million federal grant announced this week will help with the cost of 187 new tractors – but only if the applicants verify that the old ones are dismantled at a scrap yard. That rule assures that the machine does not show up elsewhere and continue to pollute the air.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provided the money to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. It was on top of \$1 million awarded through a different program last month to replace 75 tractors.

“With this financial assistance, EPA and San Joaquin Valley farmers are working together to improve air quality and promote the use of clean, cutting-edge tractors,” said Jared Blumenfeld, regional administrator for the Pacific Southwest, in announcing the grant in Fresno.

To date, the program has helped buy more than 2,200 tractors, and sent an equal number of old polluters to the scrap heap.

“Destruction is a huge part of what we do,” a district official said at a 2013 meeting on the program in Modesto. “We like to chop things up.”

This week's announcement includes another \$2.48 million to help Valley residents purchase 2,484 clean-burning wood stoves. More information on this and the tractor money are at www.valleyair.org/grants or [559-230-5800](tel:559-230-5800).

The federal Natural Resources Conservation Service also has a tractor replacement program. For details, visit www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov or call [209-491-9320](tel:209-491-9320) in Stanislaus County, [209-472-7127](tel:209-472-7127) in San Joaquin County, or [209-722-4119](tel:209-722-4119) in Merced County.

Free smog testing at fairgrounds

The Turlock Journal, Friday, Nov. 13, 2015

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and Valley Clean Air Now will host a Tune In & Tune Up car clean-up event at Stanislaus County Fairgrounds from 8 a.m. to noon today. Tune In & Tune Up is a vehicle emissions clean-up program that identifies and helps repair older, out-of-tune vehicles that impact the air quality throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

At Saturday's event, Turlock-area drivers who have had their car for at least six months will receive a free vehicle emissions test. If the vehicle doesn't pass the test, but can be repaired, the driver will receive a voucher for up to \$500 in emission-related repairs at a participating STAR-certified smog check station.

In addition to the testing, there will be a car-care clinic and health and safety fair at the site with educational booths sponsored by local nonprofit agencies. Attendees will also enjoy free food and music at 9 a.m. until supplies last.

“This event is a great resource for the community and helps eliminate mobile source pollutants generated by older, 'out of tune' cars in the San Joaquin Valley,” said Samir Sheikh, director of the Valley Air District's Strategies and Incentives department. “The Valley Air District is pleased to be partnering with Valley CAN to help improve air quality for Valley residents.”

More than 12,000 cars have been repaired to state smog standards by Valley Clean Air Now's Tune In & Tune Up program since 2003. Tune In & Tune Up has been shown to be among the most cost-effective methods to reduce vehicle emissions attempted to date in California.

Sequoia National Forest to start controlled fires to help prevent potential wildfires

Fresno Bee, Saturday, November 14, 2015

Sequoia National Forest managers say prescribed burning around the Giant Sequoia National Monument will begin once weather and smoke conditions are favorable. Burning will continue through the winter and into spring.

The areas targeted for burning are near the community of Ponderosa, south of Camp Nelson, adjacent to the Tule River Reservation, and north of Springville near Blue Ridge Road. Elevations range from 3,000 to 7,200 3,000 feet. There are approximately 400 acres where there are scattered hand piles of small limbs, brush and trees that were created from hazardous fuels reduction projects.

When burning is completed, the piles may not be entirely consumed by the prescribed fire. Some piles of remnants will be left to protect the soil from erosion and promote the growth of new vegetation.

Smoke from the prescribed burning operations will be visible in Ponderosa, Springville and adjacent mountain communities. Forest personnel will be working closely with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to manage smoke production and reduce any local impacts.