

Meetings to offer details on programs to get clean-burning tractors

Modesto Bee, Sat. Feb. 20, 2016

Meetings in the coming week will aid farmers who would like to replace their old tractors with cleaner-burning models.

They can get details on cost-sharing programs at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The meetings will start Monday in Modesto, Merced and Stockton, followed by four gatherings from Fresno to Bakersfield on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The programs help farmers buy tractors that are certified to meet standards aimed at cleaning up the region's air. The farmers must verify that their old tractors are dismantled so they do not pollute elsewhere.

Farmers also can get information on replacement of well pumps and heavy-duty trucks.

Meetings on clean-burning tractors

Merced: 8:30 a.m. at the Merced County Farm Bureau, 646 Highway 59

Modesto: 11 a.m. in Harvest Hall at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center, 3800 Cornucopia Way, off Crows Landing Road

Stockton: 2 p.m. at the San Joaquin County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, 2101 E. Earheart Ave., off Arch Road

For more information, go to www.valleyair.org/grants and www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov.

Former Shafter lawmaker Florez appointed to California Air Resources Board

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee
In the Modesto Bee, Sat., Feb. 20, 2016

Taking advantage of new authority to shape the California Air Resources Board, the Senate Rules Committee on Wednesday named lobbyist and former Shafter Democratic lawmaker Dean Florez to serve the powerful regulator.

The appointment grew out of a debate over the limits of the ARB's power and the Legislature's oversight of the climate enforcer. Last year, legislative leaders and Gov. Jerry Brown abandoned a measure that would have halved California's petroleum use, with the ARB managing the reduction.

Republicans and business-friendly Democrats balked, prodded by an oil industry campaign warning the law would vastly expand ARB's powers and result in measures like gas rationing. Resistant legislators worried about ceding authority to an unelected board. Responding to that criticism, Brown signed legislation allowing the Senate and the Assembly to each appoint one ARB member.

Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León, D-Los Angeles made Florez his pick. He can serve indefinitely, at the Legislature's discretion, and will make \$41,889 a year. Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins, D-San Diego, tabbed Environmental Health Coalition Executive Director Diane Takvorian earlier this month.

Florez, a Democrat, represented southern San Joaquin Valley communities in the Assembly and then the Senate from 1998 to 2010 and now is a registered lobbyist. During the height of last year's debate over climate legislation, he penned an op-ed urging wavering Democrats to ignore "doomsday scenarios" articulated by "Big Oil."

"My first, second and third priorities will be to represent those who are hardest hit by pollution and who need us to do more," Florez said in a statement responding to his appointment.

Cleaning up Valley air with natural gas off-road vehicles

By Megan Ginise
Fresno Bee, Thurs. February 18, 2016

The California Energy Commission will host a public workshop in Fresno on Monday to discuss the development of natural gas engine technologies for off-road vehicles in the Central Valley.

The workshop will provide insight on the current off-road vehicle market, advanced technology needs and the market potential for natural gas-powered off-road vehicles.

The discussion will be held at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's Fresno Office, 1990 E. Gettysburg Ave. from 2 to 4 p.m., but can also be viewed remotely at the District's Bakersfield office, 34946 Flyover Court, and its Modesto office, 4800 Enterprise Way.

[Guest commentary in the Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Feb. 22, 2016:](#)

I'll work to clean our air on CARB board

By Dean Florez

There have been few times, historically, when we in the Central Valley of California looked to Sacramento leadership and thanked them for considering the unique needs of our region when making important decisions that affect our lives, our families and more importantly — the air we breathe.

On Wednesday, Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de Leon made a historic legislative appointment to a game changing board that will define the Central Valley's clean air and carbon reduction future.

Senator de Leon has demonstrated, through my appointment to the California Air Resource Board, his philosophy of providing more opportunities for both urban and rural communities. This view will help advance the State's climate mitigation efforts while bringing his goals of environmental justice, economic sustainability and health benefits to our residents. I am proud to be the Pro Tem's first appointment to a board whose members were previously all appointed by the governor.

When AB 1288 passed last session, it rightly mandated that environmental justice communities have a seat at the table. California's climate strategy has always emphasized the importance of considering and addressing impacts and benefits to California's most vulnerable communities, and this change will help make that a reality.

Having represented one of the most polluted regions of our nation — California's Central Valley — for more than a decade, I am honored by this opportunity to continue pushing groundbreaking work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for the benefit of disproportionately impacted disadvantaged communities.

As a clean air advocate and former Senator, our historic efforts to clean the Valley air faced intense opposition nearly a decade ago, yet represented the most important work during my tenure in the Legislature. Our landmark package of air pollution bills were propelled by a large coalition of environmental justice groups with whom I worked hand-in-hand. I plan to continue and strengthen my partnerships with environmental justice communities throughout the State, especially those communities with low-income populations heavily burdened with high levels of pollution.

Today, as the public sentiment across our state, nation and world turns towards realizing lasting reductions in carbon output, I plan to remind members of CARB that disadvantaged communities are also at risk from the impacts of climate change, yet with fewer resources to respond and adapt to these impacts.

As California leads the world in the climate fight, I plan to be an anchor reminds board members that we must reduce short-lived climate pollutants through fully funded emission reduction programs yet continue to create new additional strategies. More importantly, I plan to emphasize the plight of disadvantaged to communities whose children must carry too many inhalers to school, and who find their opportunities limited due to the underinvestment of needed cap and trade dollars in their communities.

I would like to publicly thank the leadership, Senate Rules Committee and its Chairman, Senate Pro Tem Kevin de Leon, for entrusting me with this important position that will help define California's clean air and carbon reduction future. Time to get to work.

Dean Florez, a former member of both the California Senate and Assembly, is a Shafter native.