

News Release

Aug. 24, 2009

For Immediate Release



San Joaquin Valley
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT

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Valley Air District shines in Hewlett Foundation audit

The Valley Air District accomplishes more with fewer people and at a lower cost than other air districts in the state, according to a recent study that compared California's air quality management agencies.

Bill Sylte, a partner with the Sierra Nevada Air Quality Group, the environmental consulting firm that conducted the study, presented the results to the District's Governing Board at a public hearing last week. A summary of the report can be found at http://valleyair.org/Board_meetings/GB/agenda_minutes/Agenda/2009/August/items/Agenda_Item_8_Aug_20_2009.pdf

The audit was funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for a group of state and local air quality and environmental advocates. The study evaluated the District's performance compared to several other air districts in the state using benchmarks established by the study's authors.

"The bottom line is, you did well," Sylte told the District Governing Board.

The study compared the Valley Air District to South Coast Air Quality Management District, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Sacramento Air Quality Management District and Ventura County Air Pollution Control District.

With more than 23,000 square miles, an area larger than many states, the Valley Air District is the largest air district in California. It also faces significant challenges in meeting clean-air standards because of its unique geography, topography, and meteorology. For each benchmark, the report found that the Valley Air District's performance was among the top and above-average. The report's findings for each benchmark are summarized below:

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Air District shines in study

Page 2 of 2

Aug. 24, 2009

* **Cost per ton of emission reductions** -- The District spends only \$5,571 per ton of emissions reduced. The average of the other districts is \$23,258 per ton. The Valley Air District's performance was 76% better than the average. This benchmark measured staffing cost spent for each ton of emission reduction produced.

* **Inspection Efficiency** – Despite long distances to travel, the rate of inspections by the Valley Air district inspectors was 15% better than the average. “It’s a notable accomplishment to be where you are in this benchmark,” Sylte said.

* **Management and administrative overhead** – The Valley Air District’s management and administrative overhead was 21% lower than the average. This despite the large area covered by the District requiring three office locations to satisfy business needs throughout the Valley.

* **Public Education and Outreach** – The report found that the Valley Air District spends 33% less per capita than the average. Despite lower expenditures, the report found that the District’s performance was better than average. “Compared with the other districts, and considering the fact that your expenditures have been relatively low, you’ve got good, solid, better-than-average public outreach,” Sylte summarized.

* **Grant program administration** – The Valley Air District has been able to secure a significant increase in state and federal funding for grant programs to produce voluntary reductions in emissions. The report found that the District has one of the most cost effective grant programs in the state. The District is 26 percent more cost-effective than average, the study found. Nonetheless, the report found that the Valley’s share of California’s Moyer program funding reached a lower percentage of eligible sources of pollution than the other air districts.

The report found that over the past four years the District funding for grant programs increased by over 1,000 percent. Despite a major increase in grant funding, the District’s staffing increased by only 14 percent during the same time period. Overall, with grants to outside entities constituting 75% of the District’s budget, at \$35.32 per resident, the District has the highest per capita budget among the districts examined in this report.

Members of the District Governing Board thanked the Hewlett Foundation and their consultant for their work and expressed hope that the report’s findings help build trust, confidence, and facilitate more cooperation in the future.

“The report shows that the District’s Governing Board has exercised great stewardship of public funds in pursuing the District’s public health mission,” said Seyed Sadredin, the District’s air pollution control officer and executive director. “The Valley devotes the highest per capita resources to air quality, a major public health concern.”

“The fact that this report comes from long-time avid critics of the District adds to report’s credibility and makes it especially gratifying,” Sadredin said.

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley air basin portion of Kern. Visit www.valleyair.org to learn more.