

Ripon power plant would have no adverse impact, study says

The Record, August 1, 2003

RIPON -- A proposed 95-megawatt power plant in Ripon would have no adverse impact on the environment, public health, safety or California's electric grid, according to an initial study released this week by the California Energy Commission.

The Modesto Irrigation District is seeking approval to build the \$79 million natural gas-fired plant on a 6-acre portion of 12.25 acres at South Stockton Avenue and Doak Boulevard.

The turbine-powered plant would generate up to 95 megawatts of power for residential households, including those in Ripon and the fast-growing areas of Salida and Mountain House, near Tracy. One megawatt is enough power to serve approximately 1,000 homes in winter or 300 homes during peak demand in summer, MID officials said.

Power plants of up to 100 megawatts are exempt from the commission's standard licensing process if staffers determine the project won't hurt the environment, safety, public health or the power grid. The draft report will be used by local, state and federal agencies to issue the necessary permits.

A hearing on the project will be at 9:30 a.m. next Friday in the multipurpose room at MID, 1231 11th St., Modesto. Oral and written comments on the draft study are due by then.

Officials hope to receive commission approval by the end of this year and have the plant built by mid-2005.

LA region seeks state, fed help in fighting nation's worst air

By ANDREW BRIDGES, AP Science Writer

Published in the Bakersfield Californian (July 31, 2003, 03:55:09 PM)
and the Fresno Bee, August 1, 2003

Thursday DIAMOND BAR, Calif. (AP) - The Los Angeles region is choking through its smoggiest summer in seven years, and clean air officials say they will need help to improve the nation's worst air pollution by a 2010 federal deadline.

The region must meet ozone standards by then or risk losing federal funding or other penalties.

Doing so will require stepped up efforts from state and federal officials, as well as the ongoing local efforts, South Coast Air Quality Management District executive officer Barry Wallerstein said Thursday. The agency is charged with cleaning up the air breathed by two of every five Californians in a region that includes all or parts of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. "We can meet the standard with aggressive and sustained efforts at the local, state and federal levels - but especially at the state and federal levels," Wallerstein said during a media briefing.

As of Wednesday, the region exceeded federal ozone standards on 44 days - or nearly as many as all of last year. Until recently, ozone levels had been in steady decline across the region.

The call for increased assistance came as Wallerstein's agency prepared to adopt an update to its 1997 clean-air plan. The agency's board is expected to vote on the update Friday.

During Friday's meeting, the board also will be asked to forward a wish list of 33 pollution-fighting measures to the California Air Resources Board and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The two agencies have sole jurisdiction over the pollution sources that account for 80 percent of ozone-forming emissions in the region, Wallerstein said.

The list includes tightening pollution controls on planes, trains and boats - as well as lawn mowers and consumer products like hair spray.

The state Air Resources Board will entertain the suggestions, spokesman Richard Varenchik said.

"Some of the proposals have merit, some of them have merit but they are outrageously expensive - and I am sure people are aware of the state budget situation, so it will be a matter of sorting them through and seeing which ones look good and which ones are doable right now and which might need a little more time," Varenchik said.

Many of the proposals address vehicles, including ships and cars, already in use. Cutting the amount of pollution they belch is slow and expensive to do, said Jack Broadbent, the EPA's director of air programs for the Pacific Southwest.

"We agree that more needs to be done but we really now have to focus on existing operations, which is very difficult and essentially requires a lot of funding," Broadbent said. "That needs to be carefully thought through. You can't just take millions of dollars and throw it at the problem."

The L.A. region must cut emissions of two classes of pollutants by 559 tons a day by 2010 to meet the federal standards.

About 70 percent of those ozone-forming pollutants, volatile organic compounds and oxides of nitrogen, are traceable to vehicle tailpipes.

Ozone can retard lung development in children, worsen the symptoms of asthma and boost susceptibility to respiratory infection.

Under the updated blueprint being considered Friday, the clean-air agency identifies how it will cut just 20 percent of the emissions needed to meet the ozone standard. The balance relies on yet-to-be-identified technologies.

Environmental groups seek to have the updated plan scrapped in favor of even stronger anti-pollution measures.

"This is the weakest air plan we've seen for the region in a decade," Gail Ruderman Feuer of the Natural Resources Defense Council, said in a statement. "It delays tough decisions on pollution reduction until just three years before the clean air deadline. We need to make those decisions now, otherwise we're only pretending to get rid of air pollution."

Dean calls for stronger environmental protection in S.F. speech

The Associated Press

In the Bakersfield Californian

Thursday July 31, 2003, 06:45:13 PM

San Francisco (AP) - Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean unveiled his environmental plan today. It calls for more use of renewable resources, pushes automakers to improve fuel efficiency and strengthens the Environmental Protection Agency.

He also criticized President Bush's record during the speech in San Francisco.

This was the first major environmental address of his campaign. Under Dean's plan, 20 percent of the nation's electricity supply would have to come from renewable sources such as wind and solar power by 2020.

He would create incentives to develop hydrogen-powered vehicles, design more energy-efficient SUV's and increase use of ethanol, a renewable fuel produced from agricultural waste.

Dean also suggests requiring automakers to establish a fuel efficiency standard of 40 miles per gallon by 2015. The current requirement is 27.5 miles per gallon for cars and 20.7 for trucks. This proposal will certainly upset automakers in key electoral states such as Michigan.

During his nearly 12 years as governor, Dean had a sometimes strained relationship with environmental leaders because he frequently sided with the business community in development disputes.

In his speech, Dean said he would elevate the Environmental Protection Agency to Cabinet level. He also said he would tighten controls on air pollution and provide more funding for enforcement of environmental laws.

Dean said he would insist that the United States participate in international environmental agreements, such as the Kyoto global warming treaty. He said environmental standards should become a key element of the country's foreign trade agreements.

Environmental activists who listened to the speech were encouraged by Dean's views.

The president of the Sierra Club says he's thrilled with Dean's positions on the environment.

Air Brake

IdleAire keeps truckers comfortable while letting them shut off engines that pollute.

By Bob White, The Modesto Bee

(Published Thursday, July 31, 2003, 5:22 AM)

RIPON -- Truckers who pull into Love's Country Stores truck stop can get air conditioning, Internet access, cable television, movies and other amenities provided by many motels.

There is one difference: The truckers don't have to leave their cabs to enjoy those conveniences.

IdleAire Technologies of Knoxville, Tenn., has installed a system that makes the amenities available to truckers at no cost for two months, and then \$1.25 per hour after that.

In each of the truck stop's 88 big-rig parking spaces, a large yellow hose hangs from a heat-and-air unit overhead. The hinged cover over the air outlet at the end of the hose doubles as a computer terminal.

The trucker simply feeds the hose through a window of his cab, puts a template around the hose to seal the opening, then opens the hose cover to expose the air outlet and the computer screen.

Activating the system by swiping a credit card through a card reader, the trucker uses the menu on the screen to call up a thermostat. The menu also can be used to select music or a movie, log onto the Internet and send e-mail.

The trucker no longer needs to keep the engine running to provide electricity to the air conditioner and cab, so it can be turned off.

"This is one of the best things they've come up with," said trucker Roy Kendrick of Liberal, Kan. He agreed to try out the system when he pulled into Love's this week.

"I'm very well pleased," Kendrick said. Kendrick's Peterbilt has a satellite-link TV, he said, but it's kind of a pain to climb up on the cab to adjust the satellite dish.

"This makes it a whole lot easier."

Kendrick said the new system will add life to his diesel engine.

Carla McCaherty of Greenville, Texas, said if she lets her truck idle for eight hours, it burns 30 gallons of fuel. At \$1.50-plus a gallon, she said, "you do the math on what that costs, compared to paying [IdleAire] \$1.25 an hour for eight hours with the engine turned off."

The big savings, though, would be in reducing engine wear and tear, McCaherty said. She said she had not tried the system, but she planned to after seeing it demonstrated in the Love's store.

Truck drivers are limited by law to no more than 15 hours behind the wheel in 24 hours, with a maximum of 10 hours in a stretch.

Many spend the layover time in the sleeping compartments of their cabs, and that means the cabs must be air conditioned. Until now, that required keeping truck engines running.

There is another huge plus provided by the new system, said Josette Merced Bello, spokeswoman for the San Joaquin Valley Air Quality District.

"Any time an engine idles, it causes pollution," Bello said. "This allows truckers to turn off their engines. From our perspective, it's fabulous. We'd like to see this system every five miles."

IdleAire has installed the system at 10 truck stops -- in New York, Tennessee, Georgia and Arkansas and in Ripon, Santa Nella, Bakersfield and Lost Hills in California. The company has contracts with almost one-third of the major truck-stop companies in the nation, and with about 100 independently owned truck stops, IdleAire Vice President David Everhart said.

[Tulare Advance Register editorial, July 31, 2003:](#)

Curtailing wood burning is being responsible

Reducing burning in your fireplace when the air quality has reach levels that are hazardous to your health should be the responsibility of all citizens. Now, it's the law.

The San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District last week approved the new rule that bans wood burning on designated days during the winter.

Unfortunately, the air board also approved the rule that will force homeowners to either convert their fireplaces to nonwood burning, or to disable them all together before they can sell their homes.

Doing what we can to clean up the air ought to be the responsibility of every citizen. The air in the San Joaquin Valley can become very stagnant during both the winter and summer months. When that happens, the dirty air becomes trapped and unhealthy. Fireplace burning only contributes to that problem.

However, the Air Board went too far in ordering homeowners to spend thousands of dollars to convert their fireplaces or disable them when they go to sell their homes. And, the Air Board has placed a burden on real-estate offices and escrow companies to ensure that sellers comply with the new law.