

Letters to the Editor

We're all responsible for the bad air quality in the Valley

By S.K. Thompson

Madera

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I find it interesting that Diane Gray of the Calaveras County Chamber of Commerce and Louis Boitano of Amador County [story Dec. 29] think their communities are victims of our bad air here in the San Joaquin Valley. It's tough these days to actually find any victims of air pollution other than our children.

If you drive a car, you are not a victim. If you burn wood, you are not a victim. If you use pesticides or herbicides, you are not a victim. If you buy products that have been delivered by truck drivers, you are not a victim.

If you lived in the Valley and polluted the air and then escaped to the mountains to retire, or if you commute to the Valley cities, you are not a victim. If you are a community that depends on revenue from tourists you are not a victim.

All of us are responsible for air pollution. It's time to quit whining about losing privileges such as driving and burning and being exempt because you live in an area where the pollution you do create doesn't hang over you as a brown-grayish unbreathable cloud.

Quit looking to everyone else to solve the problem. We all did it. We all need to be involved in cleaning it up. Those who think they're too poor and should be able to burn wood should think again. Our asthma and chronic bronchial obstruction diseases are skyrocketing. We are all susceptible. And if you happen to luck out and not develop breathing problems, you will still pay through higher taxes to cover health care for the poor, disabled and elderly.

So everyone, even those in the mountains or out here in the country, should stop the whining and do their part. Stop burning now.

Spare the air: Synchronize stop lights

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Pollution appears to be the No.1 problem to quality of life in the north valley, or so says The Bee. With that in mind, I have a serious question as to the goals and objectives of our so-called traffic engineers: Automobiles are a major source of pollution; so any attempt to discontinue, or at least curtail, the idling of automobiles at signals would help solve this problem. One way is to synchronize traffic signals, allowing automobiles to travel a distance instead of stopping and idling at each block and creating more pollution. Maybe our new City Council will see the wisdom of this solution in spite of our traffic engineers.

DOUGLAS C. SMITH

Modesto

Club, developers settle dispute

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Local Sierra Club leaders say they have settled legal complaints against four developments in Bakersfield. The settlements are part of a Sierra Club campaign to make new homes pay to clean up Kern County's smoggy air.

Under the deals, developers will pay a \$1,200-per-home air quality fee.

Sierra Club officials have settled two other similar cases in the past six months -- earning promises from the developers to pay air quality fees, offer solar-powered homes and protect endangered animal species.

The four new settlements include many of the same promises from developers.

Two developments -- River's Edge on Alfred Harrell Highway and Country Club Estates on Highway 178 near Rio Bravo Country Club -- are being developed by Sage Community Group of Newport Beach.

Dave Dmohowski, a local land-use consultant who represented the two Sage projects, confirmed that those settlements have been signed.

The other two projects are at Paladino and Morning drives and between Reina and Noriega roads just east of Allen Road, said Gordon Nipp, Sierra Club spokesman.

Developers will start paying the fee when they start building homes.

The money will go to a committee that includes representatives from the builder, city, Sierra Club and San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District.

The committee will use the money to fund clean-air projects -- crushing smoggy cars and shutting down diesel agriculture engines would be considered.

Nipp said the club won't receive any of the money. "The only benefit we get is breathing cleaner air just like anyone else," he said.

But the settlements haven't ended the Sierra Club's campaign to hold more developers accountable for what club officials feel is the pollution created by urban sprawl.

Nipp said the club will continue to challenge projects during city hearings and, if the projects are approved, posing legal challenges.

Sierra Club will formally announce the settlements at a press conference at 1 p.m. today in the Lake Room of Beale Memorial Library, 701 Truxtun Ave.

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