

State makes progress in kicking oil habit

By Robert Collier, S.F. Chronicle Staff Writer

Sunday, October 24, 2004

While politicians in Washington appear to be making little headway in breaking the nation's addiction to imported oil, California has made some real progress with innovative policies.

Renewable energy sources provide about 12 percent of California's electricity supply, and Republican and Democratic leaders have reached a rare consensus over the need to increase the state's use of solar, wind and hydrogen power, along with a large dose of conservation.

"California is now embarked on the world's most ambitious effort to save electricity and diversify its supply," said Amory Lovins, CEO of Rocky Mountain Institute, of Snowmass, Colo., which has advised San Francisco in its attempts to diversify the city's power supplies.

State and local initiatives include:

-- Auto emissions: In September, the California Air Resources Board ordered automakers to reduce the global-warming emissions of cars sold in California by 30 percent starting in 2009, which would force cars to increase gas mileage. U.S. auto companies are expected to file suit in federal court after the November election to try to overturn the rule.

-- Hybrid vehicles: A new state law allows hybrid cars rated at more than 45 miles per gallon onto the state's 1,100 miles of highway lanes reserved for cars carrying two or three people during rush hour. The measure effectively includes the Toyota Prius, the Honda Civic Hybrid and Honda Insight, but excludes Ford's new Escape hybrid SUV, which fails the 45-mpg benchmark, as well as other models that American automakers are expected to release in the coming years.

-- Hydrogen: In tandem with a Bush administration initiative, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed a Hydrogen Highways plan, which foresees hundreds of hydrogen fueling stations across the state by 2010 to help the commercialization of fuel-cell vehicles. However, most experts say hydrogen fuel-cell technology will not be fully ready for mass use until about 2020.

-- Solar: Under a \$100 million bond measure passed in 2001, San Francisco subsidizes residential and commercial owners who install solar panels on their roofs. The city already has installed about 675 kilowatts of solar capacity on the Moscone Convention Center, and plans to bring another 225 kilowatts on line at the water pollution control plant in the Bayview District. Statewide, Schwarzenegger launched a "Million Solar Roofs" campaign to increase the number of solar power systems on residential and commercial rooftops. He also signed a bill in September to make it more affordable for 12, 000 homes to install solar power systems.

-- Efficiency: The state's Flex Your Power conservation program, created after the 2001-2002 energy crisis, helps private and municipal utilities, businesses, nonprofits and federal, state and local government offices to adopt more efficient electricity and heating equipment and practices.

-- Investments: State Treasurer Phil Angelides has spearheaded a "Green Wave" initiative for the California Public Employees Retirement System and the California State Teachers Retirement System. Under the program, about \$950 million of the funds' investments have been channeled into purchases of stock and private equity in solar, wind and geothermal energy firms.

Despite these advances, there also have been setbacks. Schwarzenegger vetoed legislation that would have accelerated California's transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources like wind, solar or biomass. Current rules require all retail power suppliers to obtain at least 20 percent of their electricity from these new sources by 2017. The vetoed bill would have moved the date to 2010.

The governor also vetoed funding for the California Power Authority, which helps other state agencies conserve energy and install solar panels on their buildings. Schwarzenegger's aides have said he plans to transfer the authority's programs, currently overseen by a four-person board that includes Angelides and two appointees of former Gov. Gray Davis, to agencies completely controlled by Schwarzenegger.

Russia moves closer to OK of Kyoto pact Upper house, Putin expected to give final approval

By David Holley, Los Angeles Times

in the S.F. Chronicle, Saturday, October 23, 2004

Moscow -- Russia's lower house of parliament approved the Kyoto Protocol on Friday, virtually guaranteeing that the treaty to fight global warming will take effect early next year.

Ratification still requires approval by the Federation Council, or upper house of parliament, and the signature of President Vladimir Putin, but those steps are widely expected. Russian approval would give the treaty enough worldwide support to take force 90 days after Russia's ratification documents are delivered to the United Nations in New York.

Because the Bush administration pulled out of the agreement in 2001, the pact's requirements to reduce so-called "greenhouse gas" emissions would not apply to the United States. But business units of U.S. companies operating in countries that have approved the treaty would be affected.

"Now the issue is resolved," said Grigory Pasko, editor-in-chief of Ecology and Law, a Russian-language magazine. "The approval of the Federation Council is just a technicality. ... In the end, despite the views of his own advisers, Putin chose in favor of ratifying, and in our country, whatever Putin decides immediately becomes a legal reality."

Some of Putin's top economic advisers opposed the treaty out of fear that it will hamper the future growth of Russian industry, but the Russian Foreign Ministry has strongly favored ratification. Friday's vote was 334 in favor, with 73 against and two abstentions.

Putin's decision to endorse the pact has been seen widely as tied to agreements reached with the European Union on thorny trade issues. But Mikhail Delyagin, chairman of the Institute of Globalization Problems, a Moscow think tank, said he believed the decision to back the treaty also reflected a desire to defuse Western criticism on human rights issues.

"We surrendered all positions because we decided to use Kyoto Protocol ratification as the bone we threw to the European dog to stop its barking about the violations of human rights in Russia," Delyagin said.

The treaty, hammered out at a 1997 U.N. conference in Kyoto, Japan, already has been ratified by more than 120 countries. It was designed to slow global warming by reducing air pollution, particularly the release of carbon dioxide, which many scientists believe creates a "greenhouse" effect. Industrial nations that sign on are required to reduce their emissions of six key gases to 5.2 percent below 1990 levels by 2012.

Russia's support is needed to reach a key standard for the pact to take effect: approval by countries that accounted for at least 55 percent of global emissions in 1990. Russia's share of emissions that year was 17 percent, while the United States was responsible for 36 percent.

U.S. withdrawal meant that ratification by nearly all other industrial countries was required for the treaty to take force. Canada, Japan and members of the European Union have all given their backing.

Backers of the treaty say that while it is only a first step toward addressing the threat of global warming, it will be enough to push forward the development of new technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"By signing and ratifying the protocol, we are joining the family of civilized peoples and we are not only assuming responsibilities to control emissions but we are gaining access to new energy-saving and more progressive technologies," Pasko said. "Among other things, the signatories to this protocol pledge to assist one another on various ecological issues."

"This puts a challenge to the United States -- will it continue with a policy of environmental isolationism, or will it join the rest of the world in addressing the global warming problem?" Annie Petsonk, international counsel for New York-based Environmental Defense, said in a telephone interview.

In any case, U.S. corporations active in signatory countries will not be able to ignore the treaty, Petsonk said.

Schwarzenegger unveils hydrogen Hummer, but not how he planned

By Tim Molloy, Associated Press Writer

in the S.F. Chronicle, Friday, October 22, 2004

LOS ANGELES (AP) -- Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger introduced an environmentally friendly Hummer on Friday -- but not exactly the hydrogen-powered car he promised voters he would build when he campaigned for office.

Criticized by environmentalists for owning a gas-guzzler, Schwarzenegger said during last year's recall campaign that he would convert one of his Hummers to run on hydrogen. Though he hasn't done that, the governor did introduce an alternative at an event that mixed environmentalism and stagecraft: a hydrogen-powered Hummer custom-built by General Motors at his request.

The governor drove the shiny blue SUV to a hydrogen fueling spot at Los Angeles International Airport to tout his \$100 million plan for a "hydrogen highway" of such stations. But the event betrayed the current limitations of hydrogen power even as it celebrated the technology's progress.

Though Schwarzenegger arrived in the low-pollution vehicle, he left in a gasoline-powered SUV that typically gets about 15 miles per gallon. It was a pragmatic decision, given that the hydrogen Hummer needs to refuel every 50 miles and there are only about a dozen fueling stations across the state.

Schwarzenegger said the LAX station would be the first designed for use by the general public rather than government vehicles. But a builder conceded the station wouldn't be open to the average driver for at least 5 to 10 years.

The fact that the hydrogen Hummer was new -- and not a retrofit from Schwarzenegger's personal fleet -- was almost lost amid the razzle-dazzle of the new technology.

"I promised I would turn one of my Hummers into a hydrogen Hummer. Today I drove one of those," the governor said.

However, under questioning by reporters, Schwarzenegger clarified that the Hummer wasn't his.

"I wanted to turn one of my Hummers into a hydrogen-fueled car," he said. "But then, General Motors was so inspired that they said, 'Wait a minute -- why don't you let us build one? Let us build a prototype.'"

GM said it began developing the hydrogen Hummer in late spring. The company wanted to develop a new vehicle instead of retrofitting an old one because it wanted its work to have long-term, practical applications, spokesman David Caldwell said.

The company said it owns the Hummer unveiled Friday but is lending it to California to help raise awareness about hydrogen technology. Caldwell said he was uncertain of the details but didn't think the state was paying for the use of the vehicle.

Schwarzenegger was the first person to buy a Hummer, a civilian version of the military vehicle that caught the public's attention during the Gulf War. GM estimates the latest version of the vehicle, the 6,400-pound H2, gets 10 to 13 miles per gallon. Dealers put the figure at 8 to 10 mpg.

Since the election, Schwarzenegger has reduced his fleet from seven Hummers to three, and he rarely drives any of them, spokeswoman Terri Carbaugh said.

"My Hummers are now in the garage, because I get driven by the CHP all the time," the governor said.

Schwarzenegger signed an executive order in April calling for the construction of a network of stations offering hydrogen fuel up and down the state within six years. The program is expected to cost \$100 million.

That would have the stations ready by 2010, the year when automakers say they hope to have hydrogen vehicles available to consumers.

But the target date may be optimistic, said Susan Szita Gore, a spokeswoman for Praxair, which worked with BP to build the fueling station where Friday's event was held. She said it may be 5 to 10 years before drivers can pull up to the station and fill their cars with hydrogen.

Several other government agencies are also experimenting with hydrogen-powered vehicles, including the South Coast Air Quality Management District, which plans to retrofit 35 Toyota Prius hybrid cars to use hydrogen instead of gasoline.

Map of hydrogen fueling stations: www.fuelcellpartnership.org/fuel-vehl_map.html
<http://www.fuelcellpartnership.org/fuel-vehl_map.html>

Cows help power Valley dairy

Joseph Gallo Farms' new system converts cattle manure into methane.

By Dennis Pollock / The Fresno Bee

(Updated Friday, October 22, 2004, 11:11 AM)

ATWATER - More than 100 people gathered at Joseph Gallo Farms here Thursday to observe a power generation system in which methane from cow manure is used to generate a portion of the electricity needed to process cheese produced by the megadairy.

The occasion was the dedication of a manure digestion system expected to generate up to 2.5 million kilowatt hours of electricity per year while improving water quality and reducing greenhouse gas and other air emissions.

"This one is a threefer," said Assembly Member Barbara Matthews, D-Tracy, as she and other elected officials spoke beneath the towering cottonwoods for which the Cottonwood Dairy is named. "We want to see this replicated."

The event drew air quality regulators, energy officials and dairy industry leaders who talked of the promises and challenges that come with duplicating - on whatever scale - the ambitious Gallo Farms effort that cost more than \$2 million and took more than two years.

"This technology has a terrific potential to reduce our reliance on foreign energy sources," said Michael Marsh, chief executive officer of Western United Resource Development Co. and of Western United Dairymen.

Western United Resource is the grant administrator for the Dairy Power Production Program.

But Marsh said that unless dairy operators can sell excess power they generate, "this technology will be tenuous at best." He said the money that could be made from generating the energy is vital to providing the incentive - and pay - for adding such facilities.

Gallo's operations differ from many because its cheese plant consumes all the energy created by the methane digester - and demands more.

It can take so much more, in fact, that the company is planning to add a second generator to use gas that is burned off with a continuously flaming flare. The costs of energy use amount to only 1% or 2% of operating expenses for most dairies, said Douglas W. Williams, project manager for the Gallo digester with Williams Engineering Associates in Los Osos.

"There have to be more incentives, subsidies or tax cuts to make it pay for itself," he said.

Those who operate Joseph Gallo Farms say the payoff for their digester facility - because of the added savings in the cheese processing - will be three or four years. It's expected to save \$275,000 a year in electrical costs.

Matching grants are made available through Western United Resource. The amount of assistance for the Gallo digester was \$600,000.

George Simons, program manager for renewables with the California Energy Commission, said the state is calling for 20% of its energy use to fall into the "renewable" category by 2010. He expects that will add impetus to calls for purchase of the excess power.

Tom Bantz, Pacific Gas & Electric Co. senior project manager, said there is "a renaissance in the private power-generation business."

He said landfills are among those who have added electricity-generating facilities.

Mike Gallo, CEO of Gallo Farms, said the project "is more like a pilot program, it will be refined." He said use of methane digesters is based on old technology that is being upgraded daily, and he believes the state "will mandate more use of renewable energy."

Introducing Carl Morris, chief operating officer for Gallo Farms who oversaw the digester project, Gallo quipped, "Some call him the master of methane. Hopefully, they don't call me the king of crap."

Morris was among those who led visitors on a tour of the massive digester that covers 7 acres along with neighboring lagoons. The biogas travels nearly a mile from the covered digester to the generator.

Flushed manure from the company's Cottonwood Dairy goes through separators to take out solids as it is pumped to the digester, where natural microbial action converts the nutrients in the manure into methane. There is a high-density polyethylene cover over the lagoon to capture the biogas and channel it into a pipeline. Morris stood on the heavy cover as he spoke to visitors.

The biogas system saves use of about 145,000 gallons of propane per year.

The dedication of the Gallo digester is the third such event at a dairy operation this year. Another project aided by Western United held its unveiling Tuesday in Lodi. Another went online in May at Marshall in Marin County.

Gallo's is the third of 14 projects underwritten, at least in part, by California Energy Commission grants totaling nearly \$5.8 million.

"Without a dairy industry that is strong, we would not have a strong economy," said U.S. Rep. Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced. "The reverberations from this [digester project] will change the way we do business in the dairy industry of California."

Air district power upgrade to close office

Saturday, October 23, 2004

Released to the Madera Tribune

The Valley Air District's Fresno office will undergo electrical system upgrades Friday that will require power to the building to be shut down. During the ungrade, all district services, including access to the web site and phone system, will be unavailable

Valley farmers seeking authorization to burn agricultural waste Friday and Saturday are advised that the Smoke Management system will be offline at times due to the upgrade.

Holders of burn permits seeking authorization to burn Friday should call for automated assistance between 8p.m. Thursday and 7 a.m. Friday, and for live assistance between 6 and 7 a.m. Friday. The ag-burn phone number is 800-665-2876.

The Smoke Management system will resume normal operations as soon as power is restored. The upgrade might leave the system offline until noon Saturday and burns won't be authorized until the system is back online. Burns can only be initiated with express authorization and a valid burn permit. Violators can be fined.

While the Smoke Management system is down, calls to the line will ring without answer.

[In political news addressing air quality and related issues:](#)

Hopefuls confront growth

Merced Sun-Star
Oct. 25, 2004
By Doane Yawger

LIVINGSTON -- Seven people, including two incumbents and two former councilmen, are running for three seats on the Livingston City Council -- all preoccupied with how the community handles the growth it faces.

Incumbent Councilmembers William Ingram and Frank Vierra are each seeking another four-year term. They are joined on the Nov. 2 ballot by former Councilmember and Mayor Manjit Singh Nagi, former Councilmember Guadalupe Garcia and challengers Luis Naranjo, Roy Soria and Robert Torres.

First-term Councilman Everardo Arroyo decided not to seek re-election.

Councilman William Ingram said the biggest issue in this fall's election is the community's continued growth. He said the goal is to plan growth wisely so it's not burdensome on city residents.

That means developers should foot the bill for needed infrastructure, he said.

"We have a great future. We've got great support from the state and county. One of my long-range goals is to get developers to build starter homes; we desperately need low-income housing," Ingram said.

Naranjo said Livingston needs to attract more companies and industries, providing more job stability for the community.

If elected, he said, he would investigate why the city hasn't been able to attract new businesses and then establish an approach to marketing the town.

"I believe in growth. I don't mind more residential. We need more jobs. Ten years from now, I'd like to see Livingston with a brighter, more open-minded opportunity to bring business to town," Naranjo said.

While there's room for improvement, Naranjo said he believes Livingston's police officers "do extremely well."

Garcia, who served as mayor for six years and a councilman for two years in the 1980s, said there are a lot of issues in this year's election. He criticized the current council for a lack of leadership.

"(The councilmembers) should all be replaced. I've got the experience. I like the community. The guys up there let the city manager do it all," Garcia said.

He said the current council passes the buck and doesn't have the nerve to slow the requests for growth.

"They are building too many homes and saying 'yes' to every developer. We should concentrate on commercial to bring in sales tax," Garcia said.

Vierra, winding up his first four-year term on the council, said his biggest concern is upgrading downtown infrastructure, which hasn't changed since the 1950s.

"As for Livingston's future, I know developers are pounding at the door. We need to look at planned, controlled growth. We also need to look into affordable housing and help people on the lower end of the scale," Vierra said.

Vierra said the city just received a \$1.9 million state grant for downtown upgrading, which is a start. He said the second biggest issue is securing more commercial and light-industrial businesses.

A former teacher and principal and now the bookkeeper at Livingston High School, Vierra said the new frontage road proposed by Caltrans near Livingston will open up commercial opportunities.

"Unless we can accommodate our students, we can't build and build without looking into the educational side of it," Vierra said.

Nagi, who served on the council from 1988-2000, said right now city services aren't too effective or efficient. He said Livingston residents have problems getting things done and being heard.

"Growth is needed, no question. We need to do more to attract business and industry," Nagi said.

Veterinarian Nagi said the city had a complete system in place when he first served on the council. One after another, the department heads were let go and now the services that were so readily available are gone, he said.

Nagi said he was involved with Livingston when its population was 3,000, and now there are 12,000 residents. He said he has been there a long time and should be able to use his knowledge and experience to help the community.

Soria said bringing in businesses that will hire local residents is essential, along with creating a light industrial park. He said the city needs to look for more grants to upgrade water lines and accommodate older parts of town.

Livingston also needs to look into a senior citizen housing complex and needs to build a bridge over the Union Pacific Railroad tracks at Winton Parkway, he said.

Torres could not be reached for comment. In an earlier article, he said residents should not be stuck paying for services to accommodate growth. He also said commercial-industrial growth should keep up with residential and the city's planning department needs more help.

Wasco voters consider measure on dairy buffer

Residents to voice views on nonbinding call for zone 10 miles around their city

By GRETCHEN WENNER, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Oct. 25, 2004

Let's be realistic: It's the cows, not the City Council race, triggering some big-league media interest in Wasco's upcoming election.

Residents of the nation's self-proclaimed rose capital, some 25 miles north of Bakersfield, will vote on Measure U next week along with the typical slate of school board and local government races.

Measure U is about hooves. It will gauge how Wasco-ites feel about a batch of big dairies moving in northwest of town.

Specifically, Measure U asks if folks want a 10-mile buffer zone around their city. A "yes" vote supports the dairy buffer concept.

Measure U also has zero clout.

It carries no legal weight for the Kern County Board of Supervisors, who will ultimately determine whether 10 or so projects with a possible 100,000 cows become Wasco neighbors.

Still, Measure U has a certain buzz. The Latino caucus of the League of California Cities endorsed it this month. Councilman Larry Pearson, who's up for re-election, says he was called by an Associated Press reporter about the subject last week. And this week, a *Los Angeles Times* reporter is coming to visit the town of 22,000.

Wasco native Kenneth Moore belongs to a group of U supporters who've been promoting the measure via a float in Wasco's parade and, more recently, neighborhood campaigns with doorknob hangers.

"In a nutshell, it's not against dairy itself," said Moore, who became involved because of concerns about air quality. "It's just a buffer so (the dairies) aren't so close to town."

Currently, a cluster of projects are proposed starting less than three miles from city limits.

Supporter Reggie Reyes says the most important thing is keeping the big new facilities "away from city limits" because of concerns about water pollution, smell and flies.

"I'm concerned about the younger kids and future generations," Reyes said. "You never know what these dairies may bring."

But not everyone is pro-U.

"I'm all for dairies," said Julie Priest. "I am a country girl. I've been around dairies and it doesn't bother me at all."

Priest, who lives in town, said her stance is unusual there.

Her country friends also want dairies to come in with jobs and other economic boosts.

"But they don't count," she said with a laugh, admitting that even her husband, who could be heard shouting about cows in the background, is a Measure U supporter.

At least some voters, however, don't know what to think.

"There's a lot going on about it, but I don't know what the pros and cons are," said Darline Parten.

She and husband Joe live at the south end of town, she said. Dairies northwest of the city wouldn't bother her.

She's been getting information from both sides.

"We get all this mail, all this stuff," she said. "They say they've got this new something that keeps down the smells."

Pearson, the councilman, is one of U's authors.

He's vehemently against dairies moving in so close they threaten Wasco's quality of life.

The city has seen property values go up recently for the first time in years.

Leaders have established new building codes that require landscaping and other niceties. Developers are flooding in.

And the City Council is finally washing its hands of an albatross-like municipal golf course northwest of town.

They have high hopes for patching the financial debacle created by decisions made 15 years ago. They plan to turn the course, now in foreclosure, into a development of 2,000 upscale homes.

"If the dairies come in that close to the golf course, we're done," Pearson said. "It just kills us. We're done."

Kern stuck with Chino cow manure

Untold tons of manure has been trucked into county since 1980s

By GRETCHEN WENNER, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, Oct. 24, 2004

Long before today's Chino milk cows were born, manure from their ancestors was hauled over the hill to Kern County.

Untold tons of manure have been trucked out of Chino since at least the 1980s.

Truckers are still making the run.

No one, for the most part, has tracked where they take the dung.

For Chino water officials, "gone" was good enough after dairy waste was found to be the area's major source of water pollution.

Kern officials apparently didn't know about the exports until this summer, when a county planner stumbled on footnotes describing exports to San Joaquin and Imperial valley sites.

At this point, there's only one number available for the Chino-to-Kern connection: in 2002, Kern got 180,000 tons.

That's roughly equal to a year's waste from 45,000 cows.

Kern is now on the brink of getting 214,000 more cows from some two dozen dairy projects proposed here. That's in addition to an estimated 290,000 cows already here on 55 dairies.

Like the trucked manure, most of the incoming cows are from Chino.

It's about the air

While water contamination is a concern everywhere, air in the southern San Joaquin Valley is the most immediate problem -- it's rated the worst in the nation in some categories.

And under legislation recently passed in Sacramento, dairies and other farming operations need to reduce emissions.

Scientists aren't sure how much manure contributes to air pollution, but there's no argument that it has an impact.

Now San Joaquin air officials are wondering how much manure has been dumped on Kern over the years.

"We just weren't realizing the size of this thing," said Dave Jones, planning director for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which oversees emissions from non-vehicular sources in the Central Valley.

Jones said the district first learned of the shipments about a year ago, when Southern California air regulators started crafting new dairy rules that advocated shipping manure out of the basin.

"We challenged them on that," Jones said. "We started looking at it back then."

Exporting pollution

Sam Atwood, spokesman for the South Coast Air Quality Management District, which governs the Chino area, said after concerns cropped up the district's governing board directed staff to come up with a rule that wouldn't encourage increased shipments out of the basin.

"They recognized it was not a good policy decision to reduce our emissions by simply exporting pollution elsewhere," Atwood said.

Southern California regulators never notified San Joaquin officials about the emissions source being trucked into the local air basin.

When asked how San Joaquin air officials would have found out about the shipments, Atwood said he didn't know.

Anywhere but here

Almost all existing information about the manure exports comes from Southern California water regulators.

In the past four years, a budding tracking system has created a computerized record.

These days, officials know where manure ends up but not what happens to it, said Steve Mayville, chief of the dairy unit for the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board.

In 2002, the only year Mayville broke out spehow much waste they hauled.

The George Borba & Son Dairy in Chino, for example, transported 17,061 tons to Bakersfield, apparently to or near the family's big new facility here.

Another operation, Syann Dairy, shipped 9,800 tons to "Kern County crop land."

These days, the Chino basin still has what's probably the highest concentration of cows in the world: about 302,000 animals in a 25-square-mile area.

Last year, Chino's cows produced about 1.2 million tons of manure, according to the water board.

Most was hauled out of the immediate basin.

Don't ask, don't tell

Although dairy manure is known to have caused severe water pollution in Chino, where little land is available to spread waste on feed crops, regulators don't know what impact the exports have had here.

Lonnie Wass, supervising engineer for the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, said the situation has never been studied.

"We're not tracking that," he said. "We're not regulating that."

The 180,000-ton figure, Wass said, is a "significant amount."

It's basically up to area farmers, he said, to apply the waste to crops and land at reasonable rates.

"If they're very judicious in applying manure for agronomic use, the threat to ground and surface water is quite little," Wass said. "But they're unchecked, and the hope is that the farming community is doing things right."

Neither the water board nor the air board have resources to monitor the effects of the trucked-in manure, they said.

The dairy manure, both agencies say, is now yet another component of Los Angeles-area waste dumped in the valley. There are already problems from Southern California's human sewage, or "biosolids," and green waste being spread here.

"We're going to assess this entire thing," said Jones of the San Joaquin air district. "We haven't committed to doing something yet. We'll look at it and see."

Fill tank, empty wallet

Gas prices climbing, but no single point drives change in behavior

By ERIN WALDNER, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, Oct. 23, 2004

When it comes to gas prices, there's no magic number.

There's no definitive "breaking point" when motorists change their driving and spending habits.

"It's probably different for everybody," said Jeff Spring, a spokesman for the Automobile Club of Southern California.

Nicholas Anderson, purchasing gas at a station in Oildale on Tuesday afternoon, said his breaking point is around \$2.20 a gallon. That's when he starts cutting back in other areas.

Howard Cox of northwest Bakersfield, visiting the same station, said he's forced to eat the added cost when gas prices go up because he's self-employed in the building trade and has to drive to his jobs.

And Krystal Vader, a student at Bakersfield College, also said she doesn't do anything differently when gas prices reach a certain level.

"All I do is drive back and forth from work and school," she said.

Gas prices have skyrocketed in recent weeks, fueled by hefty crude oil prices.

According to the U.S Energy Information Administration, the national retail average for self-serve regular on Monday was \$2.04 a gallon, which is a big leap from the \$1.87 average of Aug. 30.

In California, the average price of regular soared from \$2.10 to \$2.40 in the same period.

Spring said some people reached their breaking point -- they changed their spending and driving habits -- when gas prices went up in 2003.

"We saw some carpooling last year," he said.

For other people, he said \$2.30 or \$2.40 might be the breaking point.

And still other people might not have a breaking point at all.

It depends on "your own personal budget," Spring said. "Some people have more flexibility in their budgets than others."

Will demand dry up?

Dave Costello, who prepares the Short-Term Energy Outlook for the Energy Information Administration, the statistical arm of the U.S. Department of Energy, said it appears the nation's higher gas prices have contributed to slower gasoline demand in the second half of 2004.

"Going into 2005, we think the level of gasoline demand is going to be lower than it otherwise would have been," Costello said.

Gas prices, Costello said, have to go way up -- and stay there for a long time -- for people to change their behavior.

California gas prices have remained above the \$2 mark since February.

Jonathan Cogan, a spokesman for the Energy Information Administration, explained that America's demand for gasoline is relatively price insensitive. A sudden spike at the pump does not immediately result in less demand.

One reason for that: There's no ready substitute for gasoline.

Cogan offered an analogy. If the price of orange juice goes up, consumers can easily buy apple or grape juice instead. But when gas prices go up, drivers can't switch to using coal.

Costello noted that in some urban areas, it's easy for residents to take mass transit when gas prices go up and in other areas, that's not the case.

Riding the rails, buses

Rick Jaeger, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in Los Angeles, said ridership on local buses and rails in L.A. has not risen as a result of the high gas prices.

That's partly because MTA has not recovered from a strike it experienced last year.

Also, "most of our ridership is transit-dependent," Jaeger said. They don't have cars, so the price of gas doesn't affect them.

Jaeger said increases in gas prices are more likely to impact commuters coming into Los Angeles from other counties.

Metrolink, a 400-mile commuter rail system that runs through five counties, bringing people to L.A., has seen a 9 percent increase in ridership this year, according to Metrolink spokeswoman Sharon Gavin.

"This is a big jump for us," she said.

She said there are probably many reasons for the increase, gas prices being just one of them.

When gas prices have gone up in past years, Metrolink, launched in 1992, did not see a huge rise in ridership.

"It takes a lot to get people out of their cars and onto public transportation," Gavin said.

Echoing Jaeger, she said gas would probably have to reach \$3 a gallon for most people to leave their cars at home.

Here in Bakersfield, the Golden Empire Transit District, which runs the public buses, had an increase in ridership for seven straight months, according to Emery Rendes, a transit planner at GET. Ridership is up 1 percent over the same months last year.

"We can't say it's because of the gas prices," Rendes said.

He said it could be because of Bakersfield's growing population, the economy or gas prices -- or, all three.

Costello pointed out it's not always easy for people to hop on a train or bus to get to work.

"A lot of urban, suburban areas are sprawled out," Costello said.

When gas prices go up, Nicholson's driving patterns stay the same.

"I've still got to drive," he said. "I work in Rosedale." He lives in Oildale.

The drive for new autos

Jim Burke Ford in Bakersfield continues to sell a lot of heavy duty trucks and SUV Expeditions despite the high gas prices, according to the general sales manager, Jerry Cook.

Cook said customers are asking questions about the fuel efficiency of Ford vehicles, but they're still more concerned about the vehicles' safety features and the utilitarian aspect of sport utility vehicles.

Ford's new gasoline-electric SUV is not yet available at Jim Burke Ford, but there's already a lot of interest in it, Cook said.

[He thinks the vehicle's low emissions, rather than its fuel efficiency, is what's driving interest.](#)

September marked the first month the Toyota's hybrid Prius broke the 100,000 sales mark, according to the company. Sam Butto, a spokesman for Toyota Motor Sales USA in Torrance, said the Prius has sold briskly since its debut in July 2000.

Is that because of high gas prices?

"I think that's part of the reason," he said.

The Prius, he said, is an environmental choice for some people and a practical choice for others.

So far, the high gas prices of 2004 have not put a serious dent in Toyota's sales, according to Butto.

"We're still having record sales this year," he said.

Cook said the last time gasoline had a significant impact on the American auto industry was the 1970s, during the oil embargo.

"But that was because there was a fear of *getting* gas," he said. "Now, it's available."

Now, if gas surged to \$3 a gallon, he added, that would obviously impact the industry.

Bad air fights targets bad planning

Monday, Oct. 25, Manteca Bulletin

by Dennis Wyatt, Managing Editor

SALIDA -- The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is now working on a series of new regulations for development that could change the face of the valley while cleaning up the air.

And depending upon how successful the district is, it could make breathing healthier for San Joaquin Valley's 3.2 million residents including this living in Manteca, Ripon and Lathrop. It also could help San Joaquin County and the rest of the Valley meet a 2010 deadline to reduce pollutants or else risk losing tens of millions of dollars annually in federal transit funds.

The goal is to use financial incentives -- or disincentives -- depending on what type of plans are submitted for the agency's review to encourage development patterns that will reduce vehicle trips.

Air quality in the narrow, 250-mile long San Joaquin Valley Basin is among the worst in the country and is on par with the Los Angeles Basin for severity. The Valley, on average, experiences 35 to 40 days when federal health-based standards for ground-level ozone is exceeded and more than 100 days over the state ozone standard.

The Valley is federally classified as severe non-attainment for the federal ground-level ozone and particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM10) standard.

Conditions are much worse in the southern part of the Valley near Bakersfield and Fresno. But because San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties where the problem is less severe is part of the same basin and ultimately what air pollution is generated here heads south, the rules that are being adopted will apply to the entire district stretching from the southern Sacramento County line to the Techachapi Mountains by Bakersfield.

Smart planning means clean air

The new regulations for development will mean smart planning will become smart business for developers whether it is planning a residential neighborhood, a commercial project or an employment center.

The new rules, which are targeted to go into effect in early 2005, will require all developments to be reviewed by the air pollution control district. The program will provide incentives for planning that reduces vehicle trips. The incentives, which haven't been established, will be in the form of lower fees or the waiver of fees from a schedule of charges that will be assessed to developments that do not take steps to design projects that encourage less vehicle trips.

The district plans to have a computer model created that will take information on each project and assign points to determine fees that will be charged. It is possible if a development is planned right to virtually escape fees.

The aim is to design neighborhoods similar to Atherton Boyce Development's 465-home Tesero project just approved by the Manteca City Council.

The features in Tesero that will reduce vehicle trips include:

A separated, loop bicycle path that runs along the major neighborhood interior street and past the Woodward School Annex site and the 8.5-acre park.

Extension of the citywide separated bicycle path loop system with the extension of Atherton Drive.

Placing high density residential close to major arterials and alternative transit such as the bicycle path that extends to downtown shopping, the Spreckels Park employment center and shopping . It will eventually connect to shopping areas south of the Highway 120 Bypass as well as the Austin Road Business Park and Tara Business Park projects that are in their infancy stages.

It also will provide access to the \$3 million Manteca transit center being pursued at Moffat and Main, just over a mile away.

The proposed 1,063 acre Tara Park project in southwest Manteca also has some vehicle trip reducing features. The design for Tara Business Park calls for a "town center" with shops, restaurant and high density housing with a dedicated transit corridor for possible tram service in the future to the Altamont Commuter Express station as well as the employment center that is envisioned around the town center.

The district's model could also give credit for strategic use of trees to cool buildings and reduce energy consumption.

Commercial projects that essentially have solo stand alone big boxes would not fare well under a rating to reduce vehicle trips. A medium box retailer such as a Barnes & Noble clustered with smaller shops to encourage trip combining would fare better.

Projects that have covered bus stop shelters for future transit service also would do well in scoring positive points.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Sat., Oct. 23, 2004:](#)

Dairy freshener

Methane digesters can help reduce pollution from large operations.

Dairies in California, and especially here in the Valley, have become a tremendous economic engine. But serious environmental issues have to be addressed. That's why the recent dedication of a new system for reducing methane gas pollution at a Merced County dairy is good news.

The Joseph Gallo Farms unveiled a methane digester that can generate up to 2.5 million kilowatt hours of electricity per year, while improving water quality and reducing greenhouse gas and other air pollution.

The system is simple in concept: Manure from the dairy is pumped into the digester - essentially a big pond topped with a tough polyethylene cover. Natural microbes break down the manure, releasing, among other elements, methane gas. The gas is then pumped to generating facilities and burned to produce electricity.

Gallo Farms is the third dairy operation in the state (the others are in Lodi and Marin County) to use grant funds from the California Energy Commission - plus a lot of its own money - to install such a digester. In all, 14 such projects will be funded by the commission.

That's good news in a state that has, in a few short years, come to lead the nation in dairy production. Converting methane to energy in this fashion is actually an old idea. But advances in technology have made the process more efficient and less costly, and thus more attractive.

And it's important to remember that cleaner water and air are "profits" that rarely appear on spreadsheets. But they are dividends that shareholders - that's all of us, in this case - can enjoy.

Valley allergy-sufferer escapes to great unknown

Sunday, Oct. 24, Modesto Bee

By JEFF JARDINE - [BEE LOCAL COLUMNIST](#)

Plant, animal - it doesn't matter. If it's in the San Joaquin Valley, it bothers Roger Baird.

It's not that he doesn't like Modesto. He considers the city his home town, even if it's no longer his home. He still has family here.

The 31-year-old former Modestan is simply allergic to just about everything we have in these parts: molds, weeds, pollen, cats, dogs, horses, cattle and [smog](#). His body can't take it. When he comes home to visit, he gets sick within days.

So he leaves.

"Roger's OK as long as he's somewhere else," said his mother, Sandra Baird of Modesto.

At this moment, "somewhere else" is Antarctica - the coldest place on Earth and home to the South Pole.

It's where the thermometer once dipped to minus 129. And its icy waters, Roger Baird said, are home to a rare strain of cod that has a natural form of antifreeze in its blood.

Nothing grows on the Antarctica mainland except beards. Snow and ice pile up outside the compounds where scientists study things like astronomy, astrophysics, marine biology and the effects of global warming.

Otherwise, human inhabitants pretty much try to avoid becoming guinea pigs for cryogenics research.

There are no plants, pollen or molds - nothing to set off Baird's allergies and make him miserable.

The only animals on the continent are penguins, which he also encountered during a trip to Argentina's Patagonia region a few years ago.

"They attacked me," he said. "But I didn't have any allergies."

His medical conditions never dulled his adventurous spirit.

"He follows his dreams," mom Sandra said. "He was a kid who, in school, couldn't play outside for recess. The teacher had to stay in with him. He was so sickly as a small child that I can hardly find a picture of him smiling."

Yet Baird was all smiles upon arriving at Ross Island last week, the final stop before going on to his station near the South Pole. He arrived there Thursday.

He will earn \$400 a week, plus room and board, working for Raytheon Polar Service Corp. for the next year. Raytheon is the support contractor for the National Science Foundation, which has a station near the South Pole.

"It's the coldest, driest, most extreme place on Earth, and everything's going on," Baird said.

After graduating from Beyer High in 1992, Baird spent two years on a Mormon mission in the Dominican Republic. He discovered his allergies didn't act up there, and he seemed to thrive in the salt air.

In 1995, Baird enrolled at Brigham Young University's Hawaii campus because he had done so well in island climates. His diploma will arrive in the mail by the year's end, giving him degrees in art and language.

A skilled artist, he's painted with oils and completed murals for Mexican hotels. He loves to create works from whatever materials he can get his hands on - native grasses, mud, sticks.

Baird also is a language specialist who spent six months teaching English to oil workers in Argentina, touring much of South America in the process. He went to the jungles of Mexico and Guatemala to learn to read Mayan hieroglyphics and to speak varying Spanish dialects, often sneaking into areas deemed unsafe for your average tourist.

"If it's off limits, I try to do it," he said.

When he heard about a possible job working on a train that takes tourists to the areas around Alaska's Mount McKinley, he signed on for a summer. Baird discovered that cold-weather living kept his allergies at bay, too.

So he returned to Alaska the past two summers as a tour guide on the famed Mendenhall Glacier, moonlighting as a technician on a medevac helicopter crew. He slipped in an English teaching job in Japan in the winter of 2002-03.

Those frontiers conquered, he decided to try Antarctica. It suits him just fine, he said.

The air's nice and dry. No molds, no pollen. Just lots of snow, ice and white landscape. Want colors? Bring your own. He did. It will be a great place to hone his artistic skills by working in what he calls a "nonstimulous" environment.

"I'm not an Antarctic,," he jokes. "I'm an Ant-'art'-ican."

And anti-allergies.