

Gas-guzzling mowers wanted

Trade-in event offers a major discount on no-smog electric ones

BEE STAFF REPORTS

Modesto Bee, Sunday, April 10, 2005

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District wants your tired, your poor, your old gas-guzzling -- not to mention air-polluting -- lawn mower.

In return, you'll receive a \$130 discount on a nonpolluting electric mower that normally retails for \$229.99.

It's part of the air district's annual "Clean Green Yard Machines" program designed to raise awareness of the gas mower's air-polluting propensities that contribute to summertime smog.

The program begins May 14. Local scrap metal companies will recycle old mowers turned in under the program.

"This is just another way valley residents can use their power as consumers," said Dave Crow, district air-pollution control officer. "The lawn mower exchange program educates valley residents on the impact of gas-powered lawn equipment while also giving them a low-cost alternative."

A single gas-powered mower, according to Crow, can emit as much pollution as 40 late-model cars operating over the same period of time.

Electric mowers produce no harmful emissions.

Crow urges valley residents to take advantage of the offer by bringing gasoline-powered mowers, drained of all fluids, to the following events:

May 14, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Home Depot, 1617 N. Carpenter Road, Modesto.

May 15, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Home Depot, 7150 N. Abbey St., Fresno.

June 11, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Home Depot, 2655 Mount Vernon Ave., Bakersfield.

The first 240 people arriving at each event with trade-in mowers will receive a voucher to purchase a Black & Decker MM875 corded electric mower through Home Depot for \$100, plus tax.

The voucher must be used at Home Depot during the hours of the event.

The San Joaquin Valley air basin is classified by the federal Environmental Protection Agency as being in violation of federal smog standards.

As a result, officials are under a federal mandate to reduce ozone pollution within the district's eight counties: Stanislaus, Merced, San Joaquin, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and a portion of Kern.

For more information on the Clean Green Yard Machines program, contact Anthony Presto at 557-6472 or anthony.presto@valleyair.org

Cows' role in pollution is disputed

Panel must revise old stats, but not all research is in

By MARK GROSSI - THE FRESNO BEE

Modesto Bee, Saturday, April 9, 2005

With the \$4 billion dairy industry and environmentalists watching, an advisory group will take center stage next week in the emotional argument over how much smog can be blamed on cows.

Under a lawsuit settlement, the Dairy Permitting Advisory Group must come up with a suggested revision to estimate dairy air pollution, which several researchers now say the state has significantly overstated.

The problem: A key researcher won't know until summer's end how much pollution the animals create. Advisory group members will meet next week and work out a recommendation after having heard presentations from four researchers in the past several weeks.

"We'll take what we do know and talk about it," said group member J.P. Cativiela, representing Community Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship, a dairy advocacy group.

A University of California scientist on Monday told the advisory group that he needed more time for analysis. UC Davis researcher Frank Mitloehner studied cows and their waste in isolated chambers.

"We have tried to measure the most important compounds," Mitloehner said. "But you can't say something about what you haven't measured. We can't stand here and tell you a number."

Current state estimates show cows in the San Joaquin Valley produce about as much smog-making compounds, called reactive organic gas, as cars.

The issue looms large in the 25,000-square-mile valley, stretching from Stockton to Bakersfield, where there have been more daylong smog violations than any other place in the country since 1999.

The valley also has a burgeoning dairy industry, led by the No. 1 dairy county in the nation, Tulare County. Dairy owners believe they have been unfairly branded by the media, saying the current estimates are flawed.

Few people now believe the estimate, which relies on a 1938 study focused on the wrong kind of gas. In January, Mitloehner said his preliminary results indicated cows might emit only half the current estimate.

Now, after a lot of media attention, Mitloehner doesn't want to even mention a number: "It needs to be peer-reviewed."

Three other researchers have discussed their analysis with the advisory group. Group members said an independent environmental consultant, C.E. Schmidt, last month reported a dramatically lower emission rate - perhaps 85 percent lower than the current state figure.

But the work has not been checked by other academics or formally published, one environmentalist said.

"How defensible and valid are these conclusions?" asked dairy critic Brent Newell, lawyer for the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment.

The advisory group, however, cannot wait until the end of summer. The settlement of a lawsuit between the dairy industry and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District obligates the group to come up with a recommendation by April 15.

Several interests are represented in the group, including dairy, health, academics, environmentalists, the air district and community activists.

Fancher Creek project raises questions

Southeast Fresno site both residential, commercial

By Russell Clemings

[Fresno Bee, Monday, April 11, 2005](#)

Fresno's growth may set a southeasterly course in coming weeks as the Planning Commission and City Council consider the 476-acre Fancher Creek Properties development, near the end of the nearly completed Freeway 180 extension.

The project by Fresno developers Ed Kashian and Tom Richards would plant at least 687 new homes and an estimated 3 million square feet of commercial, office and light industrial space on what is now mostly farmland.

City officials, seeking to balance the city's steady northward growth of recent decades, have been longing for developers to show this kind of interest in southeast Fresno.

But some community activists and residents of the area wonder whether the city's eagerness to remold itself has led it to cut corners in its review of the Fancher Creek project.

A lawyer for Medical Advocates for Healthy Air questions whether the city was living up to an agreement - made when it settled an earlier lawsuit by the group - to use newly developed computer software in analyzing the project's traffic and air-quality effects.

"I can't figure out why they wouldn't be using every tool in the box," attorney Patience Milrod said.

City Development Director Nick Yovino disputed that the city was required to use the software in this case, but said: "We've committed to using it at a later date."

Last Wednesday, the Planning Commission had been scheduled to consider the project's first subdivision and a complex rezoning request. Commissioners put off action for two weeks when Milrod and others complained that an environmental report had not been made public until a few days before.

More than 100 people turned out for the brief discussion. In addition to concerns about traffic and air-quality impacts, neighbors are seeking details on how many apartments, if any, would be built. At least some multifamily housing is anticipated as part of a new "town center" planned for the northwest and northeast corners of Fowler Avenue and Kings Canyon Road, according to the Planning Commission's staff report.

"One of our main goals is to keep out as many apartments as we can," said Joanne Tolladay, secretary of the Sunnyside-Fancher Creek Association, who cited longstanding problems with low-income apartments just west of the project's largest tracts.

Kashian and Richards, who did not respond to repeated requests for comments over two days last week, have spent more than five years working on their project.

Earlier reviews led to changes in a draft of the city's general plan, adopted in 2002, and in the design of the Freeway 180 segment between Clovis and Temperance avenues, where work has not yet begun.

Local leaders on the Council of Fresno County Governments shifted about \$8 million in state highway funding to the Freeway 180 project in 2001 to accommodate local street and interchange improvements and the proposed Fancher Creek trail, which would traverse the project.

Yovino said the improvements were intended to serve an industrial park planned for a future phase of the Fancher Creek project and to improve traffic flow in the area. But one nearby resident, Tom Lang - who is challenging traffic fees sought by the city for his proposed Aquarius Aquarium in northwest Fresno - takes issue with that decision.

"The bottom line is that Richards and Kashian haven't paid anything" for the freeway changes, Lang said.

The Fancher Creek project would include:

About 30 acres on the northwest corner of Armstrong and Belmont avenues, where a mix of office, industrial and commercial uses is planned.

About 109 acres roughly bounded by Belmont, Armstrong, Fancher Creek and Fowler. Office, industrial and commercial uses are planned for 77 acres. An unspecified number of homes are slated for about 32 acres abutting the north and east edges of an existing subdivision.

A 31-acre tract straddling Fowler at Kings Canyon, where the "town center" is planned with multifamily housing and commercial activity.

A 211-acre area surrounding the 31-acre tract on three sides, where 687 new homes would be built. A new Clovis Unified School District elementary school also is planned in that area, along with a 5-acre park adjacent to the existing Fancher Creek Elementary School.

Ninety-five acres on the east side of Clovis at Tulare Avenue, where a regional shopping center is planned, as well as possible housing, office, commercial and industrial uses. That tract includes 52 acres under different ownership, for which rezoning is not being sought at this time.

The Planning Commission's hearing is set for 6 p.m. April 20 at Fresno City Hall. The city's planning staff said a community meeting is planned for 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Sunnyside Sports Complex, 5707 E. Balch Ave.

In three other requests heard Wednesday, the Planning Commission recommended that the City Council approve rezoning for:

A 37.5-acre tract on the northeast corner of Grantland and Shaw avenues for Ciao Properties to allow for a regional shopping center.

About 7 acres on the west side of Brawley Avenue between Shaw and Ashlan avenues for Paul DiTomaso, who plans warehouses.

A 15.2-acre parcel on the north side of Belmont Avenue between Sunnyside and Fowler avenues, where the city plans to build a baseball complex.

State to seek pesticide changes

Agency will order remake of chemicals after reporting higher pollution threat

By Mark Grossi

[Fresno Bee and Modesto Bee, Saturday, April 9, 2005](#)

Pesticide air pollution has spiked again in the country's top farming region, prompting the state to protect human health by calling for chemical manufacturers to change hundreds of products.

The state Department of Pesticide Regulation in the next several weeks will require reformulation of up to 800 pesticides, a spokesman said Friday.

The agency also announced an increase of about 14% in smog-making gases from pesticides in the San Joaquin Valley.

The Valley is a \$14 billion farm belt with a quickly expanding population and one of the country's most stubborn air problems.

"We are committed to improving air quality in the Valley," said department spokesman Glenn Brank. "This is an unprecedented regulatory action for us, and we believe it will work." The action comes too late as far as environmentalists and community activists are concerned. The groups believe the agency action should have taken place at least three years ago.

Last year, they sued the agency because the Valley was long past a 1999 deadline for pesticide air cleanup. The Clean Air Act has been violated, they said. The case was filed in a Sacramento federal court where a judge is currently considering various motions.

Teresa DeAnda, president of El Comite para el Bienestar de Earlimart, one plaintiff, said the increase in pollution from pesticides is no surprise.

"It's infuriating," she said. "The air pollution is really bad here. We're not going to make our cleanup deadlines in this Valley if they keep delaying like this."

The Valley has more violations of the daylong smog standard than any other place in the country. The cleanup deadline is 2013, which most experts consider too ambitious.

Pesticides are the fifth-biggest source of smog-making gases called volatile organic compounds, or VOCs. Other sources include vehicles, livestock waste and consumer products such as paint.

The gases combine with oxides of nitrogen, from fuel-burning sources such as cars, to make ozone, the main ingredient in smog. Ozone is a corrosive, warm-weather gas affecting the lungs, skin and eyes. It can trigger asthma attacks and other breathing disorders.

For 2003, the latest year of available data, pesticides sent out 26.5 tons of VOCs per day, up from about 23 tons the previous year. For comparison, passenger cars daily put out about 33.6 tons of the gas in the Valley.

In 1999, when the Valley was supposed to hit a target of 21.1 tons per day of VOCs from pesticides, the level was 26 tons. It dipped in 2000 and actually dropped well below the clean-air goal in 2001.

But the level jumped 34% in 2002, a number reported in 2004. It takes two years to compile the pesticide-use data and figure how much air pollution comes from the pesticides. State officials did not suspect the spike was coming.

"We were seeing a downward trend," Brank said. "We know it varies from year to year, depending on weather and the pressures of various pests."

Though officials have not yet seen 2003 numbers, a Fresno County Agricultural Commissioner spokesman said his "gut feeling" is that pesticide use had not increased. The use of more fumigants may have been the problem, said deputy commissioner Doug Edwards.

"If you have a lot of ground being taken out of production and switched to other crops, it is normal to use fumigants before you replant," he said.

The state announcement Friday confirmed part of Edwards' suspicion. Three fumigants - metam-sodium, 1,3-dichloropropene and methyl bromide - accounted for almost half of the smog-making gases coming from pesticides.

No controls will be ordered for individual farmers, although state officials are studying more effective applications of pesticides.

Report: Pesticide pollution up

Department of Pesticide Regulation to enforce new rules for manufacturers

By Dana Nichols

[Stockton Record, Saturday, April 9, 2005](#)

SACRAMENTO -- The amount of pesticides evaporating into the San Joaquin Valley air is on the rise and again violates pollution standards, according to the California Department of Pesticide Regulation.

This week's report said that there were more than 26 tons per day of emissions of volatile chemicals from pesticides in the San Joaquin Valley from May through October of 2003. Fumigants used to treat carrots, cotton and almonds were the biggest culprits.

Department of Pesticide Regulation spokesman Glenn Brank said the agency is responding to the bad news. New rules will force manufactures to disclose the ingredients in their products and to reformulate them to reduce the portion that evaporates into the air, he said.

"At the same time, we intend to do this in an orderly manner that will allow growers to keep the pest-management tools that they need."

But an attorney for several clean-air advocacy groups said the department should have taken action a decade ago after California adopted a state plan in 1994 to combat smog.

So-called volatile organic compounds -- or VOCs -- are a major factor to creating ozone, which is the major component of smog. But it is exactly the fact that oils and other volatile compounds evaporate easily that make them useful for spreading pesticides. Some pesticides, such as fumigants, are themselves volatile compounds.

So far, the department has made its efforts to track pesticide formulations voluntary.

"It is the fifth-largest source of VOC in the Valley, yet it is totally unregulated," said Brent Newell, a staff attorney for Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment. Groups Newell represents are suing the department and the state Air Resources Board to force regulation of pesticide-related air pollution.

State and federal air-pollution goals call for the Valley to have no more than about 21 tons per day of volatile compounds from pesticides released into the air.

That target is 12 percent below how much was released in 1990.

The Valley was supposed to reach its goal in 1999. Instead, 2001 was the only year for which emissions met the standard. Emissions have been rising since then.

Newell said he believes the lawsuit filed by Comite Para la Bienestar de Earlimart and Association of Irrigated Residents has forced DPR to take pesticide air pollution more seriously.

"Before we filed this case they were only talking about voluntary control measures," Newell said.

But Brank said it was the data on increasing pollution that prompted his agency to act.

He said officials expect it will take three or four years to reformulate the various pesticides.

Brank said manufacturers are being told to either reduce the volatile compounds in their formulations to no more than 20 percent, or to give a good reason for failing that target.

Now, many pesticides are 40 percent to 90 percent volatile chemicals that evaporate easily.

The DPR and the Air Resources Board are sponsoring a \$200,000 study to find ways to reduce the air pollution from fumigants. Fumigants are used to kill nematodes in soil before crops are planted and to kill almond pests, among other things.

About half of all the pesticide volatile compound air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley comes from fumigants, according to the DPR report.

States Seek EPA Action on Greenhouse Gases

By JOHN HEILPRIN, Associated Press Writer

[S.F. Chronicle, Friday, April 8, 2005](#)

(WASHINGTON, (AP) -- A coalition of 12 states and several cities asked a federal appeals court Friday to make the Environmental Protection Agency reconsider its decision not to regulate heat-trapping greenhouse gases as air pollutants.

The case has big potential implications for numerous federal and state programs under the Clean Air Act, as well as for the auto industry. Along with other forms of transportation, motor vehicles account for about a third of all U.S. energy-related carbon dioxide emissions - the chief gas scientists blame for global warming.

In a courtroom packed with auto industry representatives, environmentalists and government employees, three justices of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit sternly questioned lawyers for the states and the EPA. The judges wondered how far the government should go in the face of scientific uncertainty over global warming.

"We can't even tell what the weather's going to be two weeks from now, but these models tell us what the climate is going to be like 100 years from now," said Judge A. Raymond Randolph, whose questioning appeared to favor the EPA's position.

The judges did not indicate when they might rule in the case; such decisions typically take months.

In August 2003, the EPA denied a petition from the nonprofit International Center for Technology Assessment and other groups that sought to impose new controls on auto emissions. The agency said it lacked authority from Congress to regulate greenhouse gases, based on a legal opinion from the agency's top lawyer - who had reversed the Clinton-era legal opinion the gases should be regulated under the Clean Air Act.

Two months later, states and several cities formally challenged that decision. In the courtroom Friday, they argued that the EPA never adequately justified its decision.

"You don't have to look very far to find the authority that EPA claims it is missing," James R. Milkey, a Massachusetts assistant attorney general, told the judges Friday.

The states said the fact that another agency, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, regulates vehicles' fuel economy is beside the point. They also argued that Congress had included the word "climate" in the Clean Air Act for a reason.

"We don't need to guess what Congress meant on this," Milkey said. "The fuel economy issue is a red herring. ... The predictions of economic turmoil are not only completely overstated, they are irrelevant."

The EPA would have no easy way to regulate carbon dioxide from motor vehicles, said Jeffrey Clark, deputy assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's environment division.

"For CO₂, there's no catalytic converter," he argued. "There's no catch mechanism. The only way to reduce them is through fuel economy. ... The point is it would usurp NHTSA's authority."

States challenging the EPA are California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington, along with the U.S. territory of American Samoa and the cities Baltimore, New York and Washington, D.C.

They said the EPA acknowledged in testimony to Congress in 1998, 1999 and 2000 that the Clean Air Act gives the agency power to regulate pollution that causes global warming. Other states and cities also have tried to force federal regulation of greenhouse gases.

On the Net:

Environmental Protection Agency:

International Center for Technology Assessment:

<http://www.epa.gov> <http://www.epa.gov>

[Fresno Bee Editorial, Sunday, April 10, 2005:](#)

No painless solution

Democrats' plan to cut gas tax, raise sales tax is wrong

(The price consumers pay for a gallon of gasoline has reached \$3 in some corners of the state (most noticeably in San Luis Obispo).

It's a milestone, and the more the driving and political communities accept reality -- the days of cheap gas are gone forever -- the more acceptance there will be to some necessary changes.

There's no painless solution, and it's appalling that some leading Democrats in the Legislature are trying to pretend as if there is one. They have unveiled a new plan for gas taxes and transportation construction. It's hard to imagine a less responsible proposal.

First, the Democrats propose to eliminate the sales tax on gasoline, an outrageous passing of the proverbial buck. Those who use the roads most or guzzle the most fuel should pay their way.

To replace this essential funding source, Democrats would turn around and raise the overall sales tax by a quarter-penny. This shifts the costs of transportation onto those who purchase clothes. And tools. And books. And furniture. And appliances. And restaurant meals. And automobiles to put all that expensive gasoline in. And ... That's not all the Democrats want to do. To get the state deeper in debt, they'd borrow \$10 billion for road projects that should be handled on a pay-as-you-go basis.

At least the Democrats would raise the excise tax on the gas by a whopping four pennies over time. But it's just not enough. This proposal needs to move in one direction only -- toward a quick trip to the scrap heap.

There's simply no getting around higher prices for fossil fuels. Given the rapidly escalating demand in developing countries such as China, and a finite supply of fuel, the price will reflect this market reality. If there is no alternative -- neither super-efficient cars nor better transit -- there will be nothing but frustration.

Transit, alternative fuels and other efficiency improvements require huge public investments. The existing tax, however, is inadequate to even patch the existing road system.

A higher tax would serve two unavoidable needs, to lower consumption and to invest in a different energy future. At the moment, we're on a road to ruin. The Democratic plan just speeds the trip.

[Modesto Bee, Editorial, Monday, April 11, 2005:](#)

Solar subsidy proposal catching unjust heat

American auto manufacturers snickered when Japanese rivals started selling hybrid cars a few years ago. Detroit knew that U.S. consumers wouldn't pay extra for a fuel-efficient automobile. Japan now laughs all the way to the bank.

Some big homebuilders and utilities are making the same miscalculation about solar power. Skeptics doubt Californians will pay more for rooftop solar panels. Gov. Schwarzenegger wants to prove them wrong, partly because he wants to jump-start the solar industry here in California.

Senate Bill 1, which will be debated this month, is the vehicle for the governor's plan to create 1 million new solar-paneled rooftops by 2017. The plan is a hybrid itself. Last year, the governor wanted to mandate solar on a percentage of new homes. Homebuilders objected, saying it would drive up costs. Some claimed the solar industry couldn't produce the thousands of new photovoltaic units, a claim the industry disputes.

Wisely, the governor has come back with an incentive program to create 3,000 new megawatts of solar energy. (Now, solar power generates about 70 megawatts, a paltry amount in a sun-drenched state.) This new energy would forestall the need to build dozens of power plants. It could literally save the grid on summer days, when solar produces the most juice and when the most juice is needed.

Production homebuilders - like the vast majority of those operating in this area - would be required to offer solar as an option, just as they now offer marble countertops and hardwood floors. The offer would

include information on the cost of units (typically about \$15,000, minus a \$5,000 rebate and a \$1,000 tax credit). It also must include information about projected energy savings. (In general, a 2-kilowatt system can provide half of a household's electricity needs - which could mean savings of \$40 to \$80 a month in some areas.)

It's an offer we feel many consumers would gladly embrace.

Supporters estimate that \$2 billion to \$3 billion would be needed to subsidize these rebates over 10 years. It would be paid through surcharges on electricity rates.

SB1 poses challenges for utilities, which would have to buy back excess electricity generated by solar homeowners. It also would challenge the solar industry, which would be expected to bring down the per-unit cost of solar panels. Rebates would decrease each year and end in 2016.

Amazingly, this farsighted legislation - co-sponsored by state Sen. Kevin Murray, D-Los Angeles, and Sen. John Campbell, R-Costa Mesa - is getting flak from sluggish corporate interests and so-called "public-interest" groups.

Instead of crediting the governor for going further than any predecessor, the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights and other groups have dumped on SB1. Spokesman Jerry Flanagan called it a "green veneer on a dirty and costly energy policy." The governor could do more to promote conservation, but he is not promoting a dirty energy policy. Perhaps Flanagan got Schwarzenegger mixed up with the fossil-fuel junkies who run the White House.

Give consumers a chance to make this choice; we believe they'll agree with the governor. Perhaps they'll put the panels atop the garages where they park their hybrid cars.

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Sunday, April 10, 2005:](#)

Bring an end to noise pollution

The letters on loud vehicles are so true, especially these selfish, inconsiderate packs of people driving the modified Harley motorbikes. Some of these motorcycle gang members' bikes are extra loud, with modified mufflers that create not only [more air pollution](#), but ear-splitting noise pollution! Inconsiderate louts!

Maybe they allow these types to ride around in the Bay Area with these stupid, loud bikes, but it should not be allowed here in the once-peaceful valley! The pack mentality of these pathetic losers riding around in packs of extra loud motorcycles is truly inconsiderate and pathetic at best, and illegal at worst.

Why can't government enforce this type of noise pollution as vigorously as they attempt to ban ag burning or fires in home fireplaces?

JOAN ARNOLD

Modesto

[Visalia Times-Delta, Letter to the Editor, Friday, April 8, 2005:](#)

'Holstein Housewives' get a good pickup line

A tip to the "Housewives of Holstein Lane:" When the deluge of calls becomes intolerable, and it assuredly will, this retort may be helpful. With a pleasant voice and tongue firmly in cheek say, "Just come on up here to Tulare County and smell our dairy air." Be sure to drag the last two words together.

It works for folks in Wisconsin (The Dairy State) as an invite to Illinoisans who seem to believe their neighbor state is a summer playground.

DON BEENE

Cary, Ill.

Former Visalia resident

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Sunday, April 10, 2005:](#)

Concerned about flies

I am very concerned about all the sludge and dairies located near Wasco and around my school, Semitropic.

Flies are constantly around our school, especially when the weather is warm. The people bringing sludge to Kern County should keep it where it came from. Believe it or not, we can see these trucks drive by our school. You can't even imagine the smell sometimes.

The dairy smell is twice as bad as you think it is. We often go through two to three fly strips a day when the weather is warm. Sometimes we open the door and run in to keep the flies from getting into our room. Even then, some get in. Holding your breath on the way to lunch is not my idea of fun. I'm sure these dairies aren't helping our terrible air quality.

The problems of other counties shouldn't be Kern County's problem. If they want to bring things to Kern County, why not find something beneficial!

-- NALLEY CASILLAS, Wasco

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Saturday, April 9, 2005:](#)

Slow this rapid growth

Supervisors, council members and planning commissioners: please slow down. Our growth is out of control.

Our roads don't keep up with the traffic and our schools are overcrowded. I realize that development money is the mother's milk of politicians and ambitious politicians, but you are elected by the people who live here.

Plan, study and take your time! Make sure the infrastructure is in place before you OK development. Take into account that agricultural land is not a renewable resource. We have the best farming ground in the world and it is our No. 1 job source in Kern County.

Elected and appointed officials are the gatekeepers to clean air and quality-of-life issues. The cars and trucks that drive our clogged roads are Kern County's main polluters -- not cows as some would like us to believe.

I don't advocate no development, but rather a planned development where traffic, schools and quality-of-life issues are part of the process. Fix the roads before you allow more development. Also, quit leapfrogging. Slow down and do the job right.

-- HILDA KLEIN, Bakersfield