

Regulator tells crowd air laws benefit farmers She says, in long run, there's money to be made.

By John Hollander, staff writer
Modesto Bee, Friday, April 15, 2005

TURLOCK - Farmers face a challenge with new air pollution rules, but the rules can also be beneficial, a state regulator said Thursday night.

For example, planting crops with minimal tilling of the soil can save tractor fuel while reducing dust, said Dorene D'Adamo, who serves on the California Air Resources Board.

D'Adamo, a Turlock resident, spoke to about 80 people at California State University, Stanislaus, on recent and planned rules to reduce dust, diesel exhaust and other air pollution from farms.

She said dealing with emissions from farms, factories, trucks, cars and other sources is vital because the pollution has worsened childhood asthma in the region, and can cause cancer and other diseases.

"If we take any one sector out of the equation, we will not be able to meet our standards in the San Joaquin Valley," said D'Adamo, who also is a senior policy analyst for Rep. Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced.

She said the money spent on pollution control is far exceeded by the economic benefits, including reduced health care costs and improved productivity in the work force.

She pointed out state and federal programs that help farmers with improvements, such as chipping orchard prunings rather than burning them, and replacing diesel irrigation pumps with electric models.

D'Adamo said the air board is open to compromise where the rules pose problems. She recalled a farm tour during which regulators realized that electric forklifts, proposed in place of gasoline models, would be impractical during harvesting.

She said the board also recognizes that farmers must deal with other concerns, including water, pesticides, urban growth and foreign competition.

"All these factors really underscore the importance of adopting air quality standards in the most cost-effective way possible," D'Adamo said.

In many cases, clean-running equipment lasts longer than dirty equipment, so farmers save money in the long run, she said.

She also said air pollution can reduce crop yields.

Then-Gov. Davis, a Democrat, appointed D'Adamo to the air board in 1999, and Republican Gov. Schwarzenegger reappointed her last year. She is chairwoman of the board's Agricultural Advisory Committee for Air Quality, which includes business people involved in farming, along with researchers and government officials.

Mark Bender, chairman of agricultural studies at Stanislaus State, said D'Adamo's talk was one in a series aimed at getting students in several fields to think about the general idea of "sustainability."

A few farmers attended. Tom Perez, who grows several crops in the Crows Landing area, said farmers will be burdened by the air rules, including the phase-out of most open burning by 2010. But he agreed that they also can bring benefits.

"One thing that has happened in the industry is that our new tractors are a lot more efficient," Perez said. "We get more done with one tractor than we used to get done with three of them."

TCFD to get a new generator

By Doug Keeler, Midway Driller City Editor
Taft Midway-Driller, Friday, April 15, 2005

The Taft Fire Department is finally going to get an emergency generator it can legally use.

The department has a generator it got free through a federal surplus property program, but air pollution control officials wouldn't allow the department to use it because it didn't meet emission standards.

That means the city is going to have to pay nearly \$21,000 for a new generator and discard the free one.

Capt. Scott Hunter said the department tried to explain to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District that the old generator would only be used for emergency purposes, but that did no good.

"We tried to stress that it was an emergency generator. It was only going to run once a week (for testing) and during power outages," Hunter said,

The SJVAPCD ordered the old generator removed.

The city sought bids for a new one, but only one responsible bidder, Premier Equipment Rentals, could provide a generator that would meet SJVAPCD standards.

Hunter said that without an emergency generator, the department's emergency operations could be hampered during a power blackout. The station alerting system won't work without electric power, and the engine house doors would have to be raised manually.

Pesticide alternative may be just as caustic

Methyl iodide not safe as fumigant, critics say

Monterey County Herald, Sun, Apr. 17, 2005

By SUSAN D. BROWN, Herald Correspondent

Makers of a potent pesticide are hoping they have come up with the magic formula to replace methyl bromide, the ozone-depleting compound that theoretically is on its way to a worldwide ban.

But environmentalists say they fear the replacement, methyl iodide -- marketed under the trade name Midas -- could be even more harmful than the pest killer it would replace.

Methyl bromide, used to fumigate soil before planting crops such as strawberries, was targeted for elimination this year because it depletes protective ozone in the upper atmosphere. A multinational agreement called the Montreal Protocol provided for exemptions if individual countries could demonstrate that no viable alternatives are available.

This week, an international committee is meeting to consider exemptions that will allow farmers, including Central Coast strawberry growers, to continue to use methyl bromide through 2007. Although the committee is likely to recommend the new exemptions, the pressure is on to find safe and effective alternatives.

The candidates being considered don't harm the ozone layer like methyl bromide, but they are all toxic and can contribute to ground-level air pollution.

The first, methyl iodide, is listed as a carcinogen under Proposition 65, the ballot initiative that requires the state to warn the public about harmful chemicals.

Creating high yields

The chemical company Arvesta is currently seeking approval for its Midas product. Product manager Michael Allen hopes to have methyl iodide on the market in time for winter planting.

"These are general biocides," Allen said. "They kill weeds, bacteria, insects and nematodes. Basically it kills everything in the soil."

In Monterey County, growers fumigate their fields before planting strawberries in order to kill nematodes and other living things in the soil that carry disease.

Before fumigation was adopted in the early 1960s, strawberry-growing was a speculative business. Crops commonly failed and yields seldom exceeded 10 tons per acre. Once disease contaminated a field, growers abandoned it, triggering a constant search for new land.

Fumigation controlled disease, doubled yields and ended the search for new real estate. Methyl bromide also controlled weeds. By 1978, nearly all strawberries in California grew in soil fumigated with methyl bromide.

But now growers must find another way to maintain those high yields -- a \$334 million industry in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties for 2003, the most recent year for which statistics are available. They will be looking to replacements such as methyl iodide.

Methyl iodide doesn't deplete the ozone layer because ultraviolet light breaks it down much faster than methyl bromide -- in just one to four days. That's not enough to satisfy the folks at Pesticide Action Network, an environmental group based in San Francisco.

"Our society will look back on this in 20 years and say 'what were we thinking?'" senior scientist Susan Kegley said. Genetics labs use methyl iodide to create mutations in cultured cells, and lab workers who handle the chemical wear two sets of gloves and work carefully under a fume hood to protect themselves, she said.

Other options

[Methyl iodide easily vaporizes. It is a volatile organic compound which may contribute to the formation of ozone at ground level, where it could directly harm plants and animals. Pesticides are a major source of air pollution in agricultural areas, according to the California Department of Pesticide Regulation. Volatile organic compounds have reached such high levels in the San Joaquin Valley, that the state is considering curtailing their use to improve air quality.](#)

Kegley favors non-chemical solutions, such as crop rotation and breeding plants that are resistant to common disease.

That may be unrealistic, according to Carolee Bull, a plant pathologist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Crop rotation works by removing the vulnerable crop from the soil long enough to starve out the pests that harm them.

Strawberries need to be absent for four years for their pests to die out. Other crops, such as broccoli and lettuce, that could be planted during the wait are less valuable, she said.

And no one has succeeded in breeding disease-resistant strawberries, according to Steve Fennimore, a co-operative extension specialist based in Salinas.

"Bright people have been working on these solutions for 10 years," he said. "It's not simple."

The Environmental Protection Agency is re-evaluating all of the currently approved soil fumigants, as well as methyl iodide. The public will have an opportunity to comment once the agency announces its decision about whether to approve the pesticides. The decision is expected in June.

Report on dairy air delayed until May 6

By Mark Grossi, The Fresno Bee

Published in the Modesto Bee, Friday, April 15, 2005

The deadline for a key report on dairy air pollution has been pushed back to May 6, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District says.

Under a lawsuit settlement, the Dairy Permitting Advisory Group had until today to come up with a suggested revision for estimating dairy air pollution, which researchers now say the state has overstated.

But after a marathon discussion Monday on the latest research, many observers believed the advisory group could not meet the deadline.

Both sides in the lawsuit — the dairy industry and the air district — agreed to put off the report. The industry sued the district last year as air officials prepared to enforce operating permits on dairies.

As a settlement, the two sides had agreed to form the dairy advisory group, which represents several interests, including dairy, health, academics, environmentalists, the air district and community activists.

The group will submit a report and recommendations to the air district, which will decide how much pollution to blame on cows. The pollution estimates will determine how many dairies must apply for federal permits as major sources of air pollution.

Under current emission estimates, livestock are among the top sources of smog-making gases called volatile organic compounds. However, the estimates are based on a 1938 study that needs to be updated.

Tulare workshop helps county plan for future Officials, public discuss housing, water, education

By Julie Fernandez, Staff writer

Tulare Advance-Register, Friday, April 15, 2005

Deciding where to put an estimated 150,000 future Tulare County residents, who consultants say are not accommodated under existing city land use plans, is not a simple task.

Just ask the approximately 25 planners, city and county officials and members of the general public who attended a Tulare workshop to help the county update its general plan.

Participants in Tuesday's two-hour session split into five groups and worked hard brainstorming ways to address 11 policy issues regarding such critical topics as air and water quality, education, infrastructure and agriculture.

Consultants Bruce Race and Rick Rust held them to a strict timetable.

"I think it was a little rushed," Springville resident Barbara Brydolf said later. "I think with a little more time we could have come up with better ideas."

Brydolf attended the session with three other Springville residents concerned about the future of their unincorporated community and hopeful county officials would listen, she said.

A similar workshop focusing on policy choices was held in Three Rivers on Wednesday night. Consultants will look for a consensus of opinion to take to a committee of planners and representatives of community agencies.

Policy choices will form the underpinnings of a general land use plan that consultants will recommend to the Tulare County Planning Commission and county Board of Supervisors for adoption.

Items of discussion

The consultants presented the key policy questions facing the county as follows:

- What specific land use and transportation measures should the county undertake to reduce air pollution?
- Tulare County is the sixth worst ozone-polluted county in the U.S., according to the American Lung Association.
- What measures can the county take to reduce groundwater overdraft/depletion and improve groundwater quality?
- What can the county do to ensure an adequate water supply to meet future needs?
- How can the county encourage higher education and training?
- How can the county prevent deterioration of current infrastructure and meet the needs of new development?
- Nearly 30 percent of the county's roads are in poor condition and the county would need an estimated \$250 million in order to repair them.
- How can the county promote economic diversification?
- The county had the third highest unemployment rate in the state in 2000 and jobs in agriculture declined 24 percent between 2000 and 2002.
- How can the county expand the tourism industry utilizing existing recreational resources?
- How can the county meet the needs of a population that is expected to grow from 368,000 residents today to an estimated 630,000 by 2025 and protect natural resources?
- How can the county achieve greater consistency among the five regional, eight city, 11 community and nine agricultural urban service area plans?
- How can the county provide housing for all income levels?
- What is the future of agriculture in the county?
- A critical policy issue that focuses on where the county should direct growth will be discussed at a future meeting.
- A consensus emerged in two of the five groups at Tuesday's workshop that directing new growth to the cities with the infrastructure to handle it would help resolve several policy issues.

Inland Empire Is True to Its Name

Census figures show the region sets the pace for new residents.

Concerns are booming as well

By Daniel Yi and Seema Mehta, Times Staff Writers
Los Angeles Times, Friday, April 15, 2005

Underscoring the surging population of the Inland Empire, Riverside County has replaced Los Angeles County as the state's top destination for new residents, the U.S. Census Bureau reported Thursday.

Riverside County added 89,128 people - twice the population of Palm Springs - while Los Angeles County added 77,357 in the year ending July 1, 2004. San Bernardino County showed the third-largest population increase in the state, adding 58,936 people.

The numbers represent a milestone in a decade of explosive growth in the Inland Empire, and highlight the challenges the region faces now - and in years to come. Many roads and schools are packed beyond capacity, the air is smoggy, and even the region's prime selling point - its relative affordability - is being undermined.

"Paradise is going to be pretty crowded," said Redlands-based economist John Husing, noting that Orange County faced similar growing pains two decades ago.

The census report, which looked at county population estimates nationwide, also showed a trend reversal in the San Francisco Bay Area, which had lost population in the wake of the dot-com bust.

In the early 1990s, as housing prices skyrocketed in Los Angeles and Orange counties, people in search of affordable housing arrived in droves in cities such as Moreno Valley, Corona, Rancho Cucamonga and Fontana.

But as demand for homes surged to new highs, so too did the prices of Inland Empire homes. The median home price in San Bernardino and Riverside counties hit a record high in March, according to DataQuick Information Systems, which tracks property values. The median home price in San Bernardino County jumped 35% from a year ago, to \$298,000. In Riverside County, the median price rose 26%, to \$379,000.

"Everywhere you look, all you see are tract housing developments. And country clubs and golf courses have proliferated beyond belief in places you never thought anyone would want to live," said Lucie Gonzales, 41, who left her hometown of Indio 20 years ago and recently moved back into her mother's home, unsure if she can afford one of her own.

"In some ways, the area is becoming what people have moved out here to get away from," she said. "There's a lot more traffic. The cost of living has gone up sharply. The shopping centers down here look just like the shopping centers anywhere."

Despite rising housing prices, the Inland Empire remains more affordable than the Southland as a whole, where the median home price is \$439,000.

So people continue to arrive.

Sue Cobb and her husband, Allan, were living in a 2,800-square-foot home in Yorba Linda when they decided to move to Mockingbird Canyon near Riverside. Their new house has a whopping 4,000 square feet and sits on 1.5 acres. The couple, who own a medical supply business, paid \$450,000.

"We couldn't even re-buy our house for that in Yorba Linda," said Sue Cobb, 56, as she shopped at a Home Depot.

Last year, Riverside was the county with the second-largest growth in the nation, trailing only Maricopa County in Arizona. Riverside County's growth rate of 5% ranked first in California, and its population now stands at just under 1.9 million. San Bernardino County grew by 3.2% to more than 1.9 million, the fourth-highest growth rate in the state.

While Los Angeles remained the state's - and the nation's - most populous county with nearly 10 million people, experts said they expect the Inland Empire to continue to grow for two more decades as families trade extra commuting time for the promise of a home with a big backyard.

"It's a combination of enormous opportunities - and the infrastructure and congestion risks that go along with a very rapidly growing population," Husing said.

Topping the list of concerns is traffic. The Riverside Freeway, which carries commuters from Riverside County to jobs in Orange County and Los Angeles, is one of the most congested in the state.

Much of the new housing may be inland, but most of the jobs are still in the coastal counties, said Jeff Lustgarten, a spokesman for the Southern California Assn. of Governments. "The region needs a collective approach to land use," he said. "We need a better balance of jobs and housing in each community."

Traffic is also on the minds of people in the San Francisco Bay Area. Hammered by job losses from the dot-com collapse, the region lost population from 2001 to 2002 - the only area in California to experience such an exodus in three decades. The numbers released Thursday show that has now turned around.

While San Francisco County posted the largest population decline statewide - nearly 8,000 residents - Santa Clara County gained more than 9,000 people.

Hans Johnson, a demographer with the San Francisco-based Public Policy Institute of California, said that, as in the Southland, growth in the Bay Area has been strongest inland as people move to eastern Contra Costa County and the northern San Joaquin Valley in search of more affordable housing.

"We are in fact developing our own Inland Empire, no matter what we call it, with pollution problems, long commutes and relatively affordable housing," Johnson said.

The figures released Thursday were based on the 2000 census and estimates of net migration, births and deaths since then. The state added 430,000 people from 2003 to 2004, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, and its population stands at 36 million.

Bus fumes worse for kids on board LAUSD students are exposed to as much or more exhaust than other city residents.

By Shari Roan, Times Staff Writer
Los Angeles Times, Monday, April 18, 2005

Most kids probably think the worst thing about riding a school bus is the bully who sits in the back seat. In fact, the bitter fumes emitted from the buses may be doing them more harm. Children riding buses in L.A. Unified School District inhale as much, or more, bus exhaust than the rest of the city's population, a new study has found. The problem is that exhaust from the vehicles, particularly older buses, can leak into the cabin.

The study, published this month in the journal *Environmental Science & Technology*, is the first to examine how much exhaust is breathed in on school buses.

Researchers are still trying to understand, however, how bus exhaust seeps into the cabin, says Julian Marshall, a doctoral student at UC Berkeley's Energy and Resources Group and coauthor of the study. "Does it exit the tailpipe and come in through the windows or in through the floor? Is it from the engine? With a little more information, it might be possible to seal buses up a little bit from self-pollution."

The analysis was conducted in conjunction with researchers from the School of Public Health at UCLA. The researchers analyzed results from tracer-gas experiments in six empty school buses traveling through established routes in South Central and suburban Los Angeles. In some runs, the windows of the buses were left open while other runs were conducted with closed windows. Different buses were compared, such as those powered by diesel fuel and compressed natural gas as well as buses built in various years, from 1975 through 2002.

The experiment revealed that concentrations of key air pollutants were higher inside the bus cabins than outside the cabins. The highest levels of pollutants were found in the older buses. The research on the newer buses produced inconsistent results, but even some of the newer buses had high particle levels. The study also revealed that more particles were found when the bus windows were closed.

The study found that in a single day a child riding a school bus will breathe in anywhere from seven to 70 times more exhaust from his or her bus than a typical L.A. resident will inhale from all school bus emissions combined.

Diesel exhaust particles may contribute to numerous health problems, including cancer. "The current research is finding that it's not only an issue for the lungs but for the heart as well," Marshall says.

Children are more vulnerable to air pollution because, compared with adults, they inhale more air per day per body weight.

The new study should encourage policymakers to consider ways to curb school bus pollution, such as by operating newer buses, compressed natural gas buses or by finding methods to seal buses from self-pollution, Marshall says. A survey by *School Bus Fleet* magazine found that California has the highest percentage of pre-1977 buses in the country, at 10% of the statewide

fleet, Marshall says. Officials from L.A. Unified School District were unavailable to comment on the study.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District has tried to reduce exhaust from school buses, using particle traps and other pollution-reducing technology and by purchasing alternative-fuel school buses.

"We need to know the levels of the pollutants these buses are emitting, because our kids ride in them," says Jean Ospital, health effects officer of South Coast district. "This study shows that a commute can account for a significant, if not the bulk, of our exposures to these particles. It reinforces our efforts to try to reduce emissions from school buses."

Improving school bus air quality "is something that can be done and should be done," Marshall says. "But we don't want to instill fear in parents' minds over this. Children are safer on school buses [than in cars] - even knowing this issue."

In Protest, Senator Puts EPA Nominee on Hold

From Times Wire Reports

Los Angeles Times, Friday, April 15, 2005

A lone senator moved to block President Bush's choice to head the Environmental Protection Agency, accusing the White House and the EPA of stonewalling his requests for data from the agency on air pollution.

Utilizing a power enjoyed by all senators, Thomas R. Carper (D-Del.) put a temporary hold on the nomination of Stephen L. Johnson, the EPA's acting chief, to serve as the agency's next administrator.

EPA Gets More Time to Address Park Haze

By JOHN HEILPRIN, Associated Press Writer

S.F. Chronicle, Saturday, April 16, 2005

WASHINGTON, (AP) -- The Environmental Protection Agency is getting up to two more months to complete regulations aimed at improving the vistas in 156 national parks and wilderness areas.

EPA officials reached agreement Friday with the advocacy group Environmental Defense on a new June 15 deadline for the agency to tell states how to reduce hazy air in parks and remote areas. The rules were supposed to have been issued Friday under the settlement of a lawsuit the group filed against EPA in 2003.

The suit asked the court to make EPA enforce the 1977 Clean Air Act amendments that set goals for improving views in 35 national parks, 120 wilderness areas and Roosevelt Campobello International Park overseen by a U.S.-Canada commission.

Affected parks include the Great Smoky Mountains in Tennessee and North Carolina, Acadia in Maine, Glacier in Montana, Grand Canyon in Arizona, Shenandoah in Virginia, Yellowstone in Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, and Sequoia and Yosemite in California.

President Bush is scheduled to speak about air pollution at an Earth Day appearance next Friday in the Smokies.

Vickie Patton, an Environmental Defense lawyer, said pollution levels threaten the health of park visitors and ecosystems, and cloak views in haze. She said her group agreed to give EPA more time so it can further analyze the technical aspects.

The haze is formed by small particles in the air that come mainly from sulfur dioxide from coal-burning power plants in the East and nitrogen oxides from other sources in the West. Other EPA rules also aim to cut those pollutants.

Among the targets of the rule are more than two dozen types of industrial facilities built between 1962 and 1977, including power plants, industrial boilers, smelters, refineries, chemical and cement plants, and pulp and paper mills.

[Letter to the Modesto Bee, Saturday, April 16, 2005:](#)

Professionals ride Harleys too

In response to the writer who wrote that loud motorcycles were polluting her air ("Bring an end to noise pollution," April 10) and that motorcycle riders were pathetic losers: Well, I've got news for you: Us loud motorcycle riders are from all walks of life. We are lawyers, doctors, simple people with full-time jobs. We are only riding around on weekends to enjoy time away from the hustle and bustle of our lives. We give to children and support many charities. So when you see us on our motorcycles, please obey traffic laws and yield to us. We are only minding our own business.

Debbie Kuharski
Salida

[Letter to the Modesto Bee, Friday, April 15, 2005:](#)

Do cows or people pollute more?

It's great that the air pollution board is making an effort to identify the major contributors to the valley's problems, but I think its efforts are somewhat misguided, or at least too limited. If bovine flatulence is thought to be a major contributor to area air pollution, the facts first must be validated by scientific methods, then compared to other sources similarly validated and placed within a hierarchy so that those contributing the greatest quantities of pollutants are dealt with first and then the lesser contributors until a satisfactory, minimal pollution level is reached.

Certainly the contribution of other mammals must be examined, and since the fastest growing group of mammals is of the human variety, a study of the contribution of human flatulence is a must to determine whether we should try to control the number of dairy cattle or people.

T.J. Anglim
Modesto