

## Study Of Air Pollutants Continue In Sequoia

Valley Voice Newspaper, June 16, 2005

*Sequoia National Park* - Smog, pesticides and other airborne contaminants like mercury are riding the airwaves to the Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks. The question remains - how much and at what level of harm?

Research on these contaminants has gone on for a few years - at first focusing on smog's effect on the famous Big Trees themselves and now a closer examination of all kinds of pollutants some locally generated and some who ride the jet stream from the Orient that may be harming both plants and critters in national parks.

Park officials have known for several years that smog is hurting the big stands of Jeffrey pine trees on the western face of the Sierra as well as stunting seedlings of Sequoia trees.

Local air resources specialist Annie Esperanza says she has been monitoring Sequoia's airshed for several years noticed recent reports that the mountain air had shown a deterioration from 1999 to 2003 with the number of days exceeding the state and federal ozone standard generally rising. That was true until last year when cooler temps helped by more air movement cleared out the haze that is typically found on stagnant summer days. Breezy cool weather so far this year has helped again in 2005. "Is this a trend? Only time will tell," suggests Esperanza.

Chief interpreter for the park Bill Tweed notes that while focusing on pollution sources has meant cleaner cars for example, the valley's growth may well be offsetting the gains made by clean technology. He quips that "The air has already gone from broth to stew and if we aren't careful our stew will turn to chowder."

Esperanza says long range studies on the effect of pollutants on park resources includes work being done at eight US national parks carried out by the Western Airborne Contaminants (WACAP) project, monitoring of trans Pacific dust carried from Asia and China to the Western US. The highest jet stream winds hit the Sierra where researchers are finding worrisome persistent organic pollutants, volatile organic compound and compounds like mercury being deposited.

Mercury is a big problem back east from coal fired power plants. But mercury laden dust also rides the wind coming from large scale open burning, says Esperanza. She says while mercury is being measured at a new station in Giant Forest, the comparison to other regions is not yet known.

The WACAP project collected data from Sequoia park in 2003 and some of that raw data has been released now that shows pesticides locally generated from the valley floor as well as banned pesticides found in snow and water samples at several high elevation lakes.

Data shows higher concentrations of the pesticide dacthal in snow in Sequoia found in 2003 than found in other western national parks. Dacthal is a pre-emergent herbicide used in both speciality crops and on turf like golf courses and works by killing germinating seeds. Focusing on a banned pesticide HCH, levels are similar at all western national parks showing the widespread distribution of these world-traveling airborne contaminants. By contrast, some of the contaminants clearly are being generated from the farms sitting just below Sequoia.

Researcher Tamara Blett with NPS says they found residues of a pesticide used widely in the valley - the herbicide endosulfan in Pear Lake in Sequoia found only at the upper level of the lake. Much further down in the sediment of the lake they found the banned pesticide dieldrin deposited apparently in 1963 but not at upper levels. "That tells us the banning of the chemical reduced the disposition," says Blett.

Esperanza says EPA is gathering information on fish and amphibian tissue this summer to see if the toxic substances magnify as has been the case of other contaminants that can reduce reproductive success and become what is called endocrine disruptors. That may be what happened to the historic mountain frog population.

Also worrisome are the flow of toxic materials from Asia on prevailing air currents found in snow in Sequoia and elsewhere including nasty materials like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) long banned here but still used overseas.

What's the effect of long banned chemicals? For example the peregrine falcons that nest at Moro Rock in Sequoia National Park have never been able to produce offspring. Abandoned eggs contained high quantities (13 mg/kg wet weight) of DDE (the breakdown product of the US-banned pesticide DDT), and eggshells averaged 15% thinner than they should be. More recently, the peregrines produced eggs that lacked the normal smooth waxy brown-spotted shell; instead the shells were white and chalky. Additionally, the foothill yellow-logged frog completely disappeared from these parks in the 1970s, and today exists in the Sierra Nevada only in a handful of widely scattered populations along the western foothills.

## **Population Increase and Traffic Congestion Go Hand in Hand**

by Richard Mavis

Valley Voice Newspaper, June 16, 2005

*Tulare County* - "Newly developed areas have grown significantly faster than the streets that are established," says Myron Rounsull, Traffic Engineering Specialist with the City of Visalia. Especially in the hotspots both in the northwest and southeast areas of town. "Older roads experience growth, but not at the same rate."

If trends hold, and forecasts prove correct, the engineers are going to have quite a task in front of them. The population of the Central Valley is expected to double by 2040. Visalia's population alone has jumped by just over 18,000 in the last 10 years. Visalia is growing at a faster rate than both Tulare County and the state of California.

But right people in the right places have a plan. Ted Smalley, Transportation Engineer with Tulare County Association of Governments, says they plan to "stay ahead of the ballgame, fix congestion, and plan for it."

He notes a significant "increase of interstate travel on 99," with expansion projects planned, part by part, for the next 20 years.

Among the first of their projects will be Mooney Boulevard, aka State Route 63, which "will be widening subject to receiving funding," says Smalley, but on that matter there are "no guarantees." The area under consideration runs between 198 and Ave 28 (Caldwell). The plan is to expand from four to six lanes. The project will have to be scheduled around the Christmas traffic, says Smalley. Nobody wants to deal with the kind of nightmare that would be.

As it is, intersections along Mooney consistently receive C and D Level of Service (LOS) ratings-letters which may or may not look horribly familiar to our recent graduates. Dennis Mills, Transportation Engineer with Tulare County Association of Governments, explains: "the Level of Service for intersections is measured by the amount of delay a typical auto may endure. LOS A is less than 10 sec. delay, LOS B is between 10 and 20 seconds, LOS C is between 20 and 35 seconds of delay..."

But there are a myriad of factors that go into that rating, says Eric Bons, Senior Civil Engineer with the City of Visalia. The volume of cars and width of the road are just a couple.

As Rounsull says, a comparative look at the rates is a much better indicator than looking at the numbers. As in, "intersections along Mooney numerically have the most accidents-but ratewise, maybe not."

AADT-annual average daily traffic-count for 1995 shows close to 30,000 cars passed through the intersection of Mooney and Walnut every day that year. That number jumped to between 32,500 and 34,500 for the 2000 count. It made a similar jump, to around 38,000, in the count for 2004.

So how do drivers perceive the traffic problem? That's hard to say. "Visalia in general has a pretty good ranking," says Rounsull. "It averaged good as far as the traffic is concerned." But he adds:

“there is a lot of traffic in this town, and I think the people are concerned about it. That’s pretty traditional.”

Engineers are doing what they can. “There’s always room for improvement,” says Bons.

“For a long time Goshen at Ben Maddox was a fixed-time signal,” says Rounsfull, but now every intersection in town with traffic signals has roadbed sensors installed.

However, he adds, “often times other types of traffic control will be more effective than signals. Signals will not prevent a driver from tearing through town and causing damage to himself and others.” Much of the problem “can be attributed to driver error.”

One alternative gaining momentum in the US is traffic circles, or roundabouts. Two are currently being installed in town, says Bons. “We have one going in on Houston at Santa Fe, and another going in Shannon Ranch, Shannon Parkway at County Center.”

If space allows, roundabouts are preferable over four-way or all-way stops because of one major advantage: “the driver’s need to stop has nearly been completely eliminated,” says Rounsfull. “Traffic flows smoother without the necessary stopping.”

At conventional four-legged, signed intersections, “every vehicle must stop,” he explains. “No matter what time of day, no matter how much traffic, you must stop. This affects air quality, fuel consumption, congestion management, roadway capacity, and motorists’ time and money.”

An area’s air quality is among the factors the state uses to determine who gets funding. Regions with plans for reducing pollution usually receive more funding for their road improvement projects.

The main drawback for roundabouts today, says Rounsfull, is the education process. “Few drivers have had much (or any) experience with them, so it will take awhile for motorists” to become accustomed. “But I think that once people get used to them they will find out driving through them is a rather quick and easy task.”

Bons agrees, saying roundabouts are “something new and different. I think they’ll adapt just fine.”

For more information: [www.tularecog.org](http://www.tularecog.org) or [www.dot.ca.gov](http://www.dot.ca.gov)

## **Businesses Evacuated**

### **One Person Hospitalized After Chemical Spill**

Merced Sun-Star

By David Chircop

June 16, 2005, 06:20:43 AM PDT

A chemical spill behind a pool and spa supply store emptied out Main Street businesses Wednesday afternoon, sending one man to the hospital because of an asthmatic reaction to the materials.

The man, a Sun-Star employee who was attending a training seminar at P.S. Bistro, was doing well later in the day, a medic said.

The evacuation occurred after about three gallons of hydrochloric acid and chlorine spilled behind Country Comfort at 520 W. Main St. Another person reported having breathing problems because of the chemicals, which can cause coughing, hoarseness, inflammation and ulceration of the respiratory tract and chest pain, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Aaron Vowles, who owns the store, said enough acid was spilled to keep the average swimming pool clean for a month.

Participants in the training session were at first told to stay in place, but were later evacuated when hazardous materials crews closed in on the chemicals.

Merced Fire Chief Ken Mitten said that was a critical time because other bottles precariously hanging on the pallet could have fallen and spilled chemicals during the cleanup.

Emergency crews told nearby businesses to close back doors and to shut off air conditioners. Fire teams also quarantined a parking lot.

Businesses were later evacuated when the Merced County Fire Department Hazardous Materials team cleaned up the remaining mess.

A truck driver with Stockton-based Sierra Chemicals, who declined to give his name, said a few bottles resembling regular bleach containers fell on the ground and broke, when he was unloading after 1 p.m.

A representative from Sierra said the company sent a crew Wednesday afternoon to help the county cleanup crew.

Sitting on a padded patio chair outside his store on Main Street, Vowles said while it was a relatively small spill, it was still important to handle properly.

"It's better to err on the side of caution," he said.

## **Supervisors begin plans for bike trail**

**Wednesday, June 15, 2005**

The Madera Tribune

By Laurie Fitzpatrick

Plans moved forward on Tuesday to build a bicycle trail on the west side of Bass Lake parallel to Road 222.

The seven-mile trail would run from Recreation Point to Wishon Boat Launch, said Forest Service Recreation Officer Mike LeFevre. This trail would connect all of the camp grounds and private resorts on the west side of the lake.

The trail would be paved and built entirely on Forest Service and PG&E land, LeFevre said. The trail would be about eight feet wide with a center line to create a lane for traffic going either direction.

"It should provide a recreation resource for both the local population and visitors and tourists throughout most of the year," LeFevre said.

Madera County Supervisors entered into an agreement with the Forest Service and PG&E to begin initial planning for the bicycle trail.

According to the agreement, the Forest Service will handle creating the initial engineering designs and investigating the environmental impacts of the project. Madera County will act as the lead agency, coordinating the funding for the project.

The initial planning stage of the project, which includes both engineering design and environmental impacts, will take about a year, LeFevre said. After that, the construction stage can begin.

This initial planning stage of the project will cost about \$117,000, a report by the Road Department stated. PG&E will provide about \$13,000 of these funds. The rest will be provided by a federal grant under the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program.

The goal is to have the trail entirely separate from Road 222 so that vehicle traffic can be completely isolated from bicycle riders and other pedestrians, LeFevre said. This will reduce congestion on Road 222, especially on holidays like the Fourth of July. This will also create a safer route for bike riders and encourage more people to walk and ride bikes, thus hopefully improving air quality.

The Forest Service does not want to create just a bike lane attached to Road 222, LeFevre said. However, due to the narrowness of the land between the road and the lake, the trail will likely have to be attached to the road in places, in order to accommodate the topography. If the trail does meet the road, it will be separated by at least a curb.

Also, due to the narrow land, in areas, the trail may have to extend out over the lake, like a boardwalk, LeFevre said.

## **EPA fines VW \$1.1 million for not disclosing problem**

**By RIP WATSON**

Bloomberg News, published in the Orange County Register  
June 16, 2005

Volkswagen AG, Europe's biggest carmaker, was fined \$1.1 million by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for violating clean-air rules by failing to tell regulators that pollution controls on at least 329,000 sedans didn't work properly.

It was the biggest fine ever levied by the EPA for such a violation, the agency said in a statement Wednesday. The penalty applies to Golf, Beetle and Jetta sedans from the 1999-2001 model years. Faulty oxygen sensors might have allowed thousands of tons of carbon monoxide and other pollutants to escape into the air, the agency said.

The pollutants emitted by the cars contributed to ozone and smog, the agency said. Carbon monoxide harms children, the elderly and anyone with asthma, it said.

## **Senate Gives Ethanol an Added Boost**

**Farm-state lawmakers push through a measure to double the amount in the gas supply by 2012. The potential effect on prices is unclear.**

By Richard Simon and Warren Vieth, Times Staff Writers  
LA Times, June 16, 2005

WASHINGTON - For years, Congress has showered tax breaks on ethanol, portraying the fuel that is derived mostly from corn as a homegrown alternative to oil imports.

But even the Corn Belt could not have imagined its good fortune Wednesday as the Senate voted to double the amount of ethanol, to 8 billion gallons, that must be added to the nation's gasoline supply by 2012.

"The Senate is poised to make ethanol a cornerstone of America's energy policy," said Sen. John Thune, a Republican from ethanol-producing South Dakota.

The provision was added on a 70-26 vote to a far-ranging energy bill moving through the Senate. It is widely regarded as critical to getting Congress to adopt a new national energy policy, a priority of President Bush's.

But opponents of the provision, including a number of East and West Coast senators and the oil industry's trade association, the American Petroleum Institute, contend that it could increase gas prices because of the cost of transporting ethanol from the Midwest.

Sen. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) called the mandate "nothing less than an ethanol gas tax" that would be levied on every motorist in the country.

"There is no sound public policy reason for mandating the use of ethanol - other than the political might of the ethanol lobby," he said.

The 8-billion-gallon requirement is higher than any amount that has previously come before Congress, and would give the industry its biggest boost since a tax break for the fuel was first approved in 1978.

Ethanol, a high-octane fuel made from corn or other renewable products, is typically blended with gasoline at a rate of 10% ethanol to 90% gasoline for use in standard combustion engines. The use of such reformulated gasoline - which proponents say burns more efficiently - is required as a clean-air measure in areas with high levels of ozone or carbon monoxide.

About 30% of gasoline consumed in the United States last year was an ethanol blend, according to the American Coalition for Ethanol, a trade association that supports increased ethanol use.

The provision adopted by the Senate on Wednesday was eagerly sought by Democratic and Republican farm-state lawmakers, underscoring that energy policy was often shaped by regional politics rather than party affiliation. The ethanol coalition, based in Sioux Falls, S.D., cheered the vote as the "strongest display of support for ethanol to date in the U.S. Senate."

Bush applauded efforts to boost the ethanol requirement, saying it was a key element of a broader strategy to reduce the nation's dependence on foreign oil. "We're pretty good about growing corn here in America, and we've got a lot of good corn growers," he told industry officials at an energy efficiency conference in Washington.

Bush said he looked forward to the day when a future president would say, "Show me the crop report," instead of asking, "How many barrels of crude oil are we importing?"

Although he did not endorse a specific amount, Bush said it was important for Congress to approve a renewable fuel standard requiring a minimum amount of ethanol and biodiesel, which can come from soybeans as well as recycled waste products such as cooking grease.

The president prodded the Senate to set aside partisan politics and pass an energy bill quickly, saying the public's patience, not to mention his own, was wearing thin.

"My advice is, they ought to keep this in mind: Summer is here, temperatures are rising, and tempers will really rise if Congress doesn't pass an energy bill," Bush said.

Bush's call for action reflected a more confrontational approach than his past public comments on presidential priorities that stalled in Congress.

Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) called the ethanol mandate something "we've been waiting for for a long time," and warned that if the provision was stripped out during House-Senate negotiations on a final bill, "there won't be an energy bill, period."

The energy bill passed by the House in April would require that 5 billion gallons of renewable fuel be added to gasoline by 2012, virtually assuring that an ethanol mandate of some amount would be in the final version of the legislation.

The Senate vote came after the National Corn Growers Assn. urged its members to send gas receipts to senators with messages written on the back asserting that increased ethanol use would help to prevent spikes in gas prices.

But what effect increased ethanol use would have on gas prices is disputed.

Some have suggested that increased ethanol use would lower gas prices, mainly because ethanol is so plentiful now that the price is cheaper than gas.

However, said Edward Murphy of the American Petroleum Institute, "if there was an opportunity for people to increase their market share right now by adding ethanol to gasoline and undercutting your competition by a fraction of a cent a gallon, people would be banging at the door to do it."

He added that when the government required industry "to use a production process they wouldn't otherwise use, you're going to get higher cost." He also contended that the ethanol mandate would have a negligible effect on imports.

So eager are farm-state lawmakers for increased ethanol use that Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.), who helped settle a Senate fight over using filibusters to block judicial nominees, has begun trying to find a solution to the major sticking point that doomed energy legislation in 2003. That dispute is over whether the government should give legal protections to producers of methyl

tertiary butyl ether, or MTBE, a fuel additive blamed for fouling groundwater sources from California to New Hampshire.

Under the Senate measure, the amount of ethanol that would have to be added to gasoline would gradually increase to 8 billion gallons by 2012. Thereafter, ethanol use would grow in proportion to the percentage of ethanol in the gas supply in 2012. The United States is projected to use about 4 billion gallons of ethanol this year.

Oil companies could choose the regions where they would add ethanol to gas by buying credits from refiners that exceeded their ethanol requirement.

The bill includes a provision, sought by Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, that would exempt California from having to use ethanol during the hot summer months when, state officials say, its use could increase emissions. But Feinstein and her California Democratic colleague, Sen. Barbara Boxer, voted against the ethanol mandate.

California has repeatedly sought a waiver from the mandated use of ethanol or similar substances, saying the state's stringent gasoline standards reduce emissions without requiring such additives. But the requests for waivers have repeatedly been denied, and the state, under existing federal law, expects to use nearly 1 billion gallons of ethanol this year.

Jerry Martin, spokesman for the California Air Resources Board, said the state could live with a nationwide mandate of 6 billion gallons - or 650 million gallons in California. Feinstein spokesman Howard Gantman said that if the state was forced to use 880 million gallons, oil companies in California would probably be forced to buy credits from companies that use more than their required amount, a cost they would most likely pass onto consumers.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) also complained about additional government support for the ethanol industry. "How much is enough?" he asked after voting against the measure.

The Senate is expected to approve the energy bill within the next couple of weeks. A conference committee would then work out differences between it and the House bill passed in April.

## **Senate majority backs broader use of ethanol**

### **Opponents argue provision will raise gas prices outside the Farm Belt and cut fuel economy.**

By H. JOSEF HEBERT

The Associated Press, published in the Orange County Register

Thursday, June 16, 2005

WASHINGTON – The Senate on Wednesday endorsed a broad expansion of the use of ethanol in gasoline, despite claims by opponents that it would force up gasoline prices outside the Farm Belt and reduce fuel economy.

A provision that requires refineries across the country to use a total of 8 billion gallons of ethanol a year - double today's production - beginning in 2012 was approved 70-26 and put into a wide-ranging energy bill the Senate is expected to complete in the next two weeks.

An attempt by Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., to strip away the provision failed, 69-28. Schumer called the requirement to use ethanol in gasoline nationwide "nothing less than an ethanol tax levied on every driver" and a "boondoggle" to benefit farmers at the expense of motorists.

Opponents, mainly from the West and Northeast, said ethanol should not be required in states where it is not needed to reduce air pollution and is not readily available. Most ethanol is produced in the Midwest.

Supporters of the measure said ethanol - made almost exclusively from corn - is a way to reduce demand for foreign oil and boost U.S. energy security.

Farm-state senators - both Democrats and Republicans - said ethanol-blended gasoline would allow homegrown energy to replace some imported crude oil.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., said the ethanol mandate would mean refiners in California would be forced to use ethanol or purchase costly credits under a credit-trading system. "Either choice will mean California consumers pay more at the pump," she said.

Feinstein also disputed claims that ethanol would reduce oil imports. Because ethanol has a lower energy content than gasoline, more blended gasoline will be needed to travel the same distances, resulting in an estimated 3 percent reduction in fuel economy, she said.

Ethanol receives a 51 cent-a-gallon tax credit, so a doubling of ethanol use also would result in lost revenue for the government, added Feinstein.

The ethanol industry is expected to produce about 4 billion gallons of corn-based ethanol this year, or about 3 percent of gasoline by volume.

The price impact of ethanol at the pump is unclear. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates the added cost could be as much as 4 to 8 cents a gallon, a figure disputed by the ethanol industry.

## **EPA Sets New Rules for Cleaner Park Air**

By JOHN HEILPRIN, Associated Press Writer  
S. F. Chronicle, Thursday, June 16, 2005

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Visitors to hazy national parks and wilderness areas once again might see a clear day — even if not forever — under new rules that will require power plants, steel mills and other facilities to cut pollution by a million tons a year.

The Environmental Protection Agency rules issued Wednesday direct state officials to specify what plants will have to make the cuts and by how much.

"States are now required to go out and identify these facilities and then determine what the best available retrofit technology is," said Jeff Holmstead, head of air quality for EPA. "We don't expect that any states will fail to do this."

As part of a 2003 court settlement with an environmental group, New York-based Environmental Defense, the EPA agreed to have states impose limits on air pollution, often from sources hundreds of miles away, to reduce haze and visibility problems in 156 national parks and wilderness areas. States will now have to submit new plans by December 2007 on how to do that.

But the group, which sued to enforce the Clean Air Act, says the Bush administration weakened the final rule by allowing states to discount some data on the worst haze.

"Protective state action enforcing EPA's pollution-control guidelines will be essential to lift the veil of haze from the nation's crown jewels," said Vickie Patton, a senior attorney for the group. "Unfortunately, EPA has made it harder for the states to restore clean air to our national parks by exempting some high-polluting industrial sources from cleanup requirements."

The biggest impact will be in the Great Smoky Mountains and other parks in the Southeast and in Western parks such as the Grand Canyon. Haze is produced mainly by nitrates and sulfates that scatter and absorb light in the atmosphere.

Holmstead said that beginning in 2014, industrial facilities will have to cut 1 million tons of pollution a year — 600,000 tons of nitrogen oxides and 400,000 tons of sulfur dioxide.

The EPA estimates it will cost about \$1.5 billion a year to achieve the reduction but puts the annual benefits at \$8.5 billion to \$10 billion through fewer premature deaths, nonfatal heart attacks, hospital admissions and lost school and workdays.

The EPA expects an additional \$240 million a year in benefits from increased tourism.

"Some areas will benefit more, because they're more polluted than other areas," Holmstead said. "We are predicting improvements in all of them."

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On the Net:

EPA:

National Park Service:

Environmental Defense:

[www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) <<http://www.epa.gov>>

[www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov) <<http://www.nps.gov>>

[www.environmentaldefense.org](http://www.environmentaldefense.org)

<<http://www.environmentaldefense.org>>

## **Toxic hazard suit on ex-bases rejected**

by Bob Egelko

S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, June 16, 2005

A federal appeals court on Wednesday rejected a toxic-pollution lawsuit by Bay Area environmentalists and a group of Filipinos who said their families were being sickened by hazardous wastes from two former U.S. military bases in the Philippines.

The suit, filed in 2002, sought to require the U.S. government to assess pollution from the former Clark Air Force Base and Subic Bay Naval Station under a federal law that requires cleanup of waste sites posing the greatest dangers to human health. Advocates said some of the plaintiffs were children who drank chemical-contaminated water from the bases and now have multiple deformities and heart ailments.

U.S. District Judge James Ware of San Jose dismissed the suit in 2003, ruling that the so-called Superfund law doesn't apply abroad. The Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco upheld his decision on narrower grounds Wednesday, saying the law, even if it applies to overseas military bases, doesn't cover those no longer under U.S. control, such as Clark and Subic, which were turned over to the Philippines in 1992.

Unless it had an agreement with the Philippine government, the United States would have no power to assess or clean up pollution from the former bases, the three-judge panel said. Scott Allen, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, said the ruling leaves them without recourse and will probably end the case.

## **Volvo, Statoil start fuel cell venture**

The Associated Press, published in the Sacramento Bee

Monday, June 13, 2005

STOCKHOLM, Sweden (AP) - Swedish truck-maker Volvo AB and Norwegian oil and gas company Statoil ASA are starting a joint venture to make fuel cell technology aimed at cutting emissions from idling engines.

The new venture, Powercell, will use fuel-cell technology to build small electricity generators that can be mounted in trucks and other vehicles, the companies said Monday.

Vehicles using the fuel-cell generator would not have to run its engine on idle to generate power.

"That in turn would reduce carbon dioxide emissions from such vehicles by 20-30 tons" per year, Statoil said in a news release.

The companies said the new generator could be useful in North America, where truck drivers often sleep in their vehicles and run idle to generate power for air conditioning and other systems.

The fuel cell would be powered by hydrogen gas produced from diesel oil carried by the vehicle.

"In the long term, power units driven by fuel cells will also be used in boats, aircraft and other mobile units in which there is a need for a compact, environmentally sound and efficient power supply," said Goran Wirmark, spokesman for Volvo's technology unit.

Cars running on fuel cells that produce energy by mixing hydrogen with oxygen are already on the road in the United States and President Bush has pushed a \$1.7 billion hydrogen research program. Administration officials have said it's possible fuel cell cars will be mass-marketed in 15 years.

## **Emissions Regulations Could Stall Energy Bill**

By Carl Hulse  
The New York Times  
June 15, 2005

WASHINGTON, June 14 - Hoping to break a long legislative deadlock over energy issues, the Senate on Tuesday returned to a broad power proposal stuffed with the same politically combustible issues that have derailed past legislation - including fuel consumption, industry benefits, oil and gas drilling and pollution.

Now, with President Bush pressing Congress to deliver an energy bill this summer, the Senate is adding yet another contentious issue to the mix: global warming.

Lawmakers say the Senate could consider as many as three competing initiatives intended to reduce emissions of gases believed to contribute to climate change, a sign of heightened Congressional interest in an issue that was largely sidestepped during the fruitless energy bill debate two years ago.

Approval of any emissions plan could significantly complicate efforts to reach a compromise with the House, where architects of a bill approved in April strongly oppose new federal requirements to cut so-called greenhouse gases. But that is just one potential sticking point.

Lawmakers will also have to resolve an impasse over a House-approved plan to provide manufacturers of the gasoline additive MTBE with some protection from product liability suits arising out of water pollution. The Senate, where there is deep opposition to that idea, is expected to provide no such immunity.

While the ultimate fate of the measure may hinge on the ability of the House and Senate to resolve their differences, Senate authors must first steer their measure to passage.

"Remember, we are in the United States Senate, where senators have a chance to work their will, where there's a myriad of ideas about how America should move through this very, very difficult time," said Senator Pete V. Domenici, Republican of New Mexico and chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

After Democrats complained in 2003 that they were shut out of writing the energy legislation, Mr. Domenici took a more bipartisan approach this year. He and Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico, the senior Democrat on the energy panel, produced a bill that was sent to the floor with strong backing from both parties.

But Democrats say they will push to make the measure more to their liking. Trying to stake out territory on issues that often cut more along geographic lines than political lines, Democratic lawmakers intend to offer an amendment that would seek a 40 percent reduction in the nation's reliance on imported oil within 20 years.

"It is time that the Senate give a message that they believe that energy independence is an important criteria," said Senator Maria Cantwell, Democrat of Washington and a chief sponsor of the amendment.

The Senate measure calls on the president to take steps to reduce United States oil consumption by one million barrels a day within 10 years, but critics say the provision is weak and unenforceable. Democrats also intend to use the energy bill to increase automotive fuel efficiency standards as a way to cut consumption, though past efforts have failed.

The White House on Tuesday endorsed the Senate proposal, calling it "largely consistent" with Mr. Bush's own energy goals. But the administration said that it was not convinced of the need for

any climate change provisions and that it would oppose a plan by Mr. Bingaman to require utilities to increase their use of renewable fuels

Over all, the measure could cost up to \$36 billion over 10 years if all the projects were ultimately approved. On Thursday the Senate Finance Committee is expected to consider tax provisions that would add about \$16 billion to the price tag, including tax credits for energy efficiency and hybrid vehicles estimated at more than \$5 billion - 10 times the level of the House bill. The White House wants only \$6.7 billion in tax incentives.

Leaders of the Washington environmental lobby say that they consider the Senate bill an improvement over the House measure but that neither takes the steps necessary to solve America's energy problems while the Senate measure could open the door to a push for new nuclear power plants.

Among other divisive issues is a proposal to give the federal government new power to force communities to allow terminals for the importation of liquefied natural gas, an idea opposed by many state and local officials.

The Senate has dodged one issue that has vexed past energy bills - the prospect of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge - by addressing the drilling through a budget bill. The Senate bill does call for an inventory of offshore oil and gas resources, and on Tuesday, Florida senators threatened to filibuster the measure if it encouraged drilling off the Gulf Coast.

## **Ex-Bush Aide Who Edited Climate Reports to Join ExxonMobil**

By Andrew C. Revkin  
The New York Times  
June 15, 2005

Philip A. Cooney, the White House staff member who repeatedly revised government scientific reports on global warming, will go to work for ExxonMobil in the fall, the oil company said today.

Mr. Cooney resigned on Friday as chief of staff to President Bush's environmental policy council, two days after documents obtained by The New York Times showed that he had edited the reports in ways that cast doubt on the link between greenhouse-gas emissions and rising temperatures.

A former lawyer and lobbyist with the American Petroleum Institute, the main lobbying group for the oil industry, Mr. Cooney has no scientific training.

The White House, which said Friday that there was no connection between last week's disclosure and Mr. Cooney's resignation, repeated today that Mr. Cooney's actions were part of the normal review process for documents on environmental issues involving many government agencies.

"Phil Cooney did a great job," said Dana Perino, a deputy White House spokeswoman, "and we appreciate his public service and the work that he did, and we wish him well in the private sector."

An Exxon spokesman, Tom Cirigliano, declined to describe Mr. Cooney's new job. Associates of Mr. Cooney said he planned to move to Dallas. Mr. Cooney did not return e-mail or phone messages. ExxonMobil has long financed advertising and lobbying efforts that question whether human-caused warming poses sufficiently serious risks to justify curbing carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas emitted by smokestacks and tailpipes.

Today, Mr. Cirigliano said the oil company was committed to acting responsibly on the issue.

"ExxonMobil has taken, is taking, and will continue to take tangible actions to reduce emissions in our operations as well as in customer use of our products, and to better understand and prepare for the risks of climate change," he said.

Some climate scientists and environmental campaigners said Mr. Cooney's quick shift from the White House to Exxon was evidence of a near-seamless relationship between the Bush administration and the oil industry.

"Perhaps he won't even notice he has changed jobs," said David G. Hawkins, who directs the climate center at the Natural Resources Defense Council, a private environmental group.

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, June 16, 2005](#)

### **Modesto tallow plant was there first**

While I empathize with the residents and students in the vicinity of the Modesto Tallow Co. ("The Stench Lingers," June 12, Page A-1), I also empathize with the company. I couldn't help but notice on the chronology listed in the article that Modesto Tallow was in that location for about 30 years before the residents and students began to populate the area.

Whereas this rendering process location was originally out of town and not a residential environmental issue, it became one when developments began surrounding the company. It is not rocket science to understand that rendering is a smelly process. As stated, the company has made significant capital investments solely to comply with environmental regulations in attempts to mitigate the smell.

To those not involved in manufacturing operations or financial analysis, it sounds simple to just say "relocate the problem somewhere else." However, does the city or county really understand what that means to a business and are they willing to contribute financially toward that effort?

STEVE BROWN  
Turlock