

Talks for dairy center proceed Project would provide lab for many students

By Julie Fernandez, staff writer
Visalia Times-Delta, Friday, February 10, 2006

TULARE - A third meeting with Chevron Corporation representatives this week has raised the hopes of those involved in the effort to build a California Dairy Technology Center in Tulare.

The project's partners - the University of California, Davis, College of the Sequoias and the Tulare Joint Union High School District - are looking for a major financial supporter for the center, which is expected to cost \$25 million.

"We've been trying to raise funds for this for a number of years," said Dr. James Cullor, director of the UC Davis Veterinary Medical Teaching and Research Center in Tulare.

"We have a number of donors . . . but we haven't really found a donor that wants to help us with the bricks and mortar part of it," Cullor said.

The center will be a living laboratory providing opportunities for students in kindergarten through post-doctoral programs, Cullor said.

A portion of the center - a consumer education pavilion - is already built, paid for with a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and a \$145,000 contribution from COS.

An estimated \$25 million is needed to construct and start up a 1,000-herd dairy and build a nutrient management plant.

The new dairy would replace those now operated by COS and the high school district.

The price tag has risen significantly in the past seven years, chiefly because of inflation but also because of the decision to include the newest technology in the nutrient management area, Cullor said.

That the philanthropic arm of Chevron is continuing to show interest in the project is an encouraging and positive sign, he and others said.

"It could be a great fit for them, sponsoring the new technology center," Mayor Richard Ortega told the City Council on Tuesday.

Monday's meeting in Tulare with Chevron included for the first time political representatives such as the mayor and the dairy specialist from Rep. Devin Nunes' office.

"It went extremely well," said Carlene Salonites, assistant director of the teaching and research center. "Each member played such an important role in informing the Chevron representatives about the long-term goal of the project and what a positive impact it will have on, not only research, but on the community as well."

In addition to teaching, the center will conduct research on all aspects of the dairy industry, including impacts on [air quality](#) and ground water quality.

"That kind of research has worldwide application," said Gerald Benton, superintendent of the Tulare Joint Union High School District. "It would be an absolutely unique facility."

Valley officials urge EPA chief not to weaken air quality laws

By Mark Grossi, Fresno Bee

In the Modesto Bee, Friday, February 10, 2006

GOSHEN - The Environmental Protection Agency's top boss has gotten an earful from scientists about his proposal to drop the federal health standard for dust and soot in rural areas.

Wednesday, EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson heard from San Joaquin Valley officials, who suggest his proposal is not the best fit here.

Johnson proposed the rollback in December, after his staffers concluded that rural pollution sources, mainly farming and mining, do not create city pollution.

"It is a proposal," he said Wednesday. "It's complex science. I welcome comments because what I need to do is base my ultimate decision on the best available science."

Johnson was in the valley to tour the Phoenix Bio Industries ethanol plant in Goshen. It is part of his West Coast tour to tout the Bush administration's energy plan.

The 25,000-square-mile San Joaquin Valley is high on the EPA's agenda because it is home to some of the country's dirtiest air. The valley is a mix of urban and rural settings, all of which share air quality problems, officials told Johnson.

For instance, the Fresno-Clovis metropolitan area is several times larger than the city of Madera, which is just north of Fresno across the San Joaquin River.

"We think it will harm our mission to tell people on one side of a river that the standard applies, but it doesn't on the other side," said Seyed Sadredin, deputy air pollution control officer for the valley air district.

The district will submit data to the EPA on the valley's particulate pollution to show that the problem is not just based in cities. Johnson said he wanted to see the data because his December proposal was not based on the most recent information.

"I want to get all the information we can into the agency," Johnson said, "so the decision is based on science."

The federal Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee last week challenged Johnson's conclusions, disputing the call for the rural dust exemption.

The panel also said the agency's proposal casts doubt on studies linking tiny particle pollution to heart problems, lung disease and early mortality.

Many scientists and other experts have said health studies indicate that thousands of lives could be saved each year if the dust standard were tightened. The EPA chief said he is prepared to look closely at the criticism.

"I don't view it as a disagreement," he said. "I view it as legitimate scientific debate. What I'm interested in is, What does the science say?"

The proposal also would provide a national exemption for farming and mining in rural areas.

Farming is the biggest source of dust in the valley, but the industry has largely complied with air quality reform during the past two years.

Farmers have given no indication that they want an exemption, said valley air official Sadredin.

"They're committed to the improvements they have made," he said. "They are not looking for a rollback."

Wood burning discouraged today

Modesto Bee, Friday, February 10, 2006

People in Stanislaus, Merced and San Joaquin counties are asked to refrain from using fireplaces and older wood stoves today because of concerns about air quality. Forecasters say the air will be unhealthy for sensitive people, such as those with chronic breathing problems. The voluntary advisory comes from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The next step is a mandatory prohibition on burning.

IN BRIEF THE STATE / FRESNO

County may institute screenings for dairies

From Times staff and wire reports

Published in the L.A. Times

Tuesday, February 7, 2006

New and expanding dairies that plan to add thousands of animals to their operations have prompted Fresno County officials to consider environmental screenings for large dairies.

The county is the only one in the San Joaquin Valley without a screening process for new dairies, which create tons of manure and air pollution.

The county officials didn't feel the need for such screenings in the past because it didn't have as many cows as other counties. Fresno still hasn't surpassed Tulare County, but dairies this year plan to add about 50,000 animals to the existing 185,000.

Under state law, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District conducts environmental screening for large dairies in the region.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Friday, February 10, 2006:](#)

Stepping backward

EPA's proposed rules on dust and soot continue to puzzle.

The nation's top environmental official stopped in Tulare County on Wednesday to check out an ethanol plant in Goshen and push the Bush administration's energy plan. He also got an earful about a proposal to abandon rules on dust and soot in rural areas. We hope it penetrated.

Stephen L. Johnson, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, offered the new plan in December after intense lobbying from national mining and agricultural interests. A loyal Bush administration official, Johnson listened to their arguments and then dismissed the work of the panel of scientific experts that is supposed to oversee the creation of such regulations.

Members of the panel, the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee, were not pleased. They took the unprecedented step of going public with their anger over Johnson's cavalier attitude toward science. Some called Johnson's actions "egregious," and said his proposals "twisted" or "misrepresented" their recommendations, according to a Feb. 4 story in the Los Angeles Times.

State air officials have charged that the White House's Office of Management and Budget put its political fingerprints all over the proposal.

The California Environmental Protection Agency's air pollution epidemiology chief, Bart Ostro, told the Times of marked-up drafts of Johnson's proposals that showed changes by the White House budget office and language that was "very close to some of the letters written by some of the trade associations."

It not clear what scientific background OMB personnel possess.

Representatives of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District didn't sound much happier Wednesday. Any rule that applies different standards to urban and rural areas — which the EPA proposal would do — will be very difficult to implement in the Valley. Where does city begin? Where does farmland end? And do the EPA rulemakers believe that people in the different areas breathe different air?

As an example, Valley officials wondered aloud whether mostly rural Madera County would be excused from meeting the standards, while just across the San Joaquin River, densely urban Fresno-Clovis would have to meet them.

"We think it will harm our mission to tell people on one side of a river that the standard applies, but it doesn't on the other side," said Seyed Sadredin, the Valley district's deputy air pollution control officer.

California's tougher dust and soot standards would remain in place even if the EPA adopts this inexplicable proposal. But federal sanctions that have been used as a lever to force compliance with pollution control efforts would disappear. That's a big step backward, and people in the Valley who agree should let Johnson know it. Call his office at (202) 564-4700.

[Washington Post editorial, Thursday, February 9, 2006:](#)

The politics of science

It is a rare thing for the biography of a 24-year-old NASA spokesman to attract the attention of the national media. But that is what happened this week when George C. Deutsch tendered his resignation. Mr. Deutsch had, it emerged, lied about his (nonexistent) undergraduate degree from Texas A&M University. Far more important, several New York Times articles over the past week or so have exposed Mr. Deutsch as one of several White House-appointed public affairs officers at the agency who tried to prevent senior NASA career scientists from speaking and writing freely, especially when their views on the realities of climate change differed from those of the White House.

Mr. Deutsch prevented reporters from interviewing James E. Hansen, the leading climate scientist at NASA, telling colleagues he was doing so because his job was to "make the president look good." Mr. Deutsch also instructed another NASA scientist to add the word "theory" after every written mention of the Big Bang, on the grounds that the accepted scientific explanation of the origins of the universe "is an opinion" and that NASA should not discount the possibility of "intelligent design by a creator."

The spectacle of a young political appointee with no college degree exerting crude political control over senior government scientists and civil servants with many decades of experience is deeply disturbing. More disturbing is the fact that Mr. Deutsch's attempts to manipulate science and scientists, although unusually blatant, were not unique. Just before Christmas, the federal Environmental Protection Agency issued "talking points" to local environmental agencies. These suggestions were intended to help their spokesmen play down an Associated Press story that -- using the EPA's own data -- showed that impoverished neighborhoods had higher levels of air pollution.

At the Food and Drug Administration, the director of the Office of Women's Health recently resigned because she believed that the administration was twisting science to stall approval of over-the-counter emergency contraception. Off the record -- because they fear losing their jobs -- some scientists at the Department of Health and Human Services say that Bush administration public affairs officers screen their appearances and utterances more carefully than anyone ever did. Scientists at places such as the Agriculture Department, not a part of the government known for its publicity hounds, have made the same claim.

In every administration there will be spokesmen and public affairs officers who try to spin the news to make the president look good. But this administration is trying to spin scientific data and muzzle scientists toward that end. NASA's Mr. Hansen was right when he told the Times that Mr.

Deutsch was only a bit player. "The problem is much broader and much deeper and it goes across agencies," he said. We agree.