

Modern dairies bypassing Kern: Some readers care, some don't

Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, January 17, 2006

The next generation of mega-dairies, which are intended to be more environmentally friendly, may bypass Kern County. David Albers, a Bakersfield lawyer and dairyman, says the future of dairies is dairy parks. Those would be clusters of multiple milk farms that would run on manure, recycle water and feed an on-site cheese plant.

He said he's taking his idea to Fresno County because it's too hard to get a permit in Kern.

Some two dozen dairies have been on hold in Kern since August 2004 while the county studies the environmental impact of 200,000 additional cows.

Kern already has 300,000 cows.

Dairy parks have failed before because of environmental challenges, but Albers said consolidation is the only way larger dairies can pay for costly air and water-friendly technologies.

A Talk of the Town blog asks whether people care that modern dairies may bypass Kern. Here are some of the comments at bakersfield.com.

What next do we decide is no good for us here? Factories cause noise and truck traffic; let's close them and make the streets safer for the children.

-- Posted by: john derouche Jan. 12 at 7:58 p.m.

I don't drink milk and we don't need any more dairies here. They stink. With all this talk about no-burn days, why would Kern County even consider bringing in more stinky cows. I rarely smell woodsmoke, but at least 5 days a week I smell cows. Or is it pesticide?

-- Posted by: Progressive Pete Jan. 13 at 8:37 a.m.

How are these three words related ... Chino, cows and Bakersfield? Does this mean we get to ship our biosludge to Fresno now?

-- Posted by: Melissa Jan. 13 at 8:49 a.m.

What Kern County is actually missing out on is the 200 jobs that just the cheese plant associated with this type of project would provide. Kern County must make wise decisions about trying to exclude entire industries from its borders if it is going to offer a successful future for its citizens. Got poverty?

-- Posted by: Kim Jan. 13 at 9:17 a.m.

Dairies are good. What would we do without the milk? I say go for dairies. Farmers are the first environmentalists and it should stay that way.

-- Posted by: Kirsten Jan. 13 at 10:10 a.m.

The latest idea for dairies is pie in the sky, just another way to sucker the politicians into keeping their campaign donations legal. The technology for the proposal does not exist nor does the method of getting that technology here make sense. We do not have any universities with any capability to make even a start into assessing the feasibility of what is proposed. As for jobs, yeah 200 minimum-wage jobs will solve the real need for decent paying jobs in Kern.

-- Posted by: Neocon Savior Jan. 13 at 10:57 a.m.

Interesting that Albers has a dairy in Fresno and LIVES in Bakersfield. Even David Albers is aware of the environmental issues of living near a dairy ... heck, he is hours away!

Posted by: 7oaker Jan. 13 at 3:56 p.m.

I'm sick and tired of the cow smell. I live in The Oaks area, and some days you can't even enjoy a sunny afternoon by the pool because of the stench.

We've got ENOUGH dairies around here, build new ones in someone else's back yard.

Also, they don't look like California "Happy Cows" to me, all crammed together in the dirt.

-- Posted by: Pismotam Jan. 13 at 9:53 p.m.

Personally, I could give a (rip) where the next one goes. I've been to mega-dairies AND have even worked for one, when I was young. Why throw a big stink on another dairy in the area?

-- Posted by: Cheryl C Jan. 14 at 9:12 a.m.

Good Grief! You people in the city limits are not smelling dairies and unless you live a stone's throw away from a dairy you are probably smelling an overloaded city sewer system!

-- Posted by: Shirley Jan. 16 at 7:04 a.m.

Business calendar

Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, January 17, 2006

Upcoming 2006 annual Statewide Pistachio Day, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday; registration begins at 8:30 a.m., Visalia Convention Center, 303 E. Acequia, Visalia. Buffet lunch provided. Must be paid and ordered in advance. (559) 221-8294.

Free Preview Meeting, of the Dale Carnegie Leadership Training for Managers, 6:06 to 9:30 p.m. Wednesday, Holiday Inn Select, 801 Truxtun Ave. Call to reserve a seat. (800) 451-3253.

Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce annual Dinner & Installation of Officers, social 5:30 p.m.; dinner 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, DoubleTree Hotel Ballroom, 3100 Camino Del Rio Court. \$60. Reservations required by Wednesday. 327-4421.

"How to Start A Small Business," presented by the Small Business Development Center, 6 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, University Square, 2000 K St., second floor, Tehachapi Room. \$60. 631-1475.

"Energy & Clean Air Business Exposition," featured speakers, mixers, car crusher demonstrations, vendors, exhibits, lunch and more, noon to 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Holiday Inn Select, 801 Truxtun Ave. Web site www.bakersfieldchamber.org or call 324-1375.

New dairy already setting up a study

Environmental group was unaware when it threatened legal action.

By Mark Grossi / The Fresno Bee

Saturday, January 14, 2006

Environmentalists were not aware the owner of a new 3,200-cow dairy had been setting up an environmental impact report for months when they demanded such an in-depth study on it.

The Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment in November threatened court action if the state Regional Water Quality Control Board didn't begin an EIR by Feb. 1.

State officials this week noted the dairy owner and the local air district had been working on such a study since August. The dairy has not yet been built, but it will be located near Riverdale in Fresno County.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District decided to require an EIR as part of its permit process, which just began including large dairies last year.

Notices of the study will go out to the public soon.

"It's good news," said the environmental group's lawyer, Laurel Firestone, who had written the letter to the regional water board. "I'm glad the public will be included in the process."

Michael Boccadoro, a dairy industry spokesman, criticized the environmental group for acting too quickly.

"Situations like this occur because CRPE shoots first and asks questions later or not at all," he said.

The dairy owner, Charles Van Der Kooi, said he is building the most modern, pollution-free operation possible.

"I've been working for four months with the air quality board," he said.

District officials said the first construction phase of Van Der Kooi's dairy earlier in 2005 was not large enough to trigger the permit process.

An EIR was not ordered until the next phase, which might have been the reason environmentalists were unaware of it.

The issue turned attention to the absence of a Fresno County screening process for the booming dairy industry. Unlike most San Joaquin Valley counties, Fresno County does not lead the environmental investigation of new dairies.

12 states oppose Bush plan to cut companies' burden on reporting pollution

By Michael Gormley, Associated Press Writer
In the Fresno Bee, Friday, January 13, 2006

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) - Attorneys general in 12 states said Friday that the Bush administration's plan to ease rules on reporting legal toxin releases would compromise the public's right to know about possible health risks in their neighborhoods.

In a letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the state officials say the proposals, which include raising some reporting thresholds and moving from annual to biennial reports, would have the greatest harm in low-income neighborhoods where polluting facilities are often located.

The Bush administration proposed the changes in September as a way to reduce the regulatory burden on companies by allowing some to use a short form when they report their pollution to the EPA's Toxics Release Inventory Program.

"This EPA move appears to be yet another poorly considered notion to appease a few polluting constituents at the expense of a valuable program," New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer said.

Also signing the letter were the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Vermont and Wisconsin. All are Democrats except Republican Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire.

"The public has a fundamental right to know what hazardous materials their children and families are being exposed to," said Wisconsin Attorney General Peggy Lautenschlager.

The proposed changes, which require congressional approval, would exempt companies from disclosing their toxic pollution if they claim to release fewer than 5,000 pounds of a specific chemical - the current limit is 500 pounds - or if they store it onsite but claim to release "zero" amounts of the worst pollutants.

The chemicals involved include mercury, DDT, PCBs and other chemicals that persist in the environment and work up the food chain. Companies must report any storage of dioxin or dioxin-like compounds, even if none are released.

The inventory program began under a 1986 community right-to-know law. If Congress agrees, the first year the changes could be possible would be 2008.

EPA officials say communities will still know about the types of toxic releases, but not some details about how each chemical was managed or released.

A three-part series by The Associated Press in December that analyzed EPA air pollution data for neighborhoods nationwide underscored the need for full and frequent disclosure, said Judith Enck, an environmental specialist in the New York Attorney General's Office.

An EPA spokesman didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on the opposition by the state attorneys general.

New Invention Removes Odor From Hog Manure

By Associated Press

In the S.F. Chronicle, Washington Post and other papers, Monday, January 16, 2006

Des Moines, Iowa (AP) -- A man has received a \$500,000 federal grant to mass produce his invention, a machine that removes the odor from hog manure.

The Tempest dryer, developed by Loran Balvanz, is designed to help solve water pollution, odor and noxious gas problems in the hog industry.

Balvanz said that because his invention separates water from the solids in manure, it can solve air and water quality problems.

The Tempest removes water from manure by spinning it at a high speed. The water is vented through the top of the dryer and vaporizes in the outside air.

The process reduces the volume and weight of the manure making for easy collection of the remaining solids.

The machine was developed for Balvanz's Global Resource Recovery Organization Inc., a company he founded in 1999.

Company president Bill Flowers said a farmer using the dryer each day could retain about 75 percent of the nutrients from hog manure. Since water is eliminated, farmers will no longer need long-term storage for liquid manure, Flowers said.

The smaller quantity of solids left over after the Tempest does its job can be stored on the farm and applied to fields as fertilizer when needed, he said.

Firm Says Process for Shipping Gas Is Safer

Instead of using terminals, the company would convert natural gas from a liquid state on tankers and deliver it through a pipeline.

By Deborah Schoch, Times Staff Writer

Los Angeles Times, Monday, January 17, 2006

A major Australian energy firm plans to ship liquefied natural gas to Southern California with a new process that it says is safer and more environmentally sound than the use of the terminals that three other companies want to construct in the state.

A Woodside Energy Ltd. subsidiary is set to announce its plans Wednesday at a Sacramento news conference but will not disclose where off the coast it hopes to build its system. The project could supply 10% to 15% of California's natural gas supply, said Jane Cutler, president of the Woodside subsidiary that is leading the effort.

The firm's entry into the California market could shake up the current liquefied natural gas debate over the safest way to import the fuel.

Three terminals have been proposed, one at the port in Long Beach and two off the coast of Ventura County. But unlike those projects, Woodside officials say, their plan would not require

building a terminal to convert the liquid back to a gas. Instead, the company would construct special tankers that could do that and would deliver the natural gas directly into an underwater pipeline 15 miles off shore.

A similar but smaller liquified natural gas project began operating in the Gulf of Mexico last year.

The four proposals must be thoroughly vetted under state and federal environmental laws. The final environmental review for the Long Beach project is expected by early summer. A new version of the review of one Ventura County project, proposed by Australian-based BHP Billiton, is expected in March.

Liquified natural gas is gas that has been chilled to minus 260 degrees Fahrenheit, a process that condenses the gas so much that it can be shipped by tanker. When it is unloaded, it is warmed in a process called regasification and shipped inland by pipeline for use in homes, businesses and other facilities.

The liquefied gas is highly flammable.

In Long Beach, a proposed Mitsubishi-ConocoPhillips onshore terminal inside the city's port has drawn concern from state officials and some residents that a terrorist attack or major accident could kill or injure hundreds of people. And the two proposed terminals off the Ventura County coast have been criticized because environmentalists worry they could produce [air pollution](#) and interfere with shipping lanes.

Proponents of the plants say they can be built so they are safe and will provide California with a needed supply of natural gas, which has become increasingly expensive in recent years as domestic sources have dwindled.

Only five liquified natural gas import facilities are operating nationwide today, all on the East and Gulf coasts. But energy companies have submitted dozens of applications for new terminals, including some on the West Coast.

Some state officials think that California needs only one or two liquified natural gas import projects, intensifying the competition.

Michael R. Peevey, president of the California Public Utilities Commission, said Monday: "Over the next 10 to 15 years, we could probably use two."

Peevey said he met with Woodside representatives about 10 days ago and was impressed with their plans. "They are a very large, reputable company that operates [gas] fields on behalf of itself and many others," he said.

He added that offshore facilities - the kind proposed by Woodside, BHP Billiton and a third company, Crystal Energy - would seem safer than placing an onshore facility in a populated area. "If you're going to site an LNG terminal, it seems to me it's vastly preferable to have them offshore rather than sited in a very busy harbor," Peevey said.

Officials with Mitsubishi-ConocoPhillips said their onshore terminal would include many safeguards to prevent accidents.

Woodside Energy is Australia's largest independent oil and gas company. It exports liquified natural gas, largely to Japan and Korea. The company, which established its U.S. subsidiary, Woodside Natural Gas Inc., last year, said the Southern California project is its central West Coast focus.

The California coast provides some special challenges for LNG importers, Cutler said. "There is an extra sensitivity about the environment," she said, adding that Woodside is committed to sound environmental practices.

The firm already has met with environmentalists involved in the liquified natural gas debate, including veteran Sacramento environmental lobbyist V. John White.

"The questions they're asking, and their approach, and the fact they own their gas, makes them a serious player," he said.

[Stockton Record, guest columnist, Sunday, Jan 15, 2006](#)

EPA has mileage on its mind

By Eric Grunder

Car buyers could get some truth in advertising. From the government.

The Environmental Protection Agency plans to overhaul its goofy, no-relation-to-reality mileage estimates.

You've probably seen those stickers plastered on new car windows. They alleged how much mileage you'll get.

I've never gotten anything close to the advertised mileage in the few new cars I've purchased. I don't know anybody who has.

The numbers are phony. Car makers know it. Buyers know it. Regulators know it.

That's because, roughly, they are based on ways of driving that nobody drives. The exception may be some grandma in Wyoming so concerned about her car she hangs her head out the window so she won't wear out the windshield while driving.

Consumer Reports did its own mileage test just to test the EPA testers. In October, CR reported it found mileage shortfalls in 90 percent of the 203 cars it tested. Some CR test vehicles came in 40 percent or 50 percent lower than the number claimed by the EPA.

The EPA doesn't take into account people who drive on the highway more than 60 mph. I drive 60 exactly twice on every highway trip: once as I accelerate through it toward 70 and then when I slow down to exit. And we've all seen drivers who don't even bother with that second part. The EPA also hasn't been taking into account drivers who jack-rabbit off when the light turns green.

The agency doesn't look at road conditions, weather, tire pressure or fuel type, either.

Some of that is about to change. With numbers about as real as the chances of winning the lottery, the EPA says it's going to mend its ways. It hasn't changed anything for 20 years.

And what's it mean to you? It means that those stickers won't be the selling point they have been.

The EPA guesses that its new testing methods will slice 10 to 20 percent off the estimated city mileage estimates and 5 to 15 percent off the highway estimates.

So, you can walk around the dealership. Compare mileage and price. And go directly to a sweet little hybrid, those gas-sipping offerings that can be had for a premium price and a willingness to await delivery.

But not so fast. The EPA says its new tests likely will hack 20 to 30 percent off the city driving estimates. Suddenly, amortizing the cost of a hybrid with fuel savings grows more interminable than the last two minutes of a Super Bowl game.

You also can find one of those gas-guzzlers that are stacking up. Cut yourself a deal and figure the savings on the road-pig compared to a hybrid will offset the extra gas you'll buy.

We drivers can rationalize anything. We learned how from the EPA.

[Modesto Bee editorial, Tuesday, January 17, 2006:](#)

Solar rebate program can empower the state

The notion of turning to solar power to meet our energy needs always has been a seductive one in sunny California. But there's always been one serious catch: It's a more expensive way to produce electricity than burning fossil fuels.

It won't be easy to close that gap, but a rebate program adopted last week by the state Public Utilities Commission could take us a long way toward that goal. The program will provide \$2.9 billion in rebates between 2007 and 2016 as an incentive to get owners of homes and businesses to outfit their buildings with solar devices.

The hope is that such a massive subsidy will make it possible to bring down the cost of solar equipment as demand and production climb.

Critics regard such subsidies as expensive boondoggles. But the usual calculation of costs when comparing solar energy to more conventional sources misses one important element. A strict bottom-line comparison ignores the high cost we now pay for burning fossil fuels — in poor air quality, debilitating illness and death, and even crop damage. Those must be factors in any calculus of the true comparison.

Solar power also offers hope that we may one day wean ourselves from our dependence on foreign sources of energy. That dependence, at worst, leaves us at the mercy of nations that are not necessarily our friends, and, at best, limits and skews the foreign policy options of this nation. The PUC program's goal is to install solar devices on 1 million homes, businesses and public buildings by 2017. That would produce some 3,000 megawatts of power, or the equivalent of six large conventional power plants. Right now, California only gets about 100 megawatts of energy from solar power. That's a paltry one-third of 1 percent of the state's supply.

A homeowner who installed a typical 2,500-watt system, which runs about \$20,000, would get a \$7,000 rebate in the first year of the program. The rebate would decline by 10 percent each year over the 11-year life of the effort.

It's worth a try.

[Modesto Bee editorial, Monday, January 15, 2006:](#)

EPA fesses up about gas mileage; DOT also should tell the truth

At long last, the Environmental Protection Agency has decided to tell the public the truth about fuel mileage. The agency proposes to change the methods it uses to rate vehicle fuel economy to reflect real-world driving conditions better. Unfortunately, the sensible new rules proposed at the EPA will not affect the way the Department of Transportation calculates fuel standards for manufacturers who produce the nation's cars.

For years, experts have scoffed at the government's fuel ratings for how they are based more on laboratory conditions and not those in the real driving world. Consumers Union, which publishes Consumer Reports magazine and is a leading critic of the government's fuel testing regime, conducts its own tests. In the fall, the magazine reported that the EPA's fuel efficiency ratings were off for 90 percent of about 300 cars and trucks the CU tested for the 2000 to 2006 model years. In some cases, the CU's tests showed that the government understated fuel consumption by as much as 50 percent.

EPA administrator Stephen Johnson conceded as much when he announced the agency's proposal to change the methods it uses to determine miles-per-gallon estimates. For the first time, the EPA will consider what really happens behind the wheel, specifically, how car air

conditioning, high speeds and cold temperatures impact fuel consumption. In addition, the EPA will adjust its testing to account better for things such as road grade, wind, tire pressure and the effects of different fuel properties.

Under the new methods, the EPA expects gas mileage estimates for most cars will drop by as much as 10 percent to 20percent under city driving conditions and 5 percent to 15 percent on the highway. Fuel ratings for those popular hybrid cars are expected to decline even further, perhaps 20 percent to 30percent. For some time, fuel economy experts have known that batteries used in hybrids are more sensitive to the energydepleting effects of air conditioning and cold temperatures than conventional cars.

Now that the EPA has decided to tell the public the truth about vehicle gas consumption, it's time for the Department of Transportation to do the same when it sets fuel economy standards for automakers. Unfortunately, the DOT's flawed testing procedures are set in law. Before the department can change its policies, Congress has to change the law. Congress should.

[Letter to the Modesto Bee, Sunday, January 15, 2006:](#)

It's too expensive not to burn wood

Concerning the valley air district citations of people burning wood to heat their house during the winter months, I have this message for them: When they can tell me a way that I can heat my entire home for less than \$300 for four months total, then I'll start listening to them. I reduced my Pacific Gas & Electric Co. bill by 65 percent in the month of December.

The government officials that approved this plan have lost not only my respect but my vote as well. I will continue to heat my house using the most economically viable option for me -- seasoned oak, walnut or almond.

Brian Shockley, Oakdale

[Letter to the Bakersfield Californian, Monday, January 16, 2006:](#)

Can't pick, choose laws

It's very interesting to read about the defiance expressed about the no burn laws. I couldn't agree more. Why?

Because I'm the guy who speeds down your street even when your children are riding their bikes. The same guy who drives so slow as to impede your travel on the way to work, home or shopping. You can sometimes find me actually taking home merchandise without paying. That's me lighting up a nice cigar in a restaurant while you enjoy your meal.

It's my right as an American citizen and resident of Bakersfield to pick and choose which laws I want to obey and which I deem just too silly and therefore ignore. I find it a lot easier to just whine and break laws than it is to work within the system to try to change them. Then again, maybe sometimes government is just trying to protect us from each other.

Jose L. Maciel, Bakersfield