

Pollution Plan on Haulers Nears OK

The state air board is set to vote today on emission reduction goals for ships, trucks and trains. But critics say the proposal lacks teeth.

By Janet Wilson, Times Staff Writer
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The California Air Resources Board today is expected to approve an ambitious plan to reduce pollution from the state's booming goods-movement industry. Targeting cargo ships, tractor-trailer trucks and freight trains, the plan calls for reducing total emissions from those sources to 2001 levels by 2010, and for cutting diesel emissions by 85% by 2020.

More than 40% of imported retail goods pass through the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and are shipped via rail and truck containers through the state. The amount of goods is expected to triple by 2020.

"There's no question this expansion is happening, whether we want it to or not, because of emerging economic powers in the East - China and India, also Singapore and the Philippines," said air board spokesman Jerry Martin. "We need to prepare for ... the added pollution that will come from more ships, more trucks, more trains."

But critics say there is no guaranteed funding for the plan, which would cost \$6 billion to \$10 billion, and no mandatory controls on polluters. Without more teeth in the plan, critics say, it won't eliminate deaths and illnesses attributable to emissions from commercial transportation.

"Well hip, hip hooray," S. David Freeman, president of the Port of Los Angeles, said sarcastically of the scheduled vote. "Are they ordering people to do things? No? Then what the hell good are they? The problem, if you believe the reports that they and others put out, is that people are dying from this pollution, and we [port officials] feel a huge sense of urgency."

The Coalition for Clean Air and 13 other environmental groups wrote the air board this week urging it to add mandatory regulations and require polluters, not the public, to pay the billions of dollars in costs.

"Even if you implement this plan as outlined, you're still left with over 800 premature deaths annually from the sources of pollution driving the transport of consumer goods," said Tom Plenys of the Coalition for Clean Air.

"This industry has been flying under the radar screen and not doing its fair share for a long time," Plenys said. "You could have a \$30 per container fee ... that would add a few pennies to the price of a DVD.... With the revenue streams that they have, they can afford to pay, given the health consequences."

More than \$359 billion in goods moved through California ports in 2004, according to trade reports, creating nearly 1 million jobs, a \$34-billion payroll and \$3.6 billion in tax revenue.

Spokesman Martin said the board could strengthen the plan at its hearing today at the Long Beach Convention Center.

Some parts will be implemented by future rules, he said, but the board cannot legally regulate vessels at sea and interstate rail traffic.

The plan's goals include replacing dirty marine vessel fuel, "scrubbing" ship smokestack

emissions, requiring ships to switch to electrical power while in port rather than idling auxiliary engines, replacing 12,000 aging, short-haul diesel trucks, and retrofitting locomotives.

Marine, rail and trucking officials said the plan is a good first step. They said their industries are already spending millions on cleaner equipment and will do more. But they said they would fight any efforts by the state to impose regulations that would disrupt global trade. They said they preferred market-based efforts to reduce emissions using public and private funding.

"The goal here is to achieve the air quality levels that will ensure public health, and to us it makes a lot more sense to ... allow for industry to figure out the best methods to get there," said T.L. Garrett, vice president of the Pacific Merchant Shipping Assn., whose members transport 90% of the cargo that comes into West Coast ports

Earth Day's a work day for volunteers

By Judy Green -- Bee Staff Writer
Sacramento Bee, Thursday, April 20, 2006

Saturday is Earth Day - officially the 36th annual. This year, it's dedicated to the issue of climate change.

For some, it's a day to celebrate clean air, water and soil by attending celebratory fairs, eating organic food and listening to live music. For these people, there's Picnic Day on the UC Davis campus and the Sustainability Earth Day fair at California State University, Sacramento.

For others, Earth Day is about volunteering to help make the air, water and dirt we play in cleaner.

So, if you want to dig in and feel grounded, here's a selection from the 41 projects organized by the California State Park Foundation and a few independent projects. All projects are on Saturday unless otherwise stated. Phone numbers are provided for sign-ups and directions; the state park projects can be found online at www.calparks.org (click on Earth Day 2006).

Sacramento County

Historic Folsom Powerhouse afterbay: Removing invasive plants and cleaning trails will keep volunteers busy from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Participants need to be completely covered in work clothes and bring bug repellent; Terry Lopez, (916) 988-0205, ext. 228.

Robla Park Bike Trail: Tree planting and general cleanup are planned from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Participants need to wear closed-toe shoes and dress in layers; a few spaces are available, Julie Mier, (916) 808-2285.

Oak Parkway Corridor: Folsom REI and the Friends of Folsom Parkway will clean up along the corridor and do some trail building. The time commitment is from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., and lunch is included. Participants need to bring gloves; for directions: (916) 355-7285.

American River Parkway: The Sacramento Audubon Society invites volunteers to help remove weeds from along a section of the parkway from 9 a.m. to noon; Frank Wallace, (916) 427-5694.

Kiefer Landfill Vernal Pools: The Sacramento Valley Nature Conservancy and REI will team with volunteers to clean the area and post signs from 9 a.m. to noon. Meet at the Kiefer Landfill Administration Building parking lot, 12701 Kiefer Road, Sloughhouse. Lunch is provided. For directions: REI Sacramento, (916) 924-8900.

Valley creeks: The Dry Creek Conservancy is organizing volunteers for Saturday and April 29 to clean up creeks in Rocklin, Roseville and Placer County; site list and details at www.drycreekconservancy.org, click on "2006 Creek Week flier."

Placer County

Auburn State Recreation Area: Planting trees and cleaning debris from trails are the work waiting for volunteers at the recreation area. The project time is from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., and participants need to dress in layers and bring gloves; Bill Deitchman, (530) 885-4527.

Yolo County

Grassland Regional Park: A new picnic area will get under way at Grasslands Regional Park, about four miles south of Davis on Mace Boulevard, where volunteers will weed, clean up and plant; some may help build a kiosk. Work is from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and participants should dress in long pants and bring tools and gloves; Dimitrios Georges, (530) 666-8806.

Butte County

Bidwell Mansion State Historic Park: Removing unwanted ground cover and bushes will keep volunteers busy from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday at Bidwell Mansion in Chico. Participants need to bring gloves and dress fully covered and plan to work with staffers; sign-ups are encouraged, Joe Akers, (530) 895-6144.

Solano County

Benicia State Recreation Area: After volunteers work from 9 a.m. to noon at the recreation area, the park will be cleaner and have fewer invasive plants; Tim Sullivan, (707) 747-6204.

Marin County

Angel Island State Park: Volunteers will work from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. pulling up unwanted plants and tidying trails. Participants need to take a ferry to the island, either from Tiburon or San Francisco, and to bring a day pack with lunch, gloves and water; Rich Ables, (415) 435-9221. For more information: (888) 987-2757 or www.calparks.org, click on "Earth Day."