

S.J. Valley air board members can breathe easy after vote

Assembly narrowly votes for influential panel to stay intact

Hank Shaw - Capitol Bureau Chief

Stockton Record, Sunday, Sept. 3, 2006

SACRAMENTO - A fight to change the membership of the San Joaquin Valley's air board during this year's legislative session pitted counties against cities, agricultural interests against environmentalists and the north Valley against the south.

In the end, the San Joaquin Regional Air Quality Control Board will remain the same for at least one more year.

Why the fuss? The San Joaquin Valley is among the world's greatest agricultural regions. It is also a bowl of air pollution so bad, one of every six Valley children suffers from asthma and other respiratory diseases.

The air board has the power to set rules for emissions in order to meet the Valley's overall pollution-control goals, set by state and federal government guidelines.

Dairies cause air pollution, and the Valley is the nation's richest dairy land. Winemaking causes air pollution, and the Valley is home to California's largest wineries. The Valley is dry and dusty for much of the year, and the particles kicked up by farming in that dust can worsen breathing problems.

And in the deepest part of the Valley lie the smog-belching oil refineries around Bakersfield.

Legislation sponsored by Sen. Michael Machado, D-Linden, would have given Stockton a permanent seat on the board, added other cities and put a scientist and a doctor among the club of politicians who now control the body.

It failed last week on a 35-38 vote in the Assembly.

Fresno Democrat Juan Arambula - who once sat on the board - was the lone Valley Assembly member to support the measure.

County air board members traditionally have been friendlier to agricultural interests than city members; adding city members might change that. And adding a public health doctor and an air scientist could skew the board further away from agriculture.

Critics such as Stockton Republican Assemblyman Greg Aghazarian believe adding the two nongovernment slots is not fair; industry gets no such guaranteed seat.

None of the San Joaquin County delegation voted with Machado, defying pleas even from the bishop of Stockton, who lobbied them to support the bill.

"The main interests represented on the board right now are agricultural interests. After all, this is an agricultural community," said Rich Fowler, director of Stockton's Catholic Charities. Fowler works for the bishop. "But with this bill, other interests would also have been able to come to the table with a vote.

"I am surprised at the amount of resistance to it," Fowler said.

Resistance even came from Arambula at first; feuding between Arambula and Machado helped scuttle the bill last year. But the two patched things up this year, and a compromise appeared close.

But Hanford Democrat Nicole Parra, who has a tough re-election fight ahead this fall, convinced several of her colleagues to oppose it. Lobbyists from the California State Association of Counties and the California Farm Bureau Federation added to the attack.

Machado said he plans to reintroduce the bill again next winter. He said with the Legislature passing landmark legislation to fight global warming, it will be up to the regional air board to determine exactly how to reduce the Valley's greenhouse gas emissions.

Having a diverse set of voices on the board during that debate - which looks to be intense - will be even more critical, Machado said.

Emission deal waits for impact

Vally lawmakers, businesses uncertain of bill's outcomes.

By E.J. Schultz / Bee Capitol Bureau

Fresno Bee, Friday, Sept. 1, 2006, and Modesto Bee, Tuesday, Sept. 5, 2006

SACRAMENTO - The historic deal reached this week by the governor and Democratic leaders to curb global warming has put California in the national spotlight as the first state to fight greenhouse gas emissions.

But the real effect of the legislation - which was sent to the governor's desk Thursday - might not be determined for years.

The goal is to cut greenhouse gases by 25% by 2020, a prospect that excites environmentalists, but has businesses - including Valley growers and dairies - worried about new and potentially costly regulations.

"The devil's going to be in the details in how it's implemented," said Michael Marsh, CEO of Modesto-based Western United Dairymen.

Most of those decisions will be in the hands of the California Air Resources Board, a division of the state Environmental Protection Agency. The board, an 11-member body appointed by the governor with Senate approval, must adopt emissions-reporting requirements by 2008 and set final regulations by 2011.

California, the world's 12th largest emitter of greenhouse gasses, historically has acted ahead of federal agencies to impose limits on air pollutants.

The industries most affected by the latest effort are expected to be oil refineries, power plants and cement makers. But the final version of the bill, which was being negotiated up until the last minute, casts a "broader net," said Cynthia Cory, environmental and governmental affairs director for the California Farm Bureau Federation.

It covers "basically anything that emits greenhouse gasses as determined by the board," she said. "It could definitely include dairies, wineries, whatever they determine."

Basically, "anybody that burns stuff," or "anybody that has a lot of combustion" could be subject to new regulations, said Tom Jordan, special projects administrator of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The district has not taken a role in crafting the legislation, but Jordan said he expects the agency to be involved at some point.

Republicans and business leaders have criticized the legislation, Assembly Bill 32, as a job-killer and a primitive attempt at placing local controls on a global problem.

"This kind of feel-good legislation does nothing other than raise the price of doing business in California with no positive result," said Al Smith, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce.

"The state doesn't have a right to destroy businesses," said Manuel Cunha, president of the 1,000-grower Nisei Farmers League.

Cory, who watched deliberations closely, questioned how the legislation was crafted. "There was no businessperson at the table," she said.

But Democrats and environmental groups are praising the bill, saying the state is taking a lead in fighting global warming at a time when the federal government has stayed on the sidelines.

"Boldness has genius in it, and the state is being bold," said Assembly Member Lori Saldaña, D-San Diego, during floor debate Thursday. The Assembly passed the bill Thursday by a 47-31 vote, following the lead of the Senate, which passed it on Wednesday night.

Assembly Member Nicole Parra, D-Hanford, broke ranks with her Democratic colleagues and voted against the bill.

"I had major concerns about how it would impact the district," she said of her ag-heavy constituency.

Assembly Member Juan Arambula, D-Fresno, was the only central San Joaquin Valley Assembly Member voting for the bill.

"More and more people are concerned about global warming and realize we have to do something," he said. "The real issue has been if California should take a leadership role. I believe it's to our benefit to be a leader."

Fresno-area environmentalist Kevin Hall said growers stand to gain if progress is made against global warming. The heating planet has reduced the snowpack, reducing water supplies, he said, and the winters are too short to kill off crop-ravaging pests.

"The failure to directly address global warming is like playing Russian roulette," he said. "Every decade since 1980, we have put another bullet in the chamber. The time to act is past, and now we have to catch up."

A dark cloud lifts: Clean-burning diesel the new law California gets early start in following health, pollution regulations regarding fuel use

by Paul Roger, MEDIANEWS

Tri-Valley Herald, Saturday, Sept. 2, 2006

Ask most people about diesel fuel and a common image comes to mind: sooty, foul-smelling black clouds pouring from the tailpipes of 18-wheel trucks and city buses.

Friday marked the beginning of the end for those clouds.

In a major step toward reducing smog — and public health risks from soot — all new diesel fuel sold in California is a dramatically cleaner-burning blend, required under state and federal rules that have been in the works for more than five years.

Air pollution officials are comparing the landmark fuel changeover to regulations that required lead to be removed from gasoline a generation ago. The new diesel contains 97 percent less sulfur than traditional diesel.

The new fuel's health benefit partly comes from its chemical makeup, but the main reason is because it will be combined with dramatically cleaner truck and bus engine standards that take effect nationally for new diesel engines, starting with the 2007 model year. Running on the clean fuel, those engines will put out 90 percent less soot and nitrogen oxides than current engines.

"You won't see anything coming out of new diesel engines. The black puff of soot will be gone," said Matt Haber, deputy air division director for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's regional office in San Francisco.

"I'm sure there are some people who will miss it, but not many."

When diesel has high levels of sulfur, as the previous diesel had, it clogs filters and other devices that can be put on the engines of trucks and buses to reduce smog. The new fuel will allow such filters to be retrofitted on thousands of existing trucks and buses statewide in the coming years.

The new "ultra-low-emission" diesel will increase diesel fuel prices by an estimated 3 to 5 cents a gallon, maybe less, said Jerry Martin, a spokesperson for the California Air Resources Board.

But the cost is worth it because the new fuel is expected to have significant health benefits, saving society money in the long run, he said.

The soot that comes from diesel and, to a lesser extent, gasoline, is considered among the most harmful type of air pollution. Microscopic particles can lodge in the lungs of people, exacerbating asthma and other respiratory problems, particularly among children who ride in old school buses, the elderly or people who live near freeways and ports. The particles also can migrate to the bloodstream, causing heart problems.

"Diesel particulate matter has an enormous cardiological effect. It irritates blood vessels of the heart and can increase heart attacks and strokes," said Thomas M. Dailey, chief of pulmonary medicine at Kaiser Permanente-Santa Clara hospital.

"This is a big step. It is a significant accomplishment."

California put the new fuel on the road early. It will be phased in for the rest of the United States starting Oct. 15, through 2010.

The EPA estimates the new clean diesel, combined with new diesel engine standards, will prevent an estimated 8,300 premature deaths, 5,500 cases of chronic bronchitis and 17,600 cases of acute bronchitis in children nationally every year.

Unlike with other regulations, the new fuel and engine standards put in place during the final days of the Clinton administration were not met with lawsuits and long political battles from the oil and truck industry.

The reason: by the mid-1990s, medical research increasingly was showing the public health threat from old diesel engines. The oil and trucking industry worried that California, and eventually the nation, might try to severely restrict or ban diesel.

So the industry worked to improve it, and the EPA worked well with refineries and engine makers to tweak the rule as the industry needed, said Allen Schaeffer, executive director of the Diesel Technology Forum. The industry group represents diesel engine makers and vehicle companies, and is based in Maryland.

"There were concerns about the details when the rule first came out, but by and large everybody realized these were the pathways to the future," Schaeffer said. "It's an investment in the future of diesel. Now we have cleaner fuel and low emissions."

Because California's smog standards are so strict in general, no automakers have sold new diesel cars in the state for years. That could change.

Automakers that sell diesel cars in other states, such as Jeep, Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen, are expected to start selling them in California in the next few years. Other automakers, such as Honda, Toyota and BMW, are likely to offer some diesel engines in their cars and trucks, too.

Wheeling-and-dealing session wraps up Several Valley-targeted measures win approval by state lawmakers.

By E.J. Schultz / Bee Capitol Bureau
Fresno Bee, Saturday, September 2, 2006

SACRAMENTO - With the pounding of a gavel shortly after midnight Friday, the Legislature wrapped up what is widely considered to be the most productive two-year session in recent memory.

Driven by election-year deal-making, a desire to improve dismal approval ratings, or maybe just a pure-hearted will to actually get something done, lawmakers sent scores of bills to the governor's desk that stand to affect Californians in the biggest and smallest of ways.

Deals were cut to boost the minimum wage, cut global warming, increase competition in the cable television industry, lower prescription drug prices for the uninsured, increase solar power use, ban hand-held cell phone use while driving and prohibit the long-term tethering of dogs.

"It certainly should be properly called a very productive session," said political analyst Tony Quinn. "Once in a while, the sun and the moon are kind of lined up in the right place."

Earlier in the year, lawmakers passed the first on-time budget in six years, boosting school funding by millions of dollars. An agreement was also reached to place a series of public works bond measures on November's ballot, one of which would bring sorely needed improvements to Highway 99 - one of the most closely watched Valley initiatives of the year.

Several Valley-targeted bills got approval.

For instance, businesses operating in poor air quality zones would get incentives for buying emission-reducing equipment if Gov. Schwarzenegger signs legislation by Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter. Farmworkers could be helped by a bill by Assembly Member Juan Arambula, D-Fresno, that requires farm labor contractors to disclose on pay stubs the name of the grower doing the hiring.

In a grass-roots effort, Valley constituents successfully lobbied for the creation of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, a task force aimed at curing the region's longtime economic woes.

Still, there was a lot, for sure, that didn't get done.

Proposals to reduce prison overcrowding died at the last minute, and a package of flood-control bills also stalled. A move to strip lawmakers of the power to draw their own political districts was stunted amid squabbling and finger-pointing between legislative leaders.

Republicans, who have little say in the Democrat-controlled Legislature, are painting a much less rosy picture of the session. They are disappointed, for instance, that more debt wasn't paid down in the state budget and say that many of the bills passed are job killers. And they deride some of the legislation as "nanny government," such as a measure that prohibits the use of hand-held cell phones while driving.

"We've seen a maximization and proliferation of the liberal agenda in California," said Assembly Member Bill Maze, R-Visalia.

All Valley lawmakers, Democrats included, were rebuked in their bid to get state money for a Fresno-area dam, the much-debated proposal to build a reservoir at Temperance Flat, upstream of Millerton Lake.

As in any year, there were winners and losers on nearly every bill passed - or not passed.

Indian tribes were dealt a blow when the Assembly on Thursday failed to act on a series of gaming compacts mostly affecting Southern California tribes. Though the pacts might be taken up again, it's at least a short-term win for organized labor, which sought stronger worker protections. Watching closely is the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, which is waiting its turn to negotiate a compact for a planned \$250 million casino along Highway 99 in Madera County.

The Fresno City Council was at odds with the Fresno County Board of Supervisors over a bill that would have reshuffled the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board to give a bigger voice to the region's three largest cities, including Fresno. County supervisors - and their rural constituents - prevailed as the bill was defeated twice in the Assembly.

The agricultural industry lost a battle when a measure died that would have prevented local governments from banning genetically modified crops. Organic farmers hailed it as a victory.

"Local authority is preserved," said Renata Brillinger of Californians for GE-Free Agriculture, a coalition of environmental groups and family and organic farms.

"Local communities can protect themselves from the threats of [genetically engineered] crops."

Large-scale growers are also hanging their heads over the global warming deal, fearing that the measure - designed to cut greenhouse gas emissions - might lead to costly regulations.

The emissions deal shows, in a microcosm, how and why so much got done this year.

Running against a liberal Democratic foe in state Treasurer Phil Angelides, Schwarzenegger did not have to worry about bending over backward to appeal to his conservative base, including farmers and business interests that were staunchly opposed to the greenhouse gas bill.

"The [political] right has no place to go," said Quinn, co-editor of the California Target Book, a nonpartisan analysis of legislative and congressional elections.

That allowed the governor to reach out to moderates and independents, as he cut deals on prescription drugs, the minimum wage and other traditionally Democratic issues.

The Democrats, meanwhile, knew "they better make their deal now while the iron is hot," Quinn said.

The result was a climate not seen in Sacramento in years: Democrats working with a Republican governor in an election year.

The lovefest might continue into the fall. Assembly Speaker Fabián Núñez, D-Los Angeles, told reporters Friday that he plans to work with Schwarzenegger to get the public works bonds passed - even as he stumps for Angelides.

"We're going to go campaign together," he said of the governor. "My relationship with him is at an all-time high."

Ruling supports Merced community

Activists' lawsuit couldn't halt county's plans for UC area

By Corinne Reilly – Merced Sun-Star

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, Sept. 5, 2006

MERCED — A Merced County Superior Court judge has ruled against environmentalists attempting to stall plans for a 2,000-acre community adjacent to UC Merced.

The San Joaquin Raptor Rescue Center and Protect Our Water sued Merced County following the 2004 adoption of the university community plan.

The plan — which took more than seven years and \$4 million to develop — details the county's hopes for a community meant to accommodate 30,000 people UC Merced expects to draw in the next 30 years. It would contain more than 11,000 homes, 45 acres of retail and office space and seven public schools.

Environmentalists alleged the plan violates the county's development policies and doesn't adequately assess the environmental damage it would cause, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act.

Judge Ronald Hansen ruled in favor of the county in August.

"The (environmental review) record is sufficient to make a meaningful review as to CEQA compliance," Hansen wrote in the ruling.

Further, Hansen wrote, the "petitioner's request seems more to cause delay, rather than produce a constructive CEQA objective."

County Counsel Ruben Castillo called the ruling a "100 percent win for the county."

"This shows that the county was right in the creating of the community plan. We absolutely agree with the ruling," said Castillo.

UC Merced — which was not named in the lawsuit — said in a statement it was pleased with the decision.

"(The ruling) represents another significant endorsement for the thorough and comprehensive planning process of the university community," said the statement.

Officials at UC Merced say the community — planned to contain parks, theaters, restaurants and shops — is essential to the viability and success of the campus.

They also say the community [will reduce air pollution](#) by housing students and faculty close enough to the university to let them walk, instead of drive, to the campus.

Representatives from the environmental groups could not be reached for comment.

A ruling in favor of the environmental groups could have forced the county to redo its assessment of the project's environmental impacts, a legally required step to move forward with development.

Both groups sued UC Merced in unsuccessful attempts to stop construction on the university's first phase.

Environmental groups could still appeal the recent decision. Development of the community also is contingent upon the receipt of a permit that would let the university expand on federally protected wetlands.

University officials say they don't expect to begin construction on the community for at least five years.

Environmentalists wanted to stall plans, judge says

By Corinne Reilly

The Merced Sun-Star, Friday, Sept. 1, 2006

A Merced County Superior Court judge has ruled against local environmentalists attempting to stall plans for a 2,000-acre community adjacent to UC Merced.

The San Joaquin Raptor Rescue Center and Protect Our Water filed suit against Merced County following the county's 2004 adoption of its University Community Plan.

The plan -- which took more than seven years and \$4 million to develop -- details the county's hopes for a massive community meant to accommodate the 30,000 people UC Merced expects to draw in the next 30 years. It would contain more than 11,000 homes, 45 acres of retail and office space and seven public schools.

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They also say the community will reduce air pollution by housing students and faculty close enough to the university to enable them to walk, instead of drive, to the campus.

Representatives from the Raptor Rescue Center did not return phone calls seeking comment Thursday.

Representatives from Protect Our Water could not be reached.

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Workers use rice straw to insulate new police station

Construction method helps environment, cuts electricity costs

By Gerald Carroll, Staff Writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Friday, Sept. 1, 2006

Using one of the most ancient of building materials, rice straw, the city of Visalia's new police substations are among the first emergency-service buildings to be constructed using what used to be farm waste.

Rice-straw bales were being positioned and installed as part of the North Substation's walls Thursday under the auspices of Benchmark Inc., a Willows-based supplier of the construction-quality bales.

"The walls will be wider," said Russ Tucker, onsite supervisor for Benchmark, "but they will provide three times as much insulation as regular insulation material."

Like a traditional building, the substation's walls are made of cinderblock, but instead of packing traditional insulation on the inside of the cinderblock, 2-foot thick straw bales are used on the outside. A special plaster is then applied to finish the outside.

"We could take a weed-trimmer and make it as smooth as you want," Tucker said. "Or we can leave it. And the plaster finish will have some texture to it."

Sharon Sheltzer, the city's community development project manager, said that the two substations will have straw-baled walls. The South Substation is being built on the corner of County Center Drive and Cameron Drive.

"The south facility will be identical to the north," Sheltzer said. "The straw bales will be fitted on the south building after [the north one] is finished."

Sheltzer said she prefers the chic "unfinished" look.

"It gives it style and uniqueness," said Sheltzer, who has designed straw-bale structures in her 20 years as an architect before joining the city's staff five years ago.

Tucker said that is one of the big advantages of straw-bale construction — it can be shaped into different, even curved, structures.

"We have a special cutter over here that trims bales into almost any shape, even angles," said Tucker, pointing to a device invented by Rick Green, a rice farmer based in Willows and Benchmark's founder.

Environment-friendly

Using rice-straw bales not only enhances construction quality, Tucker said, it helps mitigate what has historically been a severe air-pollution issue in the state's Central Valley.

"It has long been a huge air-pollution problem just to burn the waste straw after each rice crop was harvested," said Tucker, who Thursday was on site at 310 N.W. Third Ave., Visalia, overseeing the North Substation's straw-bale construction phase.

"Rice straw was then burned in co-generation power plants, but the straw would burn off a substance that coated the furnace like glass," Tucker said. "So they couldn't use it for fuel."

Tucker, 62, has been in construction for 45 years. Ten years ago his career took a turn when he joined forces with Green, who set about converting his rice-straw waste into building material.

This came soon after an architect from Yolo County named John Hammond built the state's first known custom home using rice straw bales 15 years ago. Hammond's architectural firm, Davis-based Indigo, Hammond & Playle LLP, designed the Visalia substations' rice-straw bale elements.

"I remember seeing my kids play on hay bales and thinking: Why can't this be used in construction?" Hammond said. "Right now the straw-bale contracting business fills a small niche, but we feel it can be much larger."

Rice-straw bales have gained state approval as a viable construction material, and the door is now open to use straw bales in public as well as private buildings.

Flexible workers

Tucker's crew not only has to have construction knowledge to properly trim, place, wire and otherwise fasten the straw bales — they grow and harvest the straw itself.

Tony Tapia, Tucker's 30-year-old foreman at the North Substation site said, "We're out there harvesting rice first, like any farmer. After we get the rice in, we go back out there and gather up all the straw."

After the straw is harvested and bundled, Tapia transfers back to whatever site he is working to trim, treat, set and fit the bales into walls.

"From farmer to construction worker, all these guys here cross over," Tucker said. "These are really versatile people."

Tucker said that rice straw is particularly useful for construction because of a "high silica content" and that it is resistant to decomposition, but Hammond said that most any local straw could be suitable.

"Barley straw, or other kinds can be used," said Hammond. "Any straw indigenous to Visalia can be converted into building material."

Spare the air today

The Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, Sept. 3, 2006

Today has been declared a Spare the Air Day for Kern, Tulare and Fresno counties.

Spare the Air is a voluntary, summertime effort sponsored by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District that aims to reduce air pollution when air quality is expected to reach unhealthy levels.

Kern County's air quality index is forecasted to reach 140 today, which means the air is unhealthy for sensitive people, according to the control district. The air quality index takes into account the levels of ground-level ozone, particle pollution, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

When a Spare the Air day has been called, residents are asked to reduce or avoid activities that cause air pollution, by postponing unnecessary car trips and carpooling. Go to www.valleyair.org or call 559-230-5800 to learn more about Spare the Air days.

Spare the Air

Visalia Times-Delta, Monday, Sept. 4, 2006

Today is a spare the air day.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District forecast an air quality index of 140, considered unhealthy for sensitive groups.

Valley residents can help reduce and control air pollution levels by:

- Doing all your errands at once.
- Bringing your lunch to work.
- Carpooling or vanpooling.

Offshore Terminal's Onshore Effect Debated

By Gary Polakovic, Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times, Sunday, September 3, 2006

Building a floating liquefied natural gas terminal 14 miles off the Ventura County coast may be safer than putting it on shore, but the proposed \$800-million project has triggered intense opposition over its effect on air quality in smoggy Southern California.

About 12,000 coastal residents have filed comments, mostly in protest, about a draft air pollution permit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is preparing for Australia-based BHP Billiton, one of the world's largest energy companies

Environmentalists say BHP's project fails to meet Clean Air Act requirements because the EPA is not holding it to the rigorous standards that would apply if it were built on land. The EPA strongly advocated stringent controls for two years, then dropped its demand after intense lobbying from the company and the Bush administration, they said.

"It is being held to the lowest possible level of environmental review," said Susan Jordan, director of the California Coastal Protection Network. "It sets a precedent for all the offshore LNG projects."

But Renee Klimczak, president of BHP Billiton LNG International, said the project would not only provide California with a reliable source of low-polluting energy, it would aid in the fight for clean air. She said the company plans to use the best-available technology so the operation does not degrade air quality on the mainland.

"There should be no onshore impact," Klimczak said. "We have committed to reduce near-shore emissions to near zero and that's going to result in a net air quality benefit."

The debate signals a shift from safety concerns at LNG marine terminals toward environmental consequences in California, home of the nation's worst air pollution. The BHP project faces growing scrutiny because it is further along than four other proposed LNG projects and could become the first fueling port on the West Coast.

Cabrillo Port would consist of a floating gas-processing platform the size of three football fields that would be moored offshore between Oxnard and Malibu. Tanker ships would haul liquefied natural gas - compressed and chilled to minus 260 degrees for easier transport - from Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia. Eight heaters inside the terminal would warm the fuel, producing up to 1.5 billion cubic feet of LNG a day.

The EPA said the project would include numerous measures to slash emissions, including some that exceed requirements. The agency said its preliminary findings indicate emissions would not significantly affect air pollution onshore, though state and local air quality officials are skeptical.

The gas-processing terminal would release up to 95 tons of ozone-forming pollutants annually. An additional 119 tons would result from small vessels and the two or three tankers expected to dock there each week - making the project one of the top polluters in Ventura County.

More pollution could complicate cleanup efforts in the county, where the federal government has designated air quality as moderately poor and is likely to downgrade it to seriously polluted next year, said Mike Villegas, executive officer of the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District.

California air quality officials also warn that onshore breezes would blow emissions from the BHP terminal across Malibu and into the Los Angeles Basin, contributing to smog in some of the nation's most polluted communities.

"It's a pretty large [pollution] source even with mitigation measures," said Moshen Nazemi of the South Coast Air Quality Management District. "The equipment on the platform will still have emissions that are going to come onshore."

Pollution Mitigations

President Bush and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger have endorsed building LNG marine terminals. California powers nearly one-third of its electrical plants, businesses and households with natural gas, yet about 85% of the fuel is imported from the northern Rockies and Plains states or Canada and it is increasingly costly and scarce as more states switch to the clean-burning fuel.

"We need natural gas," said Susanne Garfield, spokeswoman for the California Energy Commission. "We're not as interested in where it comes from, but we probably need one or two terminals on the West

Coast."

Klimczak said BHP would take a number of steps to compensate for pollution the project generates, including a requirement that only ships powered by natural gas within 25 miles of the coast could berth at the terminal. Service vessels would be powered by natural gas instead of diesel. The LNG reheating units aboard the terminal would be fitted with "best-available control technology" to achieve significant reductions, and emissions from other sources would also be cut, she said.

"With all the efforts, Cabrillo Port emissions will be reduced to zero through mitigation," Klimczak said.

But critics cite flaws in BHP's strategy. They note that the EPA has not written the company's cleanup pledges into an enforceable permit. The state Air Resources Board said not enough is being done to account for emissions from the LNG tanker ships.

They argue that Los Angeles-area air pollution is so severe that the project must be held to the most rigorous standards.

For example, Nazemi cites LNG-industry literature that shows advanced technology could cut nitrogen oxide emissions by an additional 45% and carbon monoxide by 56% from the combustion vaporizers, the main pollution source on the terminal. But the EPA is not requiring that technology, instead allowing BHP to use equipment that releases up to four times more smog-forming compounds, according to the AQMD.

The AQMD also fears that the terminal could be a portal for "hot gas" entering California. Hot gas is natural gas that burns at a higher temperature and produces more smog-forming emissions. It is common in Asia, and Nazemi said it could increase emissions of nitrogen oxide, a key ozone precursor, at Los Angeles-area homes and businesses by 20% to 100%.

The district seeks guarantees that Cabrillo Port will adhere to hot gas restrictions similar to those required for the proposed Sound Energy Solutions LNG terminal in Long Beach Harbor. Klimczak said BHP's natural gas supply is clean and "can be taken right out of the ground and shipped and meet all California standards."

A cornerstone of BHP's plan calls for installing new, cleaner engines in two diesel tugboats operating on the California coast. But critics said the full benefit of the pollution reduction would not accrue in the affected region because the tugs operate as far away as San Francisco.

The company estimates that cleaner tugboats would eliminate 210 tons of emissions annually, enough to compensate for Cabrillo Port. But the EPA questions those estimates and seeks more tests. Villegas wrote in an Aug. 1 letter that the emissions reductions benefit to Los Angeles and Ventura counties would be just 79 tons per year and more were needed.

EPA Reverses Position

The Clean Air Act includes a mechanism to ensure that all the emissions from a new pollution source are mitigated through "offsets" - a method by which a new polluter pays to eliminate enough emissions from other sources to compensate for its own. EPA records show that for two years, the agency strenuously argued that BHP acquire offsets for its project. But securing offsets is costly, difficult to achieve and leads to delays, so the company resisted.

The EPA reversed itself and granted a waiver after the company contacted the White House Task Force on Energy Project Streamlining. Bush created the task force in 2001 to accelerate energy projects. BHP spent \$1.8 million in California lobbying for its project last year - the seventh-highest expenditure among special-interest groups, according to the secretary of state.

"I have never seen an energy project in the state with this much lawyering and lobbying in 25 years," said V. John White, air quality lobbyist for the Sierra Club.

Amy Zimpfer at the EPA regional office said the agency reversed its position after concluding that Cabrillo Port would be in a patch of ocean where the air is not designated as polluted, allowing for lenient standards similar to those in effect at Channel Islands National Park and a Navy facility on San Nicolas Island 70 miles offshore.

BHP is "providing mitigation that is not required," Zimpfer said. However, sources in the EPA's San Francisco office said officials in the agency's Washington headquarters often overrule the regional office on pollution permits. "More and more of our decisions on permits are overhauled by headquarters, and that's different than the way we've done things before," said one EPA official.

Karen Kraus, an attorney for the Santa Barbara-based Environmental Defense Center, questions the EPA's switch. She said an exemption can be granted only for projects built on the islands. Further, she said the Deepwater Port Act, under which the project is being permitted, states that clean-air laws of the closest adjoining state must apply.

"The EPA backed off," Kraus said. "There's no legal or factual basis to justify what they're doing."

Zimpfer said that the EPA is still reviewing public comments and that the air pollution permit could be modified before a final version is issued next spring.

Cause and Effect: Dogs on Notice in Asthmatic Households

By Nicholas Bakalar

N.Y Times, Tuesday, September 5, 2006

Having a dog in the house may worsen the symptoms of children with asthma <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/health/diseasesconditionsandhealthtopics/asthma/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier> by aggravating their response to air pollution, but living with cats has no detectable effect, a new study reports.

Researchers recruited 3,227 children, of whom 475 had asthma, from schools in 12 California communities. They completed health questionnaires and were followed over three years. The study <http://www.ehponline.org/docs/2006/8548/abstract.html> appears online in Environmental Health Perspectives.

The subjects reported yearly information on chronic cough and other lung symptoms. The questionnaires also included information on socioeconomic status, pet ownership and a history of asthma in either parent.

Dogs were present in 62 percent of the houses and cats in 43 percent. Using data from air pollution monitoring stations in each community, researchers found that the association of air pollution with asthmatic symptoms was consistently larger in children who lived with dogs. There were no statistically significant effects in houses with cats alone or with no pets.

The cause of the effect is not clear. "We think it's probably not allergy to dogs, otherwise we would expect to see an effect of air pollution with cats," said Dr. Rob S. McConnell, the lead author of the study and professor of preventive medicine at the University of Southern California http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/university_of_southern_california/index.html?inline=nyt-org. "It's the synergy between air pollution and dogs that makes the story."

But it may not yet be time to give away the dog.

"It's premature to advise people to get rid of a dog on this basis," Dr. McConnell said. "We need to understand what it is about dogs that results in this triggering effect. And each child is different."

California Tightens Rules on Emissions Supporters Hope Law Will Spur Federal Action

By Juliet Eilperin, Staff Writer

The Washington Post, Friday, Sept/ 1, 2006; A01

California's legislature approved the broadest restrictions on carbon dioxide emissions in the nation yesterday, marking a new stage in the accelerating drive for a more aggressive national response to global warming.

The California bill requires a 25 percent cut in carbon dioxide pollution produced within the state's borders by 2020 in order to bring the total down to 1990 levels. In at least eight other states, political momentum is building to take similar steps to limit emissions of greenhouse gases linked to climate change, a trend that could increase the pressure for a national system despite the Bush administration's consistent opposition to mandatory caps.

The California legislation also provides a statewide market system designed to make it easier for heavily polluting industries to meet the new limits. They would be able to buy "credits" from companies that emit lower emissions than the caps allow, rather than having to invest in cleaner new technologies.

The measure cleared the California Senate on Wednesday night. The Assembly, on a 46 to 31 vote, sent it on yesterday to Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who pledged this week to sign it.

"It really does point out the country needs to solve this problem in a uniform way," said William K. Reilly, who headed the Environmental Protection Agency under President George H.W. Bush and now co-chairs the bipartisan National Commission on Energy Policy. "It will rebound in Washington."

California lawmakers, along with environmental advocates and some business leaders, said they pushed the measure both to address what they see as a threat to their state's economic and environmental welfare, and to influence national energy policy.

"I really believe the effort to curb global warming is a bottom-up effort in this country," Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez (D), who is a co-author of the bill, said in an interview Wednesday. "For us, this is not just about California. This is about making a push from the bottom up to get the Congress to take action."

Advocates would have to overcome major obstacles to bring about a national program, however. Both the House and the Senate have rejected mandatory limits on carbon dioxide. But if Democrats make gains in this fall's elections, it could bolster support on Capitol Hill for a universal cap-and-trade system.

Congress would have to hash out many more details than are spelled out in California's bill. State lawmakers left key implementation issues to be decided by the California Air Resources Board. The measure also includes an escape hatch allowing the governor to extend compliance deadlines for as much as one year "in the event of extraordinary circumstances, catastrophic events, or threat of significant economic harm."

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), who has her own proposal to establish a national cap-and-trade system, said yesterday's vote "is a giant step forward toward a national cap. . . . It's only a question of time." But she said that, when it comes to details, the state bill "does not have a methodology or a process. It just caps it."

Because 40 states have coal-fired power plants that account for much of the country's carbon dioxide emissions, Feinstein added: "Forty times two, in terms of senators, makes a bill very difficult."

On that point, Sen. James M. Inhofe (R-Okla.), an implacable opponent of emissions caps, agreed, citing the Senate's record on the issue. "Cap-and-trade proposals are all cost and no reduction," Inhofe said in a statement.

Corporate opponents in California, moreover, have not given up their fight, saying the legislation could cripple their industries and raise electricity prices. Jack Stewart, president of the California Manufacturers and Technology Association, said industry is already taking steps to improve energy efficiency, and mandates will only increase the cost of doing business.

"The economic graveyards of California are littered with the jobs that are the unintended consequences of good intentions by legislators and governors," said Stewart, adding that manufacturers and utilities have not ruled out legal action to try to block the measure.

In Washington, utilities lobbyist Scott Segal sounded a similar note, saying the measure would raise electricity prices and hurt the most vulnerable consumers: "When power shortages occur and rates go up, the people who are hurt the most are the ones least able to afford it."

Bush's top environmental adviser, James L. Connaughton, said in a statement that the administration welcomes "effective state action to complement over 60 regulatory, incentive, and voluntary federal programs working to achieve the president's goal of reducing national greenhouse gas intensity by 18 percent by 2012," but that it remains concerned about "any program that moves jobs and increases emissions in other states or other countries -- an open question for California's proposed legislation."

Still, state and local politicians across the country are pressing ahead with rules aimed at cutting emissions. Two weeks ago, seven Northeastern states approved a mandatory limit on carbon dioxide pollution from power plants, with a goal of stabilizing emissions by 2009 and reducing them by 10 percent over 10 years. Maryland has plans to adopt similar standards.

In Utah this week, Republican Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. established an advisory panel composed of environmental activists and utilities executives to review the science on climate change and propose ways the state can curb its effects.

James D. Marston, director of state global-warming initiatives for the advocacy group Environmental Defense, said states are taking the initiative because the administration and Congress have refused to act. "It's harder for us to turn the boat around now because we've had several years of making dirtier energy investments instead of cleaner energy investments," Marston said.

In California, Republicans and Democrats have a political incentive to take bolder action on climate change. With carbon dioxide pollution rivaling Australia's, the state is the 12th-largest emitter in the world. A July poll by the Public Policy Institute of California showed that nearly two-thirds of Californians, including a large majority of Republicans and independents, wanted state legislators to address the issue.

"Because of the support in the state for doing something on global warming, both Democrats and Republicans have been trying to get out front of each other," said Mark Baldassare, director of research at the policy institute.

Some California companies broke with industry leaders, concluding that mandatory greenhouse gas reductions are smart politics and will be good for business. Pacific Gas and Electric chief executive Peter A. Darbee, whose company serves 15 million customers and ranks as California's largest utility, issued a statement last night saying, "We're supporting this legislation because we are convinced that climate change is an urgent problem and action is needed now."

"This is a bill that is really rolling down the tracks," said PG&E's vice president for government relations, Nancy E. McFadden, shortly before the state Senate vote Wednesday. "We made the judgment that we're going to be constructive and make it a bill that would protect both the environment and the economy."

L.A. sets goal to plant 1 million saplings

Race is on, and Sacramento may lose standing among world's great tree cities

By Laura Mecoy -- Bee Los Angeles Bureau

Sacramento Bee, Tuesday, Sept. 5, 2006

LOS ANGELES -- Watch out, Sacramento, City of Trees.

The City of Angels is making a run at your reputation -- and your claim to fame is already in doubt.

Los Angeles may be more renowned for its sprawl, [smog](#) and celebrities than its trees.

But it could challenge Sacramento's tree-loving status with a "Million Trees L.A." tree-planting campaign its mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa, plans to officially launch Sept. 30.

"If you add a million trees to Los Angeles ... it could begin to give the City of Trees a run for its money," said Greg McPherson, U.S. Forest Service Center for Urban Forest Research director.

Sacramento tree boosters beg to differ.

"We will stay one good shade tree ahead of them," promised Ray Tretheway, Sacramento Tree Foundation executive director and city councilman.

He said the Sacramento region is launching its own drive to plant 4 million trees in Sacramento and five surrounding counties over the next 40 years.

But Sacramento may need millions more to hang onto its claim of being one of the world's greatest tree cities.

For decades, civic boosters bragged that Sacramento was second only to Paris in the number of trees per person -- a boast it now appears had little basis in fact.

A U.S. Forest survey shows Sacramento doesn't even rank in the top five cities in trees per capita.

The survey of 21 cities that have conducted tree counts since 1989 found Sacramento rated No. 8 in trees per capita, behind municipalities in New Jersey, West Virginia, Canada, New York and Georgia.

Dave Nowak, the Forest Service project leader who compiled the information, said the top cities had forests within their boundaries or were located in forestland where trees sprout easily.

Sacramento, on what was once prairie land, can still lay claim to California bragging rights -- but just barely.

With 4.3 trees per person, the City of Trees edged out Oakland, the only other California city on the list. Oakland was No. 10 with four trees per person.

Sacramento tree boosters can also take heart in Los Angeles' standing. The Southern California metropolis didn't even make the list because it hasn't compiled the necessary data.

But current estimates put it at less than one tree per person.

Tretheway said the long-held belief that Sacramento was second only to Paris may have started with a 1958 newspaper story making that claim.

But he said the story reported only on publicly owned trees, leaving all privately owned trees out of the census. So the claim was dubious -- even in 1958.

"It's quite the urban myth," Tretheway said.

In the last 30 years, he said, cities around the country have launched tree-planting campaigns, similar to Sacramento's, as their leaders realized the benefits. Trees can help clean the air and water, lower energy consumption and create a more livable community.

In Los Angeles, the nonprofit organization TreePeople is among the oldest tree-planting organizations, and it had its own million-tree drive 25 years ago.

Beginning in 1981, it set out to spruce up the city before the opening of the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. TreePeople recorded the planting of the 1 millionth tree -- an apricot in Canoga Park -- four days before decathlete Rafer Johnson lit the Olympic torch at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.

The city's new million-tree campaign has not set a deadline, and Los Angeles Board of Public Works Commissioner Paula Daniels said planting that many saplings could take "several years."

She said the goal is to increase the city's canopy -- a measure of what percentage of the city has tree coverage -- from 18 percent to the national average of 27 percent.

"I have encountered a lot of enthusiasm for this project," Daniels said.

The campaign has already recorded the planting of 33,306 trees. But the city's signature trees -- the majestic palms -- don't count.

That's because palms are more closely related to grasses than trees, and don't provide the shade or other benefits of leafier specimens.

Five nonprofit agencies have promised to plant 875,000 of the 1 million leafier trees that do count, and they're already at work on meeting those goals.

On a recent Friday, one of those organizations, North East Trees, sent its crew of 12 "at-risk" teens and three supervisors to plant 20 firewheel trees in a low-income Los Angeles neighborhood.

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power paid for the saplings as part of a shade tree program aimed at reducing energy demand.

North East Trees provided the training for the teens, and the young crew supplied the muscle.

The crew hauled the 6- to 7-foot trees from a flatbed truck, then sweated and strained to dig the holes for planting the firewheels along Manitou Avenue.

The crew stuck the saplings in the hole, packed dirt and mulch around them and gave the trees their first drink of water in their new home.

"I talk to the tree, telling it that it's in shock now, but it will be all right," said 16-year-old Mayra Rodriguez.

Five years from now, she said, she hopes to return to Manitou Avenue and find beautiful grown trees lining the aging thoroughfare.

Aaron Thomas, North East Trees training director and field arborist, said planting trees along blighted streets can "transform an entire area."

Over the last 15 years, he said, North East Trees has planted more than 300,000 saplings in northeast Los Angeles, creating cooler and more livable streets in some of the city's oldest and poorest neighborhoods.

"Trees are legacies," Thomas said. "They live much longer than we do."

Tree-Planting Drive Seeks To Bring a New Urban Cool

Lower Energy Costs Touted as Benefit

By Blaine Harden, Staff Writer

The Washington Post, Monday, September 4, 2006; A01

SACRAMENTO -- This city believes an answer for global warming is growing on trees.

About 375,000 shade trees have been given away to city residents in the past 16 years, and there are plans to plant at least 4 million more. To receive up to 10 free trees, residents simply call the Sacramento Municipal Utility District, a publicly owned power company.

"A week later, they are here to tell you where the trees should be planted and how to take care of them," said Arlene Willard, a retired welfare case worker who with her husband, John, has planted four SMUD trees in the back yard of their east Sacramento house.

Perhaps the most arresting feature of Sacramento's shade crusade is its rarity, despite federal research showing that carefully planted trees can lower summertime temperatures in cities, significantly reduce air-conditioning bills and trap greenhouse gases responsible for global warming.

Most American cities have shrinking tree canopies in relation to their growth. That's because of inadequate budgets to maintain older trees and a failure to plant shade trees in new residential and commercial developments, according to federal experts, tree-planting organizations and scholars of urban ecology.

A number of major cities have launched sizable tree-planting programs -- including Washington, Baltimore, Minneapolis, Chicago, Denver and Los Angeles. Still, the decline in tree cover has been accelerating since the 1970s, especially on private property and new development, according to American Forests, an environmental group in Washington that uses satellite imagery to document tree cover across the country.

"This is like a creeping cancer," said Deborah Gangloff, the group's executive director. "In the two dozen cities we have studied, we have noticed about a 25 percent decline in tree canopy cover over the past 30 years. This is a dramatic trend that is costing cities billions of dollars."

And the trend continues even as cities heat up. Along with much of California, Sacramento set a record for heat this summer, with 11 straight days above 100 degrees. Federal scientists say that the first six months of this year were the warmest on record in the United States and that the five warmest years over

the past century have occurred since 1998. The average nighttime temperature in Los Angeles is seven degrees warmer than it was a century ago.

Many major utility companies are declining to act on the connection between urban trees and energy savings, according to Agriculture Undersecretary Mark Rey, who oversees the Forest Service.

"It is one of our new focuses to give them information and incentives to do this," Rey said, adding that the Bush administration is planning a meeting with utilities to convince them of the financial logic of urban trees.

Three shade trees strategically planted around a house can reduce home air-conditioning bills by about 30 percent in hot, dry cities such as Sacramento, and a nationwide shade program similar to the one here could reduce air-conditioning use by at least 10 percent, according to Energy Department research.

Washington is among the cities with the largest reduction in dense tree cover, with a 64 percent decline from 1973 to 1997, according to American Forests. Although there has since been considerable effort and expense to plant more trees in Washington, experts disagree about whether the tree canopy has been stabilized. They do agree that rapid canopy decline continues in Washington's outlying suburbs.

Although Bush administration officials say urban trees are a priority, spending on the federal Urban and Community Forestry Program has declined by about 25 percent in the past four years, from a high of \$36 million annually to a proposed \$27 million in the coming year.

"People have been fighting for crumbs for so long," said Mark Buscaino, who quit this summer after three years as director of the federal urban trees program. He is now executive director of the Casey Trees Endowment Fund, a private tree-planting group in Washington.

Tree-planting in U.S. cities has been championed as a way to beautify and civilize the hard edges of urban life. (Before air conditioning, it was also a primary strategy for keeping cities cool.) But a growing body of scientific research, most of it federally funded, shows that urban trees are also shrewd investments.

Sacramento's shade crusade easily pays for itself, with summertime energy savings about double what SMUD spends on trees each year. As they mature, trees already planted by the utility are expected to save enough electricity to power about 14,000 homes.

By planting 10 million trees and fabricating lighter-colored roofs and pavement, Los Angeles could reverse an urban "heat island" effect -- caused by concrete, asphalt and heat-retaining buildings -- that has been increasing for a hundred years, according to a simulation study by the Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. It found that Los Angeles could lower its peak summertime temperature by five degrees, cut air-conditioning costs by 18 percent and reduce smog by 12 percent.

"In the West, where the air is dry, shade trees are more effective in reducing the urban heat island effect than any other measure," said Hashem Akbari, leader of the federally funded research group that studies warming cities at the laboratory. In more humid cities in the East, he said, shade trees -- which increase humidity -- lower air-conditioning bills and clean the air but do not lower the outside temperature.

By absorbing greenhouse gases, lowering urban temperatures and reducing demand for air conditioning, trees planted in cities are far more valuable in combating global warming than trees in rural areas, federal research has shown. Akbari said a well-placed shade tree in Los Angeles is worth three to five trees planted in a distant forest.

His message is finding an audience. This month, Los Angeles is starting a campaign to plant a million trees, part of a free-tree program following the Sacramento model. For every dollar it spends on trees, the city expects to realize a \$2.80 return from energy savings, pollution reduction, storm-water management and increased property values, said Paula A. Daniels, a commissioner on the Board of Public Works.

Across much of the United States, though, research confirming the monetary value of trees has not triggered a rush to exploit shade.

Many major private utility companies remain skeptical. In the Washington area, in California and in most of the country, they have steered clear of programs to give shade trees to homeowners, saying it is not clear that it would help the companies' bottom lines.

Critics of big utilities say the companies have a deep institutional bias against urban trees, mostly because they spend vast amounts of money and time repairing tree-damaged power lines.

There are cultural reasons why the research findings have failed to sway the nation's utility managers, transportation engineers and municipal planners, according to Kathleen Wolf, a social science researcher at the University of Washington's College of Forest Resources.

"These people have not yet reconciled how a green living thing interacts with gray infrastructure," said Wolf, whose research is funded by the Forest Service. "There has not yet been a mind shift that says trees are technology. In most American cities and states, we are not having that discussion."

But it is not just engineers and road builders who balk. About one-third of Sacramento utility customers tell SMUD that they do not want to mess with more trees in their yards and will not accept free ones.

"Many people just don't like trees because they are dirty," said Buscaino, the former head of the federal urban forest program. "We have a lifestyle where the last thing on people's mind is trimming their trees."

Iowa is the only state with a long-term record of using state law to push private utilities to plant trees for energy conservation -- and to allow them to recover the cost of the program in electricity rates.

Over the past 15 years, the program has been a spectacular success, according to the private utilities there and Trees Forever, a nonprofit group that helps run the program. In addition to the quantifiable benefits -- half a million trees planted, reduced energy costs and savings on storm-water drainage construction -- utilities say the program has been a public relations bonanza.

"It is difficult to put a value on the community relationships we have built with the trees," said Karmen Wilhelm, a spokeswoman for Alliant Energy, a major utility in Iowa. "It has been wonderful for our reputation."

On the Muir Trail

Road less traveled crosses 211 miles of wild beauty in the footprints of history

By Diana Marcum – The Fresno Bee

in the Modesto Bee, Saturday, Sept. 2, 2006

There are days and weeks, especially in August, when the heat and the haze and the [smog hang heavy over the Central Valley and you can't see the mountains](#).

But they are there, filtering the air and water of the valley below, creating weather with their very vastness.

Somewhere up there in the High Sierra, snows are just melting and spring flowers are only now beginning to bloom.

There's a trail up there — named for famed preservationist John Muir — that goes from Yosemite Valley to the top of Mount Whitney, passing through canyons and meadows, 13,000-foot crests and granite cliffs.

It's a 211-mile walk on the West Coast's rooftop.

But it's more than a footpath. There are routes in this world that connect more than places. The Orient Express, Route 66, the Appalachian Trail — all hold the stories of those who went before and the daydreams of those who want to follow.

They hold, in short, the promise of a quest.

"The John Muir Trail has marquee value. People do it at major junctions in their life or at times when they feel the need for a major change," says Angela Ballard, editor of the Pacific Crest Trail Association's magazine.

Greg High, 55, an Escondido artist who hiked the trail in 2000, approached his trip with apprehension.

"It's a lot to take. The heat, the cold, the exhaustion, no modern conveniences," he says. "People say to you, 'Gee, why would you want to do that?' And you don't have a good answer until you get back."

Inspiration on high

Five years after his return, High still is painting what he saw on the trail.

"It's because of the nature of those mountains. I've been to the Alps. I've seen the Pyrenees. But the Sierra Nevada is very special. Muir called them the Range of Light, and they are," he says.

"Those mountains are something that happens to you. The trail goes over 11 passes, and when you go up and over a pass, you have a really good view of where you're going and where you've been. You see where you'll be in three days and you think, 'How will we ever get over there?' Then you just get back on the trail and one step at a time, you get there.

"To me, that's very meta-phoric. If you have a peak, a dream in your future, you need to get going, and keep going, and you'll get there."

The trail, a north-south footpath completed in 1938, opened the High Sierra to the public.

Now, the high country faces issues of crowding. The trail has been rerouted several times because portions were worn out by thousands of hiking boots and hooves. The trashing of Mount Whitney, at 14,494 feet the highest peak in the contiguous United States, led to strict permit limits for parts of the trail.

There's a lottery system for Whitney and the Yosemite portion, where most people begin their hike.

Crowding the wilderness

When going into the wilderness involves getting in line, how wild can it be?

Larry Fahn, immediate past president of the Sierra Club, says it's important to consider the issue of crowds on the John Muir Trail — where you might run across four or five people a day — in the larger context.

"The John Muir Trail has become America's wilderness icon. John Muir frequented the area, and people want to follow his footsteps. It's a very popular trail. But the number of people who will ever see it compared to the general population is infinitesimal," he says.

Indeed, the number of people who go backpacking is dropping. A 2005 study by the Outdoor Industry Foundation found that overnight backpacking was the one outdoor activity that declined in the previous eight years. Backpacking saw a 22.5 percent drop that the foundation attributed to people preferring activities that could be done in one day.

"The people who got into backpacking before are getting older, and they don't have the time or their knees can't take it anymore. There's some discouraging trends with young people getting so caught up in their electronic world," Fahn says.

"But if everyone spent one week in the wilderness, we would have a better country. It rejuvenates and brings about a sense of wonder and possibility and responsibility."

For those who do backpack, and even to some who never have tried it before, the John Muir Trail has taken on the reputation of a modern-day rite of passage.

'Thru-hikers' go the distance

This summer, the people on the trail will include a group of British soldiers on leave from the war in Iraq, a family moving away from Israel and young couples from Japan. There will be people trying to complete the trail by hiking a one-week section each summer, and Pacific Crest Trail "thru-hikers," whose longer journey from Canada to Mexico includes all of the John Muir.

Many of the thru-hikers say the John Muir Trail is the highlight of the larger journey.

"It really is the place on the whole Pacific Crest that people most look forward to reaching," says Ballard, the magazine editor, who made a Pacific Crest Trail journey five years ago.

"When we first hit an elevation of 9,000 feet and I saw my first alpine lake, I was awestruck and I stayed that way for the next two weeks. The granite boulders really do glisten and glow on that mountain, and the sky seems so blue and close."

Ballard says she took the arduous backpacking trip to test herself and her relationship with her boyfriend. She didn't find out until years later that he carried a ring the whole trip waiting for the time when they weren't too tired or dirty for his proposal.

He had to wait until they got home.

Now they're married and young parents, and sometimes life gets harried.

"We'll just look at each other and say, 'Remember when we lived out of our backpack?'" Ballard says. "It brings us back and gives us perspective."

Journey a bookend in life

On weekend backpacking trips, Emily Franciskovich, 27, of Visalia has run into people who were attempting the entirety of the John Muir Trail after losing someone they loved, graduating or getting ready to move.

"It seemed like a lot of people I talked to were doing it after they were coming off of, or going into, something big," she says.

In April, Franciskovich — in the thick of finishing a graduate thesis and working full time — saw a beautiful backpack on sale. Spur of the moment, she bought it, knowing at that moment that it would mean she would quit her job and this summer finally hike the whole John Muir Trail.

"I've heard about it and dreamed about it for years. But there's so many factors and variables: physical, mental, emotional. Now, I just feel prepared for it in so many ways. I've been working full time, going to school. I'm affording myself this luxury, this gift," she says. "I'm giving myself the opportunity to just walk."

Spare the Air day declared

Commuters urged to use public transit, but there will not be free rides

Tri-Valley Herald, Friday, Sept. 1, 2006

Rising temperatures and stagnant conditions, which are forecast for today, make up a stifling combination that usually produces unhealthy air quality, prompting the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to declare its 10th Spare the Air day of the year.

Unlike Spare the Air days earlier this summer, there will be no free fares on public transit.

Nonetheless, the air district is urging Bay Area commuters to preserve air quality by leaving their cars behind and hopping on trains, buses and ferries.

The last Spare the Air day was on July 25, ending a string of six such days, during which commuters were treated to free public transit.

More than 1 million commuters took advantage of the deal, and all those free rides set the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the air district back some \$13.6 million.

The air district considered the program a success. "Having six free-fare days really put Spare the Air in the minds of a lot of people," Luna Salaver, spokeswoman for the air district, said following the July heat wave.

The idea behind Spare the Air's free transit may have been to ease the smog, but MTC officials also hoped to attract more customers for BART, SamTrans, Caltrain and the other 28 operators of Bay Area public transit.

Given the poor air quality expected today, the air district reminds Bay Area residents that high levels of ozone pollution are harmful for young children, seniors and people with respiratory and heart conditions.

Region raises guard amid flare-up of heat

Bay Area's tenth Spare the Air Day triggered by temperatures that may reach into the high 90s

by Erik N. Nelson

Tri-Valley Herald, Friday, Sept. 1, 2006

After a period of fairly chilly summer weather, the Bay Area is going to heat up today, prompting air authorities to declare the year's 10th Spare the Air Day.

That means ride BART, take a bus, take a ferry to work — but don't expect a free ride. That program ran out of money four Spare the Air Days ago.

A high-pressure ridge is expected to act like a gate, preventing the marine layer from getting past the area's formidable mountain ridges. That condition will allow eastern communities such as Pleasanton and Antioch to climb into the high 90s, said Diana Henderson, a forecaster with the National Weather Service in Monterey.

That will leave the Valley areas with the kind of hot, stagnant weather that makes an ideal crucible for car exhaust and other pollutants to cook into ground-level ozone, the primary indicator of smog.

"The increasing temperatures and decreasing wind factors are creating a situation where our meteorologists are predicting unhealthy air quality for sensitive groups" in the interior valleys, including Pleasanton/Livermore and much of inland Contra Costa County, said Luna Salaver, spokeswoman for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

So far this year, there have been 10 Spare the Air Days, six involving the nation's largest free-transit program, costing more than \$13 million paid by several state, federal and local environmental programs. With that program exhausted, air officials hope that Bay Area commuters heed their call to use transit on their own dime.

In both Spare the Air Days and days where ozone, levels have climbed into unhealthy levels (12): "This is the most we've had in this decade," Salaver said. The record of 25 Spare the Air Days was set in 1996.

[Modesto Bee Editorial, Tues, Sept. 5, 2006](#)

State clears the air by setting caps on greenhouse gases

Democratic lawmakers and Gov. Schwarzenegger have taken a monumental step in the fight against global warming with the passage of Assembly Bill 32. Once again, California is leading, and much of the world is cheering.

This legislation, which Schwarzenegger has agreed to sign, would make California the first state to set caps on industrial gases linked to global warming. Under the bill, California industries and utilities would have to reduce such pollution 25 percent by 2020.

Right up until midday Wednesday, it appeared that talks might collapse as both sides haggled over whether California "may" or "shall" use market mechanisms to achieve emission reductions. It was a largely meaningless dispute. No one seriously expects California to adopt a traditional regulatory approach when much of the industrial world — including most of Europe and utilities in the northeastern United States — is moving toward a cap-and-trade system for reducing emissions.

Eventually the two sides adopted market language that made the governor comfortable. They also clarified the timetable for implementing the program, a good improvement for the final product.

There are many unknowns as California builds this model for reducing greenhouse emissions at the lowest possible cost. Will certain industries, such as cement manufacturers, try to relocate outside of California and ship their products in to escape the emission caps? Will the shift to alternative energy greatly increase electricity prices, or will it help to buffer the state from spikes in fossil fuel prices?

Although the governor relented on some demands, he gained new authority under amendments to AB32 that allow him to intervene and respond to the unexpected. The legislation approved by the Assembly and Senate allows the governor to suspend the regulations for a year in case of natural catastrophe or other extraordinary circumstances.

Schwarzenegger is also expected to sign a complementary bill, Senate Bill 1368 by state Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, that would prohibit California from importing new sources of energy that don't meet a standard for low greenhouse gases.

Ultimately, a national and worldwide program is needed to make this a winning crusade. But with the Bush administration refusing to take action on reducing industrial emissions, the states, including California, are once again forced to blaze their own trail.

It's a trail that could put California at the forefront of new technologies to conserve energy and tap it from renewable sources. That is why many businesses, including Pacific Gas & Electric Co. and some in the Silicon Valley, support this groundbreaking law.

Outside of the Bush administration, many corporate and government leaders see the future and want to capitalize on it.

[Modesto Bee, Commentary, Sunday, Sept. 3, 2006:](#)

What's driving road-tax proposal?

For Stanislaus County voters, one of the most important items on the Nov. 7 ballot is Measure K, a proposed half-cent increase in the sales tax to finance transportation projects.

The proposal, which has been talked about for years, is controversial and complex. The Bee asked Craig Lewis, the Modesto business leader who is head of the Yes on Measure K campaign, about the plan:

Q: Why is the sales tax measure important?

A: State and federal revenues from the basic per-gallon fuel tax and from truck weight fees are no longer sufficient to meet the ongoing highway maintenance, operations and rehabilitation needs. As a result, those revenues -- which are restricted under the California Constitution to transportation purposes -- are no longer available for the construction of new transportation capital improvements.

State funding for transportation capital improvements is now dependent entirely on Proposition 42 revenue. However, this revenue has proven to be an unreliable revenue source because of the ability by the state to tap into these funds.

Q: In 2002, Californians passed Proposition 42, which says that the sales tax on gas should be used for road and transit projects. Doesn't that generate enough money to pay for our road improvements? Isn't the income from Proposition 42 going up because the price of gasoline has gone up?

A: Revenue from Proposition 42 alone is insufficient to provide an adequate base of funding for transportation improvements. Originally conceived as a supplement to the funding provided by the basic per-gallon fuel tax, Proposition 42 -- even when fully authorized -- provides no more than about half of the amount the state was making available for transportation improvements just a decade ago.

Additionally, the revenue from Proposition 42 cannot be used to fund maintenance, rehabilitation, safety and emergency projects on the highway system.

Q: On the November ballot is an almost \$20billion bond for road improvements around the state. Won't that generate enough money to pay for state highway projects in Stanislaus County, including improvements on 99? Why do we need the sales-tax increase if the bond is likely to pass?

A: The Highway Safety, Traffic Reduction, Air Quality and Port Security Bond Act will, if passed, provide a much-needed boost for transportation statewide. The bonds, while important, are not a revenue source, but a financing mechanism that must be repaid in the future. They are not a long-term solution to our

transportation funding challenges. They will provide more than \$9 billion for capital improvement projects spread throughout the state.

The bond funds will help priorities such as Highway 99, providing Stanislaus County with a needed shot in the arm. But Stanislaus County residents can take a larger step forward in controlling their transportation destiny by passing Measure K and leveraging our "self-help" status to access our fair share of this bond; \$1 billion of the bond money will be set aside only for "self-help" counties.

Q: What does the term "self-help" mean?

A: The term "self-help" refers to local jurisdictions that have passed local sales taxes to fund local transportation priorities.

Q: What does it mean to "leverage" money from the state?

A: Leveraging money refers to matching state or federal funds with local funds. For example, the \$1 billion in the state-local partnership program that is a part of the bond on the November ballot will need to be matched with local money. This also provides us the opportunity to access our fair share of the additional bond money.

Other "self-help" counties throughout the state have found that they can leverage twice as much from state and federal sources by providing local matching funds.

Q: Shouldn't developers have paid more to improve roads? Can't they foot the bill for most of the expansions?

A: No. Developer fees are mitigation for the impact generated by their developments. Their money goes to pay for impacts immediately surrounding their projects and not for interregional projects. Examples are: Pelandale Avenue (including the signal lights); the expansion of Briggsmore Avenue to four lanes from Oakdale Road to Claus Road; the extension of Floyd Avenue to Claus (all in Modesto); widening of Monte Vista Avenue at Monte Vista Crossing near Highway 99 (in Turlock); connecting roads from Patterson to Interstate 5 around commercial developments and Keystone Business Park; and Oakdale Road at the Crossroads Shopping Center in Riverbank.

Examples of where Measure K money will be used on interregional transportation corridors are:

Sperry Road in Patterson

West Stuhr Road interchange near Newman

West Main Street from Turlock to Patterson

Highway 219 (Kiernan Avenue) from Highway 99 to east of Oakdale

Interchange improvements at Whitmore Avenue, Pelandale, Briggsmore and Highway 165 (Lander Avenue) in Turlock, etc.

Q: Won't improved roads just result in more growth and more Bay Area commuters moving to Stanislaus County?

A: Population growth is driven by numerous factors. A thriving economy here in Stanislaus County would fuel job growth, which is something we definitely need. We must have better transportation corridors to create more local jobs. Otherwise, we only will be a bedroom community with the job centers in other counties.

Q: Four years ago, you were among the most concerned about how poorly the Stanislaus Council of Governments was functioning. What makes you think that StanCOG, even under another name, can handle the big job of overseeing a county road transportation program?

A: The previous StanCOG management team has been replaced with new dynamic leadership that has a proven track record of building traffic-improvement projects. That is why we can feel good now about supporting this measure.

Measure K provides a stable and reliable funding source to improve transportation in Stanislaus County, along with the ability to access leveraged state and federal funding.

Q: How much will the half-cent sales tax cost the average family of four?

A: It is estimated that the half-cent sales tax will cost an average household \$90 to \$219 per year.

Q: If Measure K is approved, when will the higher sales tax begin?

A: April 1, 2007.

Q: When will we start seeing road improvements?

A: If Measure K is passed, then planning and environmental work can begin. It will take some time for improvements to show up on the ground. But upon approval of Measure K, we will be able to bond against future cash flows and provide to the cities and county money to fill potholes, improve existing roadways and provide safety features to our highways.

Whitmore overpass in Ceres will be able to be started within one year of when funds are received, with the additional major projects starting within the next 24 months.

[Stockton Record Editorial, Sunday, Sept. 3, 2006:](#)

Leaving a warm feeling

Working in concert with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the rookie who's learning how things work in Sacramento, a majority of lawmakers in both houses of the state Legislature have agreed California needs to be a global leader in reducing greenhouse-gas emissions.

They passed landmark legislation that will create the nation's most aggressive attempt to reduce global warming.

The agreement mandates a 25 percent reduction in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases by 2020.

Since the state already has strict limits on automobiles, this bill places restrictions on industrial, utility, refinery and cement plants.

It grants new authority to the California Air Resources Board to enforce air pollution controls.

It's good to be in the vanguard of reducing causes of global warming. Now if we could just get this much passion for things practical and down to earth.

[Tracy Press Editorial, Saturday, Sept. 2, 2006:](#)

Greenhouse gas caps could backfire

The state is passing laws designed to clean up the air and environment, but what we might get instead is a concrete jungle in place of agricultural open space.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger chatted with editorial writers from around the nation Wednesday afternoon, praising the Democratic-dominated Legislature, environmentalists, the California Air Resources Board, 12 of his highest state appointees and, of course, himself for pushing through long-sought legislation to cut the state's carbon dioxide emissions in 14 years.

During this cheerleading for Assembly Bill 32, Schwarzenegger never once uttered the phrases "President Bush" or "federal government." He did heap praise, though, on Great Britain and Japan for showing him the way to opt out of Bush's controversial Clear Skies Initiative and opt in to a plan to "clean our air, our water and our coastline."

Under Schwarzenegger's lead, California is leaving the rest of the nation in the dust and with greenhouse gases.

Unfortunately, Schwarzenegger has painted himself environmental green without knowing, except through mathematical models, if the cap on emissions to 2000 levels — 25 percent below the projections for 2020 — will grow jobs or be detrimental to the state's economy.

What we do know is that it has the potential to grow more homes in the once-agriculturally rich Northern San Joaquin Valley. Lodi grape grower and winemaker David Lucas, on behalf of the California Wine Institute, spoke last month with legislators at the state Capitol. He returned to his Lodi vineyard less optimistic about the survival of the farming industry when Assembly Bill 32 is signed. "My slogan to the

legislators was 'Keep me green,'" Lucas said. "Instead, (Assembly Bill 32) will surround me with more houses."

Lucas predicts that the emission caps will force growers to decide whether to grow crops or houses. In Lodi and other parts of the valley, like Tracy, homes have become more lucrative than crops.

This effect of Assembly Bill 32 won't make the environment "greener" in spite of reducing business emissions. In place of greenbelts with carbon dioxide-eaters like plants and vines, there will be asphalt, with more emissions from cars and trucks, and concrete slabs for home air conditioners, refrigerators and fireplaces.

What worries Lucas and other valley agribusinessmen is that the new state emission standards will be established and enforced by staff members of the California Air Resources Board. In the past, CARB standards have been assumption-based and applied without staff members ever setting foot in the vineyard, field, orchard, winery, dairy or packing shed.

Hopefully, CARB staff members were listening when Linda Adams, secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency, said her agency wouldn't impose emission caps without offering alternatives because the businesses will just move to another state and continue to pollute. Of course, it would be difficult for a Lodi vineyard to shift to the Nevada desert and still produce quality grapes.

[L.A. Times editorial, Tuesday, September 5, 2006:](#)

Shades of green

CALIFORNIA legislators and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger are justly proud of their completion of legislation (AB32) to reduce this state's greenhouse-gas emissions by 25 percent.

While that bill drew a national spotlight on the Capitol, the Legislature's record on other environmental bills was decidedly mixed. Schwarzenegger now has a chance to further burnish his environmental credentials by signing the significant bills that did get legislative approval.

At least two of them will help jump-start the state's commitment to fight global warming. AB1012, by Assemblyman Joe Nation, D-San Rafael, would require that half of all new cars sold in the state would run on alternative fuels by 2020. It's hardly a radical notion. Japan is requiring all new cars sold in 2030 to reach a clean-fuels standard.

Nation said his bill would end the "chicken and egg" situation where the oil and car industries are each waiting for the other to make a commitment to alternative fuels. "If we can get the auto manufacturers to move in the right direction in California, they'll have to do it across the country," said Nation, citing the size of this state's market and its appetite for trend-statement vehicles.

Also, SB1368, by Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, D-Oakland, would require a reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions from power plants.

Both AB1012 and SB1368 deserve the governor's signature to put substance behind the push to combat global warming.

Another must-sign bill for the green governor is SB1379, also by Perata, which would establish a statewide "bio-monitoring" program to track the presence of synthetic chemicals in the human body. Such a system might help unlock the mysteries surrounding the clusters of asthma, breast cancer, birth defects and other serious health issues.

Regrettably, the Legislature failed to approve significant bills to tighten the oversight of air-pollution controls in the Central Valley; protect flood-prone areas with a series of sensible guidelines that included a strong financial disincentive for local governments to approve developments behind state-owned

levees; and new guidelines that would have given the state more clout in the siting of liquefied natural-gas facilities along the coast.

Overall, the California Legislature rates a "B" grade for its work on environmental issues this session.

At the moment, Schwarzenegger's grade remains incomplete. His decisions in the next few weeks will determine whether his record really is as green as the paint on his campaign bus.

[L.A. Times commentary, Monday, September 4, 2006:](#)

Niall Ferguson: Conservative Doesn't Mean Anti-Conservationist

Red-state Republicans and blue-faced liberals are starting to agree: Green is the way.

IT HAS BEEN the political equivalent of an explosion in a dye works. From Sacramento to Tokyo, red Republicans and true-blue Tories are turning green. Last week, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger agreed to a plan aimed at reducing carbon dioxide emissions in California by a quarter within the next 15 years. On Thursday, British Conservative George Osborne told an audience in Japan that a future Tory government would consider increasing the share of revenue coming from environmental taxes.

Hang on - aren't those Al Gore's lines? Aren't conservatives supposed to be in favor of gas-guzzling SUVs and drilling for oil in national parks?

The idea that there is something fundamentally unconservative about protecting the environment is, of course, a canard. At the very core of British conservatism since the time of Benjamin Disraeli has been a romantic reverence for the land and a desire to mitigate the damage done by industrialization. It was Marx and Engels who sneered at "the idiocy of rural life." It was Lenin and Stalin whose mania for smoke-belching steelworks turned huge tracts of Russia into toxic wastelands.

Nor have conservatives in Britain or America ever prospered for long when they have been seen to represent primarily the interests of big business, a mistake the Republicans made in the 1920s and are in danger of repeating under President Bush.

Speaking to reporters in June, Bush reiterated his unorthodox views on the causes of global warming. "There's a debate," he said, "over whether it's man-made or naturally caused." There may be such a debate within the Bush family but not among scientists, the overwhelming majority of whom now believe - as my Harvard colleague John Holdren told the BBC last week - that we are already "experiencing dangerous human disruption of the global climate, and we're going to experience more."

If the current rate of global warming continues, according to Holdren, sea levels could rise by as much as 13 feet this century. That's enough to put most of southern Florida under water.

Even if the science turns out, for some as-yet-unknown reason, to have been wrong, action will still have been warranted on purely prudential grounds. The question is simply: What form of action?

Merely setting targets is not a credible option. Tony Blair tried this and has abjectly failed. By 2010, he declared, Britain would have cut carbon-dioxide emissions by 20%. Embarrassingly, emissions have gone up every year since 2002.

The more fashionable solution is emissions trading. The theory is that government sets emission levels and issues tradable allowances. To achieve "carbon neutrality," Company A can offset an excess emission of CO₂ by paying Company B not to emit an equivalent amount. This has the appeal of creating a market with built-in incentives to find the cheapest methods of reducing emissions. But when put into practice, the "cap-and-trade" model can have perverse results. The European Union Emission Trading Scheme, set up for big polluters such as power generators, ran into trouble this year because - to name just one of a number of glitches - quotas were issued for more carbon than was actually produced, causing the price of allowances to collapse.

I must say I prefer the simpler options of either taxing or fining polluters. Why? Because these have been

tried before and have worked.

Ardent Greens sometimes forget that the problem of pollution is nothing new. The first clean air laws in the United States and Britain date to the 1950s. The principle of these and subsequent laws has been straightforward: to prohibit the most toxic pollutants and to set limits on less harmful but still undesirable emissions. True, emissions of sulfur dioxide would have fallen anyway as households relied less on coal for heating and cooking. But there is no question that the legislation speeded the transition to cleaner fuels - and a less foggy London.

Needless to say, no national policy will be sufficient to halt global warming, much less a policy introduced by a single American state. Even the Kyoto Protocol, had the United States ratified it, would not have done the job because it does not bind the booming economies of Asia, which are producing more greenhouse gases with every passing year.

That, however, is not an argument for simply giving up and bidding farewell to Florida. Conservatives do not expect problems to be solved by some kind of world government; on the contrary, they prefer local solutions to global solutions. They also know that enlightened self-interest, not utopian fantasy, is the best basis for policy. And that is precisely why they may prove to be more effective environmentalists than the first generation of left-wing Greens, whose idealism too often slid over the edge into extremism.

Make no mistake: The current political transformation of red and blue into Green is a response to a political as well as meteorological climate change. Opinion polls show that Britons and Americans are belatedly waking up to the risks of global warming. They have heard the speeches. Now they want to see some action. It may not be enough to save the planet. But this political climate change could yet save conservatism.

[Fresno Bee Opinion Page, Sunday August 3, 2006:](#)

VALLEY'S TOP 10

Fall season TV shows we'd like to see

10. "Bar Trek" - wacky cops lurk outside amusing taverns.
9. "The Alan and Andy Show" - Fresno mayor and sidekick city manager run quaint rural burg of a half-million people.
8. "Extreme Takeover" - Man fights eminent domain.
7. "All My Developers" - starring the Fresno City Council.
6. "As The World Burns" - the heat wave returns.
5. "Development Arrested" - zany activists try to save farm land.
4. "West Side Worry" - gripping drama about land retirement.
3. "Desperate Housebuyers" - Tawdry lives spent inside real estate bubble.
2. "Sunsmoke" - Cast drives endlessly while complaining about smog.
1. "S*P*R*A*W*L"

[Letter to the S.F. Chronicle, Monday, September 4, 2006:](#)

Good news in the Valley

Editor -- In response to the Aug. 29 editorial, "A new smog war": It is disappointing that The Chronicle allowed politics to trump facts.

1) The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) has met particulate matter 10 standards for three consecutive years and is the first air basin classified as "serious non-attainment" to come into attainment of the particulate matter 10 standards. This is unparalleled by any other region in the nation.

2) From 1990-2005 there has been a 82 percent reduction in the number of days violating the 1-hour ozone standard.

- 3) Examples of regulations adopted, industries affected and emission reductions generated:
- Animal feeding operations, including dairies -- reductions equivalent to removing 1 million cars from valley roads;
 - On-field agricultural operations -- 34 tons per days from 3.2 million acres of productive ag land;
 - Emissions from commercial, industrial and residential development -- 10 tons per day;
 - Regulate the use of residential fireplaces to reduce particulate levels;
 - Voluntarily expanded Smog Check II program beyond the mandated urbanized areas to include more than 90 percent of the registered vehicles in the air basin.
- 4) District spent more than \$100 million on voluntary emission-reduction incentives, generating 94 million pounds of air pollution.

These are significant accomplishments in spite of the San Joaquin Valley's exploding population. Yes, there are challenges to address, but SB999 will not remove one additional pound of air pollution from the San Joaquin Valley. It does nothing more than promote individuals' own personal agendas.

SHIRLEY BATCHMAN
Director of Industry Relations
California Citrus Mutual
Exeter (Tulare County)

[Stockton Record, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, Sept. 5, 2006:](#)

Will the port be doing its part?

Among the targeted activities in new state legislation that is designed to limit the effects of global warming are coal-fired power plants, trucking, seaports, agriculture and the cement industry.

Four of those five activities are found at the Port of Stockton.

Port officials plan to increase the number ships docking at Rough & Ready Island from 20 per year to 120. Those 100 additional ships will introduce more tons of pollutants into our already unhealthy air.

Our unique geographical and atmospheric conditions in the Valley trap pollutants that can't escape.

Connecting the ships to shore power could reduce harmful emissions, but port officials resist this as being economically unfeasible.

Along with those extra ships will come thousands of trucks - which also are heavy polluters.

The port's published log of ship traffic reflects 30 percent of the cargo ships calling at Stockton in the coming month will carry cement.

A coal-fired power plant, one of a very few in the state, recently was constructed on Rough & Ready Island.

What price are we willing to pay in asthmatic children and deaths connected with respiratory ailments?

A.M. Chargin, Stockton

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the \\$5 million in funding for air pollution research approved by the California Air Resources Board. One of the studies will define the relationship between air pollution and premature death due to particulate matter. For more information, contact Maricela at \(559\) 230-5849.](#)

Aprueban 21 proyectos de análisis del aire de California

Entre otros proyectos novedosos, la oficina del ramo en California también estudiará la contaminación que llega desde barcos que navegan el Océano Pacífico, una fuente de deterioro de la calidad del aire de la que hasta hoy se carece de información

Noticiero Latino, Aire Libre, California
Radio Bilingüe, Monday, September 4, 2006

La Oficina de Recursos del Aire de California aprobó financiar con cinco millones de dólares 21 proyectos de análisis a la contaminación y sus efectos en el medio ambiente en general y en la salud humana en particular.

El presidente de esa oficina, Robert Sawyer dijo que uno de los análisis más importantes será determinar la relación que hay entre la contaminación del aire y la muerte prematura de californianos.

Entre otros proyectos novedosos, la oficina del ramo en California también estudiará la contaminación que llega desde barcos que navegan el Océano Pacífico, una fuente de deterioro de la calidad del aire de la que hasta hoy se carece de información.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the switch to new Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel \(ULSD\) by California's 1.2 million diesel engines. For more information, contact Maricela at \(559\) 230-5849.](#)

Inicia reglamento para que los californianos usen diesel anticontaminante
Desde esta mañana los camiones de carga y vehículos que operan con diesel en California sólo pueden encontrar el combustible con una reducción de 97 por ciento de sulfuro

Noticiero Latino, Aire Libre, California
Radio Bilingüe, Friday, September 1, 2006

Hoy entró en vigor en California un reglamento estatal que autoriza a las gasolineras que venden diesel a vender solamente combustible casi libre de sulfuro.

Desde esta mañana los camiones de carga y vehículos que operan con diesel en California sólo pueden encontrar el combustible con una reducción de 97 por ciento de sulfuro.

California se convierte así en el primer estado en regular al máximo actual la contaminación de sulfuro vinculada al diesel y se adelanta a un plan nacional que exigirá a la industria automotriz acondicionar motores destinados a usar el mismo tipo de energético a partir del próximo primero de enero.