

Wood-burning rules kick in Seasonal restrictions in Valley start Wednesday.

By Mark Grossi

The Fresno Bee, Tuesday, October 31, 2006

With temperatures dipping into the 40s, wood smoke wafts through neighborhoods in late October as residents burn fires in their fireplaces or wood-burning stoves with no restrictions.

But starting at midnight, people will need to call a toll-free phone number, check online or just pay attention to the local news to find out if it's OK to light up.

A seasonal air rule on wood-burning devices starts up again Wednesday. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District can ban burning on nights when the air is loaded with soot and particle pollution.

Field inspectors write \$50 citations for first-time violators of the ban, and fines can escalate for additional violations. Last year, the district wrote a record 159 violation notices, almost half of which were in Fresno County.

This is the fourth year of the effort, called "Check Before You Burn." Running from Nov. 1 through the end of February, district officials said the program is reducing soot and smoke-related particles.

"The public's cooperation truly has helped improve wintertime air quality the past few years," said district planning director Scott Nester. "We're confident that the public will do its part for Valley air again this winter."

Tiny pollution specks from wood fires add to particle pollution. Medical researchers have found that such pollution triggers lung disease, heart problems and even early death.

The district forecasts the wood-burning status daily for each of the Valley's eight counties, including Fresno, Madera, Tulare, Kings, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and the Valley portion of Kern.

Depending on the air quality, the district can allow burning with no restrictions, ask residents to voluntarily curtail wood burning or ban wood burning for the day.

Fireplace burning rules take effect Program helps to reduce winter air pollution

By Greg Ubbelohde, Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Tuesday, Oct. 31, 2006

Valley residents should check their county's wood-burning status daily before burning: The "Check Before You Burn" program starts Wednesday.

The program was established in 2003 by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. It is designed to help reduce the winter-season air pollution by discouraging or prohibiting fireplaces that burn wood, pellets or manufactured logs, said Kelly Morphy, spokeswoman for the air board.

This year's season starts just after midnight Wednesday and runs through February 2007. The burn status is issued daily and lasts for 24 hours.

Since the program started, there have been reduced levels of very fine air particles that are one of the largest contributing factors to poor air quality in the Valley, Morphy said.

"We feel pretty confident that it is having an effect in winter air quality," Morphy said.

The program has two stages.

First, it recommends people don't burn when the air quality index reaches 101, which is unhealthy for people very sensitive to air quality.

The second stage makes it mandatory for people to stop burning if the air quality index reaches 151 or higher, Morphy said.

When burning is prohibited, violators will get a notice of violation and are subject to fines.

Fines for first time violators start at \$50.

To check the day's burning status, call (800) 766-4463, or go online at www.valleyair.org. You can also find the burning status on page 2A.

Wednesday is first 'Check Before You Burn' day

By Greg Ubbelohde, Staff writer

Tulare Advance-Register, Monday, Oct. 30, 2006

Valley residents should check their county's wood-burning status daily before burning, as part of the 'Check Before You Burn' program, said a statement by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The program takes effect at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday. The burn status is issued daily and lasts for 24 hours.

In its fourth season, the program was designed to help reduce the wintertime air pollution by discouraging or prohibiting fireplaces that burn wood, pellets, or manufactured logs.

To check the day's burning status, check Page 2A of the Visalia Times-Delta or Tulare Advance Register, call (800) 766-4463, or go online at www.valleyair.org.

Partnership strives to keep county, Valley a viable locale

By Seth Nidever, Sentinel Reporter

Hanford Sentinel, Tuesday, Oct. 31, 2006

HANFORD - Fast population growth, high poverty rates, low education levels and a host of other challenges could make Kings County a vastly different -- and less desirable -- place to live that many residents see it as now.

A plan released last week by the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley is intended to make sure that people who consider the San Joaquin Valley a good place to live won't have to eat their words.

The group was convened by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger last year to promote cooperation between area government officials and private business to spur environmentally sensitive development and get a greater share of resources from Sacramento and Washington, D.C.

The partnership joins several other organizations, among them a nonprofit think-tank called the Great Valley Center and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, that have been working toward similar goals for years.

Some wonder what the impact of the partnership will be.

"The proof is going to be implementing what they come up with," said Larry Spikes, administrative officer for Kings County.

Spikes said it's virtually impossible to disagree with the ideals expressed in the proposal. Those include cleaner air and water, better transportation, an improved educational system and more access to health care.

"If they can really get traction and move forward, there's some really positive things that could come out of it," he said.

Spikes pointed to clean air and more water storage as issues that everybody can agree on. He identified open space as another critical issue. He said Kings County pursues policies to preserve agricultural land by making sure development occurs within existing communities and doesn't eat up prime farm acreage.

"You gotta grow in such a way that you don't wipe out farmland," he said.

That puts Kings County on the side of environmentalists who advocate so-called "sustainable growth." The phrase is used in the partnership's strategic action proposal.

But the degree of planning necessary to achieve that result doesn't sit well with people used to doing more of what they want with their property, said Marcie Buford, the only Kings County official to serve on the board that formulated the plan.

"We can't not grow. You either get smaller or you get bigger, unfortunately. So you need to manage how you're growing," said Buford, also a member of the Hanford City Council.

Buford, who worked on the plan for a year, said she saw consensus up and down the Valley on the need for more regional cooperation.

"It's been amazing to me how similar the desires of the citizens and officials are . . .," she said.

Still, Buford acknowledged a persistent resistance to long-term, large-scale planning.

"If you can't find that common ground, you can't overcome it," she said.

Spikes wondered where the money will come from. Better health care and education will require an infusion of money.

"It's going to have to take some very interesting (maneuvering)," Spikes said.

The partnership has \$5 million to use. About \$1.5 million of that will pay for administration, Buford said. The intent is to use the remainder as "seed money" to get grants and government funding in other areas.

Buford credited the partnership with a big role in getting funding for Highway 99 included in the infrastructure bonds on the ballot. Proposition 1B includes \$1 billion to make Highway 99 a six-lane freeway from Sacramento to its junction with Interstate 5 south of Bakersfield.

Buford views the whole effort as a new way to make the eight counties covered by the document more visible.

Officials complain the Valley doesn't get a fair return on the state and federal taxes it pays. A common refrain in Kings County government is that the poorer and less politically powerful Valley counties get overlooked in favor of urban Bay Area and Los Angeles communities.

"I think (the partnership) is our best chance to stop being invisible to the state and federal government," Buford said.

Spikes said he couldn't see how the plan released Wednesday "could be anything but positive."

"I think the concept here is, wherever we can be consistent . . . that's where they'd like to go," he said.

Proposed plant would recycle tire crumbs, agricultural plastics into sidewalks, drains, pallets

By Eiji Yamashita, Sentinel Reporter
Hanford Sentinel, Tuesday, Oct. 31, 2006

HANFORD - Scrap tires and farm plastic waste could find a second life in Hanford.

Using a patented plastic melting technique imported from Utah, Visalia-based entrepreneurs plan to launch a niche business in town that would turn old tire crumbs into rubber sidewalks, pallets and drains.

Koster Company-Modular Rubber Drains officials have assured San Joaquin Valley air quality officials the plant will not pose a serious pollution emissions problem.

"It's a huge deal," said Larry Grimes, president of the company. "The technology we're bringing here is something nobody else in the state has done before."

Modular Rubber Drains plans move into the Kings Industrial Park at the northwest corner of Industrial Way and Crown Avenue.

The company would produce rubber products using a process called "thermokinetic mixing," which melts tire crumbs simply by spinning them at high speed and uses shredded agricultural plastic films as a key binding ingredient.

A hot blob of rubber is then mold-pressed, and rubber drains, pallets and rubber sidewalks are produced. According to National Public Radio, the sidewalks are being tested in 60 cities in 15 states as a way to avoid costly repairs of concrete walks broken up by tree roots.

These products are completely made from recycled materials, Grimes said.

With no harmful emissions coming from the process, the operation has been given a permit exemption from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Californians discard 31 million tons of automobile tires every year, according to the state Integrated Waste Management Board. Grimes said his company will be recycling 100 tons of tire crumbs a month, which equates to about 17,000 tires a month.

"One of the biggest wastes in Kings, Tulare and Fresno counties is ag plastic," Grimes said. "There's not much we can do with it, but this technology allows us to 'densify' it and turn it into a useful product. It should really put Hanford on a recycle map."

The technology caught raised eyebrows in Sacramento.

The entrepreneurial team led by Grimes won a state fair award this year. The company's reputation eventually reached the state Integrated Waste Management Board, which gave Modular Rubber Drains a \$175,000 grant to start up the Hanford business.

The project won a nod as well last week, as the Hanford planning commission approved a conditional use permit for Koster Company-Modular Rubber Drains, calling it a "welcome project."

"I think this is a good project," said commission Chairman Russell Nabors. "It is a welcome project and a good addition to the industrial park. It's going to bring more jobs. From what we read and were told, it's an environmentally friendly project."

Grimes said the new plant will create up to eight jobs.

But the project was protested by a nearby business.

Crown Natural Foods, a whey-product plant across the street from the proposed rubber processing plant, voiced vigorous opposition to the commission citing emission concerns.

"I'm skeptical about the technology," Leopold Wierzbicki, president of Crown Natural Foods, said after last week's planning meeting. "Dairy food products are very susceptible to odors and emission ... When this is built, we're going to be 40 feet from each other. That's a concern."

There's no such thing as a no-emission plant when it comes to melting plastic, said Wierzbicki, a chemist and microbiologist by trade.

Anyone opposing the project has until Nov. 2 to appeal the decision. It was uncertain whether Wierzbicki had an intention to appeal the planning commission decision to the City Council.

Measure K foe debates empty seat

Activist: Roads neglected by leaders

by Tim Moran

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, October 31, 2006

Stanislaus County Measure K opponent Dave Thomas carried on a spirited debate with an empty chair Monday night at a town hall meeting sponsored by K5 K6 NewsTalk Radio.

Proponents of Measure K chose not to participate in the forum. Town hall host and radio personality Bill Mick is a vocal opponent of the measure, which would raise a little more than \$1 billion for transportation projects over 30 years with a half-cent sales tax.

"For some reason, they didn't think they had to answer these questions," Mick told the audience of about 25 people.

Thomas accused government proponents of the sales-tax measure of "defunding" road projects and maintenance for several years to create the need for the tax.

He also criticized the transportation planners behind the Measure K plan, saying they had no engineering documents or cost analyses on the individual projects.

The Stanislaus County Council of Governments doesn't have a route picked for the Oakdale Bypass, Thomas said, but the measure sets aside \$20 million to acquire land for it. "How do they know the price?" he asked. "They flat don't know."

Mick chimed in with questions such as, "Can you address the 30 years of failed government planning, and how we are led to believe that if we give money to the same people, the problem will be solved?"

Thomas answered with a listing of the annual allocations Measure K would give to local communities. Hughson would get \$40,000, he said. "You can't hire three street workers for \$60,000," Thomas said. "Hughson is out of luck."

State highway interchanges and projects would get 60 percent of the money, Thomas said, while transportation for seniors would get 2.5 percent, and commuter rail only 1 percent.

Proponents and opponents of state Propositions 87 and 90 also were part of the town hall meeting, held at The Salvation Army headquarters in downtown Modesto.

Shelley Luce, science director for the Yes on 87 campaign, argued that the tax on California oil profits would fund alternative energy technologies and reduce air pollution.

Ted Green, political director for the No on 87 campaign, said the measure would provide an incentive for oil companies to import more oil rather than using California oil, and would raise gasoline prices in the state.

Assemblyman Ray Haynes, R-Temecula, argued in favor of Proposition 90, which he said would repair the inequities in eminent domain law and prevent government from taking private property to give it to another private owner to increase tax revenue.

Debbie Olson of Lodi, representing the League of California Cities, said

the proposition would handcuff governments and school districts and cause endless lawsuits at taxpayer expense, she said.

Federal Agencies' Outward Migration Irks Area Officials Relocations Undermine Efforts To Limit Sprawl, Planners Say

By Alec MacGillis

Washington Post, Tuesday, October 31, 2006

As they battle sprawl, Washington area leaders say they face a stubborn foe, and it's not greedy developers or the tyranny of the automobile or the desire for big houses. It is the United States government.

In scattering employees to the region's outer edges, local officials and planners say, the federal government has undermined efforts to concentrate growth near public transit and the area's urban core -- the strategy local officials see as key to reducing traffic and conserving resources in a booming region.

The U.S. government, they say, has become a kind of master planner, making decisions, with little local input, that will shape Washington's commuting and development patterns for years.

"I continue to be amazed by the shortsightedness of the federal government," said Fairfax County Supervisor T. Dana Kauffman (D-Lee). "Whatever they do is 'here and now.' They seem to have no interest in trying to plan for the rational development of a sustainable community. I suppose if they had the chance to relocate to the moon, they would."

Sparking the most recent round of complaints were reports last week that the FBI is moving its Northern Virginia field office from Tysons Corner to Prince William County. The FBI says it needs more space and that the site near Manassas is less expensive and more secure than locations closer in. But some FBI employees note that it will result in higher commuting costs for many of the office's 300 workers and encourage some of them to move farther out. Agents will have to make long trips on overloaded Interstate 66 for their cases and for meetings with prosecutors in Alexandria, they say.

The move is reminiscent of another, far bigger dispersal: the Pentagon's transfer of 30,000 military and civilian employees from Arlington County, the District and other close-in locations to installations farther out, mostly to Fort Belvoir in southern Fairfax. Rather than being near Metro, the jobs, which will be followed by thousands of related contractors, will be in an area with crowded roads and little transit. Also getting thousands more workers are two other posts on the region's fringe, Fort Meade in Anne Arundel County and Quantico Marine Base in Prince William.

Local officials see a similar lack of federal foresight in the rejection of a proposal to build a Metrorail extension to Dulles International Airport underground through Tysons Corner instead of on an elevated track. Tunnel proponents said it would help achieve a key goal of Fairfax leaders to transform the county's downtown into a walkable urban center, but federal transit officials discouraged Gov. Timothy M. Kaine (D) against the tunnel, saying the delays and higher costs it would bring would imperil federal funding.

Critics also point to the consolidation of the Food and Drug Administration outside the Capital Beltway in White Oak and the transfer in the 1990s of the headquarters of the Naval Air Systems Command from Arlington to Southern Maryland. But not all agencies are moving outside the Beltway. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms recently built new headquarters near the New York Avenue Metro station.

Other regions also must contend with the consequences of military relocations and other federal actions, but the dominance of the federal government in Washington makes the area uniquely dependent on it. Ideally, officials say, this could be a plus, if the government used its sway to drive unified planning across a region divided among three jurisdictions.

That happened to some extent in the 1990s, planners and officials say, when President Bill Clinton issued an executive order that federal agencies try to locate within downtowns. By dispersing agencies outward, critics say, the federal government is effectively undermining its \$10 billion investment in Metro.

"Six or eight years ago, [the federal government] was moving in the right direction . . . but now you have a couple major decisions that undo" past successes, Arlington County Board member Jay Fisette (D) said.

At the heart of the federal government's justification for the recent decisions are cost savings and security. The Pentagon says the moves chosen by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission will save \$49 billion nationwide, partly by moving employees out of leased space such as in Crystal City. Moving out of such close-in locations as Arlington and Alexandria to such closed posts as Belvoir also complies with new military requirements for 82-foot setbacks to guard against truck bombs.

Asked about local complaints, a Pentagon spokesman pointed to the commission's final report, which acknowledged local concerns that "quality of life could be reduced because of transportation problems such as increased traffic, lack of public transportation and increased commuting times, with the attendant issues of air pollution and increased fuel consumption." The report went on to say that "these concerns were carefully weighed and considered, but in the final analysis the commission found they did not collectively rise to the level of a substantial deviation" from other priorities.

The General Services Administration, which oversees the siting of federal facilities, mentions in its regulations the need to consider transportation access, environmental impact and a "community's economy, sense of place and social fabric." But security concerns apply even to agencies unrelated to the military or law enforcement -- all new federal buildings are supposed to have a minimum setback of 50 feet, though exemptions are possible in urban areas, depending on the agency's function.

Critics say that although security concerns are understandable in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks and the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the recent moves go too far. They point out that other countries have found ways, from traffic restrictions to building design, to keep government buildings downtown in their capital cities.

"There seems to be a perception that federal agencies, no matter what they do, need to be protected," said Ronald F. Kirby, a transportation planner with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. "Rather than mix in and have your offices spread around with other activities, it's, 'Let's all get together and build a fortress someplace, and no one can get near us.' "

Rep. James P. Moran Jr. (D-Va.) said many of agencies being moved to Belvoir are obscure entities and hardly obvious targets. "The terrorists don't know who's in what office building, and even if they knew, they couldn't locate them because of all those acronyms," he said. "The security thing is overblown. It's not tempered by any measure of common sense."

George Vradenburg, a former America Online executive who is organizing a major regional planning exercise, said that the head of the GSA's buildings department had remarked at a recent conference that the agency would be willing to include local officials on the panel that makes siting decisions. But Vradenburg said nothing has come of that so far.

Some say the concerns over the federal dispersal are exaggerated. Other than the military relocations, there is little sign of a general outward move by other federal agencies, said Matthew J. Klein, president of the Akridge development company, which has federal tenants in several of its buildings. "Washington is the center of government operations, and my sense is that people still want to be closer to that center," he said. "Last I checked, no one was moving from the White House or Capitol Hill."

Rep. Thomas M. Davis III (R-Va.) disputed the inclusion of the Tysons tunnel decision as an example of federal narrow-mindedness. Fairfax officials were initially in support of an aboveground route for the Metro through Tysons, he said, and when local officials recently decided a tunnel was better, federal officials simply told them that it would be difficult to change plans. He agreed, however, with criticisms of the military relocation, which he called a "horrendous land-use decision."

Particularly aggravating to some about the transfers to Belvoir is that the Army has so far ruled out putting any of the elements at a huge, underused GSA warehouse in Springfield, a couple of miles from the post and adjacent to a Metro station. The Army says it is too complicated for it to get control of the site.

Other local officials hold out the hope that the relocations to Belvoir, which are supposed to be done by 2011, won't be carried out fully. It's possible, they say, that the road upgrades needed for the move will be found to be too costly or that a new defense secretary will soon replace Donald H. Rumsfeld, a top proponent of consolidating employees on posts.

But Pentagon spokesman Chris Isleib said it was unrealistic to expect a pullback on transfers. The relocation "is a matter of law, and we remain committed to it," he said.

With production started, Pacific Ethanol acquires Colo. Plant

By Adrian Rodriguez

The Business Journal Fri. Oct. 27, 2006

Days after starting production at its first plant, Pacific Ethanol, Inc. of Madera is solidifying its position on the West Coast by making large acquisitions.

The largest ethanol producer in California announced last week it purchased a 42 percent interest in Front Range Energy, LLC. Front Range, which has a nameplate capacity of 40 million gallons of ethanol per year, began full production in June and is currently producing at a rate of 47 million gallons annually at its plant in Windsor, Colo.

Pacific Ethanol already has had a "significant" relationship with Front Range wherein Pacific Ethanol markets Front Range fuel ethanol and wet distillers grain. Ethanol is considered a clean alternative to other fuel additives, largely replacing the toxic MTBE additives that have been used in the past.

Pacific Ethanol purchased 10,095 Class B voting units from Front Range in exchange for \$30 million cash, 2,081,888 shares of its common stock, representing another \$30 million based on the average of closing prices on Pacific Ethanol stock for 10 days preceding the closing of the deal.

Also included in the deal is a warrant to purchase up to 693,963 shares of common stock at any time before Oct. 17, 2007 at an exercise price of \$14.41 per share.

The warrant gives Front Range dubs on roughly \$10 million more in Pacific Ethanol stock.

"Our acquisition of a stake in Front Range in effect adds approximately 20 million gallons to our annual capacity," said Neil Koehler, president and CEO of Pacific Ethanol. "As this plant supplies local markets for both fuel and feed, obviating the need to ship our product long distances, it is also a perfect fit with Pacific Ethanol's low-cost destination business model."

On Monday, Pacific Ethanol announced the appointment of Front Range's majority owner and co-founder Daniel Sanders to its board of directors. He replaces Frank Greinke, who is stepping down after serving as director since 2003.

"I'm excited at the prospect of working with the board and the management team of this innovative and rapidly growing company," Sanders said.

Fuel cell manufacturer looking at Fresno as location

By Adrian Rodriguez

The Business Journal Fri. Oct. 27, 2006

A fuel cell manufacturer based in Great Britain is looking to expand into California, and currently it has Fresno on its short list of possible locations.

Cenergie's CEO Nick Abson approached the city of Fresno about six months ago regarding the possibility of Fresno being one of three manufacturing sites in California, said Scott Johnson, director of the Economic Development Department.

"They wanted to expand to the West Coast, and to California in particular, and they want a plant in southern and central and northern California," Johnson said. "It's exciting."

Abson has had several conversations with at least one potential investor to start up a manufacturing line in California, according to a newsletter published by the Economic Development Corporation serving Fresno County.

The plant would be self-funded and sized based on the demand of the region. Cenergie hopes for \$500,000 in additional capital.

The city introduced Cenergie to the EDC, which will assist the company in its research of Fresno, said Melodee Schwamb, corporate locations project manager for the EDC.

"It's kind of been a joint effort between the city economic development department and us," she said. "They've been in town several times."

She said Cenergie representatives have studied the Fresno market's demographics, workforce incentives and other details.

Cenergie's most current plans include hiring as many as 85 workers to operate from a 30,000-square-foot building in Fresno, she said. It could be fully operational within a three-year period.

Fuel cells are a non-combustive energy source that converts methane into hydrogen, which can be used as fuel. An electro-chemical process strips electrons from the hydrogen as it combines with oxygen, producing heat and water - and electricity.

Two installations already operate in downtown Fresno. The jailhouse was recently equipped with fuel cells, and the Guarantee Building generates 600 kilowatts per hour of electricity.

Sam Logan, CEO of Logan Energy, a Georgia-based manufacturer of fuel cells, consulted on the installation in the Guarantee Building.

He said Fresno is an area where residents put a high premium on energy security, and with the increasing cost of power, fuel cells are likely to become attractive here.

Fuel cells can generate electricity at about 8 cents per kilowatt.

Cenergie has looked at Fresno, Sacramento and Orange counties as potential California locations. In the EDC newsletter, which published earlier this month, Cenergie's plans called for a 20,000-square-foot test facility to run and verify fuel cell production. But the facility should be expandable to 60,000 square feet for the total build-out.

Schwamb said plans may change again as Cenergie studies the market more extensively.

It's not just this company's interest in Fresno that is encouraging, Johnson said, because other solar panel manufacturers have also approached the city in greater numbers recently. No projects have yet materialized though, he said.

"There are other clean energy companies looking at the Central Valley," including manufacturers and distributors, Johnson said. "You got the 'Silicon Valley;' maybe this could be the 'Solar Valley.'"

These developments are taking place while the Regional Jobs Initiative prepares to launch a new cluster devoted to alternative energy.

"There are people out there developing these technologies," Schwamb said. "I think what's going to be good is to have that cluster, the basis of it in place."

Cenergie could not be reached by press time.

[Tracy Press, Guest Commentary, Tuesday, October 31, 2006](#)

Antenna farm wrong spot for kids

By Susan Sarvey

Why youth sports fields have no business being located where developers want to put them.

Like the 2004 election, Tracy once again is bitterly divided by an attempt by two developers to dominate most of the building in the city for the next several decades. At the center of this controversy is the construction of a youth sports facility at the old antenna farm on Schulte Road.

All sides agree that the sports facilities need to be constructed, and with the building of 15,000 homes in the last 15 years, they should have been built sooner.

I and many other citizens object to the location of the childrens sports fields at the Schulte Road site. In the early 1990s, the federal government proposed a prison at the antenna farm site. The community, led by Rep. Richard Pombo, whose family owns many acres near the facility, lobbied against the prison at that location. Ultimately, the federal government decided not to locate the prison there. I called the agency controlling the parcel, and its officials assured me not to worry because they could not house prisoners over the 36-inch and 24-inch natural gas pipelines that run under the site.

Subsequently, the community had a plan to locate a learning center on the property, including a junior college and high school facility. An environmental impact report was prepared and the project headed to the Tracy Planning Commission for approval. In a unanimous vote, the commissioners turned down the proposal for the learning center because it would be unsafe to locate students near these pipelines. At that time, Mayor Dan Bilbrey and City Councilman Brent Ives did not challenge the planning commissions decision.

In 2001, four power plants were proposed for Tracy. They would provide energy for more than 2 million homes. Two energy companies floated proposals for peaker plants next to the antenna farm. The city and county opposed these two projects, and I got involved with the projects because there is already a glass plant there which emits 500 tons of nitrogen oxides and 87 tons of PM 2.5, and a biomass plant that emits 78 tons of PM 2.5. During that time, the proposal to locate the youth sports park at the antenna farm surfaced. Every air quality expert I spoke to, including Tuan Ngo of the California Energy Commission, Dave Stein of URS and [Seyed Saedrin of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District](#), thought the city would be crazy to have children play next to the three large sources of pollution.

Alvin Greenberg, the risk assessment expert from the Energy Commission, told me not to worry because the children could not be located there because of the pipeline safety act. The Pipeline Safety Act requires that when population densities change over a large gas pipeline, like the ones that run under the antenna farm, the pipeline must be dug up and replaced with another that is much thicker and safer. I was distressed when I learned that Pombo had gone to the Public Utilities Commission and got a variance from the Pipeline Safety Act.

I appreciate the hard work of the sports community to bring attention to the need for sports parks in Tracy. I have lobbied for a safe place for a sports park since 1990 when my oldest son got hurt playing soccer at Central Elementary School when he stumbled into a pothole.

Despite that, I will never support a location that puts children next to three large industrial facilities in Tracy that have had three major fires in the last 10 years. I certainly will not support a location that puts children over the Pacific Gas & Electric Co. backbone pipelines for the valley and does

not comply with the Pipeline Safety Act. That is why I support the Coalition for a Better not Bigger Tracy's proposal to put the children at a safer location with a more modest price tag that taxpayers can afford.

Pombo, Bilbrey and Ives, shame on you. You have had 15 years to provide this park at a safe location for the children. You have failed.

- Susan Sarvey and her husband, Bob Sarvey, own and operate a shoe store in Tracy.