

LA, Long Beach ports approve major cleanup plan

The Associated Press

In the Bakersfield Californian, L.A. Times and other papers, Tuesday, November 21, 2006

The Long Beach and Los Angeles Harbor Commissions unanimously approved a \$2 billion plan Monday to sharply reduce air pollution at both ports over the next five years.

The San Pedro Bay Ports Clean Air Action Plan calls for cutting by 45 percent particulate matter emitted from ships, trains, trucks, terminal equipment and harbor craft, according to officials with both agencies.

Measures will also aim to reduce smog-forming nitrogen oxide emissions by more than 45 percent and sulfur oxides by more than 52 percent by 2011.

As part of the plan, the South Coast Air Quality Management District will spend more than \$200 million to eliminate diesel trucks from port terminals within five years and replace them with clean-fuel vehicles.

The plan calls for all major container cargo and cruise ship terminals to be equipped with shore-side electricity within 10 years so vessels berthed at the ports won't run on diesel-powered auxiliary engines.

Additionally, all cargo-handling equipment will be replaced or retrofitted to meet emission standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Yellowstone Plans to Retain Current Snowmobile Limit

By Jim Robbins

N.Y. Times, Tuesday, November 21, 2006

HELENA, Mont., Nov. 20 — Yellowstone National Park officials say they will keep the number of snowmobiles allowed into the park at the level it has been under a temporary plan for three years, about 720 a day.

The park released a long-awaited draft environmental impact statement on Monday, proposing a long-term winter use plan for Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.

Officials are seeking comments from the states and counties that border the park and will release another draft document for public comment early next year. The new plan will go into effect for the winter of 2009.

Allowing snowmobiles into Yellowstone, the nation's most famous wilderness park, has been hugely controversial and political. The current statement is the fourth environmental study of snow machines in the park. The Clinton administration proposed banning snowmobiles; the Bush administration proposed a limit of 1,000 a day.

The latest plan would allow 720 a day, split among the three main entrances. All snowmobiles that enter the park have to meet noise and pollution standards.

Although 720 is the current limit, the park has averaged only 250 snowmobile visits a day in the last three years. Environmentalists had hoped that the new plan would reflect the lower number.

"Yellowstone has a noise problem with 250 snowmobiles a day," Jon Catton, an environmentalist in Bozeman, said. "The park service says it already interferes with visitors' ability to hear erupting geysers and wildlife. This proposal will make it worse by allowing a threefold increase."

A spokesman for the park, Al Nash, said, "All of our measures would meet federal and state air quality guidelines," because of new technology.

Noise problems, Mr. Nash said, are largely caused by older snow coaches, an over-snow bus on rubber treads or skis.

The new plan requires such coaches to meet stricter sound and emission levels and limits them to 78 a day. On average, 32 now enter the park daily.

Businesses that depend on snowmobiles favor keeping the higher number.

The new limit, said Glen Loomis, owner of a snowmobiling and snow coach business in West Yellowstone, "still protects the wildlife and other values."

The new plan would also keep a requirement that snowmobilers ride with guides. Business owners have said that requirement limits the number of snowmobilers who visit the park.

Mr. Nash said the guide requirement had proven successful.

"We've seen the number of arrests and moving violations dramatically decrease," he said. "Guided travel is a way to provide safe and effective travel."

Snowmobile Plan Proposed for Yellowstone

By Mary Clare Jalonick, Associated Press

In the Washington Post, Monday, November 20, 2006

WASHINGTON -- The National Park Service wants to maintain snowmobile regulations allowing 720 snowmobiles per day to enter Yellowstone National Park.

A draft statement issued Monday by the agency mirrors a temporary plan that has been in use for the past two winters. It would also allow 140 snowmobiles a day to enter Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Parkway, which connects the two parks.

The snowmobiles must use what the Park Service calls "best available technology" to reduce noise and pollution levels.

The plan was issued to other government agencies. The public will be able to comment on a separate draft expected in March.

Park officials stressed that the report is only a draft and that the plan is the agency's preferred alternative out of several proposals. A final plan is expected to be issued in time for the 2007-2008 winter season.

The agency has been looking at a wide range of options, from a ban on snowmobiles in Yellowstone in favor of snowcoaches _ which run on tracks and can carry several people _ to allowing more snowmobiles, which generally carry one to two.

"We are far away from the final decision," Grand Teton National Park spokeswoman Joan Anzelmo said.

The plan would limit snowcoaches in Yellowstone to 78 per day and require those vehicles to meet sound and emissions requirements.

For years, snowmobile access to the park was largely unrestricted. But that ended before the 2003-04 winter, when the Park Service moved from a Clinton administration-era plan that called for phasing out snowmobiles in favor of snowcoaches and decided instead to limit the numbers and types of snowmobiles. Court challenges have also delayed a final decision.

Jon Catton, a Bozeman, Mont.-based conservationist, called the proposal "an unfortunate U-turn by the administration only months after it pledged to emphasize conservation in our national parks." Catton said noise pollution has continued to be a problem, even though far fewer than 720 snowmobiles have entered the park each year.

[Washington Post Editorial, Monday, November 20, 2006:](#)

Building Green

The District finds a way to cut greenhouse emissions.

It's a common misconception that the noxious spew from an automobile's tailpipe is the predominant driver of global warming. But buildings are massive producers of the gases that contribute to climate change, too; they are responsible for at least 38 percent of greenhouse emissions in the United States, and the American Institute of Architects says that number is significantly higher. And, unlike the case with cars, cutting the contribution of buildings to the problem can be remarkably easy.

The environmental benefits of better building requirements remain an insight overripe for policymakers to exploit. That's why we welcome a bill the D.C. Council unanimously supported in its first reading last week. If the bill passes, government structures built three years after the legislation takes effect will have to meet a high standard of environmental friendliness. Five years on, private construction projects will also have to fulfill building requirements aimed at lessening environmental impact. This way, private developers would have a sense of how to easily bring their buildings into compliance and keep extra costs down before they have to begin meeting the new standards, a palliative that convinced the president of the D.C. Building Industry Association to support the bill.

The legislation is hardly perfect, however. The guidelines to which District developers must adhere place insufficient emphasis on energy efficiency. For example, builders can get away with doing special landscaping or making indoor conditions more pleasant instead of aggressively cutting electricity usage. Still, the legislation serves a useful purpose without imposing punishing costs on builders.

While there is some concern that the proposed law might cause developers to turn to other areas of the region that have looser building requirements, it's more likely that the District will become a regional leader in establishing environmentally sound building practices. The region's Council of Governments recently commissioned a task force to recommend area-wide "green" building standards. The District is showing the way.

After years of presidential neglect on global climate change, states and localities have had to pioneer their own approaches to reducing the atmospheric pollution they produce. Smart building requirements are a promising new tool for American cities to do just that. More jurisdictions should follow the District's example.

[Letter to the Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, November 21, 2006:](#)

Park will hurt asthmatics

I am writing to you as the parent of an asthmatic child. Several years ago, my wife and I watched our infant child lose weight because of asthma that was severe enough to cause vomiting that would not stop. I remember being so worried about my child that I lay on the floor near the crib all night to make sure that I could still hear breathing.

There were many sleepless nights. I remember the many trips for emergency medical care and all of the lost days of work because I was too worried to let anyone else care for our child. Thankfully, our child's asthma has "resolved" into a less severe chronic respiratory ailment. I have, however, been acquainted with one person who experienced a fatal asthma attack.

Now we as a community are trying to decide if we should host a racing facility in our county. Admittedly, there will be increased risk of respiratory illness for vulnerable individuals and the quality of our air will be worse if we approve this facility, but economic advantage is anticipated.

I can't help but think, as a parent, if I was offered a job at twice the pay of my current position and the only problem was that my child would be able to breathe with only slightly less ease, I wouldn't take the job. With just a little bit less difficulty, we could have lost our child!

Really, I can't see how we as a community could even be considering approving the Riverside Motorsports Park. What economic or entertainment advantage can balance the loss of even one child's life? Are we so crass as to measure the number of lost lives that could result from the increased pollution of our air against the possible economic advantage? I don't know how we can even consider it. It is quite simply time for us to turn off our ignitions and try to find another way to entertain ourselves.

Andrew Neufeld, Ph.D., Merced