

## In The News 04-17-07

### Panel rejects bill to lift nuclear ban

#### Assembly committee vote doesn't deter Fresno group.

By E.J. Schultz / Bee Capitol Bureau

Fresno Bee, Tuesday, April 17, 2007

An Assembly committee on Monday rejected a bill to lift California's ban on nuclear power plants, as backers of a proposed Fresno plant said they might take their case directly to the state's voters. As expected, Democrats on the Assembly Natural Resources Committee voted against the measure, siding with environmentalists who raised concerns about storing radioactive waste and nuclear weapons proliferation.

Assembly Bill 719 failed 3-6, with the three yes votes coming from Republicans.

Assembly Member Chuck DeVore, R-Irvine, had pitched the bill as a way to help increase the state's electricity supply while complying with new restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions. Nuclear power plants produce few greenhouse gas emissions, the leading man-made cause of global warming.

The bill would have boosted efforts by a group of Fresno business leaders seeking to build a \$4 billion, 1,600-megawatt nuclear reactor in Fresno.

But project supporters said they weren't disappointed because they had nothing to do with DeVore's effort.

"It came [as] unexpected to us that this was even proposed in the first place, so we don't look at it as a setback at all -- we will continue to move forward," said John Hutson, president and chief executive of the Fresno Nuclear Energy Group.

Bypassing lawmakers, the group has been considering launching an effort to lift the ban with a ballot measure, he said.

About 13% of the state's electricity supply comes from nuclear power, including two California plants. But a state law passed in 1976 prohibits the construction of plants until the federal government finds a way to dispose of high-level nuclear waste.

The most-discussed proposal is a repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada, but the project has been plagued by delays.

DeVore, who vowed to re-introduce the bill next year, said the state's portfolio of electricity options will continue to narrow -- and grow more costly -- as more environmental controls are put in place.

"You can't power an electrical grid on good intentions," he said.

Greenhouse gas legislation that passed last year calls for reducing emissions by 25% by 2020. Another law prohibits utilities from entering into long-term contracts with coal-fired power plants.

Last week, the State Lands Commission rejected a proposed liquefied natural gas facility off the Southern California coast, which supporters said was needed to keep up with energy demands.

About 16% of the state's electricity supply comes from coal and 42% comes from natural gas, according to a recent report by the California Energy Commission.

Opponents of DeVore's bill said lifting the ban is premature.

"Nuclear technology is the most dangerous technology on earth," said Daniel Hirsch, president of the Committee to Bridge the Gap, an anti-nuclear group. "We haven't solved the waste problem, [and] we haven't solved the proliferation problem."

Anti-nuclear activists worry that materials from nuclear plants could fall into the wrong hands and be turned into weapons, or that terrorists might attack a plant.

Environmentalists testifying Monday also pointed to cost overruns that plagued existing plants. Construction of the Diablo Canyon plant exceeded the \$320 million estimate, according to the energy commission.

A better solution, environmentalists said, is to invest in alternative energy like wind and solar power.

Proponents of the Fresno plant would face a divided public if they are able to get an initiative on the ballot. Of likely voters, 46% support new nuclear plants and 46% oppose them, according to a July poll by the Public Policy Institute of California.

The Fresno Nuclear Energy Group is doing its own polling on the issue and is expected to reach a decision soon on the best way to move forward, Hutson said.

## **Wal-Mart hits road block as council orders more studies**

By Leslie Albrecht

Merced Sun Star, April 17, 2007

Plans to build a Wal-Mart distribution center in southeast Merced hit a slight delay Monday night when the City Council approved more studies on how the 1.2-million-square-foot warehouse complex would affect air quality and traffic.

The extra scrutiny will add \$18,288 to the cost of the environmental report on the distribution center; it will also mean the report likely won't be released until the fall, said city Planning Manager Kim Espinosa.

Wal-Mart is paying for the entire \$401,638 environmental report, which must be completed before the project can move forward. Sacramento-based EDAW, Inc. is writing the report.

The new studies the council unanimously approved Monday will include a more detailed version of a "health risk assessment," which analyzes how the distribution center could contribute to health problems for people who live nearby.

EDAW consultants will also take a second look at traffic. A previous traffic study had only analyzed how residential projects in the area will impact roads. Now consultants will take into account the traffic that could be generated by three proposed shopping centers next to the new Mission Avenue interchange.

The interchange is about three-quarters of a mile from the Wal-Mart site between Childs and Gerard avenues, Espinosa said.

"Because of the amount of traffic projected to be generated by Wal-Mart we need to look at what the effects are going to be on the interchange and the whole area," Espinosa said. "It's so we can have a more complete picture so the City Council can make their decision based on the best information available."

If approved, the Wal-Mart distribution center would operate 24 hours a day, with approximately 450 trucks driving in and out each day. It would employ about 600 full-time workers to start and 900 by the end of the third year of operation.

This is the second time the council has added more studies to the environmental report on the Wal-Mart project. In November, the council approved extra analysis at the request of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the California Department of Transportation.

Residents opposed to the Wal-Mart distribution center have stepped up their efforts lately. At the April 2 City Council meeting, representatives from the anti-Wal-Mart Merced Alliance for Responsible Growth announced a new campaign to educate council members and the public on their cause. On Sunday, the group is hosting an Earth Day picnic featuring piñatas shaped like Wal-Mart trucks.

At Monday's meeting, Lisa Kayser Grant of the Moms Clean Air Network said the distribution center's location near schools would create health problems for children.

"We are not more desperate for jobs than we are for clean healthy air," Kayser Grant told the council. "You cannot as stewards in good conscience allow the Wal-Mart distribution center to locate in that place."

## **Global Warming May Put U.S. in Hot Water**

By SETH BORENSTEIN, AP Science Writer

In the N.Y. Times, S.F. Chronicle, Washington Post and other papers, Tuesday, April 17, 2007

WASHINGTON (AP) -- As the world warms, water - either too little or too much of it - is going to be the major problem for the United States, scientists and military experts said Monday. It will be a domestic problem, with

states clashing over controls of rivers, and a national security problem as water shortages and floods worsen conflicts and terrorism elsewhere in the world, they said.

At home, especially in the Southwest, regions will need to find new sources of drinking water, the Great Lakes will shrink, fish and other species will be left high and dry, and coastal areas will on occasion be inundated because of sea-level rises and souped-up storms, U.S. scientists said.

The scientists released a 67-page chapter on North American climate effects, which is part of an international report on climate change impact.

Meanwhile, global-warming water problems will make poor, unstable parts of the world- the Middle East, Africa and South Asia - even more prone to wars, terrorism and the need for international intervention, a panel of retired military leaders said in a separate report.

"Water at large is the central (global warming) problem for the U.S.," Princeton University geosciences professor Michael Oppenheimer said after a press conference featuring eight American scientists who were lead authors of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's climate-effects report.

Roger Pulwarty, one of the federal government's top drought scientists, said states such as Arizona and Colorado, which already fight over the Colorado River basin water, will step up legal skirmishes. They may look to the Great Lakes, but water availability there will shrink, he said.

Reduced snow melt supplying water for the Sacramento Valley in California means that by 2020 there won't be enough water "to meet the needs of the community," Pulwarty said. That will step-up the competition for water, he said.

On the East Coast, rising sea levels will make storm surge "the No. 1 vulnerability for the metropolitan East Coast," said study lead author Cynthia Rosenzweig of NASA. "It's a very real threat and needs to be considered for all coastal development."

Rising sea level can harm Florida's biodiversity and be dangerous during hurricanes, the scientists added.

A few hours later, retired Gen. Charles F. "Chuck" Wald focused on the same global warming problem.

"One of the biggest likely areas of conflict is going to be over water," said Wald, former deputy commander of U.S. European Command. He pointed to the Middle East and Africa.

The military report's co-author, former Army Chief of Staff Gen. Gordon R. Sullivan, also pointed to sea-level rise floods as potentially destabilizing South Asia countries of Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Vietnam.

Lack of water and food in places already the most volatile will make those regions even more unstable with global warming and "foster the conditions for internal conflicts, extremism and movement toward increased authoritarianism and radical ideologies," states the 63-page military report, issued by the CNA Corp., an Alexandria, Va.-based national security think tank.

Kristi Ebi, a Virginia epidemiologist on the scientific panel, said reduced water supplies globally will hinder human health. "We're seeing mass migration of people because of things like water resource constraint and that's certainly a factor in conflict," she added.

Peter Gleick, president of the Pacific Institute, an Oakland, Calif., think tank, said the national security and domestic infighting over water comes as little surprise.

"Water is connected to everything we care about - energy, human health, food production and politics," said Gleick, who was not part of either panel. "And that fact alone means we better pay more attention to the security connections. Climate will effect all of those things. Water resources are especially vulnerable to climate change."

As water fights erupt between nations and regions and especially between cities and agricultural areas, Stanford scientist Terry Root said there will be one sure loser low on the priority list for water: other species.

"The fish will lose out and the birds and everything," she said.

Pollution will also worsen with global warming, the scientists said.

As places like the Great Lakes draw down on water, the pollution inside will get more concentrated and trapped toxins will come more to the surface, said Stanford scientist Stephen Schneider.

And even the air, especially in the Northeast, will become more deadly. More heat means more smog cooked and about a 4 to 5 percent increase in smog-related deaths, Ebi said. That's thousands of people, she said.

The scientists and military leaders held out hope that dramatic cuts in fossil fuel emissions could prevent much of the harm they are predicting. But they said the U.S. government - and the rest of the world - has to act now.

## **Global warming health effects**

### **Smog, heat waves may contribute to big rise in illness**

Jane Kay, Chronicle Environment Writer

S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, April 17, 2007

Higher temperatures over the coming decades are expected to cause more smoggy days and heat waves, contributing to a greater number of illnesses and deaths in the United States, according to international climate scientists.

Severe heat waves -- characterized by stagnant masses of warm air and consecutive nights with high minimum temperatures -- will intensify in the United States and Canada, according to the data on North America released Monday by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Southern California, the Southwest and the upper Midwest are already experiencing drought. Late in the century, in Los Angeles, the number of heat wave days is projected to increase from 12 days a year to between 44 and 95 days, the report said. The number of heat wave days in Chicago is expected to increase by 25 percent.

Just how much people and ecosystems suffer in North America, scientists reported, depends on how well greenhouse gases are controlled. And, the scientists cautioned, it depends on how well they plan for and try to prevent the damage.

"Without increased investments in countermeasures, hot temperatures and extreme weather are likely to cause increased adverse health impacts," including effects from heat, storms, pollution and infectious disease, the report said.

Adding to the problem is that the Baby Boomer population is aging as global warming worsens, increasing the number of people most at risk of dying in heat waves.

Global warming is already affecting people's health, said Kristi Ebi, an epidemiologist from Virginia and lead author of a chapter on human health written for the international science panel.

People will eventually better respond to heat waves with health care system improvements. They'll even adjust physiologically to warmer temperatures.

"It's while all of this is changing when you have high health impacts. And that could be in the next few decades," Ebi said in an interview.

The report singled out other health effects related to global warming, including:

-- More smog.

Warmer temperatures lead to greater concentrations of ground-level ozone, which forms on hot, sunny days when pollution from cars and other sources mix. Smog can damage lung tissue, increasing respiratory and heart disease and death. Even modest increases in smog can cause asthma in children.

"Ozone occurs more rapidly at higher temperatures, and emissions of the pollutants that form ozone can go up," said Patrick Kinney, associate professor of environmental health sciences at Columbia University. His studies were also cited in the international document.

"Just due to climate change, we expect ozone to get a little bit worse. That should have adverse consequences for human health," Kinney said.

Smog-related deaths from climate change are projected to increase by about 4.5 percent from the 1990s to the 2050s, according to studies at Columbia and Johns Hopkins universities. A scientist at Yale University, Michelle Bell, looked at the 50 largest cities in eastern United States and found that the health-alert days would go up by 68 percent over the next decades.

-- Spread of illnesses, disease and allergens.

High temperatures perpetuate malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases in the tropics. As global warming occurs, the mosquitoes can expand their range to higher elevations and northward.

William Reisen, a research entomologist at UC Davis, said mosquitoes -- and the parasites in the mosquitoes -- are beginning to exploit highland habitats that were once too cold for them.

The mosquitoes that carry the disease are already in the United States, Reisen said. But the U.S. public health effort, particularly in California, helps prevent infections because of the aggressive system to control mosquitoes, he said.

In a 2006 paper on West Nile virus in Illinois, the Dakotas, Colorado and Idaho, Reisen reported that higher temperatures make it easier to transmit the illness.

"As the virus moved westward at northern latitudes, it tracked abnormally warm summers," he said.

Currently, Lyme disease is limited by cold temperatures in the north that stave off the movement of the disease-carrying tick. Studies have found that the northern range limit could shift north by 200 kilometers by the 2020s and 1,000 kilometers by the 2080s.

Pollen, another air contaminant, is likely to increase as temperatures and carbon dioxide levels rise. A doubling of the atmospheric carbon dioxide levels stimulated ragweed-pollen production by more than 50 percent, a study showed. In another, ragweed grew faster, flowered earlier and produced significantly more pollen in urban locations.

-- Food- and water-borne diseases.

A study of all water-borne disease reported in the United States between 1948 and 1994 found that two-thirds of the cases were preceded by heavy rainfall, according to author Jonathan Patz, associate professor at the University of Wisconsin.

Climate-change projections show an increase in the intensity of rainstorms, which create opportunities for pathogens to move around.

Under a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Patz is studying the effects of climate change on the Great Lakes region, looking at heavy precipitation and beach closures due to water contamination.

Ebi said a rise in salmonella has been linked to higher temperatures. Studies in Canada, Europe and Australia have shown a correlation between rising temperature and cases of salmonella, she said.

"Unless we do better about food-handling practices and other factors that lead to salmonella, rising temperatures would lead to more cases."

## **Chevron lags in cutting flare pollution**

By Denis Cuff

Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, April 17, 2007

The Chevron oil refinery in Richmond is lagging in cutting pollution from its flares, while the Shell refinery in Martinez made big cuts in response to a highly touted 2005 clean air rule, an environmental watchdog said in a report Monday.

Chevron was the only one of five Bay Area oil refineries to report an increase in major flaring incidents since June 2005, when a new flare pollution rule went into effect, Communities for a Better Environment said in a report to the Bay Area's air pollution control district.

Chevron's flaring incidents increased 80 percent from the previous 18 months before the rule, the report said.

"Shell has shown that refineries can reduce flare pollution with the right equipment and procedures," said Greg Karras, senior scientist for the environmental group. "The other refineries should be putting in place the measures at Shell to protect plant neighbors from this pollution."

The ConocoPhillips plant in Rodeo had a modest reduction of 15 percent, while the Tesoro plant in Avonand Valero in Benicia had at least 64 percent reductions.

Shell had a 74 percent reduction in flaring episodes, the report said.

Analysts from the group attributed Shell's clean performance to added equipment and upgraded procedures that allow the refinery to capture and recycle gases instead of flare them off during plant maintenance.

Refinery operators use flares to burn off gases that otherwise would cause unsafe pressure surges that could trigger fires or explosions.

Not all the gases are destroyed in the flares, leaving pollution and odors that can upset plant neighbors.

## **Major flaring episodes increase at Chevron**

### **Environmental group's report says refinery lags area competition in reducing pollution**

By Dennis Cuff

Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, April 17, 2007

The Chevron oil refinery in Richmond is lagging in cutting pollution from its flares, while the Shell refinery in Martinez has made big reductions since a new rule took effect in 2005 to curb flare emissions, an environmental group said in a report released Monday.

Chevron is the only one of five Bay Area oil refineries to report an increase in major flaring episodes since June 2005 compared with the 18 previous months, reported Communities for a Better Environment, based in Oakland.

"Shell has shown that refineries can reduce flare pollution when they're willing to invest in the right equipment and procedures," said Greg Karras, senior scientist for the environmental group. "The other refineries should be putting in place the measures at Shell to protect plant neighbors from this pollution."

The ConocoPhillips refinery in Rodeo reported a 15 percent reduction in flaring episodes, a decrease the environmental group called insufficient.

The Tesoro refinery in Avon, near Martinez, and the Valero refinery in Benicia each reported 64 percent reductions, according to the environmental group's analysis of records at the Bay Area air pollution district.

Shell had the largest reduction: 74 percent.

Oil refineries use flares to burn up gases in production equipment that otherwise could trigger fires and explosions from unsafe pressure surges.

But the flares don't destroy all the gases, venting some pollution that irritates plant neighbors.

The Bay Area's air pollution board has enacted a rule requiring refiners to look at all feasible measures to reduce flare pollution.

Plans for the five refineries now are undergoing a public comment period review before Jack Broadbent, chief of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, rules whether the refinery plans are adequate.

Communities for a Better Environment presented its report Monday in San Francisco to Broadbent and a committee of the air district board.

Karras said Shell has added extra compressor capacity so it can capture and recycle gases-- rather than flare them into air -- when it does scheduled maintenance, Karras said.

Shell also has given workers the authority to turn down or turn off equipment to avoid flaring gases even if it means cutting production, he added.

Representatives for Chevron and an oil industry group said all the refineries, including Chevron, have made substantial long-term progress in reducing pollution from flares.

Chevron had more than the usual number of flaring episodes during 2006 because it did major maintenance that required equipment to be turned off, leaving gases in equipment that must be burned off, spokesman Walt Gill said.

Chevron is doing all it can to limit flare emissions without jeopardizing plant safety, he said.

Looking at Chevron's flaring during three years -- rather than a longer period -- may distort Chevron's flaring frequency, said Dennis Bolt, spokesman for the Western States Petroleum Association.

## **COMMUNITY MEETING SCHEDULE**

Public meetings on oil refinery plans to minimize flare pollution will be held by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District at the following times and places:

? Shell refinery plan: 6-8 tonight at the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors chamber, room 107, 651 Pine St., Martinez.

? Tesoro (Avon) plan: 6-8 p.m. Thursday at the Ambrose Recreation Center, main auditorium, 3105 Willow Pass Road, Bay Point.

? ConocoPhillips plan: 6-8 p.m. Monday, Crockett Community Center, 850 Pomona St., Crockett.

? Chevron plan: 6-8 p.m. April 30: Richmond Auditorium, Bermuda Room, 403 Civic Center Plaza, Benicia.

? Valero plan: 6 to 8 p.m. May 3 at the Benicia public library, 150 East L St.

## **Beach off-roaders fear end of land's lease**

### **Debate simmers with environmentalists who say San Luis Obispo County should ensure area is safe from ecological harm**

By Steve Chawkins, Los Angeles Times

In the Contra Costa Times and Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, April 17, 2007

OCEANO -- For Byron Clayworth, it didn't get much better than this: sipping a beer, camping on the beach with his buddies and their families, frying up dinner for 15 on a homemade wok, and, most of all, zooming around the dunes on an amazing variety of off-road vehicles.

That some 25,000 other people were enjoying the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area in much the same way on a recent weekend was no big deal. Getting used to the constant background whine of engines is easy, Clayworth said, but getting used to the constant buzz of environmental activists-- that's a different story.

"We've been squeezed too much already," said Clayworth, 51, a mechanic at a Modesto dairy. "How much do they want?"

It's a question on the minds of thousands of off-road enthusiasts as a crucial decision looms for the Oceano Dunes, one of the state parks' busiest campsites and the only place in California where driving on the beach is still legal.

Over the years, the off-roaders point out, the sand they have been allowed to whip across on everything from Model T Fords to hopped-up Hummers has, mostly for environmental reasons, been whittled from 15,000 acres to about 1,500. They fear that a decision today by San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors could impose further restrictions on the site's 2 million annual visitors.

Since 1983, the county has leased 584 acres to the park free of charge, most of it in prime riding terrain. With the 25-year operating agreement set to expire next year, the board is to decide whether to approve the state's purchase offer of \$4.8 million -- a choice as highly favored by the off-roaders as it is opposed by San Luis Obispo's vocal environmental community.

"A sale to the state would be a huge mistake," said Nell Langford, a retired psychology professor who owns a vacation rental home that looks out on the parade of cars, trucks and trailers hauling all-terrain vehicles down the beach. "Here's a county that's environmentally evolved, that's into protecting its citizens from air pollution and all the things that ATV use generates. What are they thinking?"

Off-roaders want the sale approved, figuring a permanent transfer to the state would preserve the remaining riding territory. In their view, a return to county control would allow environmental activists to sway local political leaders and ultimately destroy a cherished pastime.

"There's been motorized recreation on this beach for over 100 years," said Jim Suty, head of the off-road advocacy group Friends of Oceano Dunes. "My parents used to race Jeeps here in the '60s, I'm enjoying it with my kids, and I want their kids to be able to enjoy it too."

After years of conflict, both sides are highly organized. Suty's group just held its annual crab feed, a fundraiser for its legal fees. And Langford was organizing a pointed "Children's Day" celebration, with playing tots encircled by a "human shield" protecting them from traffic on the beach.

For state parks ranger Will Pierce, the politics of it all took a back seat as he watched a gray sedan carving a serpentine track through the traffic on the hard-packed mud beside the sea.

"I've seen it a million times," said Pierce, a beach ranger for eight years. "Ordinarily sensitive, nice, conservative people get behind the wheel here and suddenly it's the Baja 500."

Pierce had his hands full. One of 140 employees who work in the park at peak hours, he had spent his shift dealing with groups of rowdy college students, an alleged sexual assault, park restrooms stripped of toilet paper, and an empty 28-foot cabin cruiser that had broken loose of its moorings and smashed onto the beach. He waved down speeders exceeding the 15 mph limit on the flats-- there is no limit on the dunes-- and warned parents who were illegally letting young children drive.

Cruising through the dunes in his truck as dirt bikes and quad runners leaped skyward, he paused at a crest and looked down at the sprawling encampment several hundred feet below. In row after jagged row sat 1,000 RVs and pickups and trailers.

In the 1930s, the dunes were home to a community of mystics who called themselves Dunites. Earlier, it was home to a failed subdivision that advertised itself as "the Atlantic City of the Pacific." Now, it's home to big families of weekend warriors, many with generators, gas grills and the latest in motorized fun.

"They just love it," Pierce said. "It's their Disneyland."

For environmentalists, though, it's not quite the happiest place on Earth. Each weekend, legions of trucks and trailers splash across the Arroyo Grande Creek -- a habitat for several rare species -- at both of the park's entry points onto the beach. Dust whipped up by off-roaders pollutes the air in nearby communities, activists say, and the protections afforded the Western snowy plover after a Sierra Club lawsuit over the threatened bird are inadequate.

"It's the local version of the spotted owl," said Andrew Christie, a spokesman for the Sierra Club's local chapter. "You can still find lots of 'Run Over a Plover' bumper stickers in Oceano."

When the birds are nesting, park employees monitor their fenced-off, 300-acre patch of sand with binoculars, gingerly laying down driftwood and hunks of kelp to "artificially enhance the habitat," said park Superintendent Andrew Zilke.

The effort takes three full-time environmental scientists and 10 or 11 seasonal employees. Zilke, an advocate of the sale, said he doubted that the county could go it alone.

But the sale's opponents insist that the county, even if it negotiates a new lease with the state, exert more control over a precious natural resource.

In a letter to county supervisors, the Sierra Club likens selling the land to "selling Half Dome in Yosemite." The more responsible course, the letter says, is to offer the state a lease with some tough conditions, such as building a less damaging park entry and permanently closing the 300 acres now fenced off for the plover and the least tern from March through September.

"Your whole focus should be on how your decision will help or harm this land in years to come," the letter says.

That's not quite on target for many local businesses, who say the focus should be on the money -- some \$200 million annually, by state estimates -- that off-roaders leave behind.

"If the environmentalists have anything to do with it, there'll be complete devastation," said John Aitkens, who has run B.J.'s ATV Rentals since 1982. Off-roaders "spend on fuel, on groceries, on hopping down to the outlet mall in Pismo Beach. They close the beach and you'll see people all around there going broke."

The only certainty is that arguments over the dunes will continue after today's hearing.

### **Locals react to sale**

The Californian

A Kern County off-roaders group supports the state's purchase of a portion of the Oceano Dunes recreation park owned by San Luis Obispo County, saying the state is best suited to manage the area.

"We think the state's got the experience working with that kind of property, which is very complicated and very regulated. It's almost impossible for anything other than a huge government entity to have the resources to maintain something like that," said Jack Patterson, vice president of the Kern Off-Highway Vehicle Association, which has about 500 active members.

Kern County has one of the highest rates of OHV ownership per capita in the state, according to Patterson. Hundreds of off-roaders from Bakersfield and Kern County flock to Oceano Dunes each summer for the opportunity to escape the summer heat, camp and ride their vehicles on the beach.

"There's a ton of people who kind of organize their life around the dunes," he said.

In light of increased OHV ownership in the state and dwindling space to ride, Patterson said, keeping Ocean Dunes open to riders also is critical to protecting the environment.

Closing off more space to OHV riders means that areas where riding is permitted will see heavier use, creating more environmental damage, he said.

## **EPA pours praise upon area groups**

### **Oakland nail salon collective among those honored for protecting, preserving environment**

By Douglas Fischer, STAFF WRITER

Tri-Valley Herald and Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, April 17, 2007

Nearly three dozen individuals and organizations throughout the Pacific Southwest were lauded Monday by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for their efforts to protect and preserve the environment.

Among them were 14 Northern Californians, including an Oakland-based nail salon collaborative, a University of California purchasing manager, an East Palo Alto school nurse and a University of California, Davis, researcher studying how farts and manure from dairy cows add to state smog.

"These organizations and individuals have applied creativity, teamwork and leadership in addressing many of the West's most sensitive and complex environmental challenges," said Wayne Nastri, the region's top EPA official, in a statement.

"The winners set an example for all of us to follow."

One of them also probably deserves our thanks: San Francisco's Bay Area Recycling Outreach Coalition, which has motivated more than 500,000 residents to take action to stop junk mail.

The group, a coalition of 110 cities and counties in the Bay Area, pooled funds to buy radio spots heard by some 8 million people, according to the EPA. The ads encouraged Bay Area residents to download the stop junk mail kit from the coalition's Web site, [www.stopjunkmail.org](http://www.stopjunkmail.org). In 2006, 672,000 residents did so.

Other winners include:

-Laurie Bauer, a registered nurse for the Ravenswood City School District in East Palo Alto, for her efforts to improve the health of all the districts' students, particularly those with asthma.

-Frank Mitloehner of UC Davis, who established that manure and gas emissions from the Central Valley's 1 million dairy cows is the biggest contributor to the region's smog problem.

-The Port of Oakland's Clean Vehicle Partnership, led by the port, Pacific Gas & Electric, Clean Air Transport and Quality Terminal Services. The effort replaced 11 older diesel trucks with cleaner-burning natural gas vehicles, saving 5,000 gallons of diesel fuel and reducing emissions plaguing West Oakland.

-The California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative, a group of public health advocates, nail salon workers and owners, and community groups that promotes the health of salon workers statewide. The group was instrumental in the 2005 passage of California's Safe Cosmetic Act, which requires manufacturers to disclose toxic ingredients in their products.

-Lesley Clark, the University of California's commodity manager, for her efforts to integrate "environmentally preferable purchasing standards" into the university's contracts, affecting from \$1.3 billion to \$2 billion in university purchases over the next five years.

[Sacramento Bee Editorial, Tuesday, April 17, 2007](#)

## **Editorial: Imprint the blueprint**

### **Núñez needs to back bill on better planning**

When it comes to challenges that threaten the state's economy and environment, transportation is near the top of the list.

Californians are not only increasing in number, they are driving longer distances, for work and errands, and spending more and more of their time behind the wheel. You can measure the consequences in congested highways, worse air pollution and more families that complain they don't get enough time together.

These driving habits also pose a challenge to the state's law to reduce greenhouse gases. Even as Californians transition to cleaner vehicles, they are driving more miles. Ever-increasing mileage means more fuel consumption, more carbon dioxide and less chance the state can reduce emissions 25 percent in 13 years, as the law requires.

Fortunately, there are strategies for slowing the growth of what engineers call "vehicle-miles-traveled." One of these is embodied in legislation that goes before an Assembly committee tomorrow.

Assembly Bill 842, by Assemblyman Dave Jones of Sacramento, seeks to create incentives so regional planning agencies will direct more housing closer to transit stations, schools, jobs and shopping. In short, the goal is to encourage a return to traditional neighborhood design, in which people can take more of their daily trips by bus, rail, bicycle or walking.

Computer models demonstrate that, by constraining leapfrog development and focusing a mix of housing, jobs and retail within existing localities, a region can actually reduce an average household's vehicle mileage by 10 percent or more.

The Sacramento region has pioneered this approach through its award-winning Blueprint program. Jones now wants to imprint the blueprint on the state's other major metro regions-- San Diego, Los Angeles and the Bay Area. These regions will be investing billions of dollars in state bond money for transportation and housing.

AB 842 would require that regional transportation plans approved by the California Transportation Commission include plans -- blueprints -- to reduce the growth of vehicle miles traveled. It would dedicate bond funds from Proposition 84 to develop these blueprints. It also would direct dispersal of \$300 million in Proposition 1C housing bonds to local governments seeking to develop infill projects.

The Assembly Local Government Committee will be the first stop for Jones' bill. It likely will face a tough hearing from lawmakers who don't want to tie up the allocation of infrastructure bonds.

But there are strong arguments in favor of ensuring that state investments don't worsen the challenge of reducing smog and greenhouse gases. That's why Speaker Fabian Núñez, (who co-authored the state's global warming bill) needs to give this bill his support. It's a false choice to say California can't protect the environment while quickly making needed investments in transportation and housing. AB 842 would help it achieve both.

[Letter to the Editor, Washington Post, April 17, 2007:](#)

## **What Will Really Bring Cleaner Air**

The Supreme Court has ruled that the Clean Air Act empowers the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate greenhouse gas emissions ["High Court Faults EPA Inaction on Emissions," front page, April 3]. Environmentalists are claiming a long-overdue victory, but EPA regulation of air pollution under the act hasn't met the law's major objectives.

Three decades after the law's enactment, most large cities (including Washington) are "non-attainment" areas: Our health is still being damaged by high levels of a range of pollutants, most notably respirable particulates from diesel engines that the EPA has only recently begun to regulate.

Would regulation do any better at reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

We need clear, strong incentives to conserve energy and switch to renewables. Broad-based economic incentives, such as a gradually increasing, progressive carbon tax, would be a much more effective and fairer approach than clumsy regulations that wouldn't go into effect for years and that probably would contain too many exemptions to matter much.

Our escalating climate crisis is an unparalleled worldwide emergency. The old, tired regulatory approach just isn't good enough.

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