

Air cleanup effort delayed for S.J. Valley

By Seth Nidever

Hanford Sentinel, Tuesday, May 1, 2007 (12:57 p.m.)

FRESNO - Hanford residents might be enjoying clean breathing by 2015, according to a staff plan approved Monday by a 9-2 vote of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's governing board.

"Staff did a good job, even though they got badmouthed by the opposition," said Tony Barba, a Kings County supervisor and member of the governing board, after voting in favor of the proposal.

The decision drew intense public interest as more than 90 people engaged in nearly six hours of comment during the public hearing preceding the vote.

The decision pushed back the deadline for meeting federal ozone standards from 2013 to 2023, dismaying environmentalists and others who think the district can do it faster. At the same time, the decision generated tentative approval from business interests who say their industries are already heavily regulated.

Ozone-filled air exacerbates lung conditions, ratchets up asthma attacks and kills hundreds of people prematurely every year, according to district health statistics.

"Those older dairy facilities are going to have a tougher time (complying)," said Jake DeRaadt, who operates an 850-cow dairy near Lemoore.

Any dairy with more than 500 cows will be regulated under the plan, a change that ropes in far more dairies than the 1,000-cow threshold established last year.

Changing that regulatory threshold is one of a series of new business regulations intended to show the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that the local air district is "leaving no stone unturned" in the battle to clean the Valley's air, according to Seyed Sadredin, district executive director.

The district must turn in a plan to the federal EPA by June 15 to avoid a possible loss of highway funds or a moratorium on new construction, officials said Monday.

The plan will require virtually every dairy in the San Joaquin Valley to implement a smorgasbord of clean air practices -- everything from covering up silage piles to doing a better job of managing manure.

New or expanding facilities will be held to even higher standards.

Dairies are the number one Valley source of volatile organic compounds, substances that contribute to smog formation.

But the linchpin of the plan is finding a way to cut motor vehicle emissions by 75 percent.

One district official compared it to the dilemma a person would face if they cut their household income by 75 percent but tried to maintain the same standard of living.

District officials say the only way they can get the necessary reductions is to convert virtually every car and truck moving in the San Joaquin Valley to clean-burning technology that doesn't yet exist.

District officials say that decision rests with the U.S. EPA and the California Air Resources Board.

"We believe ... we have incorporated everything that is feasible in this plan," Sadredin said.

Environmentalists denied both claims, saying that the technology is available and that the district has the authority to ban old diesel-engine use in mobile vehicles on certain days.

"They walked away from it," said Brent Newell, an attorney for the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment.

But even Newell conceded last week that a full Valley cleanup can't be accomplished by the original deadline. He and others took issue with the district's decision to ask for a 2023 deadline -- the maximum allowable extension under the federal Clean Air Act, saying that full compliance can be achieved by 2018.

Newell and other environmentalists had asked the board to delay approving the plan to research more options.

"Attainment is possible (earlier.) The ... analysis you've been presented is flawed," said Paul Cort, an attorney with Earthjustice, a national environmental advocacy group.

One suggestion -- requiring that older diesel engines be banned from operation on high pollution days -- was rejected by district officials as economically harmful, impractical to implement and insufficient to achieve the necessary pollution reductions.

District officials also said that such a moratorium on diesel engines in cars and trucks could only be accomplished by the state air resources board.

Agricultural representatives said that such a moratorium in the agricultural industry would spell disaster.

In general, agricultural and other business representatives were supportive of the district plan, repeatedly asserting that it doesn't give their industries a free ride.

The plan is due to the U.S. EPA by June 15, district officials said.

"Even though we don't completely agree with (it), I don't see where we have a lot of options not to," said Kevin Abernathy, executive director of the California Dairy Campaign.

"It will be painful in the process," Abernathy said.

County's air a little less hazardous

Visalia-Tulare-Porterville area drops from 4th to 7th on nationwide bad air list

Staff and wire reports

Tulare Advance-Register, Tuesday, May 1, 2007

LOS ANGELES - Tulare County's air was slightly less hazardous in the past year, an annual survey by the American Lung Association reports.

The survey listed the Visalia-Tulare-Porterville metropolitan area as seventh worst in year-round particle pollution. Last year the area was fourth.

The lung association said Los Angeles once again had the worst air, followed by Pittsburgh, Pa., and Bakersfield.

The news wasn't all bad for Los Angeles. Despite the dubious distinction, the number of days residents breathed the nation's worst ozone levels was fewer than in previous years.

"Nobody is surprised that L.A. has an air pollution problem," said Janice Nolen, the association's assistant vice president for national policy and advocacy. "The problems there are one of the reasons we have the Clean Air Act. But it is important for folks to know that there has been some improvement."

In other comparisons, the Visalia-Tulare-Porterville area dropped to 25th from 11th in short-term particle pollution but moved to fifth from fourth in ozone pollution. The organization based the rankings on ozone pollution levels produced when heat and sunlight come into contact with pollutants from power plants, cars, refineries and other sources.

The group also studied particle pollution levels emitted from these sources, which are made up of a mix of tiny solid and liquid particles in the air.

Particle pollution is measured two ways: Short-term pollution, the amount accumulated over a 24-hour period, and long-term, annual pollution.

Nearly half of the U.S. population lives in counties that still have unhealthful levels of ozone or particle pollution, even though there appeared to be less ozone in many counties than previous years, the study found.

Quality of county's air found to have problems

By Mike Lee

San Diego Union-Tribune Wed., May 2, 2007

San Diego County's air quality remains troubled, according to the American Lung Association's eighth annual assessment, released yesterday.

The association gave the region a "pass" for annual particle pollution and a "fail" for daily particle pollution and ozone, which is better known as smog. The county received the same grades last year.

Nationally, ozone pollution improved significantly but particle pollution increased, the association said.

California remains home to some of the nation's worst air problems, and Los Angeles topped the association's list of cities most polluted by ozone.

FINDINGS

Mixed Assessment For Air Quality

Washington Post, May 2, 2007

Pollution levels in the United States are getting both better and worse, according to an annual report by the American Lung Association that tracks the nation's air quality.

The upside is that smog levels declined nationwide between 2003 and 2005, aided by the appearance of more pollution controls on smokestacks, according to the report, called "State of the Air: 2007."

The bad news is that the number of places in the United States reporting unhealthy levels of soot grew over the same period, the report found. Soot describes the tiny particles of pollution generated by burning fossil fuels.

This "ominous trend," particularly in the East, is worrisome because soot pollution can increase hospital visits for heart and asthma problems, the association said.

Smog levels have declined significantly throughout the country from peak levels reported in 2002, especially in the eastern half of the United States, the report said.

TODAY'S NEWS

A Breathtaking Study

Washington Post, May 2, 2007

If your summer vacation plans include a trip to Los Angeles, California, hold your breath. The area remains the most polluted in the country, the American Lung Association reported yesterday.

The good news is that the country as a whole is less smoggy than before. Even L.A. had fewer bad-air days than in previous studies. However, nearly half the U.S. population lives in areas with unhealthy air, the group said. And dangerous soot particles, blamed on coal-fired power plants and emissions from diesel vehicles, are on the rise along the East Coast. Washington was cited for high levels of ozone and soot.

Improving indoor air quality

Merced High honored for asthma efforts

By Abby Souza

Merced Sun-Star Wed., May 2, 2007

Alicia Bohlke said it was "lucky" that Merced High School was able to fly its green "good air day" flag on campus Tuesday.

After all, said the chairwoman of the Merced/Mariposa County Asthma Coalition, it was World Asthma Day.

The school was visited by Bohlke and other coalition members Tuesday, where Principal Tom Scheidt was presented with a "Great Start" award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the school's work on indoor air quality.

Along with flying the colored flags provided by the coalition that designate the outdoor air quality, Merced High participated in Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools program this year.

Tools for Schools is a free EPA program that helps campuses improve the air quality inside its classrooms, offices and other facilities, said Shelly Rosenblum, EPA Tools for Schools coordinator.

"It's very easy to find simple, inexpensive things schools can do indoors to reduce the number and severity of asthma episodes," he said.

At Merced High, during an inspection last fall, Rosenblum said he found some classrooms didn't have their outside air intakes open fully or weren't running their ventilation systems at the right times.

But it is also as easy as asking teachers not to burn scented candles or to rearrange their classrooms so custodians can clean more thoroughly, he said.

"It's really an eye-opening exercise," Rosenblum said.

With one in every five Central Valley children diagnosed with asthma -- whose symptoms sometimes keep them home from school -- Scheidt said he thinks the fixes Merced High has made will eventually help attendance levels.

"It just makes sense," Scheidt said. "When your teachers and students are in a comfortable environment and not getting sick, they are bound to avoid being absent and perform on a higher level."

But even with the efforts of Merced High, the county and city of Merced still have some of the worst air in the country.

Merced is the sixth most ozone-polluted city in the United States, according to the American Lung Association's 2007 State of the Air report. Los Angeles came in first on the list, Bakersfield third.

Merced County is also near the top of the most ozone-polluted county list, scoring eighth. California is home to 16 of the top 25 counties on this list.

"We got a big fat F for our air quality," Bohlke said of the county.

But with projects like Tools for Schools, the members of the Merced/Mariposa Asthma Coalition hope their work will move Merced a little farther down the list.

"Mr. Scheidt and the Merced High School staff have set an excellent example for the area schools on improving indoor air quality," said Melissa Kelly-Ortega, program associate for the coalition.

But Scheidt said even though the school has made a great start in cleaning up its air, work on the issue is far from over.

"I know there are a lot of things that need to happen before we start to see asthma go away," he said. "But I know this is an important step in helping our students."

Lodi Supercenter plans could return by summer

Wal-Mart faces growing regional opposition

By Chris Nichols, News-Sentinel Staff Writer

Lodi News-Sentinel, Tuesday, May 1, 2007

Revised plans to bring a Wal-Mart Supercenter to Lodi could be back in front of city leaders by this summer, despite growing opposition in the region to such retail giants.

Lodi Planning Manager Peter Pirnejad said Monday that reworked sections of Wal-Mart's environmental impact report — including the project's effect on the local economy, traffic, air quality and agriculture — could be ready for review by the Lodi City Council in about three months.

A San Joaquin County Superior Court Judge in December 2005 overturned the council's approval of the Supercenter, asserting that the environmental report for the 226,868-square-foot project was incomplete.

Since January, several East Bay communities have either denied Wal-Mart plans to expand their existing stores into Supercenters (in Antioch) or turned down plans for a Supercenter (in Concord).

In Brentwood, city leaders this year adopted an ordinance limiting the size of their big box stores, as leaders in Galt and Stockton have proposed doing, said Steve Herum, a Stockton attorney who has challenged numerous plans to build Wal-Mart stores in the state.

"In Northern California, there's increasing opposition to the Supercenters," Herum said. "I think it's really an emerging trend in the valley."

City planners will recommend ways Wal-Mart can lessen its blow on the local economy and environment, Pirnejad said.

That advice will be studied first by the city's planning commission and then the council.

Charging Wal-Mart a "big box" fee might be one way for it to compensate for the loss of small businesses in the city, planners said earlier this year.

Such a fee could generate \$1 million, and would be dedicated to improvements in the city's downtown business core.

Opponents of giant retailers contend that the stores drive smaller companies out of business due to the low prices they can offer.

City planners could also recommend Wal-Mart purchase easements on agricultural lands near Lodi. That would help offset the loss of ag land at the proposed site, just south of Kettleman Lane at Lower Sacramento Road — across the street from Lodi's existing Wal-Mart.

Wal-Mart has 22 Supercenters throughout the state, nine under construction and nine more that have been recently approved for construction, said Kevin Loscotoff, a Wal-Mart spokesman.

Loscotoff said the company remains strongly supportive of the Lodi Supercenter.

"Wal-Mart has a 15-year relationship with the Lodi community and we have been working hand in hand for the past four years to bring this terrific new project to fruition," he wrote in an e-mail.

"We remain committed to this project and to the Lodi residents and community leaders who have repeatedly shown us their support."

Reached for comment Monday, two city council members said they will do their best to examine the project's merits.

Councilwoman Susan Hitchcock opposed the project initially, noting the project didn't fully address its detrimental effect on the area's economy or agriculture.

"I'm interested in seeing how they address these issues," she said. "I'll certainly read those documents thoroughly."

Councilman Larry Hansen said he'll also scrutinize the new reports, regardless of his already strong support for the project.

"I was in favor of the project (in 2005) and I still hope it comes to Lodi," he said.

He noted that the store would help keep sales tax in Lodi, a revenue that's lost when residents shop at big box stores in neighboring communities.

He added that his job isn't to limit how the commercial market works.

"I believe very strongly in free enterprise," he said. "I don't believe it's my job on the City Council to prevent free enterprise."

Climate change added to Modesto planning

By ADAM ASHTON

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Concerns about climate change stand to reshape Modesto's future environmental impact reports under a policy the City Council approved Monday.

By a 4-3 vote, the council expanded an ongoing update of Modesto's primary planning document to incorporate references to global warming.

The move is targeted at complying with a 2006 state law that requires reductions in emissions that contribute to global warming, such as carbon dioxide.

Smaller cities in Stanislaus County, such as Hughson and Waterford, addressed aspects of global warming in recent revisions to their general plans, the documents that describe where and how the communities can grow.

Their general plans now encourage builders to develop energy-efficient homes, plant trees and create walking-friendly neighborhoods.

The work that Modesto approved piggybacks on a \$937,280 contract the council awarded in September to bring the city's general plan and master environmental impact report into compliance with new studies that describe demands on roads, sewers and storm drains.

Patrick Kelly, planning division manager, said including the global warming study would add about \$11,500 to the contract.

Council members Janice Keating, Will O'Bryant and Kristin Olsen voted against incorporating the climate change discussion into the general plan update.

They argued that it made more sense to consider climate change when the city completely revises the general plan, a task the city is expected to undertake soon after it completes the more limited contract it launched in September. Also, the state has not detailed what it expects of local governments under the climate change law.

Mayor Jim Ridenour joined Councilmen Bob Dunbar, Brad Hawn and Garrad Marsh in voting to include the climate change discussion in the update.

They said they favored moving to comply with the state law because doing so would strengthen the city's planning documents against potential environmental challenges.

Kelly said incorporating evaluations of global warming into planning documents could raise questions about air quality and water resources. It isn't clear how climate change would affect the San Joaquin Valley, but some water suppliers anticipate collecting less snowfall while receiving more rain, which stands to change the state's water delivery systems.

Clinics to give away asthma inhalers

Uninsured and poor patients will get the devices to replace those facing a federal ban.

By Mary Engel, Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times, Wed., May 2, 2007

Community health clinics throughout California will begin giving away environmentally friendly asthma inhalers this week to uninsured and low-income patients facing a federal ban on older inhalers that use an ozone-depleting propellant.

After next year, pharmacies will no longer dispense inhalers that use chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs. In 1985, scientists discovered that CFCs were causing a hole or thinning in the ozone layer, a gaseous band in the stratosphere that shields Earth from harmful radiation.

In 1987, the United States signed an international treaty to eliminate the production and use of ozone-damaging chemicals. The American Lung Assn. and other health groups lobbied to exempt inhalers long enough to give manufactures time to develop new devices and patients time to make the switch.

Asthma inhalers dispense a prescription drug called albuterol, which quickly relaxes and opens airways during an asthma attack. The new inhalers use hydrofluoroalkane, or HFA, to propel albuterol to the lungs.

More than 2.8 million Californians have asthma, and about 370,000 of them lack health insurance, according to the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. Asthma causes 12,000 hospitalizations annually in Los Angeles County and more missed school days than any other chronic condition. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in four emergency room visits nationwide is for asthma.

Minority and low-income populations are particularly hard hit, probably as a result of genetic and environmental factors. Exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollution, including diesel exhaust, increases respiratory problems.

The pharmaceutical company Schering-Plough is donating 500,000 of its inhalers to 850 health clinics across the country, including more than 100 in California. Otherwise, an environmentally friendly inhaler costs \$30 to \$60, compared with \$5 to \$25 for a generic version of the old inhaler. The plastic canister and mouthpiece are reusable.

Barbara Pulley, executive vice president of QueensCare, which operates six Los Angeles-area clinics, said healthcare providers are expecting a run on the new inhalers as the deadline draws nearer. In addition to helping on costs, the donation will help clinics meet the demand, she said.

"For most of our patients, just to get a prescription to get their medication is enough of a challenge, without supply issues," she said.

Direct Relief International - a Santa Barbara philanthropy better known for delivering medical aid to developing countries - handled the logistics of getting the inhalers from Schering-Plough to the clinics.

Participants include the Venice Family Clinic, Valley Community Clinic in North Hollywood, Harbor Community Clinic in San Pedro, South Central Family Health Center and Glendale Community Free Clinic.

Pacific Steel agrees to fine, pollution controls

Carolyn Jones, Chronicle Staff Writer
S.F. Chronicle, Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Pacific Steel, whose noxious fumes have been drifting over West Berkeley for years, came a step closer to cleaning up its facility Tuesday by settling a lawsuit with the regional air district.

The family-owned steel foundry agreed to pay \$150,000 in fines and install a hood on a furnace in Plant No. 3, a major source of the foundry's toxic emissions.

"The company wants to continue moving forward and reducing its emissions," said Pacific Steel spokeswoman Elisabeth Jewel. "This settlement is a good opportunity to work with the air district to reach that goal."

The settlement is in response to a lawsuit filed in August by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District alleging that the foundry was too slow to install a carbon abatement system at Plant No. 3 to control odors, and did not meet deadlines to report its emissions.

The settlement will go into effect within the next few weeks, after it's certified, as expected, in Alameda County Superior Court.

The air district is confident the settlement will solve many of the problems at Pacific Steel, the nation's third-largest steel foundry and, at one point, among the Bay Area's worst polluters.

"Our goal is to achieve complete compliance at this facility. This settlement gives us that," said Karen Schkolnick, district spokeswoman. "Although we're not quite done. Now we have to make sure they follow through."

The settlement comes on the heels of a settlement Pacific Steel reached with an environmental group in February over alleged violations of the Clean Air Act. As part of the agreement with Communities for a Better Environment, Pacific Steel promised to use scrap metal that's free of lead, mercury and plastic, and spend \$350,000 to cut toxic emissions by two tons within three years.

Pacific Steel announced Tuesday the first steps it's taking to cut emissions through that settlement with Communities for a Better Environment. The steps include upgrades in ducts and hoods at Plant No. 1 and using a less volatile binder in the sand molds.

The air district will continue keeping tabs on Pacific Steel. In the next month or two, the air district will open a trailer-size monitoring center near the foundry to check emissions.

The air district settlement is not the end of Pacific Steel's legal troubles. The city of Berkeley is reviewing the foundry's use permits, which determine whether the 75-year-old firm can stay in business.

Mayor Tom Bates said the city wants to keep Pacific Steel, one of the last industrial plants in Berkeley, but the company needs to continue cleaning up.

"I firmly believe it's better to work with people than to sue them, but we do have their use permits in our arsenal," he said.

Members of the West Berkeley Alliance for Clean Air and Safe Jobs, a neighborhood group that's advocated for changes at Pacific Steel, did not return phone calls Tuesday.

Bates, a member of the air district board, said he was happy about the settlement.

"It's definitely a step in the right direction," he said. "There has been significant progress there, but we need to keep working on it."

Senate approves bill restricting cities from regulating pollution

The Associated Press

Contra Costa Times, Wednesday, May 2, 2007

AUSTIN- The Texas Senate tentatively approved a bill prohibiting cities from regulating air pollution coming from outside their boundaries despite a senator's brief threat to filibuster the measure.

Houston Mayor Bill White and the city council have been debating a plan that would allow Houston to fine any industrial plant in the area found contributing to unhealthy concentrations of certain pollutants inside the city.

The bill by Sen. Mike Jackson, R-La Porte, would make it illegal for any municipality to enact an ordinance that could be used beyond its borders. The legislation bars municipalities from using a nuisance ordinance to crack down on air pollution from outside their boundaries.

Sen. Mario Gallegos opposed the bill, saying cities need to be able to keep their residents safe from pollutants if the Legislature isn't going to crack down on the plants that contaminate the air.

Gallegos, a Democrat from Houston who recently underwent a liver transplant, railed about the proposal for about an hour before a Republican senator asked him if he was filibustering it.

He said he was, and Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst began laying out the rules for a filibuster. But after a brief break, Gallegos spoke for just 11 minutes before allowing the vote to proceed.

The measure was tentatively approved 20-11 along party lines. It could receive final approval as early as Wednesday.

Jackson's bill is SB1317

[Fresno Bee editorial, Wed., May 2, 2007:](#)

Hold your breath

Air board accepts delay, makes promises it must now keep.

The regional air board has decided to accept a controversial plan that would postpone clean air in the Valley until 2024. The 9-2 vote disappointed many but surprised very few.

Along the way to this decision, the air district staff and supporters crafted what they call a "dual path," which means setting 2024 as the official, legally mandated cleanup deadline, but simultaneously working to speed up attainment, perhaps by as early as 2019.

More than 90 people addressed the meeting of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's governing board Monday, and about two-thirds of them spoke -- often with great passion -- against the plan presented by the district's staff.

The district faces a 2013 deadline for cleaning the air, but maintains that it's impossible to meet that goal. Thus, it has decided to seek state and federal permission to bump the Valley into the "extreme nonattainment" category. That would push back the deadline to 2024, and avoid sanctions that could include the freezing of some \$2 billion in highway funds.

It also means that some Valley residents will face more than another decade of breathing dirty air, with all the attendant health and economic costs.

Critics wondered -- quite reasonably -- why the so-called "dual path" couldn't be folded into one legally binding plan. District supporters argued that the federal Environmental Protection Agency requires that any plan contain only quantifiable and enforceable reductions, and that's not always possible. But some of those reductions could be accomplished on the side, as it were.

If you have trouble following that pea, you're not alone.

In any case, that's what we appear to be stuck with, barring some dramatic and sudden change of heart among the nine air board members who voted for the delay.

The great danger with such a postponement is that buying this extra time will let the steam out of the push for cleaner air that's been building in the Valley in recent years. It's always easier -- though rarely wiser -- to just live with the status quo rather than take necessary steps that are also going to be expensive, discomfoting and difficult.

So it's incumbent on all the doctors, therapists, scientists, environmentalists, farmworker advocates, parents groups and citizens of every stripe who are unhappy about waiting another decade for clean air to keep the pressure on the air district. The air board made a promise with its vote yesterday. If it's a dual path we're to take, those who care about clean air must make sure it's a gantlet and not a yellow brick road.

[S.F. Chronicle editorial, Wed., May 2, 2007:](#)

A smog board that likes smog

SOME PEOPLE don't get it. While California works to clean both factory and vehicle emissions, the local smog board overseeing the state's dirtiest air has bailed in the fight.

The stakes couldn't be clearer. The vast San Joaquin Valley may be famous for lush crops and verdant fields, but it's also notorious for polluted air and the go-easy controls that permit such conditions. Bakersfield and Visalia are, once again, on the top-10 roster of dirty-air cities in a Lung Association study released this week.

The causes are many: the bathtub geography that cups in pollution between mountain ranges, car-centric development and industries that include oil, trucking, farm equipment long exempt from tailpipe controls, and even dairies with thousands of methane-producing cows.

For years, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District dodged stricter emission rules, nodding along with industry arguments that tougher rules were costly and impractical. In 2003, Sacramento reined in the problem partly by taking away agriculture's exemption from smog rules.

But after a lengthy meeting on Monday, the valley smog board, dominated by business-oriented country supervisors, showed it still isn't listening. It voted to postpone a federal clean-air deadline. Even by its own lowly standards, the board's action is a stunner. It wants to stall lower pollution limits from 2013 to 2024, a full 17 years from now.

Record asthma rates? Eye-burning smog? A job-killing reputation for dirty air, grit-covered car hoods and stay-indoors school days? The board ignores these dismal distinctions -- and its public duty.

The smog board is ducking its job because it isn't likely to be penalized. The statewide air board generally defers to regional panels. Federal regulators, who can withhold highway funds, aren't likely to bring down the hammer. The valley panel is betting it can get away with doing nothing.

But it could have taken steps to chip away at the problem. The state air board is due next month to announce a statewide clean-air plan, complete with suggested steps and technologies to tap. Instead of waiting for guidance, the Fresno-based board voted for its forever-and-a-day delay plan.

Also, clean-air bond money, recently passed by voters, could be tapped to replace older buses and trucks with less polluting new models. Fees on trucks serving the valley's booming warehouses and office parks could also be used to replace older, smog-spewing engines.

What will it take to correct the panel's continual cave-ins to the dirty-air lobby? Two valley state senators -- Dean Florez, D-Shafter, and Mike Machado, D-Linden -- want to remake the smog panel, adding extra seats for small cities, where elected leaders are closer to the problem, and

slots for health experts. A similar plan was shot down last year in the Legislature. The measure, SB719, is also a chance for Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to continue his push for clean air in a local setting.

For too long, the valley has allowed big interests and tame politicians to set the pollution rules. It's time for a change in leadership and direction.

[Hanford Sentinel, Commentary, Tuesday, May 1, 2007 \(12:57 p.m.\):](#)

California Focus: Is Arnold a greenhouse hypocrite?

By Thomas D. Elias

For many months, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has portrayed himself as the world's leading environmental activist, proposing clean fuel standards and trumpeting a call for the rest of the nation and the world to pass laws like California's new greenhouse gas standards, adopted last year.

But as with all politicians, it's wisest to watch what he does and not what he says. It can also be helpful to watch what his surrogates and appointees do.

So it was the other day in Oxnard, where more than 3,000 local residents turned out in a sea of deep blue "Terminate the Terminal" t-shirts urging the state Lands Commission to turn down a proposal for a gigantic liquefied natural gas import terminal on a floating platform 14 miles off the Ventura County coast. This has been billed for years as the cleanest of all possible LNG projects.

Nix it the commission did, denying the lease needed to run high-pressure pipelines across state tidelands. Short of a major revision, only the courts can now revive the plan.

LNG is natural gas drilled in remote parts of the world, cooled to a sub-freezing liquid, shipped long distances by tanker and then warmed back into a gaseous state at its destination.

Schwarzenegger doesn't sit on the Lands Commission, his aides correctly point out. But his finance director does, along with state controller John Chiang and Lt. Gov. John Garamendi, the commission chairman by virtue of his elected office. Current state finance director Mike Genest does not usually attend commission meetings, sending his own deputy, Anne Sheehan, as a surrogate.

Schwarzenegger is Sheehan's boss's boss. So in fact her vote belongs to the governor.

She cast it emphatically in favor of the LNG plant, whose environmental impact report said it would produce more than 60 tons of "reactive organic compounds" yearly. That's another term for carbon dioxide, the leading culprit among the greenhouse gases Schwarzenegger so likes to decry.

So in the same week that the governor was off to Washington and New York to speak of his dedicated opposition to greenhouse gases and carbon dioxide emissions, his chosen representative on the Lands Commission voted to okay the largest greenhouse gas producing project proposed in California in the last 15 years.

Watch out, British Conservative Party. You've bought his line and invited Arnold to speak on this issue at your annual conference, but does the governor really mean what he says?

His aides say yes. "Any reasonable person will be hard-pressed to show he has not walked the walk as an environmentalist," said Schwarzenegger press secretary Aaron McLearn the morning after the vote. McLearn then emailed a three-page list of the governor's environmental actions. "Anne Sheehan was voting for this just to further the review process along, so it could reach the governor. Her vote is in no way indicative of what the governor will do if he ever has to approve this or disapprove it."

But that can't erase what surrogate Sheehan said just before the Lands Commission voted on the planned LNG project. "I work for a governor who has backed a solar energy initiative and fights greenhouse gases," she said. "I understand the local concerns, but we need to think of the other

36 million Californians who need to turn on their lights. If we stop this now, we signal we do not want LNG in our future."

Of course, that was precisely the message the two elected members of the commission wanted to send.

Said Garamendi, who has run twice for governor, "LNG does not fill any immediate need that has been proven. The natural gas pipelines coming into California now have excess capacity and everything we know indicates there will be adequate supplies for decades. We could only okay this project if there were an overriding need, but the environmental impact report on this project says there may be 18 options for new energy other than LNG."

Even so, Schwarzenegger issued a statement within minutes of the vote affirming that "I do believe LNG should be a part of California's energy portfolio."

But the only way to get it here is via importing terminals that can't help producing vast amounts of carbon dioxide gas. So it's essentially not possible to be for LNG and against greenhouse gases at the same time.

Which makes some see Schwarzenegger as a greenhouse gas hypocrite of the highest order who tries to hide it by claiming he has so far taken no position on any specific LNG plan - even though his surrogate has.

In fact, his surrogate's vote means he's already taken a position on global warming, and not the one he wants his sycophantic admirers to understand.

Thomas D. Elias is a syndicated columnist on California issues.

[Editorial in Washington Post, May 2, 2007](#)

Editorial Roundup

The Star-Ledger of Newark (N.J.), on pollution:

The amount of pollution spewed in the air has dropped by more than half since the United States began stepping up efforts to fight smog in 1970. Those cuts occurred even as America's population grew 46 percent and the nation's energy and vehicle use rose dramatically.

But the hard-won progress will be choked off if the Bush administration gets its way. ...

A new rule proposed by the EPA last week would produce more dirty air by redefining how power plant smog is measured. The result would be old plants running longer and polluting more, sending more dirty air to New Jersey.

The proposed new rule is a shameless attempt to bypass two recent Supreme Court rulings, one coming just yesterday, rejecting looser air pollution enforcement.

The EPA is trying to sell the new rule by saying it will just make electricity production more efficient, not worsen national air quality. But the agency admits pollution could increase in some places. ...

A glance at the American Lung Association's annual review of air quality, released today, shows the magnitude of the problem. ...

The EPA should look at those numbers, take a deep breath and drop its pro-polluter rule proposal.