

Our air faring better

Reports finds quality has improved slightly

By Stacey Shepard, staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, May 6, 2007

Bakersfield got some good news/bad news earlier last week.

We were ranked No. 2 in the nation for smoggiest air behind Los Angeles by the the American Lung Association's annual State of the Air Report.

Last year, we ranked No. 1.

So did our air get better? Or did Los Angeles' air get worse?

There was a slight improvement in Bakersfield's air quality, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"In general, things are better and things will continue to improve as we move forward," said Brenda Turner, a spokeswoman for the air district. "But the way they calculate (the rankings), we'll be flunking for quite a while."

The rankings took into account the number of days when smog reached unhealthy levels.

Smog is the common name for ground-level ozone, a toxic gas formed from the emissions created by the burning of fossil fuels.

Bakersfield also dropped from No. 2 last year to No. 3 this year in the study's rankings for long-term particulate pollution, another air problem formed by tiny airborne specks spewed from tailpipes and smokestacks.

But to health officials, this year's ranking continues to spell bad news for public health.

"A small improvement doesn't mean our air is clean enough," said Sharon Borradori, a spokeswoman for the American Lung Association's office in Bakersfield. "Cleaner is not clean enough. What we really need is air that doesn't make people sick."

Common questions about Kern County's air pollution

Does our pollution come from the Bay Area and Los Angeles?

Many people think our dirty air is a result of pollution created by our neighbors in more populated areas to the north and south. But studies conducted several years ago by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District show otherwise.

Fumes from the San Francisco area account for just 7 percent of pollution in the southern San Joaquin Valley, according to Scott Nester, planning director for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Almost none of our pollution is believed to waft in from the Los Angeles area. That's because Tejon Pass, with an elevation upwards of 4,000 feet, is high enough to serve as a barrier for air transport.

Minus what the Bay Area contributes, the remaining 93 percent of our pollution is homemade or comes from cities north of us, such as Fresno and Stockton, Nester said.

Why is pollution so bad here?

The Central Valley's stagnant air, hot temperatures and fume-trapping geography make it a pollution factory with no outlet -- particularly when it comes to smog.

It's these conditions, not the amount of emissions being pumped into our air, that contribute to our bad air quality, Nester said.

In fact, the San Joaquin Valley has less smog-forming emissions in our air than the Bay Area, but the valley had 86 violations of the national smog standards last year, while they had 12.

In a nutshell, smog forms when sunlight and heat cause emissions from vehicles, factories and other sources to react in the air. As a result, smog is generally a summertime problem. In the winter, the same emissions that form smog contribute to another type of pollution known as particulates, tiny specs of dust, soot and other chemicals that linger in the still air.

What are the biggest sources?

By far, mobile sources such as cars, trucks, tractors, construction equipment and trains, are the main source of pollution in the San Joaquin Valley. Combined, they make up 80 percent of the pollution in the valley, air district officials said. Other major sources include boilers and internal combustion engines used at hospitals, schools, prisons, refineries and food processing facilities; agricultural irrigation pumps; and oil and gas production.

What are the health effects?

Smog is made up of a corrosive gas that can cause chemical burns and scarring of lung tissue, according to the American Lung Association. Symptoms include shortness of breath, chest pains, wheezing and coughing. Smog can also aggravate lung diseases such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Recent studies also have found that breathing smoggy air, even for a short time, can increase the risk of dying early.

The tiny particles that are a wintertime problem can lodge deep in the lungs aggravating respiratory and heart conditions. Recent research has linked particle pollution to lung cancer, asthma attacks, heart attacks and strokes, as well as premature death.

Most smog-polluted metropolitan areas:

1. Los Angeles
2. Bakersfield
3. Visalia
4. Fresno
5. Houston
6. Merced
7. Dallas
8. Sacramento
9. Baton Rouge
10. New York City

Chance to shape Kern at hand

Community forums this month to solicit public input on general plan

By James Burger, staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Monday, May 7, 2007

This month the people of Bakersfield will have a powerful chance to change the future of their city.

People will be able to control [the air they breathe](#), shape the roads they drive and decide what kinds of homes or shops are built in their neighborhoods.

They will shape how this city will look when it grows up.

Or they can sit back and let politicians and bureaucrats do it for them.

The city of Bakersfield and county of Kern officials are preparing to revise the Metropolitan Bakersfield General Plan.

"Everyone is talking about the overall quality of life here in Bakersfield," said Kern County Supervisor Michael Rubio. The general plan is "the road map for our future. It's our road map to attain a quality of life that is what people want here in Kern County."

The city and county are asking for residents' input at a series of public meetings to be held across the community in May.

"We've outpaced our growth the last couple years. We know there are attitudes and concerns about how the city has been growing," said city of Bakersfield planner Jim Eggert.

Vision 2020 -- the local nonprofit group that helped thousands of local people create a vision of a future Bakersfield filled with trees and pedestrian paths beneath clear skies -- is hosting the meetings.

"It's a unique experience to have public agencies asking private organizations like Vision 2020 to participate in a partnership on something that is as important to our community's future as the Metropolitan General Plan update," said Sheryl Barbich, one of the primary leaders of Vision 2020.

She said the meetings -- the first of which will be held today in east Bakersfield -- are organized to be "open, inclusive, everyone come on down and play" events.

Eggert said he knows people think government will ignore their opinions. That's why Vision 2020 is involved.

Meetings won't be boring lectures by some dry bureaucrat, he said. Instead, people will break into small groups to have free-form discussions about Bakersfield's goods and bads.

"Everyone is equal. You can speak up. You can give your opinions," Eggert said.

Barbich notes that a chance to change the general plan is a huge opportunity for common people to turn their thoughts into day-by-day changes.

"What makes this especially important is that the ideas that the community presents will actually translate into law," Barbich said.

Rubio said people complain about sprawling growth and the lack of green space in Bakersfield.

Now those people need to step up and participate in a forum where their opinions can make a difference.

"There is not a more vital portion of the process than the town hall meetings," Rubio said. "That's where we get to hear firsthand from the people who live in the community."

The general plan is the legal blueprint of growth in both the city and county areas of Bakersfield.

It controls where homes, industrial plants, shopping malls and apartments can be built.

And it is one of the most active documents in local government.

It is consulted every time someone wants to put a mobile home on their property or convert the family farm into a crop of new homes.

It controls the actions of planning officials, City Council members, county supervisors and development companies.

Last time the plan was edited, in 2002, a sparse collection of environmentalists, developers and "smart growth" leaders were the only people who got involved.

Local politicians approved a general plan that allowed the city's recent growth explosion. They knew when they voted for it that the plan they approved would make the air worse, clog local streets and freeways and consume massive sweeps of farmland.

"As quality of life continues to degrade, we throw up our hands and say 'unavoidable impacts,'" city resident Terrie Stoller said at a 2002 meeting on the plan. "We are repeating the scenario of Los Angeles in the last century without the benefit of an ocean breeze."

Politicians voted for the plan anyway.

And the city, said Rubio, has paid a price.

"If folks would have been involved in the process the last time around I don't think we would have all the dairies and sludge operations," he said.

New rules set for ag engines

By June Woods, The Madera Tribune
Thursday, May 3, 2007

New regulations released by the California Air Resources Board that impact farmers and ranchers in California won't have much of an impact in the Central Valley since rules here are already more stringent than they are statewide.

CARB is requiring all stationary diesel agricultural engines greater than 50 horsepower be replaced or retrofitted to meet air compliance rules.

According to George Heinen, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District supervisor for rule development, the district has been working aggressively to replace the higher polluting engines since 1995. "In 1995, we replaced half the non-tier engines," he said. "I'm hoping now another third to 50 percent (of those left) have been replaced."

Engines are ranked according to how clean they are. Non-certified engines manufactured prior to 1996 are ranked as Tier 0, while new engines available today are ranked as Tier 3. Tier 4 engines are not yet available, but will begin to come out in 2011.

Heinen said that although it's sometimes costly to replace or retrofit the engines, there is a program that many farmers and ranchers have taken advantage of to subsidize the costs.

"We want to make sure they're not waiting until the last minute," he said. "Once we got the word out, we had quite a few come in."

Financial assistance and incentive programs are available to help farmers and ranchers comply with the new rules, and farmers are advised to take advantage of them now. To be eligible for the Carl Moyer Program for engine replacements or retrofits, growers need to apply more than three years before the proposed compliance deadline. Those operating in the Pacific Gas & Electric or Southern California Edison service areas need to apply now for reduced agricultural electric rates

and other benefits in exchange for converting to electric motors. Local air district agricultural assistance programs and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Environmental Quality Incentive Program may be other potential sources for funding assistance. The local district offers funding through the Emission Reduction Incentive Program.

Heinen also noted that many in the Valley changed their agriculture practices long ago. "They have been pretty proactive about cleaning the air. It's their air; they breathe it, too," he said.

CARB hopes it can get the word out for farmers and ranchers not to make any engine purchases without being aware of the new engine standards, so as not to replace an engine and then have to turn around and do so again in a few years.

The California Farm Bureau Federation will be working with county Farm Bureaus, the local air districts and CARB to get the detailed engine information to the agricultural community as soon as possible. CFBF has made suggested changes and asked for extensions on all the compliance dates.

"We (CARB and SJVAPCD) worked together in 2005 and 2006 to make the (two sets of) rules compatible," Heinen said. "And (we are) looking at them to make sure they're feasible."

The new engine standard requirements use the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency off-road engine certification standards to determine if and when engines need to be replaced or upgraded. CARB is considering allowing remote engines in federal ozone and particulate matter attainment areas that are more than one-half mile from a receptor (business, residence, school, etc.) to be exempt from being replaced or upgraded, but would require new registration and reporting requirements. Spark-ignited engines using gasoline or natural gas, wind machines and mobile engines such as tractors are not subject to the new rule.

The regulations are intended to reduce diesel exhaust emissions for the estimated 8,600 stationary engines operating to power irrigation pumps.

CARB is requiring the majority of pre-1996, non-certified stationary diesel engines to be replaced by the cleaner Tier 3 (2006) or Tier 4 (2011) versions by 2011. Certified engines in the Tier 1 (1996) and Tier 2 (2003) categories will need to be replaced with Tier 4 engines by 2015 or 12 years after installation, whichever is later. More stringent requirements are being considered for engines located within one-half a mile of a residence or school.

The most common way for farmers and ranchers to comply with the new emissions rules is to replace old engines with new, cleaner diesel engines or electric motors. Using alternative fuels such as ethanol or biodiesel is another compliance option, although the details of how that would be put in place need to be further planning.

Implementation of the rule will not likely occur at the local air district level until later in 2007.

Additional information and a copy of the complete rule as presented to the ARB are available at www.arb.ca.gov/diesel/ag/inuse_ag.htm, or by contacting Barbara Cook at (916) 323-0440 or bcook@arb.ca.gov.

Central Valley water board sets new waste rules for dairies

By The Associated Press

The Madera Tribune, Saturday, May 05, 2007

RANCHO CORDOVA - Water regulators unanimously approved new rules that will require nearly 1,600 dairies Central Valley to get wastewater permits for the first time.

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board voted Thursday to adopt guidelines aimed at controlling the manure waste produced by the region's cows.

Farmers now have to submit reports on soil and pond conditions and will have to install wells to monitor groundwater pollution. Monitoring will be phased in at the rate of 100 to 200 dairies per year, starting with dairies suspected of having high levels of nitrates, which have been linked to cancer and a blood disorder.

Ranchers said the regulations were too costly and could put small dairies out of business.

To comply, it will cost a 1,000-cow dairy as much as \$56,000 initially and as much as \$36,000 annually, officials said

Environmentalists said the rules don't go far enough to protect the rural, low-income communities that may face contaminated drinking water from dairy waste.

The Department of Food and Agriculture submitted a written testimony saying it is unfair to require all dairies to install monitoring wells when contamination could be coming from other sources.

Clovis retail site report done Traffic, air issues in Wal-Mart-anchored center.

By Marc Benjamin / The Fresno Bee
Monday, May 7, 2007

A long-awaited report has been released on the environmental effects of what would be Clovis' second-largest shopping center, and critics now have another chance to fight the project.

The two-volume, 1,000-page report cites traffic and air quality as significant issues that are unavoidable.

It says that due to increased traffic, the effects of the project would exceed San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District thresholds for reactive organic gases and nitrogen oxides, both precursors to ozone.

Results of traffic modeling for the project showed that it would exceed air quality guidelines in 2008, its first year open.

The 500,000-square-foot center -- which in Clovis would be second in size to the Sierra Vista Mall -- is expected to attract 19,000 vehicles per day to the Clovis and Herndon avenues site.

The center's anchor store would be a 228,000-square-foot Wal-Mart Supercenter that would include a supermarket and be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The project includes an 88,000-square-foot Kohl's.

The City Council approved the project in 2003 but was later sued by a community group affiliated with Save Mart Supermarkets.

In 2004, a judge said the city relied on old environmental documents in approving the project. The city was using information from 1988 and 1993 environmental reports.

The judge recommended the city prepare a new environmental report to address issues raised by such a large retail project.

The report's release triggered a 45-day comment period that ends June 11, said David Fey, deputy planner for the city of Clovis.

After the comment period ends and city officials reply to comments, it will be up to the Clovis Planning Commission and City Council to certify the report.

No hearing dates are set.

With traffic fees that would be paid for the project, the city would add new lanes to the affected streets -- Herndon, Clovis and Sunnyside avenues. About 35% of the traffic is projected from Herndon, 28% from Highway 168, 25% from Clovis and 6% from Sunnyside, the report said. The rest would come from other streets.

Lawyers for the opponents, the Association for Sensible and Informed Planning, said last week that they had not read the environmental document.

During testimony in front of the Clovis City Council three years ago, concerns were raised about the opening of the center's grocery store. One complaint about the project was that there already are too many supermarkets in Clovis. Another was that markets could close if the Wal-Mart grocery opened.

In response, the city required a conditional-use permit for new grocery stores and placed a five-year moratorium on new supermarkets, which is in effect until March.

Since 2004, three Clovis supermarkets -- a Vons, Albertsons and Ralphs -- have closed. A Winco store opened, and the Save Mart that was across the street from the proposed Wal-Mart moved a mile east to the former Ralphs site at Fowler and Herndon avenues.

Residents also suggested that the Wal-Mart store on Shaw Avenue would be forced to close.

But Jerry Cook, owner of the Shaw Avenue center, said Wal-Mart will remain open on Shaw Avenue.

"Wal-Mart put a lot of money into remodeling its store, and they recently bought the property from me that their store is on," Cook said. "They have told me the store does fabulous and have said to me over and over how committed they are to that site."

He said he supports the Herndon Avenue project, saying it will "be fabulous for the city of Clovis."

The 44-acre property is zoned for a large commercial center and is just east of Highway 168.

"The demand is there for the retailers, and we think this project is going to be an asset to the community," said David Paynter, the project's developer. "We believe [the environmental report] is a good document and the city has worked hard on it."

In addition to Wal-Mart and Kohl's, Bed Bath & Beyond, Shoe Pavilion, Ross, Old Navy, Petco, Dress Barn, Jamba Juice and Pick Up Stix, a Chinese restaurant, have signed leases, Paynter said.

The center is about 90% leased out, Paynter said, but no date has been set to break ground.

New dairy rules not enough, environmentalists say **Argument centers around waste water dumping procedures**

By Jake Henshaw, Sacramento Bureau
Tulare Advance-Register, Saturday, May 5, 2007

SACRAMENTO - Tulare County dairy farmers face a new world of regulation.

Rules adopted this week to protect Central Valley water from waste produced by milk cows will require 1,550 existing dairies to develop plans for storing and using manure on fields, to drill wells to monitor groundwater quality and to maintain extensive reports.

"It's a big step forward for everybody," said J.P. Cativiela of the Community Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship, a dairy-industry coalition.

But he and Michael Marsh, the chief executive officer of Western United Dairywomen, warned that the new rules may squeeze some farmers to the breaking point.

"It's good we finally have a permit," Marsh said, but added that he worries "if you have a permit that forces you out of business."

The rules aren't a big enough step for environmentalists, who said that as a practical matter the new rules maintain an unacceptable status quo.

"The decision is a license to pollute," said Brent Newell of the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment.

Laurel Firestone, an attorney with the Community Water Center, a Visalia-based nonprofit, added in a statement that the new permit system "gives a green light for dairies to continue dumping highly contaminated wastewater into our drinking water sources."

A primary concern is that dairy waste may pollute water with nitrogen compounds that some evidence indicates may pose health threats, particularly for infants.

The long awaited new rules adopted by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board represent the latest step in extending the state and nation's air and water quality rules to the dairy industry.

Historically the industry generally operated under a waiver to the water quality rules, though they faced penalties for certain actions, such as discharging waste into waterways.

The new rules now will require dairy farmers to develop broad plans to manage waste so that it doesn't contaminate equipment or escape the farm, possibly using berms, storage ponds with adequate space for rainwater, and building roofs designed to route rain away from dry or wet waste storage areas.

Farmers also must have management plans if they use waste residue to grow crops for animal feed so that, as Cativiela said, "you put the right amount on your fields at the right time."

He said the most controversial issue for farmers is the requirement that they install monitoring wells, at a cost \$20,000 to \$30,000 annually - about half the estimated total cost of the new regulations for dairies.

"This [well] won't fix anything, it will only tell us what is going on," Cativiela said.

Farmers, he said, would prefer to put the money into improving use of waste residue for crops.

Newell complained that the regional water board isn't requiring existing dairies to line waste-holding ponds, but instead allowing them to continue with clay lining at a level that he said already exists in the valley and doesn't protect groundwater.

"The standard is, dig a hole in the ground and put waste into that," he said.

Studies cited by the water board in a report found many dairies in the valley have contaminated groundwater, including 88 in Tulare County, where at least one nitrate-polluted well is found at 63 percent of the dairies.

The board-cited studies also concluded the greatest threat from such pollution comes not from storage ponds, however, but from the fields where the waste material is used.

While liners may be considered as a remedy for particular problems at existing dairies, they'll be required for new ponds, driving up costs from \$100,000 to \$800,000, Marsh said.

"They just add to the cost rather than add to the protection," he said.

Edward Landau, assistant executive officer of the regional water board, said the new rules will be phased in to coordinate with training sessions for dairy farmers.

The monitoring wells, for example, will be built at a pace of about 100 to 200 a year, beginning with the highest risk dairies.

The new rules apply to dairies in operation prior to Oct. 17, 2005, and all the required changes must be in place by July 2012.

Peninsula Packaging Plans Expansions,

More Jobs, Solar, Fuel Cell Projects

By Miles Shuper

Valley Voice Newspaper, May 7, 2007

Exeter - With an ultimate goal of generating all its power requirements Peninsula Packaging near Exeter again is looking to the sun in addition to exploring the option of fuel cells fed by ethanol as it plans an expansion which would create an additional 60 jobs. The Exeter-based company already employs 210.

Also this week the company announced it has begun production in a second plant in Wilson, N.C.

Ed Byrne, Peninsula's chief executive officer, said the North Carolina plant is starting with eight employees and within six weeks expects to employ 30. "Within one year, we plan to have 100 production people there," he told the *Voice*.

Peninsula Packaging is an industry leader in the manufacture of food and industrial packaging products many of which are custom made for its clients which include delis, convenience stores, bakeries, confectionaries and shippers of fruits, vegetables and other perishables.

About six weeks ago The Southern California Gas Co. made a ceremonial presentation of a \$3.4 million check marking the incentive rebate for the installation of a 10-acre solar farm containing nearly 4,000 panels to generate 1-megawatt of power. And this week, the company announced a building expansion of 100,000 square feet in 2008. "With this expansion, we foresee another 60

jobs and another photovoltaic array. The next solar farm should match the existing site in terms of electricity generation," Byrne said.

Another indication the company is serious about clean power generation is its plans for using ethanol. "We are exploring the option of fuel cells fed by ethanol. One of our goals," Byrne explained, "would be to generate all of our power requirements with clean, sustainable energy."

Several weeks ago, Byrne said the existing solar panels had generated about 400,000 kilowatt hours of electricity despite short hours of sunshine. "As the days lengthened," he said, we will generate more electricity. At that time the 10-acre site was generating about 7,000 kilowatts per day and he expects that by June the solar farm will crank out nearly 12,000 kilowatt hours per day.

Another advantage of the solar-generated power is that power is generated during daylight hours when the regional power grid is under the most stress.

There is no doubt that Byrne and his company take clean energy seriously and is helping set a trend a conscientious approach to clean manufacturing processes.

"It appears that our customers, the supermarkets, have received a lot of pressure from consumers to look at alternative packaging media. The consumers are forcing us all to be more conscientious about how we impact the earth," he said.

A further indication of the firm's social and environmental concerns is that many of its products contain as much as 70 percent recycled drink bottle scrap collected from municipal waste. The recycled drink bottles are cleaned and washed then blended into Peninsula's manufacturing system to produce high quality packing products. Many of its products are also recyclable.

Becoming energy self-sufficient is more than economics, Byrne stresses in talking about the new solar and fuel cell projects. "Despite all the talk of the economic benefits of the solar installation, the real advantages are to the community at large. [Air quality](#) is a real issue to all of us in the Valley."

He estimated that the current solar farm has already saved 109 tons of CO₂ which would have gone into the air if normal sources of power generation were produced by the utility companies. He said, "It is equally important we have made a significant step in reducing our share of the nation's dependence on foreign oil."

Group Announces Dairy Energy Park

Valley Voice Newspaper, May 7, 2007

Tulare - Plans revealed several weeks ago for a dairy energy park have moved forward with the announcement that a company has agreed to purchase 900 acres between Tulare and Corcoran to build a manure-to-energy power plant side-by-side with a proposed ethanol plant. The company, HBS BioEnergy DDG Corcoran, is a joint venture headed by Len Chapman of Visalia.

Chapman told the Voice that the company has agreed to pay \$12 million to John Valov whose land is near Waukena to build the energy park with escrow closing in 18 months. "That's how much time we will need for all the approvals," says Chapman who says the company has been in discussion with the county on doing a full EIR on the innovative project.

There's high hopes for the project that will take manure from surrounding dairies and convert it in a biomass power plant that in turn will power the adjacent 60 million gallon ethanol facility.

Altogether Chapman predicts the value of the project is over \$150 million. Once the project is built out look for employment over 50, he says.

“We believe that this Dairy Energy Park will put the San Joaquin Valley on the map for the entire nation—setting a new standard for integrated technologies,” Mr. Chapman noted. “Dairying is an economic powerhouse in the Valley, but now we can show the nation how dairying can also be a sustainable industry in this new age of environmental concerns.”

HBS BioEnergy is in the business of biofuel production, with a team focusing on locating, constructing and operating biofuel facilities using cutting-edge technologies. The company has offices in Fresno.

Chapman says the site is located along the BNSF rail line that runs between Corcoran and Hanford and will bring in corn to supply the feedstock of the ethanol plant. “We hope to source more corn from California,” he says and believes “we can grow more corn in the state like we used to.”

Chapman says he looks to work with the dairy industry in sharing the benefits of the plan. “We want it to be more than telling them to bring us their manure.”

Dairymen are under the gun to “manage” their manure waste to reduce emissions in the valley's air. Such a plant could help them do that. Likewise, says Chapman, the country needs both alternative energy and ethanol for traditional fuel and this project could help meet that demand.

“We think it makes sense to make the ethanol where it will be used—in California, he says. Already the county has two ethanol plants—one operating in Goshen and one under construction in Tipton. In Kings County, a proposed ethanol plant in the Hanford Industrial Park is moving forward as well.

The parties opened an escrow account on April 17, 2007, and HBS Corcoran has made an initial deposit. The purchase agreement calls for deposits in the aggregate amount of up to \$690,000 within 18 months from the opening of escrow. The deposits are nonrefundable except under certain conditions, are to be applied to the purchase price, and will constitute liquidated damages in the event of HBS Corcoran's default under the purchase agreement.

“This model for a complete vertically integrated project has never been implemented in the renewable fuel business to our knowledge,” noted Claude Luster, president of HBS BioEnergy. “This model pairs expertise from closely related but diverse industries, with the end result that the biomass fuels could provide energy cost savings of 50 to 80 percent,” Mr. Luster explained. “This project will benefit the Valley, and help address the environmental issues here, by processing the waste to reduce emissions and practically eliminating water quality concerns normally associated with dairies.”

Chapman heads Dairy Development Group, who assists dairymen in planning, permitting, building and operating their dairies, with a focus on environmental mitigation and compliance.

What's New

Valley Voice Newspaper, May 7, 2007

A German steel maker is looking for a local site to build a valley steel mill melting scrap metal to make rebar used in the construction business. The unnamed company is looking at sites throughout Tulare County. The plant could employ 100 people. It would need to meet air district regulations considered the big hurdle for the project along with the need for considerable power.

The company has operations in Germany. Fueling the plan is big demand for rebar used in the building and highway construction business in California and plentiful supply of scrap metal that can be reused.

Builder calls railroad key to fixing problems

By TIM MORAN

Modesto Bee, Monday, May 7, 2007

Putting together a big real estate project is like working a jigsaw puzzle, according to Gerry Kamilos.

There are lots of pieces to sort, study and mesh to make a complete picture.

The pieces he sees in the Crows Landing air facility project include:

The large number of West Side residents commuting over the Altamont Pass to jobs in the East Bay

Rapid population growth that will require the creation of thousands of jobs

Congestion at the Port of Oakland and surrounding freeways that limits the port's ability to move products east and west

Air quality problems in the valley

He believes his short-haul rail proposal between the port and Crows Landing is the piece that completes the puzzle.

"What excites me about it, I can see all the elements to make this project successful. They are there," Kamilos said. "This project can hit many different agendas. It not only will have a positive impact on Stanislaus County, it will have regional, and to some degree, statewide, benefit.

"It's very dynamic and exciting."

The Crows Landing project hasn't left the drawing board. Kamilos just started negotiating with county officials to reach an agreement to develop the land, a process that could take as long as a year.

In the meantime, Kamilos has thousands of acres of real estate projects under way in several counties in Northern California.

Some are residential, some are business parks and at least one is a planned community.

How does a developer keep all those projects moving while pitching a new project in Stanislaus County?

With a good staff, an eye for detail and an organized method of attack, Kamilos said.

Identifying key issues early is critical, he said — first, technical issues such as transportation, sewer and drainage.

"Then you need to identify the political, community issues," Kamilos said. "What's the desire of the community, what elements of the plan are anticipated, what are the inherent needs to be filled?"

The next step is figuring out how the project will get done.

"That's where our strength is," he said. "We always keep in mind what's needed to implement the project, to move forward to construction and complete buildout."

A final step is cost management over time, Kamilos said.

"Too many times a large project moves forward, and because of poor planning and not understanding the timing of building out, sometimes multiple decades and through several economic cycles, it is not successful," he said. "You need to phase it so the original intent doesn't change with changing economic times."

Kamilos credits the staff he has in Stockton and Gold River, near Sacramento, with keeping his projects on track.

"You basically create an infrastructure, an organization to make sure projects move forward," he said. "As ones are completed, you begin new projects. We have a really great team of professionals that assist me to manage the projects."

But he admits that he is never far from the details.

"I am, by nature, a hands-on person. I want to make sure nothing slips through the cracks," Kamilos said.

And to make sure each of those jigsaw pieces fits smoothly into the picture.

Focus on Ag: Dairymen named to leadership program

Area almond grower profiled on Web site

By JOHN HOLLAND

Modesto Bee, Saturday, May 5, 2007

Four dairy farmers from the Northern San Joaquin Valley have been named to the latest class of the California Dairy Leaders Program. They are Luis Borba of Lumar Dairy Farms near Turlock, G. Patrick Johnston of Rocking S Dairy near Modesto, Ray Prock Jr. of Ray-Lin Dairy near Denair, and Ezequiel Correia Jr. of EzeView Dairy near Gustine. Over the next year, the six-member class will learn about dairy economics, media relations, state and federal legislative processes, environmental issues and other topics. The program is sponsored by Western United Dairymen, based in Modesto.

Livingston-area almond grower Lee Moren is among the farmers profiled on a new Web site about environmentally friendly practices. The U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service created the site to show what farmers can do to protect wildlife, water, air and other resources. Moren has used federal money to shred rather than burn his prunings, [preventing air pollution](#) while enriching the soil. He also protects the soil by growing clover and vetch between the tree rows. His and other stories are at www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/news/stories.

SoCal group wants president to declare pollution emergency

The Associated Press

Contra Costa Times, Friday, May 4, 2007

LOS ANGELES- President Bush and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger should declare states of emergency in Southern California because it has some of the nation's dirtiest air, a local government group said.

Air pollution accounts for more than 5,400 premature deaths in the region annually, according to the Southern California Association of Governments. On Thursday, the group's 71-member board voted to urge the emergency declarations as a way of tightening federal and state laws that regulate cars, trucks, ships and trains.

Those sources account for much of Southern California's smog.

"When we have a hurricane or earthquake, they declare a state of emergency," said Hasan Ikhata, SCAG director of planning and policy. "These numbers are out of this world so this is significant enough that they should do the same thing."

SCAG includes local lawmakers from Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura and Imperial counties.

The region's anti-smog agency is facing a 2015 federal deadline to cut what is known as fine-particle pollution and wants to eliminate about 71 tons of pollution daily, said Sam Atwood, spokesman for the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

Legislature debating school bus clean up money

By April Castro, Associated Press Writer
Contra Costa Times, Saturday, May 5, 2007

AUSTIN- Texas drivers pay millions of dollars in fees every year so the state can clean up environmentally harmful vehicle emissions.

But lawmakers have been diverting the revenue, leaving just a fraction of the money—collected through vehicle sales, registration and inspection fees—for its intended purpose.

And not a dime of it is spent on the Clean School Bus program, a grant program adopted by the Legislature in 2005 as part of the emissions reduction initiative. The program was designed to give schools in the state's most polluted counties the money to clean up aging bus fleets.

Despite the program, most of Texas' 35,000 school buses are spewing dangerous soot that gets trapped in bus cabins where children ride and which studies have linked to lung cancer, asthma and other respiratory ailments.

"There's money sitting in Austin ... that was collected specifically for this type of cleanup effort," said Betin Santos, an air quality specialist for Environmental Defense. "We need the Legislature to see that this is one of the most tangible air quality projects it could fund. They need to free up the money needed to protect the health of our kids."

Through the Texas Emissions Reduction Program, almost \$900 million will be available to lawmakers over the next two-year budget period, including unspent balances from previous years, according to estimates from the comptroller's office. Lawmakers plan to spend about a third of that for pollution reductions programs in the upcoming budget. A tiny amount has been earmarked for the Clean School Bus Program in 2008-09.

The Clean Air Task Force in Boston has tested air quality inside school buses using electronic monitors placed in students backpack. The group found that diesel exhaust levels inside buses are about five times greater than outside. Researchers believe that emissions from the tailpipes and the engine crankcases of older buses are drawn into the cabin through the doors and windows.

A major player in the state budget writing process isn't convinced.

"The problem is their science is not very good," said Republican Rep. Warren Chisum, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. "The cabins of the school buses are pretty sealed up. They may be coming in through the windows if they're open and stuff."

The House budget proposal, largely crafted by Chisum, would allocate \$1 million to the Clean School Bus Program over the 2008-9 budget period. That's about enough to fit one bus in each of the state's 1,200 school districts with an emissions-reducing filtration system.

Chisum said the state can decide later whether the program is worthwhile. "Why would you go spend hundreds of millions of dollars before you had any idea if what you're doing really made a difference?" he asked.

The Senate version of the budget set aside \$15 million to clean up school buses. But the final budget passed by the Legislature will likely include a number somewhere in the middle.

"To totally clean up every school bus in the state would be somewhere in neighborhood of \$60 million," said Rep. Scott Hochberg, a Houston Democrat who has proposed legislation that would expand the number of counties eligible for the grants.

About five percent of the state's school bus fleet have been fitted with emissions-reducing filtration systems, according to Environmental Defense.

In Houston, the state's largest school district, 14 percent of the 946-bus fleet have been fitted with filter systems, school district officials said.

Newer school buses are made to meet stricter emissions standards, but about a third of the state's school bus fleet is over 10 years old, an age that means emissions are significantly higher, said Larry Soward, commissioner of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

That's because diesel buses are considered workhorses, that can last 20 years or more, Soward said.

"I, for one, don't think we can wait two decades," he said.

Green versus green: Clean air, cash clash

Opponent decrying pollution; advocates point to job growth

By TOM DAVIES - THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Modesto Bee, Sunday, May 6, 2007

PORTLAND, Ind. — The ethanol refineries sprouting across the Corn Belt typically are touted as desperately needed economic engines for rural towns, a boon for U.S. farmers and a way to ease the heavy dependence on foreign oil.

When James Clear hears the word ethanol, he instead thinks about the tons of pollutants that will come from the 50-acre industrial complex being built on the edge of this eastern Indiana town.

"It would just kill me looking out on our playground there and picturing our kids breathing that air," said Clear, a chiropractor who sold the house on family land after learning that a South Dakota company planned to build an ethanol plant a half-mile away.

Ethanol has long been touted as a cleaner-burning alternative to gasoline and it carries the image of an environmentally friendly fuel because it's derived from plants and plant waste. Experts say replacing gas with ethanol blends will reduce greenhouse gases and help the fight against global warming.

But the more than 200 U.S. refineries in operation or under construction — mostly in a swath from Nebraska and Kansas east into Ohio — also emit thousands of tons of pollutants a year, including nitrogen oxide, a key element of smog.

'Darkening the skies'

Increased use of ethanol — proposed by President Bush in his January State of the Union address — could raise smog levels about 1 percent in some areas of the country, according to Environmental Protection Agency officials.

In early April, however, the EPA increased how much pollutants ethanol plants can emit before facing tougher restrictions, prompting concern among some environmental groups.

"I think word is getting around that ethanol refineries can be a heck of a problem if you live near them," said Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch. "You're taking areas that are generally not seeing a lot of pollution now and darkening the skies."

A recent study by a Stanford University professor concluded that 200 more people each year would die from respiratory problems related to ozone, the unseen component of smog, if all vehicles in the United States ran on a mostly ethanol fuel blend by 2020.

The study also suggested that areas prone to ozone problems, such as the Northeast and Los Angeles, would see increases in ozone levels under that scenario.

Critics of the study, including the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Renewable Fuels Association ethanol lobby group, said ethanol is better than traditional gasoline by any measurement.

Brian Jennings, executive vice president of industry group American Coalition for Ethanol in Sioux Falls, S.D., said areas with histories of using 10 percent ethanol blends have shown air-quality improvements.

"Every real-world example that we have of ethanol replacing straight gasoline in the market, whether it is a city or an entire state, the experience has resulted in cleaner air," Jennings said.

'No fuel is perfect'

Still, Jennings acknowledges concerns about emissions.

"No fuel is perfect, and we would be the first to admit that ethanol-blended fuels are going to emit things just like any other fuel does," he said.

Environmental groups haven't taken a strong stand on ethanol, which can create challenges for plant opponents, said Christa Westerberg, an attorney who has represented plant foes in Wisconsin.

"There is no massive PR machine working to point out the downsides of ethanol, like there is on the other side," Westerberg said. "You have ADM (Archer Daniels Midland Co.) running commercials or GM (General Motors Corp.) running commercials about how ethanol is green and is going to help save us from our energy problems."

Don Villwock, president of the Indiana Farm Bureau, grows corn and soybeans on about 3,000 acres in Knox County. He also is a steering committee member for the national 25 X '25 Project — named for the goal of having 25 percent of the country's energy coming from renewable sources such as wind, solar and biofuels by 2025.

Villwock said he thinks the ethanol industry is "getting better and better every day" in having cleaner emissions from its plants and largely is welcomed by communities where economic growth has lagged.

"It is great to see an industry come to rural America that actually pays a good wage scale," Villwock said.

Portland Mayor Bruce Hosier said city and county leaders worked for a couple of years to persuade South Dakota-based Poet LLC to build its \$175 million, 40-worker plant here.

"I have a very strong comfort level that this will be a very safe and productive project for our community," Hosier said. "It is difficult to always land those 500 to 1,000-job industries, so the chance to land 40, 50, 100 jobs is always important."

Poet's Portland refinery has a state permit for annual emissions of more than 450 tons of various pollutants. Its levels are low enough to classify the plant, which is a typical size for the industry, as a minor source of pollution under federal regulations.

Bob Berens, Poet's site development director, said the plant features equipment that removes at least 97 percent of potential pollution.

"The remaining 3 percent or 2 percent, really, is a component of natural gas usage that we have supplying the plant. So the ethanol itself is not a polluter," Berens said. "We don't have the odor, there's not as much noise. It's really a nice, clean operation."

Wind vs. the winged

Are bird deaths from the Altamont windmills disrupting the ecosystem?

By Alex Breitler - Record Staff Writer

Stockton Record, Monday, May 07, 2007

The Altamont windmills spin fast this time of year. So, too, spin the minds of scientists charged with weighing the pros and cons of wind energy.

A congressionally mandated study released last week says that as more states attempt to harness the wind, government should control more closely where windmills are allowed to sprout - perhaps saving birds and bats from being chopped up by blades as big as airplane wings.

Wind energy has quadrupled since 2000, the study by the National Academy of Sciences says. Turbines can be found in 36 states; the larger windmills can produce enough energy in eight hours to power a household for one year.

But there are consequences. The Altamont's 5,400 turbines kill more than 1,000 birds a year, according to some estimates, including golden eagles and hawks. The hills of the Bay Area are home to the largest concentration of golden eagles in the world.

There is no easy solution, the scientists said. The study, said to be the largest of its kind to date, presents no conclusion regarding what's more important: clean energy or wildlife.

But it does allow regulators - and the public - to decide.

Wind energy accounts for about 1 percent of the nation's power supply; that number could increase to anywhere from 2 percent to 7 percent by 2020, the scientists found.

Theoretically, this means less reliance on power plants that emit greenhouse gases and contribute to global warming. The scientists predict wind power will offset 4.5 percent of the carbon dioxide that those power plants otherwise would emit.

"It's 100 percent clean, free and inexhaustible," said Randall Swisher, director of the American Wind Energy Association. He was not involved in the study.

Rick Koebbe, president of Tracy-based PowerWorks, says the Altamont wind farm would save 98 lives over 20 years, and prevent 3,197 asthma attacks and 17,200 days of lost work productivity. And cleaner air is good for birds, too, said Koebbe, whose company is one of about a dozen operating Altamont windmills.

In an experimental project, these companies turned their turbines off for two months during the past two years to see how birds would react. They still smacked into the windmills, Koebbe said.

"The environmental impact (of bird deaths) is far outweighed by the health benefits of this renewable resource," he said.

The study released last week says there is no evidence that wind farms measurably harm bird populations nationwide, with one possible exception: the Altamont. That's because the birds killed here are raptors, predators with an important role in the ecosystem.

In the 1980s, when the first Altamont windmills were built, there was little thought about birds. Even today, there are virtually no federal requirements on where wind farms should exist, the study says, although there are laws protecting eagles and other migratory birds.

"We don't expect the impacts ever to be zero," said Julia Levin, state policy director for California Audubon. "With smart, informed siting decisions, they can be much lower. ... I think everyone wants to avoid having another Altamont."

A lawsuit over the bird deaths was settled in recent months; windmill operators must work to replace the smaller, older turbines with larger, more-efficient ones, though Koebbe said that effort is hampered by a number of factors, including a worldwide shortage of turbines.

Would tighter regulations have made a difference when the first Altamont windmills were built?

It's not fair to guess, said Paul Risser, a University of Oklahoma researcher and director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, who headed the recent study.

"But our guidelines would have asked whether siting a facility in an area where there are lots of raptors would in fact be a good decision," he said.

A number of factors make it hard to determine if wind power is worth it. Studies are lacking on wind farm comparisons and turbine designs, the scientists say; and the policies of local and state governments vary across the country.

Last week's study is important, Risser and others said. Areas in the Great Plains that are likely to see wind energy development in the coming years are also crossed by the flight paths of migratory birds.

Study: Secondhand smoke poses risks outdoors

Bay City News Service

Tri-Valley Herald, Friday, May 4, 2007

A group of Stanford researchers have concluded that nonsmokers face significant secondhand smoke exposure when around smokers even outdoors.

"We were surprised to discover that being within a few feet of a smoker outdoors may expose you to air pollution levels that are comparable, on average, to indoor levels that we measured in previous studies of homes and taverns," study and co-author and Stanford consulting professor of civil and environmental engineering Wayne Ott said.

"For example, if you're at a sidewalk cafe, and you sit within 18 inches of a person who smokes two cigarettes over the course of an hour, your exposure to secondhand smoke could be the same as if you sat one hour inside a tavern with smokers," Ott said. "Based on our findings, a child in close proximity to adult smokers at a backyard party also could receive substantial exposure to secondhand smoke."

The study also found that proximity makes all of the difference when it comes to secondhand smoke.

"Our data also show that if you move about six feet away from an outdoor smoker, your exposure levels are much lower," study co-author and Stanford consulting professor of civil and environmental engineering Neil Klepeis said.

In the study, the researchers used portable electronic monitors to make precise measurements of toxic airborne particles emitted from cigarettes at 10 sites near the Stanford campus. The study appears in the May issue of the Journal.

Kids Breathing Pollutants on Aging Buses

By APRIL CASTRO, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, Washington Post and other papers, Friday, May 4, 2007

(AP) -- Day in and day out, children across the U.S. are riding to school on aging buses, breathing what some activists say is a dangerous brew of pollutants up to five times dirtier than the air outside. It is a situation that Congress and many states have sought to fix in recent years. In fact, in 2005 federal lawmakers passed a measure to replace or retrofit the dirtiest diesel engines across the nation.

But little has been done.

Around the country, state officials are struggling to find the money to carry out clean school bus initiatives. And Congress has yet to deliver on the \$1 billion it promised over five years to help states clean up diesel fleets, including school buses.

"I think at one time or another all our kids are going to be on a bus breathing that harmful air, and that should bother everybody," said Karen Slay, a Lubbock, Texas, mother of four boys who have ridden buses. "In the big scheme of things, it doesn't seem to be that expensive, to me, to retrofit these."

Breathing high concentrations of diesel emissions — known as particulates — can cause minor ailments such as headaches, wheezing and dizziness. But studies have also found the contaminants can do more serious damage. Recent studies by the Environmental Protection Agency and other groups link the emissions to asthma and lung cancer.

Two types of filters are available to reduce the most dangerous emissions on older buses. Diesel particulate filters — which are installed in place of mufflers at an estimated cost of \$700 each — can reduce tailpipe emissions by at least 85 percent. Closed crankcase filtration systems, which go under the hood and cost \$7,500, can reduce engine soot by about 90 percent. A bus can be fitted with one or both filters.

An estimated 390,000 diesel school buses are on the road in the U.S., according to the EPA. Most newer buses were manufactured to meet stricter emissions guidelines and do not need filters. But about one-third of the nation's diesel school-bus fleet, or more than 100,000 buses, were manufactured before 1990 and are big polluters, according to EPA.

Researchers say older buses also let lots of emissions enter through doors and windows. The longer the ride, the more harmful to children, they say.

"The exhaust that swirls around the bus gets into the bus and can stay elevated throughout the ride," said Betin Santos, an air quality specialist for the group Environmental Defense.

In Texas, lawmakers two years ago created a grant program to help schools pay for the filters. But they never funded the effort. The money was supposed to have come from an emissions reduction fund supported by fees on vehicle sales, registrations and inspections. But lawmakers have diverted much of that revenue to pay for other things.

Many other states also are struggling to pay for cleaner school bus fleets, said Conrad Schneider of the Boston-based Clean Air Task Force, which fights air pollution.

"I think that once people start to understand that there is a simple economic fix to the problem, we could go from a situation where kids are being exposed to a high level of pollution to one where their exposure is virtually eliminated," Schneider said. "State governments will dig down and try to find the money to get this accomplished."

Clean bus advocates hail California as the leader on the issue. Voters there approved \$200 million last year to clean up its school bus fleet.

"There were studies done about the health risks for children riding in diesel-powered buses," said Patricia Rey, a spokeswoman for the California Air Resources Board. "The governor and Legislature found it to be a priority. And Californians agreed with that."

But in Pennsylvania, Louisiana and elsewhere, state money to help schools retrofit buses has been nonexistent.

Congress passed the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act, a bipartisan initiative that authorized \$1 billion to help states clean up diesel fleets. But states have seen none of that money. The Bush administration proposed modest funding for DERA in its last two budget requests, but Congress has not acted.

Illinois Sen. Barack Obama, one of the bill's co-sponsors, is continuing to push for funding. The Democratic presidential hopeful has accused his colleagues of "foot-dragging."

The Clean Air Task Force in Boston put electronic monitors in students' backpacks to test air quality inside school buses. The organization said it found that the diesel exhaust levels were on average five times greater than they were outside.

Experts say children are particularly vulnerable because soot particles can disrupt development of their respiratory systems. Also, children breathe more quickly than adults and take in more air per pound.

EPA spokesman Dave Ryan said the agency has no independent measurements of diesel soot inside school buses, and he would not comment on the other studies. But the EPA acknowledges diesel emissions can be hazardous to children.

Not everyone is convinced that the air in school buses is a threat.

Texas state Rep. Warren Chisum, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, said it doesn't make sense to spend huge sums on a cleanup, because the "science is not very good."

But Larry Soward, commissioner of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, said the dirtiest diesel buses are likely to last another 20 years or more, and "I, for one, don't think we can wait two decades."

"It's going to cost money," Soward said, "but the health of our children demands that we commit the funds."

Changes in lifestyle can slow warming, scientists say

Keay Davidson, Chronicle Science Writer
S.F. Chronicle, Saturday, May 5, 2007

The worst effects of global warming can be blunted if average people make lifestyle changes that conserve energy and if the world's nations show the political will to address the problem, a panel of international scientists said Friday.

The technology to slow climate change exists in the form of renewable-energy sources like solar, wind and hydroelectric power and making cars, homes and factories more energy efficient, but governments must adopt policies that encourage people and businesses to embrace them, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said.

At the same time, the scientists said businesses could be encouraged to quit generating carbon dioxide, which contributes to global warming, with the establishment of carbon taxes equal to \$100 per ton of carbon dioxide put into the atmosphere.

The panel also called for better management of the world's forests, the loss of which through deforestation could deprive the planet of a vital "sink" for absorbing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that contributes to rising temperatures.

Failure to take action, the panel warned, could result in dire consequences for future generations.

Friday's report was the third issued by the panel, which in its previous works analyzed the causes and extent of climate change.

"Between 1970 and 2004, the growth in greenhouse gas emissions has been about 70 percent. So the world is obviously on a warming path," said Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the panel, which has been meeting in Bangkok.

This report stresses "the need for human society as a whole to start looking at changes in lifestyles and consumption patterns" to lower its emissions of greenhouse gases, he said.

The "warnings could not be more alarming," Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass., chairman of the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, said in a statement. "But this report also gives much reason for hope.

"We know what we need to do to protect the planet. The only question is whether we have the wisdom to do so in time to make a difference."

The scientists identified commercial nuclear power as one possible future energy source, providing 18 percent of the world's electricity by 2030, just slightly more than the 16 percent currently. However, they cautioned, nuclear technology still faces obstacles in the form of plant safety, radioactive-waste disposal and nuclear weapons proliferation.

On Friday, advocates on both sides of the nuclear power debate offered different spins on the report's remarks. On the one hand, veteran nuclear power champion Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., praised the panel for citing "nuclear energy as a necessary part of the climate change solution. ... Nuclear power is clean, safe and efficient."

On the other hand, Greenpeace and the Union of Concerned Scientists pointed to the report's emphasis on nuclear power's long-standing problems and the difficulty of building enough of the expensive, high-tech plants in time to make a big difference in the war against global warming.

"It's far from a ringing endorsement for nuclear power," said UCS researcher Peter Frumhoff, who is chief author of a chapter in Friday's report that deals with the fight against planetary deforestation.

In the larger fight to curb global warming, "what this report says is this: We don't lack technology; we don't lack know-how; we don't lack a knowledge of what policies to use. What we lack is sufficient political will -- at the moment," Frumhoff said. "But if we take action now, we can stay below dangerous levels of global warming and climate change."

The report was endorsed Friday by at least one local corporate executive, who said big businesses need to heed its recommendations or risk having government force them into it.

"It's a huge issue to industry as well as to the climate, because if it's legislated wrong it's going to be very expensive, punitive and unclear (legislation)," said Joe Pettus, senior vice president of the Pleasanton-based Safeway supermarket chain.

He noted that Safeway is exploring whether to install solar panels atop its stores and to buy huge, electricity-generating windmills at remote sites.

In a statement Friday, Larry Schweger, president of the National Wildlife Federation, said: "The world's scientific experts are giving us all the information we need. This latest report provides unmistakable clarity that we must act now, and that solutions are within reach to avoid the worst effects of global warming."

U.N. climate plan called unrealistic

A strategy to cap greenhouse gas emissions could cost 3% of the world's GDP.

By Alan Zarembo, Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times, Saturday, May 5, 2007

A United Nations panel on Friday released its most comprehensive strategy to avoid the catastrophic effects of global warming, but experts said political and economic realities likely doom it to failure.

Although more than 100 countries backed the report, experts said its call for a global, multi-trillion-dollar effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is unrealistic.

The United States and China — which account for more than 40% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions — approved the report but have given no indication that they would reverse their long-held opposition to mandatory reductions in emissions.

"It's not realistic from a political standpoint, and it's not realistic because those targets are incredibly expensive," said Robert Mendelsohn, an economist at Yale University.

Even supporters of the plan were daunted by the speed and scale of action required by the report to stabilize carbon concentrations at slightly above current levels.

"It's hard to imagine," said Jae Edmonds, an economist at the Joint Global Change Research Institute at the University of Maryland. "So many things have to happen so fast, and they are so big."

The report, by the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, was released in Bangkok after a week of contentious debate.

Its primary instrument for reducing greenhouse gas concentrations is a system in which governments would place a cap on emissions and charge polluters for every ton of carbon dioxide beyond that point. That would force companies to cut emissions and invest in energy efficiency and alternative fuels.

The price per ton would reach up to \$100 by 2030. By then, the system could cost up to 3% of the world's gross domestic product, the report said.

The Bush administration quickly denounced the restrictions as too expensive.

"It would cause a global recession," said James Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

"Our goal is reducing emissions and growing the economy," he said during a news conference in Bangkok.

But Robert Socolow, a carbon mitigation expert at Princeton University, said that taking a cheaper and slower path could still be costly. A study by the British government last year found that damage from global warming — flooding, starvation, drought and other calamities — would easily top 5% of global GDP annually.

The U.N. report looked at a variety of scenarios, but only the most expensive would avoid the worst perils of rising temperatures.

That course requires annual emissions to peak by 2015 and fall to 50% to 85% of 2000 levels by mid-century. It would limit the temperature increase to 3 degrees Fahrenheit.

The concentration of greenhouse gases would be stabilized between 445 and 490 parts per million carbon dioxide equivalents — a measure that factors in the warming effects of all greenhouse gases. The current concentration is about 425 parts per million.

The United States has opposed calls for mandatory emissions cuts and carbon taxes, instead placing its hopes on voluntary reductions and future technologies that would be cleaner and cheaper.

China also has opposed mandatory reductions, saying they would derail its economic growth.

The country unsuccessfully fought to delete the most stringent emissions scenario from the report, participants in the conference said. India, the world's fifth biggest polluter, joined the effort.

The most prominent supporters of the plan were European nations.

"The report shows — and this is encouraging — that ambitious climate protection is economically

manageable," said German government spokesman Ulrich Wilhelm.

The U.N. report is the third of four installments being issued this year. With the input of more than 2,000 scientists and the approval of more than 100 governments, they are the closest thing the world has to a consensus on global warming.

The release in February of the first report, which definitively blamed humans for global warming, helped galvanize world opinion after years of debate and shifted the focus of activity toward fixing the problem.

The second report, released in April, looked at the potential effects of global warming. It said that rising temperatures, if left unchecked, would lead to widespread coastal flooding, starvation and species extinctions.

The current report is as much about policy as it is about science, asking how much the world is willing to pay to stem global warming.

Among its options are several more affordable scenarios. For example, one plan would stabilize greenhouse gas levels between 590 and 710 parts per million. It would cost 0.2% of global GDP in 2030, compared with 3% in the most stringent plan.

Annual emissions would continue to rise until 2060, increasing more than 60% above 2000 levels.

But under that scenario, temperatures would rise about 6 degrees, which the U.N. panel has described as calamitous.

Global temperatures have risen about 1.5 degrees since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century.

Peter Frumhoff, director of science and policy for the Union of Concerned Scientists and an author of the current report, said he hoped it would increase pressure on the United States to agree to mandatory emissions cuts.

"The industrialized world needs to step up first," he said.

The United States, he said, lags behind Europe, which already runs a market in which emissions permits are bought and sold.

The crux of the problem is deciding who should pay to contain global warming.

China and other developing countries argue that industrialized nations should foot the bill, since they are responsible for the bulk of carbon dioxide accumulation in the atmosphere over the last two centuries.

That view is reflected in the Kyoto Protocol, which requires participants to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions before 2012 by an average of 5% below 1990 levels.

The Bush administration has refused to join the Kyoto pact on the grounds that it does not restrict emissions in the developing world.

China, which opens a new coal-fired power plant every week, is on track to surpass the United States as the biggest polluter as soon as this year.

At that pace, its yearly emissions will double those of the United States in less than a decade, said Gregg Marland, a fossil fuel pollution expert at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee.

The U.N. report concludes that the greatest potential for curbing future emissions lies in the developing world, since those countries tend to be the least energy efficient.

But Mendelsohn, the Yale economist, said calls for immediate, aggressive cuts could alienate developing countries.

"It's best to start by setting small targets in the near future — not ones where China has to choose between economic growth and emissions reduction," he said.

Emissions

Delegates from more than 100 countries agreed at a conference in Bangkok on Friday that acting now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions can mitigate global warming.

Top carbon dioxide emitters in 2004

in millions of tons

World*: 26,583

U.S.: 5,800

China: 4,732

Russia: 1,529

Japan: 1,215

India: 1,103

Germany: 849

Canada: 551

Italy: 462

S. Korea: 462

France: 387

* Includes emissions from international aviation and marine bunkers

Sources: International Energy Agency, Associated Press

China poses big challenge on warming

Like U.S., India, it rejects controls that might slow economic growth

Robert Collier, Chronicle Staff Writer

S.F. Chronicle, Monday, May 7, 2007

Another international conference on global warming came and went last week, with leading nations agreeing that urgent steps must be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

But those countries did not reach agreement on what is arguably their toughest challenge -- coaxing China to take more effective action to limit its surging emissions.

In recent months, new data has revealed that China's greenhouse gas emissions are growing at a much faster rate than previously believed, increasing the danger that any future reductions in rich nations' emissions will be more than offset by China's increases.

At the week-long meeting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in Bangkok, Chinese diplomats teamed with their counterparts from India and the United States to oppose what they said were excessively strict emissions-reduction goals that could restrict economic development.

Chinese officials also complained that their requests for assistance with energy-saving technology -- especially with coal, which is fueling China's red-hot economic growth -- have been ignored.

"There are a lot of barriers to technology transfer," Zhou Dadi, director of the Chinese government's Energy Research Institute and a leader of the Chinese delegation, told reporters in Bangkok. "It is something the developing countries have been asking for many years, but up until now it has not happened."

The International Energy Agency said last month that China - which as recently as 2001 emitted only 42 percent as much greenhouse gases as the United States - is likely to become the world's largest emitter this year. More ominously, China's annual net growth in greenhouse gas emissions, more than 500 million tons, is more than three times the annual increase of all industrialized nations combined, according to data from the Energy Agency and the Chinese government.

The Bush administration, meanwhile, says the United States should not sign any international treaty on global warming unless China also agrees to binding limits on its emissions.

Energy policy experts say the U.S.-China confrontation gives both countries an excuse to do nothing.

"It's a chicken or the egg issue -- who caused the problem, and who should act first," said Zhang Zhong Xiang, a research fellow at the East-West Center, a think tank in Honolulu that is funded primarily by the U.S. government. "But if China becomes the No. 1 emitter this year, it certainly will put pressure on China to take actions and make commitments."

Chinese officials recently have stated that China will not accept any binding limits on its emissions until at least 2050. Instead, they have cited the government's plan to achieve relative improvements by reducing the amount of energy expended per unit of economic output by 20 percent by 2010. But China has made little progress toward that goal since it was adopted two years ago. Last week, the Chinese government released data showing that electricity consumption by residential, commercial and industrial sectors -- a key barometer of emissions -- rose by 15 percent in the first three months of this year on a year-to-year basis.

"This is very frustrating," said Yang Fuqiang, director of the Beijing office of the Energy Foundation of San Francisco, which provides about \$10 million annually for energy-efficiency cooperation programs with China.

"The GDP growth rate is now 11.1 percent. Energy-intensive industries such as iron, steel, cement and petrochemicals are growing at 20 percent a year. You can imagine -- at this rate, there's no way we can cut emissions."

Most environmental groups say the United States needs to use carrots, not sticks, with China.

"I accept as a matter of political reality that China, India and the other developing nations are not going to accept binding limitations any time in the future," said Elliot Diringer, director of international programs at the Pew Center on Global Climate Change in Arlington, Va.

"We need serious action, but there won't be binding emissions targets. ... That's out of the question in the next round" of climate change negotiations, Diringer said.

Zhou, the Chinese government official, said rich countries must develop and share their advances in clean-coal technology, such as carbon capture and storage, in which greenhouse gas emissions are siphoned off and injected into underground formations like depleted oil wells.

"If advances in technology can be deployed more widely, then it will really help all the world," Zhou said.

Many U.S. experts agree. "We have to engage China directly on clean coal and on industrial energy efficiency," said David Fridley, a China expert at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. He said that while China has well-developed programs on residential and commercial energy efficiency, it desperately needs help to improve the efficiency of coal-fired generators in heavy industry, which consumes 60 percent of China's energy.

The Bush administration's signature effort on coal is the Energy Department's FutureGen, a 10-year, \$500 million program to develop carbon capture and storage technology for domestic and international use.

But some experts say the administration has held back FutureGen because of conservatives' fear that it could morph into an interventionist, European-style industrial policy.

A report on U.S. coal policy by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, released in March, criticized the Energy Department for limiting FutureGen's activity to mere research.

The report, which was chaired by MIT chemistry professor John Deutch, director of the CIA during the Clinton administration, said FutureGen is plagued by "ambiguity about objectives" and has failed to push for the widespread adoption of clean coal technology by the power industry.

In Congress, many lawmakers favor the creation of bilateral assistance programs to help China adopt energy-saving technology. Some, however, say China is unlikely to accept U.S. advice while the Bush administration is opposing Congressional action to reduce U.S. emissions.

"We can't preach temperance from a barstool," said Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass., chairman of the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, which was created earlier this year by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

"In order to re-engage with China and the rest of the international community on global warming from a position of leadership, we must first set mandatory limits on heat-trapping pollution here at home."

In negotiations toward a treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012, developing nations are looking to Washington, said Jayant Sathaye, a Lawrence Berkeley scientist who was one of the lead authors of the Bangkok meeting's final report.

"I would be hard pressed to see China, India, Brazil or any other developing nations adopt limits if the United States is not willing to take on any commitment or take action domestically," he said.

[Tri-Valley Herald, Guest Commentary, Friday, May 4, 2007:](#)

MY WORD

Cautious optimism on MacArthur Maze

By U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee

SUNDAY'S TANKER accident in the MacArthur Maze underlined how critical our transportation infrastructure system is and set forth a challenge that people on all levels of government are working to address quickly and effectively.

Today, I will visit the site of the accident along with Senator Barbara Boxer, chairwoman of the Environment and Public Works Committee; Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters; Rep. James Oberstar, chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee; as well as Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Alamo, a senior member of the same committee; Caltrans Director Will Kempton and Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums.

I can tell you that our partners on every level of government share the sense of urgency about resolving this situation as quickly as possible. We understand what is at stake for businesses. We appreciate the severe disruption posed to tens of thousands of commuters. And we recognize the environmental [and air quality issues](#) for residents of West Oakland.

Fortunately, two potential causes for delay have been dispensed with. Initial concerns that the I-80-to-880 connector would have to be rebuilt, increasing both the delay and cost, were put to rest when inspectors announced that the impacted section was structurally sound and is expected to reopen soon. Similarly, Caltrans' announcement that steel is available to repair the I-80 connector to east 580 removed another potentially lengthy delay.

The federal role in this situation is to ensure that funds are available for speedy repairs, and all signs are positive at this point. On Monday, members of the Bay Area delegation wrote to Secretary Peters, asking her to deem repairs eligible for federal reimbursement under the Federal Highway Administration Emergency Relief program. On Wednesday, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announced that repairs had been deemed eligible. The state can now proceed with the assurance that all repairs will be 100 percent reimbursable as long as they are completed within the next six months.

Our job on the federal level is making sure that we make good on that commitment in a timely fashion.

The issue is that FHWA Emergency Relief program is out of funds. In fact, the supplemental spending bill vetoed by President Bush on Tuesday included \$685 million to top off the fund and reimburse previous projects, \$334 million of which are here in California.

I am working with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco, my colleagues from the Bay Area delegation and my fellow members of the Appropriations Committee to see to it that the needed funds are passed at the next possible opportunity.

Another item we raised in our letter to Secretary Peters was to ask her to reimburse the state for the more than \$2.5 million that went to public transportation and other traffic alleviation efforts in the immediate aftermath of the accident. I will continue to push for reimbursement for those funds, but the state needs to do its part as well. The vital role of public transportation in dealing with this situation should make the governor reconsider his decision to cut more than \$79 million in funding for Bay Area public transportation.

Too often, we hear about examples of different levels of government failing to work effectively together. While the work is far from done, I am confident that this is not one of those cases. I will continue to ensure the full participation of the federal government as a critical part of the intergovernmental process to resolve this situation quickly and return people's lives to normal.

Barbara Lee represents California's 9th Congressional District in the House of Representatives. The district includes Albany, Berkeley, Castro Valley, Emeryville, Oakland, Piedmont and parts of unincorporated Alameda County.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Monday, May 7, 2007:](#)

Global warming threat

Report says we must all act quickly to head off catastrophes.

Climate scientists delivered another dose of gloom and hope: The worst effects of global warming can be avoided, but only with quick action and investments in conservation and technologies.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change laid out the full scope of change required to head off catastrophes projected by the world's leading atmospheric researchers. This transformation must include cleaner energies, energy-efficient buildings, preservation of forests and better urban planning so residents generate less carbon dioxide in their daily travel.

This transition can occur without severe economic impacts, say researchers who contributed to the United Nations report. But it can't be done voluntarily. It will take government action and international cooperation.

It will mean removing barriers to innovation and ending subsidies that add to wasteful pollution. It may involve "carbon taxes" on fossil fuels -- one of the cheapest ways to expand alternative energies. And it could involve some options that make environmentalists cringe, such as nuclear power plants.

This transition will not be cheap. According to the intergovernmental panel, reducing greenhouse gases to a relatively safe level -- one that will result in an average temperature increase of 2 to 4 degrees centigrade (about 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2030 -- will require spending of at least 0.2% of the world's annual gross domestic product. At the maximum, it will require GDP spending of 3%, or about \$1.8 trillion.

And we can afford it, according to the panel, especially when one considers the alternatives. Most climate scientists agree that uncontrolled global warming will lead to severe water shortages, crop failures, flooding and other disasters. Those costs will be far higher than 3% of the world's annual GDP, according to Nicholas Stern, a respected adviser to the United Kingdom.

California is ahead of most in establishing caps on greenhouse gases and developing new motor fuels, energy sources and forestry programs to cut emissions 25% by 2020.

The IPCC report should prompt California leaders to redouble their efforts and work with other states and nations to broaden the impact of California's initiatives.

The report also shows the need to elect a president in 2008 who will take climate change seriously. Without the leadership of the world's richest nation, the work of the intergovernmental panel and its scientists will be for naught.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Saturday, May 5, 2007:](#)

Arnold gets on board

Governor agrees high-speed rail will be crucial for state's future.

Prospects for high-speed rail lines in California got a huge boost when Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger made a strong assertion of support for building the system. Schwarzenegger's backing is all the more important because he has been hesitant in the past to give such unqualified support for high-speed rail.

But in a commentary written for The Bee, the governor made his position crystal clear: "I strongly support high-speed rail for California, and especially for the San Joaquin Valley," he wrote.

Schwarzenegger also wrote that he wants the sources of funding for high-speed rail identified before moving ahead with a \$9.95 billion bond that's scheduled for the November 2008 ballot. Estimates for completing the entire 700-mile system run in excess of \$40 billion.

That's reasonable. The state High Speed Rail Authority, which has already done a great deal of planning and environmental study for the proposed system, should begin at once to "identify with confidence where we will find the remaining \$30 billion," in the governor's words.

We'll also need the help of Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, along with the rest of the state's congressional delegation, to secure the federal funding that will be required to help build the project.

But making the investment is crucial for the future of the state. As our population grows, our existing transportation structure -- already badly strained -- will only grow more congested.

High-speed rail is an important part of the answer, because not only it would relieve us of the need for even more highways and airport space, it would provide that relief at a fraction of the cost of those alternatives.

High-speed trains would also replace thousands of cars on the highways, which would give us a big boost in the efforts to fight air pollution in the Valley and the state.

There is a tremendous economic upside to high-speed rail. Construction of the system would provide a generation's worth of high-paying jobs, and ancillary industries -- such as designing and building the rolling stock -- would create ongoing economic opportunities.

But don't take our word for it. Just read what the governor had to say:

"The promise of high-speed rail is incredible. Looking forward to the kind of California we want to build 20 and 30 years from now, a network of ultra-fast rail lines whisking people from one end of the state to the other is a viable and important transportation alternative and would be a great benefit to us all."

Couldn't have said it better ourselves.

[Letter to the Modesto Bee, Monday, May 7, 2007:](#)

Bee ignores real facts about pollution

I learned three incredible facts in the April 29 Bee:

1. A gas lawn mower can emit as much pollution as 40 late-model cars.

2. Using one fluorescent bulb can prevent the production of 450 pounds of green-house gases over the life of the bulb.

3. We spend \$3 billion a year on health care caused by bad air.

These kinds of factoids are propaganda. I have yet to see a fluorescent bulb that equals the light produced by an incandescent bulb. It takes more energy to produce a fluorescent bulb and the ones I purchased have not lasted six years.

As for being made sick by the air, where is this utopia that we are being compared to? What is the normal amount of asthma when all of the environmental conditions are perfect?

I have a few suggestions:

1. No more drive-up windows.

2. No more golf carts.

3. Create a social awareness for getting off of our fat patooties. I go for a walk most nights and it's lonely out there.

There is no end to what can be done to improve our lives and our environment, but there is no place for agenda-driven nonsense.

John E. Arnold, Modesto

[Letter to the Visalia Times-Delta, Monday, May 7, 2007:](#)

Report on air quality missed the news

Yesterday, the "Jewel of the Valley" appeared in an extremely unflattering context in major dailies around the country.

The widespread impact of such negative national publicity on our economic development efforts, tourism, real estate values, and political consequences make the media angle alone a story worth covering. But the Times-Delta didn't report on the extent of our tarnishing yesterday. It simply said things are getting better, like Iraq is getting better.

A city that generates virtually no national news, and suddenly finds itself in the national and international spotlight - perpetually now, thanks to the Internet - represents a far greater shift in news than the Times-Delta's headline that was based on a miniscule three-point improvement near the nadir of a nationally prominent air quality ranking (American Lung Association), and therefore warrants a headline unto itself.

Yesterday and today's continuing extensive media coverage alone makes the story worth reporting.

Aaron Collins, Visalia

[Letters to the Fresno Bee, Saturday, May 5, 2007:](#)

There are plenty of ways to help clean Valley's air 'Need to do more'

So now we should expect clean air between 2017 and 2024? I still remember the promise of clean air by 1977 in the Clean Air Act of 1970.

Clean air is related to fuel efficiency. One of the most significant causes of fuel inefficiency is under-inflated tires. Perhaps we need a more efficient Clean Air Act -- one that would require free compressed air and tire-pressure gages at every gas station.

Of course I also recommend walking, riding a bicycle or taking the bus (something that I have done for the past 40 years). It is very pleasant, for example, to catch up with the news on the way to work with a copy of The Fresno Bee (sold on many buses for 25 cents). A one-month pass for unlimited trips on FAX buses costs only \$35; a monthly pass that covers both FAX and Clovis buses costs \$40.

The reality is that we all need to do more if we want clean air. What are you willing to do?

Bryan Apper, Fresno

'Greening Fresno'

To be serious and honest about greening Fresno and improving air quality:

Restrict and eliminate drive-throughs.

Encourage human-centered transportation for schools and work (walking, bicycle lanes).

Synchronize stop lights (minimize idling).

Support green cabs (hybrids that don't idle and earn good fuel economy), as are increasingly used in other communities.

Support retailers by limiting "single-use" plastic shopping bags and encouraging reusable cloth bags.

Encourage semiarid climate-appropriate landscaping (vs. lawns).

Include all schools and sports venues (Grizzlies, Fresno State) as part of an active recycling program.

Scott M. Kruse, Fresno

[Letter to the Editor, Merced Sun-Star, May 5, 2007](#)

Is clean air important?

Editor: I read in Saturday's paper that you are urging Supervisor Mike Nelson to vote no on an extension to the federal Clean Air Act until it no longer will matter except to our grandchildren. However, this is the same Nelson who apparently couldn't care less about clean air because he is the supervisor who refused to listen to arguments against the motorsports park which, by the way, you also supported.

So it will take a substantial leap of faith on my part to believe that clean air is important to the Sun-Star's editor or Supervisor Nelson when you both support what will probably become the single largest air polluter in the county.

David A. Ginsberg, Merced

[Letters to the Fresno Bee, Monday, May 7, 2007:](#)

Skewed 'baseline'

For those beating the drum that the culprits in the earth's current warming "must be" human, I give this bit of history. Prior to the onset of the "Little Ice Age," England was a major competitor with France in both grape and wine production, with English vines being grown greater than 500 miles farther north than is possible in today's cooler weather.

Only with the onset of the temporary reduction in temperature due to the "Little Ice Age" was grape production in England curtailed. The English climate is finally warming back up to the point that the English may start up major commercial grape production again.

The year of the temperature low point for the "Little Ice Age" was about 1850. Notice how the "normal" base line of earth's temperature is being taken from an abnormally low point by those pushing human caused global warming by citing the "rise" in temperature since 1850. Why anyone would use the Little Ice Age, one-sixth of the way toward a new ice age, as the base line and call this a "normal" earth temperature is beyond me.

Ed Forbes, Madera

Kick 'em off the board

I am requesting the state attorney general remove from office nine members of our local air board for willfully breaking the law and prejudicially harming some peoples' health more than others. First, the air board refused to study the health effects of its decision to postpone clean air for 17 years. Second, it failed to recognize the environmental and economic injustice of the decision, since low-income people suffer the worst when the air is dirty.

Tom Frantz, Shafter

[Fresno Bee editorial, Saturday, May 5, 2007:](#)

Thumbs up, thumbs down

Thumbs up to Henry T. Perea of Fresno and Raji Brar of Arvin, the newest members of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board and the only two members who voted against accepting a controversial plan to clean up smog by 2024, more than a decade beyond the current deadline. It's unfortunate that the rest of the air board isn't as concerned about our air quality as these two.

[\(Note: The Bee solicits "snarky lines" and topics from readers in compiling its weekly Top 10 list.\)
Fresno Bee commentary, Sunday, May 6, 2007:](#)

VALLEY'S TOP 10: Reasons Valley air district pushed back clean-air deadline

10. Allows time to build 100 new mega-dairies in Valley.
9. Creates opportunity to attract coal-burning utilities to meet energy needs.
8. Allows farmers to keep using grandpa's ancient diesel tractor.
7. They love that toxic particulate soup.
6. Keeps board members on A-list for dinner parties with polluters.
5. Pesky regulations might slow Valley's low-wage, high unemployment economy.
4. Cemeteries count on air district to pump up demand for headstones.
3. They'll take a bad-air day, anytime, over a bad-hair day.
2. We don't need to see the Sierra Nevada.
1. Asthma, shmasthma.

