

[Bakersfield Californian commentary, Sunday, June 10, 2007:](#)

Bad Air

Progress is being made

By Seyed Sadredin

Air quality in the San Joaquin Valley is better than it has ever been in recorded history. With tough regulations, innovative measures and investment by businesses and residents, air pollution has been reduced significantly throughout the valley.

Despite this tremendous progress, the valley's pollution-retaining geography and meteorology make meeting new federal ozone and particulate standards a challenge that is unmatched by any other region in the nation.

Having already reduced valley smog by 80 percent since the 1980s, virtually eliminating the remainder will not be cheap and cannot happen overnight.

On April 30, the air district's governing board adopted the first eight-hour ozone plan in California. This overarching and comprehensive plan is designed to help the valley attain cleaner air, as measured by the federal smog standard, as expeditiously as practicable. The regulatory cost to businesses will be about \$20 billion. Board members should be commended for their courage and commitment to clean air.

A child born today in the valley breathes air that is 80 percent cleaner than it was 25 years ago. It now meets the federal standard for particles 10 microns and smaller. The valley is the only "serious" noncompliant area in the state to meet the standard for airborne particles of this size. We achieved this five years ahead of the federal deadline.

The valley also is expected to meet the one-hour ozone standard by 2010, making it the only "extreme non-attainment" area in the state on track to do so. Meeting this health-based standard will further diminish respiratory and health-related ailments associated with ozone concentrations.

The district's recently adopted plan to meet the new, federal, health-based ozone standard is the first of its kind in the nation. The plan calls for 50 percent of the valley's population to live in "attainment" areas that is, areas without any recorded violations of the air-pollution standard by 2015; that number will increase to 90 percent by 2020. By law, the valley cannot claim "attainment" because in a couple areas, air pollution still will violate the standard on at least a few days each year until 2023.

Undisputed analysis by experts shows that even if money were no object and we ignored all logistical constraints, the technology available today and in the foreseeable future could not reduce smog-forming emissions enough for all areas to attain the clean-air standard before 2023.

The only option provided under federal law is to seek an "extreme" designation and incorporate future technology when it becomes available. All local measures that can be adopted by the air district will be in place by 2010. As a result, every area in the valley will see significant, steady reductions in ozone concentrations and the number of days above the standard.

The measures contained in the ozone plan also will help the valley meet the federal standard for fine particles by 2015. (Fine particles are 2.5 microns and smaller.) This makes the valley the only non-compliant area in the state on track to meet this standard by the deadline. Doing so will eliminate more than \$3 billion per year of the estimated \$3.1 billion annual health-related costs attributed to airborne particles in the valley.

With public health a priority, the air district's governing board approved innovative and creative strategies that focus on alternative modes of transportation, as well as alternative fuels and energy. These measures will require support from the general public, business and government.

About 80 percent of our smog-causing pollutants come from mobile sources over which the air district has no jurisdiction. More than ever, we will need the state and federal government to do

their fair share for the valley by providing funding and regulatory assistance to reduce emissions from cars, trucks and locomotives.

By any objective measure, the plan adopted by the air district is a comprehensive effort that leaves no stone unturned to bring the valley into attainment with federal air-quality standards as quickly as possible.

Sayed Sadredin is executive director and air pollution control officer for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Sunday, June 10, 2007:](#)

Clean up diesels in Valley trade corridor

This region is most heavily traveled and polluted.

The movement of manufactured goods and farm produce up and down the state's highways is a crucial part of California's economy. It's also a source of a tremendous amount of damaging air pollution, here in the Valley and elsewhere. Now there's hope for serious reductions in that pollution -- but, as usual, there's a grave danger that the Valley and its polluted air will not get a fair share of that mitigation.

The culprit in the air pollution, in this case, is the diesel engine. About 40% of the state's nitrogen oxide pollution -- the main chemical component of eye-searing and lung-damaging smog -- is produced by diesel-powered equipment, from trucks to trains, boats, ships and construction equipment.

The great advantages of diesel engines over gasoline-powered ones are their relative simplicity and their durability. Diesel engines are typically more fuel efficient than gas-powered engines, and they last a great deal longer. That means older diesel engines -- which can be horrible polluters -- stay in operation for a very long time.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed using some \$111 million from Proposition 1B funds to begin cleaning up diesel engines, either by retrofitting them with new devices that reduce emissions or replacing them with newer engines that are vastly cleaner in operation.

By the numbers, the Valley should get a major portion of that money. There is more heavy truck traffic in the San Joaquin Valley air corridor than is found even in Southern California. And the damage from those emissions is greater because of the unique topography and meteorology of the Valley. NOx emissions in the Valley from so-called "heavy heavy-duty diesel trucks" are expected to reach 213 tons per day by 2010, some 73 tons more than even in the southern California region.

Yet much of the focus on diesel retrofit and replacement, by the governor and others, has been centered on Southern California transportation corridors.

That's an old story. When money is on the table in this state, it's more often divvied up on the basis of political clout than because of scientifically demonstrated need.

The Air Quality Work Group of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley wants to change that, and the effort deserves the support of everyone hereabouts, from elected leaders to business interests, environmentalists and residents of every sort. The group has begun a lobbying effort to see that the Valley gets a fair share of any money that's appropriated by Sacramento.

And since the partnership is the brainchild of the governor himself, we may hope that it has some clout in this matter, at least in his office.

Much of the governor's interest in the pollution caused by goods movement comes from his embrace of the need to reduce greenhouse gases, embodied in the bipartisan effort that produced California's landmark legislation, Assembly Bill 32, last year.

That's a worthy effort, and we wholeheartedly support it. But it's not the only component in the Valley's air pollution problems, or the state's. Greenhouse gases such as NOx contribute to climate change, with all its frightening possibilities, but they also do enormous damage to the health and economic welfare of the state's residents.

It's estimated that dirty air costs Valley residents \$3 billion or more each year in increased health care costs. What could a healthier Valley population do with that kind of money?

A fair share of diesel mitigation funding from the state might help us find an answer to that question -- and to breathe cleaner air.

Allensworth buffer bill advances

By Seth Nidever

Hanford Sentinel, Sunday, June 10, 2007

A bill that cleared the state Assembly this week creating a 2-1/2 mile dairy-free buffer zone around Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park now heads to the Senate, where Kings County's representative is almost sure to support it.

The proposal, though focused on a park 25 miles south of Corcoran in Tulare County, has drawn the ire of the Kings County Board of Supervisors.

Supervisors passed a resolution March 6 that criticized the proposed buffer zone as an unwarranted interference in local land use planning and a violation of private property rights.

"I've always said it's an extremely dangerous precedent It kind of starts throwing out the (local) process," said Tony Oliveira, Kings County supervisor.

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors has approved two mega-dairies that would bring at least 9,000 cows to private property on the park's fringe.

Defenders of the buffer, including many black legislators in the Bay Area and Los Angeles, say dairy odor and other potential environmental problems could drive visitors away from the tiny park, which commemorates the site of the first California settlement financed, settled and governed by African Americans.

Dean Florez, a Shafter-based Democrat whose senatorial district includes Kings County, has made it clear in the past that he supports the proposed legislation wholeheartedly and favors dairy buffer zones in general.

Florez did not return several calls to his cell phone on Friday.

Assemblywoman Nicole Parra, Kings County's other representative in the state legislature, signed on with Florez as a co-author of the bill and voted for it when it cleared the Assembly Monday on a 47-27 vote.

Parra couldn't be reached for comment Friday.

Oliveira said both legislators' decision to support the bill was "terrible."

"I think for our representatives to support this was a slap in the face," he said.

As the proposed legislation moves into the Senate, California State Parks has declined to take a position.

The park system is currently negotiating to buy property rights around the park that would prevent new dairies from locating there.

If the bill passes the Senate, it will go to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's desk for veto or approval.

Bucolic town bears brunt of Valley smog

Arvin logs the highest number of smog violations in the country, and residents want a cleanup plan soon.

By Mark Grossi / The Fresno Bee
Sunday, June 10, 2007

ARVIN -- America's smoggiest city has no smoke-belching factories, no rush-hour traffic, no suburbs and no freeways.

In the southeastern corner of the San Joaquin Valley, the nation's most frequent smog offender is embedded in bucolic splendor. Flourishing crops surround the city of Arvin. The Tehachapi Mountains rise majestically in the backdrop.

This quiet farm community of more than 16,000 in Kern County defies the stereotype of a vehicle-clogged, metropolitan smog trap.

But the numbers don't lie. Arvin has averaged 73 bad smog days each year since 2004. Crestline, a mountain village downwind of nearly 4 million Los Angeles residents and a maze of heavily traveled urban freeways, has averaged 65 bad days during the same period.

No other U.S. city even comes close.

Arvin is a smog dumping ground at the foot of the Sierra Nevada and Tehachapi Mountains. Pollution from the entire 25,000-square-mile Valley basin and beyond gets bottled up right here.

Plumes of pollutants ride prevailing breezes south over hundreds of miles to Arvin. The bad air comes from Bakersfield, Fresno, Stockton and even the San Francisco Bay Area.

The situation inflames city leaders, who believe they have long been left out of the cleanup discussion. They're talking about legal action.

"I was shocked when I found out about this," said City Manager Enrique Medina Ochoa. "This is not our problem."

But Arvin is among the main reasons the Valley has violated the federal smog standard more than any other place in the country over the last seven years.

The Arvin problem figures prominently in the controversial cleanup plan adopted April 30 by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said Executive Director Seyed Sadredin.

But it might take 17 years to trim enough pollution from the rest of the Valley to clear the air in Arvin. Activists and environmentalists, who have fought the new plan for months, are pushing for assurances of a much faster cleanup, perhaps as early as 2015.

In Arvin, folks are adding their voices to the protest. An energetic City Council member, Raji Brar, this year became an air district board member. Her agenda is clear: speed up the cleanup and protect the health of people in Arvin.

"It is important for this community to have a voice on that air board," she said.

Brar and other officials are surprised and appalled at the condition of Arvin's air quality. They said they never suspected it until late last year, when a community activist from Fresno informed them.

Said City Manager Ochoa: "The only time the local air district had previously talked to us was when it fined us for a diesel engine on a generator."

Arvin's bad-air days have been widely discussed at air district meetings and on its Web site, but no one formally told city officials. Sadredin said it was a weakness in the district's communication with the public. It has been corrected, he said.

"I made a presentation to the City Council in February," he said. "We're now in the process of making similar presentations for all of the 58 cities in the Valley."

In Arvin, where a brown haze often makes nearby Bear Mountain invisible on sunny days, leaders are not satisfied. Brar, who holds degrees in biology and health care management, said the community was unfairly kept in the dark.

Though no statistics are available on asthma rates in Arvin, she knows many residents who have lung problems. In her short time with the air board, Brar said, she does not feel a sense of urgency on the board about people who are suffering.

"There's a health crisis in this Valley," said Brar, who owns a local Subway sandwich shop.

"There are not enough questions and answers about health. We see the cleanup delayed and delayed."

Arvin, which is about 90% Hispanic, has no hospital, but it does have a nonprofit community health center. Both health center doctors have asthma, Brar said.

People notice the haze that moves into the area in the afternoons. Young residents are especially paying attention, said Ahmed Alrowhany, 19.

"Yes, I've heard all about the bad air," he said. "I'm going to move" out of the Valley.

Others see it differently. Pamela Starr, 51, has commuted from Bakersfield for eight years to teach sixth-graders in Arvin. She said she loves the people and won't give up her job, even though she thinks her lungs are affected.

"You get used to the cough," she said, clearing her throat. "I worry a lot about the people here, subjected to the dirty air and the pesticides in the fields. A lot of times, the kids have to take recess in the gym because the air is just so bad."

Unhealthy air has been a defining Valley feature for decades, and not just in Arvin. Smog cleanup never has been an easy proposition in this inland bowl, air quality experts said. The Valley is an ideal incubator for ozone, the dominant and corrosive gas in smog.

Ozone forms best on warm, sunny days with occasional light breezes -- the epitome of Valley weather from May to October. Ozone is the result of the sun cooking vehicle emissions and certain gases from such sources as paint, gasoline and dairy waste.

During long stretches of stagnant weather, mountains on three sides of the Valley hold in pollutants, which build into a stifling chemical soup. These summertime messes continually migrate southeastward, carried by light breezes.

The chemicals eventually leave the Valley through the Tehachapi Pass to the southeast, but they need a firm push from the wind or they can hang around for days in the air around Arvin.

"When the Valley is not venting [pollution]," said David Nunes, air quality project planner for the district, "it's a real challenge for a downwind area in Arvin's location."

Sequoia National Park, known worldwide for giant sequoias, has the third-highest total of violations in the country, because breezes also carry smog to the park from Valley metropolitan areas.

Yet, compared with the notorious South Coast Air Basin, the Valley puts out only half the amount of smog-forming gases.

The Valley's pollutants often remain trapped in a calm weather pattern a lot longer than they do in the Los Angeles area. That's why the area has more smog violations over the last seven years -- 738 for the Valley, compared with 647 for South Coast.

The health consequences of frequent exposure to unhealthy ozone levels can be devastating, medical researchers say. Ozone has been linked with early mortality. It triggers lung ailments more readily in the elderly and the very young than in healthy adults.

But even adults with healthy lungs suffer, researchers say. Ozone creates microtears in lung tissue, which scars and repeatedly tears thereafter.

People with lung problems have bouts of asthma and bronchitis.

Cleaner-running vehicles -- cars, pickups, SUVs and especially diesel trucks -- would eliminate most of the problem, air officials said. Federal and state officials control the standards for fuels and engines on vehicles. Their measures will take years to make a big difference.

Sadredin said the district has budgeted \$2 million over the next few years to replace the dirtiest-running vehicles that affect Arvin and northwest Fresno, another hot spot for smog.

Federal, state and local officials said they would continue pushing for businesses to replace older diesel trucks, as well as encouraging the public to drive cleaner-running vehicles.

Arvin leaders are unmoved. City Manager Ochoa said he would consider lawsuits against sources of upwind pollution, such as Bakersfield and Fresno. He said there may be an issue of environmental justice, which would involve a case built around fair enforcement of environmental law for people of all races, cultures and income.

Said Ochoa, "All we're looking for is a good [upwind] neighbor."

Woman is Arvin's air apparent for change

Raji Brar just wanted to clean up downtown Arvin

BY STACEY SHEPARD, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Monday, June 11, 2007

Raji Brar, standing outside her home, is the Arvin councilwoman recently appointed to the valley air district board in Arvin.

The 31-year-old opened a Subway sandwich shop on the city's main thoroughfare in 2003 and had a vested interest in seeing the surroundings revitalized.

So with \$3,000 -- about half of which she borrowed from her father -- she launched a campaign to run for City Council. And won.

Soon after taking office late last year, however, Brar realized that Arvin had far bigger problems than a dilapidated downtown. The city was in the midst of a pollution crisis. In recent years, it had more smog violations than any other place in the country.

Earlier this year, Brar was appointed to the board that oversees the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, the agency charged with cleaning the valley's notoriously dirty air.

Three months in, Brar has shown she's not willing to rubber-stamp plans or go easy on industry.

Veteran board members say that will likely change as Brar gets a better understanding of the realities of air pollution.

But clean air advocates have hailed her votes against plans to extend the time frame to clean up the valley's smog problem and grant extension to air rules for agriculture.

"I think she's the best voice we could have up there because she's not afraid of standing up to the old guard," said Daniela Simunovic, a community organizer for the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment, a clean air and environmental justice advocacy group in the valley.

The rise of Raji

So, how does one go from running a sandwich shop in a small town to making key decisions about a serious regional public health problem?

Brar, the daughter of parents who had come from India to work as farm laborers, never set her sights on public office.

In college, she majored in biology, then got a master's degree in health care administration, both from Cal State Bakersfield.

She worked as a chemist at BC Laboratories and then worked as an executive assistant to the CEO at Clinica Sierra Vista.

After getting married, she wanted work that would give her flexibility to raise a family. A small business seemed ideal.

She opened Subway in Arvin following several torrid years of politics in the small city. The eatery soon became what Brar called "a public meeting place," where local firefighters, teachers and clinic workers came to eat and dish about local events, she said. Before long, her customers were pushing Brar to run for office.

After getting elected, a clean air advocate gave a presentation to the Arvin City Council on the city's dubious ranking as the smoggiest city in the San Joaquin Valley, the state and the nation, according to some estimates.

If the problem was that bad, Brar and others wanted to know, why had the air district made no attempt to reach out to them? The air district, Brar learned, regularly held town hall meetings in other parts of the valley. Why not in Arvin?

"We have tons of young people here and we're in the dark," said Brar, the mother of a 2-year-old son. "Wouldn't you visit the city that has the worst air? If you're doing outreach, why wouldn't you do outreach here?"

With the help of Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, and clean air advocates, Brar won a seat representing the southern San Joaquin Valley on the air district's board.

The board is made up of 11 members and has often been criticized as being too industry-friendly, shying away from enacting tougher regulations because of the impact on industry. All board members are county supervisors or city council members from the eight counties in the valley.

In a meeting last month, Brar cast the lone vote against a new air rule aimed at open burning in agricultural fields because it included exemptions for some farmers for the next three years.

Earlier in the year, she was one of two dissenting votes on the district's plan to clean up smog. The district came under heavy criticism from environmentalists and health advocates because it asked to delay the deadline for meeting federal air standards by more than 10 years, until 2023.

Under the smog plan, most of the valley would obtain clean air before then. But because of Arvin's location at the bottom of the valley, where most of the valley's pollution drifts, it would be the last area to come into attainment.

When she voted against the plan, Brar said: "For me to go back to my constituents and say, 'There's nothing more we can do,' ... that's not acceptable."

Against the grain

Though she doesn't wield much power voting in the minority, Florez said Brar's decision to go against the grain is a good change on the board.

"I think she's definitely shown she's not a get-along-to-go-along kind of person," he said. "She just does what's right."

Tulare County Supervisor J. Steven Worthley, a four-year air district board member and current board chairman, said new members often face a steep learning curve. Brar's no vote on the smog plan seemed to stem from her frustration, he said.

"As you're on the board longer, you begin to understand the realities of cleaning up the air and I think she would be less likely to take minority positions in the future," he said.

Fresno County Supervisor Judith Case, a seven-year air district board member, said casting a no vote because you don't like a particular rule or plan isn't an effective way to fight air pollution.

"I understand her frustration," Case said. "But if your answer is, 'I don't like this,' well then what's your answer?"

Standing up for Arvin

Brar realizes her no votes carry no weight at this time, but she feels it's important to stand up for her community and demand the best.

She also admits that despite her background in science, she doesn't fully understand the technical details of all the rules and regulations that come before the board for approval.

She's not convinced other board members do, either. Only an air quality expert, not a panel of local elected officials, could really make an informed decision on some of the issues that come before the board, she said.

"The job of the board is to make sure the staff is doing their job. You have to be creative and innovative and think, well, did you guys look into this?" she said. "If you have no idea of other techniques or other technologies, how would you even be able to give that opinion?"

But in place of technical expertise, Brar feels her duty to stand up for the people of Arvin is better served by taking a hard line and voting against policies that include extensions for polluters and delays in obtaining clean air.

"If there's a constant presence, a constant push to do better, (the air district staff) is going to work harder," she said. "I think that's what we need."

Clovis collecting Wal-Mart comments

By Marc Benjamin / The Fresno Bee
Sunday, June 10, 2007

Clovis officials are collecting letters from residents and others interested in commenting about a draft environmental impact report for a Wal-Mart Supercenter. The deadline to submit a written comment is Monday.

The supercenter, proposed to go on Herndon Avenue between Clovis and Sunnyside avenues, is the anchor of a 500,000-square-foot shopping center that will include Kohl's, Petco, Ross and Old Navy.

A supercenter includes a Wal-Mart supermarket.

So far, 15 to 20 letters have been received, including nine from one group of residents wanting sound walls installed east of the shopping center to reduce traffic noise, said Ryan Burnett, an associate planner for the city.

In his letter, resident Cliff Raley said the project will cause noise levels that will exceed the city's standards.

Other neighbors were worried about traffic, road widths and other businesses being forced to compete with Wal-Mart, which could lead to more blight as stores close because they are unable to compete.

Clovis Unified School District officials were concerned about the Sunnyside and Herndon intersection, which is where the district has a continuation school, bus yard and main district offices.

"On paper, it appears the mechanisms are in place to assure the funding of necessary improvements," wrote Bill McGuire, associate superintendent for Clovis Unified. "However, it will be important to monitor the real-world situation once the project is fully operational."

He also wrote that the project builder should be responsible for improvements east of Sunnyside along Herndon.

The shopping center is expected to attract up to 19,000 vehicles per day. The increased traffic would exceed San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District smog thresholds, the environmental report said.

Marcy Ruona wrote that with the traffic caused by Wal-Mart, Clovis would not be a healthy city.

Ruona and others wrote about concerns for neighborhood aesthetics. Ed and Linda Cole said, "We are very concerned about how the proposed Wal-Mart could lead to residential property value decline. Clovis has a heritage of being an attractive community and a Wal-Mart superstore just doesn't fit the character."

One letter was in favor of the new Wal-Mart: Lorine Howell wrote that it will offer lower prices than other grocery chains in Clovis.

The city will be required to respond to each letter. The letters and responses will become part of the final environmental impact report.

Those who do not write letters will be allowed to comment when the Clovis Planning Commission and City Council conduct hearings this year. No hearing dates have been set.

Landfill fire lasts 12 hours

A dozen agencies work to extinguish piles of garbage in southwest Modesto

By EMILIE RAGUSO

Modesto Bee, Monday, June 11, 2007

A fire at the Bonzi Landfill in southwest Modesto Sunday required firefighters to spend some 12 hours extinguishing flaming mounds of garbage.

Despite thick clouds of brown and white smoke, environmental officials said neighbors of the landfill, just south of the Tuolumne River at 2650 W. Hatch Road, should not be alarmed.

"Our biggest concern was control of the runoff from putting out the fire," said Sonya Harrigfeld, the director of the Stanislaus County Environmental Resources Department. "All of that was contained on-site."

The agency's other concern was [air quality](#). But wind kept the smoke moving south over farmland and away from houses, so hazardous materials specialists ruled the scene safe, Harrigfeld said.

There were no injuries and no property damage.

The fire was reported at 8:55a.m., said Battalion Chief Sean Slamon of the Modesto Fire Department. Firefighters for the Paradise-Burbank Fire District showed up three minutes later.

Firefighters from 12 agencies took turns putting out the flames. The Bonzi company provided drivers and three loaders to break up the mounds of garbage so firefighters could hose down the smaller chunks.

"It just takes a long time," said Paradise-Burbank Fire Chief Les Alderson, who said the cause of the fire remained unknown.

The president and general manager of Rudy Bonzi Inc., Brian Terrell, said he was suspicious about how the fire started.

"There's nothing here to cause a fire to start," Terrell said. All the waste at the landfill comes from construction, demolition and industrial sites. Piles of wood loomed in front of less distinguishable masses of concrete, plastic, brick and metal.

Unlike household waste, where aerosol cans, cleaning supplies and other chemicals could combine to erupt, the landfill's materials are considered inert, or unreactive.

Despite on-site security, Terrell said, neighborhood kids have been known to jump the property's fence to play or steal materials.

Fire precautions taken

Sunday's fire was the site's fifth since it opened in 1967, he said. The last one, started by bottle rockets in 2000, led the company to take precautions.

Bonzi workers mow the site's grass to less than an eighth of an inch. Firebreak roads separate the property into segments. And all waste materials are contained on a large concrete slab, said Terrell, who took over as landfill manager in April 2006.

"Fire's not something we want to have happen," he said. "But we have a plan in place if something occurs."

Like all other landfills, said Harrigfeld, the Bonzi site is regulated by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board and the California Integrated Waste Management Board.

Though Sunday's fire did not appear to pose environmental risks, pollution problems at the landfill date back to the early 1980s, when state regulators began issuing cleanup orders.

In recent years, tainted groundwater emanating from the landfill threatened the water supply for the 300 residents of Riverdale Park Tract.

The landfill was closed to the public in the mid-1980s, but Bonzi garbage trucks were allowed to continue using it. In 1985, the landfill was identified as among 150 of the potentially most hazardous of the 1,800 landfills statewide.

Last fall, however, the plant won praise from the regional water board for its cleanup efforts.

Neighbor Manuela Magallon drank a can of soda while watching firefighters spray arcs of water into the landfill.

"It scares me a lot," she said in Spanish, pointing toward the thick smoke. "I don't want it to come over here."

Concord mulls proposals for old naval base

Suggestions from residents include regional park, transit village near BART

By Tanya Rose, MEDIANEWS STAFF

Tri-Valley Herald, Sunday, June 10, 2007

CONCORD — Finally, some concrete ideas for developing the vast and empty 5,170-acre Concord Naval Weapons Station.

Or, at least concrete-ish.

All spring and into the summer, residents have been meeting at a handful of city-sponsored workshops where opposing minds, for the first time, have been able to hash out ideas on what should be built on the shuttered base.

It's the largest land use project the region has ever seen — adding to the city's size by one-third — and city leaders expected sparks to fly as people try to come to a consensus on land uses. Though there's still much to be done to determine the mix of open space, office parks and housing at the former base, things have gone much more smoothly than anticipated.

Some of the ideas include a regional park and trails up around Mount Diablo Creek, intense transit village-like development near the BART station up to the bunker area, and moving the Diablo Creek Golf Course to a different spot to allow more commercial development in the course's current spot. There's also been talk of preserving the hillsides, something the city of Pittsburg is grappling with on its own border.

"There are definitely different viewpoints, but it seems like everyone's starting to come to a center point," Concord Vice Mayor Bill Shinn said.

"You've got the developer on one side, the openspace guy on the other, and I think everyone understands that no one's going to get exactly what they want. So there's been compromise, and that's been a surprise."

The ideas, of course, are conceptual at this point, said Concord reuse project director Mike Wright. They will eventually be whittled down to three formal alternatives, and the City Council expects to take a stance on them at its Sept. 4 meeting.

Also, until August the city is accepting proposals from federal agencies interested in getting land at a discount — something required by the federal Base Realignment and Closure statute anytime a military base is closed and transferred to the public.

Possible uses include facilities or parkland run by the East Bay Regional Parks District; a California State University, East Bay, campus; a physical rehabilitation center for injured soldiers coming back from Iraq; and centers for the homeless. Contra Costa County is also talking about putting a public safety training center there.

"I think people nowadays have more of a sense of what's out there, the geographical obstacles, the sewer pipes, the creeks," Councilwoman Helen Allen said. "I think they have more reality of the piece of property we're dealing with. We can always use more people participating, though, and that means from all over the region."

There will be more opportunities. The city will hold a workshop from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday at the Concord Senior Center. There, participants will break the site into three chunks and get into specific uses. When that's done, city leaders like Wright will have an even better idea of what people want to see at the weapons station.

At an Aug. 4 workshop, also from

9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the senior center, residents will be able to communicate with the City Council directly.

Community activist Kathy Gleason, who lives near the base, which lies along Highway 4, said, "It seems so far like all of the open-space people have the same ideas, and the developers have

their ideas, but there is a general agreement that the development should take place near BART, and that the hills should be open,"

By February 2008, the city should have a draft environmental impact report ready, with alternatives ranging from light uses to heavy development, and all of the traffic and air quality issues that come with them.

By next June, the city will be ready to approve the environmental documentation and the overall plan for the base, Wright said. After that, the plan will go to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD, for approval.

Regarding the exchange that must happen between the U.S. Navy and a developer or developers, Wright said, "The earliest the property will change hands is summer 2009."

The federal government decided to close the southern portion of the weapons station in 2005 as part of a cost-cutting move, and the city has been working on a blueprint for the base ever since.

Democrats face off over emissions bill

California lawmakers lead opposition to a draft that would prevent states from taking tougher action than the federal government.

By Richard Simon, Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, Friday, June 8, 2007

WASHINGTON — An unusual rift has emerged between top congressional Democrats over a draft global warming bill that would prohibit California and other states from taking tougher action than Washington to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles.

On one side are House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) and a number of her California colleagues, fighting to preserve their state's landmark law to cut tailpipe emissions. Pelosi has said that action to curb global warming is one of her most important initiatives.

On the other side are Reps. John D. Dingell, a Democrat from auto-producing Michigan who has expressed support for the legislation, and Rick Boucher (D-Va.). Dingell is chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which will shape the bill, and Boucher is the chairman of a key subcommittee writing the bill.

On Thursday, Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Los Angeles) rounded up a dozen signatures from members of Dingell's committee on a letter that strongly opposes the draft.

"We have serious concerns about the direction in which the committee is currently heading," the letter says.

California's senators, Democrats Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, also vowed Thursday to use "all means at our disposal" to block any effort to preempt California law, suggesting a possible bill-killing filibuster, if necessary.

The swift reaction against the proposal could doom the plan.

Perhaps the most important foe is Pelosi, who earlier tangled with Dingell by forming a special panel to consider global warming legislation. Also opposed are California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, California Atty. Gen. Jerry Brown, and governors and attorneys general from other states, including several seeking to follow California's lead in regulating tailpipe emissions.

"While federal action is necessary and long overdue on climate change, Congress must not deny states the right to pursue solutions in the absence of federal policy," said a letter to Boucher sent by eight governors, including Schwarzenegger.

Dingell and Boucher showed no sign of retreating Thursday.

"Unlike local air pollution, which can be cleaned up by requiring cleaner cars to be sold in that area, climate change is a much larger problem that must be addressed nationally and internationally," Dingell said.

The fight, which comes as the energy issue moves to center stage on Capitol Hill underscores Democratic leaders' challenge in passing comprehensive legislation to reduce global warming and U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

Energy policy and environmental regulation often scramble the usual party-line divisions, splitting lawmakers based on their region's economic interests rather than ideology.

As Democrats prepare to debate their first energy bill since taking control of Congress in January — a measure expected to come before the Senate next week that calls for stricter miles-per-gallon rules for vehicles — some of the stiffest opposition comes from Democrats from auto-making states.

A House subcommittee is to vote next week on a measure that includes the provision to prevent states from imposing stricter standards than the federal government has on vehicle emissions.

California has been fighting to win the Bush administration's approval to implement its law requiring automakers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Automakers oppose the plan.

The federal Clean Air Act permits California to set stricter anti-pollution rules than the federal government because of the state's legendary smog problems, but only if the Environmental Protection Agency approves.

On Thursday, an auto industry group spoke out in support of federal preemption of state laws. "The United States needs a consistent national policy that avoids the marketplace chaos that would surely arise from a patchwork quilt of conflicting state fuel economy/carbon dioxide mandates," Dave McCurdy, president and chief executive of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, told a House energy subcommittee.

Dingell said Congress gave federal regulators the authority to set vehicle fuel-efficiency standards because of "long-standing congressional concerns about the burden that would be placed on auto manufacturers selling cars across the country if they were forced to comply with regulations from multiple authorities."

Boucher cited the recent Supreme Court ruling that the EPA must regulate greenhouse gas emissions unless it can demonstrate a compelling reason not to. He said automakers could come under the authority of the EPA; the federal Department of Transportation, which sets fuel-economy standards; and the state of California.

"The automakers are understandably concerned about this regulatory confusion," Boucher said. "You could have at least three different regulations that would be inconsistent and make it impossible for them to manufacture their product."

Energy bill draft splits House Dems It's Pelosi greens against industry protectionists

Zachary Coile, Chronicle Washington Bureau
S.F. Chronicle, Friday, June 8, 2007

Washington -- California's effort to lead the nation in battling global warming has set off a major fight among House Democrats, pitting Speaker Nancy Pelosi's efforts to slash greenhouse gases against her colleagues' desire to protect the auto and coal industries.

The intra-party feud went public Thursday at a House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing when Pelosi's allies accused the panel's top Democrats of pushing a plan, backed by automakers, to block California and 11 other states from enforcing their tough rules limiting emissions from vehicles.

The committee's chairman, Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., said that allowing California, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Transportation Department to all set greenhouse gas and fuel efficiency rules would lead to chaos and hurt the auto industry.

"What kind of confusion is this going to create?" Dingell asked. "What we're going to have is a magnificent situation where nothing is going to happen. We'll have mass gridlock ... and we're going to have an enormous mess on our hands."

Democrats from California and elsewhere said the proposal -- part of a comprehensive energy package -- was an effort to throw out stringent greenhouse gas limits passed by states, which automakers are fighting in court, and replace them with much weaker federal regulations.

Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Los Angeles, also complained that the draft energy bill would strip the Environmental Protection Agency of its power to regulate greenhouse gases, which was reinforced by a recent Supreme Court decision. The bill designates the Transportation Department, which sets federal fuel economy standards, as the only agency that can regulate vehicle emissions.

"It seems like we're headed in the absolutely wrong direction," Waxman said. "It just seems to me that we're limiting EPA's ability to regulate in this area, and we're also denying the states the ability to regulate."

He added, "If we can't get good national (climate regulations), we've got to at least let the states do what they want. ... Oftentimes, whoever takes action will become the leader."

The spat over pre-empting California's and the EPA's power to limit emissions exposes a deep divide within the Democratic caucus over how to address global warming. Most Democrats agree climate change is a problem, but they split along regional lines over how to solve it -- with many coastal lawmakers backing deep cuts in emissions, and those from states producing automobiles, coal and oil favor a go-slow approach.

Pelosi, a San Francisco Democrat, has signaled clearly where she stands. Earlier this year, she appointed a new House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming. As chairman, she picked Massachusetts Rep. Edward Markey, an outspoken environmentalist, whose unstated goal is to pressure Dingell, an ally of the auto industry, to act on climate change.

Markey sharply criticized the draft discussion bill at the hearing Thursday. He also blasted the committee's leaders for failing to call as witnesses any officials from states that would see their climate regulations invalidated. He plans to press the issue at a hearing before his own panel today, where California Attorney General Jerry Brown is scheduled to testify.

"This bill is cutting the legs out from under the states just as they are starting to sprint forward on carbon pollution regulation," Markey said, "and it's cutting the legs out from under the EPA just as it has begun lacing up its shoes after the decision in Massachusetts vs. EPA."

The chief sponsor of the bill, Rep. Rick Boucher, D-Va., tried to ease intra-party tensions over his proposal. He acknowledged his plan to pre-empt state climate rules had angered some fellow Democrats. He said his goal was to address the regulatory confusion created by the Supreme Court's ruling, which appeared to give the EPA and the Transportation Department the power to set limits on vehicle emissions.

Boucher called several witnesses from the auto industry to bolster his case. A lobbyist for the United Auto Workers, Alan Reuther, warned that a patchwork of state climate rules could cost auto workers their jobs. Dave McCurdy, the president of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, warned that his industry "cannot survive with 50 different standards or a dozen different standards or five different standards" on greenhouse gases.

But Markey responded that while U.S. automakers are fighting new greenhouse gas limits and fuel economy standards in the United States, they are already producing more efficient vehicles to sell in Europe to meet the European Union's tough new climate rules.

"You're telling us it can't be done. It's being done already," Markey said.

The proposal to pre-empt states' climate regulations faces several hurdles on the track to passage -- especially as opposition to the plan is increasing. Pelosi said this week she opposes it, and she's planning to use her clout to strip the provision from the energy bill before it moves to the House floor.

On Thursday, California's two Democratic senators, Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, announced they would block the provision if it reaches the Senate. "We would oppose it with all means at our disposal," they said in a joint statement.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger also weighed in Thursday with a letter of opposition sent to the bill's sponsor, signed by the governors of seven other states that have passed new emissions rules. "Congress must not deny states the right to pursue solutions in the absence of federal policy," the governors wrote.

U.S. to help on new climate pact
European plan cuts greenhouse gases in half by 2050
Mark Landler, Judy Dempsey, New York Times
Friday, June 8, 2007

Heiligendamm, Germany -- The United States agreed Thursday to "seriously consider" a European plan to combat global warming by cutting in half greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, averting a transatlantic deadlock at a meeting here of the world's richest industrial nations.

The compromise, worked out in tough negotiations between the United States and Germany, also endorses President Bush's recent proposal to bring together the world's largest emitting countries, including China and India, to set their own national goals for reducing emissions.

The agreement reached Thursday does not include a mandatory 50 percent reduction in global emissions by 2050, a key provision sought by Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, nor does it commit the United States or Russia to specific reductions.

Nevertheless, Merkel, the host of the Group of Eight meeting, proclaimed it a major victory. She had placed climate change at the top of the agenda for the gathering, and in recent days she pressured Bush to relax his opposition to mandatory cuts in emissions, though he ultimately did not.

"If you think of where we were a few weeks ago, and where we have reached today, this is a big success," a visibly relieved Merkel said in this Baltic Sea resort.

The United States had threatened before the meeting to reject large parts of the German proposal, which reaffirmed the role of the United Nations as the primary forum for negotiating climate agreements.

Now, though, the Bush administration has agreed for the first time to take part in negotiations to develop a new global agreement on climate policy by 2009. Such a pact could form the basis of a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012 and was never ratified by the United States.

"One of the features I think we all agreed to is, there needs to be a long-term global goal to substantially reduce emissions," said Stephen Hadley, the White House national security adviser. "There are obviously a number of ideas as to how that should be done."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who has long prodded Bush to embrace a stricter climate policy, said the agreement represented "a very substantial coming together" of the world's leaders. His comments came after he met one-on-one with Bush for the last time as prime minister.

Environmental groups were more mixed in their reaction, with several noting that the agreement did not alter the Bush administration's refusal to accept binding targets for emissions reductions.

"He has only agreed to consider the goal," said Philip Clapp, president of the National Environmental Trust, an advocacy group. "This is the kind of language that emerges from a discussion in which people say, 'We have to have something to take back to our publics.' "

Other advocates, though, said it was significant that the Bush administration had agreed to help negotiate a new climate agreement by 2009, within the framework of the United Nations.

In the past, White House officials have cast doubt on the need for an agreement. Bush's proposal last week to convene a conference of the largest emitters stoked suspicions among some Europeans that he would pursue climate change on a parallel track with the United Nations.

Fred Krupp, the president of Environmental Defense, a New York-based group, said the spotlight would now shift to Congress, which is drafting legislation that may cap emissions in the United States.

For Europeans, the prospect of a successor to Kyoto is important because it gives stability to the market in trading carbon-dioxide credits, which was instituted by Europe as a way to meet its emissions caps.

"The United States is now on a bandwagon they cannot stop," said Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, Merkel's chief adviser on climate policy. "That is more than I expected. In a way, climate common sense prevailed at the last minute."

The 11th-hour deal came after weeks of intense diplomacy by Merkel -- first to marshal support for her plan from other G-8 leaders, then to persuade Bush to edge toward her position.

Merkel, a physicist and former environment minister, staked a lot of prestige on a deal. While playing down hopes of a breakthrough, she instructed her chief negotiator, Bernd Pfaffenbach, to keep pushing for a compromise. Negotiators worked on the text all night Wednesday.

At noon, just before Merkel and the other leaders prepared for a forum with young people, she waved a draft of the communique before the group. "Any objections?" she asked. There were none.

The compromise

Fighting global warming: Group of Eight leaders, including President Bush, agreed Thursday to call for global emissions reductions and cited a goal of a 50 percent cut by 2050.
Not mandatoy: The declaration's language called for the countries to "seriously consider" following the European Union, Japan and Canada in seeking to halve emissions.
What Europe wants: European leaders had pushed for mandatory cuts, but Bush resisted.

Airlines' long-term goal is zero emissions

Global warming a crucial topic at Vancouver meeting

David Armstrong, Chronicle Staff Writer
S.F. Chronicle, Saturday, June 9, 2007

Those jet contrails streaking across the sky could become a thing of the past if the world's airlines are able to reach a newly announced, and very lofty, goal: Slash jetliner greenhouse gas emissions until, 50 years from now, airlines generate no air pollution at all.

The aviation industry is taking heat from regulators and politicians for its contributions to global warming -- and this has created a sense of urgency. Climate change dominated last week's annual meeting of the International Air Transport Association in Vancouver, British Columbia, where talk of CO₂, carbon footprints, emissions trading, alternative fuels and the threat of increased regulation and taxation was everywhere.

The trade association's director-general, Giovanni Bisignani, challenged airline executives and aircraft manufacturers to solve the carbon emissions problem once and for all.

"Air transport must become an industry that does not pollute," Bisignani said. "Zero emissions.

"We can see potential building blocks for a carbon-free future. Fuel cell technology is here. The first solar-powered aircraft is built and we can make fuel from biomass today."

Bisignani declaration may be less a practical plan than a statement aimed at motivating the industry and impressing the public.

Zero carbon emissions is considered utopian, but worth trying for -- even if no one is quite sure how to do it.

"It's going to require totally new technology to eliminate emissions," said Fred Roe, regional manager of BACK Aviation Solutions, a Connecticut aviation consultancy.

And some experts say zero emissions is a pipe dream no matter what the technology.

"There is no sense in aiming for zero emissions," said Michael Levine, a New York University professor and former airline executive. "But I believe we have to be responsible for our emissions and declare to the public we're going to make the best effort we can."

Bisignani admitted that going green won't be easy. But he insisted it can be done if governments fund alternative fuels research, manufacturers build cleaner-burning engines, airports improve tangled air traffic control systems and airlines push harder for clean technology.

Airlines produce 2 percent of the planet's carbon dioxide emissions, but the expansion of air travel will raise that figure to 3 percent by 2050, according to the United Nations.

The push comes at a sensitive time for the aviation industry, which slumped badly following the terrorist attacks of September 2001, and recessions in several nations. The world's airlines lost

\$45 billion from 2001 through 2006, according to the trade association, which predicts that recovering airlines will turn a slim profit of \$5 billion this year.

Airlines have already attracted attention from environmentally minded politicians.

In the United Kingdom, Chancellor of the Exchequer and prime minister-in-waiting Gordon Brown slapped an air passenger duty expected to generate 1 billion British pounds to offset the aviation industry's adverse impact on the environment.

Earlier this year, the 27-member European Union said it will require airlines from EU nations to join a carbon-trading scheme by 2011. Eventually, all airlines that fly to EU countries will have to participate to keep their landing rights.

Bisignani noted that 12 million tons of carbon-dioxide emissions could be cut if the EU simply blended its member states' 27 air traffic control systems into one -- creating "a single European sky."

Some airlines are acting on their own to support green causes by encouraging passengers to buy voluntary carbon offset fees. The airlines don't keep the fees or include them in the price of fares, but pass the money on to selected organizations that promote sustainable development, plant trees and clean up water supplies.

British Airways introduced a carbon offset fee -- which varies according to a passenger's route and type of aircraft -- in 2005. In recent months, other airlines, including Scandinavian Air Systems, Air Canada, Delta and Australia's Virgin Blue -- have followed suit.

"It's definitely a great start," Roe said. He emphasized that keeping such programs voluntary would be essential now, "when the airline industry is fighting tooth and nail for every dollar it can get."

Airlines have reduced aircraft noise by 75 percent since 1977 and burn 70 percent less fuel per mile than in 1967. New aircraft generally are lighter and have more efficient engines.

But while airlines are trying to go green, they can't do it on their own, said Steve Ridgway, chief executive of the London carrier Virgin Atlantic Airways.

"We need a 'single sky,' with harmonized air traffic control systems," Ridgway said, adding that a unified system would enable airlines to lower emissions by flying more direct routes and following wind patterns.

Ridgway's boss, Richard Branson, chairman of the Virgin Group, has teamed with former Vice President Al Gore to offer a \$25 million reward for creating a viable biofuel to replace conventional jet fuel.

NYC Mayor Pushes Traffic Fee Proposal

By VERENA DOBNIK, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, Friday, June 8, 2007

New York (AP) -- Traffic congestion and devastating pollution are among the "inconvenient truths" of our age and could be eased by imposing pay-to-drive fees on Manhattan motorists, Mayor Michael Bloomberg told a legislative panel Friday.

Bloomberg, who normally takes the subway to work, told the lawmakers he got stuck in traffic three times on his way to the special hearing.

His remarks were greeted by a roaring ovation from supporters who included environmentalists in bright green T-shirts handing out fresh green apples before the hearing.

"The threats to our city, and our planet, are inconvenient truths that we can no longer avoid facing, and that we can no longer wait for Washington to confront," Bloomberg said, referring to the title of Al Gore's Oscar-winning global warming documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth."

Under Bloomberg's proposal, cars entering Manhattan south of 86th Street would be charged \$8 per day, and trucks \$21. Under a three-year pilot program, the fees would be collected only during the worst traffic hours, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Two major roadways flanking the east and west sides of Manhattan, FDR Drive and the West Side Highway, would be exempt.

Some lawmakers in the city's outer boroughs and bedroom communities do not support the so-called "congestion pricing," saying it would punish many drivers.

"This is a tax on middle-class people," said state Assemblyman Richard Brodsky, a Westchester Democrat who chairs one of the committees that held the joint hearing. "This will stop the Chevrolets from coming in, not the BMWs."

The mayor's plan got a boost Thursday from Gov. Eliot Spitzer and U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters, who announced that New York is one of nine semifinalists to receive federal funds to fight traffic jams.

"This plan would keep the city that never sleeps from becoming the city that never moves," Peters said of the proposed fees.

The city would become the first in the nation to adopt a congestion pricing plan of this magnitude. The proposal is similar to a system that London has used since 2003, and government officials there say it has significantly reduced congestion.

It is part of an ambitious series of environmental proposals from Bloomberg in recent months, including converting the entire taxi fleet to hybrid vehicles, replacing light bulbs with more efficient ones and a goal of a 30 percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2030.

Backers say the fee plan would cut traffic jams and pollution while generating money for mass transit projects — nearly \$400 million in its first year alone.

Environmentalists have applauded the plan, but it would have to be enacted by the state Legislature, making the support of lawmakers from outer boroughs and bedroom communities around New York critical to its success.

The mayor pointed out that on Friday, like many warm-weather, high traffic workdays in New York, a state air-stagnation advisory was in effect not only for Manhattan, but also for surrounding counties on Long Island and Westchester County.

In addition, Bloomberg said, four times as many New Yorkers are hospitalized for asthma as the national average.

He said such facts are "a reminder that when idling cars and trucks stack up on our roads and at our tunnels and bridges, they produce more than just ulcers and hair-trigger tempers," Bloomberg said. "They pump deadly pollution into the air that we and our children breathe."

In addition, he said, the hours lost in traffic rob the economy of work hours.

Bloomberg said the plan has the support of more than 80 civic, labor and political groups. The plan also appears to be gaining momentum from influential state leaders in Albany.

Spitzer said he would urge lawmakers to support the plan so that New York would qualify for the federal funds outlined by Peters on Thursday.

The other cities competing for a total of \$1.1 billion in federal funds are Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Miami, San Diego, San Francisco and Seattle. Peters said that up to five cities will split the money, and the winners will be announced by mid-August.

Spitzer said New York would ask for \$500 million — almost half the federal money that will be available under the Department of Transportation's Urban Partnership program. Under the plan, a network of cameras would capture license plate numbers and either charge a driver's existing commuter account or generate a bill to be paid each time.

Commuters who already pay a toll to come into Manhattan via tunnels and bridges could apply that against the new fee. For example, a person already paying a \$6 toll to go through the Lincoln Tunnel would be charged an extra \$2 under the plan.

Senior citizens who oppose the plan held a news conference at a Manhattan hospital, one of the places they said they must sometimes drive to.

"I had a friend I had to take in for radiation every day," said Robert Goldberg, of Brooklyn. "There was no way he could take the subway."

In Legislators' Scrutiny, Traffic Proposal Faces Hard Questioning

By NICHOLAS CONFESSORE

N.Y. Times, Sat., June 9, 2007

New York State lawmakers gave a cordial but cool reception yesterday to the congestion pricing .of the State Assembly who appeared at the hearing yesterday, including many from the boroughs outside of Manhattan and the city's suburbs. Indeed, rather than resolve any battles, Mr. Bloomberg's answers seemed only to draw the lines for future ones in Albany.

"There are still a lot of questions that have to be answered and have not been answered," said Herman D. Farrell Jr., a Manhattan Democrat. "This present bill, as it's given to us, it's like the Ragu commercial, 'It's in there.' But it's not."

Cities and towns in New York generally must seek state approval to institute new fees and taxes, as well as to create new public authorities, as Mr. Bloomberg has proposed.

The hearing did feature occasional light moments. [Richard L. Brodsky](#), a Westchester Democrat, expressed civil liberties concerns about the cameras that would be installed to track cars as they drive in and out of Manhattan. He asked Mr. Bloomberg what people would think if President Bush proposed a similar plan.

"If George Bush had come out for motherhood and apple pie, everybody would be against it," Mr. Bloomberg said.

Mr. Bloomberg tried several times to defuse skepticism about the plan by pointing out that it called for only a three-year pilot project, many costs of which could be paid through the federal grants. But several members challenged him on the point, saying that the legislation as proposed left it up to city officials whether or not to keep the system in place at the conclusion of the pilot phase.

"It's entirely at the mayor's discretion whether or not to continue the project," said Rory I. Lancman, a Queens Democrat. Mr. Farrell noted that state officials had already given the mayor broad policy powers in one area — control of the city's schools — and that "a lot of people are not happy now."

Some lawmakers also questioned Mr. Bloomberg's plans to create a new public authority to control the roughly \$380 million in revenue the program would obtain each year. Under the legislation, which was introduced in the Senate on Thursday, that authority would also give the city more power over the completion of some major projects, like the Second Avenue subway.

Mr. Spitzer, among others, has said he would prefer that that money remain in the control of existing authorities like the Metropolitan Transportation Authority or the Port Authority.

Speaking to reporters after the hearing, Mr. Bloomberg was asked if he might be willing to part with the new authority if it would help push through the bill.

"I think we'd be happy to talk about anything," Mr. Bloomberg said. "There's nothing that we shouldn't be willing to talk about."

Precisely how the proposal will be received more broadly among lawmakers in Albany remains unclear. Only two weeks remain in the legislative session there, and the congestion proposal is only one of several elements of the mayor's plans that require legislative approval, to say nothing of the governor's and lawmakers' own priorities.

But Scott M. Stringer, a former assemblyman who is now Manhattan's borough president, said he thought the hearing had moved the proposal forward.

"I got a sense that there's great possibilities here, based on the questions asked and the mayor's responses, and that there is plenty of time to make something happen," said Mr. Stringer, who has endorsed Mr. Bloomberg's plans, along with a broad coalition of businesses, unions and civic groups. "Two weeks is a lifetime in the legislative process."

Ray Rivera contributed reporting.

Monuments Threatened by Global Warming

By ARIEL DAVID, Associated Press Writer
In the S.F. Chronicle, Friday, June 8, 2007

ROME, Italy (AP) -- For centuries, Europe's monuments have withstood earthquakes, fire and plundering. Now cultural treasures from the Colosseum to Westminster Abbey could face new threats from climate change, a study says.

Increased rains in northern Europe could wash away layer after layer of ancient stone, while rising heat in southern and central Europe could lead age-old monuments to crack and disintegrate, according to the European Union-funded study.

Experts have long warned that a rise in sea levels attributed to global warming threatens low-lying areas, including treasures like Venice or sites in flood-prone regions.

But the three-year study didn't look only at the catastrophic impact of storm surges, landslides and floods. It also took into account the slow erosion that Europe's cultural heritage could suffer from climate change, said Cristina Sabbioni, the study's coordinator.

"We needed to put this problem on the table, because so far it has been politically ignored," said Sabbioni, a physicist with Italy's National Research Council. Climatologists, chemists, geologists and biologists used projected climate data to predict how marble, limestone, wood and other materials commonly used in ancient buildings would fare in future weather patterns until 2099, Sabbioni said.

Researchers produced a "Vulnerability Atlas" of Europe, with maps that indicate which areas will suffer an increase or decrease in risk factors, from damage caused by salt crystals to corrosion of medieval stained-glass windows.

According to the study, lower humidity during the summer in Britain, France, northern Spain and central Europe will increase the amount of salt deposited on monuments.

This is especially dangerous for the region's Gothic cathedrals, whose elaborate carvings are made of soft porous stone which absorbs sea salt from the air. Once the water evaporates, the salt crystallizes and puts pressure on the surrounding stone, Sabbioni said.

"If the salt is deposited on the surface, the damage is aesthetic, and this is a dramatic problem for frescoes," she said. "But if it is absorbed we have internal breakup of the material."

Less rain in southern Europe will force authorities to spend more money to clean monuments blackened by pollution, while an expected rise of precipitation in northern Europe could wash away an increasing amount of ancient stone each year.

Monuments built of marble and limestone, such as the Colosseum in Rome and the Parthenon in Athens, will also suffer due to increased temperature fluctuations which cause such materials to expand and contract, causing fractures and breakage. Central Europe, southern Spain and Greece will be the areas most affected due to the drier climate and rising temperatures, the study says.

Even more recent monuments like the Eiffel Tower, completed in 1889, could face trouble as the study predicts warm weather and pollution will increase corrosion of metals in northern Europe.

Researchers said problems caused by rain, salt crystallization and thermal stress are already known to conservation experts. For example, the baroque facades and statues of the southern Italian town of Lecce, carved in soft stone, have long been eroded and damaged by rain, pollution and salt.

But the study indicates these threats will move to areas where they were previously unheard of, said Joseph King, an official with the International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, a U.N.-backed intergovernmental organization based in Rome.

"Climate change touches a lot of things, and cultural heritage is among them," said King, a conservation expert who did not take part in the EU study. "The problems we are going to have are the same ones we have now. The difference is in the intensity and where they are going to occur."

Not all the study's predictions are negative. Glass corrosion is expected to decrease across Europe and reduced moisture will help bricks in historical buildings stay dry.

Sabbioni warned the effects could ultimately be even worse because the climate model used for the study was a "moderately optimistic" one chosen from among those used by the U.N. - sponsored

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The agency issued a spate of reports this year, drawing on the studies of some 2,500 scientists, which predict grim consequences of global warming if swift action is not taken.

Although no specific research was done on single monuments, the maps produced by the \$1.6 million "Noah's Ark" study on climate change and cultural heritage can help policy-makers plan conservation efforts based on which risk factors threaten their area, Sabbioni said.

The study offers guidelines to help limit the effect of climate change on monuments, from increasing the frequency of repairs to installing barriers on buildings to reduce salt deposits.

Researchers didn't produce an estimate of the cost of climate change on cultural conservation, but the study says that, ultimately, Europe may have to accept some losses.

"Priorities will have to be established," Sabbioni said. "We cannot hope that everything will last forever."

[S.F. Chronicle commentary, Friday, June 8, 2007:](#)

Pollution math

By Joe Nation

OK, it's time to get serious about reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. After a steady stream of bad news from scientists about how greenhouse gases are overheating Earth, Californians are paying attention.

But what to do? Buy hybrid automobiles? Install solar panels? Ride a bike rather than drive to work? Recycle more? Sure. Each of those will help. But few Californians understand how much (or how little) each of those individual efforts will accomplish.

Before we reduce, we need to understand just how much we spew toward the heavens. Each year, Californians emit nearly 500 million metric tons of greenhouse gases, a per capita average of 13 metric tons. (A metric ton, 2,205 pounds, is 1.1 times the weight of an America ton or 2,000 pounds.) The U.S. average per capita is 20 metric tons, while the global average is about 4 metric tons.

The math is simple. Every person in this state on average emits 29,000 pounds of CO₂, methane and other greenhouse gases each year. That's 80 pounds each day, or about 3.3 pounds each hour. How in the world did we get to this place? And, more importantly, what can we do about it?

First, we can start by understanding our own individual carbon footprint. Virtually everything we do comes at some cost in greenhouse-gas emissions: driving to work, cooling the house, flying to a vacation site, and so on.

Individuals can estimate their own carbon footprints with the many carbon calculators on the Internet. But users beware. Many carbon calculators have different formats, require different inputs, and not surprisingly, can yield very different conclusions.

Let's start with emissions from driving at www.driveneutral.org, a nonprofit. Drive Neutral estimates that a 25 mpg car using gasoline at 12,000 miles per year emits 9,312 pounds of carbon dioxide, or about 4.2 metric tons. (Drive Neutral allows users to choose gasoline, bio-diesel, diesel or natural gas for their calculations.) Other sites, www.terrapass.com, <http://safeclimate.net>, and <http://carbonneutral.com> showed similar results, although input variables are often different. (E.g., <http://carbonneutral.com> allows users to choose engine size, but not mpg.) Bottom line. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, each gallon of gas consumed emits 19.6 pounds of CO₂. Until plug-in hybrids, hydrogen fuel cell, or some other new technology arrives, the best solution to reduce carbon emissions is to drive less and drive a car with higher fuel economy.

Trading in that 15 mpg SUV for a 30 mpg hybrid SUV (yes, it exists) cuts your annual emissions in half (from more than 7 metric tons to 3.5 tons). And it will also save you \$1,340 each year in gas (at \$3.35 a gallon). Even better, why not go the Full Monty and try a hybrid sedan at more than 50 mpg? That will cut your emissions from 7 metric tons to just more than 2 metric tons and save nearly \$2,000 in gas each year.

Many calculators estimate emissions from air travel, which makes up about 5 percent of the greenhouse-gas emissions total in California. I estimated emissions from a 5,200 mile roundtrip from San Francisco to New York at <http://begreenow.com>, <http://carbonfund.org>, and <http://climatecare.org>. Total emissions in each case were about 1 metric ton, although another site estimated emissions as high as 2.3 metric tons. Bottom line. Be wary of calculator results for air travel. Assume (conservatively) that your share of a plane trip to New York is at least one ton and perhaps more. The best solution? Fly only when you must.

Some carbon calculators estimate footprints at home, mostly from your electricity and natural gas use. But these also can provide a wide variety of answers because of the uncertainty about where many of us purchase those fuels. PG&E customers receive about one-half of their power from sources with no CO₂ emissions (e.g., large hydro and nuclear), while customers at the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power receive one-half of their power from coal, which emits about 70 percent more greenhouse-gas emissions than natural gas.

Even so, "at home" calculators are of some use. The most detailed is the U.S. EPA calculator at www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ (then click on "calculator"). It walks users through gas, electric and fuel oil costs. Bottom line? Switch -- if you can -- to renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, biomass and geothermal. Those generally cost slightly more than conventional power, but their long-term emissions reductions are a bargain.

The EPA site also highlights the benefits of other activities. Replacing 20 incandescent lightbulbs with Energy Star bulbs will reduce emissions about one ton per average house per year. Installing double-pane windows reduces emissions more than 1.5 metric tons. Recycling aluminum, glass, plastic and steel reduces emissions more than 400 pounds.

In the affluent Bay Area, don't be surprised if your initial footprint resembles a size 18 (tons) or worse. But at least you'll know your starting place, how to reduce, and truly how steep that climate-change mountain is.

Joe Nation, a former member of the state Assembly, teaches microeconomics and climate change at the University of San Francisco.

[S.F. Chronicle editorial, Friday, June 8, 2007:](#)

Political hot air

PRESIDENT BUSH can see a scientific and political consensus building on climate change. There's a need to curb emissions and boost energy efficiency, he admits.

But he still can't accept the need for definite targets or ironclad commitments on cutting greenhouse pollutants. So, while he delays and temporizes, the problem will worsen.

That's the empty, neutral ground the White House occupies coming out of a showdown meeting of the Group of 8 major industrial nations. After saying he was open to global action, Bush fought off a push for binding goals on cutting emissions and holding down temperature increases by the year 2050.

Instead, he held the group to a feeble pledge to "seriously consider" such steps, leaving ample wiggle room for dodging action.

It's a missed opportunity, but it's no surprise. The other seven nations (Britain, Germany, Japan, Russia, Canada, France and Italy) were poised to agree to the steps, which would set the stage for other big-emitter countries, such as China and India, to follow suit.

Bush asked for more time. His plan was a 15-nation parley next year with a larger group of industrial powers and further windbag talks. It may be a good way to fine-tune standards, but it may also be a game plan for do-nothing diplomacy.

Bush's embarrassed allies did their best to paper over the failure. Britain's Tony Blair praised the results. G-8 host, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, said it was "a major step forward." Still, either leader must be disappointed by Bush.

Was it conceivable that Bush would ever give ground on global warming? Bush has shed his skepticism about the dangers of heat-trapping gases and has sprinkled recent speeches, including this year's State of the Union address, with references to the issue.

The G-8 gathering was as close to a friendly audience as he could expect. Blair and Merkel, for example, are on good terms with Bush, who values personal connections. If not taken up by this group, the subject will be left to the United Nations, hardly a friendly audience for the White House.

Until the watered-down pact was announced, Bush was on a modest roll on international issues. He had doubled U.S. spending on AIDS, replaced Paul Wolfowitz at the World Bank with euro-friendly Robert Zoellick, and taken a tougher stand on Darfur sanctions. During the G-8 conference, he lavished attention on Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was angry over plans for a U.S. anti-missile shield near his border.

The White House wants to sell the toothless G-8 agreement as another modest success: a reasonable meeting of minds that achieved consensus. But this sales pitch falls short.

The White House missed a chance to show initiative on a crucial issue that's important to other world leaders. Now it will be up to Bush's successor to make a difference.

[Sacramento Bee commentary, Monday, June 11, 2007:](#)

Claudia Rosett: Beyond pollution offsets

Despite chronic scandals that suggest it can't clean up even its own offices, the United Nations wants to manage the weather of the entire planet. In the name of cooling global warming, the U.N. is steering toward a role as chief broker for assigning and trading national rights to emit carbon dioxide. The plan amounts to a tax on high per-capita carbon emitters, such as the United States, and subsidies for low emitters, such as Laos and Equatorial Guinea.

Unfortunately, a global carbon tax-cum-redistribution system would likely chill the productivity of free societies and subsidize some of the world's worst regimes.

The worst carbon offenders, after all, tend to be the countries that are the freest, most democratic, and, as a result, the most vibrant, creative and productive. America, in all its freewheeling bounty, may exhale more than its share of greenhouse gases, but it also has given the world a disproportionately huge roster of inventions -- telephone, airplane, computer, the Internet, leaps in modern medical technology -- that enhance the quality of life. Given a chance, the States might yet invent ways of correcting the weather undreamt of in any U.N. bureaucrat's philosophy.

By contrast, countries that emit the least carbon dioxide per person generally are saddled with the most repressive, corrupt and stifling governments -- ruinous for their own people and damaging to a civilized world order. A prime example would be Zimbabwe (now chairing the U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development), which under the brutal rule of aging tyrant Robert Mugabe has gone from breadbasket of southern Africa to basket case.

The good news, presumably, is that Zimbabwe is a paragon of carbon thrift, giving off, per Zimbabwean, less than one-sixteenth of the U.S. average of carbon dioxide. The bad news is the Mugabe misrule.

Babies born in Zimbabwe today have an average life expectancy of 37 years, or less than half the average 78-year span in America.

So it's not impoverished children who are likely to benefit from climate-change subsidies. It's their rulers, who control the toll gates.

My question is: Why stop with carbon offsets? We live in an interconnected world, teeming with behaviors and byproducts that might lend themselves to U.N.-brokered trading. Here are a couple: Corruption offsets. When highly corrupt governments do business in world markets, they taint the business climate in ways that create incentives and avenues for others to become more corrupt. How about the U.N. levying a tax on the most corrupt regimes, and redistributing the revenues to countries that enhance the global business environment by enforcing financial integrity? No need to soak already impoverished peoples in corruption-fostering regimes. The U.N. could levy a direct personal tax on their rulers, and collect it when said potentates arrive for the annual U.N. General Assembly opening in New York -- requiring simply that they dip into their private accounts, or maybe open their briefcases.

A glance at the annual country corruption index by Berlin-based Transparency International suggests, for example, that, under this scheme, governments of such graft-happy places as Burma and Belarus could buy corruption offsets from places such as Finland and New Zealand.

Despotism offsets. Much as financial corruption taints world markets, tyranny contaminates the integrity of global politics. How about a U.N.-brokered levy on tyrants, with the proceeds to be paid out as further incentive to the benevolent influence of democracies? Let Cuba's Fidel Castro and Libya's Moammar Gadhafi buy despotism offsets from countries such as Poland and Mongolia.

The possibilities are endless: Sex-discrimination offsets for the Saudi royals; bombast offsets for Venezuela's Hugo Chavez; illicit-nuclear-bomb offsets for Iran's mullahs and North Korea's Kim Jong Il.

The only hitch I can see is if the U.N., in all fairness, imposed similar levies on itself. In that case, by the time the dignitaries of Turtle Bay got done paying for their own corruption offsets, incompetence offsets, self-aggrandizement offsets, cover-up offsets, and, most of all (lest we forget climate change), hot-air offsets, the U.N. would be out of business.

[Tri-Valley Herald Editorial, Friday, June 8, 2007](#)

Opinion: Reconsider flexing your power in Hayward

If there's a hot topic in Hayward these days, it's the two proposed power plants that Calpine Corp. and Tierra Energy want to plop down on the west side of town.

Now, there's no question that Hayward has an industrial reputation. But does that mean residents should be forcibly doomed to breathe more questionable air? Does that mean Tierra is justified in devising a secret plan for the Eastshore peaker plant without first seeking civilian input? Just because we house more industry does not mean it's automatically OK to locate two power plants here. Key word: automatically. So Calpine and Tierra, let's not fall into a state of complacency here.

California Energy Commission officials held an informational meeting on Wednesday as a sort of mass airing of concerns for all parties. That included their own concerns about any possible barriers delaying the approval process for both the Eastshore and Russell City plants.

We say not so fast there, buddy. These "possible barriers" include air quality studies and possible impacts on surrounding neighborhoods. The power companies are always quick to point out that they'll buy credits to offset the pollution, but what does that do to make conditions acceptable for residents in the area of the plants? Nothing. This isn't a process that would, could or should be rushed. The Bay Area may need power, but that doesn't trump basic quality-of-life and health issues.

We urge the CEC, Calpine, Tierra and Pacific Gas & Electric Co. to take their time in these planning stages. Listen to residents and city leaders and genuinely take their concerns to heart. Do we really need two power plants in the same area? Do we really need two in Hayward in general? Consider the impacts. Weigh the information. And decide: Isn't there somewhere else more conducive to this plan?

[L.A. Times editorial, Monday, June 11, 2007:](#)

Reinventing Kyoto

The international treaty for cutting greenhouse gases is a bust, and Bush's approach will do little to help.

AS PRESIDENT BUSH sat across the table last week from European leaders steamed about his approach to global warming, he could at least bask in the knowledge that even though the compromise he engineered isn't exactly the right thing to do, it's less wrong than usual.

Bush, the former Texas oilman who is as beloved by environmentalists as Nero was by Christians, has been under pressure from a Democratic Congress and fellow world leaders in the Group of 8 to change course on climate change. And he did, sort of. The final communique from the G-8 summit in Germany commits the U.S. to "seriously consider" cutting its greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2050 and to work with the U.N. to come up with a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, the international treaty on climate change that the Senate refused to ratify in 1998. That's not the deal for mandatory cuts the Europeans were seeking, but it's further than Bush has been willing to go before.

Bush is correct about one thing: Kyoto is a mess. The president has rightly forced other world

leaders to address one of the major flaws of the pact, which is that it doesn't apply to emerging economic giants such as China and India. Yet he also seems to think that these developing countries should be held to the same standards as the U.S., and is unwilling to do anything unless China does the same. That's unrealistic and unfair.

A better approach would be to fix what's really wrong with Kyoto.

What's so magical about 1990?

The Kyoto Protocol's main mechanism for saving the world is a cap-and-trade system. Individual countries or confederations set caps on emissions of greenhouse gases based on where they were in 1990 — in the European Union, it's 8% below 1990 levels — and pass out credits to power plants and industrial polluters, dictating how many tons they can emit. Polluters that fall below their allocations can sell their "carbon credits" to those that can't reduce emissions as easily.

A carbon-trading market for these credits has emerged in Europe, but the scheme so far has done nothing to reduce emissions because, thanks to the power of the energy lobby, the initial credit allocations were set too high. But that barely touches the surface of Kyoto's problems.

The choice of 1990 as a base year simply rewards countries whose economies have shrunk since then and punishes growth. Russia, Eastern Europe, Germany and Britain are strong backers of Kyoto, and if one looks at the costs and benefits of the pact, it's no wonder. Today, these countries emit either less than they did in 1990 or just a little bit more. In Britain, that's because the privatization of the coal industry led to a decline in coal-fired power plants in favor of natural gas; elsewhere, it's because the collapse of the Soviet Union was followed by the closing of filthy Soviet-era industrial plants, while economies in Russia and much of Eastern Europe stagnated.

The U.S. economy, meanwhile, has grown significantly since 1990, with a corresponding rise in power demand that, according to the Energy Information Administration, has caused carbon dioxide emissions to jump 20.4%. What a global carbon-trading scheme boils down to, then, is a massive wealth transfer from the U.S. to Russia. U.S. polluters would pay billions of dollars to buy carbon credits from other countries — mostly Russia, because it would have the most to sell. Why should we inject huge sums into a country with a rotten human rights record, rampant corruption and opposing geopolitical views? And what did Russia do to earn the cash, other than shrink?

Further, because there is no world body that polices greenhouse gas emissions, countries and polluters are on the honor system — we have to trust them to be honest about how much they're polluting. Governments in Russia or Ukraine aren't capable of monitoring emissions from every pollution source even if they wanted to, and under Kyoto, there's no reason for them to want to. After all, if Ukraine claims to be cleaner than it really is, rich countries such as the U.S. and Japan will shower it with money for carbon credits. And corrupt governments will tend to distribute credits unfairly, using them to reward political supporters and reducing the market's effectiveness.

Meanwhile, an even bigger problem than the ill-considered carbon-trading scheme is figuring out what to do with those nations that don't have to take part in it.

Cars, coal and China

Just 40 countries are required to reduce emissions under Kyoto, and because the U.S. and Australia didn't ratify the pact, it's only 38. Those countries aren't necessarily the world's richest, nor the biggest emitters; they include many poverty-ridden former Soviet-bloc countries such as Estonia, Lithuania and Ukraine. The pact excludes wealthy Asian and Middle Eastern nations such as South Korea, Taiwan, Qatar and Kuwait.

Why the distinction? The poor Eastern European countries were eager to take part, knowing they stood to make a lot of money on carbon credits. Meanwhile, many wealthy countries were excluded on the basis of historical fairness: Because they didn't become economic powers until relatively recently, they aren't considered as culpable in the buildup of greenhouse gases that started in the 19th century.

Also left out are India and China. A quick look at the increase in greenhouse gas emissions in China alone is headache inducing. If China keeps growing at its current rate, its per capita income is expected to reach U.S. levels within 25 years. Once that happens, the Earth Policy Institute projects, there might be three cars in China for every four people, which is the current ratio in the U.S.; that comes to 1.1 billion vehicles. Currently, there are only 800 million vehicles in the entire world.

Meanwhile, China builds a new coal-fired power plant every week to stoke its growth, and the International Energy Agency calculates that in a quarter of a century, its CO₂ emissions will be double those of the other industrialized nations combined. India, the world's fourth-biggest polluter, is also growing at a blistering pace. Unless these two countries can be persuaded to embrace green power, they will render Kyoto and every other attempt to reduce greenhouse gases moot.

Unfortunately, they're not eager to change their ways. Last Monday, China unveiled its climate-change plan in response to pressure from the G-8; it made no commitments to any quantifiable carbon reductions and rejected international efforts to impose them. India also refuses to consider anything that might slow its economic development.

That's no reason to give up, however.

Free-market fix

The week before the G-8 summit, Bush announced that he would call together the 15 nations most responsible for greenhouse gas emissions to hammer out a voluntary deal on lowering them. Implied in that plan was a rejection of the United Nations process that created the Kyoto Protocol and is now focusing on a successor for it after it expires in 2012. Also implied was that the U.S. would only go as far as China and India in making cuts.

That's wrongheaded on many levels. There is something to the historical fairness argument. China and India didn't create this problem, the older industrial powers did. Further, Americans remain far and away the biggest energy hogs on Earth — yearly per capita CO₂ emissions are many times higher in this country than in China or India. We are in a vastly better position to cut emissions without derailing our economy and will never persuade the developing world to come along unless we lead by example.

What's needed is a new, improved version of Kyoto that brings India and China onboard and commits them to "grow green," but still leaves the tougher cuts up to those nations better able to make them, such as the U.S., Canada, Japan and Europe. A better treaty would scrap the unworkable carbon-trading scheme and instead impose new taxes on carbon-based fuels. As recently explained in the first installment of this series, carbon taxes avoid many of the pitfalls of carbon trading. They would produce an equal incentive for every nation to clean up without relying on arbitrary dates or caps, or transferring money from one nation to another. They're also much less subject to corruption because they give governments an incentive to monitor and crack down on polluters (the tax money goes to the government, so the government wins by keeping polluters honest).

Of course, China and India would be no more eager to accept carbon taxes than carbon caps. But the free market has a way of accomplishing what no amount of international pressure can.

As clean-power technologies and alternative fuels become more widely available, which a carbon tax would encourage, they will get cheaper. China and India both care more about raising standards of living than about pollution or global warming, but that doesn't mean they don't care at all. Waterways are becoming badly polluted in both countries, and the air in many big Chinese cities is nearly unbreathable. Coal is abundant and cheap in China, but if the price of renewable power were competitive, the Chinese would buy it. Yet green power will never reach this price unless the U.S. and other industrialized nations crack down much harder on carbon.

Real solutions to global warming, such as carbon taxes, won't come cheap — they'll make power bills steeper and gas prices even higher than they are now. But the economic news isn't all bad. Much of the clean technology of the future will probably be developed in the United States and sold overseas. Think of it as a novel way of reducing our trade deficit with China while building a cleaner world.

[Washington Post editorial, June 8, 2007](#)

Kneecapping California

Guess who's trying to kill the Golden State's emissions standards.

THERE IS a bald attempt in Congress to short-circuit California's effort to regulate tailpipe emissions -- with Democrats leading the charge. A bill from the chairman of the House energy and air quality subcommittee, Rep. Rick Boucher (D-Va. -- or is that D-Big Coal?), would halt recent moves by states to limit the emission of greenhouse gases that cause climate change. He insists, "This is not an attack on California." Color us unconvinced.

The Supreme Court ruled in April that the Environmental Protection Agency has the authority to regulate greenhouse gases. Meanwhile, California has asked the EPA to do something it has done more than 40 times over the past 30 years: waive the agency's emissions rules to allow the state's more stringent regulations to take effect. That would mean a 30 percent reduction in greenhouse gases from car and light truck tailpipes by 2016, starting with the 2009 model year. Eleven other states have signed on to California's bold new standards. The only thing standing in the way is the EPA. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) asked for the waiver in December 2005; he has threatened to sue if it is not granted within six months.

Because California's tough air pollution laws predate those of the federal government, the Clean Air Act allowed the state to devise its own laws, as long as they are not arbitrary and are at least as stringent as national regulations. Now comes Mr. Boucher's bill to bar any waiver if the EPA administrator finds that "such State standards are designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions." Regulating carbon dioxide emissions from tailpipes "is the functional equivalent" of regulating fuel economy, a domain of the Transportation Department, Mr. Boucher told us. As a result, "We have gone from one regulatory agency to two or three when it comes to regulating fuel economy," he said, referring to the EPA, the Transportation Department and California. By making DOT the sole regulator, Mr. Boucher told us, "We are making order out of confusion."

He's right in saying that strong federal leadership would be ideal. What California is seeking permission to do wouldn't be necessary if the federal government had been serious about air pollution (initially) and global warming (now). But from President Bush to industry-beholden members of Congress, there has been little stomach for facing down the automakers or the coal and electricity industries, which together account for 60 percent of energy-related carbon dioxide emissions in the United States.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California vowed Tuesday to oppose any legislation coming to the floor that undermines California's emissions plan and strips the EPA of its authority to regulate greenhouse gases. Ms. Pelosi should gird for battle.

[Bakersfield Californian commentary, Sunday, June 10, 2007:](#)

Non-smoker suffering from 'smoker's lung'

I am 50 years old and I have a smoker's lung. I've never even put a cigarette in my mouth. But my lungs have a problem delivering oxygen to my body. There have been days when I have hardly been able to move for lack of oxygen.

What is my problem?

Ignorance.

I was shocked to learn Bakersfield had the third worst air quality in the nation.

I'm a milk drinker and the only thing I don't like about dairies is the smell as I drive by.

I know that there are major traffic issues in southwest Bakersfield, but hey, I live in the northeast and we won't have the same problems for years, yet.

The only time I think about trucks is when I am driving on Highways 58 or 99.

I live in a farming community and I grew up on the edge of the oil fields. I've never given them a second thought. That's just the way it is. Right?

I can't breathe and I am totally ignorant about the serious and unique air quality issues facing the San Joaquin Valley. I do not consider air quality when I go to vote.

I don't talk about air quality issues with my friends. I definitely do NOT read newspaper articles on air quality or listen to television programs on the subject. They're boring and talk about restricting my rights or hurting the industries that are vital to our county.

I would never think to ask my state, county and city representative what they are doing about the issue.

Like, I said, I suffer from ignorance. Big time ignorance.

So, what am I doing about it?

- Type: "San Joaquin Valley air pollution" in my search engine and start reading. There is plenty of information out there to become educated. I should know the greatest contributors to air pollution in the valley. (Hint: It's not me, but I still need to know who is.)
- Develop an "air quality vocabulary." What is the "federal 8-hour ozone standard?" What is a NOx and why should I care? When talking about air, what is a PM and who creates the most of it?
- Pay attention to news reporting. In addition, Valley Public Television has created a series on the valley air. The station's Web site is www.kvpt.org. Children need to know more about our air than that -- there are days they have no PE.
- Factor air quality control issues into my considerations for voting and give this issue a higher ranking on my list of things I care about. Let my representatives know that improving valley air quality is a key step in obtaining my vote. If I see the words "city planning" I will think "air pollution reduction." As the city grows, the ability to navigate through Bakersfield is not only an issue of convenience. It is an issue of cleaner air.
- Visit the Web site of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District at www.valleyair.org and read about what they are doing and what they are learning about the valley air. This agency is supposed to be accountable to me, as well as the federal government. I need to know how to support its efforts and also ensure it does represent my interests.

I spent about an hour on the Internet and learned a lot. Now, I am slightly less ignorant, but I have a long way to go. The valley has been slow to respond to its air problems. The legislative branches are well on their way to formulating and implementing plans for improving valley air. Now I have to get working and become a valley air quality collaborator. I can't afford to be ignorant. My very breath depends on it.

Debbie Mish Garton lives in Bakersfield and is a member of the Opinion section's Sounding Board. She is a religious education teacher.

[Bakersfield Californian commentary, Sunday, June 10, 2007:](#)

Daddy, why does Bakersfield stink?

I get to enjoy clean air every day living in Frazier Park. Well, most days, unless the winds shift and the air from the valley "turns the corner" and comes up the canyon.

The first thing you notice on such days is the haze and, then, with your first breath, you notice the smell a thick, chemical soup of cow-truck-car-factory-field. You can't help but notice it. My son, when he was 4 years old, asked: "Why does Bakersfield stink?"

One of the biggest problems with Bakersfield's air is that too many people have forgotten what clean air is like, or have ceased to notice what they are breathing. In, out, in, out, with each breath your body filters whatever is there.

Minute particles are captured and some are stored in your lungs, migrating to other organs, dissolving into toxins that cause a myriad of diseases. Worse than trans fats? Undoubtedly. If we did notice, truly notice, the situation wouldn't be tolerated for long.

What do I do? I drive less. I recycle. I combine errands and I know that the more we do this collectively the better the air will be. I try to teach my kids these values. I drive our smallest car on the longest trips. I call in and report gross polluters, those driving old cars that belch smoke. I vote for cleaner air whenever I can, because I believe that the way we currently treat what we breathe isn't a whole lot different than the way we treat one another or our own bodies with indifference.

The other thing I am doing is helping people experience clean air. I am working with a group of dedicated artists to found the Mountain Shakespeare Festival. Our motto: "Stay and breathe awhile." We hope that our friends from Bakersfield and Los Angeles, two metropolises vying for the worst air quality in the country, will come up, fill their lungs with clean air and then return home with a memory of compelling entertainment and what it is like to truly breathe.

Perhaps, a few days later, back in "the grind," they will gaze out their car windows when locked in traffic on Rosedale Highway or the Sepulveda Pass and think, "Why am I, why are we, living this way?"

Hopefully, the next time the ballot asks them to "sacrifice" some money to build high speed rail, increase mileage standards or force factories to filter their waste, they will realize it isn't a sacrifice at all to give up the mass suicide we participate in daily.

But I don't do nearly enough. I would love, some day in the not-too-distant future, to drive down only as far as the Flying J in Lebec, or take a shuttle even. I would sit down in a sleek train, wave at the empty gas pumps and be whisked silently off to the movie theater on Ming Avenue.

I love to drive, but when asked recently by a representative of the Kern Council of Governments a body charged with working out a state-wide highway and development plan for our future what I envisioned Frazier Park would be like in 50 years, I replied; "Cars, as we know them, will no longer exist and the massive ribbon of Interstate 5 will be a gigantic skate and biking park."

Peter Kjenaas is a member of the Opinion section's Sounding Board. He lives in Frazier Park and is president of Cartwright Entertainment, a production company.

[Bakersfield Californian editorial, Sunday, June 10, 2007:](#)

Members of *The Californian* Opinion section's Sounding Board were asked to comment on what they are doing, or what they would be willing to do to help clean up the valley's polluted air.

While we look to regulatory agencies, such as the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, to develop strategies and enforce rules, individuals also can play a role in curbing pollution.

Appearing on today's Forum page are responses from Sounding Board members Debbie Garton of Bakersfield and Peter Kjenaas of Frazier Park. Other responses will appear in the daily Opinion section.

What would you do or what would you be willing to do to help clean up the valley's polluted air?

Send your responses to opinion@bakersfield.com with your name, address and telephone number. Responses also can be mailed to Opinion Section, *The Bakersfield Californian*, P.O. Bin 440, Bakersfield 93302, or by fax to 395-7380.

[Bakersfield Californian commentary, Friday, June 8, 2007:](#)

Is district 'walking the walk?

SEYED SADREDIN RESPONDS

In response to the concerns expressed by David Baldwin in his Community Voices article, which appear below, Californian Editorial Page Editor Dianne Hardisty contacted Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Sadredin's response is being presented in a question-and-answer format.

Q: Is the district relocating?

A: Because the rent is so reasonable, the district would prefer to remain in Kern County's Public Services Building on M St. But the county wishes to free up the space and has asked the district to relocate.

Q: Where will it be moving?

A: The district is working with a commercial Realtor in its search for an 18,000-square-foot complex. Four locations in the vicinity of 7th Standard Road and Highway 65 are in consideration.

Q: How will the space be developed?

A: For staff to move into a suitable complex, it appears the office space will be built specifically to meet the district's specifications. The plan is for the district to lease the complex from the builder or private owner.

Q: Will the district require the use of "green" technology to build the complex?

A: In the formal bidding process, the builders will be asked to submit proposals that incorporate "green" technology, as well as proposals that do not. Both options will be presented to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's governing board in August.

"Green" technology will increase construction costs and as a result will increase the district's rental costs. Even without the use of "green" technology, the district's rental costs will double because the county's charges are so low.

"Green" technology has four components incorporation of energy-efficient systems; use of building materials, such as recycled products; installation of reflective roofs and solar energy systems; and individual amenities for employee convenience and comfort. The office complex could incorporate all four components, or a few of the most cost-effective and energy-efficient.

Q: Does the district's new office in Modesto use "green" technology?

A: No, that building was constructed about four years ago. Unless a tenant agrees in advance to buy a building, often the contractor will not incorporate the more expensive technology.

Q: Did the district eventually buy that building?

A: Yes, about a year ago.

Q: The district is asking valley businesses to use "green" technology when they construct buildings. Is the district "walking the walk" when it does not follow its own advice?

A: The district's governing board has expressed an interest in using "green" technology to build this project and for other district needs. Board members will consider bids, building specifications and associated costs when they meet in August.

[Bakersfield Californian commentary, Friday, June 8, 2007:](#)

Community Voices: Air district should set example

This letter is being submitted as a matter of genuine public concern and is not meant to demean the decisions made by the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, its officers, or the governing board.

In fact, this letter is meant to encourage the governing board to explore options that would send the message: The district is a leader in improving air quality. The message would be sent to the regulated community, the leaders of our great cities and counties, and most of all the citizens that breathe the air.

Soon, the district's southern regional office, currently leasing space in Kern County's Public Services Building on M Street in Bakersfield, will need to relocate to new office space.

One of the options is to have a new office built according to district specifications and then lease it back from the builder.

Due to budgetary constraints the district is considering specifying a building that is not substantially "green". Although the initial investment of "green" construction and planning is high, the payback is well worth the commitment.

Wouldn't it be great if the district decided to build a "GREEN" building? It would be a building that makes a statement!

The Kern Schools Federal Credit Union recently completed a "green" building that is located near the Marketplace at 9500 Ming Ave. Green buildings incorporate energy-saving techniques in their design that reduce energy consumption, energy costs and emissions to the atmosphere.

The credit union looked to Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design, one of the most recognized measurement tools in the industry, for green building strategies. KSFCU compared its green building at 9500 Ming Ave. to a similar non-"green" office building located on 5201 California Ave. in terms of energy costs.

According to a report presented by the credit union and compiled by Premier Management Co., the results were:

Energy costs for the 72,000-square-foot, three-story KSFCU building at 9500 Ming Ave. in April 2006 was \$9,264; in May 2006 was \$13,350; and in June 2006 was \$15,630.

Energy costs for the 63,000-square-foot, four-story building at 5201 California Ave. in April 2006 was \$18,311; in May 2006 was \$21,622; and in June 2006 was \$25,835.

As noted earlier, cost savings from building "green" translate to energy savings and emissions reductions.

Paramount Farms and the Kern County Fairgrounds are two other examples of local organizations committed to energy saving techniques, and should also be congratulated for their efforts.

The district is already a leader among air pollution control districts and air quality management districts across California and, indeed, across the United States of America. The leadership is in place. Perhaps the district just needs a little encouragement from the community.

Let's encourage the governing board to ask for a building that is designed to incorporate LEED strategies, and to continue to be the great leader that they have become.

David P. Baldwin works for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. However, he is writing as a concerned private citizen and "fellow air breather."

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Sunday, June 10, 2007:](#)

Fallout from a mine

I stopped at the Minkler Store recently and was told that the migration of 50 to 150 buzzards came through Minkler about three weeks ago. Probably their flyway is over Jesse Morrow Mountain.

If a mine is allowed to operate there, blasting will confuse the buzzards and other birds that fly over that mountain each year. What about the other animals that live there, such as the kite bird, the burrowing owl, the tiger salamander, the kit fox (which is endangered), the golden eagle and probably many more I don't know about? They cannot tolerate the road-building and blasting that will be going on if Cemex mines the mountain.

Where do you think all the rattlesnakes are going to go when blasting begins? The vibrations will go through the foothills, and we will have snakes in our backyards in town. I hear this is a terrible year for rattlers biting dogs and cats near the foothills.

Think about the results of this operation and write to newspapers and county supervisors before it's too late. Don't forget about truck traffic and water usage, and the air pollution it will cause. Go to www.jessemorrowmountain.org for more information.

Georgia Linscheid, Reedley

[Letter to the Modesto Bee, Friday, June 8, 2007](#)

Don't sell water to San Francisco

The powers that be at the Oakdale Irrigation District feel we have a surplus of water to sell to San Francisco ("Bay Area's thirsty; Oakdale district may help," June 3, Page A-1). Who really benefits from that?

I've also read the argument that ethanol, as an alternative fuel, requires too much water to grow the corn to make it.

Oakdale has land; Oakdale has water. Oakdale and the surrounding cities have farmland and transplants commuting on a daily basis to the Bay Area to work, consuming gasoline by the tankerful and adding to the valley's air pollution.

Why not solve a few of our local problems and be an example instead of a drain on our precious resources?

San Francisco should utilize its \$168 million to learn to convert its sea water for nondrinking purposes, freeing more water from Hetch Hetchy for drinking. We should plant more corn and fewer houses.

As a side note, there is a complaint that corn costs would rise if used for alternative fuel, costing the dairy industry more for feed. Perhaps if we used more of our corn crop for fuel and less for high-fructose corn syrup, which has found its way into everything we eat, we could have an alternative fuel option.

Mona Manthe, Oakdale