

## **Thompson, Synagro reach truce of sorts**

By Doug Keeler, Midway Driller Editor  
Taft Midway Driller, Wednesday, July 11, 2007

City Councilman Cliff Thompson, an outspoken critic of importing Southern California's sewage sludge into Kern County, has reached an accommodation of sorts with Synagro.

He says he is willing to accept Synagro's biosolids composting facility east of Taft in an area the city wants to annex.

"First of all they are here, so we've got to co-exist," Thompson said in an interview last week.

At Tuesday's council meeting, he put it like this:

"Am I going to be in their corner? Probably not. Am I going to be less vocal? Probably so."

Thompson toured Synagro's plant on South Lake Road with other city officials last week, then met at length by himself with Synagro representative Lorrie Loder.

He said he sees a major distinction between Synagro, which combines the biosolids with greenwaste and composts it for use as fertilizer and soil amendments, and the land application in Kern County of the unprocessed sludge.

"There's a huge difference. Night and day," Thompson said. Synagro is not land applying biosolids. They are turning it into compost. I think what they are doing is probably the best way of processing the biosolids."

Thompson said his tour of Synagro's composting facility and the meeting with Loder impressed him.

"I had my eyes opened a little bit," he said.

Thompson said he was impressed with the steps Synagro takes at the South Kern Composting Facility to keep pollutants out of the ground water and to keep other pollutants out of the atmosphere.

Synagro's Lorrie Loder was happy with Thompson's comments.

She said Synagro looks forward to a long and productive relationship with the city.

## **Students write winning essays**

Tulare Advance-Register, Tuesday, July 10, 2007

The work of Tulare students stood out in the fifth annual "Make A Difference in Air Quality" essay and poster contest, which was coordinated by the Tulare County Association of Governments.

Los Tules Middle School eighth grader Seth Hurd was first-place essay winner in grades 7-8. Honorable mentions include Sarah Hacker, who is home-schooled in Tulare, and Kirstyn Martinez, a third-grade student at Pleasant School.

Heritage School third-grade student Irene Carlos was awarded honorable mention in the poster contest. More than 400 entries were submitted this year. To view winning essays or posters or for more information on the contest, visit [www.tularecog.org](http://www.tularecog.org).

## **S.J. County population on the rise**

### **Number of residents expected to triple by 2050**

By Mike Martinez, STAFF WRITER  
Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, July 11, 2007

TRACY - The population of San Joaquin County is expected to triple by 2050, according to population estimates released by the state earlier this week.

The number of county residents is projected to reach nearly 1.8 million in the year 2050, making it the 11th most populous in the state, moving past San Francisco, San Mateo and Ventura counties.

Nearly half of the county's population is expected to be Hispanic (848,850), nearly triple the number of whites (381,757) and Asians (368,075), the next two largest segments.

Neighboring Contra Costa County is expected to have 1,812,242 residents - only

30,000 more than San Joaquin - while Alameda County is expected to top the 2 million mark. "There is no question the Central Valley is going to be the growth center for California over the next several decades," said Mike Locke, president and CEO of the San Joaquin Partnership, a nonprofit economic development corporation in San Joaquin County.

Locke said one of the many challenges is going to be balancing the population growth in San Joaquin County with open space and agricultural preservation.

He also said controversial issues - such as [air quality](#), convincing residents to use mass transit and the density of land use - are going to start a lot of discussions.

Locke said projections 40 and 50 years into the future are "always a little bit suspect" when based on mathematical projection formulas "based on a lot of assumptions."

"What are the challenges that come with those assumptions?" Locke said. "There has been a lot of debate regarding the state in relation with long-term strain in California ... if the whole state continues to keep growing, do we continue to pump the whole Delta to Southern California?"

State Sen. Dave Cogdill, R-Modesto, who represents a portion of San Joaquin County, said the numbers are an indication the state needs to address future water needs today.

"The last time the state built a sizable reservoir was 1979 when there were only 23 million people living in our state," Cogdill said in a prepared statement. "Local water storage projects are a move in the right direction but the only way we can address the needs of all future Californians is by increasing the amount of water available statewide."

## **Belmont mulls hybrid incentives**

### **Council eyes gift certificates for drivers who go green**

By Will Oremus, MEDIANEWS STAFF  
Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Buy a hybrid, get free tennis lessons?

It could happen in Belmont, where the City Council is exploring a program to reward eco-conscious car buyers with "gift certificates" for city services.

Under the plan, residents who buy a new alternative-fuel vehicle will get a \$500 voucher from the city. That's enough to buy a basic business license, rent a picnic area at Twin Pines Park, enroll in a belly dancing class and sign up the kids for swim lessons.

"I don't think we could afford to just cut people checks," said Dave Warden, the Councilman who dreamed up the idea and introduced it at Tuesday night's meeting. "I'm thinking this would actually encourage more business with the city by making people more aware of the programs we offer."

The Council hadn't decided whether to pursue the proposal as of press time.

The concept is the latest in a parade of proposals that Peninsula cities have been trotting out in recent months in a bid to become more "green." Belmont also on Tuesday was scheduled to consider joining San Carlos, Foster City and others in eliminating permit fees for solar panel installations.

"Think globally, act locally," Warden said. "If we can do something that doesn't cost much money to improve our air quality and reduce dependence on foreign oil, that's a great opportunity."

Ironically, Warden says he got the idea to tackle vehicle emissions from critics of Belmont's proposed ban on smoking. "Why don't you ban vehicle exhaust instead?" was a common refrain from outraged smokers in city meetings on that proposal.

Cities don't have the authority to regulate emissions, but Warden said the incentive program could help nudge residents toward vehicles that belch fewer harmful fumes from their tailpipes.

Hybrid buyers already get perks from the federal government, which introduced tax credits of up to \$3,000 for certain vehicles in the Energy Policy Act of 2005. And while the regional Bay Area Air Quality Management District doesn't offer rebates to individuals, it doles out hundreds of thousands annually to help public agencies clean up their fleets.

"At the air district, we definitely believe in the incentive as well as the regulatory approach to improving air quality," spokeswoman Karen Schkolnick said. "Any agency that rolls up their sleeves to see how they can participate, we think that's great."

Belmont Councilman Warren Lieberman is the proud owner of a hybrid Toyota Prius, but he's not yet convinced of the wisdom of Warden's approach.

"I think it's a very intriguing idea," Lieberman said. "But you do have to ask yourself, 'Is this an appropriate way for the government to be directing consumer behavior?'"

Lieberman said he and his wife bought the Prius in 2004 on its merits, not because of government tax breaks. He suspects a program such as Warden's would be more likely to serve as a policy statement than to actually influence a consumer's decision.

Warden disagreed, saying he knows people who decided to buy hybrids because of the federal tax credits. He is considering buying one himself in the near future, but he said that as a city official he would not be eligible for any perks approved by the Council.

Belmont resident Risa Horowitz, an avid environmentalist whose family owns two Priuses, said she hopes the idea catches on.

"Anything we can do to try to get people out of the regular gas guzzlers, especially the SUVs, would be magnificent."

[Stockton Record Editorial, Wednesday, July 11, 2007](#)

## **It'll take more than 24 hours of Live Earth to save the planet**

Material Girl Madonna has gone home in her Escalade. Controversial Kanye West has finished rapping about conspicuous consumption.

Live Earth, 24 hours of entertainment designed to sound the global-warming alarm on Saturday, is history.

The event's organizers and participants deserve credit for trying to do the right thing. But did the power of music really convince people to live differently and adopt behaviors that will help cool the planet?

Live Earth, "the largest global entertainment event in all of history," as organizer and former Vice President Al Gore said, might have drowned in its own excess.

It's hard to embrace conservation tips and preservation ideas from those who live the high life and ease their conscience with carbon offsets, the practice of burning excessive fossil-fuel emissions and buying their way out by funding "green" power somewhere else and sometime later.

It's even harder to be told "think and live small" by those who too often don't think and live very large.

The British press was particularly harsh about Madonna's carbon emissions from her nine houses, a fleet of cars and a private jet.

The News of the World tabloid, Britain's biggest-selling newspaper, called her a "climate-change catastrophe."

Organizers, including Gore and producer/entrepreneur Kevin Wall, seemed to realize the potential for hypocrisy during eco-commercials shown during the 24-hour production. They were filmed in grainy black and white.

So many stars make millions of dollars doing product endorsements that some distinction had to be made.

Gore says part of the inspiration for Live Earth came from his own youth, the civil rights movement and such songs as Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind."

We certainly hope Live Earth makes a meaningful impact, particularly on many of those young people who might have been attracted to the event more by the music than the message.

It's a noble thing to provide a global refrain for climate awareness. But the overheated scope and style of Live Earth made it seem more like a party than a mandate.

[Stockton Record Editorial, Tuesday, July 10, 2007](#)

### **Helping to clear the air**

Local government officials are getting environmentally friendly wherever they can, primarily by purchasing low-emissions vehicles and providing incentives for building contractors who use methods that help reduce air pollution.

San Joaquin County and city officials from Tracy to Lodi are beginning to convert their vehicle fleets to hybrid technology, while encouraging developers to accommodate bicycles, walking and public transportation.

No one approach will be enough to help the Valley comply fully with federal ozone standards, but they should make a collective impact. The changes are happening in every community. With higher gasoline prices, they also make economic sense.

**Quote:** "The emissions reductions are pretty modest, but it does show to the world that (agencies) are doing something about this and so should you," said Diane Bailey of the Natural Resources Defense Counsel.

[Stockton Record, Letter to the Editor, Wednesday, July 11, 2007](#)

### **July Fourth is a mess in Tracy**

We went to Tracy's July Fourth events in Lincoln Park and Tracy High and had a good time.

However, thousands of beverages were being consumed, and we were surprised to find no receptacles for recycling cans and bottles.

There were a few bins poorly marked for "bottles." But they were full of trash.

Most people apparently didn't care about spoiling our environment, but I'm more bothered by the lack of responsible leadership from city officials.

Recycling is something you do for your community and your children.

Making new aluminum cans from used cans takes 95 percent less energy, and 20 recycled cans can be made with the energy needed to produce one totally new can.

Changing our wasteful habits isn't just about pleasing a few tree-hugging crackpots.

The point is to improve our community's health, protect our natural surroundings, keep our water and air clean, reduce our need for foreign resources and preserve the climate and way of life we enjoy and take for granted.

Larry Nelson, *Tracy*