

Two experts will join valley's air board

BY STACEY SHEPARD, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2007

Clean-air advocates tallied a victory this weekend when Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a bill that will add a doctor and scientist, both with expertise in air pollution, to the San Joaquin Valley air district board.

The bill was introduced five years ago as a way to shake up the 11-member San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board, which is dominated by county supervisors. Proponents of the bill, which included environmental and health advocates, criticized the supervisors for being too close to the agriculture and oil industries to pass tough regulations.

The bill was opposed by farm groups, industry representatives and a majority of local legislators. Among those who voted against it were Assemblywoman Nicole Parra, D-Hanford, state Sen. Roy Ashburn, R-Bakersfield and Assemblywoman Jean Fuller, R-Bakersfield. The Kern County Board of Supervisors and a majority of the current San Joaquin Valley air district board members were also against the additions.

Opponents said adding more people to the board wouldn't clean the valley's air any sooner. They also criticized the idea of political appointees serving on the board rather than officials elected by the voters.

The only local lawmaker to support the bill was state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter.

"This sends a clear message to the air district that the status quo is no longer good enough," said Sarah Sharpe of the Coalition for Clean Air, one of the groups that supported the bill.

Mary Nichols, chairwoman of the California Air Resources Board, made similar comments Monday after a news conference on the bill in Fresno.

"It's been tough to build the political support to pass strong measures to clean the (valley's) air," Nichols said. "Given ... the huge disparity of income, the growth rates and air pollution threats in the valley, this is a very sensible move. You (will) have scientific minds on the board asking questions elected officials won't always ask."

The doctor and scientist will be appointed by the governor. The bill stipulates both positions must be filled by valley residents.

The bill also creates two additional seats for cities with populations of 100,000 or more in order to increase representation of the valley's most populated areas. Currently, one seat exists for a city with a population of 50,000 or more.

The new seats will increase the size of the board from 11 to 15 members.

Governor signs bill shaking up composition of Valley air board

In the Modesto Bee, Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2007

FRESNO, Calif. - Air quality advocates and environmentalists celebrated Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's signature on a bill allowing a doctor and a scientist to join the board overseeing the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The measure, which Schwarzenegger signed into law Sunday, gives the governor authority to appoint to the board a doctor and a scientist who live in the smoggy San Joaquin Valley and specialize in the health effects of air pollution.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Mike Machado, D-Linden, also provides two additional spaces on the board for city council representatives, increasing the total board membership to 15.

"Clearly the health of valley residents is a priority for the governor," said Kim Thompson of the Fresno Madera Medical Society. "The medical community is ready to move forward in support."

Supporters said the changes were necessary to boost the community's input into air quality decisions and strengthen the board's medical and scientific expertise.

Governor signs bill shaking up composition of Valley air board

The Associated Press

Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2007

FRESNO, Calif.-Air quality advocates and environmentalists celebrated Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's signature on a bill allowing a doctor and a scientist to join the board overseeing the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

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Car owners will pay more to clean up the state's air

Los Angeles Times, Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2007

Motorists' fees in California will increase under a bill signed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger that is intended to raise millions to develop alternative fuel and clean-air technology.

But consumer advocates condemned the bill for putting the costs on the backs of motorists rather than oil companies.

AB118, by Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez, D-Los Angeles, increases fees charged to car owners to raise \$210 million for new energy subsidies and clean-air programs. In mid-2008, registration costs will go up \$3 per year for all vehicles and a smog abatement charge on new cars will jump from \$12 to \$20 a year.

A spokeswoman for the Republican governor denied he was being inconsistent by approving increases in the smog abatement and vehicle registration fees after initially winning election on a vow to kill an increase in the vehicle license fee.

The bill follows the 2006 passage of AB32, which requires the state to cut the emission of carbon dioxide and other planet-warming gases by 25 percent by 2020.

Some Democratic lawmakers said a large share of the money could end up going to oil companies to fund pollution reductions already required by law, something the bill's proponents dispute.

City Council OKs report for Clovis Wal-Mart

Discussion on water, traffic, pollution precede vote on proposed supercenter.

By Marc Benjamin

The Fresno Bee, Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2007

An environmental report for a 492,000-square foot shopping center with a Wal-Mart Supercenter as an anchor was approved by Clovis City Council members Monday night.

Council members approved an environmental report for the center after more than three hours of discussion that included concerns about traffic, pollution and water supply for the center at Clovis and Herndon avenues. Monday night's meeting was a follow-up to a six-hour hearing on the center last month.

The vote was 3-2, with council members Harry Armstrong and Lynne Ashbeck opposed to the environmental document.

As the meeting inched toward 11 p.m., the council still needed to address the site plan and the center's hours. Wal-Mart wants to keep its store open 24 hours a day. Clovis police are requesting the store be open only from 5 a.m. to midnight.

Council members, following staff recommendations, determined that many of the issues brought up in a meeting last month by a Stockton attorney, such as the need for a water supply assessment and health and pollution issues, were met in the environmental impact report for the project.

Save Our Crossroads Center attorney Natalie Weber said the city's environmental report was defective. She had one City Council ally in Armstrong, who described the environmental report as "very weak."

Armstrong said he called 50 Clovis residents and 47 of them were opposed to the center.

Council Member Ashbeck was concerned about the findings of traffic issues in the report.

Council Member Nathan Magsig said he is not sure that traffic issues can be completely mitigated.

"There will be problems whether or not this project happens," he said.

Mayor Bob Whalen said he could not think of anything that has not already been addressed in the environmental report.

"Blaming the developer is like getting on the scale in the morning and seeing I'm overweight and blaming my wife for being a great cook," he said.

The water supply assessment issue was dismissed outright by the city staff because the assessment is required for projects exceeding 500,000 square feet or with more than 1,000 employees. This project will not exceed either threshold, the city said.

The city also said air quality issues and their health-related impacts were in the report's health risk assessment, which was reviewed by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Opponents said the traffic study, which projects 19,000 vehicles per day, was not a correct analysis and should have shown additional traffic beyond the environmental report's projections.

"This is about the direction you want the city to go," said Wendy Kubos, who lives near the proposed project.

Clovis resident Ron Sundquist added: "We should take care of what we have first. ... We can have big stores, but let's do it in the right way."

But longtime Clovis resident Jo Ann Kelly said she supports Wal-Mart. "It will keep me from going to River Park," she said. "It's been studied to death and I don't think it needs to be studied anymore."

Council Member Armstrong sought a guarantee from a Wal-Mart official to keep the Shaw Avenue store open for 10 years.

He also said that there are not enough people to support three supermarkets within a one-mile stretch of Herndon Avenue.

Aaron Rios, Wal-Mart's spokesman, said the company bought the Shaw Avenue store and recently made \$4.5 million in renovations. But, he also said it wasn't in his authority to make a 10-year guarantee that the store would remain open.

TV tower may help experts tune in on Valley emissions

Air sensors gather information, find sources of greenhouse gases

By Alex Breitler - Record Staff Writer

Stockton Record, Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2007

WALNUT GROVE - A television broadcast tower one-third of a mile high could give scientists their clearest picture yet of the greenhouse gases that swirl invisibly in the Central Valley sky.

Officials said Monday that the 1970s-era tower, recently equipped with air sensors, will provide important data for regulators as they enforce a new law requiring greenhouse gas emissions be reduced 25 percent by 2020.

"We hope that eventually this data will be useful," said Arlyn Andrews, a scientist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Boulder, Colo.

Air sampled from as high as 1,600 feet will give experts a better idea of Valley emissions from as far as several hundred miles away and won't be tainted by sources such as diesel-belching tractors in the surrounding fields, Andrews said.

Here's how it works: Air is funneled into a pipe running down the side of the tower, just west of Interstate 5 near the San Joaquin County line. The air is sucked into ground-level sensors that provide continuous data on several gases believed to contribute to global warming.

Air also is diverted into a suitcase containing 12 glass flasks that are shipped regularly to the NOAA lab in Boulder for further testing. That ensures the computers at the tower are accurate, Andrews said.

The project, paid for in part with \$700,000 from the California Energy Commission, is the sixth of 12 throughout the country. Similar sensors were installed recently on a tower in San Francisco.

The scientists are renting the privately owned Walnut Grove tower.

"This really is just the beginning of what we hope will be a much denser network" of tower monitors, said Marc Fischer, a staff scientist with Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. He is leading the project for the state.

Data from the towers should also give scientists a better handle on the sources of greenhouse gases and how much comes from the burning of fossil fuels or is produced naturally.

Climate change in California could lead to any number of problems, experts say, including rising sea level, a thin snowpack in the Sierra, and more-intense storms and droughts.

Probes over SF, Walnut Grove analyze sources of carbon dioxide

in the Modesto Bee, Monday, Oct. 15, 2007

SAN FRANCISCO - New probes bolted onto a giant antenna tower are sniffing for greenhouse gases, part of an experiment to measure how much this region is generating.

Last month, a crew installed the monitoring probes at heights of 760 feet and 400 feet on Sutro Tower, a huge red and white structure in the heart of San Francisco mostly used to transmit radio and TV signals. There also is a probe 1,500 feet high on the Richland Tower in Walnut Grove.

A group of university and government scientists is trying to lay the groundwork for understanding whether the state's aggressive new anti-global warming laws will work.

The California Greenhouse Gas Emissions Project, known as CALGEM, is the brainchild of scientists at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. They determined four years ago that the greenhouse gases produced from burning fossil fuels could be measured regionally, which would help sort out how much of the pollution can be blamed on humans.

Until now, government monitoring sites were designed to focus solely on global patterns.

"This is the first time that the complete suite of greenhouse gases from a mixture of urban, suburban and rural areas will be monitored in a systematic fashion," said physicist Marc Fischer, leader of the lab's Environmental Energy Technologies Division.

"California is a big player in total greenhouse gas emissions," said Fischer, who submitted a proposal to the California Energy Commission five years ago. The agency granted \$700,000 toward the research.

California is the state that emits the most greenhouse gases a year - one-fourth of the U.S. total.

Under a new state law, by 2020 California must cut its greenhouse gas emissions to the levels emitted in 1990, a reduction of 25 percent. State law says that by 2050, carbon emissions must be reduced to 80 percent below 1990 levels.

At Sutro Tower and the second site in Walnut Grove, scientists are sampling all of the greenhouse gases twice a day. In Walnut Grove, they also are measuring some of the gases continuously. The San

Francisco spot was chosen to measure oceanic air, and the inland site will allow experts to measure air that is heavily influenced by the urban and rural areas.

Hayward gets \$95,000 grant to build bike lanes

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2007

HAYWARD - A \$95,000 grant from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District will help the city create a bike lane connecting the up-and-coming cannery area with the downtown district, city officials said last week.

The bike lane will be on lower B Street between the Amtrak station and Grand Street near the downtown BART station, said Luis Samayoa, a city transportation engineer.

Samayoa said crews will be able to take out one traffic lane because C Street is wide enough to handle the traffic.

The city is building a brand-new Burbank Elementary School and expanding Cannery Park while developers build hundreds of new homes in the former industrial area once dominated by the old Hunt's Cannery.

Downtown proponents have long hoped that new residents there will bring more activity to downtown.

Execution of the project awaits a fund transfer agreement between Hayward and the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency.

Health assessment clears steel company

Odors, risks still worry Berkeley residents

By Kristin Bender, STAFF WRITER

Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, October 16, 2007

BERKELEY - Neighbors say the smell of burning plastic is still in the air near Pacific Steel Casting despite findings from an independent environmental health consultant showing that emissions from the plant do not exceed permissible levels.

Pacific Steel Casting, a family-owned business that has operated in West Berkeley for 73 years, has been at the center of complaints from residents about headaches, nausea and a tightness in their chests because of a foul odor.

The company, which makes steel castings for truck parts, medical equipment and sewer pipes, also was sued by three different groups because of odor and alleged toxic emissions over the last few years.

But the just-released health risk assessment report -- completed by Environ in Emeryville and paid for by Pacific Steel -- shows that cancer risks and non-cancer hazards for those exposed to plant emissions and for those living, attending school or day care near the facility do not pose a significant risk.

"This report has determined that emissions from Pacific Steel Casting do not exceed notification levels for neighbors living in area zoned for residential or light industrial use.

The results show that Pacific Steel is not required to make any changes to reduce the risk to the public," according to a company statement.

The assessment was mandated by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District under a state air pollution control law, the Air Toxics Hot Spots Act of 1987. The law requires California facilities to report the types and quantities of toxic substances they routinely release into the air and make changes to reduce any risks.

The report is good news for the plant, but it could be another year before the air district signs off on the findings.

It must be reviewed by the California Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment in the next 180 days, said air district spokeswoman Karen Schkolnick. The city of Berkeley also will do an independent evaluation of the findings.

"(Pacific Steel) is certainly in a waiting pattern," said Schkolnick. "At this point, they are waiting to see if there will be any additional requests for information or if there is a requirement for revisions because we haven't issued our approval and we won't for a while," Schkolnick said.

Residents and community groups don't agree with the findings.

In August, Global Community Monitors released preliminary data that showed levels of manganese and nickel much higher than those deemed safe by the World Health Organization and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"I think (Pacific Steel) is Berkeley's greatest environmental concern," said Berkeley community activist L A Wood, who has done a dozen of the environmental sampling tests since May.

West Berkeley artist Michele Pred said she complained to the air district about 10 days ago because of a foul smell in the air for two days straight.

"It's the same old burning brakes, pot handle smell. It's like burning plastic," Pred said. "I did make a report and I sent out a call for everyone to do the same because it was so bad."

Pacific Steel has been fighting neighbors and legal battles for several years.

Last year, under a settlement with the air district, which had sued, Pacific Steel was required to install a \$2 million carbon absorption unit to reduce odor and emissions.

The company also settled with Communities for a Better Environment in Oakland earlier this year, promising to reduce its hazardous air pollutants by at least two tons annually. A third lawsuit from Neighborhood Solutions of Oakland is still pending.

"The company has made significant improvements. We are not perfect, but we are doing a significantly better job of capturing emissions and we will try to be even better," company spokeswoman Elisabeth Jewel said.

Jewel added the company last month installed a newer, larger filter system to capture metals on one of its three plants.

The company also made interior changes to increase the efficiency of the ventilation system, the spokeswoman said.

Oakland City Council President Ignacio De La Fuente, the vice president of the union representing 700 Pacific Steel workers, called the assessment good news.

"In the last several years they have done tremendous work in dealing with neighbors," he said.

The public can comment on the report until Jan. 31, 2008. The air district also will plan a community meeting before the end of January.

Comments need to be submitted in writing to Scott Lutz, manager of toxic evaluation section, BAAQMD, 939 Ellis St., San Francisco, CA 94109. They can be e-mailed to slutz@baaqmd.gov.

[Fresno Bee commentary, Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2007:](#)

CAL THOMAS: Global warming cult just wants to control us

This is a two-part column. Part one is what you might expect from a politically conservative person who believes "global warming" is a secular religion and that Al Gore deserved the Nobel Peace Prize as much as Yasser Arafat, Le Duc Tho and a myriad of other low-wattage lights, which is to say not at all. The second part may surprise my liberal friends.

The Church of Global Warming (CGW) is a cult. A cult has a number of definitions, among them this one from dictionary.com: "A religion or sect considered to be false, unorthodox, or extremist, with members often living outside of conventional society under the direction of a charismatic leader."

Cults wish to control others. Global-warming fundamentalists wish to do the same through the power of government.

CGW members would reject cult status -- which all cult members do -- and Al Gore has never been accused of displaying charisma. But the CGW confers charismatic status on him because he tells them what they want to hear: Salvation is available through the reduction of one's carbon footprint. Gore regularly violates his own doctrines by flying on big polluting jets, leaving tracks the size of Bigfoot.

Ignore the evidence

Cultists never allow contrary evidence to challenge their beliefs.

Last week, a British judge found nine scientific errors in Gore's film "An Inconvenient Truth" and ordered British schools to mention them and to teach the other side of global warming.

Like the Pulitzer Prize, which mostly goes to liberals or to economic conservatives who are OK with abortion and same-sex marriage, the Nobel Peace Prize has become a victim of political correctness and a tool for message-sending.

In this case (as when the award went to Jimmy Carter), the Nobel committee wanted to send a message to President Bush. What will they do when he leaves office? That's easy; they'll give it to Bill Clinton.

People who genuinely labor for peace (read a partial list in the Oct. 13 Wall Street Journal lead editorial) are often ignored by the Nobel committee. Despite evidence from NASA and other scientific sources, which rebut Gore's claims of pending climate disaster, CGW members have the kind of blind faith displayed at a Benny Hinn healing service.

Having said that (and far more could be said and is being said), conservatives miss an opportunity when they only ridicule Gore and dismiss his ideas. They should be asking themselves whether it might be possible to find common ground with Gore on at least one of his doctrinal issues that would serve nearly everyone's interests. This is where Part Two begins.

Reduce our reliance

Republicans and Democrats repeatedly tell us we rely too much on foreign oil, especially that which comes from a current trouble spot, the Middle East, and that which comes from a potential trouble spot, Venezuela. Might it be possible for the CGW crowd and the Church of Free Enterprise (CFE) to come together for the common purpose of reducing our reliance on foreign oil?

CGW fundamentalists would get what they want -- a reduced carbon footprint and supposedly lower global temperatures (go ahead and let them believe it) -- while CFE parishioners would rejoice that Saudi Arabia's hold on us (not to mention its use of our money to underwrite terrorism) could be broken.

If we would launch an energy-independence program with the intensity of a Marshall Plan for Europe, or a man-on-the-moon project, to liberate ourselves from the petroleum despots by developing synthetic fuels and finding new energy sources closer to home -- especially nuclear power -- we could strike a blow against the Islamofascists more damaging than bombs and bullets.

This will require leadership at the highest level, and it will require a conservative of sufficient stature not to be labeled a compromiser or a fool. Anyone out there who meets the test? And would Al Gore bring his legions with him to the table?

[Fresno Bee editorial, Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2007:](#)

More than a slap to Bush

Gore's Nobel offers U.S. chance to do some global image repair.

Maybe you're tempted to dismiss the news of this year's Nobel Peace Prize winners as a slap at the Bush administration's policies on global warming. If so, you're one-third right.

In awarding the prize jointly to former Vice President Al Gore and the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Nobel committee sent a clear political message to the White House. Anyone who would disregard that message as just an exercise in anti-Americanism is missing three points.

The first is that the Nobel committee's decision recognizes real accomplishments by all the honorees.

Since the 2000 presidential election, Gore has emerged as the most prominent counterweight to the Bush administration's policies of denial on global warming. In doing so, he has helped move the debate on global warming in the world's most powerful nation.

For its part, the U.N. panel (which includes a number of prominent American scientists) has diligently laid out the scientific consensus on global warming, countering the misinformation promulgated by the Bush administration and various interest groups.

Skeptics may ask what does any of that have to do with peace? Plenty, according to a growing number of studies. As global warming disrupts climate patterns, crops are likely to fail in some areas. As sea levels rise, populations will be displaced. Diseases may spread. Changes such as the opening of Arctic passages may lead to territorial disputes.

Each of those holds the potential for violent conflict. The risk of such conflicts can't be reduced if the world's most powerful nation ignores the role human activities play in global warming. By insisting that global warming is both real and a threat, the scientists in the U.N. network and Gore have created the circumstances that are essential to dealing peacefully with its effects.

The second point about the Nobel award is that it comes at a time when much of the world holds the United States in low regard.

Surveys conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Project chart this unwelcome decline over the years that the Bush administration has been in office. To state it broadly, in some parts of the world the United States is regarded as Global Enemy No. 1. Even our closest allies trust us less.

The causes are complex. One clear cause, though, is the U.S. penchant for going it alone. The Bush administration's inaction on global warming is an obvious example.

Which brings up the third point about the Nobel decision. While it is implicitly critical of the Bush administration's actions (and inaction), it also draws a distinction between the American government and Americans.

In fact, by honoring a former vice president and a group that includes U.S. scientists, the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize points to a path by which America and Americans can rebuild their standing in the eyes of the world.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2007:](#)

Synchronize road signals

In her recent column, "Lower standards do not equal improvement," Lois Henry admonishes the public to start "pitching a screaming fit -- and soon."

I know that city and county officials have not been paying any attention to the public's opinion about traffic flow in Bakersfield, at least as long as the nine years I have lived here. Your newspaper has carried dozens of letters about the subject in that time. I know that officials have heard directly from citizens. The subject is a regular topic when I get together with friends. This is a serious quality-of-life problem that also contributes mightily to our bad air.

Yes, tens of millions of dollars need to be spent on new and better roads. But there is one solution the city could implement today that would cost almost nothing, and that is a simple synchronizing of road signals on major streets.

This would mean abandoning the practice of allowing small feeder side streets to have preference over signals during the busy daytime hours of 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. (And I know that happens not only because I see it happen, but because a street official told me that residents who live on side streets have successfully lobbied that they don't like to have to wait for a green light.)

Mayor Hall has yet to establish a memorable legacy of his tenure as our mayor. This is a project that, if he just made a few calls to order changes, would live in the memories of this city's citizens for years to come.

GREGG KNOWLES, Bakersfield

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the Board makeup of the Valley Air District. If you have any questions, contact Maricela (559) 230-5849.

Expertos médicos se integrarán a la mesa del aire en el Valle de San Joaquín

Zaidee Stavely, Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2007

Grupos comunitarios de una de las regiones más contaminadas en todo el país celebran hoy la aprobación de una ley que incluirá a expertos médicos entre las autoridades del aire del Valle de San Joaquín. El gobernador de California, Arnold Schwarzenegger firmó la ley ayer. Grupos comunitarios han estado exigiendo un cambio en la mesa del aire durante cinco años.

“Es una gran victoria para todos los que quieran respirar aire limpio en el Valle de San Joaquín”, dijo Carolina Simunovic, co-coordinadora de la Coalición por la Calidad del Aire en el Valle Central. “Al poner a un doctor y a un científico”, agregó, “vamos a poder tener una discusión más avanzada acerca de cuáles son los efectos de la contaminación para nuestra salud. Y esperamos que estas posiciones puedan mover esta mesa directiva, que siempre ha sido resistente al cambio”, concluyó Simunovic.

Algunas asociaciones de agricultores se oponían a la ley, porque decían que las autoridades del aire ya estaban haciendo suficiente por limpiar el aire.