

How to beat bad air

By Gerald Carroll

Visalia Times-Delta & Tulare Advance-Register, Thurs., Nov. 8, 2007

Want to take a morning walk? How about an afternoon bicycle ride? Better check the air first.

It's easy to do, and, in real time, both ozone and small-particle pollution levels can be measured. If levels are high, postpone the outdoor session. If levels are low, go for it, experts say.

It's all online at www.valleyair.org <<http://www.valleyair.org>>, under "Air Quality Information" and "Real-Time Air Quality." There, check out the South Valley ozone and particulate matter, PM, and daily charts. They go back 30 days.

Ozone is an odorless, poisonous gas that can be dangerous, even lethal, if inhaled at high levels. Particles can range anywhere from dust and smoke to microscopic specks that cause ailments ranging from asthma to pinkeye.

Ozone and particle levels are charted out, hour by hour. For example, Wednesday's ozone levels were near zero between 5 a.m. and 6 a.m. If you can get up that early, there's your bicycling opportunity.

"That's what I need to do," said Shawn Ferreria, who rides a bicycle 18 miles a day. He also analyzes weather for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control district in Fresno and advises Central Valley farmers and residents on air-quality issues.

But at lunch, watch out. Ozone levels pick up steam.

"And [ozone] gets even worse around 4 or 5 in the afternoon," said district spokeswoman Brenda Turner. "Ozone levels are lower this time of year, but it doesn't go away."

If summer is ozone time, autumn and winter is when all manner of smoke, fumes, dust and particles assume star roles as ingredients in the witches' brew known as Central Valley air.

Turner said a particular kind of teeny-tiny particulate matter, called PM2.5, is especially treacherous.

"These particles are less than one-170th the width of a human hair," Turner said. "Really small, and really dangerous, because they go very deeply into the lungs."

So, if Wednesday's PM2.5 numbers are any indication, Visalians were pretty much safe from the wrath of the tiny particles. Levels averaged around 75, considered "moderate," in the Visalia area but have been problematic in rural Tulare County.

In fact, the PM2.5 levels were projected to shoot to 152 on Sunday and Monday - which gets into the "red" zone of unhealthfulness, Turner said.

Fortunately, due in part to a district no-burning order for Monday, the actual particle count came to 116 on Monday, considerably less than forecast.

"That's why the no-burn orders are given," Turner said.

That usually means a complete shutdown - construction sites, farmers, residents, everyone, Ferreria said.

"Sometimes it has to be done," Ferreria said. "Many people out there just have to wait their turn in order to burn."

Construction sites constantly use water trucks to mitigate dust - mandatory under district rules, Turner said. On Wednesday morning, massive land-levelers were rumbling across the site of the new Target store at Riggan Avenue and Dinuba Boulevard in north Visalia, kicking up dust.

However, later Wednesday morning, a water truck was seen spraying down the dust.

"Good for them," Turner said. "That's the law."

Tulare County farmers had been exempt from burning advisories and other laws until just two years ago, Turner said, and the district wants to "work closely" to make sure the \$4 billion Tulare County farming industry is not unduly hindered.

"That's fine for the air, but any type of compliance comes at a cost to the farmer," said Bill Appleby, assistant to the Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner in Tulare.

Tehachapi may get air monitoring station

By Stacey Shepard, staff writer

Bakersfield Californian Thursday, Nov, 8, 2007

Tehachapi could get a clearer picture of its air pollution problem if air officials approve a plan today to install an air quality monitoring station there.

The board of the Kern County Air Pollution Control District is expected to vote on spending \$123,000 to install equipment to measure two types of pollution -- smog and particulate matter 10 microns or smaller, known as PM 10.

The air district, which covers eastern Kern County, currently has two monitors, in Mojave and Ridgecrest. The Tehachapi monitor would be installed at 800 S. Curry St. behind the Kern County Fire station.

Tehachapi residents asked for the monitor due to concerns about the city's proximity to the lower end of the San Joaquin Valley, which has some of the most polluted air in the country.

While Tehachapi is perched in the mountains, where air is typically cleaner, questions have been raised about how much smog blows over the mountains, said David Jones, air pollution control officer with the Kern County Pollution Control District.

"The people (in Tehachapi) want to see what they're really being exposed to," Jones said. "(Smog) is constantly blowing over the top of the valley. Their concern is, how much?"

Jones said most of the smog in eastern Kern County is known to drift in from the San Joaquin Valley or the Los Angeles area. But the effect on Tehachapi is unclear. The last smog measurements taken in Tehachapi were in 1995, when state officials set up a temporary monitor, he said. That data showed Tehachapi's air quality was better than Arvin's but slightly worse than Mojave's.

Following the request from residents, the air district funded a study that also showed Tehachapi was the best place for a new monitor.

In general, air in eastern Kern County is far cleaner than that of valley cities. Eastern Kern County had just one smog violation this year, while Bakersfield had 15 and Arvin had 40.

How to go

The Kern County Air Pollution Control District board of directors meets at 2 p.m. today at Golden Hills Community Services District, 21415 Reeves St., Tehachapi. For more information, call 862-5250.

What's New

Valley Voice Newspaper Thurs. Nov. 8, 2007

Proposed plan to cut pollutants of diesel emissions from heavy duty truck vehicles could hurt "the little guy" including farms that operate one ton or larger trucks, says Nisei Farm League President Manuel Cunha Jr. ARB released draft rules last month that would require the replacement of what they call the dirtiest trucks on the road. Cunha says the threat is too ambitious replacing pre-1992 trucks by 2010. Many farms use these trucks sparsely, sometimes a few times a year, says Cunha and can't afford to replace them. The proposed rule covers trucks above 1400 GVWR. Cunha says he figures the cost of the plan at \$12 billion. The ARB has vowed to include millions in incentive monies to replace the trucks. One plan would be to crush older trucks once they are taken out of service to ensure they won't be used again.

Patterson City Council is against Kamilos project

By Christina Salerno

Modesto Bee, Thursday, Nov. 8, 2007

PATTERSON -- The City Council is unanimously against the proposed 4,800-acre industrial park on the former Crows Landing air base.

Council members voted Tuesday to adopt a resolution as a first step in what they hope will become a united front -- along with other West Side city governments, school districts and fire agencies -- against the project.

The PCCP West Park LLC project, headed by Sacramento developer Gerry Kamilos, is centered around a short-haul rail line connected to the Port of Oakland.

The resolution was written by Patterson and Newman and is set to go to Newman's council next week. It also will be forwarded to the Patterson Unified School District and West Stanislaus Fire District for consideration.

Before voting, the council listened to pleas from about a half-dozen residents who said they wanted the project to go forward because it would provide desperately needed jobs to the West Side.

Donna Worley, who is in the process of becoming a teacher in Patterson, said she was bothered that the council was trying to get the school district to sign the resolution.

"I cannot understand your reasoning. The people who live and work in Patterson are working at Longs, McDonald's or Burger King," Worley said. "They cannot afford homes."

Newman resident Roy McDonald said people must commute to jobs in the Bay Area, which is "tearing the fiber" of families. The project would change that, he argued.

"We're not talking about minimum wage jobs. We're talking about jobs with stability and credibility that can pay the mortgage," said McDonald, who recently began working for Kamilos to garner support among residents on the West Side.

Councilwoman Annette Smith questioned Wednesday if any of those who spoke in favor of the project were working with the developer or were paid to show up to the meeting. "It was almost as if they were on a time clock," Smith said.

She noted that many who spoke in favor of the project left the room before the council voted on the resolution.

Mike Lynch, a consultant working for Kamilos, denied that any of the people -- except for McDonald -- were working for the developer. He said the project has been gaining public support through outreach efforts.

"They came to the meeting to speak and left. That's what people do," Lynch said Wednesday.

He asked the council to table the resolution until negotiations with the county are finished.

Members of the West Side-Patterson Alliance for Community and Environment, a grass-roots group against the project, also spoke. President Ron Swift said Patterson already has an 800-acre business park that is generating jobs.

"I'm not ever going to agree that a 4,800-acre development in Crows Landing is a good development," Smith said Wednesday.

With the resolution, "We hope the county takes pause," Smith said. "This is a public asset and is something for the entire county. It is not something to destroy the West Side."

California sues EPA over auto emissions

By SAMANTHA YOUNG, Associated Press

In the N.Y. Times, Fresno Bee and other papers, Thursday, Nov. 8, 2007

California sued the federal government on Thursday to force a decision about whether the state can impose the nation's first greenhouse gas emission standards for cars and light trucks.

More than a dozen other states are poised to follow California's lead if it is granted the waiver from federal law, presenting a challenge to automakers who would have to adapt to a patchwork of regulations.

The state's lawsuit against the Environmental Protection Agency, filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., was expected after Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vowed last spring to take legal action.

"Our future depends on us taking action on global warming right now," Schwarzenegger said during a news conference. "There's no legal basis for Washington to stand in our way."

At issue is California's nearly two-year-old request for a waiver under the federal Clean Air Act allowing it to implement a 2002 state anti-pollution law regulating greenhouse gases.

Eleven other states have adopted California's standard as a way to combat global warming and five others are considering it.

"Our position is that it's time for EPA to either act or get out of the way," said Lee Moore, a spokesman for New Jersey Attorney General Anne Milgram.

Arizona, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington plan to join California's lawsuit against the federal government, said Gareth Lacy, spokesman for California Attorney General Jerry Brown.

"The longer the delay in reducing these emissions, the more costly and harmful will be the impact on California," the state attorney general's office said in its 16-page complaint.

Schwarzenegger and other state officials say implementing the law is crucial in order to meet the provisions of a separate global warming law that passed last year. That law seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 25 percent by 2020.

California asked the EPA to grant its waiver in December 2005. EPA administrator Stephen Johnson said last summer that he would make a decision by the end of this year.

Brown said the EPA simply was "sitting on its hands."

The EPA criticized the state's actions Thursday.

"The administrator has stated numerous times that he plans to make a decision by the end of the year," spokeswoman Jennifer Wood said. "It's unfortunate that California is more interested in getting a good headline than allowing us to make a decision."

State officials say they need the matter resolved soon because the auto-emissions law applies to vehicles in the 2009 model year, which can be marketed by companies as early as this coming January.

Cars, pickups and sport utility vehicles sold in California would be required to produce fewer greenhouse gases, with the goal of reducing auto emissions 25 percent by 2030.

Further delay by the EPA would interfere with the state's ability to enforce the law on time, according to the complaint.

"Congress generally intended that the U.S. EPA make determinations of this type in a matter of weeks or months, not years," the complaint says.

While the federal government sets national air pollution rules, California has unique status under the Clean Air Act to enact its own regulations if it gets approval to do so by the EPA.

Other states can follow the federal rules or California's standards if they are tougher. The EPA has granted about 50 such waivers over the past 40 years for the use of catalytic converters, leaded gasoline regulations and other measures.

The complaint filed Thursday claims the EPA failed to act in a reasonable length of time.

In addition to the states that plan to join California's lawsuit, the governors of Colorado, Florida and Utah said their states plan to adopt the standard.

The EPA initially refused to act on California's application, saying the agency did not have the authority to regulate greenhouse gases as a pollutant. That changed when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in April that the EPA did indeed have that right.

As a result, the EPA is now developing greenhouse gas regulations that are scheduled to be released by the end of the year. Environmental groups say those regulations are not likely to be stronger than the California standards.

Meanwhile, automakers continue to challenge the California standards in court.

They are appealing a ruling last month by a federal judge in Vermont who upheld the California rules in that state. They also are trying to persuade a federal judge in Fresno to toss out the emission standards mandated under California's 2002 law.

Associations for both domestic and foreign car companies say California's standards would raise the cost of vehicles and could force manufacturers to pull some sport utility vehicles and pickup truck models from showrooms.

State sues Bush administration over greenhouse-gas limits

By Bob Egelko and Mathew Yi, staff writers
S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, November 8, 2007

SACRAMENTO - California sued the Bush administration today to force it to take action on the state's request to enforce a law limiting vehicle emissions of greenhouse gases, saying federal regulators have been stalling for almost two years.

"Congress generally intended that the (Environmental Protection Agency) make determinations of this type in a matter of weeks or months, not years," Attorney General Jerry Brown's office said in a suit filed on behalf of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and the state Air Resources Board.

The suit, filed in federal court in Washington, D.C., noted that 11 other states with similar laws will be unable to enforce them unless the EPA grants California's request, which has been pending since December 2005. The federal agency has granted every request California has made for the last 30 years to implement state air-pollution rules more stringent than federal standards.

The state's lawsuit seeks a judicial finding that the EPA has engaged in unreasonable delay and an order to force the agency to act immediately to grant or deny California's application. The agency has promised a decision by the end of this year.

The 2002 California law, the first of its kind in the nation, requires new motor vehicles sold in the state to limit emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, which scientists consider a major contributor to global warming. The restrictions take effect with the 2009 models and increase to a 30 percent reduction from current levels by 2016.

Automakers are challenging the law in federal court in Fresno, arguing that the only way to cut greenhouse gas emissions is to increase vehicle miles per gallon, a subject regulated exclusively by the federal government. A federal judge in Vermont rejected that argument in September and upheld a law identical to California's.

The Supreme Court ruled in April, in a suit by California and other states, that greenhouse gases were pollutants covered by the Clean Air Act and that the EPA must set nationwide limits unless it produces scientific evidence to justify a lack of regulation. The agency has not acted in response to the ruling, and President Bush has repeated his opposition to mandatory emission limits.

Without federal regulation, states have an increasingly urgent need to protect their residents and resources from the effects of climate change, state lawyers said.

"Recent studies, of which the (EPA) is aware, indicate the Earth may be perilously close to an irreversible melting of ice sheets within this century," the suit said.

Citing the projected effects of climate change on the nation's most populous state - including heat waves, storms, snowpack melts, fires, rising sea levels and increased smog - the suit declared,

"The longer the delay in reducing these emissions, the more costly and harmful will be the impact on California."

The EPA has said it is still evaluating more than 100,000 written responses and thousands of pages of documents it received during a public comment period this spring and a hearing in May.

But the California suit said the EPA sat on the state's request for more than a year, and scheduled a hearing and invited public comments only after the Supreme Court rejected the agency's claim that it lacked authority over greenhouse gases.

More than 99.9 percent of the comments received by the EPA favored California's request, and only one automaker, General Motors, and two manufacturers' associations submitted opposition, the suit said.

Schwarzenegger sent letters to Bush in April and October 2006, requesting urgent action on the state's request, state lawyers said.

The EPA "requires no additional time to consider comments" or to determine whether California meets the legal standards for a waiver, which have been extensively documented, the suit said. It also said automakers will begin marketing 2009 models as early as January 2008 and need to know the emission standards they must meet.

In addition to its lawsuit in U.S. District Court, Brown's office filed papers with a federal appeals court in Washington seeking an order to "compel action unlawfully withheld and unreasonably delayed."

State suing to press Bush on pollution

Strict car-emissions law still needs EPA waiver

By Michael Gardner, COPLEY NEWS SERVICE
San Diego Union-Tribune Thurs., November 8, 2007

SACRAMENTO - Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger will team up with Democratic state Attorney General Jerry Brown today to take on President Bush over global warming.

Schwarzenegger and Brown plan to file a lawsuit asking a federal court to order the Bush administration to decide whether to approve California's landmark law requiring automakers to gradually reduce tailpipe greenhouse gas emissions linked to global warming.

"California has a long and proud history of leadership in reducing pollution and fighting for clean air for our residents," Schwarzenegger said in a statement yesterday. "And we are upholding that tradition by filing a lawsuit against the federal government that takes a big step forward in the battle against global warming."

Under federal law, California must receive an EPA waiver to implement emissions standards tougher than federal levels.

But even if they prevail in court, California leaders are pessimistic that they will secure the waiver from the Bush administration, which has been slow to acknowledge warnings that human-caused global warming is a serious threat to the planet.

"Realistically, we think the chances are slim," said Mary Nichols, chairwoman of the California Air Resources Board. "We've made the case on the merits. We're right on the law. Somehow or the other politics will intervene. We just don't know where or how."

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Stephen Johnson has said he will issue his decision by the end of the year.

EPA spokeswoman Jennifer Wood said she could not comment in detail until the agency reviews the litigation.

The state has received about 50 waivers for air pollution control laws over the years; none has been denied. The current waiver application was filed Dec. 21, 2005.

Environmental groups and several states that have adopted similar regulations are expected to file motions in support of the suit.

"We need the EPA to act," said Sierra Club attorney David Bookbinder. "The purpose is to give us our decision one way or the other."

Automakers have challenged California's law in court and lobbied the Bush administration to reject the state's waiver application. They have argued that California's law amounts to de facto mileage standards, which fall under congressional authority.

In a statement responding to the anticipated lawsuit, the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers said "enhancing energy security and improving fuel economy are priorities to all Americans, but a patchwork quilt of regulations at the state level is not the answer."

California adopted the nation's most aggressive greenhouse gas reduction in a tailpipe-emissions law signed in 2003 by then-Gov. Gray Davis, a Democrat.

Automakers must reduce passenger car and light truck emissions gradually at the start - by 1.3 percent in the 2009 model year (from 2002 emission levels). But two years later, emissions must be reduced by 14 percent.

Schwarzenegger broadened the state's fight against global warming last year by signing legislation aimed at forcing a range of industries to roll back greenhouse gas emissions.

Frustrated by EPA inaction on California's waiver application, Schwarzenegger provided the Bush administration with the required 180-day notice April 25.

Under the federal Clean Air Act, a waiver can be denied only if it is proven that the regulations are not technologically feasible, the standards are weaker than federal rules or California doesn't need the emission reductions, said Nichols, the air board chairwoman.

The nationwide impact of the California law is certain to grow if the waiver is granted, she said. More than 40 percent of the nation's new cars are sold in California, and a dozen other states have adopted similar tailpipe-emission standards.

Given the stakes, automakers said the "EPA can and should take the appropriate time needed to properly analyze and respond."

But Nichols and Bookbinder said they doubt the EPA will move this year - if at all.

"If they can seize on any excuse for further inaction, they will do so," Bookbinder said.

Nichols said if a waiver is not issued soon, automakers could argue that they were not given time to comply, potentially forcing an extension of the state law's timelines.

"Now is the time to put everybody on notice that this program is going forward," she said.

California sues EPA over emissions

The state seeks to force the agency to move more quickly on its request to enforce tough regulations.

By Marc Lifsher, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, Thursday, Nov. 8, 2007

SACRAMENTO -- California sued the federal government today, demanding that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency act now to give the states the power to enforce tough regulations on automakers in the fight against global warming.

The U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way last summer for the EPA to approve state regulations to limit emissions of greenhouse gas from automobile tailpipes. But no action has been forthcoming.

The EPA has said it will act on the state's request by year's end, but today's move was a major

assault on the federal government's perceived lack of action on what many national and world leaders consider the No. 1 threat to the planet.

"There's no legal basis for Washington to stand in our way," said Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who announced the filing of the lawsuit on the state Capitol steps along with California Atty. Gen. Jerry Brown.

The governor noted that 14 other states are formally siding with California in two lawsuits in U.S. District Court and the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington.

California and the other states -- representing about 40% of the U.S. population -- have asked for a waiver from the EPA under the Clean Air Act so they can enforce regulations that limit emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from cars and other light vehicles.

But none of the state regulations, which would kick in as early 2009, can take effect without the Bush administration's approval. Under the Clean Air Act, California has special rights to chart its own way in crafting more stringent pollution controls.

Other states, in turn, have the ability to adopt California's rules if they want to exceed federal emission standards.

The California regulations, which were approved by the Legislature and signed into law by former Gov. Gray Davis in 2002, are a key component of last year's landmark global warming law.

The law seeks to cut California carbon emissions by one-fourth by 2020. Such a reduction is the equivalent of taking 6.5 million vehicles off of California roads, Schwarzenegger said.

The lawsuit seeks to force the EPA, which has had almost two years to rule on California's request, to either grant or deny the waiver. "Under the Clean Air Act, California is recognized as an innovator," said Brown, noting that the federal government has approved at least 50 such requests from California since the early 1970s.

The lawsuit, Brown added, "is not about politics. It's about science, it's about human well-being and it's about innovation."

The Bush administration is ignoring that science, charged Linda Adams, secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency. "They are running out the clock in hopes somebody else will deal with this problem," she said.

SHORT TAKES: REGIONAL EDITION

Bank will pay fares on buses, trolleys today

San Diego Union-Tribune Thurs., Nov. 8, 2007

You can leave the Hummer at home this morning.

If you jump on public transit today, the ride's on someone else. Washington Mutual bank is covering all fares on all San Diego-area buses and trolleys.

A bank spokesman says it's one way the company is saying "thank you" to consumers who ranked WaMu tops among Western U.S. banks in a recent J.D. Power and Associates customer satisfaction survey.

A similar one-day event in Sacramento last month boosted ridership by 10 percent to 20 percent. "It was very well-received," said Alane Masui, with the Sacramento Regional Transit District.

Rob Schupp, a spokesman with the Metropolitan Transit System in San Diego, said the bank is paying the agency roughly \$130,000 to cover the cash fares. That figure also includes MTS labor expenses tied to the event.

He said it's the first time a private company has attempted such an event with MTS.

Weekday ridership on the transit system averages 275,000. About 30 percent of passengers pay cash; the remainder buy monthly passes.

Web site informs shoppers of products' carbon footprint

Cooler aims to help consumers fight global warming

By Francine Breveti, staff writer

Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, November 8, 2007

Imagine you're about to shop online. Before you make your purchase, you check out how much carbon emission that Jimi Hendrix T-shirt produced compared with its competitor. It's conceivable that some day this factor may sway you in selecting a product as much as price, size or style.

Making this comparison is what Oakland-based Cooler will soon be able to do for you. Right now Cooler's Web site, <http://www.climatecooler.com>, tells you the carbon footprint you create for your online purchases within a day of the transaction.

"Cooler allows the consumer to connect every purchase to a solution for global warming," said Michel Gelobter, founder and chief executive officer.

The for-profit company was spun off by the nonprofit Oakland-based environmental think tank Redefining Progress.

Cooler lists about 350 retailers, names as common as Safeway, Macy's, eBay, Staples and Mrs. Field's. Buying any of the 8 million products available through the Cooler channel costs the consumer nothing. Instead, the Web-based company charges the retailer 2 percent to 12 percent of the purchase price to calculate their products' impacts on climate change and the Earth's health.

Cooler officials say that being environmentally friendly in the marketplace makes such good sense for retailers that they're willing to pay for the service. Gelobter argues that consumers will increasingly demand to see their suppliers — manufacturers and retailers — on the side of the angels rather than the polluters.

A recent GlobeScan survey found that 79 percent of the 22,000 people surveyed across several countries agree that "human activity, including industry and transportation, is a significant cause of climate change."

The company's Web site allows users to track the amount of greenhouse gases that they have saved from the atmosphere. Gelobter claims that, thanks to the expertise of the University of California, Berkeley, and Carnegie Mellon University, Cooler has "the country's only product carbon calculator."

"We can calculate almost instantly the global warming impact of a product."

This technology calculates the carbon impact of the product based on its description, country of origin, price, weight and brand.

It is expected that over time consumers will start seeing patterns of the carbon imprint they create from what they buy. Then it becomes feasible for them to create a carbon emissions budget, consider their choices and reduce consumption in a rational way.

Tom Kelly's family, of Berkeley, has made two purchases through <http://www.climatecooler.com>. Tracking the impact of their purchases "has been one of the intriguing aspects of the site. Most of us don't think about our purchases' climate impact," Kelly observed.

But the main focus of Cooler's business will be to sell its service to retailers and manufacturers, universities and large companies so they can monitor their own processes. Some deals are in the works but the founder and CEO wasn't ready to talk about them by press time.

"We hope the calculator will be a big shift for consumers and businesses," Gelobter said.

It has certainly changed Backpacker Magazine. Editor-in-Chief Jonathan Dorn used Cooler technology in its September issue to compare the carbon impact of taking a backpacking trip in the Sierra with a motor trip to Las Vegas or Napa.

Hands down, slogging through the mountains was better for Mother Earth. The magazine plans to incorporate Cooler's calculator onto its shopping site in the future.

Cooler invests the fees that retailers pay them in other projects that will eliminate greenhouse gas pollution, for instance the Holsum Dairy in Wisconsin. This installation captures the methane gas — over 20 times more deleterious than carbon emissions — produced by its cows and converts it into electricity to run the dairy.

Another investment of Cooler is Malavalli, a biomass fuel project in India that creates steam energy from the husks of sugarcane. Click on a video of it at <http://www.southpolecarbon.com/goldstandard.htm>.

Cooler's investment projects have been verified by trustworthy sources in the field of environmental offsets, such as Gold Standard.

Allegheny Co. may ask state to take over air quality program

The Associated Press

In the Contra Costa Times, Thursday, November 8, 2007

PITTSBURGH—Allegheny County may ask the state to take over the county's air quality program because of permit delays that some say are driving businesses away from the Pittsburgh area.

But environmentalists and others say that's a bad idea for two reasons. They say Allegheny County has some unique air quality issues because of its industry and that nothing in its regulations stops or delays businesses that need the permits.

The county took an average of 187 days to issue an air quality permit last year. This year, that has been cut to 106 days.

But economic development officials say permitting sometimes takes two or three years and is driving businesses away.

The county program predates federal and state pollution programs.

Anchorage Assembly votes down vehicle emissions testing

The Associated Press

In the Contra Costa Times, Thursday, November 8, 2007

ANCHORAGE, Alaska—Anchorage just got one step closer to ending an anti-pollution program, as the city's assembly voted to get rid of it by 2010.

The emissions tests measure the amount of carbon monoxide produced by vehicles. Those that put out too much pollution, must be taken off the road.

The program requires drivers to pay \$60 every two years to have their cars tested for emissions.

The Assembly voted 8-2 to end the program, a decision which requires approval from state and federal regulators.

The city started the program roughly 20 years ago, at a time when Anchorage routinely broke federal pollution limits.

Anchorage hasn't failed to meet those air-quality standards since 1996, prompting calls for an end to the required tests.

Assemblywoman Sheila Selkregg, who voted to keep it, proposed a scaled-back program that would require testing cars every four years instead of every other year.

Drivers spend about \$8.7 million on the tests and related repairs each year, according to city estimates.

Supporters of the program said it pays for air-quality testing that would otherwise be paid by taxpayers, they said, and it will be hard to resurrect if Anchorage starts breaking pollution rules again.

"There's clear documentation that reducing emissions from automobiles improves the lives for people who have asthma, and for most of us in general," Selkregg said.

Critics of the tests counter that cleaner-burning cars and fuels are more important to reducing pollution.

"The feds have told the car companies they have to make better cars, and they have done it," Traini said.

Selkregg and Assemblyman Matt Claman voted to keep the program. Assembly Chairman Dan Coffey, who recently sold four Xpress lube locations that do business selling emissions tests, did not vote because of a conflict of interest.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough is also considering an end to the borough's emissions testing program for cars and trucks in the next few years.

Booming palm oil demand fueling climate crisis

By Jeremy Lovell, Reuters

Washington Post Thursday, November 8, 2007

LONDON (Reuters) - Booming world demand for palm oil from Indonesia for food and biofuels is posing multiple threats to the environment as forests are being cleared, peat wetlands exposed and carbon released, a report said on Thursday.

The massive forest clearance for palm plantations underway in Indonesia removes trees that capture carbon dioxide, and the draining and burning of the peat wetlands leads to massive release of the gas, said environment group Greenpeace in its report "Cooking the Climate."

On top of that, the booming demand for biofuels that include vegetable oils to replace mineral oil is in many cases actually generating more climate warming gases, the report said.

"Tropical deforestation accounts for about a fifth of all global emissions," said the report.

"Indonesia now has the fastest deforestation rate of any major forested country, losing two percent of its remaining forest every year."

"Indonesia also holds the global record for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from deforestation, which puts it third behind the U.S. and China in terms of total man-made GHG emissions," it added.

It said that on top of Indonesia's existing six million hectares of oil palms, the government had plans for another four million by 2015 just for biofuel production. Provincial governments had plans for up to 20 million hectares more.

The report is aimed directly at a meeting next month of UN environment ministers on the island of Bali which activists hope will agree on urgent talks to find a successor to the Kyoto Protocol on cutting carbon emissions which expires in 2012.

DEGRADATION AND BURNING

It said every year 1.8 billion tons of carbon dioxide -- the main climate change culprit -- are released by the degradation and burning of Indonesia's peatlands.

Once the peatlands are drained, they start to release CO₂ as the soils oxidize. Burning to clear the land for plantations adds to the emissions.

The report said peatland emissions of CO₂ are expected to rise by at least 50 percent by 2030 if the anticipated clearances for expansion of palm oil plantations goes ahead.

It cited a report by environmental NGO Wetlands International that said production of one ton of palm oil from peatlands released up to 30 tons of CO₂ from peat decomposition alone without accounting for carbon released during the production cycle.

Greenpeace also noted that the European Union's push to boost the use of biofuels as part of its plans to cut carbon emissions by 20 percent by 2020 was a decisive factor in booming palm oil demand.

"This use alone equates to the harvest from 400,000 hectares or 4.5 percent of global palm oil production," it said.

"Meanwhile, palm oil use in food continues to increase, partly as food manufacturers shift to using palm oil instead of hydrogenated fats and partly as it replaces other edible oils being used for biodiesel," the report added.

Greenpeace called for a ban on peatland forest clearance, urged the palm oil trade not to buy and sell produce from degraded peatland areas and said governments should exclude palm oil from biofuel and biomass targets.

[Letter to the Merced Sun-Star, Wed., Nov. 7, 2007](#)

No on Wal-Mart center

Editor: I want to commend the Merced Stop Wal-Mart Action Team for the recent film they've produced "The Weight of Air." It presents a well-documented case for why the Merced City Council should vote against having the Wal-Mart Distribution Center in Merced. Copies are available for groups to view.

The proposed distribution center would cover about 48 city blocks (270 acres) and would be located in close proximity to three schools (Weaver Elementary, Pioneer Elementary and Golden Valley High School). Since the distribution center would generate an estimated 900 truck trips per day, I can't see why anyone would want to expose children and adults to the air pollution that would be produced by these trucks.

The Merced area already has the worst air pollution in our state second only to the Los Angeles area. Twenty-two percent of children who live in the San Joaquin Valley suffer from asthma. Trucks put out diesel emissions containing health damaging particles and nitrogen oxides which cause asthma, respiratory cancers and other health problems. I don't want these trucks using Merced streets close to schools and residential areas.

I urge our City Council to vote against the proposed Wal-Mart distribution center and put the health of our children and residents first.

Mary Ann Reynolds, Merced

[Contra Costa Times editorial, Thursday, Nov. 8, 2007:](#)

Fire ban is bad idea

THE BAY AREA AIR Quality Management District wants to tell people when it's OK -- and when it's not -- to have a fire in your fireplace. If the agency carries through with its plan, you could get a nasty ticket for lighting up that cozy blaze on a "Spare the Air" night.

We think that takes things a bit too far.

In the past, the agency issued advisories on cold winter nights when the air is heavy and fine particles from wood-burning fires were capable of polluting the air. But apparently that's not enough. Now it wants to ban wood fires altogether on bad air nights.

The agency admits that enforcement of the rule would rely heavily on public complaints -- just what we need, nosy neighbors spying and telling on each other. Does law enforcement really have so little to do that it has time to respond to such complaints?

The air district does put out some numbers to back its case. It says Bay Area fireplaces spew out an estimated 13.25 tons per day of the fine particles, 70 percent coming from Contra Costa, Santa Clara and Alameda counties.

Here's some numbers we really should pay attention to: Tailpipe emissions account for 43 percent of the state's total greenhouse gas load. Carbon dioxide, from cars and buses, among others, represents 89.9 percent of these emissions. Methane, which includes fireplaces and wood stoves, accounts for only 4.5 percent of total emissions.

Many of these numbers come from a November 2006 report drawn up by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

With that said, however, we do applaud the district for pursuing the much more reasonable approach of wanting to bar new installation of open-hearth fireplaces in homes and buildings. That should eventually level out the particle numbers.

What the district should be doing is recommending that homeowners clean their chimneys regularly, perhaps mandating owners of multiple units to have chimneys cleaned at least once a year. Our local fire departments would appreciate that.

In the meantime, the Bay Area air pollution agency has greater enemies than local fireplaces. We recommend it maintain the advisories and have faith that our citizens have the sense to do the right thing.