

Pair of Wal-Marts on track

30,000-page impact reports satisfy concerns about projects

BY JAMES GELUSO, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Nov. 29, 2007

The two projects -- an empty building shell at Panama Lane and Highway 99 and a vacant lot at Gosford and Pacheco roads -- have been on hold since 2004 when a court stopped them because the city hadn't studied the stores' impacts enough, including the possibility of urban blight caused by Wal-Mart driving other stores out of business.

But on Wednesday, the council was convinced that the issue had been adequately resolved in the two environmental impact reports, which totaled 30,000 pages.

"I am satisfied with this analysis," said Councilwoman Sue Benham, who cast the lone votes against the projects in 2003. "The community is ready for this issue to be resolved and I will support adoption of this resolution tonight."

Councilman Harold Hanson was less formal.

"I believe every known environmental issue to man has been covered in that EIR," he said.

Technically, the two votes were about zone changes for large shopping centers, with Wal-Mart only one store in each. But it wasn't Kohl's, Lowe's, Petco or Starbucks that brought out the opposition -- just Wal-Mart. And in both cases, the courts allowed other stores to be finished and opened.

The public comment period was dominated by professionals, with staffers from Wal-Mart, the developer, its contractor and CalTrans eating the first 13 minutes of the 15-minute comment period on the Gosford project. But the general public did get a chance to comment.

"As consumers, we have a choice when we shop at X, Y or Z stores," said Debbie Kent, who described herself as a consumer. "We want to not be in crowded stores anymore."

And Irvin Roach, who came to the microphone using a cane, said Wal-Mart Supercenters have been accommodating to him since he broke his leg in ways that other stores haven't been. Even the store on White Lane is just too crowded, he said.

But the stores didn't get away without criticism.

Renee Nelson, who acted as spokeswoman for Bakersfield Citizens for Local Control, the group that sued to stop the stores in 2003, said the urban decay study is better than last time, but not as good as it could be. And she said Wal-Mart's [air-quality mitigation](#) should be done on site, not scattered around the city and county.

Ramona Thomas, who said she lives in the Silver Creek area near the Gosford Project, said she called Castle & Cooke, the developer, and was told the shopping center would be like the Marketplace.

"I want to ask Castle & Cooke, when are they going to make Gosford Village look like the Marketplace?"

Castle & Cooke President Bruce Freeman defended the standards of the development.

"I would say this will probably be the best looking Wal-Mart ever built in the United States," he said. "It is of the same quality as the Marketplace, it just isn't Georgian architecture."

Lee Jamieson, developer of the shopping center at Panama Lane and Highway 99, said his project is a net gain.

"The only blight out there is a half-built building," he said.

And he said preserving habitat there for the San Joaquin kit fox, which has been seen on the site even recently, is a bad idea. Kit foxes should not be living alongside Highway 99, he said.

But, Nelson said, the kit foxes were living alongside the highway before the Panama project began and have decided to return. If they come back, Jamieson should find a way of accommodating them other than moving them away, she said.

The council must vote on the projects again next month, although that is likely to be a formality. Then the issue will go back to the courts, where a Kern County Superior Court judge will decide whether the new environmental reports are up to snuff.

The story so far

December 2002: The Bakersfield Planning Commission recommends approval of two zone changes that would allow Wal-Mart Supercenters at the centers of two proposed shopping centers.

February 2003: The Bakersfield City Council approves both projects by 6-1 votes, with Councilwoman Sue Benham casting the dissenting votes.

March 2003: Bakersfield Citizens for Local Control files lawsuits against both projects.

August 2003: Wal-Mart withdraws its plans for a third supercenter at Coffee Road and Meany Avenue after city staff say they don't think the site is appropriate.

December 2003: Kern Superior Court Judge Kenneth Twisselman rules against the Panama Lane Wal-Mart, saying the city didn't do an adequate job evaluating the environmental impacts. But he doesn't stop work on the project.

January 2004: Twisselman stops work on both the Panama Lane and Gosford Road projects.

March 2004: The 5th District Court of Appeal shuts down construction on the other stores in the same shopping centers as the two Wal-Marts, but reverses course two weeks later.

December 2004: The appeals court makes its ruling against the Wal-Marts, ruling the city failed to properly study the urban decay, and orders the city to start over. The developers opt not to appeal to the state Supreme Court.

June 2007: The revised environmental reports make their first appearance with an adequacy hearing before the Bakersfield Planning Commission.

September 2007: The Bakersfield Planning Commission votes to recommend approval of the environmental reports and the zone changes that will allow the Wal-Mart Supercenters to go forward.

Wednesday: The Bakersfield City Council approves the two Wal-Marts.

What's next: The new reports must be approved by a Kern County Superior Court judge before construction can resume.

Plaza Drive development in holding pattern for months

By Gerald Carroll

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Thursday, Nov. 29, 2007

City deliberations over a west Visalia commercial development anchored by an already-approved Fresno Pacific University campus have been delayed until February at the earliest.

That was the decision made late Tuesday in a 5-0 vote by the Visalia Planning Commission.

Most of the opponents of the project were put on hold at a Nov. 19 meeting with the Visalia City Council. They have labeled it a hasty, unplanned burst of traffic-snarling, [pollution-causing development](#).

The lead developer, The Mangano Company, tried to quell those concerns with an elaborate, 2 1/2-hour multimedia presentation at Tuesday's meeting.

The presentation showed just how the 29.4-acre site - on the east and west sides of Plaza Drive north of Visalia Municipal Airport and Highway 198 - would grow into 327,828 square feet of office space and educational and highway-service businesses in the next two years.

"We thought it best to provide the necessary background information for the commission to make an informed decision," said Stephen Peck, Mangano Company vice president and lead presenter.

Commission members were put off, however, by the developer's contention that old environmental impact reports and dubious traffic and water-drainage data were sufficient to allow approval of such an expansive project.

"This [area] is a Bermuda Triangle of potential traffic," said commission member Terese Lane.

Improvements, she said, are needed at three key points:

- The interchange at Highway 198 and Plaza Drive, which was termed "inadequate" by Visalia Mayor Jesus Gamboa on Nov. 19.
- The interchange at Highway 99 and Betty Drive to the northwest, currently used as a shortcut by truckers heading in and out of the Visalia Industrial Park, where 5,000 people are employed.
- The intersection of Plaza Drive and Goshen Avenue, which already is jammed daily by big-rigs and other vehicles.

Getting these areas improved by the city and Caltrans before Fresno Pacific University and collateral projects are developed is vital, Lane said. Otherwise, there will be "traffic from hell out of there," she said.

The Fresno Pacific University approval is seen by opponents, including Visalia City Councilman Greg Collins, as a gateway to runaway commercial development that would overwhelm the infrastructure. Collins appealed the Oct. 22 Planning Commission approval of the Fresno Pacific campus but dropped the appeal this month, allowing the council to approve the construction of the initial university building.

The council voted to address the rest of the plan at a later date.

A detailed traffic study presented by consultant Charlie Clouse, who represents Mangano, showed that projected traffic flows should be acceptable even if all the proposed structures are built. Commission member Sam Logan was impressed.

"That study not only went to 2030, 10 years past our own 2020 [general] plan, but it took into account all of Tulare County," Logan said. "That was an expensive study."

Other concerns, such as architectural design, storm-drainage capacity and street improvements, were also addressed by Mangano presenters.

Former City Councilman Greg Kirkpatrick was the only private citizen to offer comment at the public hearing. He said the infrastructure is inadequate for the proposed development.

"What happens without Plaza [Drive] intersection improvements?" he asked.

Andrew Benelli, Visalia's director of public works, said road-improvement money is available through a combination of local sales-tax dollars from Measure R and state funding.

But there's no guarantee of future funding, he said.

"The state's finances have changed," Benelli said.

City planners, including Brandon Smith and planning director Paul Scheibel, argued for an indefinite delay to make adjustments to the plan. However, commission member Larry Segre recommended that the plan be brought back in February.

Study confirms cancer risk near UP's Roseville railyard

Highly toxic particles make train exhaust worse than diesel truck emissions, scientists say.

By Chris Bowman

Sacramento Bee, Thursday, November 29, 2007

Air test results released Wednesday confirm that residents living near the Union Pacific Railroad yard in Roseville face a sharply higher cancer risk from locomotive exhaust than those living along nearby Interstate 80, a stretch traveled by an average 10,000 big rigs a day.

The spew from idling locomotives contains 5.5 times more of the most toxic particles than emissions from diesel-powered trucks on freeways, the study said.

"The diesel train stuff is much richer in the nastiest material," said Thomas A. Cahill, a retired UC Davis professor of atmospheric physics.

The study recommended several ways to lower residents' health risks. Paving the railyard would cut down toxic dust. Planting rows of tall trees along the edges of the yard would filter out a good portion of the exhaust particles, as would the installation of electrostatic air filters in homes.

The highly hazardous exhaust particles are polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, which California has classified as cancer-causing compounds. An extensive health study published last month found a strong link between bronchitis and elevated levels of these air pollutants among preschool children.

Cahill said he was alarmed to find airborne particles of benzo-a-pyrene - considered the most hazardous PAH compound - consistently measuring much smaller than those found in truck exhaust. The particles are small enough to reach the deepest recesses of the lungs, where they can cause the greatest harm.

"The lung captures these particles with extreme efficiency and retains them," said Cahill, co-leader of the project with his son, Thomas M. Cahill, an assistant professor of environmental toxicology of Arizona State University.

The scientists traced the source of these compounds to burned engine oil, which is spewed from the stack as part of the locomotive exhaust.

"Now that we know where it comes from, we can talk seriously about mitigation," Cahill said. "It opens up research into making an oil compound or changing the way you handle oil in a train."

The samplers also found unexpectedly high levels of toxic metals such as lead. They said the metals likely came from the dirt surfaces of the train yard, where locomotives have been serviced for 100 years.

"The dust blown off the railyard is full of all sorts of stuff, even bomb debris from who-knows-what," Cahill said.

On April 28, 1973, several 250-pound bombs bound for Vietnam exploded aboard a freight train in the railyard. Live bombs were found buried in the area as late as 1997.

The Cahills did the peer-reviewed air sampling and analysis earlier this year on behalf of the Sacramento area chapter of Breathe California, a clean-air advocacy group. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency funded the project.

One of the reviewers, Ralph Propper, an air pollution researcher at the state Air Resources Board, said he was surprised by the findings.

"It's a red flag that the PAHs that we know are the most potent components of diesel exhaust are elevated more than fivefold," Propper said. "It makes you concerned that the overall toxicity of diesel is higher than you suspected."

Cahill said his air measurements are consistent with findings from a 2004 air board computer analysis of the train yard exhausts. The study found locomotive exhaust extended about 100 square miles - encompassing most of Roseville, all of Citrus Heights and all of Antelope - and raising the cancer risk for an estimated 165,000 residents.

For example, living within 300 feet of the yard's locomotive service and repair center boosts the cancer risk an average 950 chances in a million, the state analysis showed. By comparison, living within 300 feet of I-80 in Roseville increases the cancer risk 50 to 100 chances in a million, according to the air board study.

About 100 locomotives occupy the 780-acre yard at any given time, Union Pacific officials said in 2005. About one-quarter of those are part of trains passing through en route to Portland, Reno or Sacramento. Others stop to switch tracks, reassemble cars or crews, refuel or undergo inspection, repair or testing.

States sue over eased EPA disclosure rule

California joins the lawsuit, which alleges the agency is reducing the amount of information about toxic chemicals available to the public.

By Marla Cone, Staff Writer

L.A. Times, Thursday, November 29, 2007

California and 11 other states sued the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday over a new regulation that exempts thousands of companies from disclosing to the public details about their use and emission of toxic chemicals.

The lawsuit by the 12 states, filed in U.S. District Court in New York, accuses the agency of jeopardizing public health and seeks to force it to return to more stringent requirements.

In joining the lawsuit, California Atty. Gen. Jerry Brown said the EPA was "subverting a key public safety measure that helps communities protect themselves from toxic chemicals."

For nearly 20 years, the national Toxics Release Inventory has allowed people to access data about hundreds of chemicals used and released in their communities. Seeking to ease the burden on industry, the EPA last December scaled back disclosure requirements for some small-scale facilities.

Congress established the toxic database in 1986 when it enacted the Right to Know Act after a leak at a Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, killed thousands of people.

In about 9,000 communities, the annual reports provide details about the use of nearly 600 industrial chemicals. The reports identify which industrial plants emit the most toxic substances, whether their emissions are increasing and what compounds may be contaminating the air and water.

The electronic database, searchable by states, cities, ZIP Codes, specific companies and addresses, has been used by environmentalists, state and local emergency officials, journalists and others to monitor chemicals. Many businesses have voluntarily cut their toxic releases since the inventory was created.

EPA officials say they changed the regulation to cut companies' costs of monitoring emissions and filing complex annual reports. The agency says the changes will save industry \$6 million a year and affect about 6,700 facilities.

For most toxic substances, the changes allow businesses that manage less than 5,000 pounds of a given chemical in a year, and release less than 2,000 pounds into the environment, to file a simplified, two-page form that omits details, including the handling, landfill disposal, on-site

treatment and recycling of chemicals as well as discharges into the air and water. The short form provides only the names of the compounds.

Previously, all companies that handled more than 500 pounds were required to file more detailed five-page forms, as were companies that handled any amount of substances considered the worst actors -- those that accumulate in people or animals, are persistent in nature or are highly toxic.

The EPA's changes allow the latter companies to avoid detailed reporting if they emit none of the substances into the environment and manage less than 500 pounds.

In its original proposal unveiled in 2005, the EPA had planned to grant even broader exemptions. But after an outpouring of opposition among the more than 100,000 comments received, the EPA dropped about 60% of the proposed exemptions.

The goal, EPA officials said, is to cut costs for smaller facilities that contribute less than 1% of total emissions in the country. In all, industry spends about \$650 million a year to comply with the reporting requirements.

But Brown said even small companies should be forced to provide the more detailed information because they pose a public threat.

"A ton's a lot of stuff, you know," Brown said Wednesday in an interview. "As we swim in this chemical soup that modern society serves up, we certainly have a right to know what we are encountering. No. 1, it makes the businessperson conscious that they're trespassing on the public's space, and secondly, neighbors and activists are alerted and can bring pressure to bear to reduce the emissions."

California enacted a law that requires California facilities to continue the full reporting required by the old regulation, but that law has not been fully implemented. Also, bills have been introduced in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to reverse the EPA's changes.

"EPA's rollbacks set a dangerous precedent that undermines two decades of public access to toxic pollution data," said Emily Rusch, a California Public Interest Research Group advocate.

Other states joining the lawsuit are Arizona, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and Vermont.

U.S. marks greenhouse gas decline

For the first time since 2001, carbon emissions were less than the year before, the Bush administration reports.

By James Gerstenzang, Staff Writer
L.A. Times, Thursday, November 29, 2007

WASHINGTON -- The Bush administration reported a small drop in greenhouse gas emissions for the United States last year, the first decline since 2001, but the emissions still represented a sizable increase over the last decade and a half.

The gases, including carbon dioxide, are widely blamed for global warming.

The Energy Information Administration said that in 2006 the United States released 1.5% fewer tons than in 2005.

The increase over 1990, which is used as a base year in international deliberations on long-range

targets for gas reductions, was 15.1%.

The White House drew attention to the decline on the eve of a meeting in Bali, Indonesia, to launch negotiations on a global treaty to reduce such emissions.

President Bush said in a written statement that, when measured against economic growth, it demonstrated "the largest annual improvement since 1985."

However, the government agency attributed the reduced emissions to several factors -- one of which, "favorable weather conditions," the administration had no hand in creating; and a second, higher energy prices, for which it would not want to claim responsibility.

The energy agency also said the reduction was due to a greater use of nonfossil fuels and natural gas in generating electricity.

The burning of fossil fuels, such as petroleum products and coal, releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, creating a layer that traps heat close to the Earth's surface and creates the "greenhouse effect" linked to global warming.

Robert Stavins, director of Harvard University's environmental economics program, said that although any year-to-year decrease is a positive development, long-range targets under consideration call for decreases by 2050 in the range of 50% to 80% compared with 1990.

Those decreases represent the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions that some scientists estimate would be needed to avoid serious consequences of global warming. Philip E. Clapp, president of the National Environmental Trust, said the previous one-year drop in 2001 was the result of a recession.

The decrease in emissions -- the equivalent of 117 million tons of carbon -- reported by the government Wednesday would be sufficient to hit the long-range targets if repeated each year. Emissions in 2005 increased 16.8% over 1990. They have increased 3.2% since the Bush administration took office in 2001.

Stavins said he was "skeptical of making the inference" that the United States could address the challenge posed by climate change "without any government mandates."

In addition to reporting the total tonnage of gases emitted, the Bush administration compared the tons emitted to economic growth.

Using this measure of "greenhouse gas intensity," it reported a reduction of nearly 28% since 1990. That reflects an economy growing at a much faster pace than the gas emissions, but also a shift away from the energy-intensive manufacturing industry.

David Sandalow, an assistant secretary of State specializing in the environment during the Clinton administration, noted that some European nations with economies similar to that of the United States had achieved greater emissions reductions.

Negotiators Close In on Energy Measure

Bill Raises Ethanol, Efficiency Targets; Fuel Credits for Auto Industry at Issue

By Steven Mufson, Washington Post Staff Writer
Washington Post Thursday, November 29, 2007

Congressional negotiators are nearing agreement on the components of an energy bill that would boost fuel efficiency standards for vehicles and require vast increases in the use of biofuels, according to congressional aides and lobbyists.

The auto industry and its champion, [House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman John D. Dingell \(D-Mich.\)](#), have accepted the target of achieving an average of 35 miles a gallon for each carmaker's fleet of new U.S. vehicles by 2020, set in the version of the bill passed by the Senate in June. However, Dingell and the automakers appeared to have won concessions extending fuel efficiency credits for flexible-fuel vehicles and creating separate mileage standards for cars and light trucks.

Yesterday, Dingell was still weighing the details of a compromise Senate proposal and pressing for further concessions. He was scheduled to talk by phone late yesterday with House Speaker [Nancy Pelosi \(D-Calif.\)](#). Aides and lobbyists who agreed to discuss the negotiations spoke on condition of anonymity because the two leaders had not yet conferred.

Efforts to pass energy legislation have been dragging on all year. But there was pressure to complete an agreement by yesterday or today because congressional leaders want to bring the bill to a vote when members return from recess next week, and a few days are needed to hammer out the exact language. Moreover, with oil prices at more than \$90 a barrel, many lawmakers feel compelled to take some sort of action on energy.

The two main and most likely features of the final bill are variations of what the Senate adopted. In addition to the 35 mile-per-gallon target for 2020, the Senate bill ramped up the requirement for gasoline makers to use ethanol and other biofuels, to at least 13 billion gallons by 2012 and 36 billion gallons by 2022.

There has been one change in the biofuels measure. While the Senate bill required that at least 3 billion gallons of "advanced biofuels" derived from sources other than corn be used starting in 2016, escalating to 21 billion gallons by 2022, new language would require that the first advanced biofuels be used in 2013. That might ease demand for corn, which has soared in price, and recognize that companies are making progress in using new feedstocks in pilot projects.

Many elements that were in the version of the energy bill passed in August by the House -- such as a requirement for utilities to use minimum amounts of renewable fuels and a rollback of the oil industry's share of a tax break for manufacturers -- seemed unlikely to be included, congressional sources said.

One congressional aide said that Senate Majority Leader [Harry Reid \(D-Nev.\)](#) said he had the 60 votes needed to toughen fuel economy standards and the 60 votes for renewable energy standards for utilities, "but unfortunately they are not the same 60 votes."

The excluded items and other controversial energy issues could be moved to other bills. Sen. Pete V. Domenici (R-N.M.) is still pushing to lift limits on loan guarantees that could benefit nuclear power plants, but that would probably be part of an energy and water appropriations bill.

Though critics of Domenici's efforts said he would undermine government credit reform enacted in the early 1990s, key congressional aides said Reid might go along with his proposal if he needs votes to win passage of renewable portfolio standards in the energy bill or a separate bill later.

Because of concern about the cost of the energy bill, the extension of tax breaks for renewable energy, such as wind and solar, is expected to be left out of it and perhaps inserted in a bill extending a wide variety of tax provisions, congressional negotiators said.

Companies in the wind and solar energy businesses have been lobbying hard for the extension of production tax credits worth about 1.9 cents a kilowatt hour. The credits are set to expire at the end of 2008, but companies said they need an extension to plan new projects.

"If that goes away, you'll see a shrinkage in the size of the industry at time when we need fuel diversity," said Peter C. Duprey, chief executive of Acciona Energy [North America](#), a unit of a big Spanish corporation expanding in the U.S. wind and solar markets.

Despite their self-imposed deadline, congressional negotiators were continuing to bargain yesterday afternoon, with fuel efficiency at center stage.

Key differences remained over the size and duration of the flex-fuel credits, which allow auto companies calculating fuel efficiency to factor in potential savings from vehicles capable of burning E85, which contains 85 percent ethanol, even though only 1 or 2 percent of those vehicles actually use E85. Auto companies want that provision, now set to expire in 2009, extended through 2020, while Senate negotiators wanted to phase it out earlier.

Critics said the flex-fuel vehicle credit is a loophole that could effectively lower mileage standards by as much as 1.2 miles a gallon and add more than 100,000 barrels a day to U.S. gasoline consumption. They argue that automakers can adapt existing vehicles at a cost of just \$50 to \$100 each.

"This loophole is bad policy and it should be killed, not extended," said David Friedman, a senior analyst at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Carmakers said the credit is needed to guarantee that the auto fleet is able to consume all the ethanol that will be produced under new requirements in the energy bill. They argue that if all cars used E10 -- fuel containing 10 percent ethanol -- the new biofuel mandate would produce unusable surpluses after 2014.

Dingell is also pressing for a provision that would take the responsibility for regulating tailpipe emissions of carbon dioxide away from the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) and give it to the [Transportation Department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#).

Last week, [Chrysler](#) circulated a paper arguing that tailpipe emissions were linked to fuel efficiency standards NHTSA oversees. But earlier this year, the Supreme Court said the EPA has the power to regulate carbon dioxide emissions under the Clean Air Act, and congressional sources said it was unlikely that the auto companies would prevail.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Thursday, November 29, 2007:](#)

A rare show of fairness

Valley, Bay Area win an equitable split of Proposition 1B funding.

Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez has his knickers in a knot because he got snubbed in a greedy grab for transportation bond money for Southern California. Tough.

Núñez wanted the California Transportation Commission to give the vast majority of the money -- \$2 billion from Proposition 1B and another \$1 billion expected from the federal government -- to Los Angeles and points east. Instead, the commission approved a much fairer division that spreads more of the money around the Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area.

The speaker and his neighbors will still get \$1.7 billion, or 56% of the money, but that wasn't enough.

Núñez now says he'll work hard to steer more of the funding to the south when the time comes for the Legislature to actually appropriate the money during budget deliberations. We hope the unusual Bay Area/Valley coalition -- joined by San Diego this time -- will stand strong against the money grab.

The money was approved by voters to be used in so-called "trade corridors," the network of freeways that move goods from the state's ports to inland markets in California and across the nation.

Fresno County doesn't stand to get any of the money, mostly because Highway 99 -- an important trade corridor -- was singled out for \$1 billion in funding in a specific earmark under Proposition 1B.

But five projects in the northern and southern ends of the region, including rail expansion through the Tehachapi Pass, would be funded under the CTC formula, which will bring important benefits to the Valley.

The commission also required that all projects meet the need to improve air quality in the state. That's more good news.

Núñez would need a two-thirds vote to alter the formula in the Assembly. We urge Bay Area, San Diego and Valley representatives to resist his efforts.

Fair is fair, even if the speaker doesn't agree.

[S.F. Chronicle commentary, Thursday, November 29, 2007:](#)

Open Forum

Environmental destruction that chokes growth

By Vinod Thomas

Climate change is rooted in decades of environmental neglect, energy inefficiency and carbon-intensity in the drive for rapid growth. It hasn't helped that most policy leaders have wrongly viewed environmental protection, not environmental degradation, as the obstacle to growth. And yet, if growth is to be sustained, this thinking must change: Environmental safeguards need to be seen as an essential aid to growth.

As worldwide leaders meet in Bali next month to discuss the Earth's rising temperatures, they need to bring this perspective toward climate change as the central threat to our world's economic growth. Yet, remarkably, policies of these countries to deal with climate change are far from matching the scientific consensus on its dangers.

To be clear, sustained growth has been the most powerful means to reduce poverty, especially in Asia's experience. In China, growth averaged 10 percent yearly for the past 25 years, lifting some 400 million people out of poverty. Developing countries still have to grow a great deal, as their average income is still one-sixth that of rich nations.

But it's not just how much a country's economy grows. It is how.

In the past 100 years, the world economy expanded sevenfold. Meanwhile, the global population increased from 1.6 billion to 6.5 billion, the world lost half of its tropical forests, and carbon dioxide levels rose to 380 parts per million (from the pre-industrial 280 parts per million). The 1.33 degree Fahrenheit rise in temperatures in the past century is causing sea levels to rise, melting glaciers and destroying species.

Going forward, a change in global temperature in excess of the pre-industrial temperatures of 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit could produce massive climatic instability.

Some set aside these global risks as being distant. Often ignored, too, are immediate local effects. The losses in health and worker productivity from just particulate air pollution amount to 2 percent to 3 percent of GNP in Argentina, China, India, Turkey and elsewhere. In the Amazon, the relentless conversion of forest to farm and pasture is pushing up local temperatures, which is

bad for crops and bad for people. According to recent evaluations, deforestation is compounding the damages of natural disasters, especially for the poorest.

Strikingly, when it comes to these losses, prevention is far cheaper than cure - whether it's curbing industrial pollution or reinforcement of structures in disaster-prone areas. Why then don't governments and businesses take protective measures?

One reason is that no country, rich or poor, has the economic motivation nor the political will to confront global problems alone. That's because only a part of the benefits accrue to those taking action, while others can grab a free ride. Moreover, even when the gains are local, they may only appear after politicians leave office. This split between what's good for society and what drives private interest only can be addressed if policy leaders, economists and businesses include the environment as integral to the growth agenda. The shift needs to be clear and bring concrete outcomes.

First, it must lead to deep cuts in carbon emissions. Measured per person, the United States, Japan and European nations contribute the most to global emissions. So they must lead the way. But in total amount, middle income countries - especially China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico and Russia - already account for half of the emissions. So they too must be part of the solution.

Second, developing countries need to reduce their deforestation, which accounts for a fifth of all greenhouse gas emissions, more than from all transportation. Opening markets to trade permits for emissions for avoiding deforestation would help. International financing for reducing deforestation could help, enabling the transfer of wealth to developing countries for conserving forests.

Third, the policy shift needs to stop encouraging the waste of natural resources. The world spends a quarter of a trillion dollars a year on energy subsidies, promoting energy waste and locking in polluting infrastructure for decades.

The growing awareness and assessment of environmental risks at the climate summit in Bali are timely. Yet the results will hinge on policy changes made by the national leaders. Unless they sharply raise the priority for environmental stewardship, the drive for economic growth alone will be mired in its own devastation.

Vinod Thomas is the director-general of the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank. The views expressed here are his alone.