

The following is a look back at 2007 and look ahead to 2008 by one of Tracy's elected officials.

## **Effective government takes active citizens**

### **The local San Joaquin County supervisor takes a year-end "look back, look ahead."**

By Leroy Ornellas

Tracy Press, Tuesday, December 25, 2007

Crime is down in the 5th Supervisorial District of San Joaquin County, based on FBI statistics released in September. This can be attributed to our sheriff, district attorney, local police chiefs and their rank and file, as well as community leaders and concerned residents who have formed youth programs designed to give our youth alternatives to gangs and crime.

Although we have made strides, we still have work to do. Our farmers have fallen victim to metal theft. The county has addressed this through significant changes in the county ordinance directed at junk dealers, and the cities are following suit. Additionally, we increased the sheriff's budget this year, allowing him to add personnel, including the Agriculture Crimes Task Force.

Illegal dumping continues along our roads. I assembled a team to address this ugly and costly issue, and the county board voted to make this team a permanent task force. The group has been developing various means to combat dumping, which include a reporting Web site and hotline, a listing of licensed handyman haulers, a reward program, increased surveillance and increased law enforcement and prosecution efforts. For these efforts to be successful, it will take the active involvement of the public.

Jail overcrowding is another obvious obstacle we must overcome. The county has already set aside \$25 million for a jail expansion, and our legislative advocates and the sheriff are fighting for our share of state funds. Meanwhile, we are waiting for a jail-needs assessment to be completed so we can determine just how large the expansion of the San Joaquin County Jail will be.

On the prosecution side of things, we increased the district attorney's budget to fund 24 new positions. In 2008, the obvious goal is to continue to decrease crime rates.

With the vision and initiative of San Joaquin County Superior Court Judge Barbara Kronlund, the county held its first Homeless Veterans Stand Down on Oct. 26. With 300 volunteers and participants, we served 149 veterans. Veterans received everything from medical and dental services to housing and employment services. They received breakfast and lunch, a backpack with hygiene kits and other helpful items, a haircut, a set of clothes and other services like a new Cal ID card and legal services. We received great support for this event from private individuals and corporate sponsors.

In 2004, I testified before a panel at the Livermore Veterans Affairs Medical Center as part of the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services process enacted by then VA Secretary Anthony Principi. As a result of that process, the VA announced it would be locating a regional outpatient clinic in the East Bay and another one in the northern San Joaquin Valley. Additionally, the northern San Joaquin Valley would get a new state-of-the-art nursing home to be located with the outpatient clinic.

In 2005, the county board directed county staff to submit a proposal to locate the facilities on the San Joaquin General Hospital grounds in French Camp. The VA will hire a consultant in 2008 to analyze our proposal and any others to help decide the appropriate location.

Meanwhile, the VA is seeking approval to expand the county's current clinic, which was opened in 2006, by 10,000 square feet to meet increased demand and to add services, such as pharmacy and radiology.

Early in 2007, I asked the county board to create an airport task force, which is geared to help the airport director increase business and air traffic at Stockton Metropolitan Airport.

Allegiant Air makes five weekly flights to Las Vegas and two to Mesa, Ariz. Recently, the county received a Federal Aviation Administration grant to help San Joaquin County attract additional airline service. We hope to do that in 2008. But to attract more service, we must demonstrate we have the passengers to fill flights.

In 2008, I will chair the [San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District](#) Governing Board. Earlier this year, the governing board adopted the 2007 ozone plan for the valley to bring the entire region into line

with the new federal health-based, eight-hour standard for ozone as required by the Clean Air Act. My goal as chairman will be to keep the plan on course.

As always, it is an honor serving the residents of the south county and the San Joaquin Valley.

*Leroy Ornellas, a rural Tracy dairyman, represents Tracy, Ripon, Escalon and parts of Manteca and Lathrop on the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors.*

## **Valley seeks air pass for July 4**

### **District tells feds particles from fireworks pollution were beyond its control**

By Mark Grossi

The Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee, Wednesday, December 26, 2007

Readings in Bakersfield jumped more than six times above the health threshold, said the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The agency is invoking a federal rule on events out of its control -- a rule available to air districts across the country.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is expected to exclude the readings. The last day for public comment on the district's request is Jan. 11.

If the high readings were included in the Valley's monitoring information, the district might have violated the coarse-particle standard for dust, soot and chemical specks. The Valley has achieved clean-air status for the so-called PM-10 standard with no violations since 2003.

A July 4 violation would move the region back out of the clean-air status. Officials would have to look at new and possibly expensive particle-pollution controls, such as spreading oil on more unpaved roads to hold down dust.

Environmentalists say the July 4 exception appears to be within federal rules, but they said the EPA should not look for more reasons to excuse potential air violations.

The EPA last year disregarded three particle-pollution violations due to high wind that kicked up dust and caused high readings. The agency excludes such readings if the air district can prove there would not have been a violation without the wind.

"How many other types of events will be used?" asked Sarah Jackson, research analyst for Earthjustice, a nonprofit legal watchdog in Oakland.

On July 4 in Bakersfield, high particle readings occurred between 9 and 11 p.m. The readings followed fireworks displays that showered the sky with smoke and metals, such as magnesium, copper and barium.

Such metals can cause health effects ranging from skin irritation to muscle weakness and confusion in people with kidney problems. But air officials say the particles, known as PM-10 and PM-2.5, clear in a matter of hours.

Before the fireworks shows, a Bakersfield PM-10 monitor recorded a healthy 48 micrograms of particle pollution per cubic meter of air. A 150 average over an entire day is the health threshold.

But at 8 p.m., the reading vaulted to 471. An hour later, it was pegged at 943.

By 1 a.m., the monitor dropped to 138 micrograms, meaning it was back in the healthy range.

Valley air officials say the numbers provide evidence that there would have been no particle increase if not for fireworks. Air officials said they do not have authority over Fourth of July fireworks shows.

Said district meteorologist Gary Arcemont: "It's an event that is clearly out of our control."

## **New traffic laws ahead**

### **No smoking in a car if there are minors present and tickets can be written for adult passengers as well**

By Hillary S. Meeks

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2007

New traffic laws taking effect Jan. 1 include some that will curb California drivers' smoking habits, make it harder for them to get rid of certain traffic violations and defend them against mistakes by car dealers.

While one of the most talked about new laws of 2008 — a law allowing drivers to only talk on cell phones with a hands-free device — doesn't take effect until July, there are a number of new laws that kick in on New Year's Day that residents need to be aware of, said Jan Mendoza, spokeswoman for the California Department of Motor Vehicles.

For example, the state is toughening its stance on serious traffic violations. Violations such as driving under the influence, hit and run, or reckless driving will no longer be dismissed through completion of traffic violator school or any other court-approved program of driving safety.

One new law passed for the benefit of car owners requires car dealerships to pay restitution to victims that suffer financial loss because a dealership does something wrong, Mendoza said. Examples of this include car dealers not titling cars properly, selling stolen cars or promising to make payments on a trade-in vehicle but never actually doing it.

While customers previously could sue for restitution, now the DMV can simply order it, Mendoza said.

Another law prohibits smoking in a vehicle when any minors are present, regardless of whether the vehicle is moving or not.

Each infraction will be punishable by a fine of no more than \$100, Mendoza said.

This particular infraction is called a "secondary violation," which means officers won't pull a driver over just for this violation, said Sgt. John Maxfield of the California Highway Patrol central division office in Fresno. The infraction will be cited after officers pull a driver over for a primary violation, such as speeding or a mechanical failure.

"The part that will be interesting is how many people will throw cigarettes out the window," Maxfield said. "That happens all the time. They'll get cited for that, as well."

It's not just drivers who will be cited for smoking in a car when minors are present — any passengers can be punished for the act, he said.

### **Other laws**

- **Bicycle safety:** Bike riders will be required to use illumination devices at night when riding upon a road, sidewalk or bikeway.
- **License plate coating:** Prohibits the use or sale of a spray coating product that impairs the reading or recognition of a license plate by an electronic device, such as a red-light camera.
- **Consumer recovery fund:** This law creates a special fund to compensate consumers who lose money as a result of a vehicle dealership closing. This is funded by a \$1 fee collected by the DMV on all vehicles sold by a dealer or lessor/retailer.
- **Reduction in diesel emissions:** The Healthy Heart and Lung Act will be established as a means to reduce diesel emissions and prohibits the registration, renewal of registration or transfer of ownership of a heavy-duty diesel vehicle if the vehicle owner or operator has an outstanding emissions-related citation.
- **Driver responsibility:** Requires applicants for a driver's license renewal to sign a declaration acknowledging that being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs impairs the ability to safely operate a motor vehicle.

### **Effective July 1**

- **Wireless telephone:** Prohibits the use of wireless telephones while driving unless a hands-free device is used. The base fine for a first offense is \$20, and subsequent offenses are \$50 each.
- **Wireless telephones, under 18:** No one under 18 years of age will be allowed to use a wireless telephone, even with a hands-free device.
- **Air quality:** Registration fees will increase from \$31 to \$34.

Those with cars six years old or younger will see an increase in their smog abatement fee, from \$12 to \$20.

Additional revenues collected will be used to fund a variety of fuel and technology projects through the Bureau of Automotive Repair, the California Air Resources Board and the California Energy Commission.

## **SLUDGE POWER**

### **Local company aims to capitalize on using sewage to generate electricity**

BY STACEY SHEPARD, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Friday, December 21, 2007

That stuff you flush down the toilet may someday provide power to your home. The state's largest sewage sludge composter, located near Lost Hills, plans to build a renewable energy plant that burns treated human waste and other organic material to make electricity.

Owners of Liberty Composting, formerly San Joaquin Composting, already have a contract to sell 20 megawatts of electricity from the planned \$64 million facility to Pacific Gas and Electric. Construction of the plant, called Liberty V, is slated to start in three years.

The move is part of the company's desire to find a better use for sludge in the face of stricter air pollution regulations and public concern about sludge disposal, said Patrick McCarthy, president of McCarthy Family Farms, which owns Liberty Composting.

"Five years ago, we started talking and said there's got to be a better alternative to composting," McCarthy said. "Our idea is to take these problematic organic waste streams and use them for their highest and best use in the most environmentally friendly manner, and in doing so, generate renewable energy."

Liberty Composting receives up to 780,000 tons of organic waste annually. The majority is sewage sludge from 48 communities from Los Angeles to Santa Cruz. California produces about 3 million tons of sludge a year. About one-third is directly applied to the land, another third goes into landfills and the rest is composted.

About 90 percent of the finished compost from Liberty Composting is used at McCarthy Family Farms' Liberty Ranch in Kings County.

The Liberty V plant will use a process called gasification, whereby sludge and other organic waste is heated at temperatures of more than 1,500 degrees in a low-oxygen environment.

The heat drives gases off the waste and into a chamber where injected oxygen causes the gases to ignite. The combustion heats water and the resulting steam spins a turbine, creating electricity.

Some butane is required for initial start, McCarthy said, but afterward the facility can sustain operation without an additional fuel source.

#### **'More responsible approach'**

The project will require a full environmental review but the company is touting it as a sound solution to several environmental concerns.

Air pollution will be drastically reduced because the power plant will have the most up-to-date pollution controls and airtight storage silos, McCarthy said. Farmland would not be used as the final resting place for sludge. And the facility would generate renewable energy.

Because of that, the project has received a warm welcome so far from air regulators, sludge critics and public utilities.

"They're moving to a more responsible approach," said Maureen Reilly, a Canada-based sludge watchdog who's been involved in Kern County sludge issues. "They shopped the marketplace and looked at what more can you do with sludge. I think that makes sense."

The switch from composting to a gasification plant has the potential to remove more than 80 percent of the gases and dust produced by the company's current composting practices, said Lucinda Roth, senior air quality specialist with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"Without seeing the engineering plans, it's hard to say but most likely they will get more than 80 percent," Roth said.

McCarthy said plans reviewed by air regulators show a potential air pollution reduction as high as 95 percent. In addition, he said, pollution will go down from a reduction in trucks hauling finished compost off site. Trucks will still be needed to transport the ash left over from the burning process to factories that make Portland cement. The number of trucks will go down, though, because one truckload of ash is equivalent to about 10 trucks of compost, McCarthy said.

### **Some composting continues**

A limited amount of composting will likely continue after the power plant is built, McCarthy said, but the amount of sludge and other waste coming into the facility will not exceed the current amount.

McCarthy Family Farms, a four-generation, family-owned farming and agriculture land development operation, got into the composting business more than a decade ago when it stopped spreading sludge directly onto its farmland out of the belief that composting was a more environmentally friendly approach.

Five years ago, the company found itself again re-evaluating its practice.

"We set out saying, what can we do to handle this material so it would be more acceptable and people could benefit from its use," McCarthy said.

After several trips to Europe to see how sludge was being handled there, the company settled on building a gasification plant.

Several gasification facilities have been proposed in California and surrounding states but none has been built yet, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"With more of an emphasis on renewable energy ... there's going to be much more interest in doing this," said Ben Machol, senior energy adviser with EPA.

### **Market for similar plants**

A recent California state mandate that requires public utilities to obtain 20 percent of their power from renewable sources by 2010 has spurred market growth for new forms of renewable energy, McCarthy said.

In addition to the Lost Hills plant, Liberty plans to build similar power plants in Banning and Niland in Southern California and in Ontario, Canada.

"We're very excited about the potential long-term environmental benefits," said Jim Earhart, director of Banning's municipally owned electric utility. The utility has contracted to receive 15 megawatts from a Liberty plant to be built there.

During winter months and at nighttime, the facility is expected to provide 100 percent of the power to the city of 30,000 residents.

While the project has been praised as a better alternative to sludge handling, questions remain about the practice of having other cities' sewage trucked into Kern County.

"Bringing such a project to Kern County doesn't make environmental sense," said state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter. "To me, it sounds like a great project for Los Angeles County."

McCarthy said he understands people don't like that Kern County is the final stop for other cities' waste.

"At the same time, if we can turn that material into something useful, like fuel, I'd feel a little bit better about it," he said. "I think this is an important opportunity for (communities) that feel like they've been dumped on to turn this around into a positive thing."

Liberty receives up to 150,000 tons of sludge produced annually in the San Joaquin Valley, McCarthy said. For Liberty V to be economically viable, waste from outside the area is necessary.

#### **New use**

Name: Liberty V

Owner: Liberty Energy, a subsidiary of McCarthy Family Farms, which also owns Liberty Composting in Lost Hills, Liberty Ranch in Kings County, and Liberty Logistics, a Bakersfield-based sludge trucking company.

Location: Eight miles northwest of Lost Hills

Process: Burns organic waste in a controlled environment to create electricity

Capacity: 760,000 tons per year of organic waste (primarily sewage sludge but also grass clippings, processed food waste, orchard prunings and animal waste)

Production: 20 megawatts of electricity to be sold to Pacific Gas and Electric

Cost: \$64 million

Timeline: Construction anticipated in 2011

#### **By the Numbers**

3.1 million: Tons of sewage sludge produced in California annually

1.1 million: Tons of sludge used as fertilizer (no composting)

880,000 tons: Tons of sludge composted

Source: Environmental Protection Agency

#### **What's New**

Valley Voice Newspaper, December 26, 2007

Visalia City Council approved Monday the applications for several grants that could provide money for projects still years away. The council approved applying for four Congestion Management Air Quality grants, one for \$400,000 for the Packwood Creek/Walnut Avenue Trail; \$700,000 for the Santa Fe Railroad Trail; \$600,000 for the Packwood Creek/Caldwell Trail; \$275,000 for a new traffic signal at Demaree St. and Ferguson Ave.; and another 275,000 grant for a traffic signal at Walnut Ave. and Santa Fe St.

#### **Think 'Green' When Making New Year's Resolutions**

##### **Green Mountain Energy Company Offers 10 Tips for a Green 2008**

The Fresno Bee Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2007

It's that time of year again -- time for consumers to start thinking about their New Year's resolutions for 2008.

For many Americans, dieting is the most popular New Year's resolution. This year, Green Mountain Energy Company, the nation's leading provider of cleaner energy and carbon offset solutions, suggests a different kind of diet -- a "carbon diet." The company is encouraging individuals to consider making New Year's resolutions -- with a different purpose -- that help protect the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a leading contributor of global warming.

#### **Carbon Dioxide Emissions**

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the average U.S. household is responsible for the emission of almost 60 tons of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) annually. CO<sub>2</sub> is a greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming. Each household can eliminate up to 32 percent or 20 tons of this CO<sub>2</sub> footprint by making simple yet powerful choices.

If you haven't already made your list of "green" resolutions, Green Mountain offers 10 simple ways to be "green" in 2008.

Green Mountain's Top Green Resolutions for 2008:

1. Sign up for cleaner electricity. Most people don't realize that making electricity is the leading cause of industrial air pollution in the U.S. By purchasing 100 percent new renewable energy for a year, an

American household using an average of 938 kilowatt hours (kWh) per month could help avoid contributing over 15,600 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) annually.

2. Go on a Carbon Diet. Reduce your carbon footprint or become carbon neutral by purchasing carbon offsets. Consumers can offset their electrical usage, automobile transportation, air transportation and natural gas usage by purchasing carbon offsets from BeGreen, a division of Green Mountain Energy Company. Consumers can purchase the BeGreen Driver, BeGreen Flyer or BeGreen Home products. For more information, to purchase a carbon offset or to find out what your carbon footprint is, visit: [www.begreennow.com](http://www.begreennow.com)

3. Give the Gift of Green. Plant a tree for a friend to offset carbon emissions. BeGreen also offers the Gift of Green: one native tree is planted in an ecosystem restoration project in the U.S. For only \$9.95, the recipient of your green gift receives a plantable ornament made of seed paper, plus a card telling them about the environmental benefits of their tree. Consumers can purchase the Gift of Green at [www.begreennow.com](http://www.begreennow.com).

4. Purchase a Hybrid Car. Hybrid gas/electric cars are becoming more affordable and accessible than ever. The Honda Insight and Toyota Prius are at the top of the EPA's Green Vehicle Guide and get roughly 45-60 miles per gallon (mpg) in the city. Better fuel economy means lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In fact, a five-mpg difference equates to about 2,800 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> pollution a year.

5. Green your Commute! Give your car a break. Combine trips whenever possible, share a ride, use mass transit, walk or bike whenever possible. Leaving your car at home just two days a week will save almost 1,600 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions each year! Keep your car well-maintained to maximize its fuel efficiency, safety, and reliability.

6. Drive Smart. Every gallon of gasoline saved keeps 20 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere! Keep your car tuned up, combine trips, limit idling to 30 seconds, never "top off" the tank, drive less aggressively and maintain proper tire pressure. Keeping your tires inflated properly can improve gas mileage by more than 3 percent.

7. Upgrade to EPA's ENERGY STAR-certified Products. Americans, with the help of ENERGY STAR, saved enough energy in 2005 alone to avoid greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those from 23 million cars.

8. Switch to Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs (CFL). A CFL puts out the same amount of light as an incandescent bulb but uses two-thirds less electricity. CFLs last 10 times longer and use about 72 percent less energy than a standard bulb.

9. Recycle More. You can save 2,400 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> per year by recycling just half of your household waste.

10. Say No to Plastic Bags. When shopping, bring a reusable bag to carry your purchases. A plastic bag can take an astonishing 500 years to decompose.

"As consumers make their New Year's resolutions this year, we hope they will consider the impact their decisions can have on the environment," said Gillan Taddune, Chief Environmental Officer for Green Mountain Energy Company. "Going green is not only easy to implement, but it often can save you money."

## **Installing solar panels among greening efforts**

By Jeanette Steele

Sign on San Diego, Wednesday, December 26, 2007

BALBOA PARK - Call it the greening of Balboa Park.

Park officials are installing solar panels, replacing energy-sucking lights and composting tons of waste to make San Diego's crown jewel more environmentally friendly.

The city is slowly bringing energy efficiency to the park, where some of the buildings date to 1915 and 1935, complete with the original wiring.

"Energy conservation has been discussed and been in the forefront for years. Now the technology is such that it's affordable," said Kathleen Hasenauer, San Diego's park and recreation deputy director.

The Reuben H. Fleet Science Center had solar panels installed in April, and the Casa de Balboa building should have panels atop its roof before summer.

Replacing light strings along the park's Prado boulevard is planned next month. Out with 10-watt incandescent bulbs. In with 1-watt LED bulbs.

That's 3,655 new bulbs, stretching from the west end of the Cabrillo Bridge to Bea Evenson Fountain. The lower-energy bulbs should save 141,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity a year. That equals a nearly \$25,000 savings on the city's utility bills annually, said True Ryndes of the nonprofit group Friends of Balboa Park, which is covering about half the \$28,000 bill for the bulbs.

The city is taking other steps on lighting. The park's administration, War Memorial, municipal gym and Balboa Park Club buildings are scheduled for upgrading with fluorescent lamps and related equipment before summer.

The job will cost the city \$60,000. It will yield more than \$15,000 in savings each year on the buildings' power bills, said Tom Cartier, project officer in the city's Environmental Services Department.

The future may hold more of the same, as park museums get interested in cutting their power bills.

"What's been done is just scratching the surface of what we're expecting to see in the next few years," said Rachel Laing, a San Diego Gas & Electric Co. spokeswoman. "We've had a ton of inquiries and initial meetings with museum executive directors."

Some park stakeholders have loftier goals than cost cutting.

Jeff Kirsch, the science center's executive director, has a dream of Balboa Park going totally "green" by 2015.

That would require its "carbon footprint" to be eliminated, meaning the amount of greenhouse gas produced is reduced or offset by alternative projects such as solar energy and reforestation.

The big stumbling block is the amount of gas guzzled when people drive to the park and search for parking, Kirsch said.

"How could we make it possible for people to get to the park (while) drastically minimizing the amount of fuels they burn to get here? That's a big challenge, but it can be done," Kirsch said.

He called mass transit for the park an unmet challenge.

"We just have a few bus lines, but it's nothing people can depend on, short of being willing to wait an hour and a half," Kirsch said.

The Fleet center led the way on solar energy. The panels installed on its roof generate more than 10,000 kilowatt-hours a month. That's enough to power 20 average homes each month.

The energy generated is flowing into SDG&E's power grid. The Fleet center is charting the performance in an exhibit called "So Watt!"

The San Diego Model Railroad Museum wants to harness solar energy for its bottom line. It is teaming with other tenants in the park's Casa de Balboa building to erect panels there.

Private investors would own the solar arrays and sell the power to the tenants on long-term leases. Museum director John Rotsart said his institution wants to control its power costs in the summer, when SDG&E charges extra.

Kirsch would like to see solar equipment atop many park institutions.

"We've got lots of flat buildings with roofs, so panel them up," he said.

Ryndes of the Friends of Balboa Park wants to see the city imitate Seattle's Climate Action Now program, which dictates that parks use "sustainable" building methods. For instance, one new park structure in Seattle catches rainwater to run toilets.

Balboa Park has a multimillion-dollar backlog of maintenance and repair projects. Hasenauer said anything on that list is a challenge because city funding is tight.

That's why the city has turned to private groups for help with upgrades, such as the Friends of Balboa Park's purchase of the LED lights. The same group recently donated computerized information kiosks to help visitors find their way with minimum wandering.

The San Diego Zoological Society, which has a \$168 million annual budget, is one of the park's greener tenants.

The zoo now uses biodegradable plates and cups in its cafeterias, and has opened a shop selling only "sustainable" products - which means rain forest trees and other irreplaceable natural resources weren't used to create them.

And, the zoo is keeping more of its waste on the premises, instead of sending it to the city's landfill. Between the zoo and its Wild Animal Park east of Escondido, the society recycles 60 tons of green clippings a day.

Zoo workers turn it into compost to nurture the society's gardens.

## **Test site at Lawrence lab may shut down**

Associated Press

The Business Journal Mon., Dec. 24, 2007

(AP) - More than 900 nuclear weapons program workers at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory could lose their jobs if the federal government goes ahead with a proposal to stop testing at a site in the Altamont Hills.

The Site 300 test range near Tracy is slated to stop testing under the U.S. National Nuclear Security Agency's proposal to consolidate the nation's nuclear weapons infrastructure.

Lab spokesman David Schwoegler says nuclear weapons launching systems tests could stop by 2010, and high explosives tests could stop by 2015.

Federal officials say that plan would lower security risks and storage costs by moving some of the work performed locally to a New Mexico lab and a Nevada test site.

Schwoegler says the lab is exploring other uses for the facility before the agency makes a final decision next year.

## **ENERGY**

### **Fuel maker refines plan to hike output, cut emissions**

**Alon USA seeks the go-ahead to expand a local plant. Upgrades would help clear the air and ease a supply bottleneck, it says.**

By Elizabeth Douglass, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

LA Times Wed., December 26, 2007

Can an oil refiner double fuel production and cut greenhouse gas emissions at the same time?

The task is so daunting that no U.S. refiner has even attempted it. But Jeff Morris is proposing to do exactly that with the two Southern California refineries his company bought last year.

Morris is chief executive of Alon USA Energy Inc., which purchased Paramount Petroleum Corp. and Edgington Oil Co. for a combined \$460 million. The twin deals included small refineries in Paramount and Long Beach, which make mostly asphalt and have been combined to operate as one plant.

"We may . . . become the lowest-emission refinery in California, and if we are, logic would say probably the lowest in the United States," Morris said in an interview. A preliminary engineering review indicates that the refinery's overhaul could double fuel output while reducing by at least 7% the production of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, which contribute to global warming.

Alon's project is one of just a handful of proposals aimed at boosting gasoline and diesel output in California, where fuel production falls short of demand and the environmental standards are the toughest in the nation.

The state's supply gap has widened steadily in recent years because, despite rising fuel consumption, most California refiners have limited their investments to satisfying environmental mandates or projects that increase profit but not production.

With supply so strained, even moderate production gains can help ease prices -- either by reducing the need for expensive imports or diluting the effect when production falters at another refinery. For that reason, state energy officials generally look favorably on expansion projects like the one proposed by Alon.

Such expansions, however, almost always yield more greenhouse gases and more pollution for the surrounding communities. So environmentalists are skeptical about Alon's emission-reduction claims.

"We're being met with a mixture of intrigue and incredulousness," said Morris, who has outlined the company's plans in meetings with the mayors of Long Beach and Paramount, the refinery's immediate neighbors, and others.

But Alon's proposal isn't just unusual; it's also highly pragmatic, given the intense scrutiny of any refinery project by regulators, politicians, environmentalists and community groups. Dallas-based Alon needs permits and agency approvals to proceed. And speed is important, too -- every month the expansion project is delayed means lost profit in California's lucrative fuel market.

"I believe with this approach we have a higher probability of getting the project permitted, and maybe a higher probability of getting it permitted earlier," Morris said. At a minimum, "it should be easier than the other approach" of pushing a project that boosts overall emissions.

Since the 2006 passage of AB 32, California's aggressive greenhouse gas reduction initiative, the state is more focused than ever on slashing emissions, which puts greater pressure on refineries and other polluters with new projects.

As part of the climate change initiative, the California Air Resources Board recently ordered refineries and other big plants to track their greenhouse gas emissions in 2008 and begin filing annual reports with the state the following year. Previous reporting requirements covered many pollutants, but not greenhouse gases.

"It's great to hear that the refineries are finally getting worried about greenhouse gases," said Julia May, a senior scientist with Communities for a Better Environment, a California group that pushes to cut industrial pollution. Alon's proposal, May said, has "a good goal. But let's see the numbers."

Barry Wallerstein, executive officer of the South Coast Air Quality Management District, underscored the point. Given the state's mandate to cut greenhouse gases and the urgent need to reduce smog in Southern California, he said, "all the existing refineries are going to have to continue to reduce pollutant emissions."

Wallerstein, whose agency must sign off on Alon's project, met with Morris for an initial briefing and came away hopeful, but not necessarily convinced.

Morris "sees a good business case for investing in these two independent refineries and providing fuel and asphalt for the California market, and recognizes that that also entails significant environmental improvements," Wallerstein said.

"He walked us through some of the ideas they have for revamping the facilities . . . and he seemed to be very sincere in what he was saying. The proof will be in the follow-through and what's contained in their application."

The two refineries now owned by Alon operated independently until they were sold last year. The Paramount plant made asphalt as well as relatively small amounts of gasoline and diesel. The Edgington facility, three miles away in Long Beach, made only asphalt.

Connected by pipelines and operating as a single refinery, Alon's Southern California facilities can process up to 90,000 barrels a day of crude oil, but operated at roughly 60% of that under previous owners.

## **China promises to promote clean energy**

By Joe McDonald, Associated Press

In The Fresno Bee, NY Times, SF Chronicle & other papers Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2007

China promised Wednesday to develop renewable energy for its fast-growing economy but warned that coal consumption will grow dramatically and avoided embracing binding limits on its greenhouse gas emissions.

In a report on its energy plans, the government announced no new initiatives but said it wants to curb reliance on oil and gas to drive an economy that is the world's second-biggest energy consumer after the United States.

"China gives top priority to developing renewable energy," said the 44-page report released by the Cabinet's press office.

The report said Beijing will promote hydroelectric, nuclear, solar and wind energy, as well natural gas extracted from garbage dumps and coal mines.

China's economic boom has sharply increased its need for imported oil and gas. That has prompted complaints that Chinese demand is driving record-high world crude prices and led to diplomatic strains as Beijing builds closer ties with oil-rich pariah states such as Sudan and Iran.

Communist leaders worry about the mounting damage to China's battered environment from fossil fuel use and see mounting reliance on imported energy as a strategic weakness.

The share of renewable sources and nuclear power in China's energy consumption rose from 4 percent in 1980 to 7.2 percent last year, the report said.

"China will pay more attention to the clean utilization of energy resources, especially coal, and make it a focus of environmental protection," the report said.

It said China takes greenhouse gases seriously and some of its measures would reduce its emissions. But there was no mention of whether Beijing might agree to demands by Washington to sign up to binding limits.

Beijing has rejected such limits, arguing that developing countries such as China are not to blame for current pollution levels and need to increase energy production to fight poverty.

The report said China will expand measures to exploit its abundant coal reserves - a step that will help to reduce reliance on imported fuel but could sharply raise greenhouse gas outputs.

"China will step up its efforts in prospecting coal resources," the report said. It said Beijing would reorganize its coal industry by closing smaller, less efficient mines while creating conglomerates with bigger production capacity.

## **New Haven firefighters concerned about asbestos exposure**

The Associated Press

Contra Costa Times, Wednesday, December 26, 2007

NEW HAVEN, Conn. - New Haven and fire union officials are concerned that several firefighters were exposed to asbestos while fighting a department store fire earlier this month.

As many as 60 firefighters who fought the Dec. 12 blaze at the former Kresge department store building were exposed to thick, acrid smoke for several hours. Firefighters have air packs to protect them from smoke, but the packs last only 30 minutes.

Two of a dozen samples of debris sent to the state Department of Public Health were positive for asbestos, said Andy Rizzo, the head of New Haven's Livable City Initiative. Daily monitoring since the fire has shown safe air quality levels, he said.

"Certainly, there's always a concern in a fire in an old building with the fire department," Rizzo said.

Rick Scavetta, spokesman for the Hospital of Saint Raphael, said seven city firefighters were checked after the fire.

Firefighter Patrick Egan, the union's president, said the union is considering filing a blanket claim to put the asbestos exposure on record in the event of future illness.

Fire Lt. James Kottage, another union official, said the concern about the Kresge building fire largely revolves around the asbestos and duration firefighters were exposed to the smoke and fumes.

"You have some guys who were at the fire for 10, 14 hours," Kottage said. Air quality tests conducted after-the-fact, he said, wouldn't account for what was in the smoke while the fire was burning.

Asbestos, a fibrous mineral once commonly used for insulation and fireproofing, causes respiratory diseases, lung cancer, and numerous other ailments.

Fire Chief Michael Grant said he didn't think that the exposure would be a problem.

"But let's make sure we take the necessary precautions," he said. "It's not like the World Trade Center collapse, nothing of that magnitude, but it's certainly something that you want to address, the concerns that the firefighters might have."

[Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Wednesday, December 26, 2007:](#)

### **Henry column: Politics crimps Kern's windpipe**

BY LOIS HENRY, Californian columnist

Why does the federal government hate Kern County's children?

I ask because of the Environmental Protection (and I use that term loosely) Agency's decision last week to keep California from requiring lower auto emissions by 2016.

The general reasoning was the energy bill recently signed by President Bush will lower emissions by 2020 (assuming of course the EPA actually implements those standards, which this administration has shown no zeal for accomplishing).

So, the feds said, California could just hold off.

Really?

Maybe EPA director Stephen Johnson, who overruled his own staff in denying California's request, needs to spend next summer with his kids, or grandkids, in Arvin to get a firsthand feel for how urgent our air troubles really are.

Consider this:

21.6 percent of Kern children ages 1 to 18 have asthma, compared to 16.1 percent of California children overall, according to a 2005 California Health Interview Survey.

Nearly 22 percent? You can't swing a dead cat without hitting a kid with asthma!

And a 2006 Cal State Fullerton study showed how much our dirty air costs:

In the San Joaquin Valley, there are 3,230 cases of acute bronchitis in children.

We average 188,000 lost school days valleywide.

There are 23,000 asthma attacks each year in the valley.

Adults in the valley lose an average of 3,000 work days a year.

Bad air is blamed for 260 hospital admissions.

And 460 valley residents each year die prematurely because of conditions brought about by our bad air. All that adds up to a cost of \$3.2 billion annually.

As bad as those stats are, our air is actually cleaner than it was 20 years ago, according to data from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Valley industries and businesses have done their part, reducing emissions significantly since 1980.

Spare the Air days dropped from 41 in 2003 to 6 this year. And the number of federal eight-hour violations for ozone in Arvin went from 116 in 2003 to 41 in 2007. Even so, that's more than a *month* of really terrible air days!

But we still don't meet federal standards. And new regulations adopted by the district will cost businesses an estimated \$20 billion going forward without any assurance that after that we'll be in compliance.

The air district is also trying to bring developers into the game through its "indirect source" rule, which would force builders to pay a fee or otherwise address pollution created by new subdivisions. Developers have sued. The case went to trial in Fresno Dec. 14 and the judge is expected to rule in 90 days, according to Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the air district.

But the real problem is us.

Our cars. Our trucks. Our SUVs.

These so-called mobile sources make up 80 percent of our pollution.

The air district can only tackle stationary sources, not tailpipes.

That's up to the feds.

And the feds haven't bothered to require lower emissions in more than 20 years.

So, in 2004, California set out to deal with the situation, saying new cars sold here starting with the 2009 model year had to have 30 percent lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Under the Clean Air Act, the state needed a waiver, which California has sought and received dozens of times over the years.

First the EPA tried doing nothing, saying it didn't have authority to regulate tailpipe emissions. The U.S. Supreme Court had to whack them upside the head last April saying, Duh! Of course the EPA can regulate emissions! (Not an exact quote, but you get the picture).

Now the EPA is using the energy bill to avoid forcing automakers to join the lower emission party. Yes, California will appeal and there are already calls to investigate the EPA for possibly putting politics above the nation's health (ya think?).

The EPA's excuse that we should have one national standard rather than a "patchwork" of rules in different states is just about as hard to choke down as a lungful of late-summer Kern County air.

First, that never stopped the EPA from granting us waivers before.

Second, and more revealing, the concept of "states' rights" has always been part of the Republican DNA. This administration is apparently willing to chop out its own genetic code to avoid demanding more of automakers. How pathetic.

So what does it all mean to us?

"There's no air relief in sight at this point," Sadredin acknowledged.

We should not have to wait for the November election to be able to take control over our own air and our children's health!

Just ask one of every five kids here who struggle to breathe.

*Lois Henry's column appears Wednesdays and Sundays. E-mail her at [lhenry@bakersfield.com](mailto:lhenry@bakersfield.com) or call her at 395-7373.*

[Hanford Sentinel, Commentary, Saturday, December 22, 2007:](#)

## **Guest opinion: Ethanol is good for California**

By Brian Pellens, Great Valley Energy

We at Great Valley Energy appreciate the tremendous support from the communities of Hanford and Wasco for our state-of-the-art, renewable energy ethanol projects.

I am a founder of Great Valley Energy, an air quality engineer and a resident of the Central Valley living in Bakersfield.

With the passage of the new energy bill, we have witnessed the greatest energy and environmental legislation over the past 30 years.

From an air quality perspective, with mobile sources making up more than two-thirds of ozone forming nitrogen oxides, increasing car and truck mileage standards by 40 percent will go far to decrease pollution in the Central Valley.

Those efficiency gains along with increasing ethanol in the California gasoline pool to comply with the low carbon fuel standard under AB 32, means that California has taken an important step toward decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, 40 percent of which come from transportation fuels.

As we have talked with people about these two ethanol projects, we have encountered some misconceptions about the projects and the California ethanol industry. Here are a few of the points I would like to clarify regarding our projects:

- None of California projects are "giant" in relation to ethanol plants being constructed in the Midwest or other transportation fuels producers. Rather, at maximum capacity of about 4,300 barrels per day, they are average-sized ethanol plants and each is one of the smallest transportation fuels producers in the state. (See [www.ethanol.org](http://www.ethanol.org) and [www.energy.ca.gov/oil/refineries.html](http://www.energy.ca.gov/oil/refineries.html)).
- "Power plants and refineries" is not an apt description of an ethanol plant. Rather, our dry-mill plants can be more appropriately described as highly-efficient breweries and distilleries. In fact, to prevent human consumption, we are required by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to add 5 percent gasoline to our ethanol because it is the same ethanol you find in wine, beer and distilled spirits. (See <http://www.ethanolifa.org>).
- Replacing incremental gasoline production with California ethanol production will decrease smog in the Central Valley. On a per gallon basis, California ethanol producers will emit five times less VOC and 15 times less NOx than California gasoline producers. (See [www.arb.ca.gov/app/emsinv/facinfo/facinfo.php](http://www.arb.ca.gov/app/emsinv/facinfo/facinfo.php), search on SIC 2911).
- Using California ethanol will decrease greenhouse gas emissions even more than Midwest ethanol. From a fuel lifecycle perspective, ethanol has a lower carbon footprint than gasoline and California ethanol has a lower carbon footprint than Midwest ethanol from a field-to-wheels perspective. So increasing California production will decrease greenhouse gases produced from a global perspective. The difference is that the California plants are very near the end users of our distillers grains product so it doesn't have to be dried by burning fossil fuels before shipment. (See the documents at [www.energy.ca.gov/low\\_carbon\\_fuel\\_standard/](http://www.energy.ca.gov/low_carbon_fuel_standard/)).
- California plants are being developed and built by California companies that are owned by Californians. That means that the economic benefits will stay in California. We believe we are aware of all our competitors in the Valley, and to our knowledge, Archer Daniels Midland or another large producer is not investing in or building any ethanol plants in California and will not make a killing from our plants or any others (see [www.admworld.com](http://www.admworld.com)).
- Ethanol development in California is better planned than in some parts of the country due to extensive review that a project receives. The list of widely-publicized ethanol projects in the Central Valley will differ substantially from those actually built. This contrasts with the large numbers of Midwest plants that received quick regulatory approval and financing in a rush to meet a rapidly changing market only to find that market very different once operations began.

- The state made the right decision to use ethanol as an oxygenating agent. The only other current economic choice for oxygenate is MTBE, a product of petroleum that is toxic, biologically persistent and was banned because it has contaminated so much of California's (and the nation's) groundwater. (See [www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/servicerpt/mtbeban](http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/servicerpt/mtbeban)). The use of oxygenates in gasoline has been used to help gasoline burn cleaner for decades.
- Ethanol helps gasoline burn cleaner and reduces emissions. The American Lung Association, whose mission is "Improving Life One Breath at a Time," endorses the use of alternative fuels including ethanol, recognizing its ability to reduce vehicle emissions. (See [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)).
- Modern California ethanol plants are clean energy producers. Emissions from the California plants are so tightly controlled that they will be an order of magnitude cleaner than most plants in the U.S. Comparing these brand-new California plants to those older plants operating in other states is just not a good basis for decision about local or regional impacts.
- The energy balance of ethanol is positive. Every modern study of the ethanol production energy cycle shows a significant energy gain with two exceptions. At our ethanol plants, we will produce nearly four times the amount of ethanol energy than fuel we put into it. The National Resources Defense Council, arguably one of the most credible environmental organizations in the U.S., argues that the production of ethanol is "Energy Well Spent" (see [www.ethanolrfa.org/objects/documents/572/energywellspent.pdf](http://www.ethanolrfa.org/objects/documents/572/energywellspent.pdf)).
- Ethanol is not a "magic bullet" energy solution to foreign oil. However, biofuels and other forms of renewable energy all contribute to displacing our reliance on foreign oil. In 2006, the production and use of ethanol in the U.S. reduced oil imports by 170 million barrels, saving \$11 billion from being sent to foreign and often hostile countries. (Source: LECG, LLC December 2006, [www.ethanolrfa.org](http://www.ethanolrfa.org)). We also believe if we are going to enjoy the cake (ethanol), we should make it in our own kitchen (California).
- Energy will get more expensive to produce in the future. In July 2007, the National Petroleum Council with former Exxon Chairman Lee Raymond as Chair, published "Hard Truths: Facing the Hard Truths about Energy." The report to the Department of Energy concluded that we need all energy sources, including ethanol, to mitigate the "accumulating risks to continuing expansion of oil and natural gas production." (See [www.npc.org](http://www.npc.org)).
- Producing ethanol is a good use of corn starch. Regarding the food vs. fuel debate, the ethanol industry uses only the low-value starch portion of the corn kernel, returning the protein and nutrients (18 pounds out of every 56 pound bushel) out to the animal feed markets. Ethanol is produced from field corn which is fed primarily to livestock and is indigestible by humans in its raw form. By far and away, the tripling of the cost of oil has contributed most of the rising food costs. (See [www.ethanolrfa.org](http://www.ethanolrfa.org)). Consider that a 16-ounce box of corn flakes contains less than 8 cents worth of corn.
- The plants in California will not affect the price of corn coming out of the Midwest. At full build-out of the industry, all of California plants together will produce approximately 3 percent of the nation's ethanol and will use approximately 1 percent of the corn grown in the U.S.
- Ethanol is economically viable as a petroleum replacement when oil is over \$60 per barrel, regardless of the blending tax credit. The industry is currently producing ethanol at approximately \$1.50 per gallon without any help from the government. Gasoline is being sold by the oil companies to California drivers for over \$3.30 per gallon (which is well below its true cost). Incidentally, it is currently the gasoline blenders taking the 51-cent-per-gallon tax credit against the gasoline excise tax, not the ethanol producers. The century-old oil industry benefits from tens of billions of dollars in subsidies, which had to be added back to the new energy bill to break a filibuster and get it through the White House.
- Ethanol is important to meet climate change goals and to wean California off foreign oil. With a blending demand in 2010 of 1.7 billion gallons of ethanol, all of the California plants in permitting,

construction and operation in California will produce about 30 percent of the state's demand. Refer to the State Alternative Fuels Plan (see [www.energy.ca.gov/ab1007](http://www.energy.ca.gov/ab1007)).

The recently-signed energy bill has reinforced the U.S commitment to ethanol as a transportation fuel. The bill provides for the use of 36 billion gallons of ethanol, of which 21 billion gallons will come from next generation, cellulosic feed stocks.

While cellulosic ethanol is not currently cost competitive, a tremendous amount of innovation is occurring in the industry with the current corn-fed plants serving as the foundation of future energy infrastructure. With the build-out of California's first generation corn to ethanol plants, we will be building the cornerstone of our energy future.

*Pellens is executive VP and COO of Great Valley Energy.*

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the new refinery project that will be installed in the Los Angeles area, which could possibly be an innovative precedent for the environment. For more information, contact Claudia Encinas at (559) 230-5851.

### **Proyecto de refinería podría sentar precedente nacional en medio ambiente**

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Wednesday, December 26, 2007

Un nuevo proyecto de refinería en California podría sentar un precedente nacional al innovar su proceso para producir el doble de combustible, pero con al menos un siete por ciento en la reducción de contaminación del aire.

El proyecto de una empresa de Texas para instalarse en el área de Los Ángeles, la zona más contaminada en el país, condensaría dos partes complementarias entre sí, en la producción de asfaltos y combustibles en una misma planta.

Hasta ahora ese proceso requiere de dos instalaciones separadas.

Según la empresa, *Alon*, al unir la producción también se elimina el tráfico de camiones de carga.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the Governor of Florida's disapproval on EPA's decision against California and it's ruling of automotive emissions. For more information, contact Claudia Encinas at (559) 230-5851.

### **Gobernador floridano critica decisión federal sobre emisiones automotor**

By Manuel Flores, Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, December 25, 2007

El gobernador de La Florida, Charlie Crist se sumó a otros colegas del país en las críticas a la Agencia Federal de Protección Ambiental por frenar medidas para controlar la emisión de gases de automóviles. La Florida y otros 16 estados han tratado de seguir el ejemplo de California, y quieren eliminar 22 millones de vehículos para el 2016, para intentar poner fin a la contaminación atmosférica.

Durante una cumbre ambiental de julio en Miami, el mandatario estatal firmó tres órdenes para reducir el calentamiento global; la península enfrenta la mayor amenaza si sube el nivel del mar.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses global-warming as top priority for Ban Ki-moon, UN Leader, and how United States, along with other nations resists compromising themselves in reducing specific automotive emissions. For more information, contact Claudia Encinas at (559) 230-5851.

### **Ban hace del cambio climático la bandera de su primer año al frente de la ONU**

By Joaquim Utset

Impacto USA, Friday, December 21, 2007

Naciones Unidas, 21 dic (EFE) - La lucha contra el cambio climático se ha convertido en la gran bandera del coreano Ban Ki-moon durante su primer año al frente de las Naciones Unidas.

Sin el carisma de su predecesor, Kofi Annan, pero con la persistencia tradicional de la diplomacia oriental, el secretario general ha logrado durante este año situar el calentamiento de la Tierra como una prioridad en la agenda mundial y a la ONU como el foro ideal para afrontarlo.

Ban, que en su primera conferencia de prensa no hizo una mención especial al tema, termina 2007 como "un evangelista del cambio climático".

Así se definió él mismo antes de acudir a la conferencia organizada por la ONU al respecto del 3 al 14 de diciembre en Bali, donde se busca sentar las bases de un acuerdo mundial que en 2012 sustituya al Protocolo de Kioto.

Ese mismo fervor le ha llevado a visitar desde la Antártida a las selvas de Brasil para comprobar de primera mano los efectos del cambio climático y a celebrar la primera cumbre de jefes de Estado y de Gobierno en la sede de la ONU para debatir cómo afrontarlo.

En aquel encuentro se dieron cita más de 80 mandatarios, que manifestaron su posición y propusieron medidas, e incluso el presidente de EEUU, George W. Bush, aceptó acudir a la cena ofrecida por el secretario general.

Ban, que también persigue recuperar el multilateralismo, advirtió allí de que la ONU es el "foro apropiado" para negociar un acuerdo mundial que logre reducir las emisiones de los gases causantes del efecto invernadero.

Para el coreano, el calentamiento del planeta es "el problema más importante que afronta nuestra generación", una consideración que ha calado en la opinión pública, en parte gracias al premiado documental "Una verdad incómoda", del ex vicepresidente de EEUU Al Gore, y al Premio Nobel de la Paz que éste comparte con el Grupo Intergubernamental sobre el Cambio Climático (IPCC).

Fue tras el informe del IPCC el pasado febrero, que concluyó que el calentamiento de la Tierra se debe inequívocamente a la actividad humana y que será irreversible si no se actúa, cuando la cuestión entró de lleno en las prioridades del entonces nuevo secretario general.

Desde entonces, su tarea más delicada ha sido convencer a los líderes de las principales economías de la necesidad de tomar medidas concretas para reducir las emisiones.

Mientras EEUU se resiste a comprometerse en la reducción de un nivel específico de emisiones (y menos si ciertos países emergentes gozan de excepciones similares a las incluidas en el Protocolo de Kioto), las economías en desarrollo argumentan que son las más ricas las mayores responsables del problema.

Por ello, fuentes de la ONU indicaron a Efe que Ban ha pasado largas horas al teléfono para convencer a los gobiernos de los países más contaminantes para que se comprometan con las negociaciones de Bali.

"El calentamiento global se ha situado en lo más alto de la agenda mundial, lo que significa que hay un ímpetu. Espero que también haya voluntad política de actuar", dijo recientemente el coreano, en alusión a países como EEUU, India, Brasil o China.

El énfasis que Ban ha otorgado a la lucha contra el cambio climático ha puesto en juego buena parte de su credibilidad y la de Naciones Unidas en su capacidad de lograr un acuerdo con efectos reales, por lo que el resultado de la conferencia de Bali es una prueba crucial antes de que se cumpla el primero de los cinco años de su mandato.

Pero el secretario general también ha invertido buena parte de su caudal político en tratar de detener el conflicto de Darfur, escenario de la peor crisis humanitaria que afronta el mundo, según la ONU.

Sin embargo, el año se acerca a su fin con la incertidumbre de si la ONU y la Unión Africana podrán finalmente desplegar el 1 de enero la fuerza conjunta de 26.000 efectivos autorizada en julio por el Consejo de Seguridad.

Junto a Darfur, las otras dos grandes crisis que ha tenido que afrontar en su primer año han sido la interminable inestabilidad política del Líbano y el futuro estatus de Kosovo.

El Consejo de Seguridad creó en mayo el Tribunal Especial del Líbano encargado de juzgar los crímenes políticos que han sacudido el país árabe, aunque el año termina sin que se haya podido acordar el nombramiento de un nuevo presidente.

De igual manera, 2007 llega a sus últimos días sin que se haya despejado el futuro de Kosovo, por el empeño de los albaneses kosovares en declarar la independencia unilateral y la negativa de Serbia a perder la soberanía