

Officials discourage fireworks

By Mark Grossi / The Fresno Bee
Thursday, July 3, 2008

Even though air pollution levels have dropped in the past two days, regional air officials are asking residents to refrain from home fireworks displays on Friday.

Wildfires throughout California last week poured a stifling brew of smoke and ozone-creating chemicals into the San Joaquin Valley's air. The air remained unhealthy for most of the week until weather patterns shifted.

The fires continue this week, and another shift in weather could bring the plumes of smoke back into the Valley. Fourth of July fireworks in neighborhoods just add to the problem, said officials from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"We are asking Valley residents to please consider your health and that of your neighbors, and to not opt to light fireworks this year," said district executive director Seyed Sadredin. The air district includes eight counties from Stockton to Bakersfield.

Fireworks spew dangerous specks of pollution -- tiny particles of soot, ash, droplets of liquid and other debris, such as tiny toxic metals for coloring. At some locations, the pollution is many times higher than the federal health standard.

The particles can be harmful to people with respiratory conditions. Older adults and children are also more susceptible to health problems from the tiny specks.

The smallest particles can invade the bloodstream and trigger asthma or other lung problems. Medical researchers have linked these particles with premature death.

Fireworks sales fizzling for many

BY JOE BOESEN, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, July 3, 2008

Many local nonprofits are reporting slower than usual fireworks sales Tuesday and Wednesday, but fireworks distributors still anticipate a better-than-average year.

It could be an indication of the bad economy or that Californians are heeding Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's advice not to buy fireworks to avoid more forest fires, interviews show.

"I am concerned about the fires and about air," said Russ Allred, chairman of fireworks fundraising for the Kiwanis Club of Kern, Bakersfield. "But we only have four days to make our money."

Allred said his stand, at noon Wednesday, had sold only \$300 worth, down 50 percent from this time last year. The money made from fireworks sales, typically about \$5,000 for the week, goes to club operations and charities.

The organization's annual budget is about \$30,000, Allred said, so "it will reduce what we can give to local charities."

There's time, though, to make up for the shortfall. The first two days of fireworks sales are usually slow, with business picking up as Independence Day draws nearer.

Pastor Dan Barrett of Northeast Christian Church said on the first day of sales, the booth sold \$300 in fireworks compared to \$600 the first day last year.

"We are concerned about what the governor said and the economy," said Debbie Oftedal, fireworks vendor and executive director of the nonprofit Arthritis Association of Kern County.

Her booth sold about \$700 worth of goods by Wednesday morning, which she said is normal early on.

In addition to Schwarzenegger's call last week, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Wednesday "strongly encouraged" residents to refrain from using fireworks, which produce particulate matter.

Still, officials from distributors TNT and Phantom Fireworks insisted sales this year would be positive.

"I don't think that what Arnold said is going to slow sales," said Jim Wilson, manager for TNT in Kern County. "We expect it to be a great year."

Wilson added that preliminary sales are up 10 percent.

Because the holiday falls on a Friday, sales are expected to be higher, said Ryne Conder, Central Valley regional manager for Phantom Fireworks.

He said he thinks gas prices will make people "stay at home and have more neighborhood gatherings."

Robert Haelewyn of Tehachapi was buying fireworks at Oftedal's booth Wednesday for a family barbecue in Bakersfield on the Fourth of July. He said he knows about the fires and air quality issues but still wants to celebrate the holiday.

"It's an American tradition," he said.

FIREWORKS FACTS

Hotline to report illegal fireworks

Call 868-6070 in the county and 326-FIRE (3473) in the city.

What's illegal?

Anything that shoots into the air, such as bottle rockets or mortars.

Piccolo Petes and ground blooms are legal in much of the unincorporated areas but not in the city limits.

Any firework that has been altered to make an explosive device.

When can I shoot off my fireworks?

July 1: Noon to midnight

July 2 and 3: 9 a.m. to midnight

July 4: 9 a.m. to 12:30 a.m.

Dirty shame -- Valley counties failing to create healthy areas

Organization says seven Valley counties are among the 10 unhealthiest in the state.

By BARBARA ANDERSON, The Fresno Bee

In the Merced Sun-Star, Thursday, July 3, 2008

People in the San Joaquin Valley are more likely than others in the state to live in unhealthy neighborhoods, and the state needs to make those communities a health priority, according to a report.

Among the 10 counties with the dirtiest air and least access to grocery stores and safe playgrounds, seven are in the Valley, according to the report released Tuesday by the Having Our Say Coalition, a statewide group working for health care reform.

They are Merced, Tulare, Kings, Fresno, San Joaquin, Madera and Kern counties.

Health is tied to where a person lives, said Martin Martinez, policy director for the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, and a lead organization for the Having Our Say Coalition. Neighborhoods with sidewalks help, he said, and so does living near a grocery store and a park.

But for too many Valley residents, those things are lacking, he said.

The result: People in the Valley are becoming obese, Martinez said Tuesday during a news conference.

"We are on the verge of a massive diabetes and obesity epidemic in the Valley," he said.

Obesity leads to more chronic illnesses, including arthritis and digestive problems as well as diabetes, heart disease, cancer and high blood pressure, said Helen Jones, a Fresno doctor of internal medicine. According to the 2005 California Health Interview Survey, 65 percent of Valley adults are overweight or obese.

Jones said she advises patients to exercise and eat healthful foods. But without sidewalks and accessible grocery stores, her patients' lifestyles remain the same.

"I'll do my part, but I need some help," she said.

The state should invest in communities that lack parks, playgrounds, sidewalks and grocery stores, Martinez said. Public health officials also need to do their part by becoming involved in the design of communities that promote health by incorporating adequate open space and walk-friendly neighborhoods.

Two bills pending in the legislature would provide resources to help communities improve their health status, he said. Assembly Bill 211, introduced by Dave Jones, D-Sacramento, promotes the involvement of public-health officers in land-use decisions.

AB 1472, introduced by Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, would provide assistance to public-health agencies and community organizations to evaluate land-use planning decisions.

Martinez said the Having Our Say report -- "The Path to Healthy Communities: Mapping California's Priorities" -- shows that legislators should give priority to Valley cities.

"The state is dropping the ball for everybody, but the conditions are worse here," he said.

To rank the health status of communities, researchers looked at demographics -- race and ethnicity, country of origin and languages spoken. They also compiled information on income, health conditions, weight, fitness levels, insurance status, and open space in communities.

The highest scores were given to communities with high poverty, large minority populations, low access to health insurance, a high prevalence of diseases, low levels of fitness and a lack of green space.

Ellen Wu, co-author of the report and executive director of the Pan-Ethnic network, said she recognizes the state is in a budget crisis, but she said that makes concentrating on the prevention of disease in communities with the greatest health needs all the more important.

West Park opponents move forward

Written by Jonathan Partridge

Patterson Irrigator, Wednesday, July 2, 2008

After plans for a proposed 4,800-acre industrial park in Crows Landing received 4-1 support in April from county supervisors, one might expect mourning from a group opposed to the project.

But leaders of the PCCP West Park opposition group WS-PACE.org seemed even-tempered Monday during the group's first public meeting since the April 22 vote. A lawsuit the city of Patterson filed against the project and an extensive environmental review process were both good omens for opponents, said Ron Swift, WS-PACE president.

"I'm no longer discouraged," Swift said. "I'm heartened that there are a lot of things (developer Gerry Kamilos) has to do."

Leaders of the group, which is an acronym for West Side-Patterson Alliance for Community and Environment, announced Monday that they had gained more than 1,200 members since forming a little more than a year ago.

"Now, when I say we have 1,200 members, (people) do listen," Swift said.

Burta Herger, treasurer for WS-PACE, said the group has received \$24,178 and spent close to \$21,000 on items including office supplies, advertising, labor and brochures and letters. Board members said much more money will be needed in the future, though they did not elaborate about the reason.

Swift said issues surrounding West Park have become political and indicated WS-PACE likely would get involved in the re-election races of supervisors Dick Monteith and Jeff Grover, both staunch West Park supporters.

Swift said West Side Supervisor Jim DeMartini has supported the group's cause, but it has not received support from other supervisors.

"The one thing that we've learned over the past year is that nobody is going to stand up for the West Side or Patterson except us," Swift said.

Members also discussed being involved in talks about the disbursement of money for a proposed half-percent sales tax measure for county roads projects. The measure, which would be on the November ballot, would provide \$117 million for a road connecting Highway 99 in Turlock to Interstate 5. Swift advocated that the bypass should connect to Zacharias Road north of Patterson, as proposed by the Patterson City Council, rather than passing to the south near Crows Landing. He said he did not want public money supporting a project that would tie into a freeway interchange for West Park.

West Park, which would be built in and around the 1,527-acre county-owned former U.S. Navy airfield in Crows Landing, would include an inland port that would be linked to the Port of Oakland by a short-haul rail line. Cargo containers would be moved to and from there and the Oakland port.

Proponents say that the project would provide 37,000 jobs and reduce regional traffic and air pollution by shipping some goods by rail rather than by truck.

Opponents, including WS-PACE, reject the size of the project and the consequences of more trains going through Patterson and say the project would worsen local traffic and air quality.

Attendees of the Monday meeting also suggested other ideas for strategies. One woman urged WS-PACE to have more outreach in some of Patterson's newer neighborhoods. However, WS-PACE board member Sandy McDowell warned that might not be effective with residents there.

"All they know is 37,000 jobs," McDowell said. "They're exhausted when they go home, and they feel it's someone else's problem to take care of."

Members also discussed at least one specific concern about the proposed industrial park. WS-PACE Vice President Claude Delphia criticized a proposed underpass for vehicles at Las Palmas Avenue and Highway 33, where trains headed to and from the industrial park would cross the road.

Delphia, who has also criticized past proposals for an overpass and a trench at the intersection, said turning Las Palmas Avenue into an underpass would require tearing out parts of the city's North and South Parks. It also could interfere with operations at Patterson Vegetable Co., he said, which is directly east of the railroad tracks on East Las Palmas Avenue.

"It really kills our parks," Delphia said. "It ruins the town as we know it."

He said he thought the proposed underpass was a concession to the city of Patterson, after the city sued the county, West Park and Union Pacific Railroad. The suit alleges that a vote the board of supervisors made to move forward with the project on April 22 violates the California Environmental Quality Act because it took place before an environmental impact report was complete. County officials contend that an EIR was not needed at the time, because there was no binding agreement with the developer.

Councilwoman Annette Smith, who is not a member of WS-PACE.org but is sympathetic to the group's cause, said after the meeting that she had similar worries about the underpass.

As a result, she suggested that a railroad crossing be placed elsewhere.

Kamilos said by phone Tuesday that the Las Palmas and Highway 33 intersection would have to be addressed regardless of the city's lawsuit.

He said his technical team had worked on designs for the underpass, and it appeared it would not interfere with Plaza Circle, the downtown parks or Patterson Vegetable Co.

"Obviously, there's more work to be done, but the preliminary engineering work to date says it's doable," he said.

He also said lots of people have come out in support of the project, and many of them signed a petition that was submitted to county supervisors during their April 22 meeting.

"We have a lot of support, and there are a few folks that may think differently," he said. "Regardless, we want to listen to everyone."

Meanwhile, WS-PACE members seemed to be preparing for a lengthy battle ahead. "We are committed to this thing for the long run," Delphia said.

Leaders seek global emissions deal

Bush administration pushing for different standards at G-8 summit

Michael Abramowitz, Blaine Harden, Washington Post
In the S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, July 3, 2008

Washington -- In his final months in office, President Bush is mounting a last-ditch effort to forge a global deal to limit greenhouse gas emissions but finds himself once again at odds with much of the rest of the world on how to address climate change.

Bush aides said that a deal might be struck when the president sits down next week in Japan with the leaders of the world's largest industrialized nations and developing countries such as China and India. Japan is pushing for leaders at the G-8 summit to agree to a goal to cut global carbon dioxide emissions in half by 2050, a proposal that the White House appears to be considering seriously.

The Bush administration is also conducting its own negotiations with other countries on including more specific targets for each to meet by 2020 or 2025. Germany is pushing for more significant cuts in emissions than the United States and some other countries are willing to consider, while China and India want the United States and other industrialized countries to do most of heavy lifting for the next 10 to 15 years.

Previewing his G-8 agenda Wednesday in the Rose Garden, Bush emphasized the necessity of including the developing countries in any agreement struck by his administration.

"We can't have an effective agreement unless China and India are a part of it," Bush said. "It's as simple as that. I'm going to remind our partners that's the case."

China and India, which have been invited to the summit in Japan, say that numerical targets would slow growth and stall poverty alleviation. India also wants aid and technology from industrialized countries to help it cut emissions.

India was the fourth-largest carbon-dioxide emitter in 2004, after the United States, China and Russia, according to the United Nations. Japan was fifth. On a per capita basis, though, both India and China are below many industrialized countries on the list of major emitters.

Bush has had tense relations with allies over his approach to climate change from the beginning of his first term, when he ruled out U.S. participation in the Kyoto

Are air masks the solution against smoke? Not always

By Maddalena Jackson

Sacramento Bee, Thursday, July 3, 2008

If June's fires are a preview of the remainder of the season, Sacramento Valley residents and those in the foothills and mountains will again be faced with a variety of unpleasant options for avoiding the smoke.

One of those options is wearing a mask – and living with the trade-offs.

The right mask can filter almost all particles and provide your lungs with clean air. But because sucking air through the fine mesh of the mask takes energy, breathing becomes a little harder, and masks can become warm and claustrophobic.

"I've done it for 16 years – I have to protect myself," said Patty Bender, 55, who began wearing masks in times of bad air after she was diagnosed with lung disease. A registered nurse with 30 years of experience, Bender has worn the masks, with doctor approval, to prevent further damage.

Not all masks are created equal – and there is a standard by which masks may be judged.

Bender wears an N95 mask, which means that under testing by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the mask blocks 95 percent of particulate matter.

Masks with no ratings displayed may be OK for filtering sawdust, but they are useless in filtering smoke particulates.

"Every manufacturer that comes in and wants (a mask approved) submits to us a number of respirators," said Heinz Ahlers, branch chief with the National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory. "We take those respirators and test them for penetration and for breathing resistance."

If they block a certain portion of particulates during testing, they are awarded a letter and a number that signify the type and percentage of particles blocked, Ahlers said.

The number signifies the percentage of particles blocked. A "95" mask removes 95 percent of particulate matter.

A common measure of air quality is the amount particles smaller than 2 1/2 microns in diameter present in the air. Some of the most dangerous particles are much smaller than that – a particle 2 1/2 microns wide is dwarfed by the end of a human hair.

Smoke produces particles so small that they act as a mist. Masks that have earned the NIOSH N95 certification block 95 percent of these particles, regardless of size.

But masks aren't for everyone. Health experts, including the American Lung Association and government health officials, warn that people with compromised respiratory systems should be very cautious about using masks.

"Certainly, anyone who has any respiratory illness or heart illness should consult their physician before considering a mask," said Bonnie Holmes-Gen, senior policy director with the American Lung Association of California.

Many county health officials don't recommend the N95 mask.

"You need to be in fairly good shape to use it," said Dr. Glennah Trochet, Sacramento County's health officer. "N95 respirators, when properly fitted, are fairly hard to breathe through."

Trochet also was concerned about the risks to those with preexisting heart and lung problems.

"Really, if the air quality got so bad that people needed masks, we'd probably be talking about evacuating people."

Trochet said she didn't see current conditions as a disaster, but some people, like Bender, want to take steps now despite the risk and inconvenience.

"It feels like part of my skin," Bender said. "I got used to it. ... I had such severe lung disease, I had to."

Last Friday, Enloe Medical Center in Butte County shared its supply of N95 masks with the public.

"We actually had a little over 2,000 of the masks, and we started giving them away at 10 a.m.," said Christina Chavira, a spokeswoman for the hospital. "At about 10:15, they were pretty much all gone."

Chavira said "a range of people, all ages" showed up to get masks, including at least one person wishing to upgrade from a painter's mask, which wasn't working.

Dust masks and painters masks generally do not protect against particulates. Only masks that say "NIOSH" and have a letter and number rating printed on them will protect the lungs from smoke.

Bender, who credits the masks with her health after her diagnosis, said she she feels so strongly about public access to proper masks that she has tried leaving messages with local, state and federal officials – with no responses.

"I believe this has fallen through the cracks because there have been so many issues with the fires," she said.

But the official opinion about masks is not as enthusiastic as hers. The Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District warns against using "paper masks," saying that they reduce air flow to the lungs and do not protect the lungs from particles. The Placer County Air Pollution Control District says the same.

State health officials said the decision to recommend masks – or not – should be left to each county's health officer.

Big Sur evacuates as massive wildfire spreads

USA TODAY, Thursday, July 03, 2008

BIG SUR, Calif. (AP) — Flames ominously licked the ridge overlooking this scenic coastal community, which appeared nearly abandoned Thursday after an explosive wildfire caused authorities to order more residents out of the area.

New mandatory evacuation notices were issued Wednesday for an additional 16-mile stretch along Highway 1 after the blaze jumped a fire line in the Los Padres National Forest. A total of 31 miles of the coastal highway, lined with homes and businesses, is now closed.

Several hundred evacuees attended a meeting Wednesday evening where officials braced them for a long fire season. The blaze, which already has burned 16 homes and nearly 88 square miles, was only 3% contained and wasn't expected to be fully surrounded until the end of the month.

John Friel, 62, who had been living with his kitten in his car for the past three days after being forced to leave his mobile home, was disappointed by the news.

"I've had six strokes this year and a heart attack. I'm feeling pretty scattered," said the retiree, who moved to Big Sur three years ago. "It was like putting a Rubik's Cube back together before, so this ain't helping. It just notches up the stress level."

The blaze near Big Sur was one of more than 1,700 wildfires — most ignited by lightning — that have scorched more than 770 square miles and destroyed 64 structures across northern and central California since June 20, according to state officials.

Mild temperatures and light winds did little to calm the inferno near Big Sur, which officials described as fuel-driven rather than wind-driven. A statewide drought has created tinder-like trees and brush, feeding the flames in California's forests.

"The fire is just a big raging animal right now," said Darby Marshall, spokesman for the Monterey County Office of Emergency Services.

Janna Fournier, one of the 850 Big Sur residents affected by the evacuation order, went to retrieve artwork and rescue her pet tarantula before roads closed Wednesday afternoon.

"I feel sad for the wilderness and the people who lost their homes," Fournier said. "We chose to live in a wilderness among all this beauty, so I know there's that chance you always take."

Helicopters hauling large containers of water droned loudly overhead as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, R. David Paulison, visited the area.

"If people evacuate like they're told to, we shouldn't lose any lives," Paulison said in an interview. "My only concern is that people don't take it seriously enough."

Some residents did choose to ignore the evacuation order, including Scott Parker, who stopped by the local general store as firefighters trimmed trees above the store to ward off flames snaking along the hillside a quarter-mile away.

"My wife and I are going to stay at least until we are in imminent danger. If there's a possibility of saving the house, then we're going to do it," said Parker, a landscaper who moved to Big Sur 30 years ago. "We've had a couple close ones, but this is the closest."

Meanwhile, a fire in the southern extension of the Los Padres forest north of Santa Barbara forced about 45 residents to evacuate as winds up to 35 mph pushed flames toward homes in the foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains.

The blaze has burned nearly 2 square miles of rough terrain, officials said. As night fell Wednesday, about 150,000 Southern California Edison customers in Goleta and Santa Barbara lost power when thick smoke forced the shutdown of power transmission lines. Crews restored power to about half of the affected customers.

In the Sequoia National Forest east of Bakersfield, firefighters struggled to contain a 22-square-mile blaze. Powerful gusts and choking smoke traveling up the steep canyons hampered their progress, and residents of neighboring towns were ordered to evacuate.

Back in Big Sur, construction worker Billy Rose helped clear brush around local businesses to protect the community where he grew up.

"Big Sur people are used to stress — rock slides, water spouts, 40-foot waves, you get numb to it," he said, looking weary as he sharpened his chain saw. "You can't tame Big Sur — this place is untamable."

Climate Scorecard ranks U.S. last among largest economies

USA Today, Thursday, July 3, 2008

BERLIN (AP) — The U.S. has done the least among the world's eight biggest economies to address global warming, a study released Thursday found.

The G8 Climate Scorecards 2008, released Thursday ahead of next week's gathering of the Group of Eight on the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido, also found that none of the eight countries are making improvements large enough to prevent temperature increases that scientists think would cause catastrophic climate changes.

The gathering includes the heads of states of the U.S., Japan, Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Canada and Russia.

Regine Guenther, director of the World Wildlife Fund Climate Change Program in Germany, told reporters in the German capital that G8 leaders should commit to reducing emissions in their countries 40% by 2020 and 80% by 2050.

"If we don't achieve that, the world's climate will change in ways that we can't even imagine today," Guenther said.

The scorecard ranked Britain as the developed nation that has done the most to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and reach targets set by the Kyoto Protocol. France and Germany are close behind. Germany was praised for its investment in renewable energy.

"But all three countries are at best half as far along the road as they should be," a statement announcing the study said.

The scorecard was compiled by Ecofys, a Dutch consulting company, and commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund and insurer Allianz SE.

Joachim Faber, an Allianz board member who helped compile the scorecards, said a global emissions trading market is important to fighting climate change, and that the EU should lead its development.

"The EU-specific trading system we have at the moment must serve as model system for one that we can found outside the EU, for the world economy," he said.

The study criticized low energy efficiency in the U.S., but said there was hope in legislation under consideration by Congress and initiatives led by non-governmental groups.

The study also analyzed — but did not rank — five of the world's fastest growing economies: Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa. "These countries cannot be measured with the same ruler as industrialized countries," the statement said.

Airport check-in: Denver's carbon offset program suspended

USA TODAY, Thursday, July 03, 2008

Airport check-in: Denver International, which is one of the first airports to consider a carbon offset program for travelers, is pausing the plan for now due to lack of interest from vendors. Last year, a local group of environmental experts recommended the program, and the airport has been shopping for a company to run it. "We weren't exactly thrilled with what was laid out in the initial proposal," airport spokesman Jeff Green says.

A carbon offset is a voluntary fee paid by travelers to "cancel out" the carbon emissions generated by their flights. The airport had plans for kiosks where travelers can pay for carbon offsets, which are transferred to environmental advocacy groups for things such as tree-planting or clean-power projects. It estimated that a fee of \$2.50 to offset 1,000 miles of air travel would be in line with the city's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 10% per capita by 2012.

The airport issued a formal request for proposals this year from companies interested in running the program, but received only one proposal. DIA may redesign the program, possibly by partnering with airlines, and solicit proposals again, Green says.

Several nations wary of Bush emissions deal

By Michael Abramowitz and Blaine Harden - Washington Post
Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, July 2, 2008

WASHINGTON — In his final months in office, President Bush is mounting a last-ditch effort to forge a new global deal to limit greenhouse gas emissions but finds himself once again at odds with much of the rest of the world on how to address climate change.

Bush aides said that a deal might be struck when he sits down next week in Japan with the leaders of the world's largest industrialized nations and developing countries such as China and India. Japan is pushing for leaders at the G-8 summit to agree to a goal to cut global carbon dioxide emissions in half by 2050, a proposal that the White House appears to be considering seriously.

The Bush administration also is conducting its own negotiations with other countries on including more specific targets for each to meet by 2020 or 2025. Germany is pushing for more significant cuts in emissions than the United States and some other countries are willing to consider, while China and India want the United States and other industrialized countries to do most of heavy lifting for the next 10 to 15 years. Previewing his G-8 agenda Wednesday, Bush emphasized the necessity of including the developing countries in any agreement struck by his administration.

Both China and India, which have been invited to the summit in Japan, say that numerical targets would slow growth and stall poverty alleviation.

"Sustainable development has to be supported by both financial resources and technological resources," Shyam Saran, India's special envoy for climate change, said earlier this week.

India was the fourth-largest carbon-dioxide emitter in 2004, after the United States, China and Russia, according to the United Nations. Japan was fifth. On a per capita basis, though, both India and China are below many industrialized countries on the list of major emitters.

Bush has had tense relations with allies over his approach to climate change from the beginning of his first term, when he ruled out U.S. participation in the Kyoto Protocol. Other countries and U.S. environmental groups regarded that treaty as an essential first step to stopping the man-made emissions that scientists think are contributing to the earth's warming, but Bush argued it would cripple economic growth and present unrealistic targets for cuts. He also complained that it exempted China and other developing countries from its targets.

In recent years, Bush has shifted to some degree, accepting the scientific conclusion that human action is contributing to global warming. After he was isolated at last year's G-8 summit in Germany in opposition to Japan's proposal for a long-term reduction of 50 percent, he also moved to create a vehicle to bring China, India, and other big developing countries the debate.

Campaign targets young car lovers, clean air

Vida en el Valle Wed., July 2, 2008

FRESNO -- Young people who like their cars to look fancy and be fast can do their part to make sure they are not contributing to the area's dirty air.

That is the message the state Department of Consumer Affairs and the Bureau of Automotive Repair are touting to young car loves through the DriveHealthy.com campaign. Officials joined New California Media and other groups in promoting the campaign with a Green Street car show last Saturday at Manchester Center.

Bureau representative Michael Bolten said young car owners can help by simple things like making sure their tire pressure is correct, changing their oil and air filters, and servicing their car when warning lights appear.

"This campaign is coming out at the appropriate time," said Bolten, referring to high gasoline prices and the bad air quality worsened by burning forest fires throughout the state.

Duncan Polytechnical High School students Roy Robinson and Peter Thongvathsa said young car lovers can do their part by not removing the catalytic converters from their cars.

"Many people care just about looks and how powerful the car is," said Thongvathsa. "More power equals more pollution for our air."

Cars and the environment can co-exist, said Rosario Marín, secretary of the State and Consumer Services Agency, in a statement.

"Vehicle efficiency and air quality are not mutually exclusive," she said. "By making Californians more aware and knowledgeable about proper vehicle maintenance through DriveHealthy.com, we can make a big difference in our state."

[Merced Sun-Star, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, July 3, 2008:](#)

Reducing pollution

Editor: The recent Sun-Star story headlined "Air officials are out in force hoping to raise ozone awareness in Valley" is to be congratulated for discussing the fact that air officials could call on prayer as a means of fighting the Valley's infamous ozone problem.

The soon-to-be-activated Healthy Air Living campaign is a natural outgrowth of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's less demanding Spare The Air program, which only asks people to reduce pollution-causing activities on days when ozone is worst. The new campaign, say air officials, asks businesses, cities and individuals to "make at least one major change in their behavior" if pollution is to be significantly reduced. They're also asking local ministers to appeal to their congregations to avoid pollution-causing activity.

Couldn't it be that the one major change in behavior that air officials seek in all of us is regular prayer regarding the problem? Let it be prayer that guides the heart, rather than stress, fear, or selfish activity.

JOHN SPITLER, Merced

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, July 3, 2008:](#)

Pass up on home fireworks

As I was watching the news on a recent morning, I heard Gov. Schwarzenegger was requesting that we abstain from fireworks this July 4th due to all the fires burning in California and the bad air those fires are causing. Seemed reasonable to me.

That said, the reporter was talking with people who were buying fireworks and asking them why they planned to shoot off fireworks in spite of the request. Answers were the all-about-me kind:

It's my right to celebrate July 4th.

It's July 4th, we always shoot off fireworks.

It's our tradition to have a block party and shoot off fireworks.

My child has been looking forward to this, I don't want to disappoint him or her.

What has happened to doing something different for the good of all? What are you teaching your child? Never mind what might be good for the community, it is your right to do this. There are never any disappointments in this life.

There would be no disappointments if you take your child to the fire department's extravaganza at the college. And the money you would spend goes to a good cause.

Nobody would get hurt. All would be under control. Nobody's house would burn down. Sounds like a win, win, win situation to me.

I know the fireworks booths are run by entities that want to earn money for their group and charities. However, maybe it is time to look for a new venue to earn money.

ELIZABETH MOORE, Bakersfield

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses cows are to blame for global warming. They are the second largest cause of climate change. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Las vacas calientan el planeta **La segunda causa del cambio climático**

Univision, Thursday, July 03, 2008

Agencias

La industria de la carne es la segunda causa del calentamiento del planeta, sólo después del consumo de energía en edificios y por delante del transporte, según un informe de la FAO y la opinión de un asesor clave de Al Gore durante la administración de Bill Clinton.

Emisores de gases

Un informe de la FAO (agencia de la Naciones Unidas para la agricultura y la alimentación) con el título *Livestock's Long Shadow* (La larga sombra del ganado), aseguraba ya en el 2006 que los 1,500 millones de reses que hay en el mundo eran responsables del 18 por ciento de los gases de efecto invernadero, un porcentaje mayor que el de automóviles, aviones y demás formas de transporte juntas.

Los gases vienen de muchos procesos. La quema de combustible para producir fertilizantes para piensos, la tala de árboles y vegetación para pastos, el transporte del ganado y luego de la carne... todos ellos se combinan para acumular el 9 por ciento de todas las emisiones de dióxido de carbono (CO2), el más común de los gases de efecto invernadero.

Pero es que además estos animales generan una enorme cantidad de gases en sus peculiares aparatos digestivos que se expulsan a través de flatulencias o eructos, compuestos principalmente de metano, un gas 20 veces más nocivo para el calentamiento global que el CO2.

El consumo de carne

Según el economista Jeremy Rifkin, asesor de Al Gore sobre ecología durante la administración de Bill Clinton, el consumo de carne de vaca es un agente primordial del cambio climático.

La enorme cantidad de alimento que necesitan las vacas no es un problema menor.

"Estamos destruyendo el Amazonas para alimentarlas. Hay que producir 900 kilogramos de comida para obtener un kilogramo de carne", comenta Rifkin.

Una hormona, posible solución

Tratar un millón de vacas con una hormona de crecimiento permitiría producir más leche con menos recursos, generando una reducción del volumen de gases de efecto invernadero equivalente a 400 mil autos menos en las rutas, según un estudio de científicos estadounidenses.

El estudio, publicado por Judith Capper, investigadora de la Universidad Cornell, en el noreste de Nueva York, subraya que la producción de leche a gran escala requiere de vastas superficies de cultivos y de importantes fuentes de energía para producir los alimentos necesarios para el ganado.

Según ella, el recurso a esta hormona de crecimiento STH reconstituida, primer producto de la biotecnología utilizado en el ganado estadounidense desde hace casi 15 años, permite reducir las emisiones de dióxido de carbono (CO₂) y de metano en la atmósfera, ya que se precisa menos energía y tierra de cultivo pero asegura niveles de producción lechera suficientes para satisfacer la demanda.

Ahorros y beneficios

La investigación muestra que dar un complemento hormonal de crecimiento cotidiano en los alimentos a un millón de vacas permitió producir la misma cantidad de leche con 157 mil animales menos, comparado con una cantidad similar de bovinos sin este complemento alimentario.

Esta diferencia permitió ahorrar 491 mil toneladas de maíz y 158 mil toneladas de soya y la reducción de 2.3 millones de toneladas en alimentos para el ganado.

Permite además disminuir la superficie de las tierras cultivadas en 219 mil hectáreas así como la erosión del suelo en 2.3 millones de toneladas anuales, según esta investigación.

Gravamen a comida para animales

En una entrevista al diario español El País, Rifkin propone gravar con impuestos la producción de alimentos para ganado y animar a producir comida para hombres.

"Igual que hemos puesto límite al dióxido de carbono, tenemos que frenar el consumo de carne", asegura.

P. ¿Cómo se explica este desequilibrio?

R. Hay que tener en cuenta que hay una relación entre los crecientes precios de la energía, los costes de la comida y el cambio climático. La ONU ha hecho un informe llamado *Feed versus food* (Forraje frente a comida) en el que se concluía que el 39 por ciento de los campos del mundo se utiliza para animales.

Otro 47 por ciento es alimento para las personas. El otro 15 por ciento es para productos industriales. Estamos utilizando el campo para alimentar a los animales cuando hay 2,700 millones de personas que gastan más de la mitad de su dinero en comida.

P. Pero los granjeros tienen que ganarse la vida.

R. Por supuesto. Éste es un tema que quiero que quede claro. Hay que hacer la transición de manera que no afecte a los granjeros. Por eso son tan importantes los incentivos para el cultivo de alimentos para personas.

P. Esta teoría la hizo usted pública a principios de los noventa con su libro *Beyond the beef* (Más allá de la carne). ¿Por qué nadie le hace caso?

R. Sí, es una historia vieja. Es muy triste que ni siquiera un líder mundial se haya preocupado de ello. Sólo hay dos personas que estamos hablando de ello. Rajendra Pachauri (el presidente del Panel Internacional del Cambio Climático y Premio Nobel de la Paz en 2007 junto con Al Gore) y yo. Ah, y Paul McCartney, que está muy involucrado y ha propuesto el lunes verde para que el primer día de la semana todo el mundo haga dieta vegetariana.

P. ¿Por qué están tan solos?

R. Porque concierne a la industria global de la ganadería y habría que cambiar los hábitos de la gente. Fíjese que precisamente su dieta, la mediterránea, que se basa en tomar grandes cantidades de fruta y verdura y muy poca de carne, es perfecta. El problema es que en países como el mío se consumen cantidades de carne inadmisibles. Tomamos incluso más proteínas de las que podemos digerir.

P. ¿Usted come carne?

R. No. Se puede decir que soy vegetariano al 95 por ciento. Empecé en 1977, pero bebo leche y tomo un poco de pescado.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Californians are asked to protect themselves against the pollution from wildfires.

Piden a californianos protegerse contra severa contaminación por incendios

Manuel Ocaño - Noticiero Latino
Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, July 3, 2008

Autoridades ambientales pidieron a los californianos tomar medidas preventivas por una severa contaminación del aire debido a los cerca de mil 450 incendios que continúan activos por segunda semana consecutiva en California, y de los que por lo menos 27 son peligrosos.

Hoy continúan evacuaciones en los condados de Kern, Santa Bárbara y Shasta. Hay declaraciones de emergencia para condados desde el norte de Los Ángeles hasta los límites con Oregon.

El gobierno de California pidió especial cuidado para enfermos de males respiratorios, menores de edad y residentes de edad avanzada.

Tomar mucha agua, usar mascarillas o papel humedecido si se considera necesario, permanecer en interiores y evitar actividades innecesarias al aire libre son algunas de las principales recomendaciones.