

Toyota contributes hybrid cars, money for climate research at UC Merced, Yosemite

By Danielle Gaines

Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, September 30, 2008

Hai! Toyota donated \$603,000 and five Prius hybrids to Yosemite National Park on Monday to support a number of education programs at Yosemite and UC Merced.

"The development of environmental education programs is key to preserving our majestic national parks for future generations," said Bill Duff, corporate manager of Toyota's North American environmental office. "At Toyota, we are committed to the environment and to funding educational programs that foster the next generation of environmental leadership."

Part of the money will be used to fund the Yosemite Leadership program, a UC Merced internship that provides students with work experience, wilderness education, a living stipend and the possibility of future employment.

"The partnership affords UC Merced faculty the opportunity to conduct important research that sheds light on the critical issue of climate change," said Chancellor Steve Kang, wearing a tan suit and matching khaki Toyota cap. "It prepares students to become wise stewards of the park and thoughtful leaders in the community."

Two interns from the program were on hand to talk about their experiences so far.

"It is hard to really explain and express what this program has done for me," intern Carla Saldana said. "The educational opportunities I have been given because of these programs have far exceeded everything."

Saldana was born and raised in Merced and graduated from Atwater High School in 2005. She is the second of five children and the first to go to college, she said.

"For many of the students involved they are the first ones in their family to go to college," said Mike Tollefson, Yosemite National Park Superintendent. "And sometimes the first in their family to go to Yosemite."

She quickly adapted to her new surroundings, though. "Yosemite is like a second home to me," she said.

Bob Hansen, president of the Yosemite Fund, read a letter he received from Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to the crowd that had gathered under the blazing sun outside the campus recreation center during the press conference. "I extend my best wishes for your continued success," Schwarzenegger wrote, also calling Yosemite "one of the most awe-inspiring places in the world."

The five Prius vehicles will be used to support Yosemite's air quality, bear management, wilderness education, visitor services and search and rescue departments, as they drive along the park's 263 miles of roads.

Each of the five vehicles donated are worth between \$24,000 and \$26,000, said John Bissot, general manager of Merced Toyota.

A hybrid vehicle works by processing data as the car starts, accelerates, brakes and stops. An internal computer decides how to most efficiently propel the vehicle, whether by electric motor, gas engine or both.

These features lead to a significant decrease in greenhouse gas emissions. Every 100 gallons of gasoline not consumed saves nearly one metric ton of carbon dioxide. Toyota estimated that its hybrid drivers have saved more than 319 million gallons of gas, as of September 2007.

Monday's donation is part of a larger Toyota program, called LEAF, that gave \$5 million and 23 vehicles this year to the nation's five largest national parks: Yosemite, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Everglades and Great Smoky Mountains.

"We are grateful for Toyota's generous support of these key educational programs in Yosemite," Tollefson said. "Toyota's grants ensure that parks and wild places remain relevant to future generations by providing access to higher learning and residential internships in one of America's flagship parks."

In the early 1880s, while his wife and two daughters stayed on a fruit farm near Martinez, John Muir, the "father of Yosemite," traveled to Japan and other spots in Asia.

Now, in the form of Japan's leading automaker, Muir's travels have come full circle.

L.A. can seek Providence Holy Cross Medical Center EIR, judge says

By Susan Abram, Staff Writer

LA Daily News, Tuesday, September 30, 2008

MISSION HILLS - A Los Angeles Superior Court judge has allowed the City Council to go back and ask for an environmental impact report on the \$180 million expansion of Providence Holy Cross Medical Center, an action that could postpone construction.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Thomas I. McKnew Jr. is expected to sign off Thursday on his earlier ruling, which sided with a community group that wants more studies done to determine the effects the project will have on the neighborhood.

His judgment puts the future of the expansion back into the hands of the City Council. Construction would be postponed until the city approves an EIR.

In November, council members voted 8-5 to block the expansion, saying the project needed an EIR. But at the time, they thought they needed at least 10 votes to force such a study.

McKnew later ruled that a simple majority was all that was needed to require an EIR because it falls under state environmental laws.

"This is a shame," McKnew said in court transcripts. "I don't make the law and I don't take responsibility for what happened. The respondents, the City, should take responsibility. That's where it lies."

Councilman Richard Alarcón, along with a union-organized coalition that included residents of the area, had lobbied the council to block the expansion unless a lengthy study analyzed traffic, air quality and parking issues.

The expansion, which would add a 101-bed wing, a larger maternity ward and a new intensive-care unit for newborns, gained support of the Mission Hills Neighborhood Council, county health officials and business groups, who had said the region needs more hospital beds as other medical centers have closed.

Alarcón and others say they want more hospital beds. But he and members of the Community Advocates for Responsible Expansion of Providence Holy Cross, founded by the Service Employees International Union, also said an EIR would offer greater scrutiny. It would require the developer to fix any problems, such as traffic, street-widening and parking concerns, all required under state law.

In November, a lawsuit was filed by Community Advocates for Responsible Expansion at Providence Holy Cross. The group said the city ignored state requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act, and allowed the hospital to move ahead with construction.

McKnew ruled that because this decision involves the California Environmental Quality Act, a vote of 10 council members was not necessary.

In the meantime, the hospital broke ground in May. The plans call for a four-story addition of nearly 120,000 square feet to the site at 15031 Rinaldi St.

Physicians and supporters said the expansion will add 101 much-needed beds to the 254 beds now at the hospital.

California launches broad effort to control hazardous chemicals

Gov. Schwarzenegger signs two 'green chemistry' bills that focus the state program on the most dangerous substances.

By Margot Roosevelt, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, Tuesday, September 30, 2008

California on Monday launched the most comprehensive program of any state to regulate chemicals that have been linked to cancer, hormone disruption and other deadly effects on human health.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed two broad laws that shift the state away from a scattershot approach in which bills targeting individual chemicals and products have passed or failed depending on the intensity of the lobbying and media attention.

The new measures are designed to encompass 80,000 chemicals now in circulation, rather than focus narrowly, as previous bills have, on specific substances in products such as baby bottles, toys, mattresses, computers or cosmetics. State regulators are to inventory the most dangerous, widespread chemicals first and control them at the manufacturing stage, before they are handled in workplaces, incorporated into products or allowed to escape into air and water.

The "green chemistry" initiative, Schwarzenegger said, will propel California to "the forefront of the nation and the world. . . . With these two bills, we will stop looking at toxics as an inevitable byproduct of industrial production."

The laws come as public alarm is on the rise over dangerous substances in consumer products. The federal Toxic Substances Control Act, passed three decades ago, has failed to control an explosion of hazardous materials, according to consumer and environmental groups. It exempted existing chemicals and requires the Environmental Protection Agency to prove a chemical is toxic before requesting data from manufacturers.

Automakers and electronics manufacturers lobbied heavily against California's initiative, saying that they are complying with European standards that are far stricter than U.S. federal law.

California's legislation would probably result "in higher costs with little or no benefit," Melanie Wiegner, a lobbyist for Ford Motor Co., wrote legislators. Automakers are concerned that the state could regulate brominated flame retardants in automobiles. The chemicals, which accumulate in human bodies, have been linked to neurodevelopmental problems.

The electronics industry opposed the laws on the grounds that they could result in different warning labels for California and European markets. "A patchwork of differing regulations . . . would unfairly disadvantage companies," said Joe Gregorich, a lobbyist for AeA, the electronics industry group. Computers, stereos and TV sets can contain substances that are harmful to the environment and that can cause neurological or reproductive problems in humans.

More than 164 million pounds of chemicals are sold each day in California in consumer and commercial products, a figure that does not include substances used in industrial processes. Until now, state laws have covered only the disposal of chemicals in consumer products, not their manufacture, sale or labeling.

One of the new laws, AB 1879, sponsored by Assemblyman Mike Feuer (D-Los Angeles), lays out a framework to regulate toxics over their life cycle. It also requires the state to promote safer alternatives, some of which have emerged from "green chemistry" initiatives in industry and academia.

"Leading scientists have concluded that children in the womb are pre-programmed to get cancer, diabetes and other serious illnesses, because their moms are exposed to toxic chemicals," Feuer said. "And you can never un-program them. This legislation protects generations to come."

A companion law, SB 509, sponsored by Sen. Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto), creates a scientific clearinghouse for information on chemicals' effects.

Feuer had originally introduced legislation directing the state to take action on seven substances, including lead, mercury, arsenic, cadmium, polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), hexavalent chromium and phthalates, all of which have been linked to serious disease.

But the chemical industry opposed the naming of specific substances in legislation, saying that state agencies should determine targets based on science. Legislators and environmental groups concurred.

A more controversial decision removed a provision in the Simitian bill that would have required industries to disclose to the state all of the chemical ingredients used to manufacture their products and any information about their health effects. Aides to Schwarzenegger agreed with businesses that the provision would encroach on trade secrets.

In the end, the bills were endorsed by diverse groups, including the Sierra Club, the Breast Cancer Fund, DuPont and the Chemical Industry Council of California.

Michael P. Wilson, a UC Berkeley public health researcher who wrote a 2006 report on the need for a state toxics program, praised California's new laws as a first step. But he said they may "continue to place the burden of proving the safety of chemicals on the government, rather than on producers."

Federal law prohibits the Environmental Protection Agency from sharing industry information with the states, he noted. "California agencies do not know what chemicals are sold in the state, where they are sold, by whom, for what purpose, how people might be exposed or where they ultimately end up in the environment," Wilson said. "This is the same situation for all U.S. states. There are large public health data gaps."

Sierra Club California director Bill Magavern acknowledged that "earlier versions of the disclosure legislation were stronger." But he called the new laws a "breakthrough."

"Right now," he said, "if lunch boxes are found to have lead, there is nothing the state toxics department can do to prevent them from being sold to kids. With these laws, the state can take action against unsafe products on the front end."

J.P. Myers, chief scientist and chief executive of Environmental Health Sciences, a Virginia-based nonprofit, called the legislation "the toughest, most comprehensive law in the country." The Toxic Substances Control Act is "decades out of date and has failed repeatedly to allow regulators to intervene in the face of new scientific evidence," he added.

Among states, according to Myers, Washington has passed several chemical-specific laws, but only Maine has recently passed broad legislation, restricting substances of "high concern" for children's health.

Schwarzenegger signed California's new laws on the factory floor of Los Angeles' Nelson Nameplate, a company that has cut back its use of dangerous solvents.

Green chemistry, he said, "can improve a company's bottom line. . . . These two landmark bills . . . will transform the way we deal with chemicals."

First cap-and-trade auction raises nearly \$40 million

By Robin Shulman - Washington Post

Tri-Valley Herald and Modesto Bee, Tuesday, September 30, 2008

NEW YORK — The country's first cap-and-trade auction for greenhouse gas reduction raised nearly \$40 million for Northeastern states to spend on renewable energy technologies and energy-efficiency programs, officials of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, which ran the auction, said Monday.

In the absence of a federal government program to cap the amount of carbon dioxide that power plants pump out of their smokestacks, 10 Northeastern states established the initiative to set limits and force all fossil fuel plants in their region to buy allowances to exceed it.

The initiative is being closely watched nationally as a model for efforts to reduce emissions and stem global warming.

In the sealed online auction Thursday, energy, financial and environmental organizations paid \$3.07 per ton of emissions, and all 12.5 million carbon allowances were sold, the initiative reported. Most of the bidders were power generators.

Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Maryland participated. The other members of the initiative — New York, New Jersey, Delaware and New Hampshire — did not participate but plan to join in future auctions. The next quarterly auction is set for Dec. 17.

"This is a strong indication that when New York participates in our first auction in December, it will also be a success," Gov. David Paterson said. "I hope our bold actions here will prove to be a turning point in the fight against global climate change."

Critics have said the program will not have an immediate or national effect, because the emissions cap is set too high — at 188 million tons annually, slightly higher than the current level — and the prices are low enough for utilities to pay the fees and continue to pollute.

But Pete Grannis, commissioner of the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, said that the cap will drop by 2.5 percent a year starting in 2015 and that a lower limit could have made it difficult to fashion an agreement among the states.

"We were concerned about the impact on the utility rates," Grannis said.

The earnings from the auction will go to the six states that participated based on the number of allowances they had. Maryland will receive \$16.4 million; Massachusetts, \$13.3 million; Connecticut, \$4.2 million; Maine, \$2.7 million; Rhode Island, \$1.3 million, and Vermont, \$621,000, according to the initiative.

Shari T. Wilson, Maryland's environment secretary, said her state will use more than \$6 million to help low-income people with utility bills and more than \$7 million for energy efficiency and conservation programs.

Baking company fined over emissions testing

By The Record

Stockton Record, Saturday, September 27, 2008

SACRAMENTO - A leader in the baking industry was fined more than \$300,000 for failing to test its diesel trucks for excess emissions at 58 fleet facilities, including Stockton, Manteca and Galt, officials said Friday.

In addition to the fine, Bimbo Bakeries USA, based in Fort Worth, Texas, must send employees to a mandatory class on diesel emissions testing, provide records to the state California Air Resources Board and make sure all of its trucks meet federal emissions standards, the board said.

Bimbo Bakeries is a part of Grupo Bimbo, which produces more than 100 brands of baked goods, including Oroweat, Tio Rosa and Bimbo.

The board is charged with reducing health risks posed by dirty diesel engines, aiming to cut those emissions 85 percent by 2020. Diesel exhaust contains harmful gases and can cause cancer, heart and breathing problems, and premature death.

[L.A. Times editorial, Tuesday, Sept. 30, 2008:](#)

Four bills Schwarzenegger should sign

From wildfire safety to insurance protections, these measures deserve the governor's approval.

It's amazing that California lawmakers were able to pass anything this year, given their inability to produce a timely and responsible budget. But they did come up with some good bills that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger should sign. He has until midnight tonight to make these bills law:

Assembly Bill 2447. Schwarzenegger proposed new fees on property owners to pay for increasingly expensive firefighting in, among other areas, new mountain and rural developments. It was a good start to a necessary conversation, but without fine-tuning, it would unjustly allow builders and buyers of ever more remote homes to pass their fire protection costs to others. This common-sense bill from Assemblyman Dave Jones (D-Sacramento) helps provide some balance by restricting the approval of new subdivisions unless they conform with state fire regulations and planners find that fire protection will be available.

Senate Bill 974. Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin was off-base when she asked Schwarzenegger to veto this bill, by Sen. Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach), to fund environmental cleanup of the state's ports with fees on cargo containers moving through Los Angeles, Long Beach and Oakland. Palin said the California fee -- \$60 for every 40-foot container -- would make goods shipped through the state before proceeding to Alaska too costly for her constituents. Nonsense. The small fee would

save the people of this state -- and perhaps hers as well -- a fortune in health costs and lost productivity.

Assembly Bill 1945. This important bill by Assemblyman Hector De La Torre (D-South Gate) takes on the problem of insurance companies retroactively revoking coverage, sometimes on dubious grounds. It would subject such action to review by the state Department of Managed Health Care or the Department of Insurance.

Senate Bill 375. This groundbreaking measure would build on Schwarzenegger's work to make California a leader in combating global climate change. The bill, by Sen. Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento), would for the first time allow the state to use its transportation funds to reward plans that provide for housing near job centers and transit corridors and to slow the advance of land-gobbling, pollution-producing sprawl. The remaining business opponents who see the state's future in farther-flung suburbs and longer commutes will eventually come to grips with the escalating environmental, fuel, health and business costs of such an approach, but California can't afford to wait for them.

[Fresno Bee commentary, Tuesday, Sept. 30, 2008:](#)

LAURA FULTZ STOUT: Bills would help Valley hit air quality goals

California has been immersed in a budget crisis that was as political as it was fiscal. With a budget signed and sealed, lawmakers now have a chance to come up for air-clean air. Critical environmental policy has now finally reached the governor's desk. His approval is crucial to getting California, especially the Valley, back on track.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has set aggressive goals for reducing California's global warming pollution. He campaigned on a promise to cut air pollution in half during his term. As flummoxed as we all are about the budget, two key pieces of legislation would raise new money to help us meet our clean air goals: AB 2522, by Assembly Member Juan Arambula, from which millions of dollars will support air pollution reductions in the Valley, and the Ports Investment Bill (SB 974, by state Sen. Alan Lowenthal), from which Valley residents will benefit from cleaner trucks traveling our roads to and from California's largest ports.

With a budget that tightens the belt on transportation and air quality spending, these bills are needed more than ever. The Valley is home to three of the five worst soot-and-smog-polluted regions in the country; the Valley can ill afford to delay its clean-up efforts. It has been widely reported in this paper and elsewhere that Valley air pollution costs our region \$3.2 billion every year. It is time to put more resources toward protecting the Valley families who bear so much of the financial burden of this public health crisis.

Assembly Member Juan Arambula worked closely with Sen. Dean Florez to craft AB 2522. This bill would create a new revenue stream specifically for air pollution reductions in the Valley. This money will be raised here in the Valley through car registration fees and will be used by our local air district to fight smog. That can ease the suffering for the one in three Valley families already grappling with some form of respiratory ailment.

The Ports Investment Bill seeks to save some of the 3,700 lives that are lost every year in California due to pollution from ports and freight transportation. SB 974 is four years in the making and would provide more than \$300 million per year to clean up statewide port pollution and fix intersections where freight trains delay traffic. Some 270 people die prematurely each year in the Valley alone due to port and freight transportation pollution.

SB 974 is good for Valley businesses, especially agriculture exporters trying to ensure the timely delivery of perishables. Reducing congestion on highways and building grade separations at train crossings increases reliability and decreases delays. According to a study by Beacon Economics, the fee in SB 974 amounts roughly to one-tenth of a penny for each dollar of goods shipped by California exporters. That's a worthwhile investment given the exorbitant price tag we already pay for dirty air.

Understandably, the governor is upset about the budget and the polarized politics that stalled our Legislature for months. No one was happy with the budget mess, and no one wanted the governor to make good on his threats to veto bills out of frustration.

Now he must look at these bills on their merits. A modest fee on car registration will make a big difference for the Valley. A revenue stream to deal with port trucks and congestion at train crossings will benefit the Valley, as well as thousands of residents statewide who are literally dying from port pollution. Without these new revenue streams, existing money will be stretched so far that the Valley risks getting left out.

As the political floodwaters recede, and we assess the damage done by the budget conflict, we can immediately start to rebuild. The governor should sign AB 2522 and SB 974. They are the Valley's most important pieces of environmental legislation this year. By putting good policy over bad politics, we can make progress toward the governor's clean air goals; and that's good for all of California.

Laura Fultz Stout of Fresno is the campaign and outreach associate for the Coalition for Clean Air.

[Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Tuesday, Sept. 30, 2008:](#)

Are you making a difference?

AN OCCASIONAL SERIES

Members of The Californian's Opinion section Sounding Board and readers have been invited to explain how they have "made a difference" in the past 12 months. Some of their responses appear on this page.

CLEAN AIR, HEALTHY LUNGS

I am somewhat ashamed that I have not been nearly as effective as my heart desires. But for several years now, I have enjoyed riding my bicycle as often as I can and keeping my car parked.

This provides me the opportunity to discuss the fact that I was born with asthma and that I volunteer, when possible, and serve on the local leadership council of the American Lung Association.

This incredibly hard-working group of people tirelessly pores over research regarding the damaging effects of our air on our lungs. They pen applications to acquire grant money to fund more scientific efforts. They spend time out in the community with the Mobile Asthma Clinic, educating people about controlling asthma and lung diseases.

I ride my bicycle so that I don't also contribute to our dirty air. Won't you take just one step toward cleaner air, as well?

Arin Resnicke of Bakersfield is an architect.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses global emissions of carbon dioxide increase at 3%. The world's green house emissions increased last year what could possibly lead to a worst scenario on the environment than what scientist had previously predicted. For more information on this and other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Aumentan 3% emisiones globales de dióxido de carbono

El mundo aumentó su emisión de gases de invernadero a la atmósfera el año pasado, lo cual podría llevarlo más allá del peor escenario proyectado por los científicos, dijeron el jueves investigadores internacionales.

Terra, Monday, September 29, 2008

Las nuevas cifras, que algunos llaman "de miedo", fueron una sorpresa porque los científicos pensaron que los problemas económicos mundiales obligarían a disminuir el uso de energéticos. En lugar de ello, las emisiones de dióxido de carbono aumentaron 3% del 2006 al 2007.

Esa es una cantidad que excede el peor panorama para las emisiones generadas por la combustión de carbón y petróleo y actividades relacionadas, de acuerdo con proyecciones en el 2007 de un grupo de científicos internacionales ganadores del Premio Nobel.

Mientras tanto, bosques y océanos, que absorben dióxido de carbono, están haciéndolo a tasas más bajas que en el siglo XX, dijeron los científicos. Si esas tendencias continúan, colocarán al mundo en ruta a mayores incrementos en las temperaturas y los niveles del mar.

El mayor contaminador fue China, seguida por Estados Unidos, que según datos anteriores es el líder en emisiones de dióxido de carbono por persona. Y aunque varios países desarrollados redujeron ligeramente sus emisiones en el 2007, Estados Unidos emitió más.

Aún así, fueron los grandes incrementos en China, la India y otros países en desarrollo los que causaron que las emisiones de dióxido de carbono llegaran a un nivel récord de 8.470 millones de toneladas métricas (9.340 millones de toneladas).

Las cifras dadas a conocer por agencias científicas de Estados Unidos, Gran Bretaña y Australia muestran que las emisiones adicionales de China representaron más de la mitad del incremento mundial. China superó a Estados Unidos como el principal contaminador con dióxido de carbono en el 2006.

Las emisiones en Estados Unidos subieron casi 2% en el 2007, luego de haber declinado el año previo. Este país produjo 1.750 millones de toneladas de carbono.

"Las cosas están sucediendo muy, muy pronto", dijo Corinne Le Quééré, profesora de ciencias ambientales en la Universidad de East Anglia. "Da miedo".

Gregg Marland, un importante científico en el Laboratorio Nacional del Departamento de Energía de Estados Unidos en Oak Ridge, dijo que estaba sorprendido por los resultados porque él pensó que las emisiones iban a bajar a causa de la crisis económica mundial. Pero no sucedió.

"Si vamos a hacer algo para reducir emisiones, va a tener que ser algo diferente de lo que estamos haciendo ahora", dijo.