

West Park project is viable, studies say **Data projects 34,000 jobs, millions in tax revenue**

By TIM MORAN

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, April 15, 2008

The PCCP West Park LLC development near Crows Landing would generate tens of thousands of jobs and contribute billions of dollars to the county's economy, according to new studies of the project.

For the first several years, however, the project would need to pay for the public services it will need.

West Park is the proposed 4,800-acre business and industrial park in and around the Crows Landing Air Facility southeast of Patterson. The development is anchored by a proposed short-haul rail system and inland port that would link it with the Port of Oakland.

The project has drawn opposition from many agencies and groups on the West Side. Objections include the size of the project, potential air quality problems, traffic, and train disruptions in Patterson.

Developer Gerry Kamilos is negotiating a master developer agreement with Stanislaus County. At its April 22 meeting, the Board of Supervisors is expected to vote on whether to proceed with the project.

The new studies, prepared by consultants for West Park and reviewed by an independent county consultant, were revealed Monday morning at a meeting of the Crows Landing Steering Committee.

They conclude that the project is economically viable and will generate jobs, tax dollars and other benefits for the county.

"This demonstrates that the project makes economic sense," Kamilos said. "We put into this an analysis of all the costs: agriculture mitigation, habitat mitigation, water and sewer, drainage. It's a 30-year horizon, not five or 10 years out. It's a three-decade program."

County Supervisor Jim DeMartini, who is chairman of the Crows Landing Steering Committee, remained skeptical, though he acknowledged that West Park officials had provided "a pile of information."

"Whether we believe it or not is another matter," DeMartini added. "I question the validity of it, and the impacts on the area."

Among the unanswered questions, DeMartini said, are where the water for the project is coming from, [local air quality issues](#), and whether the job projections are realistic.

Supervisor Dick Monteith, who along with DeMartini sits on an ad hoc committee to negotiate a developer agreement with West Park, said the developer has provided "more than sufficient" information.

"I'm very satisfied with what they have presented. There may be disagreements on content, and there is additional work to do," Monteith said.

That work includes preparing a formal environmental impact report, with several public hearings plus reviews by multiple state agencies, Kamilos said. That process will take about two years and would begin immediately if the board gives West Park a green light April 22.

"The vote the county is considering on April 22 is certainly not a final vote for construction," Kamilos said. "Its purpose is to move to the next step."

According to the studies, the first phase of the project, which would include the 1,527-acre air facility, would require \$251.7 million in infrastructure improvements. Those costs include road

improvements, water and sewer services and a new fire station. They would be paid for with a combination of redevelopment property tax money; the formation of a community services district with a per-acre assessment; and cash from the developer, according to the studies.

Some findings from the studies, prepared by Goodwin Consulting Group of Sacramento:

? West Park will cost the county \$200,000 more for services in the first phase than the development generates in new taxes. At completion of the entire project, however, the county will take in \$5.4 million more a year than West Park costs in services.

? The first phase will include startup of a general aviation airport as well as the short-haul rail service. It also will include providing the community of Crows Landing with water and sewer service, at a cost of \$9 million.

? Public infrastructure -- roads, sewers, water supply and the like -- for the development will cost \$251.7 million for the first phase, and \$722.7 million for the entire project by the end of the 30 years. With county public facilities fees and school fees, the cost is \$805 million. Road improvements are the biggest part of that cost, at \$304.8 million for the entire project.

? West Park will generate 34,000 permanent jobs at the completion of the project in 30 years. The number includes a 10 percent vacancy rate for buildings in the project. Another 3,000 jobs will be created during construction.

? West Park will build a new fire station for the West Stanislaus Fire District, but operating the station will cost \$1.5 million. A special assessment of \$400 per acre within the development will cover the costs.

? At the 30-year completion of the project, 50 million square feet of buildings valued at \$6 billion will have been constructed.

? The first phase will generate 8,400 jobs. The average salary of employees is estimated at more than \$47,000 per year.

KCAG seeks air quality funding proposals

By Sentinel Staff

Hanford Sentinel, Monday, April 14, 2008

HANFORD -- The Kings County Association of Governments is seeking project proposals eligible for federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funding.

Terri King, executive director for KCAG, announced last week that estimated apportionment of CMAQ funds available for programming is \$1.5 million in fiscal year 2011-12. Priority will be given to implementing projects that have the greatest documented emission reductions and projects that are recognized as transportation control measures.

A partial list of projects eligible for funding include transit fare subsidy, transportation control measures, alternative fuels, bicycle and pedestrian projects, efficient street sweepers and traffic-flow improvements.

Public and private agencies are encouraged to apply for funds, but private agencies must have a written agreement with a local agency and have a local public agency sponsor. Deadline for completed project proposals are May 2, and should be submitted to: Kings County Association of Governments, 339 W. D St., Suite B, Lemoore CA 93245.

Plaza Drive development approved

BY GERALD CARROLL

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Tuesday, April 15, 2008

A huge commercial development in west Visalia long thought to be "too much, too soon" will become reality after unanimous approval Monday night by the Visalia Planning Commission.

The 29.4-acre parcel, located along Plaza Drive north of state Highway 198, will now be home for 350,828 square feet of office, education and highway-service businesses.

"This project will rival anything between Sacramento and Bakersfield" in terms of making Visalia a key business destination, said Stephen Peck, vice president of the Mangano Company, lead developer.

The 5-0 vote was peppered with comments from Planning Commission members and community business leaders - all supporting the project.

"This project will be an asset to downtown," said Larry Segrue, Planning Commission member, referring to earlier sentiments that such a large commercial center so far from Visalia's core might draw business away from downtown. "It's a different kind of element, a different kind of animal."

A previously approved Fresno Pacific University satellite campus is the centerpiece. The university's planned first-phase building of 35,484 square feet was approved by the planning commission back in November 2007 - but the planning commission and Visalia City Council delayed passage of the remaining commercial plans.

The campus will eventually feature 53,124 square feet of office and classroom space.

Councilman Greg Collins, who has long opposed runaway development of west Visalia, at first appealed the commission's approval of the Fresno Pacific campus itself - but dropped his appeal Nov. 19. Collins and other Visalia residents have sought to avoid a second metroplex to the far west of Visalia that has already begun to accrue traffic and [pollution complications](#), detractors say.

However, proponents maintain that the parcel's proximity to state Highway 99, the Visalia industrial park and Visalia Municipal Airport are strong reasons to pursue more aggressive development.

"We don't want to lose tax dollars" to other areas, said Barbra Hood of Visalia's Property and Business Improvement District.

A state grant of \$686,000 awarded to Visalia last week to begin work on widening Plaza Drive between state Highway 198 and Goshen Avenue helped fuel optimism about the project's viability.

Traffic coming off Highway 198 at Plaza, and at the Plaza and Goshen intersection, is growing to unmanageable proportions due to growth of the industrial park, Collins and Mayor Jesus Gamboa have maintained.

Major developments such as the one approved Monday would make traffic unworkable there - but the state grant is a good starting point, officials said, toward improving the road system.

That makes the larger development more feasible.

Another controversy was whether to install an expensive traffic signal at the corner of Crowley Avenue and Plaza Drive in the first phase of the four-phase plan.

"That signal is needed now," said Charlie Clouse, traffic consultant representing Mangano. "It's going to be put in right off the bat. When the first phase of this project opens, that will be a first-rate intersection."

The plan, as outlined by Mangano Company of Visalia, calls for gas stations, a hotel and restaurants to spring up around the Fresno Pacific campus. Earlier plans for a second hotel and a fast-food outlet were scrapped from an earlier proposal to help traffic numbers line up with Visalia standards.

Peck has built a case, over time, that shows west Visalia is the only suitable area for commercial-development growth, since proposals to convert portions of east Visalia into business and commercial use are years away.

In other actions, the planning commission:

- Voted 5-0 to allow Kornwasser Shopping Center to place a 7,540-foot commercial play gym in an area near the WinCo shopping complex on the southeast corner of Caldwell Avenue and Chinowth Street.
- Approved a permit allowing Kaweah Management Company to add nine units to an existing 11-unit multifamily residential complex as an affordable-housing project of 57,356 square feet on 1.31 acres at the northeast corner of Paradise Avenue and Court Street.

Ellis evaluation

Tracy Press, Friday, April 11, 2008

An environmental report reveals potential air-quality, traffic and noise problems, but few other ill effects, due to a 2,250-house development proposed by The Surland Cos.

Construction of 2,250 homes slated for about 300 acres of south Tracy land will unavoidably increase noise, traffic and air pollution and likely force Pacific Gas and Electric Co. to replace a pair of high-pressure natural gas pipelines.

But according to an environmental impact report released this week on The Surland Cos.' subdivision and proposed water park, many other effects of the development between Corral Hollow and Lammers roads near Linne Road are insignificant.

The public has 45 days to comment on the voluminous environmental impact report, and the city's engineering and development department will have to answer each point raised in those comments.

Tracy is negotiating a development agreement with Surland that will give company owner Les Serpa the right to build 2,250 homes on the site — plus the rights to build another 1,600 homes somewhere else in Tracy at some point in the future — in exchange for 20 acres of land and \$20 million with which to build an aquatics center.

Voters overwhelmingly rejected the subdivision in a special ballot measure in 1998, when it did not include a water park.

Environmental reports are written to analyze the effects of growth. The report estimates that once built, the 3,850 homes would add 30,840 metric tons a year of greenhouse-gas air pollution a year. A metric ton is about 2,250 pounds.

They would send perhaps 7,000 to 8,000 more cars over the Altamont Pass during commute hours and clog intersections near the site, the report says, but delays could be lessened by adding traffic lights.

Plant near Riverside is said to emit a carcinogen

Air regulators believe a cement factory is the source of chromium 6.

By Janet Wilson, staff writer

L.A. Times, Tuesday, April 15, 2008

A cement factory near Riverside is emitting high levels of hexavalent chromium, a toxic carcinogen, from enormous outdoor dust piles blowing downwind across an industrial area and a residential community, the region's top air regulator told The Times on Monday.

Barry Wallerstein, chief executive of the South Coast Air Quality Management District, said months of sampling and lab work showed that so-called clinker dust piles at TXI Riverside Cement in the Rubidoux area near the Riverside-San Bernardino County line were the source of high levels of airborne hexavalent chromium detected at sites in the area, including a uniform factory directly across the street.

"We're not aware of any previous reports that a cement factory would have this level of hexavalent chromium-related risk, but the fact of the matter is we have sampled downwind of the facility, we've sampled upwind of the facility, we cross-checked and did backward calculations using air quality modeling, and it's our best professional opinion that this is coming from the Riverside cement plant," said Wallerstein.

"They have very large piles of cement material . . . and we believe that the dust from these piles is causing a downwind hexavalent chromium condition."

A company official said TXI had been talking with air quality officials about the readings, but maintained that the company's plant had not officially been identified as the source of the emissions.

"We're obviously just as concerned as the district is," said Frank Sheets, a spokesman for TXI Riverside Cement. "I think the key here is verification . . . They're making an assumption, we believe at this point in time, that we're the source of that high concentration, and we need to go through a verification process, to verify their findings."

Wallerstein said that under California's toxic hot-spots law, the facility's owners would be required to notify the public of the emissions and take steps to mitigate them. He added that AQMD attorneys had advised him that the agency was not required to notify the public of the readings until the source of emissions had been confirmed.

The district had been in contact with TXI about the readings for about a month, according to the company.

Long-term exposure to airborne hexavalent chromium, also known as chromium 6, has been repeatedly linked in studies to terminal nasal and lung cancer. Recent studies, including one by the National Toxicological Program last year, have linked it to cancer in every major organ of the body in laboratory animals that drank contaminated water.

The toxic metal is widely used in metal plating, the aerospace industry, stainless steel processing and dye manufacture. It also can be found in rocks and other raw material used in cement production. Chromium 6 was at the center of a drinking-water contamination case in Hinkley, Calif., made famous by the movie "Erin Brockovich."

Wallerstein said he did not know how long the carcinogenic dust had been blowing from the factory's outdoor areas, but that his staff had first become aware of a potential problem in November when they noticed slightly elevated levels of hexavalent chromium at a regional monitoring station. That data was collected in 2005 and 2006 but not compiled and studied until late last year, he said.

The levels found across the street from the plant are 10 times higher than typical amounts found in air, according to Wallerstein. A state health official said long-term exposure to those levels could lead to an additional 480 cases of cancer in 1 million people. That is far higher than the 10-per-million level that triggers the state's toxic hot-spots law.

Sheets, the TXI spokesman, said the clinker dust piles were part of a recycling operation that may have been in place since the 1960s. He thought it was possible that such dust piles could be covered or cleaned up, if they were proved to be a risk.

Sheets said officials at the 100-year-old plant previously had notified potentially affected neighbors of possible hazardous emissions, as required by the toxic hot-spots law. But in an e-mail, he said the levels that they calculated would come from the factory and its operations were below the reporting threshold set by the state. Records show the factory has complied with federal environmental reporting standards. In 2006, the most recent year for which data were available, they reported 7 pounds of hexavalent chromium emissions.

Dr. Robert Blaisdell, chief of exposure modeling for the air toxicology and epidemiology branch of the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, cautioned that it would take years of continuous exposure to cause illness.

But he said the local air district "should follow up on it . . . hexavalent chromium is a potent carcinogen, and the concern here would be with long-term exposure."

Some questioned why it took so long to figure out the source of the chromium and notify the public. In a March 14 letter, Wallerstein informed Riverside County officials that the tests taken directly across the street from the TXI cement factory in February and March showed levels of the carcinogen were on average 10 times higher than typical amounts in the region's air. But in the same letter, citing an ongoing investigation, Wallerstein asked them to "please maintain the confidentiality of this information to the extent possible."

Documents obtained by The Times show that AQMD tests in January also found elevated levels of the carcinogen at a dozen sites near the cement plant, including a park, two water facilities, a self-storage business and other factories.

Under one state law, any government official who learns that hazardous waste is being released must notify county officials within 72 hours or face up to three years in prison and stiff fines. Those officials must in turn notify the public "without delay."

Wallerstein said it would have been wrong to alarm members of the public without positively identifying a source of the emissions. That source was not sufficiently determined until he ordered additional tests over the weekend, after The Times contacted him about reports of high chromium readings near the plant.

Riverside County Health Officer Eric Frykman said Friday that when the county received the March letter and a one-page report, he checked with his internal agency expert, who said that based on the levels reported, there was insufficient risk to warrant notifying the public.

Richard Drury, an attorney who has successfully sued polluters over hexavalent chromium emissions, said he was less troubled by the lack of public notification than by evidence that high levels were detected in 2005 but not further investigated.

"That's absurd," he said. "The air district should have investigated immediately. If you have a peak of hexavalent chromium, you want to find out where it's coming from. It should not take three or four years. . . . It seems like someone's been asleep at the switch over at the air district."

Bush floating new climate proposal

By H. Josef Hebert, Associated Press Writer

In the Contra Costa Times, USA Today and other papers, Tuesday, April 15, 2008

WASHINGTON-The White House has told a group of House GOP conservatives it may be forced to support a limited cap on greenhouse gases and avoid a "train wreck" of regulations involving climate change, sources familiar with the meeting said Monday.

A range of options presented at a meeting last week between senior White House officials and a group of Republican lawmakers was aimed at gauging the reaction to a possible shift of Bush administration policy on climate change.

"The meeting was set up to float a few trial balloons" and it did not go well, with some participants viewing it as "political appeasement" on global warming, said a GOP operative who was briefed on the meeting. He said, given the response, the White House may be retreating on the issue.

White House press secretary Dana Perino acknowledged Monday that the administration was working on new climate change proposals, but said no decision had been made. "We're having a very robust discussion," said Perino at a White House briefing. "There's a basket of things that we're dealing with."

At the meeting, White House officials outlined a range of options that were being considered, from simply proposing a set of "principles" to proposing to cap greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, according to two individuals familiar with the discussions.

Perino disputed that description, saying the White House officials, rather than presenting the lawmakers with options, "went up to discuss with members the range of complications and concerns" raised by the possibility of having to regulate greenhouse gases under existing laws.

The Bush administration has been a staunch opponent of a mandatory so-called "cap-and-trade" approach to reducing greenhouse gases, preferring largely voluntary measures to broadly address global warming.

"We aren't necessarily against cap-and-trade proposals," Perino said Monday, but she added quickly, "What we've seen so far from Congress is not something that we can support."

The Senate is expected in June to begin debate on legislation, co-sponsored by Sens. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., and John Warner, R-Va., that would cap greenhouse gas emissions from most sources and allow polluters to purchase emission permits instead of making actual reductions. It is designed to cut emissions 70 percent by mid-century. The House also is planning to draft climate legislation soon.

Among the proposals floated by the administration at the meeting last week was one that would limit the emissions cap to electric power plants, while also allowing a "safety valve" if the cost is found to be too high. The Senate bill has no such escape valve and covers emissions almost across the economy.

The administration's views were presented by James Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, and Keith Hennessey, director of the president's economic council.

Among those at the meeting were Rep. Roy Blunt of Missouri, the No. 2 House Republican; Rep. James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin, the ranking Republican on the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming; and Rep. John Shimkus, R-Ill. All are members of a group of House Republicans who have been critical of cap-and-trade climate legislation.

The meeting was first reported Monday by The Washington Times.

The White House search for a new climate initiative comes amid growing indication that mandatory action to address global warming is highly likely, if not now, in the next year or so. All three presidential candidates-Democrats Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama, and the presumptive GOP nominee, John McCain-have said greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels, must be reduced.

At the same time, the administration is facing growing pressure to regulate carbon dioxide under the existing federal clean air law.

"We are dealing with what we call a regulatory train wreck," said Perino on Monday, using language similar to that used by the White House officials during their meeting with the GOP lawmakers last week.

The Environmental Protection Agency has been told by the Supreme Court that carbon dioxide, the leading greenhouse gas, is a pollutant and must be regulated if the EPA determines it is a danger to health and welfare.

At the same time, the Interior Department is under pressure to give polar bears special protection under the Endangered Species Act because of disappearing Arctic sea ice. A lawsuit also has been filed under the same law for more protection for arctic seals.

Together these cases would pull the enforcement of the Clean Air Act and the Endangered Species Act into the debate over climate change. This is a "regulatory trajectory ... we think is fraught with peril and that will ultimately end up in a train wreck," said Perino.

The White House officials made a similar case in their meeting with the GOP lawmakers, according to two individuals familiar with the discussion. They were told, however, that the cap-and-trade proposal being considered would be rejected by congressional Democrats, while alienating GOP conservatives.

Construction Halted Ahead of Games

By Andrew Jacobs, staff writer

N.Y. Times, Tuesday, April 15, 2008

BEIJING - City officials laid out an ambitious series of measures on Monday that will freeze construction projects, slow down steel production and shut down quarries in and around this capital during the summer in an attempt to clear the air for the Olympics. Even spray-painting outdoors will be banned during the weeks before and after sporting events, which begin here on Aug. 8.

Although officials initially suggested that the city's wholesale transformation would be complete long before the opening ceremonies, the announcement nonetheless represents the most detailed plan yet for how Beijing might reach its longstanding pledge to stage "green Games" in one of the world's most polluted cities. In the past, officials had suggested that the city's makeover would be completed well before the Games, possibly by the end of 2007.

But the two-month construction ban announced Monday will instead begin on July 20. Government directives will also force coal-burning power plants to reduce their emissions by 30 percent through most of the summer. Officials said 19 heavily polluting enterprises, including steel mills, coke plants and refineries, would be temporarily mothballed or forced to reduce production.

Gas pumps that do not have vapor-trapping devices will be closed, cement production will stop and the use of toxic solvents outdoors will be forbidden.

If Beijing's air remains unacceptably sullied in the days leading up to the Games, officials said, they would take "stringent steps" to curb polluting industries, although they declined to say what those might be. "We will do everything possible to honor the promise," Du Shaozhong, deputy director of the city's Environmental Protection Bureau, told reporters. "Just tell everybody they don't have to worry."

Some Olympic officials and athletes remain unpersuaded. Although the government has made notable strides in reducing the brown haze from coal-burning heaters and stoves, the unabated surge in car ownership has erased many of those gains. There are about 3.5 million vehicles choking Beijing's roadways, with about 1,200 new cars joining the honking parade each day.

Last August, in a four-day exercise that will probably be repeated this summer, authorities forced more than half of Beijing's cars and trucks off the road. Officials said they would present plans to restrict traffic later.

In recent months, independent scientists who have sampled Beijing's air have said levels of ozone and particulate matter from diesel engines remain five times as high as maximum

standards set by the World Health Organization. The president of the International Olympic Committee, said a particularly smoggy day could prompt officials to postpone outdoor endurance events.

Mr. Du, the environmental official, dismissed suggestions that Beijing had failed to substantially reduce harmful pollution. He said that the number of Blue Sky days, those with acceptably clean air according to the city's monitoring system, has more than doubled since 1998. There were just 100 such days then, he said, compared with 246 last year. He said levels of nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide had dropped significantly in recent years.

However, an independent study released in January by an American environmental consultant, Steven Q. Andrews, found irregularities in the monitoring system that cast doubt as to how much air quality had actually improved.

The authorities said they had reduced pollution by forcing local factories to upgrade pollution-control equipment and compelling about 200 of the most hopelessly noxious ones to shut down for good. Even on a day when the horizon was notably hazy and the fumes from idling cars undeniably acrid, Mr. Du urged a roomful of reporters to tell the public how much better Beijing's air had become in recent years. "Please assure all the athletes," he said.

But even if they find the city's air cleaner than expected, visitors may be disappointed by the indoor environment. Earlier in the day, government officials announced that a proposed smoking ban, which is to take effect on May 1, had been modified in the face of opposition by business owners. Smoking will be restricted in hospitals, schools and stadiums, but it will be permitted in bars and restaurants.

Factories to shut to clean Beijing's air

By STEPHEN WADE, AP Sports Writer
Modesto Bee, Tuesday, April 15, 2008

BEIJING — Construction will halt, heavy industries will close, and even spray painting will stop in order to clean Beijing's polluted air for the Olympics - an issue that suddenly has taken a back seat to political protests.

An aggressive plan to temporarily shutter belching steel and chemical plants, cut back emissions by 30 percent at 19 heavy-polluting companies and stop excavation and pouring of concrete at hundreds of sites around the city was explained Monday by the city's Environmental Protection Bureau.

"From the suggestions of experts we think that we need to take these measures to guarantee the air quality of Beijing," said Du Shaozhong, the bureau's deputy director.

The measures are severe and will be in effect officially for two months - July 20-Sept. 20 - although reports a few months ago suggest some production cutbacks may come even sooner.

Officials also are expected to ban about half of Beijing's 3.3 million vehicles for the Aug. 8-24 Olympics. Du said specific details would be announced later.

A month ago, pollution looked like the biggest threat to the Olympics, which are supposed to mark the emergence of China as an economic and political power. Since then, deadly riots in Lhasa have triggered worldwide demonstrations by pro-Tibet and human rights groups, threatening the country's image on a stage it has spent billions to build.

Last week, chaotic protests disrupted legs of the Olympic torch relay in London, Paris and San Francisco, prompting usually cautious International Olympic Committee President Jacques Rogge to say the IOC was facing "a crisis" - one of its toughest tests since the boycotts of the 1970s and '80s.

More demonstrations along the relay route are expected.

Beijing's noxious pollution still presents an enormous problem, a health menace and a public relations minefield.

Rogge has said endurance events of more than an hour will be postponed if the air quality is poor, and he's acknowledged some performances might be "slightly reduced." Many top athletes are reported staying away from the games until the last minute, and some have been advised to wear masks in non-competition situations.

Du did not say if shuttered companies would receive compensation for lost production.

"Enterprises have made active sacrifices for the Olympics in terms of how to allocate their production and how to offset all these negative impacts," he said.

To a suggestion that some companies might ignore the government orders, Du replied: "It's not very difficult for Chinese plants to implement all the measures."

The Capital Steel Group in west Beijing has been told to reduce emissions, and production will be halted at the Eastern Chemical Plant of Beijing Eastern Petrochemical Co. In addition, coal-burning boilers that fail to meet emission standards also will be shuttered.

Du said production would be stopped at concrete and cement plants in southeastern Beijing. Quarry operations will also be stopped.

The environmental body said gas stations, oil depots and tanker trucks would be shut down unless they were equipped with "oil vapor recovery" technology.

Outdoor spray-painting will also be banned during the period, and "spraying or painting with harmful solvents will be temporarily banned."

Du said even more "strident" measures would be taken during the 17-day games "in case of extremely negative meteorological conditions." Hot, humid and stagnant air often settles over the city in August.

Five provinces and municipalities surrounding Beijing will also be closing factories, although their plans were not released. They are: the city of Tianjin; Hebei, Shanxi and Shandong provinces; and the huge Inner Mongolia region.

Beijing is one of the world's most polluted cities. A mix of particulate matter, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide often blankets the city at levels five times higher than World Health Organizations safety standards.

As Du made his announcement, Beijing was covered in a moderate level of smog.

An IOC study released last month said that competition conditions would "not necessarily (be) ideal at every moment," but said Beijing's air quality was better than expected.

Asked if he could make a 100 percent promise that no endurance events will be postponed by pollution, Du replied: "We will do everything possible to honor the promise."

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Monday, April 14, 2008](#)

Perata trying to take our voices

I was born and raised in the great state of California. I'm happy to live in a blue state. However, I'm growing tired of gangs, smog, high taxes, vehicle registration fees, smogging fees, union jobs going to Mexico, stolen cars, foreclosed houses, gas prices,

metham- phetamine, allergies, health care costs, Barry Bonds and college tuition hikes, to name a few. The thing that really gets me, though, is the recall of Sen. Jeff Denham.

He was elected the same way most people are (Florida excluded), by winning the majority of votes. Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata is making a big mistake. We elected Jeff because the majority thought he would be the best to represent the Central Valley. By recalling Denham, Perata has taken the voice from 12th District voters.

It's pretty easy to accuse the Bush administration of taking our liberties and freedoms, not to mention its arrogance. As Democrats, we point that out every chance we get. But change the name Bush to Perata and we become hypocrites. Let's do the right thing June 2: Keep Jeff doing what he was elected to do.

RYAN CAMP, Turlock

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, April 15, 2008](#)

Still peddling his global-warming lie

I see, Al Gore, that you are still trying to con the American people into believing that global warming is real ("Gore leads charge on greenhouse gas emissions," April 1, Page A-3). I read you have \$300 million to win the public over. The American people understand there is no substitute for oil. Windmills won't do it; ethanol is a joke; solar energy is far too expensive for the average American and hydrogen cells are too far off and too expensive to consider. That leaves oil as the best source to create the energy we need.

The problem with oil is not that it creates greenhouse gases that might warm the planet; that is pure poppycock. The real problem with oil is Iran. If we leave Iraq and Iran invades, this would scare the other oil-producing countries and they would possibly join up with Iran and cut off deliveries to the United States. This would create a worldwide depression that would make the 1930s Depression look like a picnic in the park.

Your global-warming myth is not accepted by the American people. It isn't discussed by families at their dinner tables. I suggest you invest your \$300 million in oil stock where it will grow by leaps and bounds.

HARRY G. JONES, Modesto

[Stockton Record Editorial, Thursday, April 10, 2008](#)

Changing rules of the road

Would forcing smog checks for pre-1976 cars help Valley's air?

It isn't the age of the car, it's what comes out the tailpipe that counts.

In a nutshell, that should be the standard. But classic car owners are worried that a bill to be heard Tuesday by the state Senate Transportation and Housing Committee will have the effect of putting the objects of their passion on blocks.

Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, has proposed that all vehicles in the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District - and only in the Valley district - undergo smog checks every two years.

That sounds simple. Most of us already have to put our vehicles through smog checks to get them registered. It even sounds reasonable, given the huge air pollution problem in the San Joaquin Valley and the fact that so much of that pollution comes from cars, trucks and farm equipment.

As always, though, the devil is in the details. In this case, the devil is Florez's proposal is not only that all cars - including now-exempt vehicles built before 1976 - undergo the checks every two years, but that they also pass a visual inspection.

Two questions jump out: First, how many pre-1976 vehicles are there? And two, of those vehicles, how many are rebuilt classic cars that actually might have better smog gear under the hood than the original vehicle equipment but would not pass a smog check because they would not pass a visual inspection, since the original equipment had changed?

Understandably, classic car owners are concerned that despite pouring often thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of work into their rebuilt beauties, they would not be able to register them.

"All for what?" asked Ron Bramlett, who took a mangled 1966 Ford Mustang he found more than 20 years ago for \$50 and turned it into a gem.

"Cars like this one are driven so very little. ... Even if this program had 100 percent compliance, the effect (on the air) would be very, very small."

He's right. In our drive to clean up the air - and it needs it - we should not allow ourselves to be sideswiped by any seeming solution offered. Common sense must be the first rule. Cost vs. benefit must be the second.

In this case, we need to know exactly what benefit we'll see by changing the rules. If there truly is enough benefit to warrant it, then we need to ask, is changing equipment under the hood - usually much better pollution control equipment than was on the original car - what matters? Or is what comes out the tailpipe what matters?

The answer to that second question is pretty obvious.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Merced color codes its flags to indicate the status of air quality. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Codifican con banderas de colores la calidad del aire en Merced, California

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Monday, April 14, 2008

La ciudad de Merced en California inicia este martes un programa para identificar con banderas de colores los códigos sobre la calidad del aire para que los residentes de cada zona tomen previsiones.

El proyecto de la Coalición contra el Asma, del condado de Mariposa, pretende informar a comunidades sensibles a la contaminación del aire sobre las condiciones imperantes en el ambiente.

La primera bandera se colocará en el centro de gobierno y después algunas otras en escuelas y lugares de reunión común.

El rojo quiere decir que el aire es insalubre o que hay mucho ozono, el amarillo indica que hay que tomar precauciones y el verde significa que hay aire sin riesgos.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses "Green" jobs for Los Angeles. Villaraigosa vows to create new jobs that will protect the environment.](#)

Empleos 'verdes' para Los Ángeles

Villaraigosa se compromete a crear fuentes de trabajo que protejan el medio ambiente

Isaías Alvarado

La Opinion, Sunday, April 13, 2008

Un día después de insistir en el recorte de más de 700 plazas de trabajo para resarcir el déficit en las arcas del Ayuntamiento angelino, el alcalde Antonio Villaraigosa se comprometió a crear más empleos ecológicos (green jobs) con mejores salarios.

En el Foro de Economía Verde de Los Ángeles, celebrado en la preparatoria Dorsey, el primer edil habló de la importancia de crear fuentes de empleo que se enfoquen en el cuidado del medio ambiente.

"Tenemos que proteger el medio, las agencias de regulación para mejorar la ecología, pero pensar en trabajos en los sectores verdes... son el futuro de la economía, no sólo de Los Angeles, sino de todo Estados Unidos".

Ante legisladores, activistas y miembros de organizaciones ecologistas, el alcalde resaltó el entrenamiento que se imparte a 1,500 alumnos de seis preparatorias del sur de la ciudad con el objetivo de que se integren a las filas del Departamento de Agua y Energía (DWP).

"Nuestra ciudad va a crecer con mejores trabajos y con una comunidad saludable", dijo el edil, quien recibió el aplauso efusivo de los asistentes en un par de ocasiones.

El contraste en las declaraciones de Villaraigosa se dio una vez que éste salió del inmueble, donde reconoció que el despido de cientos de trabajadores del Ayuntamiento es inevitable.

"El propósito es balancear el mayor déficit en la historia de la ciudad de 400 millones de dólares. Nuestros esfuerzos son, por un lado, hacer recortes necesarios", pero mantener la calidad en los servicios que prestan las agencias del orden, explicó.

La ciudad de Los Ángeles no es la única que padece la actual recesión —motivada por el alza al precio del crudo, la crisis hipotecaria y el incremento del costo de los artículos de primera necesidad— dijo el alcalde, pues también ha hecho mella en las grandes ciudades del país.

"Me causan un gran dolor estas consecuencias", dijo, aunque anticipó que buscarán minimizar el número de posiciones eliminadas, "porque esta gente trabaja fuerte, tienen familias, tienen que mantenerlas".

Cuestionado sobre cuáles son los departamentos en los que contemplan más recortes, Villaraigosa se limitó a contestar que no existe ninguno en particular.

El alcalde ha dicho anteriormente que no despedirán a bomberos ni policías, al preponderar la seguridad en las calles de la ciudad.

Antes de la participación del edil, la presidenta electa de la Asamblea estatal, Karen Bass, manifestó que en Sacramento el tema de la ecología suena fuerte entre los legisladores, quienes prevén "traer los trabajos ecológicos a esta ciudad".

El propósito del foro fue iniciar la configuración de una economía ecológica en esta ciudad, considerada como una de las metrópolis con mayores índices de contaminación en el país.

Al mismo tiempo, buscar que los legisladores aboguen por políticas ecológicas en comunidades como el sur y el este de Los Ángeles, así como Echo Park.

Para el presente año, los objetivos de la organización Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE), los responsables del evento, son obtener 20 millones de dólares para el año fiscal 2008-09 para implementar la Fase 1 del Programa de Actualización de Edificios Ecológicos.

Uno más es el entrenamiento de 50 angelinos en los también denominados "trabajos verdes".

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Environmental Heros. Four Hispanics receive the Goldman Prize for their fight in favor of nature.](#)

Campeones del medio ambiente

Cuatro hispanos reciben el Premio Goldman por su lucha en favor de la naturaleza

Jorge Morales Almada

La Opinion, Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Por la lucha que han emprendido en contra de grandes corporaciones, por la insistencia en denunciar y por la creatividad para defender y conservar el medio ambiente, cuatro latinos recibieron el Premio Ambiental Goldman 2008 en una ceremonia que se celebró ayer en San Francisco, California.

Dos ecuatorianos, un mexicano y una mujer puertorriqueña son los galardonados que han trabajado afanosamente por el medio ambiente y por lo que han sido acreedores a 150 mil dólares.

El Premio Ambiental Goldman fue creado en 1990 por Richard N. Goldman y su difunta esposa Rhoda H. Goldman, dos filántropos que decidieron reconocer los esfuerzos ecológicos de la gente y estimular a personas comunes y corrientes a actuar de manera extraordinaria para proteger el planeta.

Los siete ganadores anuales son seleccionados de siete grandes áreas del mundo: África, Asia, islas, América del Norte y del Sur y de Centroamérica.

"Los galardonados de este año representan la espectacular labor que realizan a favor del medio ambiente personas comunes y corrientes de todo el mundo", declaró Richard Goldman en un comunicado. "Merecen nuestra atención y elogio su dedicación al mejoramiento de las vidas de los que viven en sus comunidades y su entorno ambiental".

Los otros tres ganadores son Feliciano dos Santos, de Mozambique, Marina Rikhvanova, de Rusia, e Ignace Schops, de Bélgica.

Este grupo de siete ganadores son reconocidos como audaces líderes populares que se enfrentan a intereses gubernamentales y corporativos en sus esfuerzos por mejorar el ambiente y las condiciones de vida en sus comunidades. Ellos son elegidos de manera secreta a nominación de una red mundial de organizaciones ecologistas.

Los cuatro latinos premiados hablaron vía telefónica con La Opinión.

Pablo Fajardo Mendoza y Luis Yanza son los dos ecuatorianos que decidieron defender la región amazónica de su país del gigante petrolero Texaco-Chevron, que dicen, la ha estado aniquilando durante las últimas cuatro décadas.

Ellos encabezan una de las batallas ecológicas más grandes en exigencia de justicia por lo que consideran una masiva contaminación petrolera en la región.

"No ha sido fácil, es complicado luchar contra una empresa tan poderosa y con tanta influencia, pero lo que nos ha ayudado es la férrea unidad que hay de los más de 30 mil afectados en este proceso de resistencia y lucha que hemos llevados desde hace 14 años", dijo Pablo.

La actual demanda contra Chevron en Ecuador está en su etapa final y la empresa podría pagar un monto para la reparación de daños (si es que se pueden reparar las muertes y la afectación al ecosistema, dice Pablo) que ha sido estimado en 16,000 millones de dólares.

"Es insuficiente para reparar el daño, es irreparable, la gente que ha muerto [de cáncer] y pueblos indígenas han desaparecido", reclamó.

Luis Yanza comentó que el premio que recibirán es un reconocimiento al esfuerzo colectivo de mucha gente que ha estado en la resistencia y luchando por alcanzar la justicia frente a lo que consideran una clara violación de los derechos humanos por parte de la corporación petrolera.

"Es mi tercera vez en California, por este mismo caso he venido dos veces anteriores, para protestar contra Chevron", dijo Luis. La tercera fue para ser premiado, un premio que dice lo merece la perseverancia de la gente de la región amazónica de Ecuador.

Jesús León Santos es un indígena de la mixteca oaxaqueña que dirige un programa de renovación de tierras y desarrollo económico valiéndose de una antigua técnica agrícola para transformar en tierras fértiles de cultivo una de las zonas más erosionadas y áridas de México.

"Estamos reforestando con la siembra de árboles nativos del área", explicó Jesús. "En la última década hemos plantado unos tres millones de árboles y conservamos los suelos por medio de zanjas trinchera, así las llamamos, es un sistema que permite que el agua que corre por las laderas se quede en las zanjas y poco a poco infiltrando, con eso se evita la erosión y alimenta los manantiales".

Jesús encabeza el Centro de Desarrollo Integral Campesino de la Mixteca (Cedicam), una organización ecologista local dirigida por campesinos, a quienes ha logrado unir. Sus esfuerzos se han visto recompensados con el reverdecimiento de laderas áridas, acuíferos recargados y la disminución de los altos índices de emigración.

"En verdad es un premio muy generoso y muy importante para nosotros, nos viene a confirmar que se reconocen los esfuerzos y viene a fortalecer nuestro trabajo... el dinero lo vamos a destinar a un fondo para fortalecer el trabajo de restauración de tierras", agregó Jesús.

Rosa Hilda Ramos es una boricua de 62 años de edad que se fajó los pantalones y se puso al tú por tú contra las fábricas contaminantes que rodeaban la comunidad de Cataño, en San Juan, Puerto Rico.

"Soy ama de casa y me he visto obligada a convertirme en conservacionista por obligación", dijo esta mujer que desde hace casi dos décadas se ha dedicado a defender los manglares de la ciénaga Las Cucharillas, la cual representa un importante hábitat a las aves acuáticas y migratorias de la isla.

En 1991, cuando Rosa Hilda llegó a vivir a Cataño, una comunidad de aproximadamente 35 mil habitantes, se dieron cuenta que la calidad era tan pésima que ahí se registraban los más altos índices de cáncer en jóvenes de Puerto Rico.

"Había un montón de industrias que no estaban siendo reguladas... termoeléctrica, refinerías, asfaltera, incineradora, cementeras, una cosa horrible", comentó.

Para luchar contra todos esos intereses, mencionó, la principal estrategia fue no quedarse callado y denunciar.

"Es que o nos íbamos o luchábamos, y mi familia y los vecinos nos quedamos a luchar, y sabe qué, ganamos", dijo orgullosa.

Después de años de lucha el trabajo de Rosa Hilda se ve reconocido y de forma monetaria el Premio Ambiental Goldman le dará 150 mil dólares.

"Voy a donar una parte para la protección de Las Cucharillas, otra va para pagar taxes y deudas porque todavía hay que seguir luchando contra los desarrolladores, y con otra parte me voy a ir de viaje con mis hijos".