

SoCal residents protest oilfield expansion

By CHRISTINA HOAG, Associated Press Writer

Modesto Bee, S.F. Chronicle, Washington Post and other papers, Thursday, Sept. 11, 2008

LOS ANGELES — More stringent controls are needed for an urban oilfield slated for a major expansion over the next two decades, residents of surrounding communities told county planners Wednesday.

About 50 residents told the Regional Planning Commission that the proposal to drill 1,000 new wells at the Inglewood oilfield will bring increased air and noise pollution, as well as higher risk of spills and pipeline ruptures.

"Our hope is to get more protective measures," said Ken Kutcher, a member of the Greater Baldwin Hills Alliance, a residents' coalition formed to tackle expansion of the field in southwestern Los Angeles County.

Houston-based Plains Exploration and Production, which currently produces 8,700 barrels of crude a day from 436 active wells on the field, has submitted a proposed ordinance regulating expanded operations at the field, which has been operating since 1924.

The proposal, which includes items such as noise barriers and limiting deliveries to between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., is "far above and beyond what is required," said Steve Rusch, PXP's vice president of environmental, health & safety, and governmental affairs. "PXP is willing to move ahead with more comprehensive regulations."

Residents' concerns "can all be mitigated," he added. "That seems to be lost in all the hyperbole."

Residents say they're also concerned about items such as soil subsidence caused by drilling. They want drilling restricted to the center of the oil field, farther away from residential areas.

Gary Gless, president of the Windsor Hills Homeowners Association, displayed photos of cracks in walls, pavements and ceilings of homes that he claimed were caused by subsidence.

"We need independent geologists and oil experts to review this," he said.

The planning commission continued the public hearing until Oct. 8 in order to consider the issues raised by residents.

State Sen. Mark Ridley-Thomas, who has been working with the residents, said he hoped neighbors' concerns would be addressed in a new draft of the ordinance, not just the company's. "PXP should not be permitted to proceed until every 'i' is dotted and every 't' is crossed," he said.

No new drilling is currently allowed at the oilfield under a moratorium imposed by the county Board of Supervisors in 2006. The ban is set to expire Oct. 21.

Rusch said renewed drilling will pump millions of dollars into the local economy.

Judge OKs port trucking plan

By Kristopher Hanson, Staff Writer

In LA Daily News, Thursday, September 11, 2008

In a ruling that foreshadows widespread changes for the harbor trucking industry, a federal judge has given local port authorities a green light to enforce environmental standards on big rigs entering and leaving port property.

The ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Christina Snyder ends months of speculation concerning the launch of the Clean Trucks Program adopted by the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to battle growing pollution from diesel trucks.

Snyder issued a tentative decision Monday, and upheld the ruling in an edict issued Wednesday.

It comes just weeks before the initiative's Oct. 1 start date, when all trucks built before 1989 will be banned from port property.

"The ruling comes out on the side of the people, their health and their security," Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster said Wednesday. "It's a good day for Long Beach and for the citizens of Southern California."

A national trucking association, backed by powerful retailers like Wal-Mart and Target, had sought to block enforcement portions of the plan, saying they were unconstitutional and would cause "irreparable" financial harm to their industries.

But in her court hearing Monday, Snyder sided with port authorities, saying the plan's security and environmental stipulations were more important than any perceived financial harm.

"Because a compromise in port security and in the ability to enforce the Clean Trucks Program could both potentially lead to `preventable human suffering,' the court concludes that the balance of hardship tips in favor of (the ports)," she wrote.

The American Trucking Associations plan to file an appeal with the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in the coming days.

The progressive truck plan begins Oct. 1 and continues through Jan. 1, 2012, when only rigs meeting federal 2007 emission standards will be allowed on port property.

Port and state authorities are offering subsidies of up to 80 percent to help companies buy new trucks, and the ports will begin collecting a \$35 container fee in coming weeks to help fund additional trucks.

Air quality officials believe the ban will slash diesel pollution from diesel rigs by 80 percent within five years.

Ships, trucks and trains servicing the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles - the nation's largest - have been listed as a top source of air pollution in California, spewing up to 25 tons of smog-forming sulfur oxide emissions into local skies daily.

By contrast, all the region's cars, airplanes and construction equipment emit about 1 ton of sulfur oxides per day.

The ports are also the largest source of diesel particulate matter in the area, which the South Coast Air Quality Management District has linked to increased asthma, cancer and heart disease rates in local communities.

San Antonio is going green with sewage

The Associated Press

Washington Post and Contra Costa Times, Wednesday, September 10, 2008

SAN ANTONIO -- The city plans to turn the stench of its residents' waste into sweet green cash and renewable energy.

The San Antonio Water System will sell captured methane gas generated from the utility's treatment of 140,000 tons of biosolids, or sewage, from customers each year.

The city-owned utility's board of trustees approved a contract Tuesday to provide at least 900,000 cubic feet of natural gas daily for the next 20 years to Ameresco Inc., a Framingham, Mass.-based energy services company.

"Treating these biosolids generates an average of 1.5 million cubic feet of gas a day," said Steve Clouse, the water system's chief operating officer. "That's enough gas to fill seven commercial blimps or 1,250 tanker trucks each day."

The utility already sells for reuse a portion of the water that's cleaned at its wastewater treatment plants. It also converts some biosolids into compost that's sold for use in yards and gardens.

"As far as we know, SAWS is the only city in the United States that has completed the renewable recyclable trifecta," Clouse said.

The water system will receive up to \$250,000 a year for the methane, which will be drawn from the utility's Dos Rios Water Recycling Center.

Clouse said it will take 18 to 24 months for construction of facilities needed for the contract.

"We're very pleased that we can capture and sell this gas, which is good for San Antonio's air quality and puts this renewable energy resource to work for San Antonio," he said.

EU committee votes to cut biofuels target

By CONSTANT BRAND, The Associated Press

Washington Post and Modesto Bee, Thursday, September 11, 2008

BRUSSELS, Belgium -- EU lawmakers voted Thursday to cut in half an ambitious target for using crop-based biofuels for 10 percent of its road transport needs by 2020.

The vote by the European Parliament's industry committee deals a blow to climate change goals agreed to by EU leaders last year to try to cut carbon dioxide emissions.

Environmental and aid groups had criticized the EU's 10 percent biofuels target, claiming it harmed efforts to fight global poverty and effectively tackle carbon emissions, and caused deforestation.

The biofuels target is part of an ambitious climate change package the 27 EU leaders embraced last year, which they hope to enact by year's end.

The overall aim is for the EU to draw 20 percent of all its energy from renewable sources by 2020 -- up from 8.5 percent now.

Lawmakers pushed EU governments to move away from so-called first generation biofuels, which use food crops to make transport fuels, and instead use more alternative green technologies such as electric and hydrogen powered vehicles.

An amended climate change bill now goes to the full European Parliament for a vote and back to EU governments for further negotiations. EU governments and the EU assembly all have to agree on the climate change plan before it becomes law.

France, which currently holds the EU presidency, wants the legislative measures in place before international climate change talks in December.

The European Commission, which drafted the original climate change bill, had steadfastly ignored critics who said the 10 percent biofuels target contributed to rising food prices.

Adrian Bebb, from Friends of the Earth Europe, said Thursday's vote "recognizes the serious problems associated with the large scale use of biofuels."

"Using crops to feed cars is a false solution to our climate change problems and could lead to irreversible loss of wildlife and misery for millions of people in the South," he said.

[Modesto Bee Editorial, Thursday, Sept. 11, 2008](#)

Governor, fill vacancy for scientist on air board

An uphill fight to expand the board of the valley air district ended successfully in October, when Gov. Schwarzenegger signed legislation to add four new members.

At least we thought it had ended successfully.

Eleven months later, the governor has made only one of two appointments he's required to make to the board of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Another bill that sorts out how two more representatives of valley cities are chosen for the board has stalled because of the governor's vow to sign no bills until there's a budget deal.

In April, the governor appointed Dr. John Telles, a Fresno cardiologist, filling the spot reserved for a doctor under the bill he signed last year. But the post reserved for a scientist with expertise in air quality issues has gone unfilled, even though at least two highly qualified candidates have submitted their names for consideration.

A major thrust of Senate Bill 719 was to introduce scientific and medical perspectives to a board dominated by elected supervisors from the eight counties that make up the district.

The addition of two more city representatives, for a total of five, was also meant to bring more balance to a board heavily weighted in favor of rural interests.

The original board makeup included three city representatives, rotated among all the valley's cities. That meant that, for long periods, major cities such as Fresno, Bakersfield and Modesto could be without representation.

The problem is that the League of California Cities, which had undertaken the chore of selecting city representatives, backed out of that role when legal threats over its processes arose.

To address the need, state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, offered SB 1548, which would establish a selection committee of city council members from around the air district to pick the two new city representatives. It's an effective solution. But the bill awaits the governor's signature, held hostage by the budget crisis in Sacramento.

As things stand, there are only two city representatives on the air board, Chris Vierra of Ceres and Henry T. Perea of Fresno. Arvin City Council Member Raji Brar left the board when she resigned her council seat recently.

Thus, a governing board that was supposed to grow from 11 to 15 -- and be more representative of valley residents -- is still stuck at 11, and without the crucial input of two representatives from the valley's largest cities and a qualified scientist.

One of the consequences of Schwarzenegger's vow to stall all legislation may be further delay in signing SB 1548. That's too bad. But there's no reason for waiting any longer to fill the air board seat reserved for a scientist. We've waited long enough.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses that in the Southland about 84 percent of all cancer risk from air pollution is due to diesel exhaust. For more information, please call Maricela Velasquez at \(559\) 230-5849.](#)

84 % de posibilidades de cáncer por contaminación del aire causadas por el diesel

El análisis es parte de argumentos de autoridades para exigir a unos 17 mil camioneros mejorar su rendimiento de combustible

Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino
Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, September 11, 2008

Hasta un 84 por ciento de los casos de cáncer atribuibles a la contaminación del aire se deben al consumo del diesel, de acuerdo con un estudio que elaboró durante varios años y presentó ahora la Administración Distrital de Calidad del Aire en el área e Los Ángeles.

El estudio dice que el mayor riesgo se concentró en dos zonas. La contaminación que causa cáncer bajó en ocho por ciento en toda la región en general, pero aumentó en 17 % el Los Angeles, Long Beach y Riverside.

El análisis es parte de argumentos de autoridades para exigir a unos 17 mil camioneros mejorar su rendimiento de combustible.