

## **Second Front Page**

Valley Voice Newspaper, Monday, October 20, 2008

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is proposing to approve California's plan for the San Joaquin Valley to attain the federal 1-hour ozone health standard. The plan, prepared by the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, shows that the area will have in place the controls necessary to meet the federal health standard by 2010.

## **Air board approves strict burning rules**

### **Fireplace regulations for the Valley are toughest in nation.**

By Pablo Lopez

Fresno Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Sunday, Oct. 19, 2008

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has adopted tighter restriction on fireplace burning starting Nov. 1.

Under a rule adopted Thursday, wood burning is prohibited when pollution in the area reaches 30 micrograms per cubic meter. The former threshold was 65 micrograms per cubic meter.

"We now have the strictest rule in the nation," said Seyed Sadredin, the district's executive director.

The ban on wood burning is called on winter days when particle pollution hangs in the Valley's cold, hazy air.

Restrictions on fireplace use are needed because the Valley's air quality is among the worst in the country, Sadredin said.

Five years ago, the district banned fireplaces in new residential development and established the rule of 65 micrograms per cubic meter to determine when it is a bad air day. The rule prohibited burning wood in fireplaces about a dozen times a year, Sadredin said.

The new rule will prohibit wood burning about 45 times a year, he said.

The air board voted 6-4 for the new restrictions, which apply to indoor and outdoor fireplaces, or "chimineas." Some board members wanted the limit to be 35 micrograms per cubic meter, which is the EPA recommendation, Sadredin said.

The wood burning season typically runs from November to February.

The penalty for burning wood when there is a ban is a \$50 fine. In lieu of the fine, violators can take a class about the health hazards associated with wood burning, Sadredin said.

## **No burn days expected to quadruple in SJ Valley**

Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee and Contra Costa Times, Saturday, October 18, 2008

FRESNO, Calif. — Homeowners are likely to be banned from burning wood in fireplaces and stoves on considerably more days this winter to meet new rules on particulate pollution approved by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The new rule, which the air district board voted on Thursday, is likely to increase the number of no-burn days to 48. The air district declared 12 no-burn days last winter.

Only a handful of people have objected to the new rule, which becomes effective Nov. 1.

The tighter standard is designed to help bring the valley into compliance with federal standards for fine particulate pollution by 2014.

### **Wood stoves banned on spare-air days in Bay Area**

The Associated Press

Contra Costa Times, Saturday, October 18, 2008

SAN FRANCISCO—Air quality regulators are clamping down on wood burning stoves and fireplaces between November and February in the Bay area.

Regulators say during the cooler months, wood burning in households produces one-third of the total fine particulate matter in the air.

Regulators expect 15 to 20 spare the air days this winter. Violators face fines up to \$1,000 a day. First time offenders will be issued warnings.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District adopted the new rules in July, eliciting more than 400 comments from residents.

The new rules offer exemptions for households that lack electricity or natural gas.

### **Merced County firefighters battle two rural blazes**

Pile of tires burns at Ballico scrap company and a haystack destroyed.

By Victor A. Patton

Merced Sun-Star, Monday, October 20, 2008

Firefighters from Cal Fire responded to two fires during the weekend -- a haystack fire and two piles of rubber that were ablaze.

Fortunately, no injuries were reported in either fire, according to Capt. Craig Forsythe.

Forsythe said 16 firefighters and two battalion chiefs responded to the 13000 block of Newport Road in Ballico around 4:30 a.m. on Sunday.

After arriving at the scene, Forsythe said firefighters discovered two piles of rubber that were on fire. The piles, which were composed of bits of rubber tires, were about 15 feet high and 45 feet wide, Forsythe said. The fire was contained around 3 p.m. and no structures were damaged.

The fire happened at Golden By-Products, a scrap-tire company. Staff from the county's Environmental Health Department and San Joaquin County Air Pollution Control District also arrived at the scene, Forsythe said.

Forsythe said firefighters also responded to a haystack fire off Sandy Mush Road at 7:50 a.m. on Saturday.

The cause of both fires is undetermined and remains under investigation, Forsythe said.

### **California energy policy will create jobs, lead to savings, study says**

By Matt Nauman - Mercury News

In the Tri-Valley Herald and L.A. Daily News, Monday, October 20, 2008

Three decades of emphasis on energy efficiency in California has created 1.5 million jobs and \$45 billion in payroll, and measures to combat global warming will result in similar gains in the decade ahead, a UC-Berkeley researcher says in a report to be released today.

In fact, policies that mandate cutting greenhouse-gas emissions, such as the state's landmark law known as AB 32, will require energy-efficiency improvements that will mean 403,000 new jobs with a payroll of \$48 billion and a contribution of \$76 billion to the gross state product by 2020, according to David Roland-Holst.

"The current financial crisis reminds us of the importance of responsible risk management," said Roland-Holst, a researcher with the university's Center for Energy, Resources and Economic Sustainability. "In addition to energy price vulnerability and climate damage, the risks of excessive energy dependence include lower long-term economic growth. A lower carbon future for California is a more prosperous and sustainable future."

The state has suggested AB 32 might create 60,000 jobs, Roland-Holst said, but it didn't factor in gains in energy efficiency due to the innovations that will result in even more jobs.

The study was commissioned by Next 10, a non-profit that funds research into issues it considers vital to California's future. AB 32 was adopted two years ago and the state's Energy Commission and Public Utilities Commission jointly approved how it will be implemented last week. Final approval will come from the state's Air Resources Board in December.

The law, which requires the state to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, will emphasize energy efficiency and renewable energy. It includes the establishment of a market to trade pollution credits, and it calls for cleaner cars and cleaner fuels.

Roland-Holst said that when people use less electricity they'll have lower electricity bills. "If you can save money for households on their electricity bills, they will spend that money on more customary spending, like espresso drinks and haircuts," he said.

The new report points to such energy-efficiency measures as the catalyst for job growth. Mark Cooper, research director at the Consumer Federation of America in Washington, D.C., says the historical economic impact of California energy-efficiency policies offers a vision for the rest of the nation to follow.

"The rest of the country can have massive potential savings, a humongous amount," Cooper said. He notes that an analysis within the new report shows that California's per-capita energy usage has been flat for the past 30 years, and now is 40 percent below the national average.

In the Golden State, that has meant that 24 power plants haven't needed to be built and operated. Meanwhile, from 1976 to 2006, energy consumption in the rest of the United States increased from about 8,000 kilowatt-hours per year per capita to 12,000 kilowatt-hours.

"How much better would the whole country be today if we had done what California has done?" Cooper asked. "We could have avoided probably well over 100 power plants."

A state analysis suggests that the requirements of AB 32 will result in green jobs and the creation of companies with new technologies to save energy and to produce power from renewable sources, but Roland-Holst's study is even more optimistic.

He relies on the Berkeley Energy and Resources (BEAR) model to analyze the Air Resources Board's plans for implementing AB 32 and includes in his forecast the impact of the innovations that will result.

Many Silicon Valley companies already benefit from various clean-technologies, and more hope to capitalize upon it.

Applied Materials, the high-tech equipment maker, has moved aggressively into solar. Bruce Klafter, the company's senior director of environment, health, safety and sustainability, agrees with the findings of the new report.

"I think the prevailing view, especially in Silicon Valley, is that we're not scared of AB 32," he said. "In fact, we're really looking forward to the opportunities that will flow from it."

## **Report: California saves money by saving energy**

By TERENCE CHEA - Associated Press Writer  
Tri-Valley Herald, Monday, October 20, 2008

SAN FRANCISCO—California has saved about \$56 billion in electricity costs and created 1.5 million jobs over 35 years by using energy more efficiently than other states, according to a new study.

The report released Monday by an economist at the University of California at Berkeley found that state policies that boost energy efficiency aren't just good for the environment, they're also good for the economy.

"Energy efficiency is very good for real incomes, purchasing power and job creation," said the study's author, UC Berkeley economics professor David Roland-Holst. "Energy efficiency has really helped us stimulate the economy."

Roland-Holst analyzed the economic impacts of government policies enacted since the early 1970s that have made California the country's most energy-efficient state. California was among the first states to create energy-efficiency standards for new homes, buildings and household appliances such as refrigerators and washing machines.

The average Californian now uses about 40 percent less electricity than the average American. That means the \$56 billion that Californians would have spent on electricity between 1972 and 2006 could be spent on goods and services that create more jobs than energy, most of which is imported from other states and countries, according to the study.

The report, entitled "Energy Efficiency, Innovation, and Job Creation in California," also analyzed the economic impacts of a recently proposed plan to reduce California's greenhouse gas emissions over the next 12 years to achieve aggressive targets set by the California Global Warming Solutions Act.

The UC Berkeley study estimated the state's plan to reduce the greenhouse gases, which include measures to cap emissions and increase energy efficiency standards, could create 400,000 new jobs and increase household incomes by up to \$48 billion annually by 2020.

"If the country can follow California's example, it will have a dramatic effect on our future emissions and energy independence," Roland-Holst said.

## **Sparse plug-ins for electric cars spark creativity**

By PHUONG LE, Associated Press Writer  
Modesto Bee, Monday, October 20, 2008

SEATTLE — Owning an electric vehicle requires more than global-cooling ambitions. It takes guile, planning, sharp vision, a silver tongue - and a 50-foot extension cord.

Steve Bernheim knows accessible outlets like a firefighter knows hydrants. He has to - his Corbin Sparrow runs only 25 miles on a charge.

"You do guerrilla charging where you locate these plugs," said Bernheim, an attorney who lives in the Seattle suburb of Edmonds. "I'm an expert at finding them."

While California has more than 500 public charging stations at parks, malls and grocery stores to serve electric vehicles that rolled out in the last decade, the network is still thin across the rest of the country, forcing drivers like Bernheim to get creative.

That may change as charging stations crop up in San Jose, Seattle and Portland to serve early adopters and pave the way for a new breed of mass market plug-in cars.

"Every auto company in the world is developing all-electric or plug-in hybrids," said Zan Dubin Scott, a spokeswoman for Plug In America, a nonprofit advocacy group for electric car owners. "The utilities, municipalities and smart business people are seeing that this is the future."

The vast majority of electric vehicle owners charge their cars at home while they sleep, so most trips aren't a problem.

But drivers can now plug in - reservations recommended - at two park-and-ride lots in King County, which includes Seattle. The county plans to add sockets at three garages under construction.

"We want to make sure we're ahead of the curve in doing what we can to support the use of these vehicles," said Rochelle Ogershok, a county transportation spokeswoman.

In Oregon, Portland General Electric put five free charging stations in downtown Portland, Salem and suburban Lake Oswego and plans to add more.

At the end of the year, Coulomb Technologies plans to roll out five curbside charging stations in downtown San Jose that drivers can access through a prepaid plan. The company is working with entities in New York and Florida to do something similar, president and founder Praveen Mandal said.

Palo Alto-based Better Place is working with Renault SA to develop charging stations for electric cars in Israel and Denmark that would work on a paid subscription, said spokeswoman Julie Mullins.

In recent months, the smaller cities of Edmonds and Lacey invited drivers to plug in their electric vehicles at free public stations near city hall.

"We haven't seen much usage yet, but we wanted to put it out there," said Graeme Sackrison, mayor of Lacey, a town of 38,000 an hour south of Seattle. "You have to have the infrastructure in place so people feel comfortable using them."

Street-legal "neighborhood electric vehicles" that can travel up to 25 mph typically go about 35 to 40 miles on a single charge. Vehicles like the Chevrolet Volt that General Motors Corp. plans to sell in 2010 can travel about 40 miles before the gasoline engine kicks in.

Drivers like Bernheim, whose range is about 25 miles to a charge, has become adept at sweet-talking use of a 110-volt outlet if he needs to travel farther. Once he persuaded a fruit stand owner to let him plug in. He ended up buying \$50 of produce there.

Bernheim says there are about 30 reliable sites in the Seattle area to plug in. Most are free, some require calling a fellow enthusiast ahead of time. Others charge the same as parking a gas-powered car - \$7 an hour at the downtown Seattle Public Library garage.

Jeff Smith, 51, a mechanical parts inspector, carries three extension cords of varying lengths when he drives his ZENN (Zero Emission, No Noise) two-seater.

At his home in a Seattle suburb, Smith has posted a sign "plug in vehicle parking only" outside his kitchen window and invites others to plug in. No one has taken him up on the offer yet.

When he wanted to go to a Little League game - a round-trip that required an extra charge - Smith cold-called restaurants to find one willing to let him plug in while dined there.

Eric Diesen, co-owner of the restaurant Acapulco Fresh, didn't mind. He'd let others do the same.

It didn't cost him much - about a dime or so. "If it brought people in, we would do that again," he said. "And it's something we believe in."

Plug In America estimates there are several thousand freeway-capable, road-certified EVs, including both factory-built and conversions. Neighborhood electric vehicles may number in the tens of thousands.

It's a drop in the bucket compared to the more than 250 million vehicles on the road.

Driving an electric car can be a challenge when your roundtrip work commute is much longer than your car can travel. But Jason Henderson, 29, feels obligated to make it work.

"I saw 'Inconvenient Truth' and then realized that I needed to make a personal change to show others how easy it is to reduce our dependency on petroleum," Henderson said.

He bought a used Saturn with 100,000 miles and paid an expert \$12,000 to convert it to all-electric. He estimates it has cost him about \$252 in electricity to drive 9,000 miles in the past 18 months.

It's not hard to find places to plug in, but "there should absolutely be more spots," he said. "Everyone has power outlets, so it's just a matter of making them available."

Henderson now drives his car 15 miles from his Tacoma home, charges it at a friend's house and hops a vanpool another 35 miles to his office at Microsoft Corp.

He said he's just like a normal driver, "except my car has a much smaller carbon footprint and has a cheaper energy source."

## **Will a Tax Break On Hybrids Skid to a Stop?**

By Erica Garman

Washington Post, Sunday, October 19, 2008; LZ03

Living in LoCo is Erica Garman's blog devoted to all things interesting in Loudoun County. You can find it at <http://www.loudounextra.com>. This column of highlights from the blog appears in this space every Sunday.

Five years ago, the Loudoun Board of Supervisors enacted a personal property tax of a penny per \$100 of assessed value on hybrid cars to encourage the purchase of fuel-efficient vehicles and to support clean-climate initiatives. Owners of conventional cars pay a tax of \$4.20 per \$100 of assessed value.

Several board members say that the time has come to revisit the tax break for hybrids. At the board's Sept. 2 meeting, Supervisor Jim Burton (I-Blue Ridge) proposed exploring the option of raising the rate for hybrids to \$1. His motion passed.

Supervisor Stevens Miller (D-Dulles) agreed with Burton.

"The incentive is no longer necessary," Miller said. "Although I'm a big proponent of the technology, the harsh reality is that we're giving tax breaks to drivers of luxury hybrid SUVs that get fewer miles per gallon than fuel-efficient cars."

Miller said he thinks that rather than eliminating the tax incentive, the board should "move it forward" and focus on the next technology by giving owners of all-electric vehicles a tax cut.

Supervisor Andrea McGimsey (D-Potomac) expressed her displeasure with Burton's motion, citing an article she had read recently.

"It said that 80 percent of people choose hybrids for the fuel economy and the tax benefits," she said. "Please don't cut this initiative."

Environmentalists say that more hybrids on the road would decrease our dependence on foreign oil, conserve resources, reduce [air pollution](#) and mitigate global climate change. My husband and I purchased a hybrid Toyota Highlander a few years back for those very reasons. The tax incentive certainly helped sway our decision, but more importantly, we wanted to support hybrid technology and send a message with our wallet that clean technology is important to us.

It's true, as Miller mentioned, that our hybrid gets about the same miles per gallon as a conventional midsize sedan -- not the most fuel-efficient car on the road, by any means. But as a frequent carpooler, I need a vehicle that seats four or five children legally, which is something we can't do with a Prius.

Most of the people who posted comments on this blog item said the tax break for hybrid car owners should be eliminated.

"If the intent is to promote high gas mileage and low emissions, then it should be based on the vehicle, not the technology applied," one said. "My 2007 vehicle gets 37 to 42 mpg on every tank and the engine is rated as Ultra Low Emissions. It is not a hybrid. Does a hybrid SUV getting 24 mpg deserve a tax break more than I do?"

Another commenter wrote, "If I cut back my electric bill, can I get a tax break on my home real estate tax?"

#### NBC Puts Spotlight on Loudoun

In another nod to the pivotal role that Loudouners and other Virginians are expected to play in this year's presidential election, Ann Curry of NBC News watched Wednesday night's final presidential debate with six Loudoun voters at the Best Western Leesburg Hotel.

Afterward, Curry questioned the six undecided voters during a live post-debate roundtable that aired on MSNBC Wednesday and was replayed on the "Today" show Thursday morning.

A research company selected and screened the residents before the interview and did not tell them that they'd be on TV that night -- or that they would be interviewed by Curry.

"I was like, 'Oh, I'm so out of here,' " said Joan Al-Shamali of Leesburg, recalling her reaction when she saw the cameras and Curry in the room.

But Al-Shamali said Curry's personal touch put her at ease.

"She shook my hand and said, 'Girlfriend, I've got your back,' " Al-Shamali said.

Jimmy Csizmadia, also of Leesburg, said he, too, was surprised to see the cameras and Curry. He described the journalist as "just how she appears on TV."

So, have these two previously undecided voters made up their minds?

Al-Shamali said she'll be voting for Barack Obama, and Csizmadia said he's decided on John McCain.

"They both have good ideas," Csizmadia said. "But it comes down to picking the best of two evils."

#### Talking Back in Broadlands

On the eve of Wednesday's public hearing on the Broadlands hospital land-use application, 12 residents belonging to Concerned Citizens of Broadlands were at the monthly meeting of the Broadlands homeowners association board of directors to express their dissatisfaction with the board's recent endorsement of the project.

"Thanks for misrepresenting us," said Broadlands resident Karen Rodier, addressing the board. "Thanks to you, everyone thinks the whole community approves of this hospital."

Rodier is a mother of three who lives less than a mile from the 58-acre parcel at Belmont Ridge Road and Broadlands Boulevard where HCA wants to build a 164-bed hospital. She said she is concerned about an increase in traffic that a hospital would bring, although she said her main worry is the constant construction noise.

Mark Booth, who lives on the same street as the Rodier family, told the board: "Your vote creates an appearance that the residents at large are in support of the hospital. . . . Not every person is for it."

In response, Cliff Keirce, president of the Broadlands HOA, said that he and the three other resident board members who voted to endorse the hospital invested hundreds of hours researching the plans. He said they determined that the proposed hospital would be a better use of the site than an office park, which is allowed under the zoning.

"We've had several meetings with the applicant and have seen the traffic studies," he said. "They've listened to our concerns and have made adjustments to their proposal based on our requests."

The board's endorsement does not speak for all community residents, Keirce said, comparing the board's decision to that of an organization throwing its support to a political candidate.

"Union leaders, for example -- I belong to one -- may vote to endorse Barack Obama," he said. "But not every union member may feel that way."

## **NM calls for review of Asarco copper smelter plans**

The Associated Press

Contra Costa Times, Saturday, October 18, 2008

SANTA FE, N.M.—New Mexico Environment Secretary Ron Curry says a more stringent standard for the amount of lead allowed in the air should trigger a more intensive look at plans to reopen a Texas copper smelter.

Curry says the standard adopted by the Environmental Protection Agency this week means Texas and federal regulators need to review possible lead emissions from the Asarco copper smelter in El Paso.

Curry says Asarco's air quality permit renewal application shows the company will exceed the EPA's new lead standard.

He says lead has been an issue in the past for the New Mexico and Texas communities surrounding the smelter.

The EPA, under a federal court order, is slashing the amount of the toxic metal that will be allowed in the nation's air by 90 percent.

## **Completely Unplugged, Fully Green**

By JOANNE KAUFMAN

N.Y Times, Friday, Oct. 17, 2008

SIMON WOODS, who is 6, would like to play on a baseball team. His mother, Sharon Astyk, is sympathetic, but is also heavily committed to shrinking her family's carbon footprint. "We haven't been able to find a league that doesn't involve a long drive," she said. "I say that it isn't good for the planet, so we play catch in the yard."

That is one way that Ms. Astyk, a mother of four, expresses her concern for the environment. She has unplugged the family refrigerator, using it as an icebox during warmer months by putting in frozen jugs of water as the coolant (in colder weather, she stores milk and butter outdoors). Her farmhouse in Knox, N.Y., has a homemade composting toilet and gets its heat from a wood stove; the average indoor winter temperature is 52 degrees.

Many people who can comfortably use "carbon footprint," "global warming" and "energy offset" in a sentence will toss a bottle or can into a blue recycling bin and call it a day. Those who are somewhat more committed may swap incandescent bulbs for compact fluorescents, rely on cloth shopping bags and turn to mass transit.

Then there are people like Ms. Astyk, 36, a writer and a farmer who is trying, with the aid of a specially designed calculator, to whittle her family's energy use to 10 percent of the national average. She and her husband, Eric Woods, a college professor, grow virtually all their own produce, raise chickens and turkeys, and spend only \$1,000 a year in consumer goods, most of which they buy used. They air-dry their clothes, and their four sons often sleep huddled together to pool body heat.

They began this regimen in 2002. "My husband and I started to talk about climate change, and oil prices were going up," Ms. Astyk said. "The other factor was a justice issue. There was a great disparity between the resources used by the third world and by us, so we decided we had to cut back." Some people may view Ms. Astyk and her family as role models, pioneers who will lead us to a cleaner earth.

Others may see them as colorful eccentrics, people with admirable intentions who have arrived at a way of life close to zealotry. To others they come across as "energy anorexics," obsessing over personal carbon emissions to an unhealthy degree, the way crash dieters watch the bathroom scale.

Ms. Astyk has heard such talk but says her neighbors' attitudes have softened as energy prices have risen. "People have moved gradually from 'Sharon is a fruitcake' to 'Sharon is a fruitcake who might make some sense,' " she said.

Jay Matsueda, who might also answer to the name energy anorexic, or carborexic, has neither heat nor air-conditioning in his condominium in Culver City, Calif.

He runs his car, a 1983 Mercedes SD Turbo, on waste oil from a Los Angeles restaurant. When he gives a gift, it is usually an organic cookbook, a copy of [Al Gore's](#) book "An Inconvenient Truth" or reusable bamboo flatware. "That way, people don't have to accept plastic cutlery at takeout places," said Mr. Matsueda, 35, who wrote in an e-mail message that he occasionally relieves himself on his lawn in order to "save a flush."

Although he concedes that there is "sometimes an impracticality" to habits like filtering vegetable oil for fuel, people do view him as part of the mainstream, he said. "I'm not perceived as a very radical guy," said Mr. Matsueda, the marketing director for a company that manufactures compact fluorescent bulbs. "People will say, 'Jay's doing it, and he's normal.' "

How normal? Mr. Matsueda lives the sort of life that the public relations firm Porter Novelli recently called "dark green."

The company conducted a poll of 12,000 people, examining their commitment to various environmental practices — reducing energy use at home, buying energy-efficient appliances, boycotting companies with bad environmental records. Seven percent earned the top designation, dark green.

Some people who organize their lives around carbon emissions do so in a private way, aiming to help the planet, and secondarily to influence friends and relatives. Others want to prove a point in public, including several who are pulling stunts.

David Chameides, a cameraman in Los Angeles, is collecting all the waste he generates in a year in his basement, and keeping a blog that describes his detritus. A sample entry (from Oct. 6, Day 279 out of 365) includes "1 bag of hair from haircut — put out on lawn for birds," "1 plastic wrapper from ice cream — garbage" and "2 aluminum tuna cans — recycle."

Similarly, Colin Beavan, a writer in New York City, is working on a book and movie, "No Impact Man," about the efforts that he and his wife, daughter and dog are making to spend a year without harming the planet. "In other words, no trash, no carbon emissions, no toxins in the water, no

elevators, no subway, no products in packaging, no plastics, no air conditioning, no TV, no toilets ...” he has written on his blog.

Not even Al Gore recommends such privations.

The former vice president, who is cited as an inspiration by some carborexics, is the founder of the Alliance for Climate Protection, a nonprofit group that sponsors the We Campaign. On that campaign’s Web site —[wecansolveit.org](http://wecansolveit.org) — the advice is fairly prim: turn down the heat and air-conditioning when you aren’t at home, wash your clothes in cold water, pump up your tires, car-pool at least once a week.

The utility company Con Edison goes a bit further, offering more than 100 tips on its Web site. Among the less intuitive: take showers rather than baths, replace light switches with dimmers or motion sensors, don’t preheat your oven when you broil or roast food, cover liquids in the refrigerator (“uncovered liquids make the refrigerator work harder,” Con Ed says).

But nobody recommends reusing the same plastic Ziploc bag for a year, as Anita Lavine and Joe Turcotte, a Seattle couple, have been doing. When their two toddlers come home from preschool, Ms. Lavine scrubs the Ziploc bags that hold their soiled clothes and biodegradable diapers, and uses them the next day. She does the same with the plastic bags that hold her children’s apples “and random lunch stuff,” she said.

Whatever the weather, Mr. Turcotte, who is 40, rides his bicycle 16 miles a day (round trip) to his job at a health care foundation. Ms. Lavine, 35, who works for a company that makes DVD games, keeps the thermostat at 60 and is about to acquire three chickens. They’ll be welcomed for their eggs, their willingness to eat food waste and for their ordure — a nice addition to the family’s compost heap.

“My friends,” Ms. Lavine said, “think I’m the craziest person they know.”

Not everyone thinks that Ms. Lavine and her ilk are crazy. “What these people are doing is fantastic, needed and catalytic,” said David Gershon, the author of the book “Low Carbon Diet” and founder of the

Empowerment Institute, a consultancy that helps people and communities reduce energy consumption. “Some people are in the vanguard and show what it’s possible to do,” he said.

When one half of a couple is less zealous than the other, it can be a strain.

Mr. Matsueda, the Los Angeles marketing executive, said he once broke up with a girlfriend who owned a Ford F-150. “It drove me nuts,” he said. “It was this big truck she took all over town with nothing to haul — she just didn’t get it.” The relationship, he said, ended for other reasons, but her choice of vehicle “didn’t help.”

To some mental health professionals, the compulsion to live green in the extreme can suggest a kind of disorder.

“

If you can’t have something in your house that isn’t green or organic, if you can’t eat at a relative’s house because they don’t serve organic food, if you’re criticizing friends because they’re not living up to your standards of green, that’s a problem,” said Elizabeth Carll, a psychologist in Huntington, N.Y., who specializes in anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorders.

Certainly there is no recognized syndrome in mental health related to the compulsion toward living a green life. But Dr. Jack Hirschowitz, a psychiatrist in private practice in Manhattan and a professor at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, said that certain carborexic behaviors might raise a red flag.

"The critical factor in determining whether something has reached the level of a disorder is if dysfunction is involved," he said. "Is it getting in the way of your ability to do a good job at work? Is it taking precedence over everything else in your relationships?"

People who adhere to a strict carbon diet say there are some sacrifices they are not willing to make. Ms. Astyk acknowledges that she sometimes buys new books and toys for her children — and that being the mother of four might even, to some, call her eco-credentials into question.

To her detractors, she points out that her children still receive Popsicles, Cheerios and the occasional new toy. "We let them have sugar and we let them watch television," she said. And while she mainly shops at yard sales, "I do buy some new books. I'm not pure. I use Amazon."

In part, she said, her family is living out a sort of futuristic experiment. "What does a life with less energy look like?" she said. "It's fun to try to get the most out of the least. It's like a party game."

[Tri-Valley Herald Editorial, Monday, October 20, 2008](#)

### **The world still must cut emissions**

THE CALIFORNIA AIR Resources Board came out with a final plan to meet a landmark global warming law signed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger two years ago. The board boldly suggested that if this state is to reach its global warming goals, it would require cutting carbon emissions by nearly 30 percent of the projected emissions by 2020. That means emissions would have to be cut by four tons per person.

California's effort would be the first comprehensive effort of any state to reduce greenhouse gases without federal regulation, and the board is set to vote in December. Yet we have to wonder if California is going to be beginning this venture alone, or if the venture is even going to begin as scheduled.

The economy has taken center stage and global warming, once a hallmark issue among many lawmakers, appears to have been shoved to the side.

The feeling is that the United States is throwing out billions to save its banks and many countries have nationalized their financial markets to bring stability, who can think of the future when we don't know where we'll be tomorrow?

One Republican senator recently said the green bubble has burst. Another, Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma, the senior Republican on the Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee, scolded 152 House of Representative members for releasing a set of principles to tackle global warming.

He said: "The current economic crisis only reinforces the public's wariness about any climate bill that attempts to increase the costs of energy and jeopardizes jobs."

Rajendra Pachauri, head of the United Nations climate panels, says discussions of global warming are "on the back burner." Even the California Air Board refused to give specifics on its plan until it factors in a struggling economy.

We understand everyone's worries about the economy, how it's affecting every sector in the U.S. and much of the world, but we need to understand something else. The warming of this planet is not going to hold until our economic troubles cease, and the world must be involved, not just California.

Global warming can be linked to the dry conditions in California where, according to an independent panel, water supply problems are so bad that every suggestion to fix the Delta will have to be done, and even then, there are no guarantees except for high costs.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change examined the Great Lakes and discovered global warming will destroy the region's shipping industry because of lowering water levels. Even now, vessels have to leave behind cargo so they don't drag on the bottom — more than 8,000 tons of cargo per trip are left behind for every inch of lost channel depth.

In some degree, we need to start the process of cutting down harmful emissions. Perhaps scaling back some goals and making adjustments to the cap-and-trade credits program that will encourage businesses to cut emissions. Those who cannot because of economic and technological hurdles can purchase credits. Adjustments to these plans can be made on an annual basis so we can eventually get back in the fast lane.

Indeed, times are tough economically, but we can't allow it to drive us off course from combating global warming and giving our children and grandchildren a better environment in the future.

[Sacramento Bee, Commentary, Saturday, October 18, 2008](#)

### **High-speed rail is a natural extension of intercity rail lines**

By Estelle Shiroma

As a frequent passenger of both long-distance Amtrak and intercity Capitol Corridor trains from the Sacramento region to the San Francisco Bay Area, I support trains as an alternative to increased vehicle driving and continuing freeway congestion.

If we had high-speed rail today, I would use it for business and pleasure. When I travel to the East Coast I often take rail and have experienced the relatively high speed Acela train from Washington, D.C., to Philadelphia. I have also traveled by Shinkansen in Japan.

High-speed rail could very easily replace airline trips when I travel within California. The advantages are numerous - no long waiting period to board, more comfortable surroundings, and ample work space not available on planes. Trains are also more accessible for the handicapped. As the baby boomers age, there will be many more seniors who will not be (or should not be) driving, and the train would provide a safer alternative.

Proposition 1A would also provide money to enhance train service in urban regions, where there is increasing demand for public transit. We would reduce our dependence on foreign oil, create jobs that couldn't be outsourced, and reduce vehicle air pollution and greenhouse gases.

Californians need to have a vision for the future - the same vision that voters had when they passed the 1990 bond issue that funded acquisitions and capital expenditures to support the current intercity rail passenger service in California.

This phenomenally successful rail passenger service has set unprecedented ridership records and serves as a model for the rest of the nation. We need to expand that vision to include high-speed rail in California. It is a choice and investment we can make now for ourselves and future generations of Californians.

[N.Y. Times editorial, Sat., Oct. 18, 2008:](#)

### **Last-Minute Mischief**

All presidents indulge in end-of-the-term environmental rule-making, partly to tie up bureaucratic loose ends but mainly to lock in policies that their successor will be hard pressed to reverse.

President Bill Clinton's midnight regulations were mostly good, including a rule protecting 60 million acres of national forests from road-building and most commercial development. Not surprisingly, most of President Bush's proposals are not.

Exhibit A is a set of six resource management plans covering 11 million acres of federal land in Utah. They would open millions of acres to oil and gas drilling and off-road vehicles, risking priceless cultural artifacts and some of the most breathtaking open spaces in America. The plans, each more than 1,000 pages, were dumped on an unsuspecting public in the last few weeks by the Bureau of Land Management.

The bureau claims that it wasn't trying to pull a fast one and that drafts were available months ago. But the final documents are what count. The public now has only a few short weeks to register objections before the secretary of the interior makes them final.

Why the rush? The agency says it had to wrap things up before it ran out of planning money. What we are really seeing, though, is the last gasp of the Cheney drill-now, drill-everywhere energy strategy; one last favor to the oil and gas drillers and the off-road vehicle enthusiasts before a more conservation-minded president (both Senators Barack Obama and John McCain have far better records than Mr. Bush) comes to town.

Environmentalists are also suspicious of the Interior Department's recent proposal to revoke a longstanding if rarely used regulation that gives Congress and the interior secretary emergency powers to protect public lands when commercial development seems to pose immediate environmental dangers.

Dirk Kempthorne, the interior secretary, decided that the rule was unnecessary after Representative Raúl Grijalva of Arizona and about 20 other members of the House Natural Resources Committee ordered him to withdraw about 1 million acres near the Grand Canyon from new uranium mining claims to give officials time to assess potential damage to the air and water.

Arguing that the committee did not have a quorum and that he had other means of guarding against damage, Mr. Kempthorne not only refused to obey the committee's order but proposed to rescind the departmental rule requiring him to obey it. The public has been given 15 days to comment, after which Mr. Kempthorne will be free to jettison the rule.

Mr. Kempthorne is also pressing ahead with plans to scale back important protections required by the Endangered Species Act by eliminating some mandatory scientific reviews by the Fish and Wildlife Service of federal projects that could threaten imperiled animals and plants.

The new rule — which could be made final at any moment — would allow projects like roads, bridges and dams to proceed without review if the agency in charge decides they would cause no environmental harm.

The National Audubon Society and other groups have compiled an extensive list of cases in which the agencies misjudged the threat and Fish and Wildlife Service scientists had to intervene to protect the species.

Some of the administration's recent regulations have been helpful — one tightening pollution controls on small engines like lawnmowers, another tightening lead emissions. But others could cause serious and lasting damage. And there are still three nerve-racking months to go before Mr. Bush leaves office.