

## **Around the Region**

Modesto Bee, Saturday, May 2, 2009

The grass is growing and it's time to fire up the lawn mower. Better yet, it's time to take that old gas-guzzling air polluter and trade it in for a cordless electric mower.

Gas mowers are one of the biggest neighborhood polluters, so the San Joaquin Valley Air District's annual trade-in enables residents to retire their old mower and get an emissions-free electric model at a fraction of the normal cost.

For more details and to request a voucher, call the district office in Modesto at 557-6400. Or, you can e-mail your request for a program voucher to [public.education@valleyair.org](mailto:public.education@valleyair.org); make sure you provide your name, address, phone number and county of residence.

## **Bad allergy news for children**

### **Research shows Valley's poor air worsens condition**

By Alex Breitler

Stockton Record, Saturday, May 2, 2009

STOCKTON - This weekend's rains may grant brief respite from the sniffing, sneezing and suffering.

But springtime allergies will return, and new research shows allergies are significantly worse for children who live in areas with poor air quality, such as the San Joaquin Valley.

The study by the National Center for Health Statistics says that as pollution levels rise, so do the odds of aggravated hay fever or other respiratory symptoms.

The Valley as a whole fails to meet federal standards for two major pollutants named in the study. And Stockton last spring ranked 15th among the top 100 allergy capitals because of the amount of pollen in the air, according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America.

"If you mix pollution plus allergy, it's toxic," said George Bensch, a Stockton allergist. "You put the two together, and the pollution acts as a catalyst to make it much worse."

The correlation has been studied overseas, but officials said this survey of 72,279 children, some of whom live in California, was the most comprehensive to date.

Stockton has less air pollution than Valley cities to the south; according to data extrapolated from the study, children in Modesto, for example, would have a 16 percent greater chance of facing more severe allergies. Children in Bakersfield would be close to 35 percent more likely than those in Stockton.

Bensch said children are most susceptible because their lungs are still growing.

"They don't deserve this," he said. "They have no defense."

Bensch said this allergy season has been a little worse than normal because of the dry spring. A dose of rain provides two or three days' relief for those allergic to windblown pollen, but on the flip side, late rains can give allergy-producing plants a shot in the stem.

At any rate, the worst should be over by June or early July, Bensch said.

The number of Central Valley allergy patients has increased over the past two decades, although experts have said it's not entirely clear why. Published studies have suggested allergies may occur earlier in the year because of climate change.

The new study places blame on two kinds of air pollution: ozone, which contributes to smog; and tiny liquid and solid particles that float in the air.

Pollution spewing from vehicle tailpipes may be of the greatest concern. After the reunification of Germany, a study there found an upswing in allergies among children in the former East Germany as living conditions there became westernized, including an increase in traffic.

California air officials said the latest findings confirm the importance of battling pollution.

"We have grown accustomed to allergies and operate on the assumption that the only relief is medication," California Air Resources Board member Barbara Riordan said. "But reducing ozone and particulate matter also helps.

"Children can use more energy on their schoolwork and less on struggling with runny nose and itchy eyes," she said.

### **Breathe easier**

While you can't entirely avoid air pollution, Stockton allergist George Bensch offers a few basic tips for those suffering from allergies:

- Do not exercise outside when pollution levels are high.
- Wear a mask if you go outside on a windy day.
- Close your windows at night and do not use a fan in the house, since that can stir up allergens.

### **Bill would ease gas stations' fines over vapors**

Wyatt Buchanan, staff writer  
S.F. Chronicle, Sunday, May 3, 2009

Owners of gas stations in California, who are required to install expensive vapor traps that significantly cut air pollution, could get help from a measure that is up for a vote in the Legislature this week.

Assemblyman Martin Garrick, R-Carlsbad (San Diego County), wants to cap potential fines at \$1,000 for one year for station owners who haven't installed the trap systems.

His bill, AB453, goes before the Natural Resources Committee on Monday. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger also has called for an "enforcement holiday" for stations making good-faith efforts to comply.

The rule ensures that most smog-producing vapors do not leak from tanks, pumps and nozzles. When all are installed, they will cut emissions by what 450,000 cars produce each day, according to the state Air Resources Board.

Trap systems cost about \$11,000 per pump, and only 40 percent of stations installed them by the April 1 deadline.

The Assembly approved another bill last week, by Assemblyman Ira Ruskin, D-Redwood City, that would create a fund to help small stations finance the systems with up to \$50,000 in grants and loans.

Meanwhile, air districts across the state have handed out almost \$944,000 in fines to stations, according to an analysis by Sen. Dave Cox, R-Fair Oaks (Sacramento County). Cox also has introduced legislation to extend the deadline.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District has hit stations under its jurisdiction with \$27,625 in fines, according to a letter the district sent Cox.

### **Essay-poster contest returns**

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Monday, May 4, 2009

An essay and poster contest for students is being organized for the seventh year by the Tulare County Association of Governments.

Called Make a Difference in Air Quality, the contest is for students from kindergarten through high school. The focus this year is on how to make alternative transportation choices that leave the air cleaner.

Essays should be between one and two pages and posters should be on 11-by-8 1/2-inch paper (turned horizontally).

Entries should include the name of the entering student, address, grade, school and phone number.

They must be mailed to the Lockwood Agency, 500 N. Willis St., Visalia CA 93291.

Deadline is May 21.

Winners in each contest will receive \$250 gift cards, and the grand prize winners will each receive a \$500 gift card.

## **Clearing the Air on Smog: Cows vs. Cars**

### **Combustion, Not Belches to Blame**

By John Lindt

Valley Voice News, Monday, May 4, 2009

San Joaquin Valley - Vowing to cut smog in the Valley, regulators have targeted two reactive chemicals that when hit by sunlight, create ozone.

The two are nitrogen oxide (NOx) produced by combustion when you burn something and volatile organic compounds, and VOCs that create smog when combined with NOx emissions. VOCs occur both naturally and are manmade and vary widely by their reactive potential. The most common VOC is methane. Cows as well as wetlands supply plenty of that.

Cows make a lot of methane belching out fermented emissions from their rumen – their stomachs. “But methane is not a potent VOC,” says UC dairy researcher Frank Mitloehner. “It has very low reactivity.”

Trees supply a fair share of the emissions out there. “Over half the VOCs in the state occur from natural sources,” says Mitloehner.

There are so much naturally occurring VOCs in the atmospheric inventory that reducing the manmade portion to zero “still leaves plenty to react with NOx in the air to make smog.”

Nitrogen oxide emissions are largely from transportation – 70 percent mobile sources – with the largest stationary source the petroleum industry.

Still dairy industry critics, newspapers and the uninformed shout that cows create more smog than cars.

Mitloehner, who interacts with state and local regulators, says that those who enforce dairy regulations that have tightened over the past decade have “come around” to the latest science now.

Just a few years ago, the ARB used a 1938 study to guide policy that overstated the amount of VOCs produced by dairies by 50 percent.

He says in a recent paper that regulators used values 6 to 10 times too high, based on the reactive factor in order to estimate inventories used to make ozone attainment plans.

Two problems arise. Regulations cost the dairy industry lots of money driving the little guys out of the business, but it appears the tighter rules won't even make the difference in cleaning the air.

In a 2004 study, Mitloehner offered research that showed that rule makers were blaming the wrong end of the cow anyway – focusing on manure rather than cow belches as a major VOC source. Most significantly, the latest revelation is that reaching ozone attainment in the Valley requires the main focus ought to be strictly on nitrogen oxides.

By 2020, the Valley air district – seeking to get to an ozone level of 85 – which is attainment – could require a 50 percent cut in manmade VOCs and a 40 percent cut of nitrogen oxides from combustion.

In a modeling study, researchers realized they could reach that same 85 ozone attainment level by requiring a zero reduction in VOCs and a 47 percent cut in NOx.

The planning study focused on one of the smoggiest locations in the Valley – Arvin – south of Bakersfield.

“It makes more sense to target combustion – not VOCs,” says Mitloehner.

Confirming what amounts to a change in thinking by regulators is Valley air district supervising engineer Sheraz Gill. “We did rely earlier on the 1938 study but we revised the emission factor in 2005 based on multiple studies. Now we have enough new information that we are looking at revising that emission factor once again.”

“There is no doubt that in the long term we are a NOx-driven air basin” and need to focus on reducing combustion to clean the air, says Gill.

Offering a different emphasis, Lucinda Roth, supervisor in the district planning department says targeting VOCs in the earlier years of the plan – now for example – “makes sense but that in later years – from 2013 to 2020, the focus will be on NOx reduction.

“We have a problem since 80 percent of the NOx emissions are from out of our jurisdiction. At least we have incentives” to cut combustion from mobile sources.

Perhaps a cynic might say – since you can't get to the cars, you target the cows. This month in the UC ag publication California Agriculture, Mitloehner offered recent research on dairy emissions both as smog precursors and from a greenhouse gas perspective.

Here is another surprise. Rather than focus on either the front or back end of the cows – strategies should aim at dairy feed as a key source of emissions rather than manure or dairy lagoons.

“The big source is the stored feed – the silage” that is fermenting. “Just smell it.”

Methane, while not a major problem with smog, is a potent greenhouse gas implicated in global warming, says Mitloehner.

Strategies to cut methane include formula adjustment to feed and capture of the emissions to put them to good use. To reduce waste – what makes sense to Frank Mitloehner – is what they did in his parents' village in Germany.

The village of Juehnde built covered digesters for livestock waste and other biomass. Now the technology supplies enough power and heat for the entire village to go off the grid. Mitloehner says there is a tentative plan to do the same idea at UC Davis where he teaches – in the planned West Village campus subdivision that could get 2,000 students off the grid.

Turning a waste into a resource and helping restore the image of cows in the popular imagination as a sustainer of civilization may not be the goal of all this study. But with the public well detached from where their food comes and young people too often looking at dairies as the place where animal cruelty is regularly practiced – where tons of polluting manure piles up – a new perspective is in order.

They ought to pay attention to where their protein comes from and the good that manure does making crops grow in the next field over.

There is no doubt methane is making the world get warmer, however.

Mitloehner has calculated all the cattle in the world produce 614 billion kg of methane and that requires 15 billion trees to soak that up.

“We had better get to planting,” says the researcher.

## **Six to be honored for work to improve air quality**

By Cathy Locke

Sacramento Bee and Modesto Bee, Sunday, May 3, 2009

Six groups, businesses, government agencies and individuals will be honored as Clean Air Champions on Thursday during an awards luncheon sponsored by Breathe California of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails.

The recognition coincides with May as Clean Air Month and honors efforts to achieve better [air quality](#). The Sacramento region ranks among the 10 worst metropolitan areas in the United States for air quality.

Receiving recognition are:

- Faith Bernstein for youth leadership in heading an effort to improve air quality and have solar panels installed at C.K. McClatchy High School.
- LJ Urban's infill housing project in West Sacramento for smart growth.

- The El Dorado, Feather River, Sacramento Metropolitan and Yolo-Solano air quality management districts and the Placer County Air Pollution Control District for working together on measures to meet federal air quality standards by a 2018 deadline.
- Toni Barry for helping form the Sacramento Green Partnership, which brings together representatives from throughout the region to focus on ways to address [climate change](#).
- Nolte Associates Inc. and its Natomas office for employing a variety of sustainable techniques inside and outside the workplace.
- Owen Howlett, recipient of the individual award, for efforts in bicycle education through Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates and the Sacramento Bicycle Kitchen.

For more information about Breathe California of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails and this year's Clean Air Award winners, see the Web site at [www.sacbreathe.org](http://www.sacbreathe.org).

## **Oil execs seen rough path for alternative energy**

By John Porretto - AP Energy Writer

In the Washington Post, Merced Sun-Star and Modesto Bee, Monday, May 4, 2009

HOUSTON -- Despite millions in new investments and President Barack Obama's push for clean energy technology, many oil and gas executives say mass production of renewable energy is not likely before at least the middle of the next decade, a new survey showed Monday.

Fifty-two percent of 382 petroleum industry executives surveyed by KPMG LLP said large-scale production of alternative energy sources will not be viable in the short term, at least not by 2015. Of those who believe such production is possible, 17 percent said the likely source is wind, 10 percent said biodiesel and 7 percent cited solar, according to the annual e-mail survey conducted in April.

Participants included executives for major oil companies, independent exploration and production outfits and other energy companies.

Based on their responses, there's been a significant shift in perception over the front-runner in alternative energy.

In a survey two years ago, 18 percent of executives said ethanol was the most likely renewable energy source for potential large-scale production, but it fell to 6 percent in the latest query.

"The results clearly show the momentum wind energy has gained as a clean energy solution," said Bill Kimble, who oversees the global energy institute at KPMG, the audit, tax and advisory firm.

Though it now accounts for slightly more than 1 percent of U.S. electricity production, wind was cited in the survey as the alternative energy source mostly likely to benefit as the Obama administration shapes its energy policy. Thirty-five percent said wind would be the biggest winner, followed by natural gas, biofuels and solar all with double-digit percentages.

Survey participants had clear choices for their picks as the biggest losers under Obama's policies: Coal at 42 percent and oil at 36 percent, even though fossil fuels are forecast to provide 80 percent of all global energy needs through 2030.

The president and his energy secretary, Steven Chu, have vowed to aggressively pursue policies aimed at addressing climate change, including a cap on carbon emissions.

Proposals have included a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system, which could allow companies or plants to trade emission allowances among each other to mitigate costs. Either would be costly for polluting companies.

Not surprising, only 8 percent of the executives surveyed said cap-and-trade is the best approach to counter global warming. Sixteen percent said the best solution is tax incentives for investing in renewable energy sources, while 15 percent favored a carbon tax.

Many oil and gas executives have said they're concerned the industry will be targeted to carry more of the cost burden than it should based on emissions levels. The potential for new taxes, they say, worries them too.

"There's an effort here at the moment to raise money from a segment of the business that is just deemed to be able to pay," Bill Klesse, chief executive of Valero Energy Corp., the nation's biggest refiner, told Wall Street analysts recently.

## **Congress to stop using coal in power plant**

By Jim Abrams - Associated Press Writer

In the Washington Post and Modesto Bee, Friday, May 1, 2009

WASHINGTON -- The 99-year-old Capitol Power Plant, which provides steam for heat and hot water in congressional buildings, is ending its distinction of being the only coal-burning facility in the District of Columbia.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said Friday that the switch to natural gas as the sole fuel source used at the plant was part of their efforts to reduce the carbon pollution impact of Congress on the nation's capital.

"The Congress of the United States should not only be a model for the nation, but also a good neighbor," Pelosi said.

The two Democratic leaders have for the past several years initiated steps to make the Capitol grounds more environmentally friendly. But moves to change light bulbs, use less paper and buy fuel-efficient vehicles have in some respects been overshadowed by the smoke that continues to rise from the power plant about four blocks south of the Capitol.

The D.C. government has complained that the plant worsens air quality and has affected the respiratory health of residents and workers in the area, particularly children.

The plant last year operated on about 65 percent natural gas and 35 percent coal. Pelosi's office said the plant has not burned coal since March and would continue to go without coal barring problems.

Acting Architect of the Capitol Stephen Ayers cautioned in a letter to Pelosi that work still needed to be done to upgrade the natural gas pipelines. He said coal might still have to be used as a backup in circumstances where heating needs exceed capacity of the natural gas pipelines, when abnormally cold conditions increase demand or when there are equipment outages.

The Capitol complex would not totally end its dependence on coal. Electricity is supplied by a local utility company that uses coal as a power source.

Ending the use of coal at the power plant has met some resistance from coal state lawmakers, who have said it sends the wrong message about the possibilities of clean coal.

But Hill Residents for Steam Plant Conversion, a neighborhood group, has urged Pelosi and Reid to move quickly to stop using coal at the plant, saying it was a major source of sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide and particulate air pollution.

## **Capitol Plant to Shift to Natural Gas**

David A. Fahrenthold

Washington Post, Saturday, May 02, 2009

The U.S. Capitol Power Plant, the largest single source of [air pollution](#) in the District, will switch to burning mainly natural gas in an attempt to lower its emissions, congressional officials announced yesterday.

The plant, a few blocks southeast of the Capitol, provides steam for heating the Capitol complex. Democratic leaders have made converting it to a cleaner-burning fuel a centerpiece of their "Green the Capitol" initiative.

In a letter, the Architect of the Capitol's office said it might cost \$1 million to design the modifications to convert the plant's boilers to burn more natural gas, and \$9 million to carry them out. When the work is

done, officials said, the plant will burn coal only as a backup fuel, when equipment fails or temperatures are unusually cold.

The conversion could be completed as early as November 2010.

## **No More Free Rides on 'Code Red' Days**

Washington Post, Saturday, May 2, 2009

The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission has decided to discontinue the Code Red Ride Free program, which encouraged Northern Virginia residents to leave their cars at home on days when [air quality](#) is bad and allowed them to ride the bus for free.

The elimination of the Ride Free program will help address a funding shortfall in the region's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program caused by a reduction in federal funds.

The Ride Free program began 10 years ago. Although the program is ending, officials remind residents that using public transportation continues to be one of the best ways to combat harmful emissions. People are encouraged to take public transportation whenever possible.

## **Protesters crash port meeting about air-quality plan**

By Chris Metinko, Oakland Tribune

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Sunday, May 3, 2009

OAKLAND — Protesters stormed and disrupted a Port of Oakland meeting early Saturday, saying a new plan to manage truck traffic at the port fails to address environmental issues, and does nothing to improve working conditions for drivers.

"We do not accept the plan that has been articulated," said the Rev. Eric Gabourel, a member of the East Bay Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, as he helped lead the protesters into a meeting room at Oakland City Hall. "It is not going to get us clean air. It is not going to give us local hires."

Gabourel joined others outside City Hall before the meeting to help rally environmentalists, truckers, community leaders and others to protest the port's new Comprehensive Truck Management Plan.

Port officials say the \$15 million plan would help reduce pollution, improve security and meet business needs. It includes \$5 million for truck retrofits to help bring them in compliance with upcoming air-quality regulations and would create a truck database registry, so officials would know what trucks are entering and exiting and if they are abiding by all regulations.

"We need to move forward with this," said Omar Benjamin, executive director of the Port of Oakland. "If we don't move forward, we are not going to clean the air."

The port is trying to reduce seaport diesel pollution by 85 percent by 2020.

But the protesters said the plan is neither comprehensive nor sustainable. They said the port should instead go with an employee driver-based port trucking system, in which drivers would be employed by trucking companies that would pay them a better wage and make sure their trucks were up-to-date with the latest environmentally friendly technology.

"It should be the responsibility of trucking companies to upgrade the trucks," said Aditi Vaidya, port program director for the East Bay alliance for a Sustainable Economy. "The truckers themselves cannot afford it."

Many truckers at the port are independent contractors.

"Being an independent contractor is like being a slave," said Muhammed Asif, a 56-year-old truck driver from Oakland. Asif said he gets paid between \$5 and \$6 an hour from work at the port, making it hard to upgrade or retrofit his truck to meet new standards.

"It's hard to put food on my table," he added.

The plan is set to be heard by the port's Maritime Committee May 26 and go for final approval by the board June 2. Public comments on the plan are being accepted until May 15.

## **Gas drillers battle Pennsylvania pollution concerns**

Jon Hurdle, Reuters

San Diego Union-Tribune, Monday, May 4, 2009

HICKORY, Penna. — U.S. energy companies rushing to exploit Pennsylvania's massive natural gas reserves have launched a public relations campaign to calm fears the bonanza is contaminating water with toxic chemicals.

Drillers are holding public meetings to assure people the chemicals used to help extract gas from Pennsylvania's majority share of the Marcellus Shale cannot escape into drinking-water wells.

Though scientists have yet to find definitive evidence that drilling chemicals have seeped into ground water, there are dozens of anecdotal reports from around the state that water supplies in gas-production areas have been tainted.

The public outcry threatens to impede exploitation of the 44-million-acre Marcellus Shale, which geologists say might contain enough natural gas to meet U.S. demand for a decade.

People in gas-drilling areas say their well water has become discolored or foul-smelling; their pets and farm animals have died from drinking it; and their children have suffered from diarrhea and vomiting.

Bathing in well water can cause rashes and inflammation, and ponds bubble with methane that has escaped during drilling, they say.

That's the challenge facing Matt Pitzarella, a spokesman for Texas-based Range Resources Corp who recently told around 150 residents at the Hickory fire hall that new drilling techniques are much less damaging to the landscape than traditional ones, and that energy companies are subject to strict environmental regulations.

Other companies such as Chief Oil & Gas and Chesapeake Energy Corp have held community meetings.

Over a dinner of beef stew, baked beans and coleslaw hosted by Range, Pitzarella said the company encased its drilling shafts in layers of steel and concrete to ensure that chemicals used to help fracture the gas-bearing rock cannot escape into aquifers.

"There are zero reports of chemical contamination of groundwater," he said.

Ron Gulla, who said his land has been polluted by Range's gas drilling, was incredulous.

"I have never seen such a bunch of liars in my life," he shouted at Pitzarella, to scattered applause. "You have put me through hell."

This is how the battle lines are being drawn in the U.S. struggle to reduce dependence on foreign oil and cut carbon emissions. Marcellus is the largest of the U.S. shale gas reserves, which are trapped in sedimentary beds making it more costly to extract.

### **SULFUROUS SMELL**

In rural Clearville, south-central Pennsylvania, Spectra Energy Corp is drilling to establish an underground gas storage facility.

Sandra McDaniel, 63, said federal authorities forced her, though eminent domain laws, to lease about five acres of her 154 acres to Spectra to build a drilling pad on a wooded hilltop.

McDaniel watched from the perimeter of the installation as three pipes spewed metallic gray water into plastic-lined pits, one of which was partially covered in a gray crust. As a sulfurous smell wafted from the rig, two tanker trucks marked "residual waste" drove from the site.

"My land is gone," she said. "The government took it away, and they have destroyed it."

Back in Hickory, Pitzarella acknowledged that water quality was the "No. 1 concern" but denied there was any escape of chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking."

Drilling injects chemicals thousands of feet below the aquifers, and companies haul away waste water for treatment when the operation is finished, Pitzarella told the meeting.

Residents say escaped methane has caused some well water to become flammable, and its buildup has led to at least one explosion in a drinking water well. Many people in drilling areas drink only costly bottled water.

Pennsylvanians say they have not found fracking chemicals in their water only because they have not known what to test for, and because of the cost of testing.

Although the state's Department of Environmental Protection publishes a list of 54 chemicals that may be used in fracking, companies won't disclose what goes into the fluid, calling the information proprietary.

The composition of fracking fluid has been unregulated since the oil and gas industry won exemptions in 2005 from federal environmental laws including the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

According to the Endocrine Disruption Exchange, a Colorado research group that has investigated the health risks of fracking chemicals, about a third may cause cancer; half could damage the brain and nervous system, and almost 90 percent have the potential to harm skin, eyes and sensory organs.

Fracking chemicals include benzene, a carcinogen, plus toluene, methanol, and 2-butoxyethylene, a substance that can reduce human fertility and kill embryos, according to Damascus Citizens for Sustainability, a group that opposes drilling.

Range's Pitzarella said the chemicals make up only 0.05 percent of the fracking mixture, and that they include unspecified substances commonly used in households such as a friction reducer like that used in contact lenses and a biocide disinfectant used in swimming pools.

Stephanie Hallowich, 37, a mother of two, said she and her husband Chris moved to the outskirts of Hickory from suburban Pittsburgh 18 months ago for a quiet rural life but are now closely surrounded by four gas wells, a three-acre reservoir containing water for drilling, a liquid extraction plant, and a gas compressor station.

Concerned about noise, air quality and her children's health, Hallowich would like to move but can't believe anyone would buy her house.

"I don't want to find out in five years' time that my kids have cancer," she said.

Wayne Smith, 52, a Clearville farmer, said he made about \$1 million in royalties over three years from gas taken from under his 105 acres, but he now wishes he never signed the lease and wonders whether tainted water is responsible for the recent deaths of four of his beef cattle, and his own elevated blood-iron level.

Smith would like to get his water tested for the full range of fracking chemicals but he can't do that without specifics on the fluid's composition. "We don't know what's in it," he said. "They won't tell us."

## **Seeking to Save the Planet, With a Thesaurus**

By John M. Broder, staff writer

N.Y. Times, Friday, May 1, 2009, and San Diego Union-Tribune, Saturday, May 2, 2009

WASHINGTON — The problem with global warming, some environmentalists believe, is "global warming."

The term turns people off, fostering images of shaggy-haired liberals, economic sacrifice and complex scientific disputes, according to extensive polling and focus group sessions conducted by ecoAmerica, a nonprofit environmental marketing and messaging firm in Washington.

Instead of grim warnings about global warming, the firm advises, talk about "our deteriorating atmosphere." Drop discussions of carbon dioxide and bring up "moving away from the dirty fuels of the past." Don't confuse people with cap and trade; use terms like "cap and cash back" or "pollution reduction refund."

EcoAmerica has been conducting research for the last several years to find new ways to frame environmental issues and so build public support for climate change legislation and other initiatives. A summary of the group's latest findings and recommendations was accidentally sent by e-mail to a number

of news organizations by someone who sat in this week on a briefing intended for government officials and environmental leaders.

Asked about the summary, ecoAmerica's president and founder, Robert M. Perkowitz, requested that it not be reported until the formal release of the firm's full paper later this month, but acknowledged that its wide distribution now made compliance with his request unlikely.

The research directly parallels marketing studies conducted by oil companies, utilities and coal mining concerns that are trying to "green" their images with consumers and sway public policy.

Environmental issues consistently rate near the bottom of public worry, according to many public opinion polls. A Pew Research Center poll released in January found global warming last among 20 voter concerns; it trailed issues like addressing moral decline and decreasing the influence of lobbyists. "We know why it's lowest," said Mr. Perkowitz, a marketer of outdoor clothing and home furnishings before he started ecoAmerica, whose activities are financed by corporations, foundations and individuals. "When someone thinks of global warming, they think of a politicized, polarized argument. When you say 'global warming,' a certain group of Americans think that's a code word for progressive liberals, gay marriage and other such issues."

The answer, Mr. Perkowitz said in his presentation at the briefing, is to reframe the issue using different language. "Energy efficiency" makes people think of shivering in the dark. Instead, it is more effective to speak of "saving money for a more prosperous future." In fact, the group's surveys and focus groups found, it is time to drop the term "the environment" and talk about "the air we breathe, the water our children drink."

"Another key finding: remember to speak in TALKING POINTS aspirational language about shared American ideals, like freedom, prosperity, independence and self-sufficiency while avoiding jargon and details about policy, science, economics or technology," said the e-mail account of the group's study.

Mr. Perkowitz and allies in the environmental movement have been briefing officials in Congress and the administration in the hope of using the findings to change the terms of the debate now under way in Washington.

Opponents of legislation to combat global warming are engaged in a similar effort. Trying to head off a cap-and-trade system, in which government would cap the amount of heat-trapping emissions allowed and let industry trade permits to emit those gases, they are coaching Republicans to refer to any such system as a giant tax that would kill jobs. Coal companies are taking out full-page advertisements promising "clean, green coal." The natural gas industry refers to its product as "clean fuel green fuel." Oil companies advertise their investments in alternative energy.

Robert J. Brulle of Drexel University, an expert on environmental communications, said ecoAmerica's campaign was a mirror image of what industry and political conservatives were doing. "The form is the same; the message is just flipped," he said. "You want to sell toothpaste, we'll sell it. You want to sell global warming, we'll sell that. It's the use of advertising techniques to manipulate public opinion."

He said the approach was cynical and, worse, ineffective. "The right uses it, the left uses it, but it doesn't engage people in a face-to-face manner," he said, "and that's the only way to achieve real, lasting social change."

Frank Luntz, a Republican communications consultant, prepared a strikingly similar memorandum in 2002, telling his clients that they were losing the environmental debate and advising them to adjust their language. He suggested referring to themselves as "conservationists" rather than "environmentalists," and emphasizing "common sense" over scientific argument.

And, Mr. Luntz and Mr. Perkowitz agree, "climate change" is an easier sell than "global warming."

## **Hey, I'm Walking (or Running or Biking) Here . . .**

By Andrea Sachs

Washington Post, Sunday, May 3, 2009

New Yorkers, honk if you love pedestrians.

In the city that never stops driving, cars and pedestrians have always tussled over the island's finite turf. To the casual eye, it's always seemed that automobiles had the advantage, but now pedestrians are gaining ground.

"Developing the High Line [a new park], reclaiming the waterfront and creating pedestrian space -- all of these elements are getting people out of their cars and onto their feet and bikes," said Amanda M. Burden, director of the Department of City Planning. "We are making the city a glorious experience for the pedestrian as a participant, rather than inside a metal cage."

The city is also revealing its green colors, which also benefits walkers and bikers. Two years ago on Earth Day, Mayor Michael Bloomberg unveiled PlaNYC, an ambitious agenda that addresses such quality-of-life issues as [air pollution](#), land use and public transportation. The project is scheduled to run through 2030, when the city's population of more than 8.3 million is expected to have grown by a million more, but some goals have been met. In the past year and a half, for example, 49 acres have been transferred from car usage to public space.

"The idea of PlaNYC is to reduce emissions and congestion by getting people on bikes and using pedestrian spaces more," said Monty Dean, a spokesman for the city's Department of Transportation. "We can't build our way out of the congestion, but we can acknowledge how the streets are being used."

The plan safeguards such popular tourist activities as staring at skyscrapers, snapping photos of iconic sights and crossing Broadway in Times Square to make an 8 p.m. curtain. Here is a handful of the pro-pedestrian projects to look for -- and to look forward to.

**Biking Initiatives:** The city has formulated an array of plans that encourage -- and protect -- cyclists. For example, 200 new miles of bike lanes will be installed by early this summer, part of the DOT's 1,800-mile master plan scheduled for completion by 2030. Free cycling maps are available at area bike stores or online (see below). To park your bike, look for any of 35 new sheltered racks. For a more fashionable lockup, artist-musician David Byrne has created nine racks (eight in Manhattan, one in Brooklyn) that double as objets d'art. For more information on NYC biking: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/bicyclists/bikemain.shtml>.

**East River Waterfront Project:** The riverfront revitalization plan, which will roll out in phases starting this month, covers a two-mile stretch from Battery Park to East River Park in Lower Manhattan; it also closes a gap in the Manhattan Greenway (see below). When complete (around 2013), pedestrians will be able to walk an unbroken path linking the Financial District, South Street Seaport, Chinatown and the Lower East Side.

The walkway, to be beautified with plants, benches, pavilions and other amenities, remedies the loss of waterfront access caused by the construction of FDR Drive and the industries of yore. For example, steps carved at historic slips will lead to the water's edge, and a man-made archipelago will let visitors "walk" on water. Pier 15 will feature a two-story structure with a cafe, maritime center and close-up glimpses of maritime activity, including visiting tall ships. At Pier 35, an amphitheater-style space will open up to views of Governors Island and Brooklyn.

**Governors Island:** On weekends between May 30 and Oct. 11, visitors to the 172-acre island can bike or hike along seven miles of pavement, including a 2.2-mile trail along the periphery. The recent addition on the southern end completes the loop. Free bike rentals on Fridays; a fee of \$15 per two hours is charged for the rest of the weekend. The island is about seven minutes away by free ferry, which departs from the Battery Maritime Building. Info: <http://www.govisland.com>.

**Green Light for Midtown:** Allowing pedestrians to take over stretches of Broadway might seem insane in a city with about 13,000 taxis, until you hear the facts. According to the city's DOT, more than 356,000 walkers -- or 4.5 times as many people as cars -- pass through Times Square a day. However, only 11 percent of the terrain is set aside for pedestrians, one likely reason that 140 percent more accidents occur on Broadway in Times Square than happen on parallel avenues along the same stretch.

Starting Memorial Day weekend, the city will ban cars from Broadway around Times Square (north of 42nd Street) and Herald Square (north of 32nd Street), thus creating three acres of open space for pedestrians. The pilot plan, which also adds greenery at 25 locations, runs through the end of the year, at

which point officials will determine whether to continue the arrangement. Info: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/broadway.shtml>.

**The High Line:** Built in 1934 and active until the 1980s, the High Line once supported freight trains transporting goods to and from city factories and warehouses. Come June, the line's elevated train trestle will transport pedestrians away from concrete sidewalks and into a green space. The 1.5-mile "garden in the sky" sits 18 to 30 feet aboveground and ribbons through three neighborhoods: Hell's Kitchen/Hudson Yards, West Chelsea and the Gansevoort Market Historic District. Because of its narrowness (20 to 60 feet across), the design will be kept simple, mainly benches and thematic plantings, such as a mixed perennial meadow and a wetland. Exit points are set at every two or three blocks. The first portion, from Gansevoort Street to 20th Street, is scheduled to open in June; the target date for the second section is 2010. Info: <http://www.thehighline.org>.

**Manhattan Waterfront Greenway:** "The entire West Side has been effectively turned into a recreational waterfront site," said Parks and Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe. "You can walk the entire length of the island without ever crossing a city street." The 16-mile route along the Hudson River extends from Battery Park to Inwood Hill Park and is part of a 32-mile master trail that will eventually circle the island. The factories, piers and other vestiges of old commerce have been replaced with boardwalks, cafes, lawns, recreational centers, boathouses and other becalming attractions. For maps: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/mwg/mapshome.shtml>.

**Summer Streets:** Officials plan to reprise the summer event in which, on three consecutive Saturdays, cars were not allowed on a 6.9-mile route from the Brooklyn Bridge to Central Park. Special attractions will be sprinkled along the way; last year's fest featured sidewalk chalk art, yoga, hopscotch and a limited supply of free loaner bikes. Info: <http://www.nyc.gov/summerstreets>.

## **The PATH to Dirty Energy**

By BRUCE NILLES

Washington Post, Sunday, May 3, 2009

Discussion about transmission line planning and green power is popular in Washington these days. A vast network of new high-voltage transmission lines is needed, we're told, to bring renewable energy to market. But does that mean that any new transmission line is good for the environment and the new "green economy"?

There's now controversy over the planned Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH) transmission line ["Down to the Wires," editorial, April 10], with some saying environmentalists oppose what will bring much-needed clean energy to market. Yet a quick review of the facts reveals that the PATH line has nothing to do with clean energy and everything to do with profit-seeking coal companies.

The PATH line doesn't originate at a wind farm or solar installation. PATH begins at West Virginia's 3,000-megawatt John E. Amos coal-fired power plant. Among the nation's 1,400 coal-fired plants, the Amos plant ranks among the worst emitters of sulfur dioxide, mercury and [global warming pollution](#). And the Amos plant isn't the only dirty power plant that would benefit from new transmission lines. Western Pennsylvania, Kentucky and West Virginia are dominated by old coal-fired power plants.

PATH is a joint venture of American Electric Power Co. Inc. and Allegheny Energy Inc., both of which rely heavily on coal. Allegheny Energy officials have said that 95 percent of the company's electricity is generated by coal -- not what we'd called a "green power" company.

These companies will make extraordinary profits from the PATH line. First, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has guaranteed a high rate of return on the construction of the multibillion-dollar line, which will be paid for by ratepayers. Second, the utilities will earn much higher profits for their coal-based electricity once PATH enables access to higher-priced markets in other East Coast states.

This combination of high returns for zero-risk investments makes it abundantly clear why coal utilities want PATH and other transmission lines, and why they encourage the misconception that these lines are needed to move clean energy power.

While some will say that local residents are opposing PATH out of "NIMBYism," there is much more at stake for them than their backyards. The opposition is about coal's air and water pollution and the devastating practice of mountaintop removal coal mining. It is about our obligation to curb global warming pollution. This is why national groups such as the Sierra Club are joining forces with local groups to oppose the line. Sierra Club supports responsible transmission planning for clean energy, but the PATH line does not fall into that category.

PATH is also not needed to meet the Washington region's growing electricity demand. Recent reports show that demand in the region has actually been declining. Any fear-mongering about power blackouts is based on bad data -- official studies traced the 2003 blackout to utility operating and maintenance errors, not a need for new transmission lines.

There are other solutions to meet power needs in the mid-Atlantic region rather than linking up with dirty coal plants, including the vast East Coast offshore wind resources.

The price of offshore wind electricity is competitive with coal and can be delivered into the grid via transmission lines that are only tens of miles long instead of the hundreds of miles needed for moving coal-fired power. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory has also found that many East Coast states, including Virginia, could meet 100 percent of their electricity needs with offshore wind.

If Virginia and the nation are serious about supporting clean energy, then transmission reform must be part of that policy, but it must result in new lines that serve our vast clean energy resources rather than expand the carbon-intensive power generation as the PATH line would.

The writer is director of the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign.

## **Ethanol test for Obama on climate change, science**

By H. JOSEF HEBERT

The Associated Press

Washington Post, Sunday, May 3, 2009

WASHINGTON -- President Barack Obama's commitment to take on climate change and put science over politics is about to be tested as his administration faces a politically sensitive question about the widespread use of ethanol: Does it help or hurt the fight against global warming?

The Environmental Protection Agency is close to proposing ethanol standards. But two years ago, when Congress ordered a huge increase in ethanol use, lawmakers also told the agency to show that ethanol would produce less pollution linked to global warming than would gasoline.

So how will the EPA define greenhouse [gas emissions](#) from ethanol production and use? Given the political clout of farm interests, will the science conflict with the politics?

Environmentalists, citing various studies and scientific papers, say the agency must factor in more than just the direct, heat-trapping pollution from ethanol and its production. They also point to "indirect" impacts on global warming from worldwide changes in land use, including climate-threatening deforestation, as land is cleared to plant corn or other ethanol crops.

Ethanol manufacturers and agriculture interests contend the fallout from potential land use changes in the future, especially those outside the United States, have not been adequately proven or even quantified, and should not count when the EPA calculates ethanol's climate impact.

"It defies common sense that EPA would publish a proposed rule-making with harmful conclusions for biofuels based on incomplete science and inaccurate assumptions," complained Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa.

He was one of 12 farm-state senators, both Democrats and Republicans, who wrote EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson in March, urging the agency to stick to assessing only the direct emissions.

Ethanol, which in the future may come from cellulosic sources such as switchgrass and wood chips, is promoted by its advocates as a "green" substitute for gasoline that will help the U.S. reduce its reliance on fossil fuels, especially foreign oil. That transition is a priority of the Obama White House.

In 2007, Congress ordered huge increases in ethanol use, requiring refiners to blend 20 billion gallons with gasoline by 2015 and a further expansion to 36 billion gallons a year by 2022.

Congress said any fuel produced in plants built after 2007 must emit 20 percent less in greenhouse gases than gasoline if it comes from corn, and 60 percent less if from cellulosic crops.

Meeting the direct emissions would not be a problem. But if indirect emissions from expected land use changes are included, ethanol probably would fail the test.

Nathaniel Greene, director of renewable energy policy at the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental advocacy group, said that wouldn't mean the end of ethanol.

Ethanol from existing production facilities is grandfathered and "there are ways to produce advanced ethanol's that would comply with the greenhouse thresholds," even using land use climate impacts if the industry chose to adopt them, Greene said.

But farm interests and their allies in Congress are pushing to get the EPA to at least postpone any consideration of the land-use impacts issue, arguing the science surrounding the issue is uncertain.

The senators' letter said that an overreaching regulation by EPA on ethanol's link to climate change "could seriously harm our U.S. biofuels growth strategy by introducing uncertainty and discouraging future investments."

Environmentalists say there have been enough studies on the indirect impact of ethanol on greenhouse pollution to justify the science.

Ignoring the indirect impacts "will undermine the environmental benefits" of the renewable fuels program "and set a poor precedent for any future policies attempting to reduce global warming pollution," 17 environmental group wrote Jackson in response to the senator's plea.

Greene said the EPA's handling of the ethanol rule will be a "a test of our ability to follow sound science" even when it conflicts with the interests of powerful interests.

The environmental organizations noted that Obama has "vowed to make the U.S. a leader on climate change" and put science over politics, and "now is the time to uphold those pledges."

EPA spokeswoman Andora Andy declined to say when an agency proposal -- a holdover issue from the Bush administration -- would be issued. Interest groups on both sides of the debate said it could come in days. The White House Office of Management and Budget concluded its review of the EPA proposal last week.

## **Australia delays carbon trade, may toughen target**

By Rob Taylor, Reuters

Washington Post, Monday, May 4, 2009

CANBERRA (Reuters) - Australia's government put back its much-vaunted carbon-emissions trading scheme by a year on Monday, bowing to industry demands for more relief amid a recession while opening the door to an even deeper long-term reduction.

Lacking the political backing to implement the world's most sweeping cap-and-trade scheme outside Europe, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said the regime would be delayed until mid-2011, but he still aimed to push laws through parliament this year.

But the major opposition, Green opponents and a key independent senator immediately rejected Rudd's concessions as "flawed," making eventual success far from assured.

"Starting slower because of the global economic recession and finishing stronger, with the prospect of a bigger outcome for greenhouse gas reductions... we believe gets the balance right," Rudd told reporters.

The setback was not unexpected after months of hardening resistance to Rudd's plan, a cornerstone of his election platform. Some carbon industry players said the delay could help clear away uncertainty that had stymied early trade and clouded the outlook for corporate costs.

The new draft included several short-term concessions to big industry in Australia, one of the world's biggest emitters per capita: a low fixed carbon price capped for a year at A\$10 (\$7.36), with a transition to full market trading in July 2012; and increased eligibility for free emissions permits, including 95 percent for the heaviest export-oriented polluters.

But Rudd also left open the possibility of deeper reductions.

While maintaining his interim 2020 emissions reduction target at 5 to 15 percent below 2000 levels, he said the government could increase the cut to 25 percent if other rich nations agreed to similar reductions at Copenhagen -- a measure aimed at appeasing Green party legislators who wanted tougher targets.

But his overture fell flat, with Greens negotiator Senator Christine Milne calling the delay "environmentally reckless," and party leader Bob Brown unveiling an ad campaign against Rudd's climate credentials, running ahead of elections late next year.

Key independent senator Nick Xenophon, one of two swing independent votes necessary to win passage, also rejected it as a "lame duck" when most Australian voters wanted climate action.

"The government's (scheme) is fundamentally flawed. Their model is unfixable and the changes announced today are simply window dressing."

#### COPENHAGEN, ELECTIONS LOOM

Rudd is walking a difficult line, with business and conservatives pulling his center-left Labor party toward a softer carbon regime, and environmentalists demanding he not undermine global climate talks in Copenhagen in December, when world governments will seek a successor to the Kyoto Protocol.

But Rudd's delay enables Australia to await the outcome of those talks before deciding whether to match tough world targets or opt for a softer target in the event of a global impasse.

U.S. President Barack Obama's administration will likely be eyeing Australia's climate tactics as it prepares for its own Senate battle over creating a "cap-and-trade" law that would slash emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

Brown said he had written to Rudd with an offer to break the Australian Senate deadlock and support the legislation if amendments made it environmentally effective.

But the new plan still falls short of Green demands for an unconditional emissions cut of 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, with a commitment to move to a 40 percent cut if the climate talks in Copenhagen forge a new global climate pact.

Major emitting industries and conservatives had complained the original regime start date on July 1 next year would hamper an economic recovery from a recession tipped to see 1 million unemployed by next year.

The changes will help placate companies most exposed, like flag carrier Qantas Airlines, OneSteel and top steelmaker Bluescope, whose chairman last week attacked the emissions plan as an economic "de-stimulus."

Australian electricity futures for later in 2010 fell 12 percent as the expected price of carbon was removed.

Some participants in the nascent carbon market said the delay was welcome relief after months of deepening uncertainty.

"I'm a little surprised but I suppose the good thing is at least it gets resolved... The worst outcome is continued uncertainty about what is going to happen," said Gary Cox, vice president of commodities and energy at global brokers Newedge.

[Fresno Bee commentary, Friday, May 1, 2009:](#)

### **A new way of looking at how we do things**

By John D. Welty and Deborah Nankivell

Rather than weigh in on ballot measures, the Fresno Business Council board decided to underscore what we believe is the underlying problem in our democracy -- outdated, silo-based government structures. We would like to offer an alternative approach based upon what we have learned in our region.

A couple of key questions: What is the solution to single-interest influence at the Legislature? How do we create a comprehensive vision for the future and align strategies to achieve it?

When you ask people what they want, you typically get the same answers -- quality jobs, safe neighborhoods, vibrant health and good schools. Today, even those who once had those things are facing the stress of feared or actual job losses.

Our institutional and organizational structures, created during the industrial age, are failing. No longer are constancy, conformity and hierarchy effective constructs. Now, rapid change demands adaptability, creativity and highly leveraged networks.

We must replace the inertia built up in comfort with a passion for lifelong learning if we are to thrive economically. Survival demands a shared responsibility for every enterprise. Adversarial relationships sap the energy needed to succeed.

Silo-based thinking and state-level funding have hamstrung innovation and the ability to effect even the most obvious local changes. The further upstream decision-makers are, the greater the influence of single interests on the outcomes and more inefficient the process.

Local control is about more than power; it's about reality. What sounds great in concept often sounds foolish in neighborhoods, classrooms and offices where we live, learn and work.

In California, we live in widely diverse regions, not one-size-fits-all communities. We must change how we do the public's business by transforming the relationship between state and local government and allowing more local control over priorities, execution and funding.

Our community has been on the road to transformation for a long time. The emergence of 10 community values at a community retreat to launch the Collaborative Regional Initiative in 2000 was an important milestone. Those in attendance put personal interests aside and embraced what is an old approach to conducting the community's business-collaboration behind a shared plan. The values have become a new contract for behavior in the civic sector.

The CRI was one of a dozen such ventures across our state giving rise to a network of regional stewards. The Fresno effort evolved into the Regional Jobs Initiative, the Human Investment Initiative and the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley. All these efforts were locally constructed, ambitious, and aim to align and leverage the efforts of many behind shared goals and strategies.

There is growing interest in other regions and at the state level to find out if the approaches we are using here can be replicated. Can we create platforms for stewards to empower comprehensive solutions to local, regional and state problems?

We have reached a point where fundamental changes at the state level are essential for us to scale and accelerate our work. This is true not just in our region, but every region across California. Policies and funding must support what works in our communities, not stifle innovation, spark competition and create dysfunction.

In Fresno, we have learned how to look through four lenses simultaneously -- economic development, infrastructure development, human development and a circle of stewards, which encompasses the whole.

If you are interested in learning more about this, go to our Web site at [www.fresnobc.org](http://www.fresnobc.org). Our most challenging issues -- the economy, crime, education, poverty, [air quality](#), water, etc. -- all require the best thinking across a host of disciplines.

Once the most promising strategies have been developed, it is up to all of us to take action. Whether it's a neighborhood, city, region, state or nation, alignment is the path to a healthy community.

Alignment requires a platform where stewards can come together to serve like the RJI, HII and partnership. A new organization, California Forward, holds the promise of becoming a statewide platform for transformational change.

In a competitive global economy, the willingness to align -- to collaborate -- has become a survival skill. Some of today's greatest challenges are structural and systemic. We must reinvent government to reflect this century's realities.

*John D. Welty, president of California State University, Fresno, is also president of the Fresno Business Council. Deborah Nankivell is chief executive officer of the Fresno Business Council.*

[Guest Commentary in the Contra Costa Times and Tri-Valley Herald, Saturday, May 2, 2009:](#)

## **Readers' Forum: Energy independence and the new Bay Area green economy**

By Guy Houston

WE ALL should applaud the California Air Resources Board's plan to increase use of alternative fuels to help solve our energy dependence on the Middle East (Times editorial, April 24). Reducing the use of corn-based ethanol is the right action considering its relatively low yield of fuel compared to other feedstocks.

But instead of cheers the Times editorial board should get boos for its efforts. The obsessive bashing of the Bush administration and lazy reporting and research just follows a familiar pattern. The federal subsidy of the corn ethanol industry did not start with the Bush administration (it started with Jimmy Carter, a peanut farmer) and it certainly won't end with the Obama administration. The Times also forgot the historic fact that eliminating MTBE's to save our drinking water was a primary factor in ethanol growth.

The primary mechanism of the federal government to subsidize the corn ethanol industry has been the reduction of the excise tax on sales of gasoline blended with ethanol. The program was part of the Energy Tax Act of 1978. It was augmented in 1980 and subsequently increased in separate legislation in 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1998.

The rapid expansion behind the ethanol fuel market was the phaseout of MTBE (methyl-tertiary-butyl ether) as a fuel oxygenate. Because of water contamination issues MTBE's were a public health hazard.

After lengthy court appeals, California was one of the first in the country to ban MTBE's in 2002. In responding to the need for an alternative oxygenate for fuel, the 2005 Federal Energy Bill was passed with goals for a national minimum use standard of ethanol. We all remember the disastrous mistake government made with MTBE's; ethanol was the best alternative at that time to oxygenate fuel to improve air quality.

The minimum use standards the federal government has employed are currently being mimicked in California, as minimum targets for alternative fuels are being established as a result of our own AB 32, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's Global Warming Initiative.

Corn and soy, both food products, yield a relatively small amount of oil per acre of cultivation. Corn and soy yield 50 gallons per acre while alternatives such as jatropha (650 gallons per acre), palm oil (850 gallons per acre), and coconut (300 gallons per acre) offer much greater yields and are not taking base commodities out of the worldwide food supply. Although still undergoing research and development, the future of biofuels will likely be algae, which can yield an estimated 5,000-10,000 gallons per acre.

The Bay Area is known worldwide for its colleges and universities, national laboratories and Silicon Valley. Current business and community leaders want Northern California to be the home base for the new green economy. Solving the key problems of the day; energy and water, will require a massive effort from all.

Right now, great minds are planning a future for the Bay Area, which provides high-paying jobs and a prosperous economy for our region. Taking advantage of the opportunity requires forward-thinking. The Times should also think toward the future instead of reinventing the past.

*Houston is a former Assemblyman from 2002-2008. He is president of California Gold Advocacy Group, a government affairs company.*

[O.C. Register Editorial, Sunday, May 3, 2009:](#)

## **Gas stations getting hosed**

Remember not too long ago when unaccountable Sacramento bureaucrats promised to be reasonable when enforcing the Draconian rules they adopted to ever so marginally reduce escaping emissions at the gasoline pump?

As we suspected, bureaucrats at the California Air Resources Board rarely have beheld a Draconian rule they don't love to enforce.

Since the government's mandate went into effect April 1 requiring costly retrofitted nozzles or spanking new equipment at California gas stations, the air police around the state have fined 149 gas stations \$943,815 for noncompliance. If that sounds like a lot of money, consider that there are an estimated 3,100 more stations out of compliance that government shake-down artists have yet to shake down. That's almost one third of the state's 10,000 gas-pumping vendors.

Of course, paying exorbitant fines isn't their only option. Another 64 gas stations have chosen to shut down, rather than risk hefty fines of up to \$25,000 a day, or spend thousands to convert their equipment, according to state Sen. Dave Cox, R-Roseville.

"The inability of air control officers to understand the economic impact and the financial strain of their regulations on small businesses defies common sense," complained Sen. Cox, who with Senate colleagues from both parties conducted a survey to weigh the damage.

The state air board maintains that these regulations, which were finalized only months before the April deadline, are necessary to improve air quality. Industry spokesmen counter that the mandate's bottom-line difference will be to increase the emission-capture rate at the nozzle from 95 percent to 98 percent.

Sen. Cox has authored Senate Bill 507 to extend the April 1 deadline another year to give gas station operators an opportunity to comply. The bill will be heard in committee May 18.

One obstacle has been difficulty securing financing to purchase the costly new equipment because of ongoing tight credit. The senators attempting to save constituent local businesses from the pain of an intrusive, unaccountable government bureaucracy so far have had about as much success as most taxpayers when faced with the unelected, unaccountable Administrative State.

The 35 regional air-quality districts enforcing the state board's new regulations are clearly beyond the influence of those on whom they inflict financial pain. Even when unelected bureaucrats promise to be reasonable, there is little recourse when their idea of reasonableness is utterly unreasonable. The whole episode reminds us that the best argument for small, limited government is simply to watch government operate.

[Sacramento Bee, Letter to the Editor, Sunday, May 3, 2009:](#)

### **Capitalism likes fuel standard**

Re " 'Low-carbon' rule will slam brakes on economy, critics say" (Page A1, April 25): The Bee's story on the state Air Resources Board's adoption of the Low Carbon Fuel Standard was incomplete.

A broad range of stakeholders voiced support for the standard, including electric utilities, electric car manufacturers, next-generation biofuels companies, natural gas providers and even Chevron.

As for cost, some people may be satisfied with having to hope and pray for stable and low oil prices, but as a state that is 97 percent dependent on a commodity the price of which has varied by 300 percent just in the last two years and whose rapid price increase in 2008 helped plunge the country into the current recession, we're not. The only defense against such economically damaging whipsaws is to offer consumers a choice, one they don't yet have. The Low Carbon Fuel Standard harnesses capitalism to do exactly that and, as a result, Californians will finally get some competition for their transportation fuel dollars, and alternative fuel makers will finally get sustainable demand for their products.

David Crane,  
Special adviser to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger for jobs and economic growth

[Merced Sun-Star, Letter to the Editor, Saturday, May 2, 2009:](#)

### **Letter: Soon to be moot**

Editor: Doesn't Merced -- opponents and proponents of the Wal-Mart distribution center -- realize that it could soon be a moot point as to environmental reports and everything else?

There will soon be a ready-built, ready-to-go, distribution center available when Gottschalks closes just down Highway 99. Look at the money it could save Wal-Mart in time and construction cost. As a plus for opponents, it would move all the jobs, revenue and future expansion to Madera County. The trucks will still be traveling on Highway 99 so Merced would lose everything but the air pollution.

Sounds like a win-win situation doesn't it, especially for Madera County, Wal-Mart and the people who have delayed the whole operation.

William Robers, Merced

[Letter to the Editor, Washington Post, Saturday, May 2, 2009:](#)

### **Paying for Cleaner Air**

A consensus emerged among witnesses at the House Energy and Commerce Committee's hearings on climate change that offers a way to protect consumers and prevent a windfall for power generators ["Democrats May Ease Bill's Emissions Rules," news story, April 25].

State regulators have mechanisms to ensure that the value of any free [emissions](#) allowances is passed to consumers rather than to utility shareholders. However, it is critical that Congress specify that, in the electricity industry, such permits go only to regulated local distribution utilities as a proxy for their customers.

Both President Obama and Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), chairman of the energy and environment subcommittee, say they want to protect consumers in a cap-and-trade system. Our proposal would do that for electricity customers. Power generators would have to buy their emissions allowances; proceeds would go to local utilities, which, because they are regulated, would pass them on to consumers. Furthermore, state regulators could direct proceeds toward energy efficiency and clean energy technologies, lowering compliance costs.

By properly targeting these free permits, Congress can ensure that consumers are protected while polluters pay for emitting carbon.

RICK MORGAN  
Commissioner  
D.C. Public Service Commission-Washington