

Learn about healthy air, living

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, June 2, 2009

You may remember "Spare the air," the alerts to valley residents to not to mow the lawn, barbecue or use their vehicles needlessly on bad air days. Last year, that seasonal campaign was set aside for a year-round promotion, Healthy Air Living. To help explain the effort, the Valley Air District is inviting the public to open houses where its staff will explain the goals and offer ideas on reducing pollution. Sessions scheduled in our area are:

- June 16, 6 to 8 p.m., Central Valley High School, 4033 S. Central Ave., Ceres
- June 25, 6 to 8 p.m., Merced College, Room LES-111
- July 21, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Nick Blom Regional Library, 4835 Sisk Road, Salida
- Aug. 6, 6 to 8 p.m., Westside Union Elementary School gymnasium, 659 K St., Los Banos

The district also is holding a session for businesses from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Thursday at its Modesto office at 4800 Enterprise Way. For details, call the office at 557-6400 or visit www.healthyairliving.com.

L.A. selects firms to collect 3,600 tons of trash daily

By Rick Orlov, Staff Writer

L.A. Daily News, Tuesday, June 2, 2009

Taking the next step to reduce Los Angeles' reliance on landfills, the Board of Public Works on Monday selected four firms that will compete for a contract to get rid of 3,600 tons of trash generated daily.

Board President Cynthia Ruiz said a recommendation from the city staff is expected in 60 days on the best way to proceed, with the goal of having no trash being dumped in landfills by 2025.

"We are on a pretty good track already," Ruiz said. "The city recycles 65 percent of its trash now, but getting to that final 35 percent is difficult."

The four finalists, selected from a field of 13, are California Renewable Technologies, Green Conversion Systems, Urbaser and Keppel Sehger, and Wheelabrator Technologies Inc.

California Renewable Technologies has a system that would convert the trash into compressed natural gas, which can then be used as fuel. The three others rely on incineration to get rid of the trash, officials said.

However, a moratorium on incineration is in effect, part of a court ruling imposed on the South Coast Air Quality Management District that prohibits the emission of particulates.

The AQMD is appealing the ruling. It is also working to develop a program that would allow trash to be incinerated if steps at mitigation were taken, officials said in a report to the Public Works Board.

Ruiz said Los Angeles is far ahead of other cities in diverting trash from landfills.

The city has expanded recycling to nearly 400,000 of the 540,000 apartments in the city. It also has an extensive recycling program for businesses and is working on a program to recycle waste generated by the Los Angeles Unified School District.

"We find that people are willing to participate in all recycling programs once they learn about it," Ruiz said. "Part of what we have to do is educate people."

Jets, Giants new stadium to be greener than most

By Tom Canavan, AP Sports Writer

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Tuesday, June 2, 2009

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J.—The New York Jets and Giants signed a memorandum of understanding with the Environmental Protection Agency that will make their new \$1.6 billion football stadium in the New Jersey Meadowlands one of the greenest in professional sports.

The agreement details ways the teams will reduce air pollution, conserve water and energy, improve waste management and reduce the environmental impact of construction on the stadium that is scheduled to open for the 2010 season.

Recycled steel, concrete and aluminum are being used in the building. The 82,500 seats are being made from recycled iron and plastic.

One goal is to reduce average annual water demand by 25 percent compared to the current Giants Stadium. Waterless urinals will save 2.7 million gallons of water and the synthetic turf will save 3.5 million gallons compared to natural grass. Energy-efficient products are expected to reduce energy consumption 30 percent. New mass transit links are expected to eliminate 5.6 million miles of car travel per year.

"The Meadowlands has been our home for many, many years," Giants chief executive John Mara said. "We owe it to our neighbors and fans and to our team and our employees to adopt the most environmentally responsible approach possible."

The Giants have been based at the Meadowlands since 1976. The Jets started playing games at the stadium in 1984.

Jets owner Woody Johnson said the teams decided early to go green in the building of the stadium.

"This is a starting platform, and it is our pledge going forward that we will be part of the societal movement representing this ... trying to be responsible," said Johnson, who wore a green Jets hat and a green tie.

Mara had earlier kidded Johnson about the building being green. The Giants' primary color is blue.

"What I will say to my friend Woody Johnson is that today and St. Patrick's Day will be the only two days that green is the preferred color in this building," Mara said.

Moran Alone in Rallying Opposition to Power Plant Rivals Steer Clear by Focusing on Alternatives

By Rosalind S. Helderman

Washington Post Staff Writer, Tuesday, June 2, 2009

This is the first in a series of stories about issues being discussed by the Democratic candidates for governor of Virginia, who will stand for the primary next Tuesday.

Gubernatorial candidate Brian Moran headlined a rally opposing the construction of a coal-fired power plant in southeast Virginia yesterday afternoon, a contentious local battle that has helped draw distinctions between Democrats on the critical question of how to meet the state's energy demands.

With one week left before the June 9 Democratic primary, Moran and his opponents, former Democratic National Committee chairman Terry McAuliffe and state Sen. R. Creigh Deeds (Bath), have expressed concern about the environmental impact of coal and touted cleaner alternatives. But only Moran is dead set against the \$4 billion plant in Surry County, between Richmond and Hampton Roads.

Moran says the plant, proposed to begin operating in 2017, will contribute to [air pollution](#) and will dump pollutants into the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

"I think it's important for Virginia voters to know where the next governor will stand," Moran said in April.

But McAuliffe and Deeds have noted that more than 50 percent of power generated today comes from coal, a level of production they say cannot be ended instantly. Both have emphasized the need to clean up coal use and have suggested that Moran's opposition to the Surry plant is an election-year shift designed to draw environmentally minded voters.

While in the House of Delegates, Moran voted for a 2004 bill that paved the way for a coal-fired plant in Wise County. He made comments supportive of coal. Moran's campaign has said the Wise plant was one part of a more complex energy bill. It was also smaller than the proposed Surry facility and outside the Chesapeake watershed.

A power company consortium proposing the Surry plant has estimated it would create 2,400 jobs during construction and 200 jobs when operational. It would also add 1,500 megawatts a day to the electrical power grid, at a time when experts are predicting power shortages.

First proposed in December, it would require multiple permit approvals before construction, and McAuliffe and Deeds say it is too early to rule out the project.

"I'm not ready to say yes or no to that plant today," Deeds has said. "I am willing to say we have to continue to invest in new energy sources."

Deeds has proposed the creation of an "energy research triangle" between Virginia universities. He has not dismissed coal, perhaps because doing so could alienate voters in his base in southwest Virginia, where coal mining is still a key part of the local economy.

McAuliffe has made "green" jobs a centerpiece of his campaign, calling for wind turbines off the coast and for using poultry waste as biofuel. He has said that he has "lots of concerns" about the proposed plant, but he has not taken a position.

"As governor, I never want another coal plant built," he said. "I want us to build wind farms, biomass, biodiesel and solar -- that's my emphasis."

Some locals in Surry have been supportive of the plant. But others, including resident Betsy Shepard, fear the impact of an industrial plant on the main street of Dendron, population 300. Shepard helped organize yesterday's rally, which came as the town council met to consider allowing Surry County to take over zoning of the site.

"You start to become a one issue voter," she said.

Senate rejects mandatory motorcycle smog tests

The Associated Press
in the Merced Sun-Star, Monday, June 1, 2009

SACRAMENTO -- A state senator has agreed to water down a bill that originally would have required smog checks for motorcycles.

The state Senate approved the legislation by Sen. Fran Pavley on Monday after she agreed to scale it back. It now goes to the Assembly.

Pavley, a Democrat from Santa Monica, wanted mandatory smog checks for motorcycles. She says they're more polluting than cars and that owners often make them worse by removing the catalytic converters.

Opponents say motorcycles get better gas mileage and that a smog check requirement would be the equivalent of another tax.

The latest version of Pavley's bill drops the smog-test provision. It now merely authorizes law enforcement officers to fine motorcyclists who remove the converters.

If the bill passes the Assembly, it would go to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a motorcycle owner himself.

Nevada gold mine closed due to mercury emissions

By Scott Sonner, Associated Press Writer
In the S.F. Chronicle, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Monday, June 1, 2009

Reno, Nev. (AP) -- State environmental regulators have ordered a northeast Nevada gold mine to shut down because it failed to meet a deadline to install equipment to reduce mercury emissions.

The Jerritt Canyon Mine, about 50 miles north of Elko, was directed to cease operations by midnight May 30, the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection confirmed Monday .

The Environmental Protection Division had issued an order in March 2008 requiring Queenstake Resources USA of Elko — a subsidiary of the Canada-based Yukon-Nevada Gold Corp. — to install new emission control systems by the end of that year at the mine.

The initial order had followed a yearlong investigation into mercury emissions. Mercury is a toxic metal that can damage the brain and nervous system.

Queenstake voluntarily stopped mining and processing ore in August 2008, and cited financial reasons.

State regulators issued a new order in March of this year that allowed the company to restart processing if it complied with most of the state's environmental requirements and pledged to install the mercury control system by May 30 on the so-called "roasters" that are used to superheat the gold-bearing ore.

As part of that process, naturally occurring mercury in the rock is converted into toxic vapor, which becomes airborne.

Company officials notified the state that they would not meet the deadline because of a delay in fabricating fiberglass ductwork.

Greg Remer, chief of the Nevada Bureau of Air Pollution Control, said in a letter to Queenstake chief operating officer Graham Dixon that approval of the mine's startup was based on assurances that the May 30 deadline would be met.

"Queenstake has not yet demonstrated compliance with the mercury emission limit specified by the order," he said.

Before its closure last August, the mine employed about 400 workers.

Environmental Protection Division spokeswoman Jill Lufrano said the mine cannot reopen until the state-of-the-art emission controls are installed.

"As far as we know, there is no definite time line for that to be accomplished," Lufrano said.

Lufrano has said the new system will reduce mercury air emissions to 175 pounds per year from the 1,700 pounds reported in 2007.

Nicole Sanches, a spokeswoman for Yukon-Nevada Gold at its headquarters in Vancouver, British Columbia, said the company no longer was processing ore at Jerritt Canyon as a result of the state's order.

"Everything has been suspended at Jerritt Canyon," she told The Associated Press.

In April, Dixon said the company intended to produce roughly 2,000 ounces of gold a week for the next year, or roughly 90,000 ounces through the end of the year from 800,000 tons of stockpiled

ore. Some of the ore is from Newmont Mining Corp.'s operations that Jerritt Canyon was under contract to mill.

[Letter to the LA Daily News, Tuesday, June 2, 2009:](#)

Don't delay air rules

Re "White House memo says EPA regulations are harmful" (May 15):

I completely disagree with the idea that the EPA should be even more limited in regulating greenhouse gas emissions from big businesses. It is these industries that have spent \$80 million lobbying to water down the current climate bill that is circulating around Congress.

Now we are left with a plan that won't significantly reduce pollution for another ten years and gives billions in taxpayer subsidies to oil and coal companies - the industries most responsible for causing global warming in the first place!

Congress must present legitimate legislation that holds these big businesses accountable before America and the world fall victim to the irreversible effects of global warming.

Azure Pallay, Alta

[L.A. Times commentary, Tuesday, June 2, 2009:](#)

Muzzling the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, a California pollution watchdog

The state's financial crisis is cited for plans to shut the small state office that gets big results -- perhaps too big.

By Gina M. Solomon

Under the cloak of the budget crisis, the Schwarzenegger administration is proposing to eliminate an office that has effectively taken on some of California's most insidious polluters, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, or OEHHA. This small, independent office of health scientists contained in the state's Environmental Protection Agency is a strange target if the goal is truly to save money. The total taxpayer bill for the scientists is only a few million dollars, which could easily be funded by tapping a small portion of unspent reserves from existing environmental fees.

So why, then, the proposal to eliminate the office? Here's my guess. The scientists at the OEHHA are charged with protecting, as their website puts it, "public health and the environment by scientific evaluation of risks posed by hazardous substances." In the past, that mission has pitted the OEHHA against a variety of powerful interests, including tobacco and chemical companies. In other words, the office has some powerful enemies.

Take Big Tobacco. The OEHHA was the first agency in the world to declare secondhand smoke to be a breast carcinogen, paving the way for stricter controls on secondhand smoke.

The diesel industry has its own reasons for being unhappy with the agency, which declared diesel exhaust to be a toxic air contaminant, forcing emission control measures that have cleared California's air.

Dow Chemical probably isn't too happy with the OEHHA either. The office is likely to propose listing bisphenol A, or BPA, as a chemical "known to cause birth defects or reproductive harm." Such a listing would mean that products containing BPA, which has been used widely in such things as baby bottles and food cans, would have to be labeled.

And then there is the issue of hexavalent chromium, or hex chrome, a potent human carcinogen. Last fall, the OEHHA finalized a proposal to set a lower safe drinking water level for hex chrome, but the new standard has been held up for months in the governor's office.

Hex chrome gained wide public attention in the 2000 movie "Erin Brockovich." The true story on

which the film was based occurred in Hinkley, Calif., a town in the Mojave Desert with the highest U.S. levels of hex chrome in drinking water. The chemical fouling Hinkley's water came from a Pacific Gas & Electric facility that had contaminated the local groundwater. Brockovich's famous investigation of the high rates of cancer and other diseases in the town -- and the multimillion-dollar legal settlement it spawned -- have not resolved everything. The contaminated plume of groundwater is still there, and it's spreading. It would be expensive for PG&E to clean up this site to a more stringent standard. And because hex chrome is a national issue, polluters across the country would hate to see California adopt stringent regulations that could point the way for other states to take action.

Not all of the OEHHA's foes are external. Even other boards and departments at Cal/EPA might have a motive to see the agency's wings clipped. OEHHA scientists refused to sign off on the Department of Pesticide Regulation assessment of the notoriously toxic fumigant methyl bromide. When the pesticide regulators attempted to circumvent the OEHHA and set standards that wouldn't protect the health of residents living near agricultural fields, the state Court of Appeal ruled in July 2008 that the Department of Pesticide Regulation must consult with the OEHHA before making decisions.

So you get the idea. This is a feisty little office of scientists who conscientiously strive to do their job of scientifically assessing health risks in our air, water, food, soil and consumer products. Sometimes the little guy wins in these David-versus-Goliath fights. But more often he loses, and if the OEHHA gets eliminated, we all lose.

Fortunately, the fight's not over. The Legislature can fix the problem by preserving the OEHHA as an independent office inside Cal/EPA and strengthen it by consolidating other risk assessment functions there. The OEHHA should be funded by its fair share of fees. Polluters must pay, and science must prevail.

Gina M. Solomon is a physician and senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council. She is also an associate clinical professor of medicine at UC San Francisco and director of its occupational and environmental medicine residency program.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Cuba is in vigor trying to cut back measures that will reduce energy consumption. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at (559) 230-5851.

Entren en vigor en Cuba medidas drásticas para reducir consumo de energía

El Periodico de Mexico, Tuesday, June 02, 2009

La Habana, (EFE).- En Cuba entró en vigor hoy un drástico plan de "medidas excepcionales" dictadas por el Gobierno para ahorrar energía y reducir el consumo, en un intento de paliar los efectos de la crisis financiera internacional, que agravó los problemas crónicos de la economía de la isla.

El semanario oficial Trabajadores alertó hoy a los responsables de empresas e instituciones estatales, que consumen la mitad de la energía de la isla, que enfrentarán severas sanciones si no cumplen los planes de ahorro, siguiendo la campaña de advertencias y amonestaciones de los demás medios cubanos, todos estatales.

El gobierno que preside desde hace 16 meses el general Raúl Castro anunció la semana pasada las "medidas excepcionales" para reducir el consumo de combustibles y señaló que recurrirá a los apagones de no lograr ese objetivo.

El plan, para el que no se ha fijado un límite de tiempo, paraliza desde las seis de la tarde (23.00 GMT) las entidades que no presten servicio público, limita el uso de aires acondicionados a cinco horas diarias y ordena apagar las cámaras de refrigeración dos horas cada 24.

También se reducirán los servicios públicos de transporte, con disminución de horarios, rutas y frecuencias, mientras que en el sector comercial es evidente el desabastecimiento creciente.

Funcionarios gubernamentales afirman que Cuba carece de los suficientes recursos para adquirir combustibles por encima de lo previsto y que, además, han caído el turismo y los envíos de remesas de dinero, dos de las principales fuentes de divisas del único Estado comunista de América.

El ministro de Economía y Planificación, Marino Murillo, declaró recientemente que la crítica situación económica cubana y la falta de liquidez del Gobierno se podrán amortiguar "sólo con la eficiencia y el ahorro".

El sector estatal deberá reducir su gasto en un doce por ciento respecto a los primeros meses del año, porque el exceso sobre lo presupuestado ya ha costado unos 90 millones de dólares, según el ministro.

Advirtió, además, que el seis por ciento de crecimiento que se planteó Cuba para 2009 "no se va a lograr", y que ahora sólo espera "2,4 ó 2,5 por ciento".

En los primeros meses de 2009 las importaciones cuadruplicaron a las exportaciones, según fuentes oficiales.

La economía cubana empeoró en el último año con tres huracanes que causaron pérdidas por 10,000 millones de dólares, el aumento de los precios de las importaciones, la caída de las exportaciones y la reducción de ingresos por turismo y remesas, todo lo cual produjo la aguda falta de liquidez.