

Sharing the ride: Kings County vanpool program flourishes as national model

By Eiji Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel, Sunday, June 7, 2009

Driving your car to work is getting more and more expensive. But to most, taking a bus is way too inconvenient. And commuting to work by train is difficult unless you live and work in downtown areas where the railroad passes through and trains actually leave and arrive on time.

So what's a perfect mode of public transportation that gets you directly from Point A to Point B in the Valley while saving significantly on gas money?

A vanpool.

Kings County, of all places, seems to have figured it out.

Interest in public transportation programs inspired by Kings County's booming vanpool business has been springing up from San Diego to Montana to New York, according to the local program's director.

The Kings County Area Public Transit Agency's vanpool -- originally envisioned to help farm workers and correctional officers -- has flourished since its 2002 launch, providing a key option that takes a bite out of workers' gas bills and help the environment in the absence of time-efficient public transportation services in the area.

Now, programs modeled on the Kings County system are being explored in different areas across the state and the country, said the agency's Executive Director Ron Hughes.

"Several times a month, we get a call from different places or people interested in the project," Hughes said. "There is a guy in North Dakota I work with. There's a lady in Missoula, Mont., as well as people in Washington state. And there are others I can't always keep in touch with."

Kings County's vanpool is finding itself in a whirlwind of attention.

The Environmental Defense Fund, a national think tank, recently issued a report highlighting model transit projects, including the one in Kings County. The report was welcomed by congressional leaders as setting the standard for transit investment in the upcoming transportation bill.

Co-founder of United Farm Workers, Dolores Huerta, was to speak with U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis this week to advocate for replication of the program in other parts of the country where farm workers live, Hughes said.

Out-of-area politicians like Rep. Bob Filner of San Diego are now interested. Hughes said he was invited to speak with the Democratic congressman this past Friday.

But none of that gets much media attention. The agency doesn't go out of its way to publicize its success.

"We're a well-kept secret," Hughes said.

But for how long?

Commuters' choice

Though little publicized, Kings County's vanpool program is booming -- mostly by word of mouth.

That's how Olivia Guzman of Hanford found out about the program.

Guzman, staff service analyst at Avenal State Prison, said she has vanpooled since the program's beginning.

"One thing good about it is that I loved the fact that I could just relax while somebody else was driving to work," Guzman said. Plus, the commute cost her only about \$50 a month.

Now she volunteers as the main driver of her van. The main benefit: She pays nothing for her commute.

"I'm not paying anything right now. That's where the benefit is," she said. "It's a 45-minute drive one way. It can add up with tire rotation, oil changes plus wear and tear on your car."

When the gas price shot up beyond \$4 a gallon last fall, Curt Mitchell of Exeter took matters into his own hands. Mitchell, an investigator for Kings County's human services agency, joined a vanpool with 11 or so people who live in Visalia and to its east but work in Hanford.

"It was an immediate benefit for my personal budget, for sure," Mitchell said. "When you include gas, maintenance and care you have to put into your car, it had to be around \$300-\$400 a month."

Mitchell says the cost of his commute is now between \$65-\$120 a month.

Trinka Stone, a state employee, commutes between Hanford and downtown Fresno every day. She's driven her own Dodge Ram. She's taken Amtrak. In the end, she initiated vanpooling.

"[I was] tired of the train never being on time and the high costs of driving myself to and from work," she said.

The agency touts cost saving to society achieved by the vanpool as well.

In 2008, vanpool vehicles were responsible for eliminating 404,314 vehicle-commuting trips, cutting 551 tons of emissions and saving \$59.1 million in societal costs by saving money for riders and avoiding fatalities and injuries, according to data provided by the agency.

"We need to clean up the air and clear our highways. The only viable program out there is a vanpool type of project where people share a ride and travel to work," Hughes said in a previous interview with The Sentinel.

"We're all concerned about the air. We're all concerned about the congestion. But what are we doing about it? The easiest solution is take 11 cars off the road and put these people in a van. We've done that 400 times."

Originally started in 2001 with a few vans transporting correctional officers from Visalia to Corcoran, the program has since enjoyed rapid growth.

Today some 390 vans issued by the agency, including 120 for farm workers, travel through the five-county area spanning from Kern County to Madera County and beyond. In addition to groups that commute to the Lemoore base, downtown Fresno and 10 prisons scattered across the Valley, there are groups using the vans in such remote areas as Taft, Atwater, the Salinas Valley and Ventura.

The agency is adding 60 more vans this summer.

Future of ridesharing

More favorable news for the local rideshare program: The new San Joaquin Valley Express Study, released this week, concluded that a commuter rail would be the ideal transportation option, but given the current economic climate, the more realistic alternative is vanpooling.

That may be exactly the kind of paradigm shift Hughes has been looking for.

"You can put a bus here because you don't have enough congregation of people. But if you can put at least 10 people together who are going between two places, that becomes a van," Hughes said. The GPS system tracks how many passengers the vans take, where they went and where they got off -- all monitoring measures required of public buses.

By doing so, Hughes hopes to convince federal lawmakers to make funding available for vanpool programs like the one here. The vanpool here is an unsubsidized, self-sufficient operation. Funding could make it even more cost efficient for users in a wider area, Hughes say.

"When the gas gets to \$6 to \$7 a gallon, and that's going to be within five years, we're going to have a different conversation here," Hughes said. "This is going to be one of the key elements in getting around town and between towns. Whether you work in fields or work in Fresno, if you live 40 miles from the work center, you'll have to find ways to get there economically."

The recent study also called for Valley counties to work together to secure long-range transportation funding while working in the short term on air-quality rules that favor ride-sharing.

The transit agency is doing just that.

A proposal to form a new regional joint powers authority among five Valley counties is already on the table.

"The project has reached a point where it is attracting the attention of local, state and federal representatives and facing pressure to expand beyond its current area," Hughes said.

Regionalizing the program would ensure its future stability and affordability, he said.

If everything goes well, the newly expanded agency is expected to start operating as soon as July 2010.

Tulare's Phillip Mattingly takes on challenges with unusual ideas

By Gerald Carroll, staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Saturday, June 6, 2009

TULARE — At the California Speedway in Fontana this spring, college-age participants in the Shell Eco-Challenge managed to squeeze 2,757.1 miles per gallon of gasoline out of a prototype vehicle, organizers announced.

Skeptical? Phillip Mattingly isn't.

Mattingly, a Tulare-based artist, screenwriter, musician and consultant, said he has exceeded 50 miles per gallon in his 2007 Toyota Camry using the latest in fuel-efficient technology.

In the near future, he believes, that will be nothing.

"You can't believe what young people are capable of doing," said Mattingly, 51. "We all need to think like that."

Mattingly plans to work with such young people through a proposed auto racing/science facility in Tulare.

The project would be part of the Tulare Motor Sports Complex, which has drawn opposition from environmentalists fearful of pollution and noise. But Mattingly, a Sierra Club member who often uses self-composed poetry and music to describe his views on the environment and modern life, said the project would incorporate environmentally friendly features.

And the upside is enormous, he said.

"Imagine the most brilliant minds in science as guest speakers in the science center, which will be located right next to the track," Mattingly said.

Dave Swindell, whose company ran the Eco-Challenge, is working with Mattingly and other Tulare-area residents to create the science center.

Swindell said he appreciates Mattingly's deeply philosophical approach to solving major world problems like air pollution, fuel waste and poor water quality.

Mattingly energizes young minds to think of new solutions to old troubles, Swindell said.

"His ideas are valid and they are great," he said.

Darrel Pyle, city manager for Tulare, said Mattingly's optimism and vision for a combination racing oval and research-and-development facility give the project more widespread appeal.

"As for noise and other complaints, people need to realize that use of that facility for major racing events will average two or three weekends a year on the average," Pyle said. "The rest of the year, it can be an educational campus and learning opportunity for all."

Mattingly and his wife, Joy, write screenplays for Hollywood productions and consult on a variety of high-profile entertainment projects. The couple lives in Tulare with 15-year-old daughter Jayne, and three grown children live in Montana.

"It's been a great life and a great family," Mattingly said.

Clean-air lawsuit against WA dairy dropped

The Associated Press

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Sunday, June 7, 2009

YAKIMA, Wash.—A citizens group has dropped its federal court lawsuit against a Washington state dairy that sought to limit methanol pollution.

According to the lawsuit filed in April in U.S. District Court in Spokane, the methanol is emitted into the air by animal waste and silage.

The suit was filed by the group Community Association for Restoration of the Environment, based in Granger, Wash., and also known as CARE, against DeRuyter Brothers Dairy of Outlook, Wash. It contended the dairy should be required to obtain permits under the Clean Air Act.

The Yakima Herald-Republic said CARE had hopes of using the DeRuyter case to force dairies to apply for state and federal permits under the Clean Air Act for emitting 10 tons or more of methanol a year. Methanol from decomposing manure and silage is identified as a hazardous air pollutant by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Industry lawyers said CARE's case collapsed because of faulty science.

"Their expert witness was unraveled in deposition," said John Nelson, a Spokane-based lawyer who represented DeRuyter Brothers.

Nelson said CARE agreed to withdraw the case and not refile it if he agreed not to seek recovery of legal fees and costs, which DeRuyter estimates approach \$500,000.

Charlie Tebbutt of The Western Environmental Law Center in Eugene, Ore., represented CARE and conceded problems with the data collected by its expert witness. "A few samples were compromised for reasons we aren't clear about," he said.

But Tebbutt added, "We are still convinced that DeRuyter and others are emitting more than the law allows. The stink in the smell in the Lower (Yakima) Valley is hazardous chemicals."

The Lower Yakima Valley is dense with dairies, with at least 74,000 cows on 72 farms.

Complaints about odor are routinely collected by the Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency, officials at the agency said. That odor isn't caused by a single substance but rather a number of compounds.

Environmentalists have been largely unsuccessful in bringing the federal Clean Air Act to bear on the emissions of gases, such as ammonia, from large animal-feeding operations.

"It's very difficult to do," said Frank Mitloehner, associate professor and air-quality specialist at the University of California, Davis.

Sacramento area drivers take the 'Car-Free Challenge'

By Tony Bizjak

Sacramento Bee, Sunday, June 7, 2009

Joan Edelstein of West Sacramento made a public vow last week. She will drive her car no more than 200 miles this month.

The go-green pledge puts her among a handful of Sacramentans who've announced similar intentions at the new "Car-Free Challenge" Web site – not for pocketbook reasons, they say, but because it's the right thing to do.

Just days in, however, Edelstein is learning an inconvenient truth about the movement to reduce driving.

Depending on where you live, it's not easy.

Edelstein, an education consultant who works on asthma issues, feels it's important though, and she wants to make a statement.

"I had issues about using cars to begin with," said the hybrid-car owner, who as a kid didn't think twice about walking to school or the store. "I'm excited to do this."

She jumped when she heard about the challenge sponsored by TransForm, an advocacy group hoping to send a message that there's a "critical mass" of people out there who don't want to sit in traffic and pollute and are willing to try something new.

Edelstein lives in a new energy-efficient, tri-level condo in West Sacramento only three miles from work. She's concerned enough about global warming that she's used online calculators to measure her carbon footprint.

Yet, from where she lives, she has to drive to work and to the store. The industrial streets on her route aren't safe or convenient for walking, and there is no bus.

"I find it very strange I can't just walk to do my grocery shopping," she said.

Her 200-miles pledge – it pencils out to less than seven miles a day – means she will use her car only to commute and buy food.

But Edelstein already was ahead of the game.

Even without the Car-Free Challenge, her driving profile ranks her among the daintiest of gas sippers in the Sacramento region.

On a typical day she estimates she may drive about 12 miles. That's far below the Sacramento average of 50 miles per weekday per household, according to estimates by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments, the region's transportation planning agency.

Residents in downtown and midtown Sacramento as well as downtown Marysville rank at the low end of the driving scale, averaging fewer than 25 miles a day, SACOG data show.

They're like midtown resident Mary Marks, another Car-Free Challenge participant, who enjoys her drive-less lifestyle.

She tossed a dust cover over her car and bought a bike some time ago. Her commute to her downtown office is just a few blocks.

"I even ride my bike to church," she said.

It's easier, she acknowledges, because she lives in one of the region's most densely packed areas. Housing, offices, stores and nightspots are intermingled. Walking is easy and bus service frequent.

By comparison, households in more rural Granite Bay average more than 55 miles a day, according to SACOG's analysis. The region's true long-haulers, at more than 75 miles a day, live mainly in the rural foothill areas.

SACOG, made up of city and county leaders, has made it a top goal to reduce the number of miles people drive their cars by promoting tighter communities with better mixes of housing, jobs, usable transit, and bike and pedestrian routes.

Also, Sacramento Congresswoman Doris Matsui is pushing the locally engineered "Complete Streets" concept at the national level with a bill requiring that states and metropolitan areas define

and design many streets as equal-rights territory for pedestrians, cyclists and buses, as well as cars.

Matsui and others in transportation and energy circles say they hope to take advantage of new Washington leadership to reduce reliance on foreign oil and to diminish greenhouse gas emissions.

SACOG head Mike McKeever believes that will make it easier – even enjoyable – for average people to make lifestyle changes that reduce congestion and air pollution, such as living where it's as easy to stroll to Starbucks as it is to drive.

"I don't think it's asking people to accept pain," he said. "We're looking for increased quality of life."

Edelstein of West Sacramento and others aren't waiting for government to design better communities.

They say they want to step up now and set an example by doing it publicly.

Edelstein calls it being eco-conscious.

This week she took the train to San Francisco for business. And if she has a meeting in downtown Sacramento, she'll walk, she said – but not in high heels or when it's too hot.

"I can't walk when it is over 90 degrees," she said.

Jim Brown of Curtis Park, who signed up for the Car-Free Challenge, says he is doing well but he, too, has run into a conflict.

He pledged to drive less than 100 miles this month, but also agreed to drop by a friend's house in Sacramento's Pocket neighborhood to feed the cat during a week the friend is away. That's a 10-mile trip.

"This is on my conscience," Brown said. "I made the pledge to keep my mileage low, and now I have this cat-sitting gig."

So far, his bike has been the answer.

Edelstein is no bike rider, though. She's just hoping more like-minded carbon footprint watchers will move into her neighborhood.

"Hopefully" then, she said, "we'll get more buses."

EPA sued over air pollution claims

By Susan Montoya Bryan, Associated Press Writer

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Saturday, June 6, 2009

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is being sued by an environmental group that claims the agency has failed to safeguard public health in the West by not limiting the transmission of air pollution across state lines.

The EPA requires states to have plans aimed at addressing the interstate transport of ozone pollution, the primary component of smog, and fine particles or soot, but WildEarth Guardians claims New Mexico, California and a handful of other Western states do not have such plans.

"EPA is two years late in fulfilling its mandatory duty to prepare federal good neighbor plans protecting the public from interstate soot and smog," according to the lawsuit filed Friday in federal court in San Francisco.

EPA regional spokeswoman Wendy Chavez said the agency has not had a chance to review the lawsuit and she would not be able to comment further on the pending litigation.

WildEarth Guardians warned in March it would take the agency to court if it failed to enforce the interstate transport requirements of the federal Clean Air Act. The group is concerned because

the state plans were due in May 2007, but New Mexico, California, Colorado, Idaho, North Dakota, Oklahoma and Oregon still lack approved plans.

The lawsuit claims the EPA has neither approved the plans for the states nor implemented a federal plan. If a state fails to submit a plan, federal law requires the agency to prepare one for that state.

New Mexico environment officials have said they turned in their plan in 2007 but EPA has yet to approve it.

WildEarth Guardians argues that pollution problems in the West are on the rise. The group said Los Angeles, Denver, Phoenix and other cities have violated clean air standards limiting ozone, and the problem is popping up in rural areas such as the Four Corners—where New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona and Utah meet.

The Four Corners region is home to two coal-fired power plants and the San Juan Basin, one of the largest natural gas fields in the nation.

Jeremy Nichols, WildEarth Guardians' climate and energy program director, said the lawsuit is aimed at prodding the EPA to enact regional air pollution controls that will ensure residents are not affected by smog or soot that is produced in neighboring states.

Nichols said ozone should be dealt with on both local and regional levels before it becomes a problem big enough to force Western states to change the way they operate.

"Clearly, where we're at now is everybody wants to point the finger at everybody else, but nobody really wants to take responsibility for their own impacts," he said. "Hopefully, this is part of chipping away at that mindset and part of bringing people together to come up with collaborative solutions on this issue."

China: Will ensure stimulus protects environment

By Henry Sanderson, Associated Press Writer

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Friday, June 5, 2009

BEIJING—China said Friday it will strictly monitor the government's economic stimulus package for projects that cause pollution, addressing worries that officials would ignore the environment in an effort to maintain China's high economic growth rates.

The stimulus will not damage the environment, Ministry of Environmental Protection Vice Minister Zhang Lijun told a news conference.

China's 4 trillion yuan (\$586 billion) stimulus package was unveiled last November to boost domestic demand during the global financial crisis.

Zhang said only projects concerning infrastructure and improving public welfare will get approval for fast-track environmental assessments—meaning everything else will be subject to a more rigorous assessment.

The environmental ministry has approved 365 projects related to the stimulus since last year and rejected or postponed 29 high-energy ones, such as petrochemical plants, steel factories and coal-powered power plants, he said.

A total of 210 billion yuan (\$30.7 billion) of the stimulus money is earmarked for environmental protection projects and improving energy efficiency.

Zhang said less than one-tenth of the 230 billion yuan (\$33.8 billion) the central government spent of the stimulus in the fourth quarter of last year and the beginning of this year went to that.

"The government's endeavors to stimulate domestic demand and stimulate economic growth will have little effect on our environmental protection efforts," Zhang said.

Still, he warned that some regions in China are still building projects without getting the required approval from environmental authorities. He did not give any details.

Environmental problems in China's vast rural areas are "increasingly acute," he said.

"The environmental situation in China remains tough, the surface water pollution is serious, the coastal waters across the country are slightly polluted, and in some cities air pollution is still serious," he said.

Still, measures to control pollution have been strengthened as seen in lower levels of some pollutants this year, Zhang said.

A measure of sulfur dioxide, an air pollutant that causes acid rain, fell 4.9 percent in the first quarter of this year compared to the same period a year earlier, and chemical oxygen demand, a measure of water pollution, fell 2.9 percent.

"What we can see is a continued momentum of decline," Zhang said.

The government set targets to cut chemical oxygen demand and emissions of sulfur dioxide by 10 percent between 2006 to 2010, and officials have said China will meet the goals.

Texas suing BP for pollution violations

By Michael Graczyk, Associated Press Writer

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Thursday, June 4, 2009

HOUSTON—BP Products North America Inc. is being sued by Texas authorities who accuse the petrochemical giant of 46 pollution violations at its Texas City refinery—including one tied to an explosion that killed 15 workers and injured 170 others four years ago.

The suit filed by the Texas Attorney General's Office in state court in Austin last month and announced Thursday alleges the BP Texas City refinery, about 35 miles southeast of Houston, spewed hundreds of thousands of pounds of pollutants in a "pattern of unnecessary and unlawful emissions."

The state said the emissions were the result of poor operational practices and inadequate maintenance at the refinery, the nation's third largest and BP's biggest, refining 460,000 barrels of crude oil daily.

"BP Products is charged with polluting our environment, concealing information from authorities and harming Texans," Attorney General Greg Abbott said in a statement. "In recent years, more than 45 unlawful pollutant emissions occurred at BP's Texas City facility.

"This enforcement action holds BP accountable for failing to comply with environmental, health and safety laws that are intended to protect Texans from harm," he said.

According to the suit, which court documents indicated was filed May 22, among the improperly released air pollutants were volatile organic compounds, carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulfide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides.

BP spokesman Ronnie Chappell said Thursday the company had no comment on the lawsuit specifically but that the company's goal was to "resolve this matter and address the state's concerns."

"We are working hard to reduce the number of emissions events at the Texas City refinery," Chappell said, noting more than \$1 billion in investments to upgrade facilities. "When they fully take hold, the improvements we are making should deliver a significant decrease in the number, size and frequency of emissions events at the refinery."

The suit seeks an injunction requiring BP to take all necessary steps to eliminate future unlawful emissions. The state also wants BP install additional air-quality monitors "to ensure future compliance with emissions restrictions" and is seeking unspecified civil penalties, fines and attorneys' fees.

A hearing on the state's request for a temporary injunction is scheduled for June 29 in Austin.

Abbott said the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality filed 15 enforcement orders against BP between 2000 and 2007. He said the company was required to report unlawful emissions to the state environmental agency and fix the problems. BP, however, not only failed to comply with time deadlines to report the emissions to state authorities but also failed to take steps to prevent additional illegal emissions in a timely manner, Abbott said.

The fatal explosion in March 2005 led to an unlawful release of contaminants for more than 160 hours, Abbott said. The TCEQ later determined the event was "avoidable" and was the result of BP's "poor operations practices."

In March of this year, a federal judge in Houston approved a plea deal, highly criticized by victims, that fined parent British oil company BP PLC \$50 million for its criminal role in the blast. The agreement included BP's subsidiary pleading guilty to a violation of the Clean Air Act, a felony, and also placed the company on three years probation.

A month earlier, BP agreed to pay almost \$180 million to settle a federal pollution case with the Department of Justice and Environmental Protection Agency. That agreement, which federal authorities said addressed BP's failure to comply with a 2001 consent decree, included spending of \$161 million on pollution controls, \$12 million in penalties and \$6 million to reduce air pollution near the Texas City refinery.

[Modesto Bee Editorial, Sunday, June 7, 2009:](#)

The bus is leaving the station - so get on it

Take the fact that our air quality, especially in the summer, ranks among the worst in the country.

Add to that the fact that the price of gas is heading toward \$3 per gallon.

And the fact that between pits and potholes, our roads are in awful shape.

And the fact that you never know when you're going to leave work and find your car's been stolen by one of those folks whose photos appear every Saturday in the paper.

And the fact that fees and fines -- for public parking, for overtime or illegal parking and moving violations - are going up.

Add it all up and you've got plenty of reasons to leave your car at home and find another way to get to work.

You can try walking, or riding a bike, or carpooling. Or, you can try using public transportation - otherwise known as riding the bus.

In metropolitan cities of almost any size, public transportation - from buses to light rail to rapid transit - is a no-brainer: It's convenient, it's efficient and it's economical.

But in Modesto and most other medium-sized cities, especially in the San Joaquin Valley, getting people to use public transportation is like pulling teeth.

Stanislaus County boasts public transportation in each of its incorporated cities, and a county service that can shuttle people between cities. That service includes a line that can carry students between Modesto and the California State University, Stanislaus, campus.

In Modesto, the Modesto Area Express, otherwise known as MAX, has more than 20 routes. On a typical day, buses log more than 5,500 miles to shopping centers, schools, medical complexes and government offices.

Here are 10 reasons to give MAX - or CAT in Ceres, BLAST in Turlock, or START in the county - a try:

1. You'll be helping improve the environment. Vehicle exhaust fouls the air something fierce, and, as we know, dirty air causes all sorts of health problems. This should be reason enough to do your part to reduce emissions. But, if it's not ...

2. You'll be saving money. On fuel, on shake-rattle-and-roll wear and tear on you and your vehicle, on parking and other fees.
3. You'll be getting at least a bit more fresh air and exercise as you walk to and from your home and workplace to the nearest bus stop -- especially if you do so briskly.
4. You'll be reducing the stress that comes from being behind the wheel. After all, how often to you hear of "bus rider rage"?
5. You'll have some free time on your way to work. Time to read (we recommend your local newspaper), make a few calls, check your email, or "tweet," catch a few z-z-z-z's, or chat with people you meet on your route.
6. You'll have a chance to unwind on the way home. Time to breathe deeply, decompress and let the stresses of the work day disappear long before you walk in the front door.
7. You'll never have to worry about finding a parking place, or if you park on the street, having to duck out and move your car every hour or so to avoid a costly ticket.
8. You'll have an easy way to ride-and-bike; Modesto buses have bike racks that allow for a sweat-free bus ride to work in the morning, and a healthy, heart-pumping bike ride home at day's end. Or vice versa.
9. You'll be helping improve the public transportation system. More riders mean more revenue, more buses and more routes.
10. You'll be setting an example that, who knows, may encourage a family member, friend or fellow worker to join you.

We encourage you to give riding the bus a try. Go to one of the Web sites we've listed and find the right route. Start using the bus one day a week and then work your way up to.

The bus is about to leave - and we hope to see you on board!

- Stanislaus Regional Transit

www.srt.org

800-262-1516

- Modesto Area Express

www.modestoareaexpress.com

521-1274

- Modesto Transit Center

www.srt.org/transitcenter_customerinfo.htm

521-1274

- Bus Line Service of Turlock

www.ci.turlock.ca.us/citydepartments/developmentservices/transitservices

668-5600

- Ceres Area Transit

www.ci.ceres.ca.us/CeresAreaTransit/CAT.html

527-4991

- Riverbank/Oakdale Transit Authority

www.rotabus.com

869-7444

- San Joaquin Regional Transit

www.sanjoaquinrtd.com

943-1111

- eTrans -- Escalon bus service

541-6645

- Ripon bus service

599-7441 or 599-2108

- Manteca Transit

www.ci.manteca.ca.us/mantecatransit/general.htm

239-9236

- Merced County Transit (Offers connections to Turlock & Gustine)

www.mercedthebus.com

800-345-3111

- Dial-A-Ride

Modesto, 527-4900

Turlock, Denair, 668-5600

Ceres, 527-4991

Newman, Patterson, Waterford, 800-262-1516

Escalon, 541-6645

Oakdale, Riverbank 869-7444

Manteca, 239-9236

Merced County, 384-3111

- Express service to commuter/BART

Altamont Commuter Express

www.acerail.com

800-411-7245

- Bay Area Rapid Transit

www.bart.gov

510-441-2278

- Commute Connection (Ridesharing)

www.commuteconnection.com

800-527-4273

[Contra Costa Times and Tri-Valley Herald guest commentary, Sunday, June 7, 2009:](#)

Viewpoint: Governor is trying to muzzle a pollution watchdog

By Gina M. Solomon

UNDER THE CLOAK of the California budget crisis, the Schwarzenegger administration is proposing to eliminate an office that effectively has taken on some of the state'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 truly is to save money. The total taxpayer bill for the scientists is only a few million dollars, which easily could 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 Web site 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 probably will 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.

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 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. Because hex chrome is a national issue, polluters across the U.S. 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 is 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 the University of California, San Francisco and director of its occupational and environmental medicine residency program.

Modesto Bee Guest Commentary, Sunday, June 7, 2009:

Less is new more for environment, economy

By Ed Begley Jr.

A funny thing happened on the way to the economic downturn. As our iPods were getting smaller and smaller (along with our home values and 401Ks), people began to worry about all they've been consuming.

Somewhere along the way people actually started to recognize that less can indeed mean more. It's something I've practiced for many years -- and I couldn't be happier that the nation seems to be joining in.

I have always been inspired by the lessons I learned from my sensible, thrifty parents -- and spurred by my desire to see those values embraced universally. From my parents' Depression-era perspective, buying and using only what you need, turning off lights and re-using everyday items just made people better citizens.

Back then, they called it "common sense." We didn't know how important these actions were to the environment. But we knew what they meant to our pocketbooks -- and we understood the idea that using less ensured that our neighbors also would benefit.

And that's the example that I've always tried to set in my own life and share with others.

When it comes to the environment, take the baby steps first. Today I drive an electric car powered by the sun, my home is highly energy efficient and I contribute precious little to landfills. But I've had 40 years of time to work toward these goals. The average household can start with a single compact fluorescent light bulb or a solitary recycling bin -- and the benefits of these actions will become apparent almost immediately. What's good for the environment is also good for the bottom line.

Today, due to the current economic climate, Americans are re-discovering the most basic of environmental lessons. We're recognizing that less is the new "more." New limits on credit may have forced us to lower consumer spending habits, but we're discovering that our lives can become enriched through less consumption.

If "stuff" really made us happy, then there would be nothing but happy people living in Beverly Hills and unhappy people living in the bush.

That's not to say that I live a life of compromise -- far from it. I have a home, a computer, a fax machine, a cell phone. As I tell friends who ask ... "I can still give you a cool beverage and a warm shower; I'm just going to do it more efficiently." That is the heart of a "less is more" approach.

If the past 40 years have taught us anything, it's that opponents of environmental policy didn't see the connection between a healthy environment and a healthy economy.

Policies and protections put in place to preserve our world have not crippled business, destroyed entrepreneurial motivation or damaged the nation's economic vitality. In fact, just the opposite has occurred. There are four times the amount of cars in Los Angeles today than in 1970, yet we have half the smog. And we didn't go broke doing it. Today, there are more rising companies, developing technologies and burgeoning businesses focused on environmental concerns than at any time in our history.

It may feel like it's been a long four decades, but now we really are witnessing a convergence of environmental, business, social and political trends that was only a fleeting hope in 1970.

As evidence, I point to a fantastic new effort I was privileged with helping to launch San Diego's "Stand for Less" (www.standforless.com) campaign last month. Organized by the California Department of Conservation, the public-private partnership is a focused effort to educate citizens on how to lead more sustainable lifestyles by increasing energy efficiency, protecting and conserving water resources, recycling and preserving clean air.

Though we face many challenges today, I am filled with hope that by "standing for less" we are all learning to live larger. In that sense, "less" has truly become the new "more."

Ed Begley, Jr., an actor and longtime environmentalist, wrote this article for the California Department of Conservation.

[Sacramento Bee Commentary, Friday, June 5, 2009:](#)

Eugene Robinson: Something smells about burial plans for carbon dioxide

By Eugene Robinson

President Barack Obama should be applauded for taking climate change seriously, recognizing that the phenomenon can be traced to the burning of fossil fuels and intensifying the search for viable solutions.

In one of its centerpiece initiatives, however, the administration may be digging a very expensive dry hole.

I mean that literally. The plan is to meet ambitious targets for limiting emissions of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse" gases through development and widespread use of an unproven technology known as – prepare for your eyes to glaze over – carbon capture and storage.

That clunky phrase has a simple meaning: Siphon off the carbon dioxide from the smokestacks of power plants, before the stuff has a chance to warm the atmosphere, and pump it deep underground where it can be entombed forever. Theoretically.

This idea is fundamental to the "clean coal" initiative that Obama and many in Congress tout so enthusiastically. About half the electricity consumed in this country is produced in coal-fired power plants – which is not surprising, given that the supply is so abundant that the United States has been called "the Saudi Arabia of coal." Power plants fueled by natural gas release less carbon dioxide – but natural gas is more expensive. Nuclear power plants release no carbon dioxide at all – but there's the problem of what to do with the nuclear waste.

It's no surprise that the climate change policy being developed by the White House and Congress assumes that coal – responsible for 36 percent of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, according to the Department of Energy – will continue to play a dominant role in keeping the lights on and the air conditioners humming.

"This is America – we figured out how to put a man on the moon in 10 years," Obama said last year during the campaign. "You can't tell me we can't figure out how to burn coal that we mine right here in the United States of America and make it work."

Maybe, maybe not. It is indeed feasible to capture the carbon produced by coal-burning power plants and bury it. But it is expensive – a power plant capable of carbon capture would cost up to 50 percent more to build than a conventional plant, and that doesn't take into account the cost of the massive infrastructure needed to transport the carbon to storage sites and pump it underground.

And would the stuff stay down there? The whole point of the exercise, remember, would be to keep the carbon dioxide from getting into the atmosphere, where it would contribute to climate change. The idea is to confine it in specific types of geological formations that would contain it indefinitely. But scientists acknowledge that they can't be absolutely certain that the carbon dioxide will never migrate.

Scientists and engineers will have to prove that the possibility of a sudden, catastrophic carbon dioxide release from a storage site is exceedingly remote. I say "catastrophic" because carbon dioxide is heavier than air, and a ground-hugging cloud would suffocate anyone it enveloped.

That is what happened in Cameroon in 1986, when naturally occurring carbon dioxide trapped at the bottom of Lake Nyos erupted and killed 1,746 people in nearby villages.

Presumably, storage sites would not be located near population centers.

Perhaps more difficult will be proving that the carbon won't seep out slowly, say at a rate of 1 percent or 2 percent a year. There would be no health risk from a gradual escape, but we'd have gone to great trouble and expense, and the carbon dioxide would have made its way into the atmosphere after all.

Meanwhile, hydrologists are worried that the buried carbon dioxide – mixed with other pollutants produced by the burning of coal – could migrate in unforeseen ways and contaminate sources of groundwater.

It may be possible to answer all these concerns, but there's a larger question: Is this really a good idea? Is this the legacy we want to leave to future generations – thousands of sites, labeled "off-limits," where we've deposited the harmful residue of our toxic addiction to fossil fuels?

The Obama administration is spending \$2.4 billion from the stimulus package on carbon capture and storage projects – a mere down payment. Imagine what that money could do if it were spent on solar, wind and other renewable energy sources. Imagine if we actually tried to solve the problem rather than bury it.

[L.A. Times column, Monday, June 8, 2009:](#)

Gas station vapor battle in California dissipates

A fight raged for months over a mandate for vapor recovery systems. In the end, the regulation stands and businesses have a reasonable amount of time to comply.

By Michael Hiltzik

No doubt it will come as a relief to all concerned that the controversy over the state's -- P-II EVR, for short -- has been mostly resolved.

About 90% of the GDFs in the state -- that's "gasoline dispensing facilities," or "gas stations" to you -- have installed their P-II EVRs or are on track to do so by the end of this year. The storm passed without too much disruption in the supply of gasoline to drivers across the state.

Indeed, it's my bet that the average California motorist hasn't the faintest idea what I'm talking about.

This is about a knock-down, drag-out fight that raged behind the scenes for months to water down what environmental authorities say is a crucial regulation to clean up the state's air, in some places still among the dirtiest in the U.S.

The battle was a distilled version of the usual game of chicken between government and business over tough but necessary regulations -- featuring inflated claims of the dire consequences of enforcement, assertions of bad faith or incompetence on either side and interference by sensation-seeking politicians.

In this case, things may have worked out for the best. The regulation stands, and the regulated businesses have been given a reasonable, but not excessive, period to comply. And the lessons learned will be applied to upcoming rounds of regulation, some of which have deadlines that are already looming.

At issue was a regulation addressing a major contributor to air pollution in California: gasoline vapor emitted when gas is pumped into storage tanks at the service station or the fuel tank in your car.

The California Air Resources Board originally ordered the state's roughly 11,000 gas stations to install vapor recovery equipment in March 2000. (The systems, which capture stray fumes and recycle them back into storage tanks, are related to those rubber collars you find on the nozzles at your neighborhood pump.)

The dealers were given five years to complete Phase I, which covered the passage of gas from tanker truck to storage tank. Phase II, covering the route from the storage tank to your car, was launched in 2005. The air board gave dealers four years, or until this April 1, to meet that standard.

With four years to get right with the air board, most dealers did the natural thing: They procrastinated. They then ran afoul of Ben Franklin's rule about procrastination: "You may delay, but time will not."

As the April 1 deadline approached, gas station owners found themselves caught between the economic downturn and the credit crunch. Thousands found themselves without access to cash or loans to pay for the work, which can run to about \$10,000 per pump.

"Some got caught in the credit crunch," Terry Dressler, director of the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District, told me last week. "Some simply put it off."

There was also a logjam of equipment orders, and some dealers discovered that getting the necessary building permits from their local planning and fire departments would take weeks or months.

"There are as many stories as there are gas stations as to why they missed the deadline," says Dressler, who is also president of the California Air Pollution Control Officers Assn., or CAPCOA.

With thousands of dollars in fines facing any station that missed the deadline, the dealers enlisted their state legislators to get them a break. Senators and assemblymen started writing the air board and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, agitating to put off the regulations for at least a year.

My colleague Margot Roosevelt reported in April that the fight was generating the sort of overheated rhetoric you hear from the business lobby when a costly regulation falls into its cross hairs.

The Responsible Clean Air Coalition, which is affiliated with the California Chamber of Commerce, issued a fire-breathing statement charging "zealous Sacramento bureaucrats" with scheming to put more than 6,000 gas stations out of business. (Any time you see the word "Responsible" in the name of a group like this, brace yourself for an irresponsible claim.)

Meanwhile, a coalition of health and environmental groups mobilized to oppose a bill in Sacramento that would postpone the deadline.

"The regulations are incredibly cost-effective," says Bonnie Holmes-Gen, senior policy director of the American Lung Assn. in California, which led the defense campaign. "We're getting hundreds of tons of pollutants out of the air every month. The public health cost of that pollution is huge in terms of asthma alerts and the health of children."

To its credit, the air board stuck to its guns, upholding the April 1 deadline even after Schwarzenegger urged it to delay.

But it did acknowledge that some missed deadlines might not have been entirely the gas stations' fault. Among other factors, the air board had approved only a single manufacturer's system until last October, when it certified a second. This forced a delay on some dealers who thought the second system would be more compatible with their old equipment, gas retailers say.

Foot-dragging at city and county halls also held up some installations. Certainly the business downturn stretched some dealers' finances to the breaking point.

"Procrastination wouldn't have created a problem if the economy hadn't done what it did," Dressler says.

As the April deadline approached, the air board and CAPCOA asked the state's 35 air districts to go easy on stations making a good-faith effort to meet the regulations.

It suggested that they limit penalties to \$1,000 for those stations; the idea was to avoid putting laggard stations out of business without awarding any of them a free pass for missing the deadline. After all, thousands of gas stations -- more than half in the state -- had fulfilled their responsibilities on time. The local districts largely agreed.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District, which covers Orange County and the metropolitan areas of Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties, even rebated money to dealers who had been charged more.

As of last week, according to the air board, roughly 90% of all stations either had the equipment installed or had reached an agreement with their local air quality boards to get the work done by Dec. 31.

But this isn't the last big costly regulatory deadline that threatens to hit procrastinating business owners in the seat of the pants. Most gas stations face a Sept. 1 mark for installing yet another air-pollution system. A rule requiring construction firms and other commercial and industrial operations to replace outdated diesel generators kicks in Dec. 31.

Dressler says he and his fellow pollution regulators have learned a lot from the Phase II EVR affair. He says they thought they had provided enough warning for gasoline dealers about the approaching deadline, "but there's always room for improvement." For the next round of rules, they'll be issuing relentless warnings about the need to line up necessary financing and equipment orders well in advance of the last minute, for example.

"We don't want to have this sort of angst the next time," he says.

[S.F. Chronicle commentaries, Sunday, June 7, 2009:](#)

Clean energy is the best option for U.S.

By Carl Pope

Global warming and unsustainable energy dependence are the foremost environmental issues of our time; they are also the signature economic issues of our day, providing enormous risks to future economic growth and unparalleled opportunities to create jobs and launch a different model of economic development.

America's energy future must create millions of new jobs; reduce our dependence on oil; shift American energy production toward cleaner, cheaper sources like wind and solar; reduce global warming pollution; and protect the planet for our children and grandchildren.

In many places, a shift to wind energy is well under way. An American Wind Energy Association report shows that last year more than 8,000 megawatts of new generating capacity was added - that's 42 percent of all the new power-producing capacity in the United States and the equivalent of seven new large coal plants. Employing more than 85,000 people, up from 50,000 a year ago, the wind industry continues to grow.

The American Solar Energy Society reports that in 2007, renewable energy and energy efficiency provided more than 9 million jobs and \$1.045 billion in revenue in the United States - and that as many as 37 million jobs can be generated by the renewable energy and energy efficiency industries in the country by 2030. This is more than 17 percent of all anticipated U.S. employment.

Americans want clean energy - and they want clean cars, too. Virtually every major auto manufacturer now produces hybrid vehicles, and in 2005-08, more than 1 million hybrid vehicles were sold in the United States.

A clean-energy economy will also revitalize the now-languishing U.S. manufacturing sector, and it will create the industries of tomorrow. These new clean-energy jobs - installing solar panels, renovating buildings to make them more energy efficient, constructing the Smart Grid - are jobs that can't be outsourced.

The opportunities abound not just for clean-energy jobs but also for consumer savings. According to a Union of Concerned Scientists analysis of a renewable electricity standard, getting 25 percent of our electricity from renewable resources will save consumers \$64.3 billion in lower electricity and natural gas bills. Energy-efficient buildings will save families and businesses money on their energy bills.

But right now, we are walking a precipitous line. As the clean-energy bill is being debated now in the House of Representatives, we are watching the usual suspects try to weaken it.

Big Oil, Big Coal and dirty-power companies are extracting a steep price at the expense of renewable energy, energy efficiency and other provisions critical to boosting the economy and protecting both the planet and the public interest.

Instead, we should be shifting U.S. energy production toward clean energy sources much more quickly than business as usual. This is in order to ensure strong growth in the clean-energy industries and clean-energy jobs that are key to solving both our environmental and our economic crises.

Polluters must pay for their global warming pollution - and those funds should spur investments in clean energy; protect consumers, wildlife and vulnerable communities; and promote job creation rather than rewarding the polluters.

America's clean-energy future should not only benefit the biggest companies, but it should offer opportunities to people from all communities. The scope and scale of the work to be done on clean energy and global warming will provide our country with a historic opportunity to set a new urban and rural social agenda to bring jobs and opportunity to marginalized communities.

Now is the time to work together on a clean-energy economy. President Obama is already building coalitions with groups that have not always seen eye-to-eye. We saw that a few weeks ago when he announced new vehicle fuel-economy and emissions standards, and both the auto industry and environmentalists were present and were pleased with the deal.

Securing a clean-energy economy means all of us sitting down at the table together, and Obama is taking the lead.

I believe in America's ability to innovate and solve big problems. We've proved time and time again we can rise to the occasion and address major environmental challenges without harming the economy - just look at the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act and laws to reduce acid rain.

America should be a leader in this new clean-energy economy. We have the ingenuity to solve these problems. We must all act now and become the global leaders in clean, renewable energy technologies to drive U.S. economic growth.

Carl Pope is executive director of the Sierra Club.

Clean energy: America can meet the challenge

By Trip Van Noppen

America's addiction to oil and other fossil fuels has put our economy, our security and our future at risk. But while President Obama, Congress, energy experts, business leaders and citizens across the country are rolling up their sleeves to create a clean-energy future, oil executives stubbornly insist that rapid change is impossible or too expensive.

Chevron CEO David O'Reilly says moving away too quickly from oil is "a straight path back to a pre-industrial economy and a standard of living to match." Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson says the transition is 100 years away and that tougher rules to reduce carbon emissions will hurt consumers.

Of course oil companies don't want Americans to think we can kick the fossil-fuel habit anytime soon. Their bottom line is tied to the status quo. The question is not what Chevron and Exxon Mobil think is possible but what is the best way forward for our nation.

The industry's arguments ignore both the real costs of global warming and the economic benefits of a rapid shift to clean energy. The catastrophic potential of global warming is clearer every day. So are the opportunities for a rapid shift to clean energy produced at home with American labor and by American entrepreneurs.

A study commissioned by the Global Humanitarian Forum says global warming contributes to 300,000 deaths worldwide each year. The study estimates that the worldwide cost of global warming - from death, illness, drought, flooding, food shortages, species extinction, loss of forests

and farmland, storms and property damage - is already \$125 billion a year and will double by 2030.

Compare that with what we have to gain: The Union of Concerned Scientists estimates that an accelerated transition - cutting carbon emissions by 56 percent in 20 years while investing heavily in renewables, conservation and energy efficiency - would save U.S. consumers and businesses more than \$450 billion in energy bills. Under that scenario, the American economy would grow by more than 80 percent in that period.

Even the simplest steps, such as Obama's goal of cutting Americans' use of electricity 20 percent and cutting natural gas use by 10 percent by 2020, would create hundreds of thousands of permanent jobs - while cutting 150 million metric tons of global warming pollution a year and eliminating the need for 200 new power plants.

O'Reilly and other naysayers argue that the technology is not available to make this transition. Perhaps what they mean is that they aren't selling it. Important clean-energy technologies are here today, and new breakthroughs arrive almost daily. As the president has made clear, clean, renewable energy is the growth industry of the 21st century. Our economic future depends on it. Investing in American businesses can help our nation compete with other countries that are currently leading on clean-energy technology.

But implementation and innovation have been held back by the unfair competition created by government subsidies and tax breaks for fossil fuels. Obama's economic stimulus package made a down payment toward more federal investment in renewables, but much more is needed - and oil companies must do their part. Over the past 15 years, the five largest oil companies have invested just \$5 billion in renewables - a minuscule amount of their budgets for oil exploration - compared with \$50 billion from venture capital firms.

There is an old proverb: "Those who say it cannot be done should not interrupt the people doing it." So, will we be fooled again by the oil companies who have brought us to this crisis, or will we rise to the challenge and build a better future for ourselves and our children?

The choice is ours.

Trip Van Noppen is president of Earthjustice.

Moving U.S. from carbon energy to clean power

By Michael Honda, Amy Smart

The American Clean Energy and Security Act begins to lay the groundwork for a future powered by the wind and sun. America needs this bill to maximize job creation, invest in the skills of our workers and the long-term economic prosperity of our country, and significantly reduce the pollution that has been caused by fossil fuel industries for decades.

University of Massachusetts economists estimate that investing \$100 billion in clean energy and green infrastructure over two years would generate 235,198 jobs here in California. Between the \$80 billion in the president's economic recovery plan and funding in his budget, we're on track to do even more.

To deliver on the promise that clean energy holds to transform our economy, the House of Representatives should strengthen the act in these ways:

- Increase the clean energy standards to 30 percent by 2020, combine renewable energy and energy efficiency to deliver more clean energy jobs to the U.S. economy more quickly.
- Restore authority to the EPA to regulate carbon emissions from power plants under the Clean Air Act.
- Reduce incentives to polluting industries to supplement programs that create green jobs and train workers to fill them.

There may be efforts to roll back the target for reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 2020. The bill's science-based standards aim to reduce U.S. global warming pollution by 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020, and achieve an additional 10 percent reduction through agreements to prevent tropical deforestation, for a total reduction of 27 percent by 2020. By 2050, the bill would reduce emissions by 83 percent. We are urging Congress to oppose any effort to weaken the pollution reduction targets.

Congress needs to hear from people who are ready to repower America - to move away from the polluting energy sources of the past and toward the clean energy technologies of the future.

Rep. Michael Honda, D-San Jose, is a member of the House Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition. Actress Amy Smart serves on the boards of the Environmental Media Association and Heal the Bay.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Sat., June 6, 2009:](#)

Global warming lies

Kofi Annan's Global Humanitarian Forum assertion that 300,000 deaths a year in developing (i.e. tropical) countries are caused by man-made global climate change is ludicrous. People in those countries have been dying of malaria, malnutrition, poverty, wars, dysfunctional health care delivery systems, and, more recently, AIDS throughout their history.

Now we're supposed to believe that 90% of those deaths were the result of anthropogenic global warming.

Roger Pielke Jr., a political scientist at the University of Colorado and a true believer in carbon-caused global warming, calls the report "baloney...a methodological embarrassment."

He fears that the document's flaws will trivialize the "real threats" from CO2 emissions.

More to the point, the report is an attempt to shift blame for the humanitarian disasters that have bedeviled Third World nations forever from the incompetence and venality of their governing bodies onto the phantom of human-caused global warming and the "carbon polluters" of the western world.

The study is one of many scary prophecies we will see as the date for a new U.N. climate conference in Copenhagen nears. Read it as scientifically baseless propaganda meant to mau- mau developed countries into forking over more money to corrupt third world politicians.

Michael Freeman, Sanger

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses ineffective measures against climate change and the world has not taken enough measures to revert climate change. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Ineficaces medidas contra cambio climático, dice Semarnat

La Cronica, Thursday, June 4, 2009

Juan Rafael Elvira Quesada, secretario de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, reconoció que México y el mundo no han tomado medidas eficaces para revertir el cambio climático.

Señaló que no se ha logrado revertir de manera importante la emisión de gases de efecto invernadero al mundo ya que sólo es 5%.

En el panel "Revitalizando la economía a través de la acción climática", indicó que México ocupa un lugar preponderante para reducir las emisiones a la atmósfera pero tampoco está solucionando el problema.

Detalló que desde hace dos años nuestro país lanzó un programa para combatir los efectos del cambio climático pero aún no se tienen resultados concretos.

"México aún no tiene todos los elementos anticíclicos para salir adelante de una recesión, la recesión mundial y la de la influenza que nos causó grave daño económico", comentó.

El empresario Carlos Slim también participó en el panel y aseguró que en las crisis económicas se tiene una tendencia para tomar medidas que pueden crear grandes déficit fiscales y presiones financieras indeseables.

Durante su participación planteó que los cambios pueden basarse en dos ejes: usar los conocimientos tecnológicos y cambiar la cultura.

También hizo un llamado a los gobierno a incorporar a la población marginada al modelo de la modernidad para que sea “una palanca de desarrollo que tenemos en el futuro”.

En entrevista, resaltó las medidas implementadas por el gobierno federal para evitar los contagios por el virus de la influenza, “se vio que no era un virus ni muy agresivo ni ha mutado. Yo creo que todo ha estado muy bien”.

Sobre la disminución de afluencia del turismo, dijo que se combinó la recesión económica con la contingencia sanitaria.

Uno de los hombres más ricos del mundo rechazó hablar de los programas del gobierno para echar andar la economía y de las recientes detenciones de funcionarios municipales importantes.

Destacó que el gobierno esté plateando una agenda ambiental con colaboración de los empresarios para que todos aporten algo.

Dijo que los retos son disminuir las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero y no destruir los recursos naturales.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses ecologist extend their hands to President Obama. For a long time, it went unnoticed the tendencies of high levels of CO2 and its dangerous impacts on health and the environment.](#)

Ecologistas tienden la mano a Obama

J. Jaime Hernández Corresponsal
El Universal, Friday, June 05, 2009

WASHINGTON.— Por primera vez desde hace casi una década, la celebración internacional del Día del Medio Ambiente no contará este 5 de junio con las protestas y la batería de reclamos que durante casi una década le llovieron a la administración del presidente estadounidense George W. Bush.

La llegada de Barack Obama ha desarmado a esa variopinta comunidad de activistas ecológicos acostumbrados a culpar a la Casa Blanca por la inminencia de un colapso medioambiental que adelantaba desastres naturales, derretimiento de glaciares, una sequía galopante, derrocamiento de gobiernos y conflictos regionales por la disputa de los recursos naturales.

Por primera vez, las organizaciones ecologistas y las instituciones internacionales han dejado de lado las pancartas y las consignas mientras conceden el beneficio de la duda a una administración que no sólo ha revertido gran parte de las políticas medioambientales de la era Bush, sino que ha elevado el listón para que la humanidad retrase al máximo su cita con su propia aniquilación y siente las bases de un nuevo contrato entre los seres humanos y el medio ambiente.

Un líder capaz

“La capacidad de Barack Obama para movilizar a los votantes y entusiasmar al país con una esperanza de cambio quedó patente con su victoria. Y muchos creemos que como presidente está perfectamente capacitado para empujar al país en la dirección correcta”, asegura Lester Brown, director del Earth Policy Institute y una de las voces más respetadas entre los ecologistas.

A manera de prueba, Brown desmenuza los compromisos del presidente Obama en sus primeros meses de gobierno para desandar el camino al caos y la destrucción que auguraban las políticas medioambientales de Bush. Como la decisión de declarar formalmente dañinas para la salud humana y pública las emisiones de dióxido de carbono, así como de otros cinco gases más

de efecto invernadero, una política a la que se había resistido la administración Bush mientras renunciaba unilateralmente a los acuerdos medioambientales de Kioto bajo la complacencia del poderoso complejo industrial.

“Durante mucho tiempo ignoramos las tendencias medioambientales que en las últimas décadas han traído consigo la subida de los niveles de CO₂, la deforestación, la desertificación, el derretimiento de glaciares y el éxodo de comunidades que huyen de ríos que desaparecen y territorios yermos”, aseguró Brown al manifestar su esperanza de que las nuevas políticas que ha impulsado el presidente Obama permitan revertir el daño causado.

Precisamente, la agenda medioambiental de Obama, que pasa por la inversión en energías renovables, por la construcción de autos más eficientes y menos contaminantes y por una mayor independencia del petróleo, permitirá a los grupos ecologistas celebrar un día que por primera vez en mucho tiempo estará marcado por las promesas de un cambio medioambiental que comienza a tomar forma.

Los actos, que se celebrarán en la ciudad de Omaha, en Nebraska, bajo los auspicios del Programa Medioambiental de Naciones Unidas (UNEP), no estarán exentos de protestas, protagonizadas, esta vez, por los grupos vinculados a la derecha conservadora y a poderosos consorcios industriales.

“Vamos a acudir a Omaha para desmentir que el dióxido de carbono sea el culpable del calentamiento global”, dijo uno de los miembros de Proyecto 912 Nebraska, un grupo con escasa base pero con gran capacidad de movilización que considera el fenómeno del calentamiento global como “el gran engaño del siglo”.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses reductions offered only equal to about 8% of polluting emissions. Mexico produces about 523 million tons of CO₂ a year and the reductions offered by President Calderon are of only 50 million tons.](#)

Reducción ofrecida equivale sólo a 8% de emisión contaminantes

Carolina García

El Universal, Saturday, June 06, 2009

México produce alrededor 623 millones de toneladas de bióxido de carbono (Co₂) al año, de acuerdo con cifras oficiales, y la reducción ofrecida por el presidente Felipe Calderón de 50 millones de toneladas, sólo representaría una baja de 8% en la emisión del contaminante.

En el marco del Día Mundial del Medio Ambiente, el presidente Calderón lanzó este compromiso; sin embargo, ésta no es la primera vez que en la actual administración se lanza el reto.

En diciembre pasado, en la conferencia de Naciones Unidas contra el Cambio Climático, el secretario de Medio Ambiente, Juan Rafael Elvira Quesada, dio a conocer un plan para reducir a la mitad de las emisiones de Co₂ en 2050, con respecto a los niveles de 2002.

En ese marco, el titular del Medio Ambiente dijo que ese “ambicioso objetivo” se podrá lograr mediante el empleo de tecnologías limpias y eficientes, como la eólica o la solar.

México ocupa, de acuerdo con el propio secretario del Medio Ambiente, el número 15 en la lista de países más contaminantes.

En 2007, en un encuentro con corresponsales extranjeros en México, el titular de la Semarnat se comprometió a que México reduciría 80 millones de toneladas por año de bióxido de carbono.

El funcionario dijo en esa ocasión que México contribuye con 2% de la contaminación mundial de Co₂.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses plan against climate change seeks to reduce greenhouse emissions by 50 percent.](#)

“Guardan” plan contra el cambio climático

Buscan bajar 50% emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero

Noemí Gutiérrez

El Universal, Thursday, June 04, 2009

El gobierno federal delineó un programa integral para combatir el cambio climático, que incluye la difusión del tema en libros de texto de educación básica, y la creación de un atlas nacional de riesgo.

Considera programas estatales de residuos sólidos para evitar emisiones de metano no controladas, e incluso la puesta en operación de 10 modernos radares para prevenir efectos de los fenómenos hidrometeorológicos, 66 estaciones meteorológicas automáticas y 67 observatorios meteorológicos.

Se pretende reducir 50% las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero en el país.

Sin embargo, este Programa Especial de Cambio Climático (PECC) 2008- 2012 aún no ha sido presentado por el presidente Felipe Calderón pese a que algunos de los 106 objetivos y 303 metas debieron iniciarse desde el año pasado.

México será sede a partir de hoy, en Quintana Roo, de la tercera reunión de las principales economías sobre seguridad energética y cambio climático, para celebrar el Día Mundial del Medio Ambiente.

En la versión preliminar de consulta pública del programa, se detallan los cuatro ejes fundamentales para enfrentar el cambio climático: Visión de largo plazo; Mitigación; Adaptación y Elementos de la Política Transversal. En el PECC se reconoce que el cambio climático es el principal desafío ambiental global del siglo por ser una de las amenazas para el desarrollo y bienestar humano.

Según el informe Stern, estudio mundial sobre el impacto económico de este fenómeno publicado en 2006, alerta que si por el cambio climático se eleva la temperatura entre dos y tres grados centígrados tendría un costo de 3% del Producto Interno Bruto (PIB) mundial, y si aumenta a cinco grados las pérdidas globales serían de 5% del PIB y de 10% en países más vulnerables.

Compromiso federal

México reconoce que aunque genera 1.6% de las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero (GEI) mundial, el PECC es una demostración del compromiso de la administración del presidente Calderón.

Uno de los lineamientos más ambiciosos del plan es reducir los GEI a 50% en 2050, pero la reducción comenzaría a ser gradual desde 2012.

En la producción de gas y petróleo la meta es bajar 13.4% de sus emisiones y en la generación de energía eléctrica 10%, y transporte 5.7%. En 2006 estos sectores emitieron en conjunto casi 50% del GEI nacional.

En el PECC se reconoce que muchas medidas de mitigación no cuentan con presupuesto.

Judith Domínguez, del Centro de Estudios Demográficos, Urbanos y Ambientales de El Colegio de México, criticó que en el programa especial no se explique cómo se lograrán las metas ni cuánto costará su puesta en marcha.

Rodolfo Lacy, coordinador de Programas y Proyectos del Centro Mario Molina, detalló que no se incluye lo que se haría para evitar las emisiones de los autos "chocolate", los vehículos a diesel, grandes camionetas, y no se considera integralmente a la iniciativa privada.

Lamentó que el gobierno federal no haya iniciado el programa "20 en 15" con el que se pretende que cada litro de gasolina rinda 20 kilómetros para 2015, y no los 12 actuales.

María José Cárdenas, encargada de la campaña de Energía y Clima de Greenpeace, criticó que el PECC no tenga metas claras para evitar la deforestación, que además es la forma más "fácil y económica" de reducir los GEI.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses California's new invention: "domestic refinery". The invention can reduce the price of fuel for vehicles to 10 cents, generate their own fuel at home and also stop polluting the air.

Presenta California nuevo invento: a 10 centavos el galón de combustible y sin contaminación

Manuel Ocaño

Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, June 04, 2009

El gobierno de California presenta hoy un invento que dice puede reducir el precio del combustible para vehículos, a solamente 10 centavos de dólar por galón; generar su propio combustible en casa, y dejar de contaminar el ambiente. El inventor de la 'refinería doméstica' de etanol, Tom Quinn se basó en el principio de Henry Ford, el diseñador de los primeros modelos de vehículos, que llevan precisamente su nombre en la marca, quien dijo que el etanol sería el combustible del futuro.

Thomas Quinn, el hijo del referido diseñador estuvo a cargo de la presentación de un primer modelo que produce combustible a partir de sobras que dejan los clientes en una cervecería: "Nuestra maquinaria es la primera refinería no comercial de etanol, y la tecnología en que se basa consiste en separar el agua del alcohol.

California promoverá ahora la venta de generadoras domiciliarias. Tienen el tamaño de un refrigerador pero funcionan como lavadoras, con agua que entra y sale; cuestan en promedio diez mil dólares, y por un adaptador de 400 dólares se puede convertir una camioneta que hoy rinde diez millas por galón de gasolina, en un vehículo híbrido de mayor rendimiento.