

Mountain Valley goes green in big way **Mountain Valley Express has been going green.**

Manteca Bulletin Monday, June 8, 2009

By that, the regional Manteca-based company with a fleet of 170 tractors and trailers including 60 locally recently partnered with U.S. EPA-certified SmartWay.

President Scott Blevins noted Friday that MVE is committed to operating cleaner, more fuel-efficient vehicles.

His trucks operate on diesel engines.

"We now have a no engine idling policy with annual smoke testing (on diesel engines) to make sure our trucks are not emitting exhaust smoke into the air," said Blevins.

Another 19 of the trucks are already equipped with the DPF or Diesel Particulate Filter – an oxidant catalyst and EGR valve retrofitted to remove a majority of soot and unburned hydrocarbons from burned diesel fuel – necessary by the state on all such vehicles by 2011.

Those trucks also feature the California Clean Air Vehicle logo.

As part of state regulation, MVE is involved in universal waste recycling of tires, batteries, antifreeze and filters along with the storm water program.

The latter assures that no pollutants are washed away or drained into the water supply.

For its efforts and more, MVE achieved a top SmartWay score of 1.25.

"The score was based on overall carbon production," Blevins said.

MVE has nine locations, including Nevada and Arizona with connections to the southeast territory of the U.S.

The local trucking company was established in 1976 and also has an impeccable safety record for the past 10 years.

In that span, MVE has racked up numerous first-place awards in its division with the California Trucking Association, according to Blevins.

He credits the accident-free numbers to the injury prevention programs.

More information on Mountain Valley Express can be found by logging on to www.mtnvly.com.

Scientists: Global warming has already changed oceans

By Les Blumenthal - McClatchy Newspapers

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, June 9, 2009

WASHINGTON -- In Washington state, oysters in some areas haven't reproduced for four years, and preliminary evidence suggests that the increasing acidity of the ocean could be the cause. In the Gulf of Mexico, falling oxygen levels in the water have forced shrimp to migrate elsewhere.

Though two marine-derived drugs, one for treating cancer and the other for pain control, are on the market and 25 others are under development, the fungus growing on seaweed, bacteria in deep sea mud and sea fans that could produce life-saving medicines are under assault from changing ocean conditions.

Researchers, scientists and Jacques Cousteau's granddaughter painted a bleak picture Tuesday of the future of oceans and the "blue economy" of the nation's coastal states.

The hearing before the oceans subcommittee of the Senate Commerce Committee was expected to focus on how the degradation of the oceans was affecting marine businesses and coastal communities. Instead, much of the testimony focused on how the waters that cover 70 percent of the planet are already changing because of global warming.

Ocean acidification or diseases that thrive in acidified, oxygen-depleted seawater could be responsible for oysters not reproducing in Washington state, said Brad Warren, who oversees the ocean health and acidification program of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership in Seattle. A federal study found that two-thirds of larval blue crabs died when exposed to acidity levels like those currently measured off the West Coast, he said.

Federal studies also found acidity levels in the North Pacific and off Alaska are unusually high compared to other ocean regions. The high acidity is already taking a toll of such tiny species as pteropods, which are an important food for salmon and other fish.

As greenhouse gas emissions increase, billions of tons of carbon dioxide from smokestacks and vehicle tailpipes are absorbed by the oceans. The result is carbonic acid, which dilutes the "rich soup" of calcium carbonate in the seawater that many species, especially on the low end of the food chain, thrive in, Warren said.

"If we lose it, it is gone forever," Warren said of the oceans' delicate chemical balance.

In the Gulf of Mexico, Alexandra Cousteau said, the runoff down the Mississippi River from farms in the Midwest has created a dead zone the size of New Jersey where few species can survive. Wetlands in Louisiana are disappearing at the rate of 33 football fields a day as hurricanes grow in strength and frequency because of climate change, she said.

"We must start to realize that there can be no standalone policies, especially as they relate to our water resources," Cousteau said. "Energy, transportation, climate change, infrastructure, agriculture, urban development: this is where our ocean policy must begin. It is all interconnected."

Others testified that the economic toll eventually could be enormous for fishing and other ocean-related industries and for the nation's coastal communities. Taken together, the ocean and coastal economies, including the Great Lakes, provide more than 50 million jobs and make up nearly 60 percent of the nation's economy.

"Significant environmental changes, such as sea level and sea temperature rise, oxygen depletion and ocean acidification, will dramatically change the landscape, restructuring an array of natural and physical assets as well as cultural and economic," said Judith Kidlow of the National Ocean Economics Program. "Over the next 30 years, the nation will see the most significant changes in the ocean and coastal economies since the arrival of industrialization and urbanization."

The subcommittee's chairman, Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., suggested a doubling of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration budget, which is now about \$4 billion, and giving the agency additional responsibilities.

Cantwell, however, said the key has to be passing comprehensive climate change legislation to reduce carbon emissions.

"Protecting our oceans is an environmental and economic imperative," Cantwell said.

Why use gasoline when you can fuel your truck with leaves, wood and trash?

By John Penney - Norwich Bulletin
In the Taft Midway Driller, Tuesday, June 9, 2009

Killingly, Conn. - A Connecticut man has spent the past few years resurrecting and modifying 130-year-old technology that allows him to run a 4,000-pound truck on wood, leaves and trash.

Five years ago, Dave Nichols, fed up with the rising cost of fuel and wood waste disposal and concerned with the amount of emissions produced by traditional gas-powered vehicles, began constructing a biomass gasification system for his 1989 Ford F150 pickup truck.

"I got the idea after leafing through a couple of old books that mentioned this type of system being used to power gas lamps in the 1870s," said Nichols, 42. "Then, except for a brief period during World War II, the technology disappeared."

It disappeared, he said, because car and fuel companies concluded they could not reap substantial profits from vehicles that ran on a free fuel source.

Soon after, Nichols, a building contractor and garage owner, began constructing the first of six biomass fuel prototypes. The latest version ingests organic material, such as wood chunks, shavings and grass clippings, and converts it into fuel through a chemical reaction.

On Monday, Nichols drove his modified truck up, the vehicle smelling faintly like a campfire. Inside the truck bed sits a short barrel-like structure where "organic debris" is fed.

How it works

The fuel is broken down by an external on-board reactor — smaller than a typical truck bed toolbox — which heats the material to 2,200 degrees, breaking it into basic elements. The breaking down of wood by high heat causes multiple chemical reactions that create hydrocarbons. In addition, small amounts of water are introduced to the process, creating hydrogen fuel.

The fuel, now a potent mix of hydrocarbons and hydrogen, travels through a series of filters, condensers and pipes to the engine.

"All that's left is a small amount of white ash," said Nichols, pouring a load of leaves and wood into the hopper. "And I can drive 85 miles per hour, stopping only to pick up more wood or other fuel. It's free fuel with no fossil-fuel emissions."

Nichols said he's applied for grants from the state and federal Department of Energy to make the dash controls more user-friendly and hopes to mass-produce his system once he secures financing. He said the technology can be applied to any gas-powered device, from lawn mowers to heavy equipment.

"I laughed at him when he started working on this," said Jerry Thayer, owner of Jerry's Repair shop in Killingly. "But I'm convinced this works."

Nichols' vehicle has also caught the attention of a local legislator. A representative of U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney is scheduled to meet with Nichols and take a look at his creation.

"It sounds like a very interesting product," said Jenny Contois, Courtney's district director. "And we're sending someone to see what, if any, funding opportunities are available."

House Approves Incentives for Trading In Gas-Guzzlers

\$4 Billion Plan Heads to Senate

By Kendra Marr and V. Dion Haynes, Washington Post Staff Writers

Washington Post Wednesday, June 10, 2009

Joshua King brought his 1995 Jeep Cherokee to Kip Killmon's Tysons Ford yesterday to have the oil changed in hopes of extending its life a little longer. Low rate financing and other incentives had not persuaded King to buy a new car.

But yesterday he said Congress may have given him a good reason. The House approved a plan to give vouchers of up to \$4,500 to consumers who trade in their gas-guzzling clunkers for more fuel-efficient models. And King said he would consider a swap.

"I'd definitely do that," said King, a 28-year-old father of two from Gainesville. Having logged 200,000 miles, his Jeep "now is worth only \$1,500."

Under the House plan, trade-ins must be in drivable condition, get no more than 18 miles to the gallon, and be 1984 models or newer. The new car or truck must get better gas mileage; the bigger the difference the bigger the voucher. For instance, a new car getting at least 10 more miles per gallon than the old car would be eligible for a \$4,500 voucher.

To ensure that the vehicles being scrapped or recycled are actually being driven before the swap, trade-ins must be insured to the same owner for at least a year.

Dealers, unions and automakers have been lobbying for months for the legislation in hopes that it would spark an otherwise weak auto sales market.

Abbas Khademi, a partner in Marlow Heights Ourisman Chevrolet near Andrews Air Force Base, said the dealership's business has dropped 30 to 40 percent from a year ago, a sharp reversal for what traditionally has been one of the busiest Chevy dealers in the region.

When customers do come in to the massive showroom, many take a wait-and-see attitude and leave without a commitment, Khademi said.

"Customers are apprehensive, sitting on the fence, very timid," he said. "A lot of them come in and then say they want to see what happens to the economy before buying a car."

Khademi hopes the House bill will help overcome that reluctance.

Sixteen other countries have enacted similar so-called cash-for-clunkers programs, and many have reported an uptick in sales as a result.

"I hope it has the same kind of effect it had in Germany," Khademi said. "I support anything that will stimulate car sales at this point."

Mining industry wants NV to postpone mercury regs

The Associated Press

In the S.F. Chronicle, Contra Costa Times and other papers, Tuesday, June 9, 2009

LAS VEGAS, (AP) -- The Nevada Mining Association wants the state to postpone ordering the industry to install additional mercury emissions control equipment until the federal government reveals its plans for gold mining pollution this summer.

Environmentalists say the state regulations should move ahead as scheduled and criticized the industry for putting profits ahead of the environment and the health of residents of Nevada and neighboring states.

The state intends to begin issuing permits in July requiring mining companies to equip their operations with the latest technology to prevent toxic mercury from escaping into the air. Most gold mines will have two years to comply.

Industry leaders argue in a petition filed with the Nevada Environmental Commission on Monday they should not have to spend the tens of millions of dollars required now because the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency may impose its own pollution control requirements on gold mines.

The EPA decision is expected in August.

Justin Hayes, policy director of the Idaho Conservation League, said the move is a "standard industry position of not wanting to address their pollution problems."

The group maintains airborne mercury from Nevada is contaminating fish both in Nevada and downwind.

"This is mining putting their profits ahead of the health of children who eat fish in Southern Idaho, Northern Nevada and Utah," Hayes told the Las Vegas Sun. "They're prioritizing corporate profits over the health of people. That's what it is."

Nevada gold mines have long been among the regions largest emitters of airborne mercury, a neurotoxin that can cause brain damage, especially in fetuses and children.

The state believes federal standards would disrupt its mercury control program, which has been operated for several years by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.

"It does present uncertainty — not only for the state but also for the mining industry, as far as what will be expected," said Jill Lufrano, spokeswoman for the division.

The state has been requiring the mines to reduce airborne mercury for the past few years. Several mines have installed the new equipment.

The commission is scheduled to meet June 17.

[In the Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Guest Commentary, Wednesday, June 10, 2009:](#)

Is responsibility too much to ask?

By Fred Hiatt

For moderate voters clinging to some faith in government, the question over the past two decades of mostly two-party rule was: Can't Washington do anything? Now, with one party pretty much in control, the question has become both more hopeful and more anxious: Will Washington do anything responsibly? Yes, "responsibly" is a freighted, finger-wagging word. But it seems a fair question to ask of a radically remade capital.

The hope during the Clinton and Bush presidencies was that the two parties would mix the best of their ideas and produce something constructive. Bill Clinton worked with Republicans to achieve welfare reform, George W. Bush with Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., to begin to hold public education accountable through No Child Left Behind. Generally, though, both parties tended to see more advantage in failure that could be blamed on the opposition than in sharing credit for accomplishments.

So anyone who believes, say, that climate change threatens the planet or that America's health-care system needs major repair has to cheer that President Obama and the Democratic Congress are determined to act. Cheer, but worry, too. Because if you also believe that economic growth is essential to solving America's health-care problem, and just about every other problem, then you don't want government spending, borrowing and bureaucracy stifling the private sector. You want solutions that aren't so complex that they make problems worse.

There's nothing easy about health care, but the least difficult piece is insuring the uninsured: Mandate that everyone sign up, and provide subsidies so everyone can afford it. Harder, politically, is to levy the taxes to pay for those subsidies. Even harder, both politically and substantively, is to keep costs down. No one entirely knows how to do that, but it will involve telling doctors, hospitals, drug companies and patients -- you and me -- things they don't want to hear.

Obama's plan to extend insurance would cost, by his estimate, \$1.5 trillion over the next decade. He has said, rightly, that the country has to find a way to pay for that. But his proposals don't come close to showing how, and Congress doesn't like even the down payment he did suggest.

Even if lawmakers find ways to pay for the reform, it won't necessarily meet the responsibility test. Medicare spending already is growing out of control. If cost savings or revenue that might have helped Medicare instead are applied to a new entitlement, the bigger problem becomes that much more insoluble.

There's no easy answer on climate change, either, but most economists would say the sensible approach would be to levy a tax on oil, gas and coal and then get out of the way. Higher prices for those fuels would discourage use and encourage investment into wind power, conservation and other good things. To cushion the blow, you could rebate the money in a progressive or at least neutral way.

But Obama and Congress don't want to take responsibility for raising taxes any more than they do for limiting health-care options.

So Democratic leaders in the House have fashioned a 946-page climate change bill that forces industries to pay to exceed a gradually declining limit on carbon emissions. It's a tax with deniability, and with huge enforcement challenges.

In theory, it could work; some economists even prefer it to a tax because you can set a clearer emissions target. But if you're going this route, design becomes crucial. During his campaign, Obama proposed to auction off the pollution permits. But to buy support in the House the bill's authors had to promise to give away 85 percent of the allowances.

For some industries, this is a bribe; there's no reason to expect that they would lower prices to consumers. Regulated utilities could be made to charge consumers less. But that would just postpone the behavior modification that is the point of the bill.

It isn't easy being a responsible majority when much of your opposition won't even admit there's a problem (as in climate change) or remains less interested in solutions than in grist for 30-second commercials warning of higher taxes or socialized medicine.

If it turns out this government can't fashion workable solutions and pay for them, it won't be the fault of Democrats alone. But let's hope it doesn't come to that. Because if bipartisan government didn't work, and one-party control doesn't work, it's not clear what we might try next.

Hiatt is The Washington Post's editorial page editor.

[Fresno Bee commentary, Tuesday, June 9, 2009:](#)

Earth: Replace Smog with Earth in the title

By Mark Grossi

In Wednesday's paper, you may notice a new name for Smog Log -- Earth Log. It's a change I have been advocating for a while.

Air quality is probably the top natural resources issue in the San Joaquin Valley. Everyone breathes. But there is always something happening in water supply and politics. There is usually something interesting to report out of the mountains. Now, I'll write about all of those things this space.

I've been covering these issues on a full-time basis with The Bee since February 1993. And I have written about natural resource issue off and on since 1978. I still cannot keep up with everything that's going on.

So I invite readers to use the comments here to help me inform, balance, represent and otherwise broaden public consciousness about natural resources.

[Letter to the Reedley Exponent, Wednesday, June 3, 2009:](#)

Saying no to "a little off the top"

Mountaintop removal is moving to California. It is happening at a number of places now and Cemex wants it to happen in our San Joaquin Valley, less than 10 miles from Reedley, Sanger and Orange Cove Centerville and Minkler.

Mountaintop removal is done by blasting and we will hear it at all hours of the day and maybe night. We will breathe the particulates from the blasting and who knows what is in [the] depths of that mountain that will be in the air. The extra number of trucks, according to Cemex, will be up to about 900 per day. The traffic includes the other mine's trucks along the Kings River, school busses, tour buses, fruit trucks and cars which people drive to and from the towns and mountains and foothills.

We will be looking at the mining activity day and night because of so much activity with the mining and the mountain will be all lit up all night. We will have broken windshields from gravel from the gravel trucks. We will have more asthma and lung diseases. Our aquifer water will be more depleted. Our roads and bridges will be terrible with all the heavy traffic.

We must all write letters to our County supervisors, planning Commission and local papers.

Cemex is busy trying to get this to come to pass. We must stop them.

"Friends of Jesse Morrow Mountain" needs your help. Our website is

www.jessemorrowmountain.org.

Georgia Linscheid

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses EPA will have workshops on air pollution around schools. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

EPA realiza audiencias sobre contaminación de ambientes aledaños a escuelas

Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino
Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, June 9, 2009

La Agencia Federal de Protección Ambiental (EPA), lleva a cabo este martes una serie de audiencias para revisar muestras que obtuvo hace unos meses sobre contaminación cerca de decenas de escuelas públicas en el país.

Según un reporte divulgado en diciembre, por lo menos 95 escuelas en 30 estados operaban en ambientes tóxicos para los estudiantes. La EPA respondió con un análisis a escuelas en zonas sospechosas en toda la nación.

Esto es lo que dijo al respecto Lisa Jackson, la administradora nacional de la EPA: (actualidad).- "Enfocamos nuestros recursos en monitorear aire tóxico en inmediaciones de escuelas porque los estadounidenses nos voltearon a ver con angustia cuando surgió un reporte que mencionaba tóxicos peligrosos en el aire.

El reporte incluye a ocho escuelas de California.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses all diesel-powered public transit in Juarez will be fined if they do not check emission levels and meet requirements](#)

Multarán por ruterías que no porten engomado ecológico

Horacio Carrasco
El Diario, Tuesday, June 9, 2009

Los agentes de la Dirección General de Tránsito emprenderán a partir del 1 de julio una serie de acciones para sancionar a los transportistas que no hayan obtenido el engomado ecológico, dijo Bernardo Escudero Ortega, director general de Ecología y Protección Civil del Municipio.

Agregó que el gobierno municipal instaló dos máquinas verificadoras de su propiedad en la Oficina de Transporte Público: una para motores a diesel y otra para gasolina, con el fin de que revisen las emisiones a todos los autobuses que prestan servicio en la ciudad.

"Este programa sigue en marcha y lo hicimos porque se ratificó el convenio entre Municipio y Gobierno del Estado para que sea el Municipio el que verifique las unidades", explicó.

Informó que "no ha habido suspensión en este proyecto", aunque "sí se dio una demora" porque los transportistas no han acudido a hacer la verificación de sus vehículos.

El programa sí ha seguido, nada más que disminuyó, pero aun así se lleva un avance de 50 por ciento, expresó.

Pero ahora las cosas van a cambiar porque a partir del 1 de julio la Dirección General de Tránsito va a comenzar a revisar que los autobuses tengan su verificación de emisiones, dijo Escudero.

Con la actuación de los policías de vialidad se espera que el programa retome velocidad y empiece la cresta de verificación, porque ya va a haber acciones de la Dirección General de Tránsito apoyando el programa, agregó.

El precio que pagan los transportistas es el mismo que cubren los automóviles, es decir, 54.80 pesos que equivalen a un día de salario mínimo, informó.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses American Airlines tries out new technology that will save fuel and reduce emissions.](#)

American Airlines ensaya tecnología de ahorro de combustible

Por David Koenig

El Nuevo Herald, Tuesday, June 9, 2009

American Airlines experimentará por primera vez con nueva tecnología de ahorro de combustible en un vuelo de París a Miami esta semana, en un intento de adopción de un nuevo sistema de navegación para el futuro.

El avión, que despegará el jueves, tomará una nueva ruta guiada a través de un sistema GPS (de posicionamiento global) en lugar de seguir la travesía usual de los aviones que realizan el mismo recorrido.

El aparato también ascenderá y descenderá de manera más gradual y usará otras medidas de ahorro de combustible que ya se utilizan ahora, como acercarse a la pista de aterrizaje usando un motor en lugar de dos.

American Airlines anunció que será la primera aerolínea en probar la tecnología y nuevas tácticas de reducción de emisiones de gases contaminantes en una ruta trasatlántica. La prueba está coordinada también por la Administración Federal de Aviación.

Bob Reding, un vicepresidente ejecutivo de American, dijo que la operación demostrará los beneficios de un nuevo sistema de navegación GPS que podría ahorrar combustible, reducir los retrasos en tráfico aéreo y las emisiones de gases contaminantes.

La aerolínea usó 11.240.000 millones de litros de combustible (2.970.000 millones de galones) el año pasado.

American Airlines dijo que sus esfuerzos para proteger el ambiente ahorran 416 millones de litros (110 millones de galones) al año en combustible y redujeron las emisiones de gases en 1.040.000 millones de kilos (2.300 millones de libras) en 2008.

La prueba del jueves será realizada con un Boeing 767-300.

Brian Will, un piloto de la aerolínea que vuela aviones modelo 777, dijo que el avión realizará una ascensión continua al despegar del aeropuerto de Charles De Gaulle de París, en lugar de subir y bajar en intervalos de 600 metros (2.000 pies) o más.