

Modesto Bee, Guest Commentary, Tuesday, June 23, 2009:

Valley's air quality's getting better -- let's keep it up

By Seyed Sadredin

This summer, let's build on the momentum of cleaner air. Let's commit to making one change in our daily routines for air-quality improvement.

During winter 2008-09, the valley's air quality was among the cleanest in decades, and most of the credit goes to valley residents for doing their part. In response to educational messages from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, residents from San Joaquin to Kern counties heeded calls from community leaders to cut back the use of residential fireplaces.

As a result, the number of days with "good" air quality increased dramatically and the number of "unhealthy" days dropped by 50 percent, valleywide. In fact, we had no "unhealthy" days in Fresno County.

Let's keep the momentum going. Can you make one change, such as riding a bike to work or carpooling? How about using an electric lawn mower or making your home more energy efficient? Take your pick from a wide array of clean-air choices you can find at www.healthyairliving.com.

We the people can do much to clean our air. In fact, we cannot achieve our clean-air goals through business regulation alone. Valley businesses, including agriculture, already are subject to some of the toughest air regulations in the nation. A few changes in our daily routines can achieve a great deal of reductions in air pollution at little or no cost. In fact, much of what we can do as individuals will save us money and improve our health.

More than ever, in these tough economic times, we must use our resources wisely and strategically. Some question spending resources on public education and argue for more expensive regulations on businesses. We at the air district contend that we must supplement effective regulations with a healthy dose of public education and participation.

Despite a great potential for dividends, however, no one should underestimate the challenge that comes with asking the public to accept some responsibility. Asking people to use their cars and fireplaces less frequently triggers strong emotional reactions.

This year, the air district plans to spend about 30 cents per person in the valley to get the word out. We hope to do this through our year-round Healthy Air Living initiative, which replaced the old Spare the Air program.

Reaching out to more than 3.5 million people in three different media markets is not an easy task. Aside from traditional media, we hope to engage the public through "new media" such as Twitter and Facebook (become a friend), face-to-face gatherings in community events such as Healthy Air Living Chats and many other public events throughout the valley, and partnerships with businesses, teachers and students.

Help us get to cleaner air by getting the word out to friends and relatives. The air district is providing a great opportunity with a series of free, informal, public meetings this summer in every county in the air basin, including in Merced County on Thursday (Merced) and Stanislaus County on July 21 (Salida). For a complete schedule, visit www.healthyairliving.com.

We hope to see you there. Together, we can clean up the air.

Workshop on Avenal power plant proposal Tuesday

By Eiji Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel, Tuesday, June 23, 2009

Community members will have an opportunity to learn more and make comments about a proposed power plant in Avenal on Tuesday.

A workshop, being held by the California Energy Commission, will discuss the final staff assessment on the 600-megawatt natural gas-fired facility proposed by a Houston-based firm Avenal Power Center LLC. The project has been undergoing the licensing and permitting process since February 2008.

The document will serve as the staff's testimony at an evidentiary hearing scheduled to be held on July 7 by the hearing officer and a committee of two commissioners reviewing the application. In the analysis, officials reviewing the project concluded that the project meet all laws, regulations and standards.

Tuesday's workshop seeks public comment and response on the project as well as on the final staff analysis of the project, state officials said.

"We're inviting everybody -- the public and all interested parties -- to come in. The purpose is to provide another opportunity for the public and government agencies involved to present questions and comments on the document," said Percy Della, spokesman for the Energy Commission.

The workshop will take place at the Reef-Sunset Unified School District, 205 N. Park Ave. from 2-5:30 p.m., followed by another session from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

But not all community members are welcoming the timing of the workshop.

Speaking for concerned residents in Avenal and Kettleman City, environmental justice advocates this week objected to the way public notice was given on the meeting.

"Sending out a notice on the afternoon of Thursday, June 18, for an important workshop scheduled three business days later is not acceptable as it is not adequate notice," Bradley Angel, executive director of Greenaction for Health and Environmental Health, said in his statement directed to the California Energy Commission, following the commission's announcement about the workshop. "In addition, scheduling a workshop for the public in the middle of the work day when most people cannot attend also is not real public participation."

Angel requested the commission reschedule the workshop and hold it at a time that allows most working people to attend.

The commission has no intention of rescheduling the meeting, as it was legally noticed on June 10, not June 18, Della said. Also, he said the workshop will be held in two sessions to give people a chance to participate in the process after work hours.

The Avenal power plant project is nearing the end of the permitting process.

If licensed, the \$530-million power plant will begin construction in April 2010 on 34 acres of an industrial zone property just south of the Fresno County line and two miles east of Interstate 5. The project is six miles from Avenal's commercial and residential areas.

If everything goes well, the plant will be in full operation by June 2012.

Information on project proceeding is available on the Energy Commission Web site at www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/avenal.

Big West seeking extension

BY JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, June 23, 2009

Big West refinery, on the auction block as owner Flying J struggles with bankruptcy, is trying to secure an extension of its ability to expand under the Clean Fuels project that was approved by Kern County Supervisors in October.

Under the original approval the project had one year -- until December 2009 -- to get started on the expansion of the refinery, said Kern County Planning Director Ted James.

With the property up for sale, according to earlier reports, it is extremely unlikely that the project will go forward fast enough to meet the December deadline.

Big West of California has asked Kern County to push back the allowed start date for up to four years.

James said the company is likely requesting the extension so it can complete the sale of the refinery and give the new owner the option of undertaking the expansion.

Former Big West executive Bill Chadick, who was laid off by Big West earlier this year, said retaining that entitlement would be good business.

"I haven't been there since March, but it would certainly make good sense," he said.

A representative of Flying J said Monday the company has no comment on the request for an extension.

Supervisors will have to take a stand. Supervisor Mike Maggard said he supports the extension because it is critical to crafting a sales deal.

"If they can't expand, it tremendously reduces the value of their asset," Maggard said. "I think it's important that we do it."

Tom Frantz, of the Association of Irrigated Residents, said supervisors should let the expansion fail.

"The Board of Supervisors should take this opportunity to close the (refinery), get it cleaned up and do something else with the property -- maybe a solar park that would provide good, clean energy to Kern County," he said.

The Association of Irrigated Residents has filed suit to stop the expansion.

Asbestos contamination responsible for halting Redwood City rail project

By Shaun Bishop, MediaNews

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Tuesday, June 23, 2009

Asbestos-contaminated soil along the railroad tracks leading to the Port of Redwood City has forced Union Pacific to halt a major maintenance project until the site can be cleaned up.

Worse still, at least for children on the Peninsula, the delay in the track rehabilitation derailed a planned Redwood City stop for a special Disney train promoting the upcoming movie "Disney's A Christmas Carol."

Disney decided last week to move the train's Bay Area stop, set for next weekend, to Oakland because the asbestos issue prevented the railroad from finishing the Redwood City track in time.

"It just wasn't safe for them to bring the Disney train out without making those repairs," Mike Giari, the port's executive director, said. "Yeah, we were disappointed."

The snag in the project also caught the attention of state and regional regulators, who are monitoring the situation but have not yet opened formal investigations.

Railroad workers discovered the asbestos as they were replacing portions of the track and laying down new bedrock near the intersection of Seaport Boulevard and Blomquist Street, said Zoe Richmond, a Union Pacific spokeswoman.

The railroad put up bright orange fencing and warning signs while it figures out how to clean up the potentially hazardous fibers. Richmond said the company is not yet sure when that will happen.

"Obviously, anytime you have a situation like this, you have to proceed with caution and be compliant," she said, "and if that means that the project is put on hold, it gets put on hold until we're able to do it right."

Exactly when the asbestos was discovered is unclear. Richmond said that Union Pacific discovered the asbestos within the past two weeks and stopped work immediately.

The California Division of Occupational Safety and Health got a complaint May 19 from a Union Pacific employee about the asbestos contamination, Cal/OSHA spokesman Dean Fryer said. The agency sent an inspector out to the site May 28, he added.

Cal/OSHA has not yet opened a full investigation into the incident but is "keeping in contact with (Union Pacific) to see how it moves forward," Fryer said.

"I don't know how long the work went on before somebody raised the concern, but once the concern was raised it was addressed immediately, and that's what we expect from an employer," he said.

Exposure to airborne asbestos is thought to put people at risk of serious illness, including several types of cancer and asbestosis, a noncancerous scarring of the lungs.

Richmond said the company used to transport asbestos-containing products for one of its industrial customers near the Port of Redwood City. She said some of those materials may have fallen out of the rail cars and into the soil.

Railroad brakes and other parts once contained asbestos, but Richmond said she doubted the trains would have shed asbestos into the soil.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District, which also deals with asbestos issues, sent an inspector out to the site Friday after MediaNews inquired about the contamination.

"On the face of it, it sounds like they're handling it appropriately, but we're going to check in with them ... and ask more questions and look at them more," district spokeswoman Lisa Fasano said.

Cool-paint plan for cars loses its luster

Goal was to reflect heat, save energy

By Michael Gardner, U-T Sacramento Bureau
San Diego Union-Tribune, Tuesday, June 23, 2009

SACRAMENTO — Cool paints simply grew too hot for California's air-quality regulators.

Before retreating, the state Air Resources Board was busily drafting requirements for heat-reflective paints and windows that would help keep cars from baking in the sun.

Now, only windows are targets when the air board meets Thursday.

The plans for cooler colors and windows were modeled after architectural standards that incorporate reflective paints and glass to save energy in buildings.

Regulators reason that drivers stepping into cooler vehicles would be less likely to run their air conditioning, saving gasoline and curbing greenhouse gas emissions linked to global warming. Studies show that today's white cars stay nearly 5 percent cooler than darker vehicles.

But creating reflective dark paints proved difficult. That raised serious doubts about the ability to transfer cool-paint technology from buildings to vehicles, particularly for popular shades of black.

"This got translated by somebody as meaning you couldn't have black cars," said Mary Nichols, air board chairwoman.

Leading the charge was Rush Limbaugh, who railed about "tyranny" and branded the science "bogus."

"Buy a black car now because soon they won't be available, or look so putrid you won't want one," Limbaugh warned his radio audience March 26.

Limbaugh appeared cued by wardsauto.com, a mainstream site dedicated to industry issues, that raised the issue two days earlier.

"On the surface it's not a bad idea, but fundamental issues reveal profoundly flawed legislation," wardsauto.com reported. Most important, "heat-reflecting paints for black and other dark colors on vehicles have not been invented yet."

Automakers say they didn't interpret the initial plan as an assault on black cars.

"I don't think that was a claim we made," said Charles Territo, a spokesman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, regarding protests that black cars would be outlawed.

California regulators say it was never their intention to ban any specific color; the objective was to encourage practical and affordable technology that could be applied quickly. Critics insist that prohibiting black cars may not have been the state's goal, but it would have been the result nevertheless.

Regardless, the cool-paints proposal is now shelved.

"The board decided not to pursue that mainly because it would just meet with such opposition from industry and the amount of benefit was rather small," Nichols said.

"The window regulation is relatively simple and straightforward and not that expensive," she added.

Cool paints would have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 150,000 tons a year by 2020, regulators said. In comparison, they say better reflective windows will keep 1 million tons per year from entering the atmosphere.

Reducing emissions by 1 million tons is the equivalent of taking 200,000 cars off the road, air board officials said.

Experts say a large share of the sun's energy is invisible, so windows would not have to be substantially darkened to have the heat bounce off.

Under the air board proposal, passenger-car windows combined would have to block at least 45 percent of the sun's heat starting with 2012 models, with the front windshield required to reflect most of the rays. By 2014, those standards would increase slightly.

Windows installed by body shops and repair services also would have to comply.

Manufacturer costs will initially increase an average of \$60 for all windows in 2012 but are estimated to climb to \$80 as better reflective glazing is required, the air board estimates. For motorists, by 2014, the regulation will result in an extra outlay of about \$111 over the life of a vehicle, based on the increased purchase price and subsequent slightly higher replacement costs. That will amount to \$9.25 annually over 12 years, regulators estimate.

However, regulators say motorists stepping into a cooler car could save \$16 per year in gasoline because of reduced air conditioner use.

Automakers are arguing for more time to comply. Implementation is "just one model year away," Territo said.

They also oppose targeting specific parts of a car. Instead, regulators should set a broad standard and then give automakers the flexibility to meet the goals, Territo said.

"Let us figure out the best way to do it," he said.

Don Anair, an analyst with the Union of Concerned Scientists, said he doesn't think the regulation will be a financial burden.

Reflective windows "pay for themselves over the life of the vehicle" by improving fuel economy, he said.

Abandoning the cool-paints regulation "was not a major blow" to the campaign to curb emissions, Anair added.

"Did they propose banning black cars? No. But black was clearly one of the more challenging colors," he said.

An air board report explains that most dark paints rely on carbon black to form the ebony hue, but that color absorbs light rather than reflects the sun's rays. However, alternatives do not work as well as today's paint, cannot create jet-black and are much more expensive, leading staff regulators to recommend dropping the proposal.

"Staff was unable to clearly identify a technology path at this time that would lead to improved solar performance with acceptable color choices, costs and ease of application," the report reads.

Nissan to mass produce electric cars in 2012

By SHINO YUASA - Associated Press Writer

in the Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, June 23, 2009

YOKOHAMA, Japan -- Nissan Motor Co. said Tuesday its electric vehicles will be affordable, setting sights on the potentially lucrative market with a plan to mass produce zero-emission cars globally from 2012.

Japan's No. 3 automaker said it would unveil its first electric vehicle in Japan on August 2 and begin sales next year.

"We are moving forward with zero-emission vehicles," said Chief Executive Carlos Ghosn at a shareholders' meeting.

Nissan will sell electric cars first in Japan and the U.S. after April 2010, and then mass produce them globally in 2012.

Along with production in Japan and Europe, Ghosn said Nissan would make electric vehicles in the United States at its Smyrna plant in Tennessee with initial output capacity of more than 100,000 units per year.

"The U.S. is going to be a very important market" for the company's electric vehicle strategy, he said.

"I can tell you I'm not at all worried about how to sell these cars because there is an appetite for zero-emission cars."

Other carmakers are also racing to produce fully electric cars. U.S.-based Tesla Motors has a prototype that is scheduled to be produced by 2011. Toyota Motor Corp. has said it plans to sell electric vehicles in the U.S. by 2012 while Chinese automaker Dongfeng Motor Corp. has teamed up with a Dutch-based company to develop and make electric cars.

Ghosn gave few details, but stressed that Nissan's zero-emission cars will come "with a very reasonable price."

"If it's not affordable, it's not going to work," Ghosn told reporters.

"We are not going to come with a very high price. We are going to come with a reasonable price," he said. "We are here to mass market them."

Earlier in the month, Nissan's smaller rival, Mitsubishi Motors Corp., launched its electric vehicle, the i-MiEV, with a price tag of 4.59 million yen (\$48,300). Even the company acknowledged the i-MiEV is too pricey and said it aims to cut the price in the future.

Ghosn said expensive electric cars are "for a niche" market which Nissan doesn't plan to target.

Ghosn brushed off criticism that Nissan is falling behind its bigger rivals - Toyota and Honda Motor Co. - in the increasingly competitive market for gas-electric hybrid vehicles.

Ghosn said the global market for hybrid cars remains too small, with hybrid cars accounting for just 3.5 percent of the Japanese auto market in 2008, and 2.3 percent in the United States.

Globally, the market for hybrid cars is below one percent, Ghosn said, attributing hype over gas-electric cars to heavy media coverage.

The meeting of Nissan shareholders came after the company reported a net loss of 233.7 billion yen in the financial year to March 2009. It was the first time Nissan had sunk to an annual loss since Ghosn took the helm a decade ago under an alliance with Renault SA of France.

Hit by a collapse in demand amid the global economic crisis, the company's sales tanked worldwide. It expects to sell 3.08 million vehicles in the current fiscal year to March 2010, down 9.7 percent year-on-year.

Ghosn said a prolonged slump in the global market is continuing, with sales projections in Japan, the United States and Europe all looking grim this year.

"Is the worst behind us? I don't know. I cannot tell you," he said. Nissan forecast its global market share will stand at 5.7 percent in the current financial year, up just 0.2 of a point year-on-year.

Nissan shares closed at 571 yen Tuesday, down 4.7 percent from Monday.

Parks aim to reduce visitor emissions, their own

By PHUONG LE, The Associated Press

In the Modesto Bee, Merced Sun-Star and Hanford Sentinel, Tuesday, June 23, 2009

MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK, Wash. - Karen Lasch and her family recently pulled over their car near a glacier-fed creek in Mount Rainier National Park, piling out for a glimpse of the snowcapped peak in the distance.

But she hadn't given much thought to the impact that she, millions of other tourists and the national parks themselves have on the wilderness. Each year, vehicles and parks operations spew thousands of tons of emissions that contribute to climate change.

"This is such beautiful scenery," the Louisville, Ky., tourist said recently, as her family snapped pictures. "It would be such a shame to lose."

Officials at parks across the country are trying to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by cleaning up their own operations, with the help of federal stimulus dollars.

"We know we have to green our own house," said Sonya Capek, the Pacific West region's environmental program coordinator. "It's part of our mission to protect and preserve the resources."

The National Park Service and the Environmental Protection Agency have started the Climate Friendly Parks network program to help parks address climate change. Parks must measure their amounts of emissions, come up with plans to curb them and educate the public on what they can do to help.

Seventeen parks, including the Everglades in Florida and Fire Island National Seashore in New York, have already created plans. Sixty parks are developing their own plans.

National parks, like other federal agencies, have already been under orders to reduce energy and gasoline use. But the Obama administration has pushed greening parts of government further, including replacing government fleets with more fuel-efficient cars and trucks.

Parks are turning down thermostats and sealing windows, providing loaner bikes to employees and installing food composting and recycling bins.

One recent morning at Mount Rainier, workers climbed atop the park's emergency operations center and installed 48 solar panels to provide energy to the building. They have also added dual-flush toilets that reduce water use and use electric vehicles to pick up trash at campgrounds.

"The goal is really to knock (down) our carbon footprint," said Jim Fuller, the park's energy coordinator.

Each year, Mount Rainier creates greenhouse gas emissions equal to about 1,100 households. Visitors to Mount Rainier account for two-thirds of the 12,170 metric tons the park emits each year, mostly in driving to the park and inside it.

Federal stimulus dollars are giving national parks a boost in their efforts. Of \$750 million for national parks, there's stimulus money for energy-efficient windows at Alabama's Russell Cave, wind turbines at Alaska's Gates of the Arctic and solar panels at Georgia's Cumberland Island.

Visitors to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park may soon hop on hydrogen-powered shuttles, while those visiting parts of Golden Gate National Recreation Area will find mostly organic food grown within 30 miles rather than shipped from across the country. Rocky Mountain National Park runs shuttles so backpackers don't have to drive to trailheads. Other parks such as Wisconsin's Apostle Islands National Lakeshore are asking visitors to do their part with tours, education programs and public awareness campaigns.

"We're basically trying, without hitting people over the head, to say this is an issue," said Bob Krumenaker, Apostle Islands' superintendent.

Rainier acting superintendent Randy King said the park doesn't want to discourage visitors. "It's very important that people enjoy the parks and make a personal connection." So the park is looking in-house first to conserve where it can.

"We need to set a good example and do what we can," he said.

Roger Scott, from Southfield, Mich., said he's noticed solar panels at several national parks he visited since retiring last year.

"Parks get used an awful lot and they're going to get used even more," he said, adding that now is a good time to start thinking about human impact to the parks.

It's unclear whether parks can realistically become carbon neutral through conservation alone or without buying offsets, but park officials say the expectation for now is get as close as possible.

"It's OK to have a difficult goal," King said. "It's important that we take it seriously."

Climate Friendly Parks: <http://www.nps.gov/climatefriendlyparks/>

Gardens in the sky

By Robin Shreeves - Mother Nature Network (mnn.com)

In the Modesto Bee, Tuesday, June 23, 2009

I've spent some time studying green roofs. We're planning an addition to our home, someday, and we'd like the addition to have a green roof. I envisioned one with edible plants but was told by some experts that wasn't feasible. I wasn't so sure I believed them then, and after what I read on the New York Times (www.nytimes.com/2009/06/17/dining/17roof.html), I'm pretty darn sure I talked to the wrong people.

Rooftop edible gardens are popping up all over the place - mainly in cities. According to the article, restaurants are growing edible rooftop gardens for food for their restaurants, schools are doing it to provide fresh food to their students, businesses are doing it for tax incentives, churches are doing it as social service projects and some individuals are attempting to turn rooftop gardens into their livelihood.

In addition to providing sustainable food, edible rooftop gardens have other environmental benefits. They can help reduce the "heat island" effect in cities that have few trees and lower the temperature around the building with the rooftop garden. They can help improve air quality in the area and improve water retention.

It's exciting to see the rate of growth of rooftop gardens. Green Roofs for Healthy Cities did a survey and found that the number of green roof projects done in the U.S. jumped 35 percent last year.

"Steven Peck, its president, said he had no figures for how many of the projects involved fruits and vegetables, but interest is growing," The New York Times reported. "'When we had a session on urban agriculture,' he said of a meeting of the group in Atlanta last month, 'it was standing room only.' Mr. Peck said the association is forming a committee on rooftop agriculture.

I just may get my edible green roof after all, someday.

Robin Shreeves blogs about finding eco-friendly food options at www.mnn.com/featured-blogs/sustainablefood.

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Friday, June 19, 2009:](#)

Say it ain't so, Joe

By Mark Grossi

"The streak" finally ended.

The San Joaquin Valley went 17 days without a federal ozone violation in June. It's not quite the same as Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak in 1941, but it's twice as long as any June streak I could find for the Valley.

For the record, the violations on Thursday occurred in Arvin and Sequoia National Park -- where you won't find rush hours or freeways. We've talked about how ozone precursors move downwind from metro areas, such as Fresno and Bakersfield.

The streak in perspective: The Valley's best ozone summer ever was in 2005. There were 14 federal violations in June that year. If the Valley runs the table with violations the rest of this month, the total would be 13.

[Manteca Bulletin Commentary, Saturday, June 20, 2009:](#)

Destroying the San Joaquin Valley in order to save it

By Dennis Wyatt, Managing Editor

Passing gas could one day become a criminal act.

It sounds absurd but who would have thought cows doing what they do naturally would become a major target of the air quality cops.

Methane gas is basically organic material breaking down. It is also a greenhouse gas that is over 20 times more effective trapping heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide. It also stays in the atmosphere for anywhere from nine to 15 years.

You can find methane gas being created at wastewater treatment plants, landfills, natural gas and petroleum operations, coal mining and farming activities — more specific dairy operations.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Quality Control District is zeroing in on Bessie and the other 2 million dairy cattle in the valley that each produce 12.98 pounds of volatile organic compounds (VOC) a year. To put that in perspective 700 cows produce as much VOCs as 60,000 cars.

This sounds scary, doesn't it? It is as scary sounding as arsenic in water. Guess what, arsenic is a naturally occurring substance found in all water. The issue is the arsenic level just as it is the level of green house gas in the atmosphere.

The solution the air pollution control district has is to cut the weakest from the herd – dairy farmers – and make them pay the price. Forget the fact the \$1 million per dairy solution that involves covering a dairy's lagoon and using a digester would essentially wipe out family farms. The air quality cops have zeroed in on cows and aren't going to be happy until they've wiped out the dairy industry.

Methane gas and carbon dioxide are apples and oranges in one aspect but in reality they are both fruits. One would think with the efforts being put in reducing carbon dioxide sources that it should go a long way to reducing greenhouse effects even though methane is 20 times more effective at trapping heat.

Why not go after two-stroke engines such as weed whackers and other lawn blowers? The Diamond Bar Air Quality Control District has done studies that show it is a huge source of carbon dioxide – much more than a typical car. Yet no one has even considered seriously the economic and long-term ramifications of outlawing two-stroke engines as opposed to wiping out dairies.

That's because the air quality control board is taking a piecemeal approach to cleaning up the air.

Instead of attacking everything that contributes to the problem as a whole and placing value in descending order on how disruptive, costly and effective they'd be compared to each other we are simply going down the list one-by-one.

It is all in pursuit of what would seem to be an agenda of having perfect air instead of cleaner air. There is a huge difference between the two.

Making this all the more ironic is we could chase the dairy industry to Mexico and then thanks to the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Mexico trucks that generate 20 times the amount of diesel pollutants that their counterparts this side of the border could haul milk up here and effectively wipeout any gains by destroying our dairy industry in terms of air quality.

If you don't think a diesel truck can make it from Tijuana to Bakersfield on one tank of diesel you're dreaming. On the way it would add to air quality problems in the Los Angeles Basin and worsen the problems here in what has been described as the dirtiest air basin in the country in a number of different categories.

The end result is we could destroy the valley as a place for humans to thrive simply to meet an objective of air purity or – what would more likely being the case – approaching the problem in isolated steps.

It could all lead to the air being cleaner than even nature intended – unless, of course, they managed to ban lightning strike fires, dust storms, and volcanic eruptions – and end up having massive unemployment with people literally starving because we can't produce affordable food.

Eliminating affordable food would be a good thing since humans tend to produce more VOCs when they consume more natural diets consisting of fruits, vegetables, and nuts.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Tuesday, June 23, 2009:](#)

Respect all on roads

As a recreational and commuter cyclist, I must respond to Joseph Hryn's letter of June 18.

Bicyclists riding the wrong way in bike lanes and blowing through stop signs drive me nuts, too! Ignorant and disrespectful cyclists give the rest of us a bad reputation.

However, the League of American Bicyclists reports that 50% of cyclist fatalities result from Vehicle Code violations by automobile drivers. Drivers need to understand that cyclists have equal access to roads and streets, except freeways.

It is all a matter of education. Cyclists need to understand that they are required to obey the Vehicle Code, just like auto drivers.

Auto drivers need to understand that cyclists are co-equal users of streets and roads, and cyclists have the right to "take the lane" when roads are too narrow to safely share with cars. Drivers need to learn not to make turns in front of cyclists.

Education programs for both cyclists and automobile drivers will be a significant part of the Fresno Bicycle Master Plan being written this year. As both gasoline prices and air pollution rise, there will be more and more bicycles on the road. We all need to learn to share the roads safely.

Stephen Lewis, Fresno

[Letter to the Manteca Bulletin, Saturday, June 20, 2009:](#)

Editor Manteca Bulletin,

Dennis Wyatt's story in my opinion didn't go far enough on the problematic issue of methane gas. I think dairies are one of the most vital industries in this valley. The loss of dairies forced out of existence by high priced technology to reduce methane gas, would be a huge financial loss to the Central Valley. I would like to continue drinking milk and eating my cookies knowing our milk is safe to drink. If our milk came from South of the Border, how can we be sure of the quality, from a country that don't impose quality standards?

Here is the part the Manteca City Council and editor of the Bulletin forgot to mention. The bulk of the toxic waste is not from the daily deposit of dairy cattle. It is from the mountains of cow manure that is piled up and sold as fertilizer. This mountain of cow manure that is covered most of the time, creates a vast amount of gas. This mountain of manure is the prime source of methane gas. That brings up a question, on how the dairies can dispose of this toxic manure in a shorter period of time. I think it would be less expensive to address this issue, than having the industry be forced out of business by regulators requiring expensive technology. Dairies make money off cow residue, but unless they get rid of the source of pollutants, they will be forced out of existence. That would certainly be a loss, in a vital industry that has been with us for many years. The industry has got to rid themselves of the source of pollutants, so regulators want have any excuse to impose high priced technology on dairies. The city will be hard pressed to find a solution to this issue, but if they don't, dairies might go the way of the Pontiac.

Fleener Richards, Manteca

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses California suspends air pollution lawsuit against six main automotive companies due to President Obama's administration now demanding similar emission reduction measures. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851](#)

Suspende California demanda por contaminación a las seis principales automotrices en el país

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, June 23, 2009

El procurador general de California, Jerry Brown retiró una demanda del estado por contaminación del aire contra las seis compañías automotrices más importantes en el país. Declaró que la querrela de California ya no es necesaria, puesto que la administración del presidente, Barack Obama, exige ahora a las automotrices una reducción de contaminación similar a la que demandaba California. El ex procurador, Bill Lockyer había presentado la demanda en el 2006 contra General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, Toyota, Honda y Nissan porque se rehusaban a diseñar modelos con mayor rendimiento y menos emisión de gases peligrosos. La demanda fue detenida cuando se encontraba en debate en la Corte de Apelaciones de San Francisco, de donde podría haber pasado a la Suprema Corte de Justicia.