

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Thursday, Aug. 6, 2009:](#)

Air officials will give away a Chevrolet hybrid

By Mark Grossi

The local air district is touting the giveaway of a hybrid Chevrolet as a way to get more people interested in lifestyles that will help make the air healthy.

To enter the drawing, you need to fill out a pledge card that can be obtained online or at the offices of the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District. The cards give people many options, such as using an electric lawnmower or riding a bike to work.

You also can enter at one of the 19 participating Chevrolet dealers around the Valley.

The drawing for the car will take place on Oct. 15, officials said.

Air quality: good

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Friday, Aug. 7, 2009

Today's air quality will be classified as "good" as clouds and marine air push into the Valley today.

The rating is a stark contrast to yesterday's forecast which was "unhealthy for sensitive groups."

Development freeze? City strikes back

By Gretchen Wenner and James Burger, Californian staff writers
Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Aug. 7, 2009

Talk about a line in the sand.

Want to build something in Bakersfield? Forget about it.

Consider it the city's revenge for a lawsuit filed Tuesday by local homebuilders upset by a spike in traffic impact fees.

Alan Tandy, Bakersfield's city manager, said the litigation "makes it impossible" for planners to process development projects.

Zone changes, general plan amendments, tract maps and other development proposals are apparently on ice.

"We attempted, on many occasions, to warn the HBA of the consequences," Tandy wrote in an e-mail, referring to the industry group that filed suit, "but they either did not fully understand or simply do not care."

State law requires developers to show their projects won't worsen congestion. If the city's underlying traffic program is bogus, as the suit alleges, developers can't prove they've lessened impacts to roads and air quality.

Bob Decker, top executive of the Home Builders Association of Kern County, said the city's saber-rattling comes as no surprise.

Homebuilders won't blink, he said, adding the de facto moratorium isn't legal.

It's also "far from impossible" for the city to process plans while the case plays out, Decker said.

Whether a development freeze would hurt the industry depends on how long it lasts, Decker said.

Bakersfield officials have already taken action.

They cancelled a Thursday committee meeting about a new habitat plan because the legal challenge requires analysis and "has seriously threatened future development potential" in Bakersfield, a memo shows.

The county adopted the same fee schedule and is also named in the complaint, although most residential construction is within city limits.

The traffic fee increase adds thousands of dollars in up-front costs to each new home. Builders reeling from the recession say it could be the death blow for some local companies.

City and county officials say they need the higher fee -- nearly \$13,000 per home -- to collect the bulk of local matching funds for \$630 million in federal transportation dollars secured by now-retired Rep. Bill Thomas, R-Bakersfield, before he left office. If the increase is postponed they could lose that money, they say.

NOW WHAT?

Nearly two dozen tract maps and 10 projects requiring general plan amendments are currently in the pipeline, said Jim Eggert, Bakersfield's planning director.

His department will continue processing cases "until we hear otherwise," Eggert said.

Traffic fees paid when builders pull permits will be charged according to the revised schedule, though the disputed sum may be placed in escrow.

Ted James, Kern County's planning director, said the county will also charge the new fees when building permits are pulled.

"This ordinance is in effect," James said. "It has not been thrown out by a court."

He would not say whether the county will consider halting development while the lawsuit unfolds.

At least one developer isn't happy about a possible freeze.

"We can't fathom" why the city would stall a major project when the jobless rate is so high here, said Steve Sugerman, spokesman for the 255-acre Bakersfield Commons project at Coffee and Brimhall roads.

An environmental report was recently filed with city planners. Sugerman said the developers, southland firm World Oil, hope for final approvals by the end of the year.

World Oil isn't part of the lawsuit and is fine with the city's traffic fee program, Sugerman said. Still, he blamed only the city, not the homebuilders' group, for a possible development freeze.

VOTES AHEAD

City Councilman Zack Scrivner said Tandy's concerns are valid.

The builders' allegations undermine traffic studies and make projects -- and the city -- magnets for environmental lawsuits.

"You wonder how much potential damage the HBA is doing to itself," Scrivner said.

Councilman David Couch said he's asked City Attorney Ginny Gennaro's office to report on the possibility of a joint closed session with the county to see if they can hire the same attorney.

The council's next meeting is Aug. 19.

Kern County Supervisor Mike Maggard, a former city councilman, said "the suit focuses attention on a weakness that could jeopardize development in our area."

From his vantage point, blame for the litigious atmosphere doesn't lie with the county.

"It's unfortunate that Tandy and the HBA did not continue the dialogue," Maggard said. "When you stop talking, this is what happens."

Gas stations gain aid for new vapor systems

Jim Wasserman, staff writer
Sacramento Bee, Friday, Aug. 7, 2009

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed legislation Thursday authorizing \$8 million in extra funding to help California's independent gasoline station owners install the state-required new vapor recovery systems.

Station owners have complained that the global credit crunch has made it difficult to get financing for systems required by the California Air Resources Board. The state says the new vapor recovery technology will reduce emissions that lead to ozone formation.

Schwarzenegger, signing Assembly Bill 96 on Thursday, said it offers relief to "small gas station owners who have shown good faith in trying to comply with the California Air Resources Board's enhanced vapor recovery deadline, but are struggling to compete in a tough economy."

Funding will provide grants and loans to station owners.

Mild summer making life easier for football coaches, players

By Joelle Milholm, News-Sentinel Staff Writer
Lodi News Sentinel, Friday, Aug. 7, 2009

The record temperatures. The smoky haze. Last summer it was difficult to walk outside and take a deep breath, let alone run sprints and condition for football season.

This summer, there have been fewer 100-degree days, even fewer 90-degree days in Lodi according to the National Weather Service. There has also been cleaner air thanks to the lack of wildfires that put a murky cloud over high school practices last summer.

The milder temperatures are allowing high school football players to better condition this summer and it's causing another out-of-the-norm trend according to Lodi High freshman football coach Robert Sperling.

"It allows us to condition at a higher rate and for longer and the kids are giving it all they've got and they aren't as gassed," he said. "The kids can't wait for the next day. Some kids actually asked me if we are going to condition tomorrow and I have never heard that as a coach."

Prep sports are currently in the dead period where coaches aren't allowed to hold practices or train with any of their sport's equipment. However, players are allowed to weight train and condition until official practices can begin Aug. 17.

The Tokay High varsity football team has been conditioning pretty consistently since the 2008 season concluded last November. Michael Holst, the Tigers' defensive coordinator and strength and conditioning coach has noticed a big difference this summer compared to last.

"The players feel blessed that they have this weather. There's not a whole lot of complaining," he said. "It's usually 90, high 90s, even around 100, so this is amazing weather for us to be in because we can get a lot more accomplished. We can push the kids a little harder."

With better air quality and lower temperatures, it has also been safer for players to be outside and running. Sperling said that he has many players on his team with asthma and they have been able to breath much better this year.

"It makes a big difference. We haven't had any asthma attacks this year," he said. There still have been a few days in the 100s this summer. Lodi High head coach Todd Dillon said the Flames went to a camp in Elk Grove and suffered through a 102-degree day, but otherwise the team has been lucky.

Even with the lower temperatures, Sperling hasn't changed his water break schedule. He still gives his players frequent breaks and lets them have water every 20 minutes. Holst also stressed the importance of taking routine rests. Dillon said that with temperatures still in the 80s, staying hydrated is still very important.

"You can't come out here and just start drinking water before practice," said Dillon, who tries to educate his players on having a better diet because what they eat and drink every day is important. "You need to drink throughout the day and stay hydrated."

As far as football goes, the weather is also helping coaches teach their players more of their strategies and philosophies. Sperling and Tokay head football coach Louis Franklin said players seem to be paying more attention than last summer when they were being beaten down by the heat and smoky air.

"We never want to have any distractions and one distraction last summer was the weather," Franklin said. "So I think it has just helped the kids focus and it is just keeping the kids mentally tough and understanding there are no excuses."

With first games approaching in five weeks and first official practice days creeping up even faster, area coaches are just hoping the milder summer trend continues. They know practices are tough on players once they get their pads on. It only makes things worse if the temperatures start climbing.

"The only bad thing is if the weather changes," Holst said. "That first week winds them regardless of the weather."

Plan urged to save national parks from global warming effects Climate change could result in the catastrophic loss of wildlife, a report says. The National Park Service is called on to create a system to manage animals and plants.

By Margot Roosevelt, staff writer
L.A. Times, Friday, Aug. 7, 2009

The federal government must take decisive action to avoid "a potentially catastrophic loss of animal and plant life" in national parks, according to a new report that details the effects of global warming on the nation's most treasured public lands.

The 53-page report from the National Parks Conservation Association, a Washington-based advocacy group, details concerns related to climate change in the parks, including the bleaching

of coral reefs in Florida and the disappearance of high-altitude ponds that nurture yellow-legged frogs in California.

The group called on the National Park Service to come up with a detailed plan and funding to adapt to temperature-related ecosystem changes.

"Right now, no national plan exists to manage wildlife throughout their habitat, which often is a patchwork of lands managed by multiple federal agencies, states, tribes, municipalities and private landholders," wrote Thomas C. Kiernan, president of the conservation group.

A major climate bill passed by the House in June would allocate more than \$500 million a year to natural resources adaptation under a proposed carbon-trading program. The Senate is drafting a companion bill, but the outcome of the legislation remains uncertain.

The survey by the conservation group reinforces recent testimony by President Obama's nominee for park service director, Jon Jarvis. "Climate change challenges the very foundation of the national park system and our ability to leave America's natural and cultural heritage unimpaired for future generations," Jarvis told a House subcommittee.

He suggested that "national park units can serve as the proverbial canary in the coal mine, a place where we can monitor and document ecosystem change without many of the stressors that are found on other public lands."

The report recommends adaptation strategies including the creation of wildlife corridors stretching from one park to another so that species can move unencumbered into cooler areas. It also recommends more effective limits on environmental hazards.

Glacier melt accelerating, federal report concludes

Reviewing five decades of data on three 'benchmark glaciers,' researchers say that shrinking glaciers clearly result from global warming.

By Jim Tankersley, staff writer
L.A. Times, Friday, Aug. 7, 2009

Reporting from Washington -- The federal government Thursday released the most comprehensive study of melting glaciers in North America -- and the results show a rapid and accelerating shrinkage over the last half a century because of global warming.

One of the glaciers in the study, the South Cascade Glacier in Washington state, has lost nearly half of its volume and a quarter of its mass since 1958, scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey said. The two others in the study, the Wolverine and Gulkana glaciers in Alaska, have both lost nearly 15% of their mass.

In all three cases, the melting has increased over the last two decades. The acceleration is the result of warmer, drier climates in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska caused by global warming, the researchers said.

"By having a 50-year record, you can look over what's going on, look over the meteorological, climatological record, and really get an idea of what's going on in the mountains," said Edward Josberger, a scientist with the USGS Washington Water Science Center in Tacoma, Wash., who has worked for a decade on the study.

"Climate change effects are starting to become more and more noticeable," he added, "and this is one of the effects that's being displayed."

The three glaciers in the study are known as "benchmark glaciers" because their varying climates and elevations are representative of thousands of other glaciers across the continent.

For five decades, USGS researchers have periodically measured the glaciers' size with tools including measurement stakes and photographic surveys. Their data include tallies of winter snow accumulation and summer melt.

In each case, the data show that summer melting accelerated in the last 20 years. At the same time, winter snowpacks have tapered off. The reduced accumulations and increased melts have resulted in shrinking glaciers.

South Cascade Glacier, for example, had a volume of nearly 0.06 cubic mile of water in 1958, Josberger said. By 2008, it was down to 0.03 cubic mile.

When glaciers shrink, water runoff declines, setting the stage for drier conditions in the region, particularly at the end of summer, when other supplies of water dwindle.

In the past, shifting ocean conditions explained some of the shrinking trend, the USGS researchers reported. But the latest acceleration suggests rising temperatures are "overwhelming" those natural cycles, the report concluded.

Climate Bill Is Threatened by Senators

By John M. Broder, staff writer

N.Y. Times, Thursday, Aug. 6, 2009

WASHINGTON — Ten moderate Senate Democrats from states dependent on coal and manufacturing sent a letter to President Obama on Thursday saying they would not support any climate change bill that did not protect American industries from competition from countries that did not impose similar restraints on climate-altering gases.

The letter warned that strong actions to limit emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases would add to the cost of goods like steel, cement, paper and aluminum. Unless other countries adopt similar emission limits, the senators warned, jobs will migrate overseas and foreign manufacturers will have a decided cost advantage.

"As Congress considers energy and climate legislation," the senators wrote, "it is important that such a bill include provisions to maintain a level playing field for American manufacturing."

"It is essential that any clean energy legislation not only address the crisis of climate change, but include strong provisions to ensure the strength and viability of domestic manufacturing," the letter said.

The 10 senators are seen as crucial undecided votes in the Senate debate on climate legislation. The House narrowly passed a climate bill in late June, but the Senate is moving slowly, in part because it is preoccupied with health care legislation.

The senators represent Midwestern and coal-producing states from which many of the 44 Democrats who voted against the measure in the House come from. Without their support, it is unlikely that the Senate can pass a major climate change bill.

The 10 senators were Evan Bayh of Indiana; Sherrod Brown of Ohio; Robert C. Byrd and John D. Rockefeller IV of West Virginia; Bob Casey and Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania; Russ Feingold of Wisconsin; Al Franken of Minnesota; and Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow of Michigan.

They called for transition aid for energy-intensive manufacturers in the form of rebates on their energy costs; negotiation of a strong international agreement on emissions; programs to monitor emissions in other countries; and significant financing for clean energy technology.

The authors also proposed "border adjustments," tariffs, on goods from countries that do not agree to an international program for carbon dioxide reductions. The House bill gives the president the power to impose such penalties on goods from countries that do not adhere to an international climate change regime.

"Climate change is a reality and the world cannot afford inaction," the senators wrote. "However, we must not engage in a self-defeating effort that displaces greenhouse gas emissions rather than reducing them and displaces U.S. jobs rather than bolstering them."

In an interview shortly after the House vote, President Obama said he was concerned about the tariff provision of the House bill, calling it potentially protectionist.

Big donors sought for Schwarzenegger climate meeting

By Kevin Yamamura

Sacramento Bee, Friday, Aug. 7, 2009

A top California Chamber of Commerce official is soliciting six-figure donations to help Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger host a climate change summit in Los Angeles, offering contributors private access to the governor and "first-paragraph mention in official event press release," according to donor materials.

Schwarzenegger will host the Governors' Global Climate Summit 2 from Sept. 30 to Oct. 2 to give leaders of states and other "subnational" governments a platform to discuss clean energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Organizers have billed the event as a precursor to a major U.N. Climate Change conference scheduled for December in Copenhagen, Denmark.

To pay for the Los Angeles conference, Schwarzenegger is relying on the California State Protocol Foundation, a nonprofit group with ties to the California Chamber of Commerce and other business leaders who opposed 2006 legislation mandating a reduction in greenhouse gases by 2020.

Climate summit donors can become a "Blue Sky Sponsor" for \$250,000 or a "Clean Air Sponsor" for \$100,000. Both levels offer access to a "VIP Reception" with Schwarzenegger, a photo op with Schwarzenegger and mentions in the official press release, along with prominent placement on event materials. Five other opportunities with price tags between \$100,000 and \$250,000 offer similar benefits.

Donors can become a "Title Sponsor" for an unspecified price. That sponsor can host its own private reception "with key participants" and receive "first paragraph mention in (the) official event press release," in addition to the other opportunities to meet with the governor.

Schwarzenegger deputy press secretary Lisa Page said the governor is relying on outside donors because it is "important for saving taxpayer dollars at a time when education, social services and other important programs are facing devastating cuts."

But Bob Stern, executive director of the Center for Governmental Studies in Los Angeles, called the event "another end run around contribution limits." Donors normally can give only \$25,900 directly to the governor per election cycle, though they can donate unlimited amounts to his ballot-issues committee and the Protocol Foundation.

"Why are groups going to give?" Stern said. "It's because they want access to decision-makers. These are business decisions, and they're going to get bang out of their bucks."

In the Protocol Foundation's filing last year, Chamber President Allan Zaremborg was listed as the Foundation's president and California Business Roundtable President William Hauck as its vice president. The group shares its address with the California Chamber of Commerce.

Larry Dicke, the chamber's chief financial officer, is the Protocol Foundation's secretary-treasurer and is listed as the contributor contact for the climate summit.

Dicke said the Protocol Foundation is "completely separate" from the California Chamber of Commerce and has no influence on the focus of the summit itself.

"We're handling the fundraising, and everything else is being handled by the Governor's Office," Dicke said of the Protocol Foundation. "All of what we do is about lessening the burden on state government."

The Protocol Foundation previously has raised money through tax-deductible contributions to fund Schwarzenegger's overseas trade missions and receptions. Those efforts largely coincide with the business community's goals of promoting California goods.

In this case, the foundation is helping the governor organize a conference seemingly at odds with positions of its business-oriented leaders. The chamber opposed Assembly Bill 32 in 2006, which Schwarzenegger signed to reduce greenhouse gases 25 percent by 2020 and considers his foremost environmental accomplishment.

Business groups continue to voice concerns at the California Air Resources Board about higher AB 32 costs weighing down the state's economy as part of the AB 32 Implementation Group coalition.

Bill Magavern, director of Sierra Club California, said that while the conference may help California leaders speak with their counterparts elsewhere, "it concerns me that you have an organization that is doing everything it can to obstruct implementation of global warming policy in California being involved in fundraising for this global summit."

Page said neither the Protocol Foundation nor the chamber is involved with the conference program. She said officials from the California Environmental Protection Agency, along with leaders from other states and nations, are developing the agenda.

The Protocol Foundation last year raised \$830,000 for Schwarzenegger's first climate change summit, according to public records.

Foundations gave heavily last year, including \$200,000 from the Aga Khan Development Network, an international charity tied to the spiritual leader of Ismaili Muslims. But major energy players donated as well, including Pacific Gas and Electric, ConocoPhillips, BP America and Florida Power & Light, an owner of wind farms in California.

While private organizers are in charge of fundraising, the governor's publicly funded state office last year handled press releases for the conference. The 2009 solicitation suggests that a top donor can buy first-paragraph placement in a governor's press release.

Page said this year's conference press releases are still in the planning stage. One of last year's press releases included a list of donors, though none highlighted a contributor in the first paragraph.

[Letter to the Sacramento Bee, Friday, Aug. 7, 2009:](#)

Some questions about 'clunkers'

"Cash for clunkers" is designed to replace old vehicles with newer, more efficient models. The old, polluting vehicles are to be scrapped.

Is this program being tracked? Are the vehicles actually being scrapped? Who is collecting these "clunkers"? Where are they being stored? Where are they being scrapped? Or are we "outsourcing" these clunkers to another country?

Elizabeth O'Donnell, Shingle Springs