

Note: This event was postponed and is being rescheduled.

Cleaner buses

Orange Cove Times, October 14, 2009

Officials will celebrate new, cleaner school buses will be held at 11 a.m. on Thursday, Oct. 15 at Orange Cove High School.

Dignitaries expected to attend are State Air Resources Board Chair Mary Nichols, Valley Air District Executive Director Seyed Sadredin, Fresno County Supervisor and Valley Air District Governing Board member Judy Case, Orange Cove Mayor Victor Lopez, Kings Canyon Unified School District Superintendent Juan Garza and KCUSD Deputy Superintendent Ron Hudson.

A state grant administered through the local air district is taking old, polluting school buses off the road in a rural Fresno County school district, and as a result, improving the lives of its children and community.

The four new buses, which replace buses manufactured before 1977, will reduce harmful air pollutants that affect human health in the Kings Canyon Unified School District. The buses were replaced through the Prop 1B Lower Emission School Bus Program. The state Air Resources Board allocated \$39 million in Prop 1B funds to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"Replacing older, dirtier school buses with today's newer models provides cleaner air to students, communities and schoolyards," said ARB Chairman Mary D. Nichols. "Credit goes to the San Joaquin Air District for moving expeditiously to parlay this voter- state funding into on-the-ground air quality improvements in a part of the state that really needs it."

This project is an example of how the Air District targets the areas of greatest need in the Valley for critical funding," said Seyed Sadredin, the Air District's executive director and air pollution control officer.

With a population of 10,000 students in the Kings Canyon Unified School District and nearly 600 at Orange Cove High School, these newer buses will have an immediate benefit to the area, reducing exposure to harmful diesel particulate emissions and nitrogen oxides (NOx) by 85 percent each. These pollutants are serious health threats that can cause disease and exacerbate existing respiratory conditions such as asthma.

Buses manufactured before 1977 produced about seven tons of emissions over their lifetime, compared to lifetime emissions of one ton for buses manufactured today. Additionally, older buses are not subject to federal safety standards. All pre-1977 buses in the Valley will be replaced with Prop 1B funding. Remaining funds will be used for retrofits and additional replacements.

School districts must apply to the Air District for funding. For additional information, call 559-230-5800.

"With this important change, we can improve the lives of these students and their community significantly," said Sadredin. "That, in a nutshell, is why we are here."

For more information about the Valley Air District, call a regional office: in Fresno, 559-230-6000; in Bakersfield, 661-392-5500; and in Modesto, 209-557-6400.

Warmer days in Valley follow big storm

By Pablo Lopez and Jim Guy / The Fresno Bee
Thursday, Oct. 15, 2009

Sunny skies and 80-degree weather are forecast for today as the central San Joaquin Valley and Sierra Nevada dry out from the season's first rainstorm.

The National Weather Service said the warm weather will continue through the weekend. Air quality will also be good throughout the region.

The storm earlier this week left behind a mind-boggling amount of rainfall in some places.

It dumped 13.74 inches in Dinkey Creek, 10.14 inches at Wishon Dam, and 8.09 inches at Shaver Lake, the weather service reported Wednesday.

"It's nuts," said Jim Dudley, an NWS meteorologist in Hanford. "It doesn't happen very often. That's a lot of rain."

Dudley said he couldn't say for sure whether the Dinkey Creek monsoon was a rainfall record because the weather service doesn't keep track of that statistic. But, he said, "It's definitely the most anybody we've been talking to has seen."

Fresno, however, set a record for rainfall -- with 1.28 inches in a 24-hour period, starting at midnight Tuesday. The record for Oct. 13 had been 0.88 of an inch, set in 1968, said Jeff Barlow, another NWS meteorologist.

Fresno now has a season-to-date total of 1.40 inches of rain, Barlow said. Normally at this time, Fresno has 0.52 of an inch.

The forecast for Fresno calls for a mostly sunny sky today with a high near 78 degrees. Skies should remain mostly sunny for the next seven days, the weather service said.

Once the rain stopped Wednesday morning, a high-pressure system settled over the Valley, Barlow said. Fresno recorded a high of 79 degrees, the normal for this time of year, he said.

A weaker storm hovering off the coast will miss Fresno and the Valley, Barlow said. But the new system might bring isolated showers in the nearby Sierra this weekend, he said.

"You might want to bring an umbrella if you are headed to the mountains," he said.

Tuesday's storm contributed to a rash of traffic accidents, dozens of power outages and minor flooding. On the Valley floor, Hanford received 1.28 inches of rain, Merced had 1.44 inches and Visalia had 1.47 inches.

North Fork in the Madera County foothills received 6.95 inches of rain, and Yosemite Valley had 5.41 inches.

About 29,000 PG&E customers lost electricity during the storm, but power was restored to all but a few customers by late Wednesday afternoon, said utility spokesman Denny Boyles.

Keith Coolidge, acting chief deputy director of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, said the recent storm has raised Northern California reservoirs by 1 foot.

But Coolidge, who was in Fresno on Wednesday speaking to members of the State Board of Food and Agriculture, said the state's drought is not over. Despite the recent storm, groundwater levels and the state's major reservoirs remain low, he said.

The storm toppled trees and caused minor flooding, but most of the debris was cleared up by Wednesday morning, said Bob Palacios, manager of the Fresno County road maintenance and operations division.

The good news for mountain areas was that the storm brought snow.

A spokesman for Sierra Summit ski area said Wednesday that several inches of snow fell at its highest elevation, but lower elevations received rain. Boomer Devaurs estimated the snow accumulation at about 4 inches.

Burn limits lifted today in foothills

In the Modesto Bee Thursday, October 15, 2009

Effective today, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection lifted the suspension on burning on private land within the Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit.

The unit includes Calaveras and Tuolumne counties and the eastern portions of San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties. The lifted suspension also applies to certain parts of the Stanislaus National Forest.

Burning will be allowed on days and nights as established by the Air Pollution Control District in each county.

For the "permissive burn status" call: 754-6600 in Calaveras County; 877-429-2876 in Stanislaus County; 533-5598 in Tuolumne County; and 800-281-7003 in San Joaquin County. Information about the Stanislaus National Forest is available at 532-5601.

Burn suspension lifted in Lode

Stockton Record, Thursday, October 15, 2009

SAN ANDREAS - Property owners in Calaveras and Tuolumne counties will be able to legally resume burning brush piles effective at 8 a.m. today, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit announced Wednesday.

The lifting of the burning suspension comes after a storm this week soaked area soils and vegetation, reducing the risk that debris pile fires could go out of control. Permits available from California Department of Forestry offices are still required, and burning is allowed only on days designated by local air pollution control districts.

The lifting of the burning suspension that had been in place during fire season affects all of Calaveras and Tuolumne counties as well as eastern portions of San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties within the jurisdiction of the local CDF unit.

Regulations limit the size of burn piles to 4 feet in diameter. All flammable material and vegetation is to be cleared within 10 feet of the outer edge of the pile. Those conducting the burning are required to keep a close water supply and stay in attendance with a shovel until the fire is out.

Only brush and other plant debris can be burned. No burning of trash, tires, plastic or garbage is allowed.

Residents of Calaveras County can check burn day status with their air pollution control district at (209) 754-6600. San Joaquin County residents should call (800) 281-7003.

Storm allows Cal Fire to ease burn restrictions

By Kim Minugh

Sacramento Bee, late Thursday, October 14, 2009

Following cool temperatures and the region's first significant rain, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection announced Tuesday a decrease in burn restrictions in Nevada, Yuba and Placer counties.

Officials have ended its seasonal ban on residential burning, although residents still are required to obtain permits for any burning and must burn only on days permitted by the local air pollution control district, according to a Cal Fire news release.

Residents also must adhere to the following regulations, according to the release:

- A burn pile can be no larger than 4 feet in diameter.
- All flammable material and vegetation must be cleared within a 10-foot radius of the pile's outer edge.
- A water supply must be kept close by.
- An adult should be present with a shovel during the burning.
- Burning should be done only during appropriate weather conditions. For example, burning should not be conducted on windy days.

For more information about burn permit requirements, call Cal Fire at (530) 889-0111 or go to www.fire.ca.gov

State changes rules after city invests \$4.1M

By Dennis Wyatt, Managing Editor

Manteca Bulletin, Wednesday, October 14, 2009

The adoption of state regulations has drastically changed the playing field forcing Manteca to rethink moves made after investing \$3.5 million in a building for police operations and \$600,000 on a co-gen plant for the wastewater treatment facility.

That is on top of more than \$12 million Manteca sewer and water ratepayers are paying because standards have changed for the treatment of both water and wastewater.

None of the expenditures, though, impacts the general fund that the city is trying to balance after a \$14 million deficit developed this year due to dropping revenues and increasing expenses plus the state swiping more than \$1 million. They do, though, underscore how frustrating and expensive it is to deal with state mandates that can change in the middle of civic undertakings.

The former Qualex film processing building consisting of 55,000 square feet at 555 Industrial Park Drive is the latest example. The city purchased it for \$3.6 million several years ago with the intent of having it take care of police headquarters space needs for the next 20 to 30 years.

They even spent money on design work. Manteca was getting ready to move forward when developers sued over the increase in the government facilities fee increase of which part was going to pay for the Qualex remodeling and retrofit that could reach \$10 million. Still, it would have been less than building a comparable building from scratch and acquiring land.

The City Council opted to put the project on hold pending the outcome of the lawsuit. Manteca prevailed in the lawsuit.

Steve Pinkerton, when he arrived at city hall in the summer of 2008 as city manager, asked for a re-evaluation of all pending projects. It was then that staff discovered the state had just changed a regulation regarding holding cells for municipal police departments.

The state was now requiring 24/7 staffing much like the county jail for new police facilities. Existing police department with holding cells that lacked around the clock staffing were grandfathered in.

It was found that it would add at least \$620,000 a year to police department operating costs effectively making a move to 555 Industrial Park Drive a major ongoing budget buster.

Since a holding cell is essential for police operations plus helps reduce the number of trips to take suspects who have been arrested to the county jail, the city has started rethinking its strategy of how to meet police headquarter needs as the city grows.

Police Chief Dave Bricker has said expansion on the Civic Center site would avoid that costly condition unless, of course the state decides to make the requirement apply to expanded police facilities.

The co-gen plant was perhaps even more frustrating.

It was estimated in October 2002 that a co-generation plant installed at Manteca's wastewater treatment plant would start saving more than \$400,000 a year in municipal power costs starting in mid-2003.

But that was before the [San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District](#) threw a wrench in municipal plans after giving the city a tentative OK to burn methane gas, which has become the bane of air quality experts, instead of letting it escape into the air. The cogen plant was ready to go in May of 2003. But then rules governing co-generation plants changed after the district gave its tentative initial OK and the unit had been ordered and shipped.

The city folded its cards and putting the co-generation plant that originally cost in excess of \$600,000 up for sale. It's in perfectly good shape, has never been used, and has even been updated in a fruitless effort to meet the new standards. And it can still reduce power costs and reduce pollution at the same time. It just can't be used in California.

Manteca is now pursuing a new co-gen plant designed to hack away at the \$1.2 million PG&E bill that the city incurs each year to run the wastewater treatment plant. This time around, they aren't taking "yes" as an answer and are working as close as possible with the district before making each move.

Power plant application is pulled out

Reedley Exponent, Wednesday, October 14, 2009

A plan to bring discounted electricity to Valley communities was withdrawn recently by a board comprised of its member cities.

The Kings River Conservation District (KRCDD) board pulled its Community Power Plant application from the California Energy Commission's permitting process, citing delays in implementation of Community Choice, ongoing economic conditions, continued limitations in the credit markets, and fiscal issues affecting local governments.

Parlier was one of ten board members that remained in the Community Power program proposed by KRCDD. Other members were Clovis, Corcoran, Dinuba, Hanford, Kerman, Kingsburg, Lemoore, Reedley, Sanger and Kings County.

Reedley City manager Rocky Rogers said the city wouldn't hesitate to jump back into the program if KRCDD or another group proposes a Community Power project. "The City is always looking for alternative supplies especially those that will provide stability and cleaner emissions."

The KRCDD proposed 565-megawatt, gas-fired power plant in Parlier was intended to provide lower-cost electricity to San Joaquin Valley cities. For Parlier and Sanger, the plant also factored into plans to delay waste water treatment plant expansions, and prevent several hundred tons of salt from entering the groundwater each year.

Parlier City manager Lou Martinez said use of its treated waste water allowed them to delay a \$30 million plant expansion, but the City had purchased 60 acres of land across from its current plant as a contingency.

"We were sorry to see [the Community Power Plant] dropped, but we understand it was the economy and other things that affected the decision," said Lou Martinez, city manager for Parlier

Martinez said at least two private parties have expressed an interest in developing a power plant in the same location, but there is no concrete plan in place. "I understand they have talked to KRCDD about taking over the power plant application, but I don't know if that's possible."

David Orth, general manager for KRCDD, said the agency has contact with several interested parties, including, he believes, the ones Parlier has talked to. He said KRCDD continues to explore options for investment partners or buyers to keep the project moving forward, but believes there is too much uncertainty in the California energy market right now. He says PG&E's 'anti-competition' stance hasn't helped. "I don't expect them to ever be comfortable with competition. They aren't going to look favorably on anyone building a generation plant."

The KRCDD Community Choice program has had to clear hurdles since a 2002 state law authorized the ability for entities other than large energy suppliers--including Pacific Gas and Electric--to enter the market. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) took about two years to issue the regulations. Then, as KRCDD initiated discussions with cities and counties about the program, Orth said he began to encounter what he termed 'unfair challenges' from Pacific Gas and Electric which had previously identified itself as supportive of Community Choice programs. He said PG&E's marketing tactics became decidedly competitive despite their earlier statements to the CPUC. KRCDD filed a complaint with the CPUC and eventually prevailed in its objective to have PG&E acknowledge it was a competitor and was advocating on behalf of PG&E shareholders, not necessarily customers.

The settlement also required PG&E to reimburse KRCDD \$383,633 in legal fees and acknowledge that customers are not required to buy their electricity from PG&E.

A new challenge appears to be in the works in the form of a 2010 ballot initiative that would require a two-thirds affirmative vote before any local entity could enter into a contract such as Community Choice. In a market dominated by a handful of large public power agencies, Orth said it could be an uphill battle to garner enough votes at the local level for a City to enter into an agreement with an alternative energy supplier.

KRCDD continues to operate Pine Flat Power Plant and the Malaga Peaking Plant, and pursues future power resources. Founded in 1951, KRCDD is a resource management agency for water, power and the environment within the 1.2 million acre Kings River service area in Fresno, Kings and Tulare counties.

Take a deep breath -- more bad news on air pollution

The consequences of breathing bad air is linked to appendicitis and ear infections, new studies indicate.

By Jill U. Adams, staff writer
L.A. Times, Monday, Oct. 12, 2009

It's easy to see how air pollution would affect respiratory disease: You breathe in smog-filled miasma all day and the ozone, other noxious gases and small particulate matter therein can make you wheeze and cough. Pollutants can trigger asthma attacks and bronchitis in susceptible individuals.

But it's harder at first blush to understand links to other conditions. In two studies reported last week, bad air was associated with higher rates of appendicitis and ear infections.

The new reports have been met with surprise because neither health problem seems obviously linked with the airway or bloodstream. At the same time, they represent a trend toward broadening the research scope of air pollution and health.

"People are looking at everything and air pollution these days," says Francine Laden, an epidemiologist at Harvard School of Public Health in Boston.

Research on air pollution has been conducted worldwide for decades and is part of the basis for government regulation of air quality. Study after study has found more hospitalizations and higher death rates when certain pollutants are high. In addition to respiratory effects, research has established that air pollution increases the risk of cardiovascular events such as arrhythmia, heart attack and stroke, and the incidence of certain cancers.

In the appendicitis study, published Oct. 5 in the Canadian Medical Assn. Journal, researchers examined records for 5,191 adults admitted to Calgary hospitals for appendicitis from 1999 to 2006. The dates of the patients' admissions were compared to air pollution levels in the preceding week, using data from three air quality surveillance sites in the city.

The scientists found a significant effect of pollutants on appendicitis rates in the summer months among men, but not women.

The risk of going to the hospital with appendicitis more than doubled when summer pollution was at its highest, says study lead author Dr. Gilaad Kaplan, a physician-researcher at the University of Calgary.

The strongest effects were found when high pollution days preceded hospital admission by at least five days rather than a shorter period. This suggests there is a certain lag time between pollutant exposure and the development of appendicitis.

The study did not examine how pollution might cause appendicitis, but Kaplan speculates that inflammatory processes are involved. Substances the body produces to ramp up inflammation are implicated in appendicitis. Other research has found these substances in healthy volunteers after they breathed diesel exhaust.

A similar argument is used to explain cardiovascular risk factors associated with air pollution: that substances involved in blood clotting are produced after exposure to bad air.

In the ear infection study, presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery in San Diego, researchers compared prevalence of the disease in 126,060 children with trends in air pollution from 1997 to 2006. Health information came from the National Health Interview Survey, administered by the U.S. Census Bureau, and air quality data came from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency records.

Four pollutants -- carbon monoxide, nitrous dioxide, sulfur dioxide and particulate matter -- decreased nationwide over the 10-year period. The number of children reported as having more than three ear infections in a year also declined.

Again, the study cannot say air pollution causes ear infections, only that the two are associated. And it did not investigate how pollutants affect the ear canal.

But it's not a stretch to go from respiratory illness to ear infection, says lead author Dr. Nina Shapiro, a pediatric otolaryngologist at UCLA School of Medicine. Pollutants have been shown to damage cilia -- tiny little hairs that line many of the body's passageways.

If that occurs in the ear, Shapiro says, then the cleansing process is damaged or slowed, which could set the stage for infection.

Study coauthor Dr. Neil Bhattacharyya found a similar association between air pollution and sinus infection in adults in an earlier investigation published in *Laryngoscope* in March.

An inherent weakness in both the ear infection and appendicitis studies -- and in many air pollution studies, for that matter -- is that air quality data for a geographical area are used as an estimate of what an individual actually inhales, says Derek Shendell, a public health researcher at the University of Medicine and Dentistry, New Jersey, in Piscataway.

Air quality measured at a site may not represent what someone living in that neighborhood is actually breathing. It will depend on levels they encounter in their house or workplace.

And even within a given neighborhood, pollution will be greater near busier roads.

Researchers must also be on the lookout for other unrelated factors that may affect the health condition being measured.

For example, Shapiro notes, there was a decline in cigarette smoking during the time period covered by her ear-infection study.

If the children also had less exposure to secondhand smoke -- a known risk factor for ear infections -- that could account for some of the decline in disease.

Pneumococcal vaccine, introduced in 2000 -- the middle of Shapiro's study period -- has also been credited with declining rates of ear infections.

In fact, both the new studies are just first steps. They are sure to stimulate more research on how air pollution might trigger these conditions as well as other nonrespiratory diseases.

Adventure of the Week: Aid others' lungs by burning yours

By Gamaliel Ortiz

Sacramento Bee, Thursday, October 15, 2009

The door to the stairwell of Sacramento's tallest skyscraper, the Wells Fargo Center, swings open Nov. 14 for an event benefitting the American Lung Association.

Tackle the 32 flights of stairs, and you'll help to make breathing easier - for someone else, anyway.

The American Lung Association challenge, already fulfilled by others in cities with towering buildings, is making its first stop in the City of Trees and is open to stair climbers and their sponsors for a fundraiser.

"The money is going to fund several local programs like Open Airways, Freedom for Smoking, asthma camps, awareness, and advocacy for air quality and global warming issues," says Robert Ojeda, executive director for the American Lung Association of California.

Arden Hills Resort Club & Spa and other fitness businesses are offering public training sessions around the event. The Arden training package, scheduled to begin Monday, wraps together the \$100 donation each participant agrees to give and the \$25 entry fee with eight training sessions and a T-shirt. The total cost is \$285.

Arden fitness instructor Robert Linkul is training for the climb, following a major health setback.

After lung surgery in May to remove a carcinoid tumor - rare for his age of 28 - and then enduring a collapsed lung while recovering, Linkul knew he had to help.

"I had a very personal issue that brought me into a situation that had me become aware of lung disease," he said.

The tumor had gone undetected for nearly a decade. Now he's back on the stair climber.

During his treatment, the Sacramento resident was impressed with technology but knew more could be achieved to make lung surgery less invasive to shorten recovery time. Funds also will go to research and screening of lung ailments.

Last year, the Sacramento area raised about \$50,000 for the association through various events. Since this is the first year Sacramento is doing the climb, organizers hope to double that figure.

"I really want to be able to help. Sacramento has really bad levels of asthma and pollution," Linkul said. "Being a strength and conditioning coach, I thought of developing a team to do the climb."

Within weeks of his surgery, Linkul had heard about the event and acted. He has set a goal of getting enough participants to raise \$2,500, and he's halfway there.

He has about 12 trainees who are pumped for the big climb - all 612 steps of it. And he hopes this can be an annual thing for him and his team.

"I'm planning on climbing them twice," he says, "but we'll see what my lungs have to say."

Redwood City, too, may get In-N-Out restaurant

By Shaun Bishop, The Daily News

In the Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, October 15, 2009

REDWOOD CITY — San Carlos isn't the only Peninsula city looking to land an In-N-Out Burger.

The popular fast food chain could get approval as soon as next week to construct a new restaurant on Veterans Boulevard in Redwood City, officials said.

In-N-Out has quietly moved through the city's planning process since applying in mid-June to tear down the abandoned Baker's Square building at 949 Veterans Blvd. and build one of its red-and-white restaurants there.

The city's Architectural Review Committee last month approved the design for the 3,265-square-foot building, which would come with 47 parking spaces, outdoor seating and a drive-through.

If the Planning Commission and zoning administrator approve the plans next week, it would clear the way for construction of the only In-N-Out between Mountain View and Millbrae.

At the same time Redwood City is finalizing the restaurant's plans, a separate project in San Carlos is proceeding at a slower pace. The San Carlos City Council agreed Monday to sell In-N-Out a city-owned plot of land at Holly Street and Industrial Road for \$1.6 million.

That agreement hinges on San Carlos giving In-N-Out the permits it needs to build there, and some residents on Monday expressed concerns about the restaurant's potential impact on traffic and pedestrian safety, among other issues.

The Redwood City project, eyed for a site surrounded mostly by businesses, has not provoked any opposition, associate planner Salish Mehra said. The city sent notices about the project to 300 property owners around the site and received four or five supportive e-mails in reply, he said.

On Oct. 20, the Planning Commission will consider approving environmental review documents that state the project would have a negligible impact on air quality, traffic and other issues. The site's design would allow up to 25 cars to queue in the drive-through, so long lines will not spill onto city streets, Mehra said.

If the Planning Commission approves the project, the zoning administrator will hold a hearing Oct. 21 to consider granting the company the use permit it needs to operate the restaurant.

City officials believe the new location would attract people who work in the downtown area, including employees at the nearby Kaiser Hospital and San Mateo County Government Center.

The site would include bike racks and landscaping along the street to encourage people to grab a bite without using their cars.

"We really do feel a lot of people are going to be walking here, so we made an extra effort to make it a pleasant pedestrian experience," Mehra said.

The restaurant could also give the city's coffers a small boost. Finance Director Brian Ponty estimated In-N-Out would generate between \$15,000 and \$30,000 in annual property tax revenue.

"My guess is they'd probably come in at the higher end, because they're a newer restaurant, newer to this area, and they seem to be very popular," Ponty said.

Use of Forests as Carbon Offsets Fails to Impress In First Big Trial Project in Bolivia Keeps Trees Standing But Has Little Clear Effect on Emissions

By Juliet Eilperin

Washington Post Thursday, October 15, 2009

More than a decade ago in the northeast corner of Bolivia, a group of polluters and environmentalists joined forces in the first large-scale experiment to curb climate change with a strategy that promised to suit their competing interests: compensating for greenhouse gas emissions by preserving forests.

The coalition of U.S. utility companies, two nonprofit groups and the Bolivian government had the common goal of making a dent in the worldwide deforestation that accounts for about 17 percent of greenhouse gas emissions each year. The outcome of that experiment is fueling debate over a key element in international climate strategy.

While the Noel Kempff Mercado Climate Action Project has succeeded in keeping a biologically rich preserve of more than 6,000 square miles free from logging, it has fallen far short of its goal of reducing emissions. The mix of pragmatism and idealism -- providing powerful financial incentives to encourage influential companies and poor countries to work together to slow global warming -- shows the complexity of a much-heralded approach that Democratic lawmakers and international negotiators are trying to write into law.

Preventing the clearing and burning of tropical forests, which help absorb carbon dioxide and provide habitat to an array of species, has become a critical objective for environmentalists.

"It doesn't matter who caused the problem. We are in it together," said Wangari Maathai, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her work on tree planting in Africa and appealed to President Obama in a meeting last week on the need to preserve forests overseas. "If forests can be kept standing, it would be good for developed nations, it would be good for the developing world."

It also gives the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases more affordable carbon credits under the cap-and-trade system Congress is now debating. Without international offsets, pollution allowances would be 89 percent more expensive under the climate bill authored by Democratic Reps. Henry A. Waxman (Calif.) and Edward J. Markey (Mass.), according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Sixty percent of the international offsets would come from tropical forests, the agency said.

"Including offsets from tropical forests in a climate bill is a key to affordability," said Nigel Purvis, executive director of the bipartisan Commission on Climate and Tropical Forests. "It would be geopolitically and economically foolish for us to push back on that."

But a report Greenpeace will release Thursday questions the premise of using forest conservation overseas to compensate for U.S. pollution, noting that Noel Kempff envisioned keeping 55 million metric tons of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere over 30 years but has lowered that expectation to 5.8 million. The revised estimates do not take into account that logging may have moved to areas to the north, east and southwest of the project. And the report notes that the project's three corporate underwriters -- American Electric Power, BP America and PacifiCorp -- overestimated how much carbon the project kept from entering the atmosphere, telling the EPA it accounted for 7.4 million metric tons from 1997 to 2004.

"At this crucial time, with the [climate] negotiations in Copenhagen and U.S. legislation, can we afford to take a gamble on what the backers of these programs say haven't been as effective as they anticipated?" said Greenpeace spokesman Daniel Kessler.

American Electric Power chief executive Michael G. Morris said Greenpeace is naive to suggest the world should create a multibillion-dollar fund to preserve forests instead of letting corporations undertake these initiatives to meet their bottom line.

"When Greenpeace says the only reason American Electric Power wants to do this is because it doesn't want to shut down its coal plants, my answer is, 'You bet, because our coal plants serve our customers very cost-effectively,' " he said.

Several forestry experts said the world has learned from the Noel Kempff project and has incorporated lessons from it in the policies that U.S. lawmakers and international negotiators are now shaping. The sharp cut in verified emissions reductions came from satellite technology and better computer models that adjusted the baseline for what would have happened if the project had not been conducted.

Toby Janson Smith, who directs Conservation International's forest carbon markets program, said two new global standards -- one measuring a project's carbon storage and another its social and environmental benefits -- have built "great confidence in the market" in the last couple of years.

And Sarene Marshall, deputy director of the Nature Conservancy's climate team, said any binding climate regime would allow emitters to use verified offsets only after the fact, rather than projected estimates. "We can definitely measure with a high degree of scientific accuracy, and this can be verified by a third party, what would have been the emissions from forests that were targeted for destruction," she said.

The Norwegian government, which has pledged \$1 billion between now and 2015 to conserve forests in Brazil, has proposed that any global climate deal inked this year spell out that rich nations pay to protect tropical forests and establish an offset program only once developing countries improve their governance and accounting systems. Audun Rosland, a Norway climate negotiator, said his country wants this stored forest carbon to be on top of what industrialized countries are already doing. "We need both deep cuts in developed countries and developing countries," he said.

Markey, who focused on deforestation during a visit to Brazil last year, included a provision in his and Waxman's bill that sets aside 5 percent of the money from emissions allowances to conserve forests overseas, and the bill states that offsets must come from projects in countries that have a national deforestation plan or are working toward one. The Senate bill includes the same set-aside and slightly different project requirements.

But Kyle L. Davis, PacifiCorp's director of environmental policy and strategy, said the two bills' strict forest requirements might make it impossible for companies like his to find the 2 billion tons of offsets they promise.

And Sen. Byron L. Dorgan (D-N.D.), a pivotal vote on climate legislation, said he remains concerned that this sort of system can lead to market speculation. "That's a very complicated area where there's not a lot of experience," Dorgan said.

In the end, according to Center for Clean Air Policy President Ned Helme, both U.S. and international officials need to figure out how to preserve tropical forests as part of any domestic and international climate agreement.

"In terms of selling the deal, this is an important part of the deal, because so many countries benefit," Helme said. "We have to make sure we're not overselling the promise."

Mount Rainier Residents Turn to Corn as a 'Greener' Fuel Alternative

By Avis Thomas-Lester

Washington Post, Thursday, October 15, 2009

Sat Jiwan Ikle-Khalsa and some of his eco-conscious friends in northern Prince George's County were concerned about the effect of greenhouse emissions on the environment, so they erected a granary to provide corn fuel as a home-heating alternative to natural gas, oil or electric heat.

The granary, dubbed the Mount Rainier Urban Grain Bin, opened Saturday in a ceremony at the silolike structure at 3601 Bunker Hill Rd., behind the town's fire station. About 30 people were on hand.

The granary resulted from a partnership among the Save Our Sky Home-Heating Cooperative, the Preserve Our Planet Corn Cooperative and the City of Mount Rainier, officials said.

"The primary motivation is to affect global warming," said Ikle-Khalsa, a "green" building consultant and Save Our Sky member. "Burning corn reduces carbon emissions by 85 percent."

According to organizers of the Mount Rainier granary, it is the second such structure in the world. A similar structure was erected in Takoma Park in 2002, said Mike Tidwell, an environmentalist credited with starting the Takoma Park granary.

The 20-foot-tall, 9-foot-wide structure in Mount Rainier holds 20 tons of dry, shelled corn, which can be burned in pellet stoves and fixtures designed for some fireplaces, Ikle-Khalsa said.

Tidwell, founder of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, said he was spurred to action after researching the effects of global warming. Organizers initially hauled corn from the Mount Airy farm where they purchased it but then decided to erect the storage facility. The city accepted the granary as a gift and agreed to insure it under its municipal policy.

"I've been burning corn since 2001," Tidwell said. "I installed our stove on Sept. 11, 2001, as we watched the World Trade Center burning. I always say that I am fighting terrorism by using Maryland corn as fuel, rather than natural gas imported from countries that don't like us."

The Mount Rainier granary's corn is provided by the same farm in Mount Airy that the Takoma Park granary uses. The cost is \$200 per ton, and there is no markup for profit. Volunteers run the granary, and residents who use the alternative heating source pay \$100 to join the co-op and \$25 a year to renew their memberships. The fees pay for maintenance of the structure, Ikle-Khalsa said.

Using corn for heating is more cost-effective than other fuels and also supports area farmers, organizers for the Mount Rainier granary said.

At Saturday's event, John Ackerly, president of the Alliance for Green Heat, discussed how burning cleaner fuel benefits the environment, Ikle-Khalsa said. And County Council member William A. Campos (D-Hyattsville) told the crowd that the granary fit in with an emphasis in the county to be more clean-energy conscious.

Ikle-Khalsa uses corn to heat the 2,600-square-foot home he shares with his wife, Mimi, their daughter, Kyah, 2 1/2, and a roommate. The home's hot water and electricity are solar powered.

"I have saved \$300 to \$400 a year," Tidwell said of fuel costs.

Some critics say that corn fuel also pollutes and that without proper ventilation, it could release carbon monoxide into the home. Ikle-Khalsa said the granary uses sustainable corn that is raised using natural fertilizer instead of nitrogen, which makes it gentler on the environment, and that the stoves, if installed and maintained properly, are safe.

"Any fuel has some drawbacks," he said. "But we find corn to have the fewest."

Corn-burning stoves cost about \$2,500 for a midrange unit, organizers of the Mount Rainier granary said. The federal government offers a 30 percent tax credit, up to \$1,500, for the purchase of certain stoves and for solar, wind and geothermal appliances, Ikle-Khalsa said. The stoves are rated for use inside mobile homes and, unlike wood- or gas-burning fireplaces, which require ventilation through a chimney, are vented through a wall like a clothes dryer, the Mount Rainier organizers said.

They said more than 70 members use fuel from the Takoma Park granary at a cost of \$200 to \$1,000 a year. As many as 30 families are expected to join the Mount Rainier co-op this winter.

A similar program, Baltimore Biomass, offers "local, sustainably grown biomass" to its members in the form of shelled corn at a facility at 2800 Sisson St. in Baltimore, according to the co-op's Web site. It plans to erect urban grain bins that will serve customers round-the-clock, the site says.

Ikle-Khalsa said burning corn for fuel spiked in popularity in 2005 because of a steep increase in gasoline prices. Experts say corn-fuel usage might surge again this year because of the poor economy.

"This year, corn prices are down, so I expect everybody will save money," he said.

Cap-and-Trade Would Slow Economy, CBO Chief Says

By Juliet Eilperin

Washington Post, Thursday, October 15, 2009

A House-passed bill that targets climate change through a cap-and-trade system of pollution credits would slow the nation's economic growth slightly over the next few decades and would create "significant" job losses from fossil fuel industries as the country shifts to renewable energy, the head of the Congressional Budget Office told a Senate energy panel Wednesday.

CBO Director Douglas W. Elmendorf emphasized that his estimates contained significant uncertainties and "do not include any benefits from averting climate change," but his message nevertheless contrasted sharply with those of President Obama and congressional Democratic leaders, who have suggested that a cap on carbon emissions would help revive the U.S. economy.

Elmendorf testified before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that the cap-and-trade provisions of the House bill -- in which emitters of greenhouse gases would be able to buy and sell pollution credits -- would cut the nation's gross domestic product by 0.25 to 0.75 percent in 2020 compared with "what it would otherwise have been," and by 1 to 3.5 percent in 2050.

Elmendorf also pointed to disruptions that would occur as Americans sought employment with industries that would benefit under a carbon cap, such as solar and wind power.

"The shifts will be significant," the CBO director said. "We want to leave no misunderstanding that aggregate performance -- the fact that jobs turn up somewhere else for some people -- does not mean that there are not substantial costs borne by people, communities, firms in affected industries and affected areas. You saw that in manufacturing, and we would see that in response to changes that this legislation would produce."

Opponents of climate-change legislation seized on Elmendorf's comments, suggesting they meant the United States would be better off not curbing greenhouse gas emissions linked to climate change. Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), who described himself as "a skeptic" on the issue, detailed how Kansans would likely face higher energy prices under a cap-and-trade system.

"Because while we're projecting these things, people are having to deal with their basic lives on it, and this is going to be very expensive," Brownback said.

But Elmendorf, who called the economic downside to the House climate bill "comparatively modest," noted that climate change could impose costs on Brownback's home state in other ways, by harming agriculture.

In light of those potential risks, the CBO director said, "many economists believe that the right response to that kind of uncertainty is to take out some insurance, if you will, against some of the worst outcomes."

Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), co-author of the House bill with Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.), said that several independent analyses, including one by the CBO, had found their bill "would only cost about a postage stamp a day, and that's before you include thousands of dollars in savings from energy-efficiency gains. The harsh reality is that America's global warming and energy challenges are just too important for us to keep mailing it in by not enacting a comprehensive energy and global warming bill."

Daniel J. Weiss, a senior fellow at the liberal think tank Center for American Progress, pointed to a University of Massachusetts at Amherst study that concluded that the House bill would add jobs to the overall U.S. economy.

"We estimate this sustained expansion in clean-energy investments triggered by the economic stimulus program, and the forthcoming American Clean Energy and Security Act, can generate a net increase of about 1.7 million jobs," Weiss said.

For more coverage of climate-change legislation and related issues, go to <http://washingtonpost.com/climate>.

EPA Releases '07 Climate Document Rejected by Bush Team

By Dina Cappiello

Washington Post, Wednesday, October 14, 2009

An e-mail message buried by the Bush administration because of its conclusions on global warming surfaced Tuesday, nearly two years after it was first sent to the White House and never opened.

The e-mail and [the 28-page document](#) attached to it, released Tuesday by the Environmental Protection Agency, show that the agency concluded in December 2007 that six gases linked to global warming pose dangers to public welfare, and wanted to take steps to regulate their release from automobiles and the burning of gasoline.

The document specifically cites global warming's effects on air quality, agriculture, forestry, water resources and coastal areas as endangering public welfare.

That finding was rejected by the Bush White House, which strongly opposed using the Clean Air Act to address climate change and stalled on producing an "endangerment finding" that had been ordered by the Supreme Court in 2007.

As a result, the Dec. 5, 2007, e-mail sent by the agency to Susan Dudley, who headed the regulatory division at the Office of Management and Budget was never opened, according to Jason Burnett, the then-EPA official that wrote it.

The Bush administration and then-EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson also refused to release the document, which is labeled "deliberative, do not distribute," to Democratic lawmakers. The White House instead allowed three senators to review it in July 2008, when excerpts were released.

The Obama administration made a similar determination in April but also concluded that greenhouse gases endanger public health. The EPA is currently drafting the first greenhouse gas standards for automobiles and recently signaled that it would attempt to reduce climate-altering pollution from refineries, factories and other large industrial sources.

In response, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Republican lawmakers have criticized the EPA's reasoning and called for a more thorough vetting of the science. An internal review by a dozen federal agencies released in May also raised questions about the EPA's conclusion, saying the agency could have been more balanced and raising questions about the difficulty in linking global warming to health effects.

The agency released the e-mail and documents after receiving requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

Adora Andy, a spokeswoman for EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, said the draft shows that the science in 2007 was as clear as it is today.

"The conclusions reached then by the EPA scientists should have been made public and should have been considered," she said Tuesday.

Not all Alaska ports support limits on cruise ship emissions

By Erika Bolstad- McClatchy Newspapers
Modesto Bee, Wednesday, October 14, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Some Alaska ports of call have asked the Environmental Protection Agency to rethink - or at least slow down - its plans to impose stricter air quality requirements for cruise ships and other large oceangoing vessels.

The EPA wants all large vessels to stop using so-called bunker fuel within 200 nautical miles of U.S. shorelines, saying that reducing air pollution from the dirty fuel could save the lives of 8,300 people each year, help an additional 3 million people avoid respiratory problems and clear hazy skies as far inland as the Grand Canyon.

Some cities, such as Juneau, Alaska, where there's long been a concern about air pollution from cruise ships, asked for the EPA to slow down its process. Others, such as Ketchikan, Alaska, complain that no modeling has been done to determine there's an ambient air problem in Alaska's coastal communities.

Clean-air advocates say they're dumbfounded that Alaskans, who promote the natural beauty of the areas cruise ships visit, would object to stricter fuel standards that keep the environment pristine.

"It's one of the great things about the cruise ships in Alaska. They're sold as, 'Come see this pristine environment,' " said Frank O'Donnell of Clean Air Watch. "Well, what's wrong with making it pristine?"

Ketchikan Mayor Lew Williams III worries that regulations would make cruise operators reluctant to choose Alaska. Already, some lines are repositioning ships because of the economic downturn; an estimated 140,000 fewer passengers are set to disembark in Alaska next year.

"We're just trying to make a living and keep the economy going," Williams said. "The cruise industry's been vital for southeast Alaska."

That concern was shared by both of Alaska's senators, Democrat Mark Begich and Republican Lisa Murkowski. Both submitted comments to the EPA, with Murkowski asking the agency to consider gathering some Alaska-specific data before imposing air quality standards based on modeling done at other U.S. port cities.

Nearly 14 percent of all employment in Alaska is tied to tourism, Begich said, adding that he is "concerned the imposition of a rule developed without consideration of environmental and economic impacts in Alaska might have the unintended consequences of exacerbating this decline."

Alaska Gov. Sean Parnell went a step further, noting the importance of cruise ships to the economies of Alaska coastal communities, but also calling into the question the science used to include most of Alaska in the EPA's proposed emissions control area. There's little air quality data backing up the EPA's rule, Parnell noted, and the agency's proposal "reflects a misunderstanding of Alaska's geography and ecosystems."

International marine protection groups such as Oceana, however, would like to see more of Alaska included in the emissions control area, not excluded, said Jackie Savitz, one of the organization's senior campaign directors. They're concerned that rapidly melting sea ice will open up parts of the Arctic to more ships, increasing pollution. Already, Savitz said, black carbon - soot - has been proved to reduce the reflective qualities of snow and ice and lead to additional melting.

"A lot of the impacts that we're seeing with air pollution issues, whether it be carbon dioxide or particulate matter from ships, it's having a great effect on Alaska," Savitz said. "Alaska is in the crosshairs. You would think Alaska would be one of the first states calling for tougher regulations."

The EPA's rule should be final by December. At that time, the EPA plans to issue a rule banning the sale of high-sulfur fuel in U.S. coastal and internal waters beginning in 2012. It also would require that new engines in U.S. ships meet nitrogen oxide controls that match a North American emission control area supported by the U.S. and Canada.

By 2016, the EPA would require that new engines on vessels operating in the emission control area use equipment that reduces nitrogen oxide emissions by 80 percent.

[Sacramento Bee Editorial, Thursday, October 15, 2009](#)

Editorial: Time for truce on renewables

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Democrats who control the Legislature have plenty to disagree about. So it's a shame they can't even get together on an important issue on which they say they agree.

California has long been a leader in pushing the electricity industry to use renewable sources of energy to power the state's grid. Current law calls for the utilities to use renewables for 20 percent of their electricity production by 2010.

The industry is falling short of that benchmark, but Schwarzenegger and the Legislature's Democratic leaders say they want to go even further. In exchange for delaying the 20 percent standard until 2013, they would require that 33 percent of the state's electricity come from renewable sources by 2020.

The problem is, they can't agree on how to get there. The governor last week vetoed legislation that would have put the new standard into law. Instead, he has ordered the Air Resources Board to implement the idea with regulations as part of the board's plan to fight global warming.

That's a step in the right direction, but it's not sufficient. Anything this air board does can be undone by a future board, whose appointees will be controlled by the next governor. Already, one Republican candidate, businesswoman Meg Whitman, has said she would suspend implementation of the global warming law because she thinks it is hurting the economy.

But this kind of uncertainty will hurt the economy more than just about anything. Companies that are ready and willing to invest in green energy, solar power, windmills, geothermal will hesitate if they think the state is not serious about its commitment. Just when California should be reaping the benefits of its environmental ethos, we will be sitting on the sidelines instead.

The dispute between Schwarzenegger and the Democrats boils down to a couple of issues. First, the Democrats are trying to use the new law to steer as many renewable power projects as possible into California, in part at the behest of labor unions whose members would build and operate the plants. The governor is right to object to these moves and insist that the law allow the reasonable importation of renewable energy as part of a western region initiative that would keep costs down.

The Democrats also are trying to erect new regulatory hurdles in the way of the very projects they say they want to see built in California. But California already has the toughest environmental permitting laws in the nation. Does the state really need more layers of review for projects that, ultimately, would be helping the environment?

Schwarzenegger made his objections clear while these bills still were in the Legislature. The Democrats decided to test his resolve by calling his bluff. Now they know: he is willing to veto even a bill he wants to sign if his concerns are not addressed before lawmakers send the measure to his desk.

It's time for both sides to sit down and work out their fairly narrow differences so their mutual goal can become a reality. If they fail to do so, they'll put at risk an industry that could and should be part of the economic resurgence California so badly needs.

[Valley Voice, Commentary, Thursday, October 15, 2009](#)

City to Tackle Environmental Issues

Kim Loeb is the City of Visalia's Man for the Times

By Rick Elkins

You could say that Kim Loeb is Visalia's man for the times.

Loeb is the city's new Natural Resource Conservation Manager who will be in charge of overseeing the city's environmental issues from water conservation and recharge, to energy conservation and more. Visalia Deputy City Manager Leslie Caviglia said having Loeb on board will allow the city to move forward on several environmental initiatives – including updating the city's water conservation ordinance, developing a new landscape ordinance and addressing other issues such as greenhouse gases and household hazardous waste.

“We just have the staff availability and expertise to move along,” said Caviglia of the tasks before the resource conservation manager.

Loeb is a professional geologist, a certified engineering geologist and a certified hydro geologist, who is basically dealing with the underground water supply, he explained. He comes to the city from EnviroSolve Corporation, a Visalia company that consults businesses and industry on environmental issues and regulations.

“I got involved in geology because I was interested in the groundwater supply,” said Loeb, a graduate of California State University, Northridge. He moved to Visalia with his wife and two daughters in 1991.

“There's so many things the division is involved with it's hard to prioritize,” he said, adding, “one thing does jump out – water conservation and groundwater recharge.”

Water, or the lack of, has become a big issue throughout the state with three below-normal rain years and a continual drain on the underground water supply. “We're going to do everything we can to help out our water situation,” he said, noting the steady decline in the underground water table.

He will be charged with updating the city's water conservation ordinance, said Caviglia. However, he said not to expect any big surprises.

Tied to that will be a landscape ordinance that will be modeled after one the state is drafting – the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance – that all cities will have to follow by Jan. 1, 2010.

"It will require being more efficient in the use of water in the yard," Loeb explained, noting that Cal Water sees usage of water in the summer months go way up.

Caviglia said the city has landscape standards now, but the state law will require an ordinance that will put teeth into water conservation when landscaping.

Loeb will also work with the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District on groundwater recharge, and work with consultants on the plan to reuse water from the city's wastewater treatment plant to water the Valley Oaks Golf Course and to trade water with the Tulare Irrigation District.

Caviglia said it is important for the city to identify areas for water recharge – basins and streams – so when excess water becomes available, the city will be able to use it to recharge the underground supply where the city gets all its domestic water.

Loeb will also have the task to help the city negotiate AB 32, the massive legislation to address greenhouse gases in the state. That measure affects many aspects of planning and building, including trying to design neighborhoods that provide public transportation, bike paths and shorter paths to shopping centers to reduce vehicle traffic.

Another task for him is to reduce waste and increase recycling in the city. He said the city offers free commercial recycling audits to businesses and that some businesses have reduced their landfill costs significantly after the audit. To call for an audit, phone 713-4532.

Loeb is still getting his feet wet with the city. He just started his new job Sept. 14.

[The Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Thursday, Oct. 15, 2009:](#)

Back to the Future for energy policy

Too much heat and too little light are being generated right now inside the Washington, D.C., Beltway on the issue of global warming. Some electric utilities and allies in the coal and nuclear industries claim that only coal or nuclear reactors can meet future energy needs and combat global climate change. They say there is no other way.

However, beyond the Beltway there is clear evidence that there is another way. There is a prosperous new direction -- without using more polluting coal or building more expensive, dangerous nuclear reactors.

This "third way" takes advantage of America's vast -- and easily recovered -- energy efficiency "reserves" and dramatically expands reliance on a wealth-creating mix of advanced and renewable energy technologies.

Quietly, but steadily, one major U.S. utility, California's Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), has spent the last 20 years demonstrating that this "third way" powers economic growth, is easier on the family pocketbook, and [slashes air pollution](#).

Despite its odd sounding acronym, SMUD's success -- now spanning two decades -- is a model for other cities, states and indeed, for Congress. SMUD's path to success began in 1989 when Sacramento voters closed the problem-plagued and expensive Rancho Seco nuclear reactor. SMUD's citizen leaders then embarked on an ambitious and productive, utility-led, energy efficiency and green energy initiative.

Since the vote to shut down their troubled reactor, Sacramento's industries, commercial businesses, residents and nonprofit institutions have benefited from consistently lower electric rates than California's major utilities. Close collaboration with customers is a key to SMUD's comprehensive energy efficiency programs and renewable energy development, ranging from detailed audits of industrial facilities to incentives for miserly refrigerators and compact light bulbs. SMUD even enabled local manufacturers to "co-generate" electricity for the community together with the steam needed for their industrial processes.

On the cost side of the energy equation, a new, comprehensive academic report from Vermont Law School (VLS) on the prospective economics of new reactors underscores Moody's wariness of embracing a new generation of reactors. The study, conducted by Dr. Mark Cooper, found that efficiency and renewable energy cost estimates average 6 cents per kilowatt-hour, while the cost of electricity from new nuclear reactors is estimated in the range of 12 to 20 cents per kilowatt-hour. VLS's analysis concludes

that, "the additional cost of building 100 new reactors, instead of pursuing a least cost efficiency-renewable strategy, would be in the range of \$1.9 trillion to \$4.1 trillion over the life of the reactors."

Congress and the American people have heard this story before --promises that nuclear power is a solution to America's energy needs. In fact, nuclear power continues to be a fiscal black hole; looming as a fool's gold solution to the growing real threat posed by global climate change.

Many states "get it" and are now implementing SMUD-type programs. More than two dozen states have legislated or passed referenda requiring that utilities provide a specific percentage -- typically ranging between 10 percent to 30 percent of their electricity supply -- to be generated by sustainable energy resources by a certain date. Nearly 1,000 mayors of cities like Denver, Chicago, Portland, Austin, and Salt Lake City have signed the Mayor's Initiative on Climate Change, pledging to use sustainable energy resources to power their jurisdictions to prosperity.

Nevertheless, Beltway cheerleaders for the nuclear and coal industries are trying to force us, the taxpayers, to give away tens of billions more in shaky loan guarantees. This scheme shifts responsibility for failed nuclear projects onto the backs of the American families and businesses -- despite the conclusion of the Congressional Budget Office that 50 percent of such nuclear reactor loans will likely default.

The nuclear industry and their lobbyists want us to take the risk while they pocket the profits. New nuclear reactors would lead us deeper into national debt, and weaken our economy.

Congress must look outside the Beltway and adopt practical and profitable solutions like Sacramento did 20 years ago. It's time to make energy efficiency, wind, geothermal, biomass and solar power the cornerstone of America's energy future.

Ed Smeloff is the former president of the Sacramento Municipal Utility District. Scott Denman, the former executive director of the Safe Energy Communication Council, contributed.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses thousands of children are sick from lead poisoning in China. At first it was indicated that only 968 children were sick but within the last couple of months those numbers rose to over 3,000. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Mil niños enfermos en China por envenenamiento por plomo

Por Tini Tran

El Nuevo Herald, Thursday, October 15, 2009

BEIJING -- Casi mil niños en una provincia china dieron positivo a pruebas de exceso de plomo en la sangre, informaron los medios de comunicación estatales el martes, el más reciente de algunos casos similares que involucran a miles de niños en todo el país.

Los exámenes tomados a casi tres millares de niños que viven cerca de plantas refinadoras de metales en la provincia china de Henan revelaron que más de una tercera parte tienen niveles excesivos de plomo en la sangre, informó la prensa estatal.

La oficina de salud en la ciudad de Jiyuan tomó muestras de sangre a 2.743 niños menores de 14 años después que se informó sobre casos de envenenamiento por plomo en la vecina provincia de Shaanxi, dijo el director de la oficina, Wei Zongchang, según la agencia noticiosa oficial Xinhua.

El informe agrega que se detectaron indicios de envenenamiento por plomo en 968 de los niños.

Es la más reciente de una serie de casos de envenenamiento por plomo que afecta a centenares de niños en China, un indicio de cómo el rápido desarrollo económico se ha producido a menudo al costo de una intensa contaminación ambiental.

El envenenamiento por plomo puede dañar los sistemas nervioso y reproductivo, causar hipertensión sanguínea y pérdida de memoria.

En los últimos meses se ha informado de casos similares en las provincias de Yunnan, Fujian y Shaanxi y el número de niños afectados supera ahora los 3.000.

Los casos han provocado inestabilidad en medio de la indignación creciente por escándalos de salud pública en que los niños han sido las víctimas principales, una preocupación para el Partido Comunista gobernante, preocupado por la estabilidad social y cualquier desafío a su autoridad.

El alcalde de Jiyuan, Zhao Suping, dijo que el envenenamiento por plomo en la ciudad es resultado de la contaminación de larga data. Agregó que la ciudad ha estado produciendo plomo desde hace 52 años.

En respuesta a los resultados médicos, las autoridades municipales han suspendido totalmente la producción en 32 de las 35 plantas y han cancelado para de la producción de las otras tres, dijo Duan Xizhong, titular del comité del Partido Comunista local.

Las familias con niños que viven en un radio de 300 metros (1.000 yardas) de las plantas han sido alejadas de ellas.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses President Luiz Ignacio Lula against climate change. Brazil pretends to reduce deforestation by 80 % by 2020 which will reduce 4,800 tons of CO2.](#)

Lula contra el cambio climático

Brasil pretende reducir deforestación

The Associated Press

Univision, Tuesday, October 13, 2009

BRASILIA - El presidente Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva afirmó el lunes que Brasil pretende reducir la deforestación en 80 por ciento hasta el 2020, lo que permitirá disminuir 4,800 toneladas de emisiones de dióxido de carbono causante del calentamiento global.

Conferencia de la ONU

Tales metas formarán parte de la propuesta que Brasil llevará a la Conferencia de la ONU sobre Cambio Climático, que se realizará en diciembre en Copenhague, donde los países buscarán un nuevo acuerdo para contener el calentamiento global a partir de 2012, cuando se vencen las metas vigentes actualmente.

Lula dijo que pretende que otros países participen de la construcción de la propuesta mundial para contener el cambio climático.

"Queremos construirla con otros países, queremos ver lo que es posible obtener en Copenhague como propuesta, sobre todo del mundo desarrollado, para que ellos asuman compromisos no solo de disminuir emisiones, sino también de pagar por el daño que ya le hicieron al planeta", señaló en su programa radial Café con el Presidente.

Según Lula, la propuesta debe determinar las emisiones de cada país y cuánto están contribuyendo para reducirlas.

Brasil es clave

"Con eso se podrá responsabilizar a cada país por el daño que hizo y acabar con esa discusión genérica en la que todo el mundo quiere ser tratado en igualdad de condiciones", expresó.

El presidente ha insistido en que los países más ricos asuman mayores responsabilidades en el freno de las emisiones de dióxido de carbono y financiar acciones en las naciones pobres para proteger su naturaleza y disminuir sus emisiones.

Brasil ha sido considerado clave en las negociaciones sobre cambio climático por albergar 63 por ciento de la Amazonia, el gigantesco bosque húmedo sudamericano que alberga un tercio de la diversidad biológica mundial.

Brasil inició el año pasado un esfuerzo redoblado por contener la deforestación de la Amazonia, y este año comenzó a extender el esfuerzo a otros ecosistemas.