

People invited to help guide Walmart study

by PI Staff

Patterson Irrigator, Friday, Oct. 16, 2009

At a glance

- Those who wish to comment on the impending environmental review of the proposed Walmart in Patterson can submit entries to the Patterson Community Development Department, 1 Plaza, P.O. Box 667, Patterson 95363.

Local residents can help guide the environmental review of Patterson's proposed Walmart store during a comment period that began Oct. 1 and ends Oct. 30.

The Walmart proposal — officially titled Patterson Plaza and encompassing 16.75 acres at the corner of Ward and Sperry avenues — will soon undergo a full environmental review as required by the California Environmental Quality Act.

For now, individuals, businesses, community groups and public agencies can submit comments in writing to the city's Community Development Department on what should be studied in the review — from traffic and [air quality](#) issues to the economic impact on local businesses.

Part of the month-long comment period was a public scoping meeting Wednesday, Oct. 14, where residents could air their thoughts in person. Coverage of the meeting will appear in next week's Irrigator and online at www.pattersonirrigator.com.

There was a similar meeting last summer for West Park, the proposed industrial project on and around the Crows Landing Air Facility.

The Patterson Plaza retail center plans include a 158,000-square-foot Walmart, as well as 20,000 square feet of retail and restaurant buildings and nearly 20,000 more square feet to be occupied by CVS Pharmacy and Taco Bell.

Walmart proponents say the store would give local residents a more convenient way to buy a wide variety of products while also keeping sales tax revenue here, instead of sending it to Modesto or Turlock, which already have such stores. Opponents say it will destroy small businesses in town and could harm the quality of life in Patterson.

Mountain House urged to fight plans for nearby power plants

by Justin Lafferty

Tracy Press, Friday, October 16, 2009

MOUNTAIN HOUSE — Local residents voiced concerns about air pollution Wednesday night over a proposed peaker power plant that would be built on the edge of Alameda County, just a couple miles from Mountain House.

Mountain House resident Bob Anderson, who said he has a doctorate degree in mechanical engineering from Princeton, showed the Community Services District Board of Directors a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation detailing why he thought any proposed power plant was a bad idea.

His two major worries, he said, was that a power plant would lower property values and create more air pollution that would blow east to Mountain House.

Anderson discussed four major power plant permits near the community: East Altamont Energy Center, Mariposa Energy Project, Tracy Combined Cycle Plant and the Tesla Energy Center.

"These are large sources of pollution," Anderson said. "All of these plants, at least the ones that are close to us, are in Alameda County. They found a nice loophole in the process where they can ask for permission from Alameda County and say, 'By the way, you're going to get a whole bunch of money out of this, and the prevailing winds are going to blow into the next county.'"

East Altamont, which has a valid permit, would be a 1,100-megawatt plant and be built about a mile from Mountain House. Mariposa, whose permit is under review, would be a 200 megawatt peaker plant and be built about two miles from Mountain House.

Anderson cited a study, done in July by the University of California, Berkeley that analyzed the effects of all power plant openings nationwide since 1993. The study said that a large power plant (380 megawatts or more) could decrease local property values by 9.3 percent.

He also noted a study from the California Air Resources Board, which likened exposure to particulate matter from power plants to a non-smoker living with a smoker.

"We need to press these concerns with the state and see how far we can take this," Anderson said. "The commission will listen to the local people who are affected by this plant development, even if on the technical basis it doesn't break any laws."

Bob Sarvey, an air pollution activist and Tracy shoe store owner, told the board that this would also become a financial burden for the district. Sarvey said if there was a fire at the plant, Mountain House would have to call upon and pay for Tracy's fire department to respond, since it's the closest town. He said it would take too long for any fire department in Alameda County to come out and take care of a situation.

Sarvey also noted that Mariposa, or any power plant that moves in, should have to use recycled water.

"This board can have a big influence on this project," Sarvey said. "If you are going to accept this project, you should get involved, because Mountain House is the most affected by this project of all the communities."

Paula Zagrecki, the director of finance from Diamond Generating Corporation, which has a hand in Mariposa's development, spoke to debunk some claims made by Anderson and Sarvey. She said that Mariposa would buy air emissions credits in San Joaquin County, not just Alameda County, to help offset whatever damage the plant caused, something she said the company doesn't legally have to do.

"While we understand that there are issues about air quality, you also should understand that every time you buy a Honda and drive that Honda, you don't have to mitigate your air emissions," Zagrecki said. "We do and we're not just mitigating them in the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, we are mitigating them here because we understand that we are 2.3 miles away from your community and there could be impacts on San Joaquin."

Zagrecki also said that the creation of Mariposa would generate about \$26 million in jobs and supply costs that would mostly be spent in San Joaquin County. She added that Pacific Gas & Electric Co. would only run Mariposa about 600 hours a year.

Replying to Sarvey's point about recycled water, Zagrecki said Mariposa had no qualms with using it, but she stressed the need for a reliable water source.

The board looked into possibly getting involved in the Mariposa project to at least get any relevant documents, and to send out information to other involved parties as well. Director Jim Lamb was worried about the cost of becoming an intervener, as the district would be responsible for sending out the information, but Sarvey said the board could apply for financial hardship.

Lamb said that any information they receive from a power plant or Alameda County would be posted on the district's Web site.

NM mining company reaches settlement with state

The Associated Press

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Thursday, October 16, 2009

CUBA, N.M.—The New Mexico Environment Department has reached a settlement agreement with Menefee Mining Corp. that will require the company to pay the state \$100,000 for violating the state's air quality act.

The department filed a lawsuit in state district court in 2008 to require Menefee to apply for an air quality permit. State officials issued compliance orders against the company the same year.

Menefee, located south of Cuba, N.M., mines and processes humate, a plant fertilizer.

Yellowstone plan sharply curtails snowmobiles

By Ben Neary, The Associated Press

In the San Diego Union-Tribune, Contra Costa Times and other papers, Friday, October 16, 2009

CHEYENNE, Wyo. — The National Park Service has approved a plan to restrict snowmobile numbers in Yellowstone National Park to less than half of last winter's limit.

The park on Thursday announced daily limits that will allow up to 318 snowmobiles and up to 78 snowcoaches per day in the park for the next two winter seasons.

The park has allowed up to 720 snowmobiles a day into the park over the past five winters, but actual use has been far less.

Yellowstone spokesman Al Nash said the park saw an average of 205 snowmobiles and 29 snowcoaches last winter. The park's highest recorded day was 557 snowmobiles in late December 2007.

Nash said the Park Service will keep the 318-snowmobile limit in place for Yellowstone over the next two winter seasons as it crafts a permanent winter-use management plan for the park.

Disagreement over how many snowmobiles to allow into the park for years has pitted the state of Wyoming and some tourist communities near the park against the National Park Service and environmental groups determined to reduce traffic they say can disturb wildlife and the area's tranquility.

Wyoming's congressional delegation issued a joint press release blasting the federal agency's decision.

"The snowmobile and snowcoach numbers weren't sufficient when the proposed rule came out in July and they aren't sufficient now," said Sen. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., the state's senior U.S. senator. "More people should be allowed in the park, not less."

But Patricia Dowd, Yellowstone program manager for the National Parks Conservation Association, called the Park Service decision a step in the right direction.

Dowd said scientific studies have found that snow coaches — vans fitted with special treads to move over the snow — are more environmentally friendly than individual snowmobiles.

"For the past 10 years, both the Park Service and the EPA have looked at noise and air quality and impacts to wildlife and impacts to other park visitors," Dowd said. "So we want the best experience for both park visitors and natural resources of the park."

Past winter use plans have prompted federal lawsuits in both Wyoming and Washington.

Wyoming is pressing one federal lawsuit in a Denver appeals court. The state is trying to get the court's permission to allow a federal judge in Wyoming to consider whether to block the new Park Service plan.

Wyoming House Speaker Colin Simpson, R-Cody, has worked to keep snowmobile traffic flowing into the park's east entrance. The Park Service had proposed closing Sylvan Pass, which leads to that entrance, but relented recently under intense state and federal political pressure.

Simpson said Wednesday he believes limiting snowmobile traffic to 318 machines a day will be a hardship for businesses on the east side of the park.

"It's been a hardship every time it's been decreased," Simpson said. "And it seems as though we never get it back up unless it's a court ruling."

Alaska ports protest rules on cruise ship emissions

Erika Bolstad

Sacramento Bee, October 15, 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, 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, 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 why 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."

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.

Carbon offsets seen as key in saving forests

By Juliet Eilperin, Washington Post

In the S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Friday, October 16, 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 Waxman of Los Angeles and Edward Markey of Massachusetts, 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 this week questions the premise of using forest conservation overseas to compensate for U.S. pollution, noting that the Noel Kempff project 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. "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.

But 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.

Hybrid cars dominate EPA list of top 10 fuel sippers

More automakers are joining the trend. Nine of the top 10 vehicles in the Environmental Protection Agency's fuel economy rankings for the 2010 model year are hybrids, made by six companies.

By Martin Zimmerman, staff writer
L.A. Times, Friday, Oct. 16, 2009

Love 'em or hate 'em, hybrids have gone mainstream.

Nine of the top 10 vehicles in the government's fuel economy rankings for the 2010 model year are hybrids. And they come from six automakers and carry nine nameplates.

"There's now a hybrid for everyone," the government said in releasing the latest findings. "It's not either a [Toyota] Prius or a [Honda] Insight anymore."

The Prius hybrid was once again the leader, with its fuel economy of 51 miles per gallon in city driving and 48 mpg on the highway, according to the Environmental Protection Agency's testing methodology. Other vehicles in the top 10 include the Ford Fusion hybrid and its Mercury Milan twin, the Civic and Insight hybrids from Honda, and the Nissan Altima.

The only non-hybrid at the top of the list was the tiny Smart For Two from Daimler, which clocked in at 33 mpg city/41 highway.

One car you won't find on the list is the Tesla Roadster -- or any of the electric cars silently plying the nation's roads in growing numbers. The EPA is still trying to figure out how to measure fuel economy and greenhouse gas emissions in electric cars and plug-in hybrids in a way that would provide meaningful comparisons with traditional gasoline- and diesel-powered cars.

The bottom of the rankings was populated by expensive gas-burners from Ferrari, Mercedes-Benz, Bentley and the like -- cars whose owners presumably can pay the extra cost at the pump without blinking.

The award for worst fuel economy goes to the Lamborghini Murcielago, which has a base manufacturer's suggested retail price, or MSRP, of \$392,400 and burns 34.3 barrels of oil a year, or \$4,230 worth of gas, according to the EPA. The Prius, which carries a base sticker of \$22,000, burns 6.9 barrels of oil annually, or \$774 worth of gas.

[Merced Sun-Star commentary, Friday, October 16, 2009:](#)

Ellie Wooten, John Pedrozo: All aboard, high-speed rail

With the state and the Valley's rapidly growing population, we all know about the transportation challenges that lay ahead of us.

Traffic on our highways and at airports will only get worse and will directly and indirectly affect the quality of life for all of us. It is vital that we all work together to achieve new transportation solutions that will help us meet these challenges.

In September, the Merced County Board of Supervisors and the city of Merced each adopted a resolution supporting the high-speed rail system for California, for our Valley and for Merced city and county residents.

Other resolutions supporting high-speed rail have been adopted by the county and city in the past, and these recent resolutions are a reflection of our on-going support for high-speed rail. These recent resolutions also reflect our eagerness to work together with the California High Speed Rail Authority to locate a maintenance facility in Merced County.

You have likely already heard about the high-speed rail system proposed for California. With the passage of Proposition 1A in November 2008, Californians approved funding for a first-in-the-nation high-speed train system to meet the travel needs of the 21st century.

High-speed rail offers us a fast, safe, reliable and environmentally friendly transportation option.

Train stations will be required throughout California especially here in the Central Valley which will be the heart of this new system.

Additionally, there will be a number of maintenance facilities for repairing, maintaining, cleaning, fueling and storing the vehicles that will serve the train system.

In order to complete the high-speed rail project, we will draw on California's skilled work force. An estimated 160,000 construction-related jobs will be needed to plan, design and build the system.

By 2035, an additional 450,000 permanent jobs are expected to be created due to the economic growth expected as a result of the high-speed train system in California.

So what does this mean for us?

First, it means improved transportation alternatives for people living and working in our county. But we are working to make sure that it means more jobs and more opportunities for our residents.

Right now, the California High Speed Rail Authority is evaluating where the high-speed train tracks will run and will soon be deciding where to locate maintenance facilities for the system.

A public meeting this week drew close to 100 people who shared their interest in the project with state officials. They used their knowledge of local issues to explain the best choice of routes for the rail line from San Jose to Merced.

Local government agencies and representatives from the community have been working together to show the state why Merced County is the best location for a maintenance facility. Our community has a proven track record of enthusiastic support for the high-speed rail project, and we are ideally situated to provide a convenient station stop.

A station and maintenance facility in Merced will bring extraordinary opportunities to our community. There would be more employment opportunities -- up to 35 jobs to staff a train station and 1,500 jobs for the maintenance facility. A maintenance facility will also bring a number of economic benefits to the county.

High-speed rail representatives for years have talked about having a maintenance facility located at the former Castle Air Force Base.

Our county would be the best location for a maintenance facility, and we must continue to advocate to legislators, to state and federal representatives, and to the California High Speed Rail Authority that Merced County is the best choice for a maintenance facility location.

This will take each and every one of us making an effort -- the county, our local cities, educational institutions, chambers of commerce, private business and most importantly our residents.

We urge everyone to support high-speed rail and to contact our legislators, the governor and the High Speed Rail Authority to call for having both a station and maintenance facility located here in our county.

We all know the challenges that we face with high unemployment and grave economic circumstances. Please help us by overcome those challenges by supporting this project.

Ellie Wooten is mayor of Merced and John Pedrozo is District 1 Merced County supervisor.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Russia does not fear climate change. Russians look at global warming cynically; some inclusively say that a bit of warmth would do them good. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Rusia no le teme al cambio climático

Los rusos miran con cinismo al calentamiento global; algunos incluso dicen que un poco de calor les vendría bien.

Terra, Friday, October 16, 2009

A pesar de que Rusia es el tercer emisor de dióxido de carbono del mundo, muchos rusos -quizás la mayoría- ven al cambio climático como un problema ajeno, una paranoia irracional creada por aquellos que tienen vidas demasiado cómodas.

Raya Corry-Fitton, una estudiante británica que vive en Moscú y suele escribir para nuestra página de internet, nos comentó que sus amigos rusos dicen que el cambio climático y las emisiones de los automóviles enormes que tragan grandes cantidades de carburante- son tonterías.

El presidente Dimitri Medvedev prometió que para 2020 reducirá las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero entre 10 y 15% partiendo de los niveles de 1990.

Los ambientalistas rusos señalan que eso se traducirá en mayores esfuerzos para reducir las emisiones, porque la reducción prometida ya se logró, pero como un efecto secundario del colapso de la industria pesada rusa, a principios de los 90.

El principal asesor de economía de Medvedev, Arkadiy Dvorkovich, advierte que el futuro crecimiento económico de Rusia acarreará, inevitablemente, mayores emisiones de gas.

Ausencia "verde"

El desastre nuclear de Chernobyl en 1986 despertó un enorme interés de los ciudadanos rusos por asuntos medioambientales. Pero no duró mucho.

En el país no existe un movimiento verde establecido y muy pocos rusos consideran como una prioridad los problemas medioambientales.

Las iniciativas ecológicas -como la que propone que ciertos días no se usen coches- son vistas con burla y sarcasmo.

Uno de los ambientalistas rusos más conocidos, Aleksei Yablokov, presidente del Centro de Política Ambiental, dice que la actitud de Rusia hacia el cambio climático es cínica.

Además insiste en que los líderes rusos están sacrificando el bienestar del futuro en pos del rédito económico inmediato.

Yablokov afirma que el gobierno ya había desmantelado las estructuras de protección del medio ambiente desde antes de la presidencia de Vladimir Putin y que esto se intensificó durante su gestión.

El especialista también rechaza la idea muy expandida en Rusia- de que el cambio climático será incluso beneficioso por el simple hecho de que calentará partes del país que hoy son demasiado frías.

Científicos rusos calculan que, si bien esto hará que surjan nuevas tierras arables, la principal consecuencia será la pérdida de buenas tierras cultivables.

Los expertos también vaticinan consecuencias desastrosas en las regiones habitadas de la tundra siberiana a medida que se vayan derritiendo las capas subterráneas de hielo que sirven de base a pueblos y asentamientos.

"Estúpidos"

También hay voces contrarias. Por ejemplo la de Alexander Nikonov, conocido escritor y geólogo ruso, que opina que las emisiones industriales dirigidas a la atmósfera están salvando al mundo de una nueva Era de Hielo.

Nikonov dijo a la BBC que Rusia, como país más frío del mundo, puede sólo beneficiarse del calentamiento global.

El escritor señala que dos tercios del territorio ruso son actualmente inhabitables.

La vida y la agricultura serán posibles en un área que es siete veces más grande que Francia, anuncia.

Al ser consultado sobre por qué tantos científicos fuera de Rusia no coinciden con sus predicciones, Nikonov responde de manera simple y concisa: porque son estúpidos.

Además los acusa de manipular la ciencia para que se adapte a la agenda política de la izquierda. A todas las elites occidentales, a los graduados de las universidades prestigiosas de Estados Unidos y Europa se les metió una visión socialista del mundo.

Sus estómagos están llenos y sus vidas felices. No tienen nada que hacer, entonces dicen ¡joye!, acá hay una oportunidad para ir a salvar algo y pueden resistirse.

En cambio, Rusia es un país lleno de problemas reales.

La opinión pública rusa sigue convencida de que los científicos están divididos respecto a las causas del calentamiento global, entonces eligen creer lo que prefieran.

Motivaciones

Además, los rusos están cada vez más convencidos de que la teoría del calentamiento global fue creada por aquellos que tienen un odio innato por los grandes negocios.

También sospechan que hay una motivación ideológica, más que científica, y perciben que los ambientalistas critican duramente a EE.UU. pero a la vez le quitan importancia a la acción de países como China e India.

Sea por cuestiones de salud o de cambio climático, los rusos son mucho más fatalistas que sus vecinos europeos. De ahí su permanente amor por el alcohol, el tabaco, los coches veloces y la comida rica, aunque engorde.

Además, los gobernantes rusos recuerdan las privaciones materiales y la constante escasez de la era soviética y no piensan poner trabas al nuevo consumismo.

¿Será que las nuevas generaciones rusas, que crecieron después de la caída del comunismo, mirarán sus vidas y el futuro del planeta a través de otro cristal

Terra/BBC Mundo