

City Hall to consider trimming hours

By David Siders, staff writer

Stockton Record, Monday, Nov. 23, 2009

STOCKTON - The city is considering closing City Hall every other Friday starting in January, the administration saying that keeping employees home those days would reduce the number of polluting commutes they make to work each year.

The measure is in response to a proposed rule by the [San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District](#) that would force large employers to adopt strategies to reduce employee car trips. It would shift city employees from a standard schedule to 80 hours of work every nine days, extending City Hall's hours by one hour, to 6 p.m.

The City Council is expected to consider the matter Dec. 1.

Police, fire, municipal utilities and some information technology operations would not have their schedules changed, Human Resources Director Dianna Garcia said in a staff report. Nor would libraries or recreation centers observe the revised schedule.

Garcia, in her report, said employees on a nine-day schedule would commute 26 fewer Fridays, the busiest freeway traffic day of the week. She said the schedule also would benefit employee morale and make

Stockton more competitive in the recruitment and retention of employees. Many other agencies, including Tracy, Manteca and Lathrop, have adopted similar schedules, according to the report.

The Stockton City Employees Association was considering the measure. Joe Rose, the association's lawyer, said, "We're just trying to gauge the employees' points of view on this."

He said some employees have said they could not adjust to the schedule because of child care or other reasons but that most would likely favor it. He said the city should consider making the schedule change voluntary and implementing it later than in January.

"There's probably a lot of questions to be answered," he said.

Mayor Ann Johnston said, "We'll do it carefully, with consideration of all our employees."

Technology aims to solve ag issues

By Seth Nidever, staff writer

Hanford Sentinel, Friday, Nov. 20, 2009

TULARE -- Most California farmers expect to be in business in five years, according to a recent survey by agriculture marketing firm dmrkynetec. But to make it, they'll have to meet challenges ranging from air quality problems to groundwater issues to the use of complex technology.

Those themes were featured Wednesday at a conference in Tulare that brought about 50 growers, crop advisors and others to hear about the latest government regulations and scientific advances to help farmers prosper.

"It's important for everyone to be up to date on the latest rules and regulations," said Ron Harben of the California Association of Resource Conservation Agencies.

Harben noted that regulation is "not always taken to kindly," but, he added, "as population grows, we can no longer do what we used to be able to do."

Agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley -- comprising 6.4 million acres and 27,000 farms churning out \$15 billion in annual value -- is the last major industry in California to be subject to the full range of environmental controls other sectors have faced for some time.

Agriculture's \$1.7 billion annual contribution to Kings County's economy ranks it second only to government employment.

Wednesday's conference was designed in part to educate farmers about those regulations -- and to identify areas where regulators think farmers are making a significant effort toward a cleaner environment.

Speakers highlighted the conservation management plans, which growers were required to formulate in 2004 shortly after ag became subject to air quality standards.

The individual farm plans -- some 4,000 of which have been filed with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District -- outline strategies to control dust and reduce the Valley's notorious air pollution. Some are as simple as watering down dirt roads. Others involve higher-tech practices like "chemigation" and "fertigation," which avoid tractor runs through the field by putting chemicals and nutrients directly into irrigation water.

The plans have cut ag emissions by 35 tons a day, according to Johnnie Siliznoff of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

"There's a lot to be said for that," Siliznoff said.

Ag's remaining contribution to air pollution is 406 tons per day, according to air district engineer Shiraz Gill.

Gill called the conservation plans "a great accomplishment" but pointed to more restrictions coming with AB 32, the landmark 2006 California climate change bill that requires reductions of greenhouse gases.

"You are going to be hearing a lot more about them in the future," he said.

Growers already have key air pollution deadlines on the horizon. By Jan. 2011, most stationary farm engines must be replaced by cleaner-burning models or electric motors.

Early next year, tightening air pollution restrictions are going to rope in smaller farms, according to the air district.

Another key issue is groundwater management. Massive, decades-long overdraft of the Valley's groundwater is sinking the land, threatening structures like the Lemoore Naval Air Station runways and bringing plant-killing salt to the surface.

Better ways need to be found to regulate, control and replenish that groundwater, said engineer Karl Longley.

"This [groundwater] basin is our bank account," Longley said.

Better ways need to be found to capture floodwater and direct it toward natural recharge aquifers, he said.

If the current overdraft situation continues, he added, parts of the Valley will look like "Iraq."

Longley noted that Fresno County and Kern County have groundwater management ordinances while Tulare and Kings don't.

The sheer amount of regulatory talk weighed on Justin Dutra, a crop advisor with Stone Land Company in Stratford.

"It's kind of depressing. Ever hear of the term regulated to death?" asked Dutra in an interview after the conference.

"Ag has always been able to adjust. But we can only adjust so much," he said.

What are the largest sources of global warming emissions in California?

The list is out

Chevron, Shell refineries atop state emissions list

By Paul Rogers, staff writer
Contra Costa Times, Monday, Nov. 23, 2009

When it comes to global warming, California has started keeping score.

The state Air Resources Board last week finished tallying and made public the list of the largest greenhouse gas emitters in the state, and two East Bay refineries sit atop the list.

The first-of-its-kind rankings show that oil refineries, power plants and cement plants lead all industrial facilities statewide in pumping out carbon dioxide, a byproduct of burning fossil fuels that has been building up in the Earth's atmosphere in increasing concentrations.

The largest California emitter last year was the Chevron oil refinery in Richmond, which emitted 4.8 million metric tons of greenhouse gases. The Shell refinery in Martinez was second, with 4.5 million metric tons, followed by the BP and Chevron refineries in Carson and El Segundo, near Los Angeles. Rounding out fifth place was the Dynegy Power Plant at Moss Landing, a massive 1950s-era structure on the Monterey Bay that burns natural gas to create electricity for much of Northern California. The Valero Refinery in Benicia and the Tesoro Refinery in Martinez were seventh and eighth, respectively.

"This shows a commitment by California to move forward with real action to address climate change," said Stanley Young, a spokesman for the Air Resources Board. "We need accurate accounting to be sure we are getting the reductions that we are planning for."

All data were compiled and submitted by the facilities themselves. The accounting is required under Assembly Bill 32, the landmark global warming law Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed in 2005.

Industrial sources and power plants make up 43 percent of California's greenhouse emissions, with transportation at 36 percent. A separate California law requires all new cars sold statewide to reduce greenhouse emissions 30 percent by 2016.

Environmentalists praised the reporting rules.

"What are the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases? It's important to know," said Jim Metropulos, a spokesman for Sierra Club California. "We should focus on the largest sources first. Spotlighting, transparency and holding people accountable are important."

The Air Resources Board worked to create uniform software for each industrial facility to tally its emissions. Verification by a third party — essentially a pollution accountant trained by the state — is also required under state law. Any industrial facilities that emit more than 25,000 metric tons a year of carbon dioxide or related greenhouse gases are required to report. In California last year, 605 facilities passed that threshold.

Five coal-burning power plants in Utah and Wyoming that sell electricity in California also are included, and topped all California industrial sources, including the Chevron Richmond refinery.

Young said the emissions totals will be used as a baseline as California prepares to launch a "cap and trade" market in 2012. Under such a market, which is used in Europe, companies are given a limit of the amount of pollution they can put out, and if they produce less, they can sell credits to other companies to help them meet their required amount.

A bill passed by the House in June and pending in the U.S. Senate would require similar mandatory greenhouse emissions limits and a trading market for the entire United States.

Oil industry officials said their facilities top the list because they use large amounts of natural gas to heat crude oil and convert it to gasoline, diesel and jet fuel — products Californians demand.

"We use about 45 million gallons of gasoline a day in California," said Tupper Hull, a spokesman for the Western States Petroleum Association. "It's easy to criticize refineries, but everyone forgets they produce the cleanest-burning gasoline on Earth and it is central to the economic vitality of the state."

Hull said that the oil industry already is working to make its facilities more efficient and investigating research into storing carbon dioxide underground. The industry, he added, also will participate in California's carbon trading market.

"The low-hanging fruit is to increase your efficiencies," he said. "Any time you can get more use out of natural gas, that will result in reduced greenhouse gas."

Study sees transit saving Californians' energy, cutting greenhouse gas

By Mark Glover, staff writer

Sacramento Bee, Saturday, Nov. 21, 2009

A new study says Californians could save billions each year and cut greenhouse gas emissions by developing neighborhoods within easy access of public transportation.

The study – "Windfall for All: How Connected, Convenient Neighborhoods Can Protect Our Climate and Safeguard California's Economy" – was conducted by Oakland-based TransForm, formerly the

Transportation and Land Use Coalition. TransForm is a coalition that includes nonprofits, environmental advocates and labor unions.

The study concentrated on four metropolitan centers – Sacramento, the Bay Area, Los Angeles and San Diego.

If all residents in the four areas lived in transportation-friendly communities, the study said, they would save \$31 billion per year on transportation costs and emit 34 percent less greenhouse gas.

TransForm officials said the study demonstrates the need for governments to direct policies and dollars "to support smart growth development and public transportation."

They said the study also underscores the goals of Senate Bill 375, signed into law last year. The bill, by Sacramento Democrat Sen. Darrell Steinberg, is designed to cut greenhouse gas emissions through anti-sprawl measures, including rewarding new residential development with easy access to public transit.

"This report provides hard evidence that SB 375 ... has the power to act as an economic driver," said Stuart Cohen, executive director of TransForm.

For the Sacramento area, TransForm's study projected that residents living in transit-friendly communities, with good access to jobs and shopping sites, would spend nearly \$2.25 billion less per year on car purchases and related costs. The report said there would be a 27 percent reduction in greenhouse gases.

Cohen said the numbers were derived by dividing the metropolitan area into grids, and making calculations for each grid, including proximity to current public transit options, plus car miles traveled by residents.

Cohen said the Sacramento part of the study took in 1.8 million people.

The study estimated savings for the Los Angeles area at \$15.4 billion, plus a 38 percent cut in greenhouse gases; the Bay Area, \$10.7 billion savings, 42 percent cut in gases; San Diego, \$2.8 billion savings, 30 percent cut in gases.

MH board opposes proposed power plant

By Justin Lafferty

Tracy Press, Thursday, Nov. 19, 2009

MOUNTAIN HOUSE — The governing board of Mountain House voted unanimously Wednesday night to oppose a proposed power plant that would be built in Alameda County but possibly degrade air quality in the community.

Though the Mountain House Community Services District board of directors was apprehensive at first about opposing the Mariposa Energy Power Plant Project, which would be built about 2½ miles west of the community, the members were swayed to do so after hearing from the public.

Directors Matthew Balzarini and Jim Lamb felt the board should research the matter a little more thoroughly before they made a decision. District General Manager Paul Sensibaugh wasn't sure about what possible benefits the plant might bring to Mountain House and wanted to make sure all the information was available before they chose to oppose it.

"We don't know enough at this point to be opposed or be for this," Sensibaugh said, prior to public comment. "We also don't know what the mitigation plans are."

Bob Sarvey, an air pollution activist and Tracy shoe store owner, said the board should be vocal about their concerns until they are properly addressed. Mariposa, one of the smaller proposed power plants, would generate 200 megawatts of power — enough electricity for roughly 200,000 houses.

"If you don't oppose a project like this, you can't go to the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors and say 'Will you support us?'" Sarvey said. "The more people you have that are behind you that are concerned about your concerns will make Mariposa know that you want your concerns mitigated."

At the district's October board meeting, Bob Anderson, a Mountain House resident with a doctorate from Princeton in mechanical engineering, said a power plant would hurt local air quality and lower property values.

Anderson was at the meeting Wednesday night, too, and said the board had to stand up to Mariposa or else the area would run the risk of becoming a breeding ground for other power plants. He mentioned areas in East Contra Costa County and Hayward that became "power development corridors," and did not want one planted in Mountain House's backyard.

"Once a power plant comes in, a whole bunch of people descend on the area and want to further develop that area," Anderson said. "If it starts getting industrialized, once that direction goes, the die is cast and it's going to be harder and harder to stop that."

Paula Zagrecki, the director of finance from Diamond Generating Corp., which plays a part in Mariposa's development, said the plant would do its best to offset whatever environmental damage is done.

"We are mitigating locally, as opposed to within the greater Alameda County," Zagrecki said.

However, since the plant would be built in Alameda County, on the western edge of the community, the district and San Joaquin County have no jurisdiction over it.

The board also voted unanimously to become interveners to the project, which means the district would receive any relevant documents from Mariposa and other interveners. It would also have to copy any information they want to send out to all interveners.

Board members were a little worried about the printing and mailing costs attached with being an intervener, but Sarvey, who plays such a role in the Mariposa project, said most things are now done through e-mail. Later, Sarvey said so far, the total cost to him has just been a stamp. While he noted that there would be some staff costs for the district, it wouldn't really break the bank.

"By intervention, you show that you're interested in this and everyone takes you seriously," Sarvey said. "It's not a costly process or else I would've never been able to do it. I've intervened in many power plant cases and I highly recommend you do it."

Sensibaugh said he didn't have an estimate of how much becoming an intervener would cost the district. The district's legal counsel, Paul McGrew, said they can withdraw if the costs become a burden. Zagrecki also offered to forward documents to the district if they were unable to intervene.

Becoming an intervener means the district can also have a representative testify at hearings, and Sarvey said it would hold more power than just being an observing member of the public. Lamb said any documents the district received would ideally be posted on the district's Web site for the public to view.

A climate change dust-up

One side sees hacked e-mail as a sign of a 'Warmist Conspiracy.' The other says it's being taken out of context. Analysts don't expect it to have much effect on the Senate greenhouse gas bill.

By Jim Tankersley and Henry Chu, staff writers
L.A. Times, Sunday, Nov. 22, 2009

Reporting from Washington and London - Is it a "Warmist Conspiracy," or a case of an e-mail being "taken completely out of context"?

Regardless, the latest dust-up over the science of climate change appears unlikely to affect the dynamics of either a pending debate in the Senate or international climate negotiations in Copenhagen next month.

Conservative bloggers have seized on a series of e-mails between leading climate scientists, which were obtained by computer hackers and posted online last week, as evidence of a scientific conspiracy to push claims about human-caused global warming.

But advocates of action to curb global warming dismiss those claims, and political leaders and analysts say the Senate bill to limit greenhouse gas emissions will sink or swim based on economics, not science.

"The scientists are going to fight about this for decades," said Robert Dillon, a spokesman for Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, one of several Senate Republicans who say they are open to some form of a climate bill. "We should be doing something to curb our emissions that would not harm the economy, and could in fact boost the economy," he said.

The British institution at the center of the debate confirmed Saturday that its server had been hacked and that it had contacted the police to pursue an investigation of what it believes was a criminal act.

The University of East Anglia said it could not confirm the authenticity of all the hacked data, including e-mails that have been published on the Internet, because of their sheer volume.

But it accused the hackers of using the material selectively and out of context to undermine the "strong consensus" that global warming exists, and declared that such misuse of information "cannot be considered a genuine attempt to engage with this issue in a responsible way."

An e-mail by one of the university's professors, Phil Jones, has been singled out by skeptics as proof that scientists have deliberately misled the public on the issue.

In the 1999 e-mail, Jones wrote of using a "trick" to hide an apparent decline in recent global temperatures on a chart being prepared for use by a meteorological organization. But in a statement posted on the university's website Saturday, Jones said that the e-mail had been "taken completely out of context" and that there had been no misrepresentation of data.

"The word 'trick' was used here colloquially as in a clever thing to do. It is ludicrous to suggest that it refers to anything untoward," Jones said.

Skeptics of man-made global warming disagreed, trumpeting the e-mails online. "The Death Blow to Climate Science," one website headlined. Another hailed a "Warmist Conspiracy."

Last week, the leading Republican on the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, James M. Inhofe of Oklahoma, declared 2009 "The Year of the Skeptic"; on Saturday, a spokesman for environment committee Republicans, Matt Dempsey, said the e-mails, if authentic, "would have a profound impact on the debate" over the climate bill.

Advocates of the bill disagreed. "The science is clearly on the side of those who are concerned the world is warming," said Joshua Freed, a senior advisor for clean energy at the think tank Third Way.

The e-mail controversy, said Josh Dorner, a spokesman for the pro-climate bill group Clean Energy Works, "does absolutely nothing to change the fact that we are now closer than ever before to reaching binding international and domestic deals. We have a path to success in the Senate and at Copenhagen and beyond."

A clear majority of senators appears to back some action to curb greenhouse gas emissions. President Obama and congressional leaders have framed their support for the bill largely in terms of its potential to create "clean energy" jobs in the United States.

Wyoming challenges Yellowstone snowmobile rules

By Ben Neary, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, Friday, Nov. 20, 2009

Cheyenne, Wyo. (AP) -- The state of Wyoming filed a federal lawsuit Friday seeking to block the National Park Service from further restricting snowmobile numbers in Yellowstone National Park.

The Park Service issued a temporary rule on Friday that would allow up to 318 snowmobiles and 78 snowcoaches per day into the park starting next month and continuing through the next winter season.

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

Gov. Dave Freudenthal issued a statement on Friday saying that the Park Service's interim rule continues the federal agency's "unacceptable pattern of limiting public access to the public's lands," a common argument among snowmobile advocates.

Snowmobiles have long been a point of controversy in the park, with environmental groups arguing that the machines increase air pollution, disturb wildlife and cause too much noise.

Al Nash, spokesman for Yellowstone, said the agency imposed the plan as a way to continue to provide public access to the park while working on a new long-term plan.

"On the big picture, no matter the issue, our continuing job as stewards of Yellowstone is to find ways to protect what is special about Yellowstone, while providing visitors the chance to experience this unique place," Nash said.

Freudenthal charged that the Park Service itself has determined that Yellowstone could accommodate more snowmobiles without harm. He said snowmobile traffic into Yellowstone is a major element of winter tourism in the state.

"Wyoming deserves a compelling reason before the federal government does something to limit visitors to our state, especially in this challenging economic environment," Freudenthal said.

The state's lawsuit is assigned to U.S. District Judge Alan Johnson of Cheyenne. The state asks for the judge to reinstate the 720-snowmobile limit until the Park Service promulgates an acceptable permanent rule.

In addition to the lawsuit the state filed on Friday, Wyoming also has a request pending with the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver seeking to block the new snowmobile limits.

The state has asked the appeals court to allow U.S. District Judge Clarence Brimmer of Cheyenne to rule on the issue of whether the lower daily snowmobile limit would violate an earlier court order that he entered. The National Parks Conservation Association has opposed the state's request.

Bio-fuel growth raises concerns about forests

By John Flesher, Associated Press

In the Merced Sun-Star, Monday, Nov. 23, 2009

PARK FALLS, Wis. -- Forests are a treasure trove of limbs and bark that can be made into alternative fuels and some worry the increasing trend of using that logging debris will make those materials too scarce, harming the woodlands.

For centuries, forests have provided lumber to build cities, pulp for paper mills and a refuge for hunters, fishers and hikers. A flurry of new, green ventures is fueling demand for trees and the debris leftover when they are harvested, which is called waste wood or woody biomass.

"There simply is nowhere near enough waste wood for all of these biomass projects that are popping up all over the place," said Marvin Roberson, a forest policy specialist with the Sierra Club in Michigan.

Waste wood has become a sought-after commodity, prompting concerns that the demand might overwhelm supply and damage the ecosystem. But government officials say there's plenty available and they point to guidelines that are aimed at maintaining tree debris to give the soil nutrients.

Many biomass projects are tied to the forests that extend across Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and part of Ontario. Among them is Flambeau River Papers, a mill in Park Falls, Wis., that emerged from bankruptcy three years ago and is pinning its hopes for profitability on generating its own heat with woody biomass.

In another Wisconsin town 50 miles away, a power company is switching from burning coal to producing combustible gas from logging leftovers. And in Michigan's neighboring Upper Peninsula, a plant under development called Frontier Renewable Resources will convert timber into 40 million gallons of cellulosic ethanol a year.

Researchers led by University of Minnesota forest expert Dennis Becker reported this summer that many would-be investors are uneasy about supplies of waste wood.

They fear environmental reviews and litigation could make some public woodlands unreliable sources, particularly in the West, where most forest lands are under federal ownership and logging often raises legal tussles, the report said.

Another problem with woody biomass is that much of the supply is in protected areas, or so far from markets that removing and transporting it would be too expensive, Becker said.

He led a separate study that found a realistic estimate of biomass available in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin was 4.1 million tons a year. Annual demand soon could reach 5.7 million tons, it said.

"A lot of folks believe there's a significant amount of woody biomass that can be used for renewable energy," Becker said. "In reality, not everything that's physically available is economically feasible or environmentally sustainable."

State and federal officials say there's enough material left over from harvesting the nation's forests to help reduce dependence on foreign oil, curb greenhouse gases and build a green economy.

A federal report says about 368 million tons of biomass could be removed sustainably from U.S. forests each year. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in August promised to spend \$57 million on 30 projects supporting development of biofuels from trees.

"Emerging markets for carbon and sustainable bioenergy will provide landowners with expanded economic incentives to maintain and restore forests," Vilsack said.

Some schools, hospitals and utilities in the Great Lakes region already use biomass for heat and electricity. Michigan Biomass, a group representing six wood-fired power plants, fears the growing interest will make fuel costlier and more scarce. Closure of lumber and paper mills that were reliable suppliers of biomass has worsened the problem, director Gary Melow said.

"In the past four or five years, where we've seen a dramatic decline in forest products manufacturing and in waste wood availability, we've started to experience significant shortages," Melow said. "We've even had power plants that ran out of fuel."

Roberson, with the Sierra Club in Michigan, said biomass projects will end up using waste wood and logs suitable for paper or other products.

"We advocate getting the best economic return for industrial use of the Midwest's forests, and there is no lower return than throwing it in the furnace," Roberson said. "There are fewer jobs per cord, per acre, from biomass than any other use."

A biomass shortage could bring pressure on forest managers to cultivate plantations of fast-growing species such as willows and aspen at the expense of pines and hardwoods native to the region, Roberson said.

That's also a concern in the southeastern part of the country, which will have to rely heavily on biomass to meet alternative energy goals because it has less potential for wind power, said Jimmie Powell, energy specialist for The Nature Conservancy.

Roberson said biomass incineration, although an alternative to greenhouse gas sources like oil and coal, still pollutes the air. Removing too much woody debris, instead of letting it decay and nourish soils, can damage the health of the forest, he said.

A number of states have developed guidelines for collecting biomass in a way that doesn't harm forests. Minnesota calls for leaving 33 percent of fine woody debris in place, said Anna Dirkswager, state biomass coordinator. Wisconsin recommends 20 to 25 percent remains for most locations.

State officials acknowledge competition for biomass may intensify but predict demand and supply will balance in time. One reason: Not every project on the drawing board will come to pass.

"Any time you have an emerging industry, there's concern that everyone will go rushing into it and there will be too much pressure on the resource," said Cara Boucher, Michigan's state forester. "But the market shakes things out."

Hornblower going hybrid for fleet with electric power

By Onell R. Soto, staff writer

San Diego Union Tribune, Sunday, Nov. 22, 2009

The ropes were untied, the harbor cruiser was floating free, and Capt. Nick Kreisel pushed the throttle as he worked the wheel, kicking powerful motors into action.

The air on San Diego Bay was filled with — the sound of splashing water.

The signature roar and smoke of a harbor boat pulling away from the dock were missing as the Hornblower Hybrid's big diesel engines remained silent.

Instead, electric motors driven by battery power pushed the boat through the water. Above the wheelhouse, electric wind turbines spun in a sea breeze and solar panels converted sunlight into power.

The visiting ship, which spends its summers ferrying San Francisco tourists to Alcatraz, is a model of what San Diego's largest harbor cruise line says is the future — a ship that saves energy by using electricity to move around.

Electric propulsion on the water is not new, but it has been mostly limited to large, oceangoing ships such as cruise liners that use fuel oil to power generators, or aircraft carriers and submarines that rely on nuclear power.

If you compare it to a car, this floating hybrid is more like a plug-in Chevy Volt than a Toyota Prius.

It relies on lead-acid batteries charged while it is plugged in at dockside for much of its propulsion, so its diesel engines — which power generators, not propellers — need only run when it is going fast and steady.

At slow speeds, 3 or 4 knots, the ship can run for several hours on battery power alone.

"We're taking the diesel out of the picture when it's least efficient," said Hornblower's Cameron Clark, who was involved in the retrofit as the company's environmental director.

That means the 149-passenger ferry uses about 75 percent less diesel an hour than it did in its prior life as a commercial-diving catamaran in the Gulf Coast, he said.

Big power plants and solar and wind farms can produce electricity much more efficiently and with less pollution than onboard generators, Clark said. The electricity from the onboard wind turbines and solar panels is not used to move the boat, but rather for its lights, computers and other electrical equipment.

The ship is designed as a teaching tool, so many of its features are out in the open. The bar, for instance, features electrical equipment instead of liquor bottles.

And passengers can try to add to the electricity supply by pedaling an onboard exercise bicycle, though Clark concedes that the amount of power a person produces is so tiny that no one has succeeded in pushing a significant amount into the batteries.

The Hornblower Hybrid will be available for private events, harbor excursions and cocktail cruises in the next couple of months, and will take part in the San Diego Bay Parade of Lights.

Clark said the \$4 million retrofit cost about 30 percent more than a typical upgrade, and it will take about six or seven years for the company to recoup its investment through lower fuel bills.

Hornblower is committed to looking for ways to save fuel and the environment, said Jim Unger, who heads the company's local operations.

It is now planning to build a second, more advanced hybrid to take tourists to the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, and is considering converting one of its seven San Diego-based ships, the Adventure Hornblower, as well.

"We're looking now for grant money," Unger said.

He said the company has installed cleaner diesel engines in two of its San Diego ships. Such engines will be required by law five years from now.

"Hornblower has really pursued a leadership role in these issues," David Merk, director of environmental services for the Port of San Diego, said yesterday.

Such moves are part of an ongoing effort to clean the air near the coast, he said.

For instance, by 2014, big ships that use a lot of electricity while moored, such as cruise ships and those with refrigerated cargo containers, will be required to plug into the electric grid while docked and turn off their engines.

In addition, the port is asking big ships to slow down as they approach, because slower ships burn less fuel and pollute less.

As an incentive, the port is making sure that longshoremen are dispatched to the dock to unload those cargoes, eliminating a need to race each other in hopes of getting the labor first.

"They don't have to be the first arrival anymore," Merk said.

In the wheelhouse, Kreisel noted the contrast of sailing under electric power to the roar of diesel engines.

"I still haven't gotten used to the calmness," he said.

Valero refinery in Delaware City to close permanently

Jeff Montgomery

Usa Today, Monday, November 23, 2009

DELAWARE CITY, Del. — Valero Energy said this morning it plans to permanently close its Delaware City Refinery, eliminating hundreds of high-paying jobs, because of weak economic conditions, high local costs and chronic troubles at the 210,000 barrel-per-day complex.

Company spokesman Bill Day said that a plantwide maintenance shutdown, announced late last month, was already under way, and will convert to a final closing. Plant employees will continue on the payroll for 60 days under federal rules for large-scale layoffs.

"We've had potential buyers come in and look at the plant, but we've never had any viable offers for that property," Day said. "We have thoroughly looked at other alternatives besides shutting the refinery down. There was really no avoiding the situation."

Day said the plant — which produces about 70 percent of the gasoline sold on the Delmarva Peninsula— has lost \$1 million a day since the start of 2009.

About 550 full time workers will be put out of work by the decision. Valero (VLO) also has notified companies that work closely with the refinery, Day said, but effects on those operations were not immediately available.

Gov. Jack Markell said today that state assistance will be offered to affected workers. He also said that the state would monitor environmental and safety concerns in the area.

The company's decision to close the refinery leaves us with several problems to solve. We need to help those hundreds of dedicated workers put their time and talents to work in a way that helps them and their families," Markell said in a written statement. "To protect the health and safety of

everyone who lives near the facility, we need to ensure accountability for the environmental issues that come from closing a refinery, and we will.?

Company officials notified workers this morning and opened talks with the plant union on severance packages and other terms. Severance packages will be discussed with non-union employees over the next several days.

"The decision to permanently close the Delaware City refinery was a very difficult one,? Valero Chairman and CEO Bill Klesse said in a written statement. ?We have spent the last year diligently trying to avoid this situation, and I have worked closely with Gov. Markell in an effort to find a different outcome.

"At this point, we have exhausted all viable options.?

John H. Nickle Jr., a Delaware City native who has followed the refinery operation closely for decade, said he was shocked by the move.

?I don?t know what to think. We?re really plowing new territory here,? Nickle said. ?I hate to see anybody losing jobs, but I would say they?ve been a troublesome neighbor.?

The refinery ranks among the state?s top sources of toxic and [smog-causing pollution](#), and has a long record of accidents and major pollution releases. At one time, two of its largest refining units ranked as the dirtiest in the nation.

Klesse said the permanent shutdown of an money-losing, waste fueled power plant earlier this fall along with a major refining unit failed to stem the plant?s losses.

?We realize that the decision to close the refinery affects many employees, their families, and the community. We are thankful to our employees for their service, and we will treat them fairly during this difficult period.?

Officials estimated that Valero will save about \$450 million next year with the closing.

Valero called in extra police and corporate security today as it announced a permanent shutdown and mass layoffs at its 210,000 barrel-per-day Delaware City refinery.

"It's fairly routine," said Bill Day, a Valero spokesman. "We want this to be a calm and orderly process. I don't know that we have any specific plans to keep them there for any amount of time."

Total idling of the sprawling complex will take several days, company officials said.

Most employee briefings on severance terms were finished by late this morning.

3 Mo. regions violate air quality standards

By Cheryl Wittenauer, Associated Press

In the Washington Post, Thursday, Nov. 19, 2009

ST. LOUIS -- The St. Louis and Kansas City areas, along with part of southeast Missouri, have violated 2008 [air quality standards](#) and may be forced to impose new restrictions, the state said Thursday.

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources said ozone levels in St. Louis, Kansas City and Ste. Genevieve County were above the eight-hour standard at some points during the April 1 to Oct. 31 ozone season.

St. Louis and Kansas City already are under ozone control measures because of air quality.

Violations typically require additional restrictions to cut pollutants created by trucks, cars, power plants and other businesses.

But because the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is reconsidering the standard for smog and may make them more stringent, the states are in a holding pattern, DNR spokeswoman Renee Bungart said.

The EPA is expected to propose revised smog standards to protect health and the environment in late December.

Last year, the EPA under the Bush administration set a maximum airborne concentration for ground-level ozone at 75 parts per billion.

EPA's science advisory board - and most health experts - had recommended a limit of 60 to 70 parts per billion to adequately protect the elderly, people with respiratory problems and children.

Prior to last year, the last EPA standard for ozone was 85 parts per billion set in 1997.

The St. Louis region had succeeded in attaining the 1997 standard of 85 ppb, with reformulated gasoline, gasoline vapor recovery nozzles, industrial regulations and mandatory inspection of autos. Meanwhile, the Kansas City region has hovered just below it, DNR said.

Smog is a respiratory irritant that can aggravate asthma and has been linked to heart attacks.

Climate change could sting allergy, asthma sufferers

By Serena Gordon, HealthDay

USA Today, Monday, Nov. 23, 2009

Climate change isn't only bad for the Earth, it may be bad for your health — especially if you have allergies or asthma.

Global warming is making pollen seasons last longer, [creating more ozone](#) in the air, and even expanding the areas where insects flourish, putting more people with bee allergies at greater risk, experts say.

"Climate change will cause impacts in every area. Wet areas will get wetter, and drier climates are getting drier," said Dr. Jeffrey Demain, director of the Allergy, Asthma and Immunology Center of Alaska, and a clinical associate professor at the University of Washington.

Those changes will mean more people with allergies and asthma will suffer. In wet areas, mold allergies will spike, while in drier areas pollens and other airborne irritants will become more of a problem, he said.

Last month, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced that it believes carbon dioxide and five additional greenhouse gases are dangerous to human health. This finding may eventually lead to environmentally friendly changes, such as regulations for cleaner energy and more fuel-efficient cars.

But, right now, problems caused by climate change are already evident, especially in Alaska, Demain said.

"There's been a significant shift in the ecosystem because of the rises in winter temperatures," he said. "On average, Alaska's temp has risen 6.4 degrees in winter and 3.4 degrees overall. And, the earlier the snow melts, the earlier the pollen cycle begins."

In addition to longer pollen seasons, the plant and tree life is changing along with the warmer temperatures. Demain said it's estimated that 90% of the Alaskan tundra will be forested by 2100, and that the types of trees that are most common are changing, too.

The warmer temperatures are also attracting insects. In the past, Alaska hasn't had too many stinging insects. But, said Demain, northern Alaska has recently seen a 620% increase in the number of people seeking care for bee stings.

Although Alaska's experience may be more dramatic than the rest of the United States, it's definitely not the only region that's experiencing change.

"We're having warmer, wetter winters, which lead to long springs and an increase in seasonal allergens," said Dr. David Peden, director of the Center for Environmental Medicine, Asthma and Lung Biology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Peden also said that ozone levels are higher, which causes more asthma symptoms.

So, what can you do to protect yourself? Both Peden and Demain said that just being aware of the problem is the first step. Next, is to be sure you know specifically what you're allergic to, and then be aware of pollen and mold cycles so you can properly adjust your behavior when those levels are high.

"Pollens are usually highest in the mornings, but grass is elevated in the morning and evening. If you're tree- or weed-allergic, plan outdoor activities for the afternoon or evening. If you're grass-allergic, you might want to plan to be outside midday. Warm, sunny, dry days are usually the ones with the greatest pollen," Demain said.

Of course, it's not always possible to stay indoors, and treatments are available that can help you live with allergies and asthma.

"As mundane as this sounds, if you have allergic disease or asthma, consult with an allergist so that you have maximal therapy and information on seasonal concerns. If you're in an area with lengthy pollen seasons, allergy shots might be useful," Peden said.

"The climate is changing, and it's changing at an unprecedented rate. Whether it's a natural cycle, or whether humans are the cause, we have to recognize that this is happening," said Demain, who added, "Every small step [such as using compact fluorescent bulbs or driving less] is important. If we all take that step, we can have a big impact."

Warming's impacts sped up, worsened since Kyoto

By Seth Borenstein, AP Science Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Sunday, Nov. 22, 2009

WASHINGTON, (AP) -- Since the 1997 international accord to fight global warming, climate change has worsened and accelerated — beyond some of the grimmest of warnings made back then.

As the world has talked for a dozen years about what to do next, new ship passages opened through the once frozen summer sea ice of the Arctic. In Greenland and Antarctica, ice sheets have lost trillions of tons of ice. Mountain glaciers in Europe, South America, Asia and Africa are shrinking faster than before.

And it's not just the frozen parts of the world that have felt the heat in the dozen years leading up to next month's climate summit in Copenhagen:

_ The world's oceans have risen by about an inch and a half.

_ Droughts and wildfires have turned more severe worldwide, from the U.S. West to Australia to the Sahel desert of North Africa.

_ Species now in trouble because of changing climate include, not just the lumbering polar bear which has become a symbol of global warming, but also fragile butterflies, colorful frogs and entire stands of North American pine forests.

_ Temperatures over the past 12 years are 0.4 of a degree warmer than the dozen years leading up to 1997.

Even the gloomiest climate models back in the 1990s didn't forecast results quite this bad so fast. "The latest science is telling us we are in more trouble than we thought," Janos Pasztor, climate adviser to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

And here's why: Since an agreement to reduce greenhouse gas pollution was signed in Kyoto, Japan, in December 1997, the level of carbon dioxide in the air has increased 6.5 percent. Officials from across the world will convene in Copenhagen next month to seek a follow-up pact, one that President Barack Obama says "has immediate operational effect ... an important step forward in the effort to rally the world around a solution."

The last effort didn't quite get the anticipated results.

From 1997 to 2008, world carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels have increased 31 percent; U.S. emissions of this greenhouse gas rose 3.7 percent. Emissions from China, now the biggest producer of this pollution, have more than doubled in that time period. When the U.S. Senate balked at the accord and President George W. Bush withdrew from it, that meant that the top three carbon polluters — the U.S., China and India — were not part of the pact's emission reductions. Developing countries were not covered by the Kyoto Protocol and that is a major issue in Copenhagen.

And the effects of greenhouse gases are more powerful and happening sooner than predicted, scientists said.

"Back in 1997, the impacts (of climate change) were underestimated; the rate of change has been faster," said Virginia Burkett, chief scientist for global change research at the U.S. Geological Survey.

That last part alarms former Vice President Al Gore, who helped broker a last-minute deal in Kyoto.

"By far the most serious differences that we've had is an acceleration of the crisis itself," Gore said in an interview this month with The Associated Press.

In 1997, global warming was an issue for climate scientists, environmentalists and policy wonks. Now biologists, lawyers, economists, engineers, insurance analysts, risk managers, disaster professionals, commodity traders, nutritionists, ethicists and even psychologists are working on global warming.

"We've come from a time in 1997 where this was some abstract problem working its way around scientific circles to now when the problem is in everyone's face," said Andrew Weaver, a University of Victoria climate scientist.

The changes in the last 12 years that have the scientists most alarmed are happening in the Arctic with melting summer sea ice and around the world with the loss of key land-based ice masses. It's all happening far faster than predicted.

Back in 1997 "nobody in their wildest expectations," would have forecast the dramatic sudden loss of summer sea ice in the Arctic that started about five years ago, Weaver said. From 1993 to 1997, sea ice would shrink on average in the summer to about 2.7 million square miles. The average for the last five years is less than 2 million square miles. What's been lost is the size of Alaska.

Antarctica had a slight increase in sea ice, mostly because of the cooling effect of the ozone hole, according to the British Antarctic Survey. At the same time, large chunks of ice shelves — adding up to the size of Delaware — came off the Antarctic peninsula.

While melting Arctic ocean ice doesn't raise sea levels, the melting of giant land-based ice sheets and glaciers that drain into the seas do. Those are shrinking dramatically at both poles.

Measurements show that since 2000, Greenland has lost more than 1.5 trillion tons of ice, while Antarctica has lost about 1 trillion tons since 2002, according to two scientific studies published this fall. In multiple reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports, scientists didn't anticipate ice sheet loss in Antarctica, Weaver said. And the rate of those losses is accelerating, so that Greenland's ice sheets are melting twice as fast now as they were just seven years ago, increasing sea level rise.

Worldwide glaciers are shrinking three times faster than in the 1970s and the average glacier has lost 25 feet of ice since 1997, said Michael Zemp, a researcher at World Glacier Monitoring Service at the University of Zurich.

"Glaciers are a good climate indicator," Zemp said. "What we see is an accelerated loss of ice."

Also, permafrost — the frozen northern ground that oil pipelines are built upon and which traps the potent greenhouse gas methane — is thawing at an alarming rate, Burkett said.

Another new post-1997 impact of global warming has scientists very concerned. The oceans are getting more acidic because more of the carbon dioxide in the air is being absorbed into the water. That causes acidification, an issue that didn't even merit a name until the past few years.

More acidic water harms coral, oysters and plankton and ultimately threatens the ocean food chain, biologists say.

In 1997, "there was no interest in plants and animals" and how they are hampered by climate change, said Stanford University biologist Terry Root. Now scientists are talking about which species can be saved from extinction and which are goners. The polar bear became the first species put on the federal list of threatened species and the small rabbit-like American pika may be joining it.

More than 37 million acres of Canadian and U.S. pine forests have been damaged by beetles that don't die in warmer winters. And in the U.S. West, the average number of acres burned per fire has more than doubled.

The Colorado River reservoirs, major water suppliers for the U.S. West, were nearly full in 1999, but by 2007 half the water was gone after the region endured the worst multiyear drought in 100 years of record-keeping.

Insurance losses and blackouts have soared and experts say global warming is partly to blame. The number of major U.S. weather-related blackouts from 2004-2008 were more than seven times higher than from 1993-1997, said Evan Mills, a staff scientist at the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab.

"The message on the science is that we know a lot more than we did in 1997 and it's all negative," said Eileen Claussen, president of the Pew Center on Global Climate Change. "Things are much worse than the models predicted."

Industrialized Nations Unveil Plans to Rein in Emissions

By Elisabeth Rosenthal and Neil MacFarquhar, staff writers

N.Y. Times, Thursday, Nov. 19, 2009

With less than three weeks remaining before negotiators gather in Copenhagen to hammer out a global response to climate change, a rapid-fire succession of countries are unveiling national plans that serve as opening bids for reining in heat-trapping emissions.

The list of what is on the table is rather long," said Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the sponsor of the meeting, which runs from Dec. 7 to 18 in Copenhagen.

But, speaking at the United Nations headquarters on Thursday, he seized on the latest pledges to take aim at the United States, which has not yet played its hand.

"We now have offers of targets from all industrialized countries except the United States," Mr. de Boer said. He emphasized that he was looking to the United States for "a numerical midterm target and commitment to financial support."

"This is essential, and I believe this can be done," he said.

In an interview, Todd Stern, the chief climate negotiator for the United States, said that the Obama administration was trying to decide whether to release a proposal in the coming days.

"What we are looking at is whether we feel that we can put down a number that would be provisional in effect, contingent on getting our legislation done," he said. "Our inclination is to try to do that, but we want to be smart about it."

He noted that bills pending in Congress involved cuts of around 17 percent in emissions by 2020, increasing to much deeper cuts by 2030.

The United States has the highest per capita emissions in the world. China has the largest emissions over all and has also refrained from setting a specific emissions reduction target, although as a developing country it would not be required to do so under the current outlines of the treaty that is being proposed.

If neither China nor the United States made a commitment, the national plans of lesser emitters would have little practical effect.

Although the United Nations no longer believes that the Copenhagen meeting can come up with a binding treaty to control emissions this year, the event is viewed as a crucial forum for the world's nations to demonstrate a commitment to addressing global warming and its potential impact.

This week, South Korea said it would cut emissions by 30 percent from "business as usual" by 2020. Russia's president, Dmitri A. Medvedev, said his country would try to reduce emissions by 25 percent by then, instead of 15 percent as announced earlier. Last week, Brazil promised reductions of about 40 percent below current projections by 2020.

The recent announcements are a mix of aspirations, good intentions and negotiating tactics. In most cases there is no certainty that the targets are politically or scientifically plausible. Still, they are a rough harbinger of the potential shape of future agreements and conflicts.

United Nations officials have said they hope that the richest industrialized nations will promise to reduce their emissions to meet negotiated individual targets. For developing nations, the hope is that they will commit to reducing their future emissions to levels below those that would accrue if they took no action. The poorest nations would get money and technological assistance to adapt to the consequences of climate change.

Many nations have based their new offers on that model. While some of the pledges are conditioned on reaching a binding international agreement, some countries, like South Korea, have said they will act whether the world did or did not.

South Korea, whose emissions nearly doubled from 1990 to 2005, said it would cut emissions by investing in energy-efficient buildings and transportation, developing new green industries and changing patterns of consumption.

"Our industry is really energy-intensive, so this is very ambitious," Sang-Hyup Kim, South Korea's secretary to the president for national future and vision, said in a phone interview from Seoul. He noted that the president and cabinet ministers had made the pledge in a building with the thermostat set low, and while wearing thermal underwear.

Last week, Brazil said it would offer to reduce its emissions by 38 to 42 percent from current projections for 2020. About half of that reduction would result from slowing deforestation in the Amazon. Forests are a crucial force in absorbing carbon dioxide.

The government described its action as a “political gesture” to show its good faith.

But it is in many ways easier for developing countries and so-called industrializing countries, like South Korea and Brazil, to put forth offers because they are under far less pressure to commit themselves formally under an agreement.

The industrialized countries — counted as those that were already industrialized when the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed in 1992 — have the more concrete task of committing to specific reductions.

Despite the steady stream of new pledges, representatives of many of the world's poorest countries have expressed frustration over a recent decision by world leaders to defer a binding agreement until next year.

“This is a major setback — we should not pretend otherwise,” Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem Mohamad, Sudan’s United Nations representative, said Thursday, speaking for a coalition of developing nations.

Ukraine's `hot air' bedevils global climate deal

By Arthur Max, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Saturday, Nov. 21, 2009

KONSTANTINOVKA, Ukraine (AP) -- Vladimir Gapor is a plumber by trade, but now he's a scavenger, prying bits of scrap steel from the ruins of his old factory and selling them for a pittance.

For others beyond this manufacturing graveyard, however, Ukraine's economic collapse has produced a potential multibillion-dollar bonanza. In an era of climate change regulation and carbon trading, Ukraine, ironically, is profiting from the smokeless smokestacks of its industrial shutdown.

How well and how long it will profit is an under-the-radar issue complicating negotiations for a worldwide climate accord being sought at a 192-nation conference in Copenhagen next month.

Gapor's old factory, which made glass for the Soviet military and space program, shut down in the early 1990s after the Soviet Union disintegrated. Private wrecking crews and desperate jobless people like

Gapor then turned the town's industries, which once employed 16,000 workers, into heaps of bricks.

In the days when Ukraine was a Soviet republic, Konstantinovka was a booming town of 100,000 with 25 factories. Concert music filled its Palace of Culture, its workers were rewarded with trips to Crimea's beaches, and its children with stays at mountain "pioneer camps." Today just five workshops still operate, and the population is down to 60,000, many unemployed having migrated to Moscow, Kiev or Western Europe to find jobs, leaving families behind.

The surrounding province in eastern Ukraine, plagued by bad management and lack of investment, has lost 10 percent of its population, said Vladimir Morozov, an environmental engineer in the regional capital, Donetsk. Wealthy oligarchs, not communists, now rule the economy, he said, and they show no interest in rebuilding a wretched backwater.

The industrial collapse has been bad for jobs but good for the climate. Ukraine produces less than half the greenhouse gases it did 20 years ago, and under a trading system devised in the negotiations for the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, curbing the gases blamed for global warming, it is allowed to sell credits for every ton of carbon dioxide saved.

Countries or companies that cannot meet commitments to reduce emissions can buy these "allowances" from those that have cut emissions more than required and have a surplus to sell. Point Carbon, a Norwegian-based consulting firm, estimates 9 billion allowances are available, mostly in Russia.

Earlier this year, each one-ton allowance sold for \$10 when Ukraine signed a \$300 million deal with Japan. The Kiev government has almost 1 billion more tons to put on the market, said Irina Stavchuk of the National Ecological Center of Ukraine.

"The hot air business is the main goal of the government," Stavchuk said.

Income from such deals is supposed to be earmarked for clean-energy and other "green" projects. But critics have questioned how well that guideline is followed.

While Western industrial powers must cut carbon emissions, and many developing nations are asked to shift to low-carbon economic growth, a few Eastern European countries have little incentive to constrain their polluting, since they're already far below emissions limits.

In a way, these nations have the best of both worlds. They can make millions selling carbon credits, while enjoying a comfortable cushion to pump carbon dioxide into the atmosphere without worrying about energy efficiency or cleaning up their factories.

But the credits could lapse in 2012, when the Kyoto Protocol expires. Russia, Ukraine and other beneficiaries want these pollution rights extended in the new deal to be struck at Copenhagen. Other countries want to redress what they believe is an unfair loophole. Carbon traders, meanwhile, fear the weight of hot air credits will drive down market prices sharply.

As part of a new climate treaty, Ukraine is being asked to commit to a ceiling on emissions and it has pledged to emit 20 percent less in 2020 than it did in the benchmark year of 1990. Since its current emissions are about 52 percent below 1990, it will be left with plenty of credits to sell.

Last week Russia, the biggest holder of hot air credits, increased its pledged 2020 target to as much as 25 percent below 1990 — about where its emissions are today.

"We have to get rid of this hot air problem because it really threatens the environmental integrity of the whole system," said Sven Harmeling, a climate expert for the nonprofit group Germanwatch.

But a solution will be hard to find at Copenhagen when countries have so much at stake, Harmeling said.

The billion-dollar diplomatic debate in the Danish capital seems a world away from grimy Konstantinovka, where ex-plumber Gapor chipped away at concrete blocks, plucking out steel reinforcement rods to sell at 1 hryvnia, or 12 cents, per kilogram (2.2 pounds).

"We need to survive somehow," he said.

Nearby, crusading local journalist Vladimir Berezin climbed onto a mound of rubble.

"We call this place the Cemetery of Communism," he said. A dozen 180-meter-tall (590-foot-tall) smokestacks stood like memorial obelisks over the devastation. The entrance to an abandoned

building bore the slogan honoring Vladimir Lenin, founding father of the Soviet Union: "Our Aim is Communism and the Ideas of Lenin are Immortal."

"It's true," Berezin said. "Here you can see Lenin's ideas. Here you see our communism."

[Bakersfield Californian commentary, Saturday, Nov. 21, 2009:](#)

Lies tarnish air boards credibility

By Lois Henry, Californian columnist

It's not the lie, it's the cover up that'll get you.

How many times does this wisdom have to be pounded into the heads of bureaucrats?

The scandal over how a lead researcher behind California's new diesel truck rules lied about his credentials continues to grow.

At Thursday's California Air Resources Board meeting, one of the board members said the legitimacy of the rule is in question because of the lie and subsequent cover up and asked for a legal opinion on what should be done next.

The problem started with Hien Tran, the lead author of the report on which the new diesel rules were based, who lied about having a Ph.D. degree in statistics from U.C. Davis.

Though the lie was brought to some CARB bureaucrats' attention well before the vote on the draconian rules last December, it was kept "in house" until I and an editorial writer for the San Diego Union Tribune got wind of it and started hammering on it early last spring.

Turns out, not all the board members, who voted on the rules based on Tran's report, were told of his lies.

But some were -- and kept mum.

The issue was brought to the full board's attention at its September meeting in Diamond Bar by regular citizens.

At the time, board member John Telles, a medical doctor, was quite upset, saying, "This is the first time I've actually been apprised that there was fraud in the organization here.

"In my world, if an article was published by somebody who didn't have a Ph.D. and said he had a Ph.D., the whole thing would be nixed...I just find it incredible."

Well, he did some of his own digging and at this week's meeting he asked that CARB's legal counsel issue an opinion on what more should be done.

Telles also laid out a stunning chronology that revealed many CARB muckey-mucks, including chair Mary Nichols, knew about the lie before the vote and never said anything.

Tran's lie was first brought up by Dr. Stan Young in November 2008 to the California Secretary of the Environmental Protection Agency, who sent Young a letter dated Nov. 4, 2008, assuring him of Tran's credentials.

Then on Dec. 3 and 4, 2008, UCLA professor Jim Enstrom contacted three CARB board members telling them of Tran's indiscretion.

One of those board members, who I've reported was John Balmes, asked CARB staffers to investigate.

By Dec. 10, Tran had confessed. Those in the know included Nichols, Balmes and at least five other top CARB members.

The vote on the diesel rules using Tran's report was the next day, Dec. 11, 2008 and the full board wasn't told.

Even after the cat was out of the bag at last September's meeting, Telles said, "Staff never mentioned that they had this information prior to the vote."

Based on all that, Telles said, the legitimacy of the vote is in question as well as the legitimacy of the truck rule "and CARB itself."

"How we handle this reflects on the future credibility of CARB."

Yes, it does. Just ask Richard Nixon.

[S.F. Chronicle commentary, Sunday, Nov. 22, 2009:](#)

A stimulating investment - mass transit

By Kathryn Phillips

The nation's unemployment rate has hit the highest level in 26 years, 10.2 percent, so policymakers are searching for ways to stimulate the economy again. The hottest proposition so far is the federal transportation bill.

In the past two weeks, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco, and Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell separately have suggested that reauthorizing a transportation bill soon could be the best way to create jobs. Rep. James Oberstar, D-Minn., chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, has been pushing since last summer for a new federal surface transportation bill that would invest nearly \$500 billion in transportation infrastructure.

Whether such a bill can be put to the best use for jobs depends on whether Congress and the Obama administration invest in the right type of transportation infrastructure. One good approach would be to focus on repairing existing infrastructure: fill the potholes and refurbish old bridges that cost Americans time, money and wear and tear on vehicles.

However, the best approach would be to direct new investment in public mass transit because it creates the most jobs per dollar spent, according to the Surface Transportation Policy Project. It also responds to the growing demand for good transit that began with rising gasoline prices in 2008. In addition, mass transit investment also cuts air and global warming pollution.

In fact, a report by the Duke University Center on Globalization, Governance & Competitiveness shows that increasing investment in conventional and green transit bus systems would cut greenhouse gas pollution around the country. It would also create high-quality, long-term manufacturing jobs in nearly every state in the eastern United States as well as Northern California.

For example, a transit bus manufacturer in Hayward, Gillig, is the second-largest producer of transit buses in North America, with a 27 percent market share. In 2001, the company pioneered the first heavy-duty transit bus built with parallel hybrid technology: The fuel tank provides gasoline for the engine while batteries simultaneously supply power to the electric motor. Most of the buses Gillig builds today are powered by the world's cleanest and most efficient diesel engines, which emit up to 90 percent less exhaust emissions. In addition, Alcoa Wheels, a bus wheel product manufacturer, employs more than 32,000 people in Visalia and three other plants in the United States.

Unfortunately, U.S. transportation policy greatly favors funding highways over public transit. The result is small and sporadic bus orders, making it difficult for the bus industry to grow.

The Duke study authors conclude: "If federal, state, and local policy were to shift to a clear, sustained commitment to public transit, the nation would have the manufacturing capability to meet the resulting increased demand for transit buses."

In short, American companies have the know-how and the talent; they just need sustained funding.

Ironically, things are better abroad for U.S. bus manufacturers. The study notes that U.S. companies have established themselves as global leaders in hybrid-bus manufacturing. Unfortunately, European firms are rapidly catching up because their countries' governments more consistently invest in transit, so unless U.S. bus systems have funds to invest, hybrid-diesel bus manufacturing here could suffer.

Buses are the main U.S. transit mode, accounting for 40 percent of all transit passenger miles. Continuing growth in transit demand could translate into larger and more consistent bus orders - if the funding is available. Domestic demand is dependent largely on the availability of public funding for bus transit. Bus manufacturers in the United States primarily manufacture on a built-to-order basis, and the economic downturn means many agencies can no longer meet federal financing formulas that require a local funding match of 20 percent.

Whether it be through transportation bill reauthorization or a new stimulus bill, new transportation funding needs to flow to transit.

We have a great opportunity to create manufacturing jobs during tough economic times and cut greenhouse gas emissions. We only need the political will to make it happen.

Kathryn Phillips is a transportation policy expert for the Environmental Defense Fund.

[Washington Post commentary, Sunday, Nov. 22, 2009:](#)

In Delhi, doing as we do, not as we say

By Miranda Kennedy

In the five years I worked as a reporter in India, I sat through many uncomfortable silences during interviews about Pakistani terrorists, the pervasive caste system and Indian Muslims -- sensitive issues that, on the face of it, seem more controversial than carbon parts per million. But these subjects rarely stirred up as much ire as India's stance on climate change. The topic has become a matter of national pride, a symbol of sovereignty and growing global clout. If you want to make an Indian government official really angry, bring up his [carbon emissions](#).

This fall, when I mentioned to the Indian government's chief economic policymaker that the United States considers India "intransigent" on climate change, the poised, Oxford-educated Montek Singh Ahluwalia looked slightly stunned for a moment. Pursing his lips, he seemed to struggle to suppress anger. "If I were using a cool description, those are either gross misperceptions or deliberate distortions," he said in clipped British English. "The Indian approach on this has been, 'Let's first decide a fair pollution entitlement for different countries.' "

India's position on climate change -- as the hard-line negotiator standing up for the moral rights of the developing world -- is a familiar one. India is the world's fourth-largest emitter of carbon dioxide, but for months now, it has come across as an obstinate child, leading the developing world in insisting that industrialized countries bear the brunt of the responsibility for global warming and have no right to dictate reductions to poor countries.

The international climate conference in Copenhagen next month won't be the showdown it was originally billed as, but the United States and other nations are certainly not going to let up in their insistence that India and China accept hard emissions targets. During Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's visit to India this summer, the country's environment minister, Jairam Ramesh, rubbed the United States the wrong way when he had a climate outburst of sorts. Standing beside Clinton, he declared to a bank of reporters, "There is simply no case for the pressure that we, who have among the lowest emissions per capita, face to actually reduce emissions."

In a country where almost half a million children die each year from water-borne diarrhea, providing access to basic services such as clean drinking water is more pressing than cutting emissions. And to do so requires energy. "You cannot say that because there is climate change the developing world shouldn't grow," was the outraged response when I asked Chandra Bhushan of the Center for Science and Environment, a New Delhi-based research group, to

explain why it is unfair to ask India to cut its emissions. "You're essentially saying, 'No more electricity to your house, close your factories, go back to the fields.' "

Even under the spinning ceiling fans in his office, drops of perspiration kept springing onto Bhushan's forehead as we talked. Like many in India, he draws a bright line between India's "survival emissions," from burning energy to produce food, for instance, and American-style "luxury emissions," from things like SUVs and central air conditioning.

In every conversation I had about climate change in India, the lines were clearly drawn: Americans, who emit 20 times more than the average Indian, are greedy over-consumers refusing to make lifestyle changes that would allow the rest of the world to grow. There was no dissent among the ranks. In a country with a healthy tradition of civic engagement and anti-government protests, I was surprised that no environmentalists were urging India to accept international limits. But high-minded nationalism has a proud history there, too; when officials use phrases such as "climate injustice" and "Gandhian moral authority" to describe India's position, it rings a bell.

Although India accounts for only about 5 percent of the world's emissions, that includes a wide range of carbon output. The 800 million people who earn less than \$2 a day have a carbon footprint of almost zero. But the tiny fraction of rich Indians who use air conditioners and drive big cars are "eating into the carbon space of millions of poor in India," in the words of Vinuta Gopal of Greenpeace. The polluting middle class should be forced to pay a kind of carbon tax, she says, just as the industrialized world owes a debt to the developing world for its historical emissions.

Most U.S. officials consider it unhelpful and misleading to assign blame according to the past hundreds of years of emissions, since we did not know then what we know now. But in India, environmentalists often bring up the greenhouse gases the West emitted not only during its decades of industrialization but also in fighting wars. And they aren't referring just to Iraq and Afghanistan -- the world's carbon waste in 1941 was mentioned in my interviews more than once.

Essentially, the United States wants India to commit to reducing its emissions, and India wants to be able to do so at a pace of its own choosing. But the two countries actually have a remarkably similar position: The international community isn't going to tell us what to do. This doesn't bode well for action on global climate change -- not next month or in the sessions that are sure to follow in the future, now that world leaders have agreed that there will be no binding agreement at Copenhagen.

India's Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, will be in Washington this week, and the Obama administration will almost certainly use the visit to try to wheedle India into softening its position. India, for its part, will try to pressure the United States to commit to giving it funding and low-carbon technology transfers, its key demand from Copenhagen. But no one expects any "deliverables" -- despite the fact that India has lately assumed a more flexible posture internationally, with Ramesh, the environment minister, making the case in New York and Washington in September that India is a "dealmaker, not a deal-breaker."

Meanwhile, at home, the government has proposed sweeping laws to help steer a less-polluting path to development. India will tighten fuel-efficiency standards by 2011, set voluntary targets to improve energy efficiency and aggressively promote solar power generation. The domestic initiative is a diplomatic volley at the industrialized world, showing that India doesn't need an international agreement to do the right thing. It is also a tacit admission that the country needs to mitigate global warming for its own sake. Environmentalists warn that rising sea levels and melting glaciers will hit India especially hard because of its long coastline and its proximity to the Himalayas.

Nevertheless, the question in India now is not whether its emissions will increase, but how, and by how much. Spending time there is a good reminder of how far India has to go. At least half of the population -- mostly people in rural areas -- have no access to electricity. Even in the capital city of one of the world's fastest-growing economies, the pretty middle-class enclave where I lived from 2002 to 2007 suffered almost nightly power cuts during the long months of summer. The neighborhood guard would blow his whistle and holler "Light gone!" in Hindi, as though he wanted

to make sure no one managed to sleep through it. Without the AC, my room would soon become unbearable, and I would join the rest of the neighborhood in shuffling out to our patios to take advantage of what breeze there was. Each summer, bands of furious city residents decide they've had enough of this and storm through the streets to protest their unsteady power supply.

To try to meet their demands, India plans to build more coal-fired power plants; more than 70 percent of India's power needs are already met by coal -- the most carbon-intensive source of power -- and that is sure to increase in the coming years. As far as India is concerned, it has no choice but to use dirty power. Now that it has opened up its economy and given its citizens a taste of the good life, it can't just call it all off and leave half the country behind.

But government policy adviser Ahluwalia promised me that India knows better than to make the mistakes of other nations that rapidly industrialized. "We are willing to guarantee that our per capita emissions will never exceed those of the industrialized countries," he said, spreading his hands generously, as though revealing a major dispensation. "If, as a result of technology, self-denial and determination, you were to cut your emissions by 50 percent -- the moment you achieve it yourself, we will accept that cap."

When I pointed out that it was inconceivable that that United States would halve its greenhouse gas emissions anytime soon, he smiled ever so slightly, with just a hint of righteousness, like a man who knows he has played a match fairly -- and won.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Sat., Nov. 21, 2009:](#)

Against mining project

With regard to the proposed mining operation of Jesse Morrow Mountain, I am shocked that Fresno County is even considering this project. The environmental impact report states that there will be "significant and unavoidable impacts" to the mountain, the air and traffic.

Cemex will fill everyone's lungs with cement dust, drain the water tables, clog and ruin our roadways. Our quality of life will be decimated.

How can the Board of Supervisors justify a project that will horribly worsen the air pollution problem? The county is already plagued with so many bad air days.

However, according to corporate spokes-puppet Jennifer Borgen, "Cemex will be doing Fresno County a favor." A favor? Their theory is that instead of a little pollution spread out amongst everyone, it will all be "localized to that area."

Approval of this project is tantamount to handing out death sentences to everyone in the path of the greed-driven project. Don't insult us with your talk of "favors." We know the score. We are considered collateral damage.

Cemex is out to make money at any cost. The Board of Supervisors must protect us!

Jackie J. Dale, Reedley

[Letter to the Modesto Bee, Monday, Nov. 23, 2009:](#)

Environmentalists destroy forest

Regarding "Rules allowing forest clearcuts must go, group tells air board" (Nov. 12, Page B-1): The Center For Biological Diversity and others, like the Sierra Club, are responsible for the destruction of our forest by not allowing timber harvesting, allowing dead timber that sits on the forest ground rotting and causing disease to spread to healthy trees.

From looking at their Web site, they are a bunch of lawyers that have no business telling us how to run our forest. Thanks to fringe eco-wacko organizations like them, they are responsible for massive fires we have every year.

Bring back responsible management of our beautiful forest now.

Kerry Smith, Modesto

[Letter to the Modesto Bee, Thursday, Nov. 19, 2009:](#)

Recycling broken in Modesto

Modesto had a modest recycling system with the blue bags. We could put in all recyclables, including metal, plastics and paper. A change was made and the paper was to be put in the green can, no longer recycled but chopped up with the yard clippings. Now all cardboard, paper and food waste goes into the green cans to become part of an "organic" soil additive.

We get too much paper! Two phone books each year, Sunday and Wednesday ads in the newspaper, plus ads stuffed in the mailbox and stuff thrown on the doorstep. How many trees is that?

We no longer have a service to separate our cans and plastics to recycle. Plastics all can be separated using the numbered triangles on the bottom.

The best recycling facilities can be found in areas that offer no garbage service recycling. Lakewood has no recycling, but nearby California State University, Long Beach, has a very good collection system. In

Modesto, you must not only find the recycling collectors but go on the proper day and time. I fear there will be less recycling because of inconvenience for the old and apathy of the young. Our air quality will diminish as more plastic is burnt. Our waste system is broken.

Michael Hauschild, Modesto

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Europe asking the U.S. and China to present emission goals. On Monday, Europe requested that these leaders in pollution present goals that reflect how they are going to reduce greenhouse emission gasses at the next climate change conference in Copenhagen. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Europa pide a EEUU y China presentar metas sobre emisiones

Por ROBERT WIELAARD

La Cronica de Houston, Monday, November 23, 2009

La Unión Europea instó el lunes a Estados Unidos y a China, los dos países más contaminantes del mundo, a que presenten metas para reducir sus emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero durante la conferencia sobre cambio climático que se realizará el próximo mes en Copenhague.

Hasta ahora ambas naciones no se han comprometido sobre el asunto a pesar de que la conferencia auspiciada por la ONU se realizará en dos semanas más, por lo que la Unión Europea argumentó que sus retrasos afectaban los esfuerzos internacionales para reducir los efectos negativos en el medio ambiente.

"Esa estrategia es insostenible", escribió el primer ministro sueco Fredrik Reinfeldt en un sitio de internet de la unión. "No da ninguna respuesta mundial, no resuelve la amenaza del cambio climático".

Suecia tiene actualmente la presidencia rotatoria de la UE y dirige las negociaciones de los 27 países integrantes del bloque.

Estados Unidos aún no ha comprometido cifras sobre sus propias emisiones, las reducciones que pretende o la ayuda económica, mientras los negociadores están esperando a que el Congreso norteamericano complete primero una ley nacional sobre cambio climático.

Por su parte, el presidente chino Hu Jintao dijo la semana pasada que los países harán lo que esté en sus posibilidades, refiriéndose al punto de vista de China sobre que los países en desarrollo no deberían estar obligados a realizar estos recortes a las emisiones. Hasta ahora, China ha prometido reducir las emisiones, pero no ha dicho cuánto.

No se espera que los mandatarios mundiales logren un acuerdo de obligaciones legales en Copenhague. Parece más bien que pretenden alcanzar un acuerdo político que incluya su compromiso sobre la reducción de las emisiones y el financiamiento para que los países en desarrollo enfrenten el cambio climático.

"Todavía esperamos que todo el contenido sea acordado en Copenhague", dijo el ministro del medioambiente sueco Andreas Carlgren en Bruselas, donde los ministros del medioambiente de la Unión Europea se reunieron para preparar su propuesta final para las negociaciones.

Un grupo de especialistas de la ONU ha recomendado que los países en desarrollo logren reducciones de entre 25% y 40% a las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero para 2020, con lo que se podría evitar el aumento catastrófico de los niveles del mar, tormentas más destructivas, sequías y alteraciones en el clima.

La Unión Europea busca recortes más grandes que los propuestos por la mayoría de los países industrializados, comprometiéndose a pasar del recorte de 20% debajo de los niveles de 1990 a 30% si otros se unen a la medida. Para 2050 la unión quiere eliminar la mayoría de las emisiones, con una meta de 95%.

Estados Unidos contempla recortes mucho menores, con el 17% con respecto a los niveles de 2005 o casi 3,5% con respecto a 1990. Japón ha prometido una reducción del 25% con respecto a los niveles de 1990. Los estadounidenses crean el doble de emisiones en comparación con los europeos y los japoneses.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses truck drivers asking California to not leave them unemployed for driving polluting vehicles.](#)

Camioneros piden California no dejarlos sin trabajo por manejar unidades contaminantes

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingue, Thursday, November 18, 2009

Representantes de miles de camioneros del puerto marítimo de Oakland, uno de los más grandes en el país, pidieron a autoridades ambientales de California ampliar el período en que tendrán que cambiar de maquinaria o reducir la contaminación del aire.

El plazo para esos cambios vence en diciembre, y cada conductor que necesita hacer dichos cambios tendría que invertir miles de dólares. Los conductores argumentan que un plan estatal de asistencia financiera sólo ayudó a contados propietarios; el resto tendrá que costear sus modificaciones en tiempos de crisis.

La administradora de calidad del aire en la región, Lisa Fasano explicó sin embargo que el daño que causa la contaminación de los camiones a la salud también representa enormes gastos en atención médica para los residentes de Oakland. Dijo además que cuando se tiene el triple de posibilidades de contraer cáncer y niveles de asma en constante aumento, eso es muy significativo.

La Oficina de Recursos del Aire de California impuso medidas similares a los camioneros de los puertos de Los Ángeles y Long Beach, los mayores en el país.

