

## **Congressman Cardoza helps secure money for Central Valley's air pollution fight**

By Carol Reiter

Merced Sun-Star, Thursday, January 22, 2009

Farmers working to meet air quality regulations got a monetary boost from the 2008 farm bill.

Congressman Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced, said \$11 million of federal funds will help growers and farmers in Valley areas that have extreme air problems.

"For so long farmers have been under the gun of increasing federal and state air quality restrictions," Cardoza said.

Cardoza, along with Sens. Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, worked to get the money allocated through the farm bill.

Cardoza believes it can be a useful tool in helping agricultural operators in California. "We have secured about \$150 million over five years to help farmers to comply with regulations," Cardoza said.

Tom Jordan, senior policy adviser for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said the district worked closely with Cardoza, Boxer and Feinstein to make sure that the money goes to the right areas.

"There is a lot of older ag equipment with older technology that can be cleaned up by using this funding," Jordan said.

The air district is working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, which will be administering the money, to make sure that the guidelines benefit the air district and the farmers. Jordan said farm equipment is one of the top five sources of nitrogen oxide emissions in the Valley.

"We're hoping that this money can be used to buy new tractors," Jordan said. "We are working aggressively to bring in a new fleet of vehicles to the Valley."

The San Joaquin Valley has been designated as an extreme non-attainment area -- not meeting federal guidelines -- under the Federal Clean Air Act. The resulting air quality regulations in the San Joaquin Valley are the most stringent in the nation.

"These funds are desperately needed," Cardoza said. "Historically, there has been a serious lack of funding to assist agriculture operators meet the tough regulations."

Cardoza said the air quality crisis in the Valley is huge. "This isn't going to solve the greater problem," he said. "But it's one step closer to helping the farmers deal with the regulatory onslaught they are facing."

### **The problem of telling the air quality tale**

#### **Smog Blog**

By Mark Grossi

Fresnobee.com, Wed., Jan. 21, 2009

The 2008 report from the local air district to the community is available [here](#). It is a prime example of how hard it is to communicate this complex and political subject to the community.

Forget the soup of acronyms -- ERC's, PM-2.5, VOC, NOx, ARB. You can quickly get lost in this jargon-laced jumble, but that's not what I mean.

The confusion for many people starts at the very first sentence in the report: "Despite significant progress, the San Joaquin Valley continues to be severely impacted by adverse air quality."

So, which is it? Better? Worse? Somewhere in the middle? Should I send my 9-year-old out to play or keep her inside?

It's like meeting a big dog that's growling and happily wagging its tail at the same time.

It confuses even supposedly savvy people. One editor recently wrote a piece saying air pollution here is not lethal, and the air is not as bad as some people say. The argument is over the degree of severity, in this person's mind.

OK, here's what's going on. There have been some significant gains in the air quality fight. No doubt. Things have gotten better. But the monitors show that this stuff we're breathing is not yet healthy.

And the degree of severity? Compare the number of violations here with any other place in the country.

For ozone, the Valley and the South Coast are the worst. No place else is even close. For PM-2.5, the South Coast and the Valley are, by far, the worst in California and among the worst in the country.

The trends suggest air pollution is more than a sensationalized problem.

In addition, any number of peer-reviewed health studies indicate the pollution triggers heart problems, lung ailments and premature death. The connection seems pretty clear to medical professionals.

There are real problems recruiting doctors with specialties, such as neurosurgery, to move into the Valley.

One editorial writer described it in this analogy: "We're no longer drowning in 13 feet of water. We're concerned because the water's only down to 10 feet, and we're still drowning."

## **Wal-Mart hoping to open Patterson store**

Written by John Saiz

Patterson Irrigator, Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2009

Representatives with Wal-Mart filed an application with City Hall on Friday to locate a store at Sperry and Las Palmas avenues.

Plans state the 158,173-square-foot facility would have a large area for groceries, space for a pharmacy and would be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If built, the store would be the largest retail development in Patterson.

"We have continued to monitor Patterson for some time," Wal-Mart spokesperson Aaron Rios said. "We believe the population in the area would support it."

Before the store can become a reality, it has a series of city approvals to negotiate. Planners are reviewing the application and will eventually determine if the project requires an environmental impact report — a lengthy and often costly study that describes the project and its effects on issues like traffic, wildlife and [air pollution](#).

The Wal-Mart would be adjacent to the recently constructed Taco Bell and Longs Drugs in the Patterson Plaza retail center. Plans indicate space for four other 5,000 square-foot buildings near by, which could be used for other stores.

Sperry Commercial LP now owns the land the store would go on. Calls to representatives were not immediately returned.

## **Cleaner air increases life span, study finds**

Alicia Chang, Associated Press

Tri-Valley Herald, Contra Costa Times, Modesto Bee & other papers Thurs., Jan. 22, 2009

Cleaner air over the past two decades has added nearly five months to average life expectancy in the United States, according to a federally funded study.

Researchers said it is the first study to show that reducing air pollution translates into longer lives.

Between 1978 and 2001, Americans' average life span increased almost three years to 77, and as much as 4.8 months of that can be attributed to cleaner air, researchers from Brigham Young University and Harvard School of Public Health reported in today's New England Journal of Medicine.

Some experts not connected with the study called the gain dramatic.

"It shows that our efforts as a country to control air pollution have been well worth the expense," said Dr. Joel Kaufman, a University of Washington expert on environmental health.

Scientists have long known that the grit in polluted air, or particulates, can lodge deep in the lungs and raise the risk of lung disease, heart attacks and strokes. The particulates - made of dust, soot and various chemicals - come from factories, power plants and diesel-powered vehicles.

In 1970, Congress passed a revised Clean Air Act that gave the Environmental Protection Agency the power to set and enforce national standards to protect people from particulate matter, carbon monoxide and other pollutants.

The law is widely credited with improving the nation's air quality through such things as catalytic converters on cars and scrubbers at new factories.

For the study, scientists used government data to track particulate pollution levels over two decades in 51 U.S. cities. They compared these changes to life expectancies calculated from death records and census data. They adjusted the results to take into account other things that might affect life expectancy, such as smoking habits, income, education and migration.

On average, particulate matter levels fell from 21 micrograms per cubic meter of air to 14 micrograms per cubic meter in the cities studied. At the same time, Americans lived an average 2.72 years longer.

"We saw that communities that had larger reductions in air pollution on average had larger increases in life expectancies," said the study's lead author, C. Arden Pope III, a Brigham Young epidemiologist.

Pittsburgh and Buffalo, N.Y., which made the most progress cleaning up their air, saw life spans increase by about 10 months. Los Angeles, Indianapolis and St. Louis were among the cities that saw gains in life expectancy of around five months.

The study was partly funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and EPA.

"This finding provides direct confirmation of the population health benefits of mitigating air pollution," Daniel Krewski, who does pollution research at the University of Ottawa in Canada, wrote in an accompanying editorial.

In a statement, the EPA said such studies provide critical information that can help the agency set standards on particulates. EPA data show that average particulate levels nationally have fallen 11 percent since 2000.

Last year, government researchers reported that U.S. life expectancy has surpassed 78 years for the first time. They attributed the increase to falling mortality rates for nine of the 15 leading causes of death, including heart disease, cancer, accidents and diabetes.

### **Cleaner air, longer life: Study provides evidence**

**In a boon for supporters of air quality management, new findings show that the more particulate air pollution is reduced, the more life expectancy increases.**

By Thomas H. Maugh II

Los Angeles Times January 22, 2009

For those wondering just how much effect cleaning up the air can have, researchers now have a much fuller picture.

Reductions in particulate air pollution during the 1980s and 1990s led to an average five-month increase in life expectancy in 51 U.S. metropolitan areas, with some of the initially more polluted cities such as Buffalo, N.Y., and Pittsburgh showing a 10-month increase, researchers said Wednesday.

The reductions in pollution accounted for about 15% of a nearly three-year increase in life expectancy during the two decades, said epidemiologist C. Arden Pope III of Brigham Young University, lead author of the study appearing today in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

It is well known that particulate air pollution reduces life expectancy, said environmental epidemiologist Joel Schwartz of the Harvard School of Public Health, who was not involved in the study. But public policy makers "are interested in the question of, 'If I spend the money to reduce pollution, what really happens?' " he said.

Schwartz reported two years ago that a study in six cities revealed increased life expectancy was associated with reductions in particulate pollution. Pope and his colleagues expanded on that connection, finding that in a large fraction of the U.S. population "the more particulate pollution went down, the more life expectancy went up."

Their finding "greatly strengthens the foundation of the argument for air quality management," wrote environmental health scientist Daniel Krewski of the University of Ottawa in an editorial accompanying the report.

The particulates in question are called fine particulates because they are smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter, allowing them to burrow deep into the small air passages of the lung. They have repeatedly been shown to produce cardiovascular and pulmonary disease. Larger particulates, which cause visibility problems, have a much smaller effect on health.

The fine particulates are produced by cigarettes, gasoline and diesel engines, coal power plants, foundries and a variety of other urban sources.

Pope and his colleagues studied two sets of data collected in 214 counties, comprising 51 metropolitan areas, in 1980 and 2000, comparing reductions in particulate levels and increases in life expectancies. They used a variety of advanced statistical methods to try to eliminate effects

linked to changes in population, income, education, migration and demographics.

They concluded that for every decrease of 10 micrograms per cubic meter of particulate pollution in a city, average life span increased a little more than seven months -- about the same amount seen in previous, smaller studies.

"We are getting a return on our investment to improve air quality," Pope said.

Overall, the average life span in the 51 areas increased 2.7 years over the two decades, with the major share of the increase attributed to reductions in smoking and changes in socioeconomic factors.

Los Angeles and Southern California in general, had large increases in life expectancy during the period, even though pollution levels did not drop as much as in other cities. Pope attributed the increase in life span to a string of smoking bans begun in 1994.

Pope thinks there is room for further improvement. The average countrywide fine-particulate concentration in the early 1980s was about 20 micrograms per cubic meter, and that dropped to about 14 micrograms by 2000.

"It's reasonable to expect that we could reduce it by that much again, but then we reach a point of substantially diminishing marginal returns," he said.

## **Study Links Cleaner Air to Longer Life**

By Juliet Eilperin, Washington Post Staff Writer  
Thursday, January 22, 2009

Reducing air pollution has extended average life expectancy by five months for urban residents in dozens of U.S. cities over the past two decades, researchers found.

A team from Brigham Young and Harvard universities reached that conclusion based on data on changes in air quality and life expectancy between 1980 and 2000 in 51 cities, including Washington. After taking into account the life-extending effects of other factors, including changes in population, income, education, migration, demographics and smoking, they calculated that cleaner air had lengthened urban dwellers' life spans significantly -- the first time researchers have been able to document an effect of improved air quality on longevity.

The researchers found that nationally, urban dwellers' life expectancy rose by an average of 2.72 years from 1980 to 2000, and five months of that increase was attributed to breathing cleaner air.

People in and around the District benefited more than most because the region has enjoyed a greater reduction in airborne fine particulate matter, or soot, which is linked to heart and respiratory diseases, than many other metropolitan areas. Overall, D.C. area residents were living roughly three years longer in 2000 than in 1980, and more than seven months of that improvement was attributed to the drop in airborne soot.

Between 1980 and 2000, levels of this type of pollution fell by more than 10 micrograms per cubic meter of air in the metropolitan region, the study found. It was only 15 years ago that other researchers discovered the link between airborne particles smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter (less than 4/100 the width of a human hair) and lung and heart disease.

C. Arden Pope III, lead author of the study published in today's New England Journal of Medicine, called the increase in life expectancy due to better air quality "remarkable."

"We are getting a return on our investment," said Pope, an epidemiologist and economics professor at Brigham Young University, adding that cutting air pollutants in major cities amounted to "a large, nationwide, natural experiment."

Between 1980 and 2000, federal regulations on power plants, including the acid rain program, helped reduce smog ingredients such as sulfur dioxide significantly, while the installation of catalytic converters on vehicles cut nitrogen oxide pollution across the country.

Every five years the government evaluates whether it should tighten the standards for fine particulates. In September 2006, the Environmental Protection Agency decided to keep the limit unchanged at 15 micrograms per cubic meter averaged over an entire year, but it tightened the maximum permissible in any one 24-hour period from 65 to 35 micrograms. Both the EPA's scientific advisory panel and independent researchers urged the agency to impose a more stringent annual standard.

Janice Nolen, assistant vice president of policy and advocacy for the American Lung Association, said she hoped the new findings would spur policymakers to tighten federal soot standards the next time they issue new regulations, scheduled for 2011.

"Air pollution shortens life, and when we reduce air pollution, it actually adds months to our life," she said. "While it's hard for people to see the connection, we can document it, and we know that the connection exists."

Pope added that one of the encouraging aspects of the study, which was co-authored by Douglas Dockery and Majid Ezzati at the Harvard School of Public Health, is that further reductions in particulate matter continue to produce health benefits.

"There is room to improve," Pope said, noting that even relatively clean cities can experience the benefits of cutting down more on airborne particulates. Furthermore, he said, "there's a lot of room to improve in Chinese cities, and Indian cities, and cities throughout the world."

## **Schwarzenegger asks Obama for tailpipe rules**

By SAMANTHA YOUNG, The Associated Press

Bakersfield Californian, SF Chronicle, Modesto Bee, Fresno Bee & others Thurs., Jan. 22, 2009

SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger isn't waiting to press the Obama administration on one of California's top priorities \_ regulating greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles.

The Republican governor sent a letter to the new Democratic president on Wednesday, asking him to give California and other states permission to implement tough tailpipe-emission standards.

"Your administration has a unique opportunity to both support the pioneering leadership of these states and move America toward global leadership on addressing climate change," Schwarzenegger wrote.

He wants the Environmental Protection Agency to reverse a 2007 conclusion by the Bush administration that states do not have authority to impose greenhouse gas standards for new cars, pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles. The Bush administration argued that such goals can be met only by regulating fuel-efficiency standards, which falls under the authority of the federal government.

Obama has vowed to revisit the decision, a promise echoed last week by his nominee for EPA administrator. Lisa Jackson awaits Senate confirmation.

The EPA referred a call Wednesday to Obama's transition team, which declined comment.

It's unclear how long it might take the new administration to review the matter. In a separate letter to Jackson, California's top air pollution official said the agency could fast-track a public rule-making process that often can take up to a year.

Air Resources Board chairwoman Mary Nichols wrote that the EPA already has an "ample record" to help it reconsider the Bush administration decision.

California is seeking a waiver from the federal Clean Air Act that would allow it to impose stiffer air pollution standards than the federal government. It first asked for a waiver in 2005 to implement a 2002 state law intended to cut vehicles' greenhouse gas emissions.

The law, which was supposed to take effect this year, requires automakers to cut emissions by nearly a third by 2016. Thirteen other states have passed similar laws, while three more are considering California's standards, according to the California air board. Federal law allows states to choose between federal and California clean-air rules.

The Bush administration's ruling marked the first time the EPA fully denied California a waiver under the Clean Air Act since Congress gave the state the right to obtain such waivers in 1967.

Democrats in Congress accused the administration of political meddling after reports indicated staff scientists at the EPA supported giving California a waiver.

The auto regulations are a key part of California's strategy to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions. The state is the world's 12th largest producer of the emissions, which are blamed for contributing to global climate change.

## **USDA funds freed to improve air quality**

Hanford Sentinel, Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2009

SACRAMENTO -- The federal 2008 farm bill includes \$10.9 million for farmers and ranchers to implement air quality conservation measures, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The NRCS, a part of the United States Department of Agriculture, will make the funds available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which has been operating since 1996 and last year alone provided \$54 million in cost share assistance.

Since 2004, NRCS in California has spent more than \$21 million on conservation practices including treating rural roads, upgrading farm engines to cleaner models, chipping orchard prunings instead of burning them, and minimizing pesticide spraying.

Farmers matched those funds, bringing the total spent in the last four years to \$42 million.

Thirty-six counties, including Kern, Kings, Tulare and Fresno, are eligible to use the funds to help them come into compliance with standards for PM 2.5 that the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is now implementing.

For more information on the assistance program, contact Anita Brown, NRCS spokeswoman, at 530-792-5644.

## **Coal-fired power plant challenged, endorsed**

By BRENDAN RILEY, Associated Press Writer

Tri-Valley Herald, San Francisco Chronicle & other papers Wed., Jan. 21, 2009

Clean-energy proponents want a federal panel to block a proposed coal-burning power plant in eastern Nevada, while Rep. Dean Heller, R-Nev., is urging Gov. Jim Gibbons to move ahead with the project.

The groups fighting the proposed White Pine Energy Station near Ely have asked the U.S. Department of Interior's Board of Land Appeals to reject the Bureau of Land Management's recent approval of rights of way for the plant that LS Power Group wants to build.

The project still needs air quality permits from the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, and Heller on Wednesday urged Gibbons to quickly approve those permits so construction can start.

The state agency said last month that the permit application from LS Power, based in East Brunswick, N.J., is being re-evaluated following a federal EPA ruling that carbon dioxide emissions must be considered when issuing such permits.

Critics, represented by lawyers for Earthjustice, say the 1,590-megawatt project would be one of the largest and most heavily polluting coal plants in the West, emitting millions of tons of carbon dioxide and other harmful pollutants yearly.

The opponents include the Bristlecone Alliance, Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, Nevada Wildlife Federation, Utah Physicians for a Health Environment, Western Resource Advocates, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada and others.

"America's top scientists have made it clear that continuing to burn coal will lead directly to climate catastrophe," said Amy Atwood of Center for Biological Diversity. "We need to scrap proposals for obsolete, dirty coal plants like White Pine and move toward a clean energy future."

Other opponents include U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., who has said LS Power should withdraw the proposal and instead focus on clean renewable power.

In his letter to Gibbons, Heller said he knew the governor backed the project and state decisions on air permitting "are the sole remaining steps necessary before construction begins."

"The completion of this project will help secure the future of White Pine County, and the expansion of this plant could lead to other worthwhile projects of the same nature," Heller said.

At least two other coal-fired plants have been proposed in Nevada, including a 1,500-megawatt plant, also near Ely, that NV Energy wants to build; and Sithe Global Power's 750-megawatt project farther south near Mesquite.

[Fresno Bee Letter to the Editor Wed., Jan. 21, 2009](#)

### **'Save their behind'**

A recent article stated that California truckers were going to encounter some high costs associated with retrofitting or replacing their engines to comply with future emission standards. This, combined with high fuel prices, would probably drive many out of business. At the same time, the Detroit manufacturers need to produce a product they can sell. Hmmm, let's see here.



Bailout money should go through Detroit or other U.S. manufacturing facilities so that they can build these engines. They should also build wind generators. This would boost American manufacturing, create jobs, result in cleaner air, reduce our dependency on foreign oil and give truckers new, low-cost engines subsidized by the bailout.

I know what you're thinking. This is too practical and the government will never go for it. The previous administration wouldn't, but the Obama team might.

This is not a quick fix, but we can no longer buy into manufacturers' claims that it will be too expensive or they need more time. They need to burn the midnight oil (or preferably electricity) to save their behinds and save our nation. So instead of producing cars that consumers don't want, Detroit will be producing products America needs.

Gary Hughes  
Fresno

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the Harvard study, which showed that reducing air pollution translates into longer lives. For more information, please call Maricela Velásquez \(559\) 230-5849.](#)

### **El aire limpio prolonga la longevidad: Harvard**

Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino  
Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, January 22, 2009

Respirar aire limpio prolonga la vida de los estadounidenses por lo menos tres años, y posiblemente cuatro de acuerdo con resultados de un estudio de la Universidad de Harvard. La escuela de salud de esa universidad determinó que el aire limpio aumenta la esperanza promedio de vida de los estadounidenses a 77 años, el promedio actual es de 74 años de edad. Un representante de Harvard declaró que el aumento en años de vida de los estadounidenses es dramático y que vale la pena cualquier esfuerzo por recuperar y conservar limpio el aire.