

Tune In and Tune Up car cleanup event

Modesto Bee, Friday, April 1, 2011

WHEN: April 9, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

WHERE: Modesto Junior College West Campus, 2201 Blue Gum Ave.

INFO: Do you have a 1995 model car or older that you've had for at least six months? Thanks to a grant from the Reformulated Gasoline Settlement fund, the first 525 drivers who come to this event will receive a free emissions test. If your car doesn't pass, you will receive a \$500 voucher for repairs at a local Gold Shield smog shop. For more information, e-mail ModestoEvent@valley-can.org or call 1-800-806-2004.

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board seeks student videos

Modesto Bee, Friday, April 1, 2011

Students and teachers have a chance to help clean the air with 30-second videos promoting bicycle riding, carpooling and other practices.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is holding its third annual For Reel Video Contest for elementary through college entrants.

The deadline for submissions, which must be on DVD, is May 27.

The district will award an iPad to the winner and show the video on its Web site.

For more information, call 559-230-6000 or go to www.healthyairliving.com.

Valley dealers see spark for electric cars

High fuel prices push interest in new models.

By Tim Sheehan - The Fresno Bee

In the Merced Sun-Star, Monday, April 4, 2011

FRESNO -- There are only a handful of plug-in electric cars on the roads in Fresno and Clovis, but as gasoline prices tickle \$4 a gallon, local dealerships say the vehicles are gaining attention from would-be buyers.

Several small companies have been producing all-electric cars in the United States, but in such meager numbers that they haven't made much of a dent in the market. That started to change in December when two major brands, Nissan and Chevrolet, introduced their plug-in battery-powered entries into the U.S. market.

The production and the availability of the Nissan Leaf and Chevrolet Volt are limited.

Fewer than 2,200 have been sold between the two models since they were launched a few months ago.

But advocates for energy efficiency and clean air describe the existence of the cars and consumers' growing interest and acceptance as a victory.

"Clearly, the first-buyer market is made up of early adopters who are interested in the technology, the greenness of the cars and the coolness of the cars," said Felix Kramer, founder of the Palo Alto-based California Cars Initiative, a nonprofit group that advocates the development of all-electric and hybrid vehicles.

Nissan announced Friday that it sold 298 Leafs to U.S. buyers in March, nearly double what it had sold in the previous three months since the all-electric car was launched. General Motors' Chevrolet dealers sold 608 Chevy Volts last month in the United States, bringing the total sold since December to 1,536.

Those figures are tiny compared with the two companies' combined U.S. sales of more than 258,000 in March.

The Leaf and Volt rely entirely on electricity to power their drive trains. Each is charged by plugging a cord from a charger into receptacles on the vehicle. The Leaf has only batteries, but the Volt has batteries and a gas motor that generates electricity to power the electric motor for longer trips.

Chevrolet and Nissan dealers in the Fresno and Clovis markets say more customers are asking about plug-in offerings as fuel prices have climbed over the past couple of months.

At Fresno's Michael Chevrolet, general sales manager Bruce Kane said he has only one Chevy Volt for sale on the lot, in addition to a test-drive model that the store cannot sell for at least six months. Not every Chevy dealer in the Valley, he added, has been able to get Volts to sell.

"We've delivered three or four of them," Kane said Friday. "The ones we're getting, we're selling."

At Lithia Nissan in Fresno and Nissan of Clovis, managers say they have orders pending for the Leaf from buyers who have plunked down deposits and are waiting two to four months for delivery.

"We've seen a noticeable increase in interest because of the gas prices," said Mark Schultz, general manager at Nissan of Clovis. "We've got eight orders pending, and demand is certainly higher than the supply."

Jeff Bergman, manager of Lithia Nissan, said his store has five orders on hand and several more orders waiting to be accepted by Nissan. Bergman said his store's first Leaf should arrive for one of his customers this month.

"I think it's just like any other car that's new to the market," Bergman said. "There are a few people who have heard about it, they want it and they like it. ... And once more people start seeing them on the street, I think we'll see much more interest in the vehicle."

Randy Lee of Fresno didn't have to see one on the street to know that he wanted a plug-in vehicle.

On the first day that Nissan began accepting online reservations for its Leaf a year ago, Lee made a reservation. When the company started taking formal orders and deposits in August, Lee was online to put his name in.

He took delivery of his Leaf from the Clovis store in January.

Lee said he and his wife, Jan, were motivated by a combination of factors: fuel prices, air quality and energy independence.

"We looked at whether the cost made sense, does it do good for the environment, and then there's the whole blood-for-oil thing," he said. "I served in the Navy, and I just don't like the idea of our kids going out into the world and fighting ... if there's any possibility that it's just for oil."

Buying a car that uses no gas and plugs into the household current to charge not only made sense, Lee said, but is also in character for him and his family.

Their home has solar panels on the roof and synthetic grass on the front lawn. Their other car is a Honda Insight hybrid. Before they bought the Leaf, they had a tiny two-seat Smart convertible.

"This is something else I can do," Lee said. "But the bottom line is, I'm a cheapskate."

With the solar panels on the roof of the house, Lee can keep his car charged with minimal impact on his Pacific Gas & Electric bill.

"And I know gas prices are just going to keep going up," he added. "Gas prices would have to go down below \$1 a gallon for this not to make sense for us."

Focus on Ag

By John Holland
Modesto Bee, Saturday, April 2, 2011

Paul Martin, director of environmental services for Western United Dairymen in Modesto, will serve two more years on the Agricultural Air Quality Task Force. He was first appointed in 2006 to the panel, which advises the U.S. Department of Agriculture on air issues.

Senate Resolution on Clean Air Act Benefits Slammed as 'Work of Fiction', by JunkScience.com

By JunkScience.com
In the Sacramento Bee, Monday, April 4, 2011

WASHINGTON, April 1, 2011 -- /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A Senate resolution introduced citing enormous public health and economic benefits from the Clean Air Act was denounced as "a work of fiction" today by JunkScience.com.

Introduced yesterday by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and 33 other members of the Democratic caucus, the resolution parrots U.S. Environmental Protection Agency claims that the Clean Air Act saves millions of lives and adds trillions of dollars to the economy.

"The resolution's claims of public health and economic benefits from the Clean Air Act are exaggerated to the point of fantasy," observed JunkScience.com publisher Steve Milloy. "It's a work of fiction," Milloy said.

To expose the fictitious benefits of the Clean Air Act, JunkScience.com recently published a report entitled "EPA's Clean Air Act: Pretending air pollution is worse than it is."

EPA's Clean Air Act principally found that:

America's air is already safe to breathe and it is much better than the EPA would have the public believe; and that

The EPA relies on health studies that exaggerate harm and economic studies that understate regulatory costs in order to maintain the fiction that its ever-more stringent regulations are providing meaningful public health benefits.

"While air quality improvements made during the 1970s and 1980s were worthwhile, the Clean Air Act has produced no discernible public health or economic benefits since at least 1990," Milloy says.

Ironically, as air quality has steadily improved over the last 40 years, the EPA has claimed more and more death and illness from air pollution is occurring. As a result of the EPA's over-regulation of air quality, Americans are spending hundreds of billions of real dollars in exchange for imaginary health benefits. The EPA claims that the Clean Air Act provides economic benefits on the order of 10 percent of the national GDP -- i.e., about \$1.3 trillion annually.

"If that claim was true then the EPA could simply regulate America's way out of our ongoing economic doldrums," says Milloy.

The Senate resolution is further misleading in that its aim is to help defeat bipartisan efforts in Congress to block EPA regulation of greenhouse gases.

"By conflating and confusing conventional air pollutants with greenhouse gases, Senate Democrats are trying to fool the public into believing that blocking the EPA's controversial and dubious greenhouse gases rules amounts to a rollback of existing Clean Air Act provisions on conventional air pollutants," says Milloy.

The JunkScience.com report "EPA's Clean Air Act: Pretending air pollution is worse than it is" is available online at http://junksciencecom.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/epa_s-clean-air-act-final.pdf.

SOURCE JunkScience.com

[Merced Sun-Star Editorial, Monday, April 4, 2011](#)

Our View: Hydropower: the original green energy

Cannella's bill would count these facilities among renewable sources.

The Legislature has passed and Gov. Jerry Brown is likely to sign a bill requiring California utilities to get one-third of their electrical energy from renewable sources by 2020.

The state has been headed in this direction for several years, largely because of the pollution associated with fossil fuels. We've seen the push for solar farms, wind farms, geothermal, biomass and other types of electricity generation to replace our big dependence on coal and natural gas.

Renewable energy was one of former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's goals, and he issued an executive order requiring it.

But we believe strongly that if the state truly values so-called green energy, then all renewable energy sources should be counted, including large hydropower plants. After all, creating power from water is an old concept and a green one.

The fact that large hydropower plants are excluded has been a sore point for the Merced, Modesto and Turlock irrigation districts and other utilities since the Renewable Portfolio Standard was established in 2002. Hydro facilities producing under 30 megawatts or less were included.

The Merced Irrigation District said it supports Sen. Anthony Cannella, R-Ceres, who has introduced a bill to fix that. His Senate Bill 297 would revise the definition of renewable sources to include hydroelectric generation facilities of any size.

The bill has been referred to the Senate Energy, Utilities & Commerce Committee. A hearing has not been scheduled.

Cannella isn't the first legislator to try to get this change made. Sen. Bob Dutton, R-Rancho Cucamonga, championed a similar proposal in 2010; it was gutted in the same committee and ended up affecting only a small expansion of one Pacific Gas & Electric hydroelectric facility.

The MID has a significant investment in upgrading the Exchequer Dam in eastern Merced County.

Experience suggests that Cannella's bill will be supported by many business groups and opposed by environmentalists and the solar power industry, which of course benefits directly from hydropower not counting as a renewable resource.

What's different in 2011 is that consumers are realizing that although going green sounds appealing, it's also expensive.

Brown power, from traditional sources of coal and natural gas, is cheaper than green power -- electricity generated by solar and wind -- which also is less reliable and requires large new transmission lines in many cases.

Cannella's bill does not reduce the renewable energy mandate, but simply includes hydro as one of the qualifying green energy sources, which the federal Department of Energy does. A statement on its Web site is clear: "Currently, hydropower is the largest source of renewable electricity in the United States."

Including large hydroelectric plants as a green source of energy will ease, but won't end, the push for other renewable energy sources because hydro currently produces only about 10 percent of the state's power.

It appears that our Valley could be a hot spot for commercial solar facilities. SunPower Corp. of San Jose plans to build a facility on almost 1,000 acres near San Luis Reservoir, with a signed purchase agreement from Southern California Edison. Another solar company is looking at a large project as part of the West Park proposal near Crows Landing.

We have long supported renewable energy because it will reduce air pollution and carbon emissions. But we agree with Cannella that the state should count all existing green sources, specifically hydro plants. We hope that the legislators from our region will get behind Cannella's bill and persuade legislators to recognize hydro as the reliable, renewable energy source that it is.

Editorials are the opinion of the Merced Sun-Star editorial board. Members of the editorial board include Publisher Debra Kuykendall, Executive Editor Mike Tharp, Editorial Page Editor Keith Jones, Online Editor Brandon Bowers and visiting editor Mary Hofmann.