

Bill targets bus idling Measure would solidify new air regulations

By Jennifer M. Fitzenberger, Bee Capitol Bureau

[Fresno Bee, Sunday, Aug. 1, 2004](#)

SACRAMENTO -- Few argue that kids who ride school buses are breathing easier because state regulations limit the amount of time buses can idle.

State air officials say they have received fewer complaints about noise and exhaust around schools since bus idling rules went into effect nearly a year ago, but they have yet to compile statistics that show the effect on air quality and asthma rates.

Regardless, a state legislator wants to cement the regulations into state law.

Assembly Member Jenny Oropeza, D-Long Beach, is sponsoring legislation that would make it more difficult for future state leaders to alter rules that she believes are vital to protecting children's lungs.

"The benefits of the regulations are so clear, and the problem they address is so compelling, that I'm not willing to let them be overturned at the whim of some future administration," Oropeza said.

Assembly Bill 2644 codifies and makes technical changes to California Air Resources Board regulations that went into effect last September.

The legislation states that school and transit buses may not sit idle for more than 5 minutes per hour unless heating or air conditioning issues arise. It requires bus drivers to turn off their engines within 100 feet of a school and restart their engines no more than 30 seconds before departing.

Drivers who break the rules could receive a \$100 fine, and repeat offenders could face criminal prosecution and possible jail time. The bill requires school bus owners to educate drivers about the law. It then becomes the drivers' responsibility to follow the rules.

It's relatively easy for state air officials to change their regulations. The Air Resources Board can alter its rules with a majority vote after it makes the public aware of the change and holds a hearing. But once the rules become state law, any changes would have to win approval of the state Legislature and governor. "Changing a statute takes a significant effort, and I want to assure that these restrictions cannot be changed without such an effort," Oropeza said.

The Air Resources Board has taken no position on the legislation, which is up for a Senate vote this week. The bill's most recent legislative analysis lists no opposition.

School transportation leaders see nothing wrong with the bill. In fact, they said they cut back on bus idling even before the rules went into effect.

Dick Dailey, interim transportation director at Central Unified School District in Fresno, said making the rules state law is a good idea.

"In the long run it's going to make a big difference," Dailey said. "We're saving the air, and we're sparing somebody's [lungs] a bit."

Terry Beaver, transportation director for the Fresno Unified School District, said his buses probably idle about 20% less now than in previous years. He said that without the rules, most bus drivers would limit idling anyway: "I don't see any gain not to do it."

Plus, following the rules cuts down on fuel expenses. In 2002, the Air Resources Board predicted its new rules would save school districts and other operators up to \$800,000 a year statewide in

fuel costs.

Since April, officials have spot-checked more than 270 buses for compliance, just six of which failed the test. Air regulators didn't issue any tickets.

More than 26,000 school buses operate in California, and many are diesel-burning models that are decades old. Diesel exhaust is a mixture of gases and particles less than one-fifth the thickness of a human hair -- small enough to penetrate deep into the lungs.

Long-term exposure elevates a person's risk for cancer and asthma. Short-term effects include eye, nose and throat irritation, headaches and nausea.

Children are more susceptible to exhaust particles because their lungs and respiratory systems are still developing. In Fresno County, 16% of children have asthma. About 13% of children in the San Joaquin Valley are asthmatic.

Diesel school buses are especially problematic because they spew exhaust in close proximity to children, said Dr. David Pepper, who oversees Community Medical Center's asthma education and management program in Fresno.

"You've got children sitting in the bus with the window open breathing the exhaust," Pepper said.

Said Paul Knepprath, vice president of government relations for the American Lung Association of California: "Reducing [exhaust] would undoubtedly improve the area around those school bus waiting zones."

Environment: A super-agency would oversee all efforts to protect air, land and water, but critics fear a loss of public input. Key boards would be eliminated.

By Miguel Bustillo, Times Staff Writer

[LA Times, Sunday, Aug. 1, 2004](#)

The plan to rebuild California government would eliminate the air pollution board that forced car makers to add catalytic converters three decades ago, a requirement that ranks along with removing lead from gasoline as one of the most effective clean-air innovations.

Besides doing away with the Air Resources Board, the plan would drastically alter many of the agencies that have given the state a worldwide reputation as a trendsetter in environmental protection. In the process, it would eliminate an array of boards and commissions where decisions to regulate air and water pollution are made in public.

Environmentalists, who complained they had little input in the recommendations, said Friday that scrapping the boards would greatly reduce public participation in government decision-making. They promised a fierce fight if Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger tried to eliminate some of the panels.

The California Performance Review, the laundry list of proposed changes to be submitted to Schwarzenegger on Tuesday, recommends creating a super-agency to oversee most environmental programs. That, in essence, would expand the power of the existing California Environmental Protection Agency and give the governor greater control over environmental programs.

It recommends dozens of other changes to the state's conservation programs, such as eliminating the Baldwin Hills Conservancy in Los Angeles and exempting small, rural logging operations from having to prepare timber harvest plans.

The plan also seeks to change existing practices it considers wasteful. For example, it would require more thorough real estate appraisals before the state buys land for preservation. And it calls for streamlining regulations it labels impediments to business, including making it easier to obtain permits to build or expand oil refineries.

Republican Gov. Pete Wilson attempted to centralize authority in a similar fashion when he proposed the creation of Cal/EPA in the 1990s, but Democrats in the Legislature successfully fought to preserve much of the independence of the state's existing environmental boards and agencies.

Under the latest proposal, California's separate clean air and water bureaucracies would be made divisions of the new Department of Environmental Protection. But the appointed panels that make final decisions on most clean air and water issues, the Air Resources Board and the Water Resources Control Board, would be eliminated.

Schwarzenegger administration officials stressed that the governor had not yet reviewed the recommendations and said they would be debated openly for months to come.

"Many of the boards and commissions targeted in this proposal have been the first line of defense on protecting the environment and public health," said Ann Notthoff, chief state lobbyist for the Natural Resources Defense Council. "Their independence has allowed California to become an environmental leader, even when we have had governors who were not particularly friends of the environment."

Environmental groups were especially alarmed at the proposal to eliminate the Air Resources Board. It has led California's efforts to cut air pollution, often imposing stricter regulations than Washington, in direct conflict with automakers and other industry groups.

Its smog-fighting regulations resulted in innovations now found in cars worldwide. This fall, it is set to approve a rule forcing car companies to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, a contributor to global warming.

Chino Dairies Facing Fines Over Waste

A judge will soon begin a \$500-a-day charge unless a pilot project to reduce pollution is implemented. Farms say work has already begun.

By Janet Wilson, Times Staff Writer,

[LA Times, Saturday, July 31, 2004](#)

A federal judge will begin fining five Chino dairies \$500 a day if they don't implement a pilot project to reduce air and water pollution from foul-smelling open wastewater lagoons within two weeks.

But a dairy representative said they are already at work designing a state-of-the-art wastewater lagoon, and accused environmental groups that sued the dairies of "just trying to make the headlines."

U.S. District Court Judge Virginia A. Phillips of Riverside held the five dairies in contempt Thursday for failing to implement terms of a 2002 settlement after the Natural Resources Defense Council and Defend the Bay took legal action against them for violations of federal clean air and clean water laws.

The dairies did not admit wrongdoing, but agreed to implement environmental management plans. The environmentalists said the dairies also agreed to design and pay for a pilot program to cover a wastewater lagoon and monitor it for two years.

"The deadline was January 2004," said David Beckmann, head of the NRDC's Los Angeles-based Coastal Water Project, which sought the contempt of court order. "They were basically continually saying they were going to comply, but in the future. But the future never came."

Dairy owner Glenn Gorzeman of Ontario, whose Gorzeman Family dairy and Gorzeman Dairy 2 were named in the order, said he had never agreed to cover a lagoon on his farm or to pay for it to be done elsewhere. The others named in the order, Desperado Dairy, Ben Vander Lean Dairy and L&M Dairy, could not be reached for comment, nor could their attorney.

Gorzeman said he had heard nothing of the contempt order until he was contacted by a reporter.

Gorzeman, who has 2,200 cattle on 85 acres, said his lagoon and nearly all of the dairies in the Chino basin were dry this time of year anyway, and "a dairy hasn't been selected yet [for the pilot program] because most of us want to get out of here. We're selling the land and moving out."

Dairies in the Chino basin comprise the nation's largest concentration of milk cows, but their numbers are being reduced by large-scale suburban residential development.

The lagoons hold millions of gallons of bovine urine and feces, according to Bob Caustin, head of Defend the Bay, a Newport Beach-based group. He said that when the lagoons overflow or rainwater mixes with them, they flow into storm drains and flood channels that feed the Santa Ana River, polluting drinking water for Orange County and the Pacific Ocean.

Bob Feenstra, head of the Milk Producers Council in Chino, a dairy trade group, said the environmental groups knew the dairies were working with a Pasadena engineering firm on a lagoon, and never called them before going back to court.

"I'm upset. I'm really disappointed," he said. "They're just trying to make headlines at the expense of our dairy farmers."

District buys natural-gas buses

By Aaron Swarts - SAN JOAQUIN BUREAU

[Tri-Valley Herald, Sunday, Aug. 1, 2004](#)

TRACY -- The Jefferson School District is doing all it can to "spare the air" in the Central Valley.

The small district located just south of Tracy, recently installed a natural gas fueling station to go along with two new buses that run on the fuel. The three-elementary-school Jefferson district has about 2,000 pupils.

And what is even more impressive is that the environmentally friendly upgrade came at no cost to the district.

"We received an \$80,000 grant to pay for the fueling station from the San Joaquin Pollution Control District," said Clare Atkins, director of maintenance operations and transportation for Jefferson. "The fuel is purchased from PG&E."

At a cost of \$147,000 apiece, the two natural-gas buses were purchased and donated to Jefferson by the Tracy Peaker Plant Environmental Benefits Oversight Committee.

The San Joaquin Air District requires mitigation by companies building large projects that impact air quality in the Central Valley. The committee was formed to make sure the peaker-plant funds stayed in the Tracy area.

"The natural-gas buses are about 95 percent cleaner than a traditional school bus," Atkins said. "The fuel is also about one-third of the cost of regular gas. This will equal a huge savings for the district."

The Jefferson School District has a total of seven buses, with only five running at any given time.

"Right now I am working on trading in one of those regular buses to the state, in exchange for a natural-gas bus," Atkins said. "Eventually we want our entire fleet to be natural-gas buses."

Having driven school buses for more than 10 years, Atkins says there is a noticeable difference when driving the natural-gas buses.

"I am amazed how clean they smell when you drive them," she said. "You don't realize how much pollution you can smell in a regular bus until you get into a natural-gas bus."

Atkins says that she hopes the efforts of Jefferson will inspire other districts to follow its lead.

"We would like to pave the way for natural-gas buses in every district," she said.

Tracy Unified Trustee Bill Swenson said that under the right circumstances, he could see his district moving toward natural-gas transportation.

"We don't have the financial resources to purchase or convert our buses to natural gas at this time," he said. "But if there were some state or federal program to help with the cost, I would be in favor of the change."

Californians still view environment as priority

By Daniel Weintraub

[Tri-Valley Herald, Sunday, Aug. 1, 2004](#)

CALIFORNIA'S economy must be on the mend. People are starting to worry about the environment again. When times are tough, fewer people care about pollution. Things like jobs and housing come first.

But a new poll released last week shows that while those problems still matter more, Californians of all political persuasions are expressing increasing concern about the air they breathe, the water they drink and the condition of the land around them.

And the survey of more than 2,500 residents by the Public Policy Institute of California suggests that large majorities are willing to sacrifice a bit of cash and, possibly, economic growth in return for measures aimed at cleaning the environment.

Oddly enough, air pollution remains the top environmental concern in this state, despite the fact that actions taken over the past several decades have steadily cleaned the air, making the fight against smog one of the big success stories in government regulation of pollution.

From 1983 through 2002, the statewide peak levels of ozone, a major component of smog, dropped 57 percent, and the maximum recorded eight-hour carbon monoxide levels dropped 45 percent, even as the population grew by 39 percent and the number of vehicle miles traveled nearly doubled, according to the state Air Resources Board.

But the public isn't satisfied. Since 2000, the percentage of Californians who say air pollution is a big problem has increased from 28 percent to 35 percent. Just 27 percent say they think the state has made a "great deal" of progress on the problem in the past 20 years, while 48 percent say

they perceive "only some" progress and 19 percent say "hardly any" at all.

Air pollution is the top environmental concern in all five regions in the poll, especially in the Central Valley and the Los Angeles area. Statewide, about 20 percent say they think air pollution is a "very serious" health hazard where they live, while 39 percent describe it as "somewhat serious."

But while Californians are nearly united in describing the problem, there is less agreement on what to do about it. Democrats and Republicans are increasingly divided over whether the government is doing enough. In 2000, 55 percent of Democrats and 40 percent of Republicans said the state wasn't doing enough to fight pollution. Now, the same share of Democrats still hold that view, but only 24 percent of Republicans say the state should be doing more.

Still, the poll found a strong commitment to environmental protection, and majorities in favor of a wide variety of measures under consideration.

With the state budget facing chronic deficits, the survey asked whether environmental programs should be protected or sacrificed for other priorities. More than half of those polled -- 54 percent -- said environmental programs should be a priority even if it meant cutting other programs, while 29 percent said other programs should be preserved first.

Similarly, 55 percent said protecting the environment should be a priority even at the expense of economic growth, while 29 percent said the economy should be the top concern of policy-makers

On specific solutions to air pollution, the poll found strong support for tougher regulation of automobile and truck emissions, greater research and development of hydrogen-powered vehicles, subsidies to reduce diesel exhaust, and requirements for energy efficiency and the installation of solar power in new home construction.

Nearly three-fourths of Californians, for example, believe that automakers should be required to significantly improve fuel efficiency, even if it means paying more for a car. Nearly two-thirds support increasing the vehicle license fee by \$6 to subsidize cleaner-burning trucks, buses and industrial equipment. And in a reflection of widespread concern about global warming, more than four in five say they support a state law requiring automakers to reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses by 2009.

The poll, unfortunately, did not examine the depth of residents' personal commitment to a cleaner environment.

It would be interesting to know, for example, whether people would really place environmental protection above specific programs that might go on the chopping block, such as the public schools, higher education or health care. Or, when people say that they would be willing to sacrifice some economic growth in exchange for a cleaner environment, whether they also mean that they wouldn't mind losing their own job or having to accept a lower salary. And while many Californians say they would be willing to pay more for a fuel-efficient car, would they pay \$1,000 more, or \$5,000?

I suspect the idea of environmental protection, like raising some taxes, polls better in the general than the specific. Still, this survey should be a wake-up call for politicians. It is another demonstration that Californians consider the natural environment to be one of the state's greatest qualities, and they are willing to set aside much of their skepticism about government when it comes to aggressive steps to fight pollution.

And while Californians express significant support for blunt-force government regulation, enthusiasm for measures that seek to protect the environment while preserving or even promoting economic growth would probably be off the charts.

Daniel Weintraub writes for the Sacramento Bee.

Gas prices fuel surge in public transit

By MATT WEISER, Californian staff writer

[Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, Aug. 1, 2004](#)

Kern County public transit agencies are enjoying a surge in bus ridership as high gas prices push people to seek cheaper options to driving.

Golden Empire Transit, Bakersfield's primary public transit agency, has seen ridership increase steadily since March. The biggest jump was a 5.3 percent increase in June compared to the same month last year.

Kern Regional Transit has enjoyed even bigger increases. The agency provides bus service between Kern County cities and has seen ridership jump a whopping 14 percent in the March through June period, compared to 2003.

Together, the two agencies carried 90,000 more passengers than in the same period last year.

The increases come after a year of declines in bus ridership, and coincide with gas prices that began rising at the beginning of this year.

"We're really glad to see the increase," said Chester Moland, CEO of Golden Empire Transit. "I hope it continues."

Gas prices apparently led many commuters to try Kern Regional Transit's intercity bus service. Many people have discovered that these routes are a more affordable way to get to Bakersfield from other Kern cities.

"You can hop on a bus that takes you from Taft or Tehachapi to downtown Bakersfield for \$2. You can't drive it for that cheap," said Linda Wilbanks, the Kern County planner who oversees Kern Regional Transit.

There's a side benefit to all this: Every new bus rider means one less car on the road, which counts as an air quality improvement for the smoggy San Joaquin Valley.

About 75 percent of the GET bus fleet runs on compressed natural gas, which burns cleaner than diesel buses or the average gasoline car. About 27 percent of the Kern Regional Transit fleet is natural gas powered, and most of those operate on valley routes.

GET has not made any changes to its routes or fares that might explain the increases. But Kern Regional Transit has streamlined its East Kern Express route, which travels between desert cities and Bakersfield. Riders traveling between Rosamond and Bakersfield once had to switch buses in Mojave, but that transfer has been eliminated.

"It does take a sacrifice to ride a bus. It's not as convenient as taking your car," Wilbanks admits. "But if you can save money, people are willing to do it more often. Perhaps not every day, but if you do it once or twice a week, that's a significant savings for your pocketbook."

In June, Bakersfield resident Bob Snoddy decided to start riding GET to work in response to the high gas prices. He purchased a monthly pass for \$25 and enjoys the simplicity of flashing the pass whenever he needs a ride.

A Park Stockdale resident, he takes the bus to his job at Kern Council of Governments downtown, and to meetings at Cal State Bakersfield.

"I can afford to drive my car every day. I choose not to," he said. "It saves you gas money, it saves you insurance money, it saves you wear and tear on your car."

Snoddy also said he finds riding the bus is more relaxing than driving. He avoids the hassles of parking and battling traffic. The bus trip takes three minutes longer than driving, he said, and he counts the walk to the bus stop as valuable exercise.

"I think the best part about it is I love not having to drive anymore," he said. "It's nice to just sit back and enjoy the ride."

Wilbanks hopes fringe benefits like these will rub off on riders, and keep them riding even if gas prices drop again. But she's not too worried.

"Perhaps new riders will say, 'Hey, this is pretty comfortable and this works out OK. I'm willing to continue this,'" she said. "But let's be honest. Usually when gas drops down, it doesn't drop down significantly."

Quality of Valley air affecting quality of life

[Merced Sun-Star, Thursday, July 29, 2004](#)

By Doane Yawger

Despite recent high-pressure weather patterns and triple-digit temperatures known to breed smog, Merced's air quality so far hasn't reached alarming pollution levels.

Between June 6 and July 28 last year, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District had 20 "Spare the Air" days. This year, no such warnings have been issued, though that could happen next month, a district representative warned.

Mike Burger, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Hanford, said high pressure aloft for about a five-day period recently kept a cap over the Valley, aggravating smog and creating triple-digit temperatures.

When that happens, there isn't the normal mixing of air that can cool and clean the atmosphere.

Burger said he expects low pressure weather systems to return shortly, which will allow cooler, coastal breezes to pass through Pacheco Pass and the Delta to this area, flushing out and dispersing the Valley's bad air.

However, Modesto-based Anthony Presto, public education representative for the Valley air district, cautioned Merced County residents that August probably will be hot and stagnant, resulting in poor air quality.

When that happens, the air district institutes Spare the Air days and people with breathing problems, who are susceptible to smog, are urged to stay inside.

Mary-Michal Rawling, environmental specialist for the Merced-Mariposa County Asthma Coalition in Merced, said she doesn't think improvements in Merced's air quality can be tied to changes in residents' habits.

But Presto said high gasoline prices appeared to have had an impact on Valley driving habits, and fewer miles logged has affected air quality.

"Many people put convenience, luxuries or profit margins before their own health. It's important for people to put their health as a priority above everything else. You don't have to sacrifice anything in making simple lifestyle changes," Presto said.

Merced County Supervisor Mike Nelson, who represents this area on the eight-county district's governing board, said the air district has little control over the major sources of air pollution, mainly cars, trucks, buses, trains and planes. The Valley's air pollution has been classified as one of the worst in the nation and the district has been mandated by federal officials to clean it up.

"People at the federal level don't understand our situation. Our cars are getting cleaner and less polluting, but we're driving more miles. It's a heck of a complicated issue. Some say air quality has improved; it depends on what standard you're going by," Nelson said.

Presto said mobile sources account for 60 percent of the Valley's smog problems. If we didn't have emissions from cars and trucks, we wouldn't have unhealthy ozone levels, he added.

Burger, the NWS meteorologist, said Mercedians can expect nice breezes in the afternoons and evenings, which prevent the build-up of Valley smog levels over time.

"Within the next 10 to 14 days, you probably won't see any lasting high-pressure systems, which tends to imply air quality will remain fairly good," he said.

About 1,200 premature deaths each year in the San Joaquin Valley can be tied to air pollution. Presto said ozone is the chief ingredient in smog. It's a corrosive gas that damages lung tissues.

Presto said nitrous oxide mixes with volatile organic compounds like paint fumes, aerosol sprays and unburned gasoline vapors to produce ozone, which is then cooked by the sun. Ozone generally only reaches unhealthy levels when temperatures rise above 100 degrees.

Rawling said more than 17,000 people, including 7,000 children, in Merced and Mariposa counties, have asthma, a chronic inflammatory disease that reduces or blocks normal airflow in the lungs. It's the top reason for all school absences in the county. She said the city of Merced is the sixth-worst U.S. metropolitan area for ozone air pollution, a major asthma irritant.

Presto said if people did more walking, riding and carpooling, choosing electric or non-powered lawn mowers over gas mowers, and using propane rather than charcoal for barbecuing, they could significantly improve air quality.

"There are so many things people could do; just about everybody can do something. The only way things can be done is through the cooperation of San Joaquin Valley residents; it can't be done by government alone," Presto said.

Support and public awareness for pollution-control efforts seems to be on the rise, Presto said, but it's still not enough.

"It's a much more serious problem than people might consider," he said.

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A broader view

Expanding the board of the Valley's air district makes plenty of sense

[Fresno Bee, Editorial, Sunday, Aug. 1, 2004](#)

Now that the state's budget charade is over -- at least for the short term -- it's time to focus serious attention on a bill in the Legislature that is crucial to our success in cleaning up the Valley's dirty air.

SB 999, by Sen. Mike Machado, D-Linden, would remake the board that governs the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The bill faces terrific opposition from entrenched supporters of the status quo in air quality, but it is essential if we are to begin making better progress against air pollution.

The bill would add four more members to the air district board and change the way they are selected. This is designed to make the board more regional in its perspectives and to give urban interests a much greater representation.

The current situation is unacceptable. For instance, the cities of Fresno, Bakersfield, Stockton and Visalia, with nearly 40% of the total population of the eight-county district, have no representatives on the board. The San Joaquin County city of Ripon, with some 10,100 people, is represented.

County supervisors dominate the current board, and that has, at times, led to a more parochial

view than is warranted by the regional nature of our air problems. In addition, important constituencies -- especially health experts and environmentalists -- complain that they are often left out of the discussion and debate over rules and regulations the board adopts. SB 999 would change that, at least a little, by expanding the board to include three "public" members, all of whom would have to have expertise in air quality matters. One of the three would have to be a physician. Permanent seats would be given to the Valley's largest cities.

It makes sense. The air district board would be more responsive and less parochial. The majority of the board members would continue to be elected officials from the district's cities and counties, preserving accountability. And new voices would be at the table, offering expertise the current board lacks.

Of course, none of this will be easy. The bill, which may be heard in the Assembly Appropriations Committee as early as Wednesday, has no support from Republicans in the Legislature. In addition, a number of Democrats -- including Nicole Parra, D-Hanford -- are balking.

But then it's never been easy. The rising public awareness of our air quality problems is only the first needed step in cleaning up our filthy air. The real obstacles come from entrenched interests who think the status quo is just fine. They're wrong, but they're also powerful, and it will take tremendous effort and will -- especially from the people of the Valley who must breathe this air -- to make them see the light.

LASTGASP

"We can't go on living this way. And we won't." Changing the makeup of the Valley air district's board is crucial to making progress.

Dairy 'moratorium' needed

While Kern County officials study the environmental consequences to permitting 16 new dairies, no new applications should be accepted.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Sunday, Aug. 1, 2004](#)

California's dairy industry wants to have it both ways. * It wants to escape regulation under a new state air pollution control law, contending any rule applied to dairies would be flawed. Research is so lacking that no one knows how much cows really pollute the air, it contends.

But then it wants Kern County officials to approve plans to allow about 130,000 more cows to march into Kern County to join the estimated 297,000 that already are here. Don't worry about cramming more and more cows into an already air polluted valley, it argues.

The dairy industry is suing to block a state law sponsored by Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, and passed last year that lifted the decades-long exemption the dairy industry enjoyed from complying with California air pollution rules.

The basis of the lawsuit is the industry's claim that research is needed before rules can be developed to regulate pollution from cows.

Several major studies are under way, including one at the University of California, Davis, that encloses cows and corrals in a "bubble" that captures and measures pollution, including the ammonia that rises from dairy waste and dust that contribute significantly to the creation of smog.

These studies will take about two years to complete. The dairy industry contends the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District should await the findings before requiring dairies to obtain pollution-controlling permits.

District officials argue that they can't wait. The new law requires rules to be put in place. The valley's severe air pollution designation and the federal Clean Air Act mandate controls be implemented now. Research findings will be used to adjust the rules later.

With herds numbering in the hundreds of thousands, dairies are moving to Kern and other valley locations from the Chino basin, where urban development is creating a demand for their land, and water and air pollution from the dairies face stricter controls.

In recent weeks, Kern has received 16 applications for new dairies. Like toadstools on your lawn, they keep popping up. Likely more are headed Kern's way.

These are not your mom-and-pop dairies. They are factory-size dairies, each with thousands of cows.

Take, for example, the long-contentious Borba dairies south of Bakersfield, which recently cleared legal challenges and are now under construction. Located on adjacent property and operated by cousins James and George Borba, the dairies will have 28,600 cows.

When is enough enough?

To their credit, Kern County supervisors are asking that very question.

Kern County Planning Director Ted James is expected to recommend to supervisors on Aug. 24 that the 16 new dairy proposals be evaluated as a group not individually; that the cumulative impacts on such things as air quality and ground water be considered; and that Kern County's capacity to absorb these polluting cow factories be determined.

The bulk of the study, which would take two years to complete, will be paid for by the 16 new dairy applicants. The results will mean some or all may or may not be welcomed to Kern County.

Meanwhile, Kern County supervisors should adopt a "moratorium" on accepting any new dairy applications until the consequences of the existing dairies and the 16 proposed dairies can be determined.

Off-road vehicles are contributing to bad air

[Visalia Times-Delta, Letter to the Editor, Monday, Aug. 2, 2004](#)

Perhaps I am out of step with our air standards in the area. We see the farmers wetting down the drives and working areas. Now someone is talking about all the pollution from the dairies, the trucks that haul all our food and other supplies and, gee, those people in the Bay Area.

Well sorry to say, as I look out my back door, all I see is a fog from the two- and four-wheeled vehicles "playing" on the riverbank. I must admit that the city did attempt to reduce the dust from the roadway (pathway) by paving it. Now we see those vehicles speeding down the way and please don't get in their way.

I am sure that those involved think they are having a ball making a dust storm, I just hope they find out just what that dust is doing to the rest of us.

Call the Air Pollution Control Board. You are kidding, right?

FRED BOYLES

Visalia