

Thursday, May 20, 2004, The Fresno Bee

By Mark Grossi

### **Air-quality studies overstate farm effects, researcher says**

Air-quality officials today will discuss more than 100 ways to hold down farm dust, but a federal researcher in Texas suggests agriculture is getting a bad rap for such pollution.

Federal air-sampling equipment has overstated the amount of pollution in agricultural dust, says engineer Michael Buser of the Agriculture Research Service in Lubbock, Texas.

He said his research shows the samplers captured too many large dust particles that are not part of the problem. As a result, the complex factors used in estimating pollution created by tilling, feedlots or other farming operations are too high.

"We absolutely should alter emission factors for agriculture," said Buser, whose agency is an arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Such factors have been used to determine that farming accounts for half of the San Joaquin Valley's dust-borne particle pollution, known as particulate matter. The stakes are high for controlling particulate matter -- specks less than a seventh of the width of a human hair. Medical scientists link the specks to lung problems, heart irregularities and premature deaths.

The danger is not lost on state officials, who control the particulate estimates in California. They are aware of Buser's investigation and have discussed the issue over the past two years, but they haven't seen enough evidence yet.

"We don't know what will ultimately come of it," said spokeswoman Gennet Paauwe of the California Air Resources Board. "At this point, there's nothing sufficiently accepted enough to consider updating any of our estimates."

So estimates remain for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which is scheduled today to hear about the 100-plus ways farmers can reduce particulate matter in dust.

As part of the district's overall particle-cleanup plan, officials will offer the options for thousands of Valley farmers who come under the plan. Farmers with 100 acres or less are excluded, and so are dairies with 500 or fewer mature cows.

Agriculture has not been regulated this way in the past, so the district and farmers are on a steep learning curve, officials said. Farmers need to submit their air-quality plans by the end of June. "There are over 250 commodities grown in this Valley," said district Planning Manager Dave Mitchell. "We need to deal with many different situations out there."

The strategies, for example, target tilling and harvesting, protecting soil from wind erosion and reducing dust from vehicles in unpaved areas. One option is farming at night, when moisture levels are higher and farm operations create less dust.

One environmentalist is expected to tell the board that those 100-plus options amount to a shell game. Sierra Club member Kevin Hall said many farmers already use options outlined in the list. He said the district next year will simply take credit for pollution reductions that have already happened. He also said farm and trade groups played too big of a role in writing the rule.

"This is a joke," he said. "They let industry write this rule and come up with options that already are in practice, then they take credit for 34 tons per day of reduction in 2005. What's the real base line of emissions from ag?"

Because the program is unprecedented, the district does not yet have details on farm practices, Mitchell said.

"We're expecting 34 tons a day," he said, "but there might be a lot of reductions that we couldn't know about."

[Thursday, May 20, 2004, Tri-Valley Herald](#)

### **Curbing diesel emissions promises to save air, lives**

Trying to find the number of times the Bush administration and environmentalists are on the same page is about as difficult a pursuit as trying to find a fuel-efficient sport utility vehicle. But last week, on the same page they were, when the White House encouragingly announced tough new rules to curb emissions from diesel-powered nonroad vehicles that we and the environmental community welcomed like a breath of fresh air.

The new regulations would mandate a reduction of more than 90 percent of the noxious sulfur and other emissions now produced by oil refineries and diesel engines of tractors, bulldozers, locomotives, barges and other nonroad vehicles. Refineries and manufacturers of nonroad vehicles are expected to be in full compliance with the new rules by 2012.

Promulgation of the plan couldn't have come too soon as far as we are concerned. The fact is, refineries and nonroad vehicles are responsible for belching more soot in the United States than this country's entire fleet of cars, trucks and buses. And, health experts say, the administration's planned reduction in emissions could avert as many as 12,000 premature deaths and 15,000 heart attacks a year.

Strict standards for buses and trucks that use diesel fuel were unveiled in the waning days of the Clinton administration. The Bush White House wisely maintained those rules, scheduled to take effect in 2007.

In the meantime, air quality should be given a lift as more and more diesel-powered engines are retired in the United States. According to the federal Environmental Protection Agency, retirement of all the nation's diesel-driven engines will cut the level of nitrogen oxide in the air by 738,000 tons a year and the level of soot by 129,000 tons.

Public pressure on the White House was pivotal in gaining the administration's attention for the need to fully address diesel fuel emissions. Crucial, too, was the willingness of both industry leaders and environmental advocacy groups to compromise. Indeed, refineries and engine makers have agreed to absorb the huge costs of improvement in exchange for an extended phase-in period of the new rules.

All in all, the confluence of positive factors that helped clinch a deal on diesel emissions should serve as a model for the administration to employ in attempts to bridge future differences between industry and environmentalists. Considering the fact that there are several as yet unresolved and contentious standoffs involving air, water and land management facing the nation, the White House should waste no time in applying that model.

[Thursday, May 20, 2004, Tri-Valley Herald](#)

### **New plan set to help clear the air (Program aims to reduce levels of smoke buildup in San Joaquin Valley)**

By Ken McNeill - SAN JOAQUIN BUREAU

SAN JOAQUIN -- The county's Air Pollution Control District has started a new smoke management program, expected to give farmers more flexibility in scheduling burns while reducing levels of smoke buildup in the Valley.

Under the old program, district staff members determined "burn" and "no-burn" days for each of three large regions making up the valley's air basin. The entire region was held to that status, regardless of differing weather conditions from one end of the region to another.

Under the program that began Wednesday, staff members have divided the entire San Joaquin Valley air basin into about 100 smaller zones. The staff will then use new interactive voice-recognition technology, along with meteorological data, to determine whether burning will be allowed.

Officials will monitor localized meteorological conditions daily to determine how many emissions from burning will be allocated to each zone. A computer program keeps track of those emissions and permits burning until the limit is reached for each zone.

The benefit is that a "no-burn" or "limited-burn" day for one area would not necessarily translate into the same status for a neighboring area.

The new program will enable farmers to request burn authorization from the district as early as 8 p.m. the day before their planned burn. They formerly had to wait until the day they wanted to burn.

Farmers who are not able to burn because of an emissions limit will be placed on a priority list for the next burn day for that zone.

[Thursday, May 20, 2004, Bakersfield Californian](#)

### **Kern's growth engine chugs along State predicts county population will double to 1.5 million by 2050, but rate expected to slow**

By VIC POLLARD, JENNIFER PLOTNICK and MATT WEISER, Californian staff writers

SACRAMENTO -- Kern County's current population boom will probably taper off in coming years, but the population is still expected to more than double by the middle of the century, state officials predicted Wednesday.

The county will grow from its current 724,900 residents to more than 1.5 million by 2050, they said.

That was among new population projections issued by the state Department of Finance. The agency predicted California will gain nearly 19 million residents, growing from this year's estimated 36 million to nearly 55 million in the next 4 1/2 decades.

While the prediction of continued growth for Kern may be good news for local builders and other businesses, smart-growth advocates and environmentalists warn it will add to the region's air quality and traffic congestion troubles.

Pauline Larwood, executive director of the Smart Growth Coalition of Kern County, cautioned that the lowered projections should not tempt anyone to become lazy about dealing with the area's growth problems.

Kern remains one of the fastest-growing counties in California, with some of the nation's worst air quality. It still has an estimated \$2 billion in unfunded transportation projects needed just to keep

pace with growth. And Bakersfield continues to be one of the most sprawling cities in the state, gobbling up farmland to make way for tract homes.

"The one that is very critical right now is the air quality issue," said Larwood. "Growth simply exacerbates that. Local government can do something about that in terms of how we develop. If you tighten up your development, you don't require people to travel as far and burn up as much gasoline. It's really important for us to do those things if we want that cleaner air."

The new figures also project that Latinos will become a majority of Kern's population 10 years from now.

The forecasts were the first to be made by the state Department of Finance using the 2000 census as a baseline.

Previous forecasts were based on the 1990 census and subsequent updated estimates.

Though growth is anticipated, the new figures contained significantly lower growth rates than previous projections, especially for fast-growing areas like Kern.

Mary Heim, of the department's demographic unit, said the previous figures were influenced by the economic boom and associated population increases of the 1980s.

But the recession of the 1990s, which saw California actually lose more residents than it gained in some years, led experts to temper their estimates of future growth, she said.

For example, the department's previous projections, issued in 1998, called for Kern to grow at about 3.2 percent a year over the next few decades.

That's close to the growth rate Kern experienced in 2002. But last year, the county grew by 2.3 percent, from 708,400 to 724,900.

The new long-range projections call for an average annual growth rate of a little more than 1.8 percent.

For example, the new projection for the county's population in 2040 is 1.325 million. The previous projections showed the county with a population of 1.623 million that year. That's a difference of nearly 297,000, more than the current population of Bakersfield, estimated at 279,700.

The growth spurt in Kern and other counties outside the larger urban areas during the last few years has been fueled largely by low interest rates, which produced a housing boom, and other factors that are not expected to continue, officials said.

Nevertheless, Kern County is expected to remain one of the faster-growing areas of the state because of its relatively low housing prices and proximity to Los Angeles.

"It's not a question of whether the county's population will double, but when," said Rob Ball, a senior planner with the Kern Council of Governments.

The current population has doubled since 1977, he added.

Others warned not to put too much stock in the latest projections.

"It's very difficult to predict the future more than one to two years in advance," said Peter Smith, a senior planner with the Kern Council of Governments. "The thing to remember about long-range population projections is a lot of things can derail them. These (numbers) may be criticized as overly conservative, but the others (from the 1998 projection) were criticized as overly optimistic."

Smith said the reduced projections could help give the region more time to plan transportation improvements to accommodate growth. KernCOG uses demographic data in computer models to determine where and when to build roads and other infrastructure.

A steady, but slower, growth rate could also give planners time to find ways to create a more skilled workforce in the region to attract better paying jobs and improve the quality of life here, said Abbas Grammy, economics professor at Cal State Bakersfield.

"With a growth in the population, our economy needs to keep up ... job creation is one of the most important economic considerations for the county," Grammy said. "Quite a bit of vocational and on-the-job training would prepare the labor force."

Despite a projection of slower growth, the new numbers for some do nothing to relieve concern over the effect of growth on the quality of life in the San Joaquin Valley.

Gordon Nipp, a board member of the Sierra Club Kern-Kaweah Chapter, said metro Bakersfield should adopt an urban growth boundary. This would stop sprawl and require the city to become more dense and start building on vacant lots left behind in the inner city.

He also said political leaders must start considering the public health effects of new urban development, not just the economic effects.

"What are the economic effects of people dying? What are the economic effects of people missing work because they have asthma or lung cancer?" Nipp said. "If the city is going to be a decent place to live, we've got to deal with these issues. We have to face the fact that we can't just expand forever."

Kern County and Bakersfield officials recently began requiring developers to reduce emissions from their projects down to zero, using such measures as crushing old cars, providing electric lawnmowers to home buyers and planting more trees.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District also plans to adopt a new air-quality impact fee. Called an "indirect source fee," it would require developers to offset the pollution caused by development by either paying a fee or redesigning the project to pollute less. Fee collections would be used to pay for other pollution control efforts, such as natural-gas powered garbage trucks, bike paths and public transit.

Motor vehicles are the region's biggest smog problem, accounting for about 60 percent of all air pollution. And as a community grows, it adds more vehicles. State Department of Motor Vehicles statistics show that vehicle ownership in Kern is increasing faster than the state average.

The growing popularity of hybrid vehicles will take a bite out of this problem. And starting this year, federal rules require all new cars to be much cleaner-burning.

Air district projections show that air quality will continue to improve until about 2005, but then growth will begin to overtake some of these gains, and some forms of air pollution will start getting worse. These projections do not account for new rules, like the indirect source fee, that have been proposed but not yet adopted.

Tom Jordan, a planner with the air district, said that if a community grows by sprawling outward, it causes the vehicle miles traveled by each resident to increase.

Because sprawl is all too common in the valley, travel distances are increasing faster than population.

He and Nipp both called on local leaders to develop new transportation options, such as better bus service and light rail.

"The benefits we get from cleaner cars is eroded by more people driving more miles," said Jordan. "The growth is going to happen, so as a valley, we need to seize on that opportunity and remake the valley as a place that has alternatives for folks to use other than the car."

[Thursday, May 20, 2004, Stockton Record](#)

**Booming growth predicted for S.J.  
Latinos expected to power increase to 1.7 million people by 2050**

**By Will Shuck**  
Capitol Bureau Chief

SACRAMENTO -- San Joaquin County's population will triple over the next four decades, growing faster than any other county in California, according to a state government forecast issued Wednesday.

By 2050, San Joaquin County will be home to more than 1.7 million people, the vast majority of whom will be Latino.

Massive growth is predicted for the entire state, which is expected to add 20 million people by 2050, bringing the population of the nation's already most populous state to 55 million.

But nowhere will that growth be more pronounced than in San Joaquin County and the rest of the Central Valley, according to a state Department of Finance projection that was culled from data gathered in the 2000 census.

By the year 2020, the Central Valley, from Redding to Bakersfield, will be home to more people than the Bay Area.

By 2050, almost one in four Californians will live in the Valley.

Officials predict a 60 percent growth rate for California by midcentury.

San Joaquin County's growth rate should exceed 200 percent, and the Valley as a whole will see 130 percent growth, making it the second most populated area after the greater Los Angeles region, a broad stretch of Southern California from the sea to the Arizona border.

California's two main population centers, Los Angeles and the Bay Area, will continue to grow, adding millions of residents, but their pace of growth will slow compared with the Valley. Los Angeles will grow 45 percent, and the Bay Area 48 percent.

"These are more than just numbers," said Richard Cummings, director of research for the Great Valley Center, a regional think tank.

"This is a hard-to-ignore reality. The Central Valley is going to change, and that creates a whole set of choices for people living here today.

"What do they want the Valley to look like for their children and grandchildren?" Cummings acknowledged that it's easy to imagine a paved-over landscape, congested roads and polluted skies in the coming years.

"But it doesn't have to be that way," he said.

As dramatic as the growth may be, the state is predicting smaller growth by 2040 than it did just six years ago. In fact, the state's experts back then said California would have 7 million more people in 2040 than they're predicting now.

That's because more people are expected to grow old and die, and fewer migrants are expected to come and take their place.

"The state is not growing as fast as we thought it would," said Melanie Martindale, a senior demographer with the Department of Finance.

But California's gradual shift toward a Latino majority is expected to be complete by 2040.

Ten years later, in 2050, Latinos will represent 53.6 percent of the population, and whites will represent 23.3 percent. Asians will make up 12.1 percent; blacks 6.4 percent; American Indians and mixed-race people 2.1 percent each; and Pacific Islanders will make up less than one-half of 1 percent.

In San Joaquin County, Latinos will be a majority by 2032, with 51 percent of the population, while whites will be 25 percent. By 2050, the county will be 57 percent Latino; 21 percent white; 11 percent Asian; 8 percent black; 2 percent American Indian; and 2 percent multirace.

Calaveras County is expected to grow from just over 44,000 to almost 93,000 by midcentury, when about three of every four people there will be non-Latino white. The Latino population there is expected to grow from 8 percent to 14 percent.

[Thursday, May 20, 2004, Stockton Record](#)

### **Study reveals potential environmental problems**

By Scott Smith  
Record Staff Writer

LATHROP -- A housing and commercial project planned for Lathrop may increase air pollution from traffic, pave over habitat and agriculture land, bulldoze native burial grounds and strain public services, a city report said.

Plans for Mossdale Landing South include building 219 homes on two sites between Interstate 5 and the San Joaquin River. The project also calls for 37 acres of commercial development.

The city's initial study found many significant environmental problems could come from the project. As a result of the Friday study, the city is requiring another one that will be more in depth, said Deanna Walsh, a Lathrop senior planner.

The city will meet at 6 p.m. tonight at City Hall so residents and interested groups can air their concerns over Mossdale Landing South, Walsh said.

"We want to give citizens an opportunity to understand what the project is and what's being done from an environmental standpoint," she said.

The city will not take action at the meeting other than to hear from the public, she said. The city will consider comments from the meeting when conducting future reviews of the project.

TCN Properties is the developer behind the project. Mossdale Landing South is small compared with other projects on the 5,794-acre Stewart Tract. The biggest is River Islands at Lathrop, which plans to build 11,000 homes.

Eric Parfrey, a spokesman for the Mother Lode Chapter of the Sierra Club, said he is keeping an eye on Mossdale Landing South despite its small scale.

Parfrey said his main concern about this project and others in Lathrop is that it proposes paving over prime farmland. He hopes that the developer will set up a land trust to preserve other farmland not designated for development.

The Sierra Club last year settled its legal battles with the developer of River Islands at Lathrop with a deal under which River Islands will provide money for an \$8.2 million trust that will pay to preserve forever thousands of acres of San Joaquin County farmland.

There are other steps that developers can take to mitigate projects without spending millions of dollars, Parfrey said. He would like to see TCN Properties use alternatives to traditional fireplaces to lessen air pollution.

Also, the developer can install electric outlets in yards of homes, allowing residents to use electric-powered lawn mowers instead of gas-powered grass cutters, further reducing air pollution, he said.

Parfrey said that if the developer builds shelters for bus stops now, they would be in place when mass transit starts to take form. Mass transit will decrease traffic congestion and air pollution, he said.

"There's a whole litany of measures," Parfrey said. "They are small, but when you add them up, they are significant."

[Tuesday, May 18, 2004, Bakersfield Californian](#)

### **County files suit against hotel owners**

By JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writer

Owners of the Padre Hotel had unskilled workers rip asbestos from the walls and pipes of the downtown landmark and dump the hazardous stuff in the Bena Landfill, according to a lawsuit filed by the Kern County District Attorney's office.

Deputy D.A. John Mitchell has filed the civil suit against Pacifica Enterprises of San Diego, claiming the company purposely and repeatedly violated state environmental laws in an attempt to save money on the Padre renovation.

The claim quotes an unnamed foreman on the job as saying, "They thought they could get away with it."

Mitchell said he wants to make sure Pacifica pays for the violations.

"People are tired of (companies) coming here and treating Kern County like a toilet," he said.

Pacifica spokesman Paul Holling said Monday that he had not heard of the lawsuit. "I know that we have had numerous (asbestos) tests in the building," he said. Beyond that, he said, he couldn't comment until he investigated the situation.

Demolition on the Padre continued unabated Monday, and workers, many of who spoke limited English, said they had no idea what asbestos is.

Asbestos is a natural fiber that, when airborne, can be inhaled. It can cause cancer and lung disease in humans according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Frank Achuff, who said he is one of three foremen working at the Padre Hotel, declined to answer questions about asbestos violations on Monday.

Philip Jay, legal counsel for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said the case is particularly troublesome because of the location of the Padre in the busy heart of downtown Bakersfield.

"You've got workers walking around there without proper equipment. You've got the risk of it blowing out of buildings," he said. "It's downtown. You've got people going in and out."

The precautions needed to keep the hazardous asbestos fibers out of the air can vary, Jay said, from keeping the material wet to creating a plastic seal around the work site and wearing special suits to protect workers.

According to the district attorney's claim, Pacifica used untrained workers to do the demolition of the Padre in April 2003 -- exposing those workers to asbestos.

It also claims that Pacifica hired a company to illegally dispose of the asbestos in the Bena Landfill, a dump used by the public.

And it states that Pacifica did it all on purpose -- in an attempt to avoid the expense of hiring a qualified asbestos removal company that could do the job correctly.

Jay said Pacifica was cited multiple times for violating environmental laws.

The claim stated that the air pollution control district issued a notice of violation to Pacifica on June 3, 2003.

Then, in March 2004, an air district inspector noticed that more walls containing asbestos had been disturbed by workers, the claim document states. The district issued a second notice of violation on March 31.

Jay said it is rare for a company to ignore citations and violate laws a second time. "I think they've been cited a few times," he said. Usually, "it's one of those situations where you cite them once and they clean up their act."

But not this time, he said.

"We think it's a pretty significant case," Jay said. "All general building contractors know about the laws. In this day and age there is no excuse for any licensed contractor not to know."

Mitchell said the only way to stop corporations from trying to buck environmental laws and save a few dollars is to make breaking the law more costly than following it.

So his complaint includes a long list of fines he's hoping a judge will impose on Pacifica Enterprises.

The list includes six separate charges -- ranging from \$2,500 a day to \$500,000 a day -- for each day the company allegedly violated the law.

"We're asking the judge to impose a sentence that will make it very clear that it's more cost effective to comply with the law," he said.

[Thursday, May, 20, 2004, Modesto Bee, Editorial](#)

### **Reasons, incentives to bike to work Thursday**

The promoters of Bike to Work Day, which is Thursday, have all sorts of reasonable arguments on their side: Bike riding is good exercise, and it reduces traffic congestion and air pollution.

Then there are the enticements -- free T-shirts for the first 125 downtown workers who arrive at Tenth Street Place and a continental breakfast for all who arrive before 8:30 a.m.

There's another practical reason to bike -- saving money. Gasoline is edging toward \$2.40 a gallon; there's talk of it reaching \$3 this summer. Bicycle commuters can burn 400 to 600 calories an hour to get where they're going, but no gas.

Saturday is the Family Cycling Festival in downtown Modesto. It opens at 8 a.m. with the serious racers in the Criterium and continues with bicycle-oriented activities for all ages. To learn more, see [www.modestogov.com/etd/ride/](http://www.modestogov.com/etd/ride/).

[Thursday, May 20, 2004, San Francisco Chronicle, Editorial](#)

### **Pedal Power**

Today's the day to pull out the bike from the garage or back porch. Check the map, give yourself extra time and then hit the road.

It's Bike to Work Day, an annual reminder of how easy and practical pedaling can be. Some 40 percent of the Bay Area lives within 5 miles of their job, so why not bike to work instead of drive?

You won't be alone. Already riders are taking 240,000 trips every weekday, cycling to work or on errands. Most importantly, each cyclist is leaving a car behind.

It can be hilly, chilly or even scary pedaling along on two wheels on busy streets. But it's getting easier and more convenient each year in an increasingly bike-friendly Bay Area. To underscore the point, Bike to Work events will include free ferry rides for bike commuters.

There will be 150 "energizer stations" dotted around the Bay Area, dispensing freebies such as sunblock, water and treats.

There's also the fresh-air factor -- the sights and sounds that only a rider can enjoy while spinning along. For safety and convenience, many cities have free maps that show bike lanes marked off by pavement paint and signs.

It's an annual fun event with a serious purpose: More of us should consider bikes as a genuine transit option. Buses and trains can accommodate bicycles. The new Al Zampa Bridge spanning the Carquinez Strait has a pedestrian-and-bike lane. Similar lanes are planned for three other bridges: the Bay, Benicia-Martinez and Richmond-San Rafael spans.

But if they build it, will the riders come? This Bike to Work Day and future ones should encourage a positive answer. Bicycles can play a role in reducing traffic, easing smog and providing exercise for deskbound workers. It's time to saddle up.