

## **Hybrid locomotive will help preserve valley air**

By SARAH RUBY, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, April 7, 2005

The state's first hybrid locomotive made a pit stop in Bakersfield Wednesday.

Today it travels to Fresno, where it will stay, shuffling rail cars as a switch locomotive for Union Pacific Railroad.

The golden-yellow locomotive known as the "Green Goat" is a regular diesel on the outside. Its conventional shell hides digitized innards, a network of batteries recharged by a small, low-emission diesel engine.

"This is a Toyota Prius," said Gary Eelman, vice president of the company that made the locomotive, RailPower Technologies Corp. "It's just much bigger and on steel wheels."

The \$750,000 locomotive creates 80 percent to 90 percent fewer air emissions than a conventional one, and it's \$450,000 cheaper to build because it reuses old parts. It uses 40 percent to 60 percent less fuel.

The air district paid \$700,000 in grants for the locomotive on the condition that Union Pacific keep it in the valley for five years. After that it will go back to RailPower for maintenance and a new assignment.

The district hopes to bring three more hybrid locomotives to the Central Valley.

The locomotive is the first diesel-hybrid locomotive in California. In its first eight years it will save the valley from 132 tons of nitrogen oxides and 2.5 tons of particulate pollution that would have been created by a conventional locomotive.

Nitrogen oxides form ozone, which aggravates asthma and other lung diseases. Inhaled dust particles can cause "serious health problems and (increase) likelihood of death from other causes," according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Web site.

## **Thompson named air board alternate**

By Doug Keeler, Midway Driller City Editor  
Taft Midway-Driller, Wednesday, April 6, 2004

Taft Mayor Cliff Thompson has been appointed to the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District's Citizen's Advisory Committee as an alternate member.

The citizen's advisory committee works in conjunction with the valley air district's governing board and meets the first Tuesday of each month.

The CAC is currently chaired by another Taft resident, Les Clark Jr., who is the primary member representing industry and agriculture in Kern County.

Thompson's term will expire on Jan. 31, 2007.

## **Decision on trash company delayed Dinuba garbage hauler to operate during study**

By Lynn Doan, Staff writer  
Visalia Times-Delta, Thursday, April 7, 2005

A Dinuba trash-hauling company will continue to operate for a few months while the county determines how to minimize its effects on the environment, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors decided Tuesday.

Miramonte Sanitation, which neighbors said pollutes their groundwater and air, will pay the county less than \$5,000 to address its effect on the environment, said George Finney, assistant director of long-range planning for the county's Resource Management Agency. Once the impact report is

complete, supervisors will meet again to decide if they will grant the company a special-use permit to operate.

The board could have required the company to prepare a more comprehensive environmental impact report, which costs about \$50,000 and takes twice as long, Finney said.

"We felt like enough evidence had been presented to show that the county would be safer if an environmental impact report was prepared," Finney said.

Finney said the board was "taking a risk" by not requiring the larger report.

But Don Guy, owner of Miramonte Sanitation, said even the board's decision was "ridiculous."

"It's ridiculous that they can hold up a private enterprise for four years because the county can't seem to make up their minds," said Guy, who was informed by the county four years ago that he was operating without a permit.

Miramonte Sanitation picks up garbage for about 4,000 residents of Tulare and Fresno counties, Guy said.

When Guy applied for a permit two years ago, he was rejected by the county's planning commission because of his company's potential effects on "land use conflicts, noise, odor, groundwater contamination, vectors, traffic generation, road deterioration and aesthetics."

Guy appealed the commission's decision to the Board of Supervisors last October, but supervisors voted to delay their decision until Tuesday. Essentially, Guy said, the board voted Tuesday to delay its decision even longer.

In the next 60 to 90 days, Finney said his staff will be studying how Miramonte Sanitation can minimize any effects on noise levels, dust, odors, traffic and aesthetic value. He said he is already working closely with the company on these issues.

But Guy, who has warned that his customers' garbage fees will rise if he's kicked off his site at 42605 Road 72, said the county must also realize that it needs his business.

"Garbage is not just my problem; it's everybody's problem," he said. "Until these people realize that we all make garbage and have to deal with it, we're just fighting a losing battle."

## **California eyes cap-and-trade plan to trim greenhouse gases**

By DON THOMPSON, Associated Press Writer

S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, April 7, 2005

SACRAMENTO, (AP) -- Even as four western states agreed this week to help string electric transmission lines to power-starved Southern California from the coal fields of Wyoming, California energy regulators began considering new ways to force the state's utilities to switch to cleaner energy.

The California Energy Commission's Climate Change Advisory Committee is eyeing "cap-and-trade" proposals, similar to what has worked to limit everything from smog to acid rain. This time it would go to limit so-called "greenhouse gases" that contribute to global warming.

Advocates say such a move by California would lead the way for other states. Already California has agreements with Oregon and Washington to trim emissions that contribute to climate change.

Yet Monday's announcement by the governors of California, Wyoming, Nevada and Utah of a plan to encourage construction of a "Frontier Line" from the Rocky Mountains to California illustrates a big problem: neither power generation nor greenhouse gases stop at state lines.

Cap-and-trades work by setting emissions limits, but let polluters buy and sell credits to help meet the standard. Where they've worked for other emissions, however, have been over the entire nation or broad regions such as Europe or the East Coast, said Stacey Davis, a consultant to the energy panel from the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Clean Air Policy.

One option for a California-led effort to limit greenhouse gases would require an agreement among several states to prevent utilities from simply getting their power from areas that don't

have the same restrictions and, moreover, could likely produce the unregulated power at a lower cost.

California already gets 20 percent of its power from out of state, and half the carbon dioxide emissions from California power use actually are generated by coal-fired plants in other states. Coal-fired power is where the growth is, and coal-rich states including Arizona and New Mexico are unlikely to go along, Davis said.

Half the power generated within California is produced using natural gas, the rest from nuclear, hydroelectric and renewable methods that do not emit greenhouse gases. Energy is produced with roughly half the carbon dioxide emissions at twice the cost as across the rest of the West, which sets up inequities that could be abused if California acted alone to reduce emissions.

"For California to do something on its own, we can't necessarily rely on other states," Davis told the advisory panel.

So she favors putting the regulatory burden on utilities, other suppliers and generators that distribute power in California instead of those who generate it in several states. Each would have to meet the emissions standard, a process that could include trading carbon credits while encouraging long-term use of cleaner energy.

Basing such a cap on power demand, instead of generation, has never been tried anywhere, Davis said.

Creating such a cap "would essentially create two separate power markets within the western grid — the capped California demand market, and the uncapped remainder of the grid," Davis said in her draft report. Cleaner energy in California and neighboring states would gain a cost advantage, though the effect on electricity prices to consumers is unclear.

Western generators could simply send their cleaner power to California and dirtier electricity to states without a cap with no overall drop in emissions. Other potential difficulties include monitoring compliance and conflicting with the federal government's regulation of interstate transmissions. And limiting California's power sources could increase supply problems in the short run.

A consensus among the advisory committee members favoring that alternative seems to be developing, said Energy Commissioner James Boyd, who chairs the panel.

Pacific Gas and Electric thinks it's "a good concept because having a market-based solution can address climate change issues in a positive manner," said spokesman Jon Tremayne.

But Southern California Edison reissued a statement noting that "neither greenhouse emissions nor electricity stop at state borders," illustrating what it said is the need for a national policy.

California's discussion comes after the Kyoto Protocol took effect in February, requiring dozens of countries to cap or reduce carbon dioxide emissions from power plants and heavy fuel-using industries.

In a separate effort to rein in greenhouse gases, California air pollution regulators in September ordered the auto industry to trim exhaust levels on cars and light trucks in the state by 25 percent before 2016. That effort is being challenged by the industry, which also argues such decisions must be made on a national level.

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On the Net:

California Energy Commission:

[www.energy.ca.gov](http://www.energy.ca.gov) <<http://www.energy.ca.gov>>

## **Dairy rule change prompts lawsuit**

By Adam Ashton

Merced Sun-Star, April 7, 2005

Two local environmental groups are suing Merced County, hoping to block a change in an agriculture law aimed at giving dairy owners more control over their land.

The change, approved by the Board of Supervisors in February, eliminates a requirement for a 1,000-foot buffer between dairy operations and new homes or private wildlife refuges.

That ordinance has the potential to harm wild animals and encourage the creation of substandard housing near unhealthy dairies, said Babak Naficy, a San Luis Obispo environmental attorney who filed the lawsuit on behalf of Merced's San Joaquin Raptor Rescue Society and Protect Our Water.

Supervisor Deidre Kelsey said the board modified the county's animal confinement ordinance to restore property rights that had been limited in previous versions of the law.

She said people who want to build homes or establish private reserves near dairies would still have to ask the county's Planning Commission for permits accounting for the impacts listed in the raptor society's lawsuit.

"I totally disagree with their premise," Kelsey said.

The lawsuit is the 19th filed by the raptor society against a local public agency since 1988. It is the third one this year, and the eighth since 2004.

The raptor society also is suing the county to slow approval of a concept plan for an 11,500-home community that would be adjacent to the new University of California, Merced.

Lydia Miller, the raptor society's director, has not returned calls from the Sun-Star since the group filed its lawsuit against the university community plan in January.

The most recent suit describes the raptor society as a group of San Joaquin Valley residents concerned about air and water quality, farmland preservation and wildlife protection.

Kelsey said the raptor society has achieved some successes in its environmental lawsuits against the county. For example, it has forced changes in plans for mining operations in recent years, Kelsey said.

Naficy said the thrust of the latest lawsuit centers on the county's decision to eliminate the buffer for private use while retaining setbacks for state and wildlife refuges.

Bringing dairies closer to private refuges, like duck-hunting clubs, could increase the likelihood of domesticated animals transmitting diseases to wild ones, the lawsuit says. Dairies also could funnel waste runoff to wildlife areas, Naficy's complaint says.

Naficy said allowing people to build homes near dairies could create low-income housing in areas that could suffer from agriculture waste. The attorney argued those homes would go to relatively poor residents who could not afford to live in healthier environments.

He said the county did not conduct an adequate environmental review to determine how many homes the ordinance's change would allow, or to gauge its impact on wildlife.

Kelsey said the ordinance still requires dairy owners and people who want to build near farms to get approval from the Planning Commission before they put up new facilities. That gives both parties an opportunity to voice their concerns.

"The changes we implemented to the animal confinement ordinance were basically an attempt to restore some of the property rights that the dairymen and their neighbors lost," she said.

Fred Souza, a member of the supervisors' dairy advisory committee, said the change did not originate from any specific complaints from farmers, but out of a desire to treat them fairly.

He said the committee kept the buffers for state and federal wildlife reserves because they had definite boundaries and laws protecting them. Private refuges lacked a clear definition and could limit landowners' options.

## **Teichert picks Sacramento site**

### **Asphalt for I-80 project will be hauled from capital facility, despite air pollution worries.**

By Niesha Lofing -- Bee Staff Writer  
Sacramento Bee, Thursday, April 7, 2005

Teichert Construction officials have decided to supply asphalt for a highway resurfacing project from the company's aggregate facility in Sacramento after two thwarted attempts to use quarries closer to the project.

Asphalt for California Department of Transportation's Interstate 80 rehabilitation project - which spans Interstate 80 from Highway 193 in Newcastle to Colfax - is now slated to be trucked from the Teichert facility on Kiefer Boulevard.

The change in venue, however, may also mean increased air pollution because trucks will have to drive a longer route, a Teichert official said.

The company was going to use aggregate from the Chevreaux quarry in Meadow Vista for the project, but decided to look elsewhere after the quarry's use permit was called into question by Placer County.

Teichert officials also had tried to use the company's own quarry near Cool but were denied a temporary use permit by the El Dorado County Planning Commission.

"I'd like to say it won't, but obviously the likelihood is that there will be increased air pollution because of this," said Michael Smith, manager of Teichert's aggregate resource development department.

But Stewart Feldman, a Meadow Vista resident and president of Meadow Vista Protection, a recently formed nonprofit action committee, said using the Meadow Vista quarry would create a more serious air pollution problem.

"Meadow Vista is a basin, and the 6,000 people who breathe the air in this basin would have had a concentration far more significant as a health risk than the values added to the entire Sacramento region by the increased transportation of the asphalt," Feldman said.

Placer County health officials, in a letter to the Meadow Vista Municipal Advisory Council last month, said the county has poor air quality and that pollution from the temporary asphalt batch plant and hauling of materials would likely result in short-term health problems.

While the truck route can't be dictated to the company's contracted truckers, suggested routes include using Watt Avenue and I-80, Smith said. Teichert also promised not to haul the material on highways 49, 65 or 193.

The company had wanted to use the Chevreaux quarry because of its proximity to the project and its vested - or essentially protected - use permit for temporary asphalt operations from 1972.

Because the permit is protected, Teichert possibly wouldn't have had to undergo the approval process under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Placer County officials questioned the permit's validity, however, and said the permit might have to undergo further legal scrutiny.

Citing contractual time constraints, Teichert officials announced late last month that they were withdrawing their plans to use the Chevreaux quarry.

The repaving portion of the project will begin later this month, Smith said.

The project also includes work on the highway's drainage and utilities and rehabilitating the Applegate onramps and offramps, said Shelly Chernicki, a public information officer for Caltrans.

The repairs to I-80 are much-needed, she said.

"The roadway is 40 years old," Chernicki said. "I-80 was built to accommodate the Winter Olympics back in the 1960s when it was hosted at Squaw Valley. It hasn't had a major rehab job since that time."

Chernicki said that the highway work will be done between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m., when there is the least amount of traffic. Construction will not take place on Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays.

While one lane of traffic will be open during construction hours, Chernicki warned motorists to be patient and to slow down in coned construction areas.

The project, which has been under way for about a year, is expected to be completed in fall 2006.