

Air quality rules seminar to be held today

Visalia Times-Delta, Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2006

A seminar on new air quality rules for builders is scheduled for noon today at the Four Points Sheraton in Bakersfield, 5101 California Ave. at Mohawk Avenue.

The seminar is sponsored by the Building Industry Association of Kern County.

Guest speakers are attorneys Alene Taber and Kathryn Casey of the Jackson DeMarco Tidus Peckenpaugh law firm of Southern California.

Cost to attend is \$25 for BIA members, \$50 for nonmembers, and includes lunch.

Registration begins at 11:15 a.m.

Information: Roger Bloom, 714-943-3310.

How to get to the bottom of the global-warming debate

By April Holladay

USA Today, Tuesday, August 8, 2006

Q: There seems to be a lot of political debate about if global warming is true or not. How can a non-scientific person sort out what the facts are and what is just an agenda? (Washington, DC)

A: Global warming is often defined as "the observed increase in the mean (average) temperature of the Earth's atmosphere and oceans in recent decades," which, unfortunately, leads to difficulties.

I am indebted to physicist and meteorologist Craig Bohren, distinguished professor emeritus at the Pennsylvania State University for sorting out problems, biases, and what objective answers that exist.

Bohren has no horse in the climate change debate: As a retired professor, he is not worried about losing or gaining funding based on his opinions.

This is his answer:

Discussion: First off, let me say I consider the concept of a global mean temperature [upon which global warming statistics are based] to be somewhat dubious, and I say so in my recent book (with Eugene Clothiaux) Fundamentals of Atmospheric Radiation. A single number cannot adequately capture climate change. This number, as I see it, is aimed mostly at politicians and journalists.

The issue of global warming is extremely complicated, and it transcends science. Views on global warming are as much determined by political and religious biases as by science. No one comes to the table about this issue without biases. So I'll state some of mine.

My biases: The pronouncements of climate modelers, who don't do experiments, don't make observations, don't even confect theories, but rather [in my opinion] play computer games using huge programs containing dozens of separate components the details of which they may be largely ignorant, don't move me. I am much more impressed by direct evidence: retreating glaciers, longer growing seasons, the migration of species, rising sea level, etc.

I have lived long enough to have seen many doomsday scenarios painted by people who profited by doing so, but which never came to pass. This has made me a skeptic. Perhaps global warming is an example of the old fable about the boy who cried wolf, but this time the doomsayers are, alas, right. Maybe, but I can't help noting that some of the prominent global warmers of today were global coolers of not so long ago. In particular, Steven Schneider, now at Stanford, previously at NCAR, about 30 years ago was sounding the alarm about an imminent ice age. The culprit then was particles belched into the atmosphere by human activities. No matter how the climate changes he can correctly say that he predicted it. No one in the atmospheric science

community has been more successful at getting publicity. NCAR used to send my department clippings from newspaper and magazine articles in which NCAR researchers were named. We'd get thick wads of clippings, almost all of which were devoted to Schneider. Perhaps global warming is bad for the rest of us, but for Schneider and others it has been a godsend.

Within the past 10 years or so at least four ... alarming books on the possibility of asteroid collisions with Earth were published. Such collisions, if they were to occur, would be incomparably more disastrous than global warming. I also started to read, again within about the past 10 years, *The Coming Plague* [published in 1995]. It painted a picture of future plagues so ghastly and sickening that I couldn't continue reading it. The shelves of bookstores groan under the weight of books proclaiming disasters of all sorts. Take your pick of how we all are going to die horrible deaths. Repent!

People who write alarmist books are either trying to make a buck or they have an axe to grind. For example, it is in the best interests of astronomers to scare us so that we'll pressure the government to support astronomy research more generously. The same is true for biology, medicine, atmospheric science [and all sciences]. This does not mean that the alarmists are wrong or even dishonest, merely that in assessing their claims we must always ask about the extent to which they will profit from our believing and acting on them.

When I was a young man I read *Famine 1975!* by the Paddock brothers, one a foreign service officer, the other a tropical agriculture specialist. This book profoundly affected me. The Paddocks confidently predicted massive famines in 1975, and I believed them. But the famines did not turn out as predicted. And this is just one example among many.

Skeptics about global warming are often painted as hirelings of the oil and automotive industries. Such claims irritate me. I have never earned a nickel as a consequence of my skepticism. Indeed, I have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars by it. First, you have to understand how a large research university operates. The professors are expected to obtain research grants, and in the atmospheric sciences these grants come mostly from government agencies.

In the atmospheric sciences it is difficult to get grants unless you can somehow tie your work to global warming, that is to say, to scare science. Because of my reputation, I immodestly believe that I could have jumped onto the global warming bandwagon. But I refused to do so because I would have found this repugnant.

At some universities, professors get only a fraction of their salary from the university, the rest coming from contracts and grants. Research associates and research professors often must scrounge for 100% of their salaries.

Professors not only directly profit from their research grants (summer salaries), they also indirectly profit. If Professor X has grants amounting to millions of dollars, this gives him leverage. He wants more money so he threatens to leave and take his bags of money with him if he doesn't get a whopping raise. Or he plays one university off against another. He gets an offer from another university in order to pressure his present university to increase his salary. I have seen this done many times. The system of federal grants, which hardly existed before (World War II), has created a professoriate with greater allegiance to government agencies than to their universities.

Professors who get research money to work on aspects of global warming are not doing anything dishonest or illegal. This is not graft. But when it is in the best financial and career interests of professors to raise the alarm about global warming (or anything), we should be skeptical.

Perhaps some critics of global warming are in the pay of the oil and automotive companies. If so, they should be forthright about this. But so should folks on the other side of the debate. What fraction of their salaries comes from research on global warming?

Now to more of my biases. I have an MS in nuclear engineering. About 40 years ago I was designing nuclear reactors. I got out of the business mostly because of boredom I have long felt that burning fossil fuels is madness in the long run regardless of what this will do to climate. Burning fossil fuels creates air pollution, which is not good for anyone's health. Also, fossil fuels are the feedstock for all kinds of industries, and so burning them is like burning fine furniture to heat your house. And finally, most important of all, basing an economy on a commodity that [in my opinion] is controlled by the most backward, unstable, and violent countries in the world is madness.

Nuclear power is dangerous but so is non-nuclear power. Several years ago Petr Beckmann published *The Health Hazards of not Going Nuclear* in which he ... tried to account for how many people die because of fossil fuels (not including automobile accidents). And this was before Gulf War I, the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and so on. [In my view] these recent wars are mostly a consequence of oil....

Many years ago I was involved in a campus debate about nuclear power. I was willing only to take the middle ground, being flanked by a professor of nuclear engineering and an "environmental activist." I considered the latter to be nearly insane. His stated position was that "the loss of a single life" was not a price he would willingly pay for nuclear power. This is madness. We are willing to accept the loss of tens of thousands of lives every year in automobile accidents with hardly a peep. Coal miners die all the time, quickly in explosions or slowly by lung disease, with hardly a word of protest....

So it rankles me that many of the same folks who did their best to undermine nuclear power are also now screaming their guts out over global warming. Mind you, I have no more to gain from nuclear power than any other citizen. I have been out of this field for 40 years and at my age am not planning a comeback.

Another [one of my biases] is many years ago I came to the conclusion that austerity was a desirable way of life in order to mitigate possible environmental degradation....

Given my way of life, it rankles me that [in my view environmentalists] are not similarly frugal. In fact, many of them are profligate by my standards, and yet they enjoin the rest of us to cut back.... Now to the biases of others. It hardly comes as a surprise [to me] that the *Wall Street Journal* takes shots at global warming. Conservatives believe in unlimited growth, a consumer society that consumes more and more. Good for business. [It is my opinion that] the Bush White House is in the hands of oilmen who will never accept that burning oil could have any deleterious consequences....

Both political parties, liberals and conservatives, are to blame for the U.S. not having a rational energy policy.

Conservatives are correct in that a sudden decrease in the consumption of oil would have grave economic consequences. Like it or not, the U.S. economy (indeed the world economy) is based on readily available cheap oil. We as a nation made lots of bad decisions: cars instead of mass transport in cities, trucks instead of railroads, suburbs and so on. The food that almost everyone eats is transported long distances by trucks. We are no longer a nation of self-sufficient farmers. We depend on all kinds of networks of food, water, and power kept in operation mostly by burning fossil fuels.

Liberals have a curiously puritanical view of global warming. [They think, in my view, that] our contribution to it is evidence of our wickedness.

Stated simply (and probably unfairly), [I think] conservatives do not believe that global warming exists (because they don't want it to exist) whereas liberals believe in global warming (because they want it to exist).

And then there are religious biases. Certainly one means of mitigating the undesirable consequences of climate change, whatever its causes, would be population control. But [I believe] this is not acceptable to many religions.

[I think] some Christians seem to take the view that God cannot possibly let us destroy our planet, whereas others want us to perish because of our sinful ways. Some evangelical Christians seem to be eager for the end of the Earth.

Economists take a quite different view of global warming than do atmospheric scientists. Not long ago a group of prominent economists compiled a list of pressing problems for humanity. Global warming was near the bottom of the list, which outraged the "global warmers." But in the short run global warming surely must be of little concern to someone in Africa dying of AIDS or malaria or malnutrition. Or who doesn't have clean water, education, a job.

People in China, India, and Brazil, where the bulk of humanity lives, aspire to the same standard of living as those of us in the U.S. and Europe. No matter what we do, these other countries are going to consume more fossil fuels, and there isn't much we can do about it.

Fortunately [for me], I'll be dead before the consequences of global warming become dire, if indeed they do. But I would like to stick around long enough to see this drama played out.

Elk Grove's Raymond Case students head back outdoors after a playground hiatus induced by hot weather

By Dan Nguyen -- Bee Staff Writer

Sunday, August 6, 2006

It was cool enough Monday for children to don sweaters and sweat shirts on the Raymond Case Elementary playground during recess.

Not that it was particularly cold that day -- the temperature averaged about 85 degrees with a cool breeze and cloud cover. But, it was an arctic contrast from the previous Monday's recorded high of 108 degrees.

That day, the children either stayed inside the air-conditioned building, doing stuff like stretches and reading. When they were outside, they said they did little but walk around, looking for shade on a campus with few trees and overhangs to provide it. Yard supervisors carried spray bottles to give a cooling mist to kids who needed it.

"It was miserable, actually," yard supervisor Susan Hastings said.

On days when temperatures exceed 100 degrees or the air quality is unhealthy, school staff members follow district guidelines that include keeping students inside during the hottest part of day, limiting physical education classes, darkening classrooms and encouraging children to drink water.

The 20-degree drop made all the difference at recess this past week as children took to playground games and shot basketballs through hoops.

Fifth-graders Cheyenne Meraz and Vanessa Allejos were wearing hooded sweat shirts outside this week. But they also brought them to school during the record hot week, since they spent much of the day inside.

"I keep it on, because the multipurpose room is pretty cool," Cheyenne said.

The two said they kept cool during the heat wave by staying inside and helping their teachers. Vanessa said Monday that she might play tetherball.

Of course, temperature is relative to what you do. This past Monday was still a hot one for fifth-grader Neha Nand.

Neha, a tall girl with a long braid, led her class in the mile run. It was her first try at the mile run, she said, as she sat on a bench to catch her breath and cool down.

"I was so scared and nervous," Neha said.

If last week were typical, the fifth-graders would've begun their conditioning then for the mile-run fitness test, which takes place in the spring. But the heat wave gave them a week off, and their teachers instead taught them the proper warm-up techniques and stretches inside the cool of the multipurpose room.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Tuesday, August 8, 2006](#)

In hot water

Water board must provide safe, clean water to all residents.

The Valley's dairy industry has been hammered lately. The recent heat wave led to the deaths of thousands of dairy cows and a distressing number of unprocessed bovine corpses. New air quality rules have many farmers fuming — and environmentalists are demanding even tougher regulations.

Now a group of angry residents has opened up a new front: They are demanding that the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board get tough with dairies over the waste water they discharge from their operations, which percolates into ground water supplies and ends up in the taps of people in rural areas all across the Valley.

The Valley water board is accused of playing footsie with the dairy industry at the expense of rural residents' safety. A new group, La Asociacion de la Gente Unida por el Agua (Association of People United for Safe Water), or AGUA, says the board has been negotiating in secret with the industry for three years on a new permit plan, but has yet to release any information on the plan to the public.

In addition, the board renewed a wastewater discharge waiver for agriculture in June, dismissing monitoring and protection requirements for fertilizers or pesticides in water from ag lands that flows into the Valley's underground aquifer.

It wouldn't be the first time that a government regulatory agency has spent most of its effort dancing to the tune of the industry it is meant to regulate.

Assembly Member Juan Arambula, D-Fresno, has added his voice to AGUA's protests.

"The Central Valley has gone too long without properly protecting water resources for its rural communities. It is the regional board's legal responsibility to protect the quality of the Central Valley's ground water," he said Saturday.

He's right. The Valley's rural communities, especially those with the highest levels of poverty, have long been neglected in just about every possible way. They get the short end of the stick when it comes to every sort of resources and government services, including the efforts of watchdog agencies that are supposed to protect them.

The Delano-based Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment, taking up the cause of the rural residents, has submitted a petition to the regional water board demanding that it create and enforce waste-discharge requirements on the 1,600-plus dairies the board oversees.

It's incumbent on the board to respond, and quickly. Forcing people to live without sufficient supplies of safe, clean water is unacceptable.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2006](#)

Readers offer up more logo ideas

'Giddyap' motto

Who came up with "Bakersfield, Life as it should be?"

I've lived here many years and actually chose to move here because I like Bakersfield. However, I doubt life should be filled with bad air, extreme summer heat, un-smart growth, one ambulance service, heavy tule fog -- the list goes on.

Here's a couple of ideas I came up with for a city motto: "Bakersfield, not that there's anything wrong with that," or "Bakersfield, Giddyap."

-- SUE CASTRO, Bakersfield

[Tri-Valley Herald, Guest Commentary, Sunday, August 6, 2006](#)

Protect states' rights, not estates' rights"

ALL right, so we'll be needing a different song. A new, catchy anthem, and maybe a flag and some cool slogan that says it all: California, capital of states' rights.

Not George Wallace "segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever" states' rights. That's so'60s. By that, I mean the 1860s.

I mean sticking up for state laws that give people more rights, not fewer. The Bush administration and its business uber alles allies have had a grand time hammering away at state and local laws across the country, laws that dare to give us more protections, rights and liberties than linguini-spined federal laws do.

This past week, a state governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, worked out a pact with the head of a whole country — British Prime Minister Tony Blair — to try to do more about greenhouse gas emissions than the feds are doing. (They could start by trading in their wheels, a Hummer and a Jag, respectively.)

People may joke that such a pact isn't worth the recycled paper it's written on, but if Schwarzenegger, constitutionally thwarted from becoming president, is going to act like California's president anyway, we should use his ambition to our advantage.

"California will not wait," the governor said, "for our federal government to take strong action on global warming." And it hasn't waited, on assault weapons, food labeling, medical marijuana,

cleaner cars and air and water. The list goes on and on, or at least it did until the feds came huffing and puffing to blow our California laws down.

The granddaddy of these modern protections, Proposition 65, has been around for 20 years — an entire generation of consumer education, of warning labels about cancer risks and possible birth defects. Not bans, just warnings.

Since Proposition 65, informed shoppers have effectively cleared California store shelves of dishes and calcium supplements with lead in them — and it's not like you can't buy dishes or calcium supplements anywhere in the length and breadth of California, is it?

For about half of those 20 years, Proposition 65 has been on Capitol Hill Republicans' hit list. Now, with an administration that preens about protecting the unborn but evidently wants to protect business more, Proposition 65 is back in the cross hairs.

If the Senate follows the House and passes the National Uniformity for Food Act, Proposition 65 and other state and local consumer-safety laws across the country may be as dead as road kill.

Uniformity for food. It sounds so wonderfully orderly, doesn't it? But the true moving force behind uniformity is un-informity. Nationalizing food standards means gutting state codes that tell you more about what you eat than the feds require. If you don't know what's in there, and you get sick or hurt, you can't complain or sue because you haven't got a clue what might have done it.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein has said she and fellow California Democrat Sen. Barbara Boxer will "use every parliamentary device available to us to stop" the legislation. In April, Schwarzenegger pledged to Feinstein that he'd be battling right there with her "to continue California's legitimate and rightful role of upholding strong public-health and food-safety standards."

The bill's supporters argue oh-so-unctuously that the nation just can't have a messy "patchwork" of laws. A patchwork of laws that would make it virtually impossible for the young or the poor to get an abortion? They like those just fine. But a patchwork of laws that might cost some business somewhere an extra paper clip? We can't have that.

Already, wimpier federal law has trumped California's sterner standards. Food and Drug Administration regulations have allowed tuna canners to ignore Proposition 65 when it comes to mercury warnings on labels. National financial companies, citing federal laws, sued California and got at least part of the state's Financial Information Privacy Act thrown out. They said, oh, no, no, no, this isn't about money; it's about ironing out a tangle of laws. (Need I tell you that when they say it's not about money, it's about money?)

And now, Capitol Hill Republicans want to interfere with minimum-wage laws in seven states, including California. (Fortunately, the Senate voted the bill down Thursday night.) Working stiff earning more than \$30 a month in tips would have had those tips counted as wages, so their bosses would only have to pay them the difference between the tips and the minimum wage, effectively cutting it to as little as \$2.13 an hour. And those Republicans had the nerve to put this in a bill that gives even more tax breaks to dead gajillionaires. I hope some waitress somewhere pours scalding coffee in House Speaker Dennis Hastert's ample lap.

California can't secede and become Bear Flag Republic 2.0 — I've already checked into it. But California could lead the charge in a new states' rights campaign among the many other states that would find their own laws kneecapped by the shamelessly named Food Uniformity Act.

Are you with me? Everybody sing:

"Oh, I wish I was in the land of non-genetically modified cotton,

"Cuz fed'ral laws, they are so rotten. ..."

Patt Morrison writes for the Los Angeles Times and is a frequent commentator on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."

[Tracy Press, Commentary, Friday, August 4, 2006](#)

Feeling heat of man-made problem

Tracy residents can finally walk outside without fear of melting, now that a record-setting heat wave has passed. But Mother Nature is still hot under the collar; it's the eastern states' turn to bake.

But our fellow Americans' suffering might not be all bad. Maybe with oppressive heat bearing down on the halls of Congress, some of the folks inside the beltway will finally wake up and smell the smog.

The weather that has slammed the United States could serve as a hint that we shouldn't get too comfortable in that backyard recliner. If scientists are correct, Tracy — and the rest of the United States — is only going to get hotter.

The 22 hottest years in the past century have happened in the past 25 years, and 2005 was the hottest on record, says the Pew Center on Global Climate Change. Judging by the weather Europe and North America have endured in recent months, 2006 should break that mark. And there are no immediate signs that the trend will reverse.

That could have a whole host of effects according to research and scientific modeling, from the infamous melting of glaciers and polar ice caps to — you guessed it — more frequent and intense heat waves. So, I hope everyone enjoyed the 100-plus degree temperatures, because they could become an annual summer phenomena.

This doesn't mean that the great California heat wave of 2006 is the direct result of global warming. It's impossible to definitively link one-time weather events to a wide-reaching trend like climate change.

Speaking generally, however, more hot summer weather is part of the global warming package.

There's a lot of clamor — particularly in some political circles — that denies humans have much impact on this trend. But it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure that pumping unprecedented levels of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which humans have been doing for more than 150 years, would have some effect on our environment. We can't forever use and abuse our resources without facing some sort of consequence.

At the heart of this human release of carbon dioxide polluting and warming our planet is our dependence on fossil fuels — coal, oil, natural gas — that release large amounts of carbon when burned. Our nation is trying to find more such fuel, the lifeblood of our economy and modern way of life. Drilling for oil and gas is a popular tact, and many politicians have taken advantage to push their agendas.

Unfortunately, even vast untapped supplies of fossil fuels won't change two stark facts. The first is that burning these energy sources is detrimental to the health of the planet, effecting the environment in ways that could hurt, not help, our economic system in the long run. The second

is that supplies of fossil fuels are finite. No matter how much exploration we conduct and no matter the reserves we find, our supply of oil and natural gas will eventually run out. We'd simply be speeding on borrowed time.

Factor in that worldwide demand for these products is growing at a pace that no amount of drilling and mining can match, and it seems our planet has a problem.

True, supplies of natural gas, coal and even oil aren't in danger of running out tomorrow. But why wait for the reaper to collect his fee? We have an opportunity to take control of our energy future before we're forced to take drastic measures. We have options. The problem is, none is without its own drawbacks.

Take ethanol. Attractive at first glance, it's produced from corn, a renewable crop. But as a recent investigation in the July edition of Smithsonian magazine points out, there is a lot less energy in a bushel of corn than the half-gallon of oil required to produce said corn. It seems silly to waste energy growing and processing corn to put it into our gas tanks when we'd get better efficiency simply burning the petroleum.

Hydroelectric power is clean and endlessly renewable, but it can destroy ecosystems when valleys and canyons are flooded to store the vast amounts of water needed to generate electricity in dams.

Solar energy is also promising, but solar systems are relatively inefficient and require a lot of space. And California's recent attempt to construct a massive solar array was scuttled by infighting in Sacramento.

No solution is perfect — every energy decision is a tradeoff. It's imperative to remember that no energy source capable of supporting our current lifestyle is free. But the fossil fuel option comes with the highest lifetime price tag.

One way or another, we will be forced to change our pattern of energy consumption. Oil can't always be king in our economy, and our quixotic quest to find everlasting fossil fuels will eventually be met by the windmill of reality. I'd prefer we seek alternatives while we have the luxury of time. While I have a fairly lenient timetable, Mother Nature won't be nearly as kind.

• Jon Mendelson graduated in 2005 from Loyola Marymount University and is a copy editor at the Tracy Press. To contact him about his weekly column, call 830-4265 or e-mail jmendelson@racypress.com.

[Letter to the Editor, Merced Sun-Star, August 4, 2006](#)

Think of the children

Editor: I attended last week's Wal-Mart environmental hearing. I went to speak although I had half of my left lung removed one month ago.

The introductions to the meeting were so long that I could not stay because I was hurting very bad. After reading the Sun-Star the next morning, I do not regret not staying for the hearing because it appears that the meeting was not what the public expected.

My problem with the idea of Wal-Mart being in our community is that there will be 900 large trucks running or idling at the site 24/7/365 while they are loading or unloading. This means 38 trucks per hour or 6 trucks per minute. This seems like a very large amount of pollution spewing into our air.

Just imaging the following: 100 people sit in the council's chambers and each of them smokes a cigarette, cigar or pipe and when the chambers are completely covered with tobacco smoke we

bring in 100 children to sit in the chambers 24/7/365. Do I need to paint a prettier picture? Is this what we want for our children? Ladies and gentlemen, please speak now or forever wear a face mask!

DR. LEO HERNANDEZ
Merced