

Fresno Bee editorial, Sat., June 2, 2007:

## **Clearing smoke on air**

### **Senator, air district must work together on burning exemption.**

An uneasy truce seems to have broken out in the most recent spat between state Sen. Dean Florez and the Valley's air district.

Florez attacked the district for a recent decision to allow exceptions to a ban on open-field ag burning, saying the district hadn't sought the required approval from the state air board. Now the district says it will seek such approval before issuing burn permits, and that it meant to do so all along.

That burning ban, part of legislation that Florez wrote in 2003, allows such exceptions for what amount to economic hardship reasons. Small farmers often can't afford to hire the expensive waste chippers that are the principal substitute for open-field burning. That was the district's rationale for allowing the exceptions for removal of orchards of 20 acres or less and letting the farmers burn the waste.

But such exceptions require the approval of the state's Air Resources Board. Conversations took place between air district staff and staffers at the state board; the air district apparently construed that as the "concurrence" required under the law; ARB says no way.

In any case, the proper procedure will now be followed, and that's good.

The other good thing to emerge from this latest round between Florez and the air district is agreement on the senator's part with the district's emphasis on the need for some sort of incentives or other help to make it feasible for small farmers to employ chipping services. Such incentives existed before energy deregulation, when the higher cost of using agricultural waste as fuel for power plants was offset by subsidies.

When those subsidies vanished, so did the economic incentive for chipping in small quantities. Restoring that option is a must, and we hope the air district and Florez can work together effectively to realize that goal in the state Legislature.

## **Burn ban for almond orchards debris in effect**

Friday, June 01, 2007

By Special to The Madera Tribune

Almond growers in the San Joaquin Valley will no longer be able to burn orchard debris as of today due to a burning ban initiated by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control. Growers may still obtain permits, however, to burn prunings from surface harvested crops such as almonds until June 2010.

Today's deadline on orchard removal burning marks the third phase of the gradual elimination of open burning in the San Joaquin Valley. It is meant to manage the elimination of agricultural refuse including prunings, and protect the air quality in the Valley.

"This process has been going on for several years but this is the first phase-out deadline to affect almonds directly," said Gabriele Ludwig, senior manager of Global Technical & Regulatory Affairs with the Almond Board of California.

Ludwig said growers will be able to manage stumps and other orchard removal material through open burning after today, following specific guidelines and by obtaining a permit from the air district.

The three exemptions to the June ban on orchard removals are:

- To remove individual trees that fall down in an existing orchard.
- For a single block up to 20 acres annually. This time-limited exemption will be available through June 1, 2015 to help growers contend with cost issues related to handling small acreage removals.
- To burn diseased trees only when the county agricultural commissioner deems that doing so is the most effective way to eradicate or stop spread of the disease.

Ludwig noted that burning orchard materials is no longer permitted under any circumstances without a permit from the air district. The district is made up of eight Central Valley counties from Stockton to Bakersfield.

### **Smog bill tied to air board**

**Cogdill's car measure's fate now hinges on passage of proposal he opposes.**

By E.J. Schultz / Bee Capitol

Fresno Bee, Sat., June 2, 2007

SACRAMENTO -- A bill to allow drivers of smog-belching cars to replace their cars with donated vehicles cleared a key legislative hurdle this week -- but not before Democrats linked the measure to a controversial proposal to restructure the Valley's air board.

The amendment by the Senate Appropriations Committee puts the bill's author, Sen. Dave Cogdill, in an awkward position.

Cogdill, R-Modesto, has long pushed for a program allowing San Joaquin Valley residents to replace high-polluting cars, which account for the majority of vehicle-generated pollution.

But Cogdill opposes a plan to add more city and public health representation to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board, which is now dominated by county representatives. So he was angry when the Appropriations Committee on Thursday tied his car bill, Senate Bill 23, to the district board bill, Senate Bill 719. In short, Cogdill's bill can only take effect if Senate Bill 719 passes.

"I am disappointed that Senate Democrats have put senseless partisan politics ahead of healthy air for Central Valley residents, but I will continue to fight to get SB 23 signed into law," he said in a statement.

The move was a victory for environmentalists, however, who have long sought to reshuffle the Valley air board.

"Before we give the air board any more discretion, we ought to have board reform," said Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, a longtime board critic.

SB 23 has a goal of replacing 200 gross-polluting cars in the San Joaquin Valley. Under the plan, residents whose cars fail the state smog check could apply for a car donated by someone else. Priority would be given to low-income residents.

SB 719, authored by Sen. Mike Machado, D-Linden, adds two city appointees and two medical experts to the Valley air board, increasing membership to 15. The bill is opposed by farm groups and county governments.

Machado's bill -- which has cleared the Senate -- also is linked to a Florez bill, Senate Bill 240, which would allow the board to increase fees on stationary pollution sources and raise vehicle license fees, with the goal of collecting \$100 million a year for anti-pollution programs.

SB 240 passed the Senate Appropriations Committee this week. It was one of hundreds of bills considered on Thursday by the Assembly and Senate Appropriations committees -- nicknamed the "graveyard" of legislation. The bills that survived face a deadline of Friday to get out of their house of origin, either the Assembly or Senate.

Among the legislation moving on is a bill that would give county school superintendents vast new powers over poorly performing schools. AB 1403, by Assembly Member Juan Arambula, D-Fresno, was originally written to cover the San Joaquin Valley. But it was pared back this week to cover only Fresno and Tulare counties.

Also advancing was a package of bills by Florez that aims to stop deadly E. coli outbreaks by increasing government oversight of the leafy greens industry.

One bill that died in committee was a proposal by Arambula that would have required the state to fully reimburse local government agencies for property losses incurred during January's devastating freeze. The state now reimburses agencies for up to 75% of the damage sustained in a state-declared disaster.

Another bill that died was a measure by Florez to require California high school students to take four years of physical education, instead of at least two years. Florez promoted SB 750 as a way to curb childhood obesity, a problem that has long plagued the Valley.

But the bill, which was opposed by the California Federation of Teachers, never advanced out of the Senate Education Committee.

## **Kern tests new dust control**

### **Use of enzyme solution cheaper option to paving**

BY STACEY SHEPARD, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Monday, June 4, 2007

Kern County will embark on an experiment this summer to reduce air pollution caused by dust kicked up by vehicles on roads with unpaved shoulders.

Under an air regulation, the county is required to pave shoulders on half of its urban roads and 25 percent of its rural roads by 2010. Roadside dust is one of the largest sources of particulate pollution, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Particulate matter lodges in the lungs and can aggravate asthma, lung disorders and heart disease.

But the cost to pave the shoulders would be \$60 million and "we just don't have the money," said Craig Pope, the county's roads director.

Instead, the county is experimenting with an enzyme and water solution that helps bind dirt and forms a hard surface that won't break and crack when driven on, said Andy Richter, a maintenance engineer with the roads department.

The mixture would significantly reduce the cost of the project. It costs about \$125,000 to pave a mile of road. The solution is expected to cost about \$10,000 per mile, Richter said.

"But we're just not sure it will perform," Richter said.

Other alternatives to paving include spreading oil on the road, but the enzyme solution appears to be better at controlling dust, Richter said. The city will test the enzyme solution on a few roads west of Bakersfield this summer.

Air district officials are supportive of the county's attempt to find an alternative, said Brenda Turner, a spokeswoman for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"It definitely stabilizes the shoulder and it appears to be almost as good as paving," Turner said.

Kern County is not alone in being short on funds to pave its road shoulders.

Richter said he's spoken with officials in Merced, Kings, Tulare and Fresno counties who also said they don't have the funds to pave all their road shoulders.

Kern County has managed to pave about 140 miles of road shoulders in recent years but it must reduce dust on an additional 1,100 miles to comply with the rule.

## **Electricity promises questioned**

### **PG&E doubts Authority's claims it can provide cheaper power.**

By Marc Benjamin / The Fresno Bee

Monday, June 4, 2007

A Valley-based electric power authority is being questioned about its promise to provide 300,000 customers with cheaper electricity than private utilities.

Pacific Gas & Electric Co., which could lose customers to the public San Joaquin Valley Power Authority, said the agency cannot provide the rates it promises.

And even officials of some cities weighing whether to join the authority say they have doubts about the project's ability to provide cheap electricity without fouling the air.

The San Joaquin Valley Power Authority could serve as many as 14 Valley communities -- two counties and 12 cities. It is being funded by the Fresno-based Kings River Conservation District and touted as a less costly alternative to investor-owned utilities.

If approved, it would be the first Community Choice program in California with a board comprised of local officials. Using the large customer base would help the authority keep its rates low, district officials say.

The authority would provide electricity generation, which comprises about one-third of a power bill. With lower rates, the communities could gain a competitive advantage in attracting economic development, district officials say.

Hanford and Kerman have joined the authority along with Kings County. Other agencies will be deciding this month.

The city of Fresno would use 45% of the power generated by the authority. Council Member Jerry Duncan is having second thoughts about joining.

He said he doesn't believe the district should build a power plant near Parlier, because it would add pollution, and he said he has concerns about how difficult it might be for customers to leave the authority. If a government joins the authority, all its residents would be charged authority rates unless they choose to stay with PG&E.

But Rene Ramirez, Fresno's public utilities director, is optimistic about the authority.

"Over a 20-year period, the customers in the city of Fresno have an opportunity to save \$500 million on their power bills," he said. "That's a lot of potential economic development for companies here and companies that may want to come here."

The city of Fresno alone would save \$600,000 to \$700,000 annually on power bills, money that can be used to hire police or fill potholes, he said.

Even if Fresno does not join, district officials say their plan can proceed.

A gas-fired power plant being considered by the district has been criticized by residents near Parlier because it would be near a school and add pollution to the Valley's air basin, one of the nation's dirtiest. But the district doesn't need a plant to provide electricity. It could also buy electricity from CitiGroup Energy, a firm that trades in power.

CitiGroup Energy representative Dave Houston told Clovis City Council members that his power-trading firm would sell power for 5% less than PG&E -- and would guarantee that those rates wouldn't rise more than 2% per year until 2015, a slower increase than what PG&E has charged in recent years.

But PG&E officials say that's a "teaser rate" that couldn't be sustained.

The Valley will need more electric generation capacity to improve reliability, district officials say.

If built, the plant would add that reliability at a lower cost than investor-owned utilities because the district has access to tax-exempt financing and does not have to show profits for shareholders, said David Orth, the district's general manager.

Residential users are promised discounts of about \$3.50 per month off the generation portion of their bills, according to studies done for the district. Industrial users are expected to benefit most.

After two years of discussion about the program, PG&E officials have started attending local government meetings, questioning rates and the district's experience and ability to build a power plant at a \$350 million cost noted in a consultant's report two years ago.

In recent interviews, Orth has confirmed the plant's price has risen and could exceed \$600 million if all 14 agencies join. Customer fees would be used to pay the plant's debt. But, he said, the plant would only be built if it makes economic sense.

The district operates a gas-fired plant in Malaga and a hydroelectric plant at Pine Flat Dam.

Jeff Smith, a Fresno-based PG&E spokesman, said the utility doesn't believe the project pencils out for its customers, whose generation rates would be paid to the authority.

"It's our belief that the numbers and what is being put forward are not good data, and the best situation for customers is to have PG&E play that role," he said. "We want to preserve the idea of customer choice, but we want our customers to make an informed choice."

He also said billing still will be done through the utility and customers will call PG&E first to complain about the generation portion of their bill.

Southern California Edison has not commented.

A study is under way to determine if Tulare County -- the second-largest would-be participant -- would join the power authority, said Brian Haddix, county administrative officer.

There are concerns that community choice has not been done before in California.

"The board wants to know if these really are significant savings, risks and what if the savings aren't there?" he said. "And what if the program goes under? What are the costs of getting back on the grid?"

With local energy service, residents can decide what they want in a local energy plan, Orth said.

"The program is aimed at lower and predictable energy rates," he said. "We also want to establish local control over energy planning."

The authority also could establish policies to spur investment in local generation capacity.

When it comes to bond repayment, Orth said, the district would be on the hook. Revenue to pay for a plant and other operations would be generated from rates.

Orth also said pollution concerns can be met with emission reduction credits, leading to more emissions removed than the power plant would create. Those credits, he said, can be acquired from other sources within 15 miles of the plant's proposed Parlier site.

Ron Manfredi, Kerman's city manager, says the authority is similar to the Central San Joaquin Valley Risk Management Authority, a group of cities that pool their insurance premiums and risk.

The risk management authority started 25 years ago with fewer than 12 communities and now covers 56 government agencies in 12 counties, he said.

Manfredi said crucial energy decisions, such as building a plant, can be made locally. PG&E makes such decisions in its San Francisco headquarters with little or no local input, he said.

"This is the opportunity for making decisions on a local level and potentially generating energy and making rate structures transparent," Manfredi said.

## **Good news for dairies**

### **Demand and prices for milk rise, while stockpile declines**

By JOHN HOLLAND, Modesto Bee

June 2, 2007

The business of dairy farming, laid low by hot weather and poor prices last year, has started to thrive again.

Prices that farmers get for their milk rose nearly 50 percent between July 2006 and April, according to a key measure used by the state.

That means higher retail prices for milk, but it's an economic boost overall for the regions, such as the Northern San Joaquin Valley, that produce a lot of it. Industry people attribute the rise to strong demand for dairy products around the world and to a drawdown of stockpiles that had held prices low.

"I think it kind of caught everybody off guard," said Frank Faria, a dairy farmer near Escalon. "There is a worldwide shortage of (dry milk) powder, but we did not think it would be as large as it is. We're benefiting from it now."

Milk is the highest-grossing farm product in the north valley and statewide. In 2005, a year of high prices, it brought \$1.6 billion to farmers in the region, according to county crop reports.

Other people made a few billion dollars more by working in cheese and other processing plants, or by providing goods and services to the dairy industry.

The 2006 crop reports, due out in the next few weeks, will show a decline because of the milk price dip.

This year has brought several months of strong increases in the minimum prices that dairy processors must pay to farmers, as determined by the state. The price, adjusted monthly, averaged \$1.14 per gallon in the first four months of 2007, compared with an average of 94 cents over all of last year.

The latest monthly figure, for April, was \$1.26 a gallon. That was close to what it costs a farmer to produce that gallon, including feed, labor, fuel and profit, according to the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

In July 2006, the minimum price was just 86cents because of a surplus of dairy products.

Despite this year's increase, it's still a wobbly industry. Production costs have risen, especially for feed corn as more and more of the grain is made into ethanol.

The severe heat wave of July killed an estimated 30,000 dairy cows and calves in the valley. Farmers had to dispose of and replace their dead animals, then deal with the reduced milk output that resulted from the interruption of the survivors' pregnancy cycles.

"It's just been brutal on us," Faria said.

### **91 dairy farms have closed**

Michael Marsh, chief executive officer of Western United Dairywomen, in Modesto, said 91 of the state's roughly 2,000 dairy farms closed in 2006 and early 2007.

Those farms tended to be small operations that could not wait for the price rebound and that faced high costs for complying with new rules on air and water quality, he said.

The total number of cows has not dropped because the average farm continues to get bigger, Marsh said.

Drought in Australia has been a key factor in the higher prices, he said. That nation is exporting less milk powder to eastern Asia than usual, giving U.S. producers an opening.

Chris Galen, a spokesman for the National Milk Producers Federation, said demand growth is especially high in the new Asian economic powers.

"China, of course, is a big story," he said. "They're consuming more (milk protein). They're using more dairy ingredients in animal feed."

They're also helping to nudge up milk prices elsewhere, as stockpiles of powder, cheese and other products shrink.

Michael Hutjens, a dairy specialist at the University of Illinois, said the biggest retail price spikes in the United States are likely to come later this summer in the areas farthest from the Midwest grain fields that feed most of the country's dairy cattle.

"Certainly, I think you're going to see it worse in places like the Southeast — in Georgia and Florida — and California," he said.

Marsh said he expects prices to stay up for the next year, allowing dairy farmers to recoup some of their 2006 losses.

Faria said 18 months of strong prices would set things right for him. He said the industry will continue to be prone to overproduction, but overall it remains vital.

"I know that the dairy business has been very good for a lot of years," he said, "and it can still be a good business if we practice some common sense with the regulations."

## **Bus service connects Visalia, Sequoia park**

By Seth Nidever

Hanford Sentinel, Sunday, June 3, 2007

Imagine going from the baking heat of Hanford to cool mountain air and the world's largest trees, all with only 30 minutes of time spent behind the wheel.

Now stop imagining.

The possibility has become a reality, thanks to a spanking new shuttle system kicked off Memorial Day weekend by the City of Visalia and the National Park Service.

Hanfordites seeking a summertime visit to the giant trees that have made Sequoia National Park world famous can now leave their cars in Visalia.

From there, a 15-seat bus will pick up guests as early as 7 a.m., take them to Sequoia National Park's Giant Forest and depart as late as 5:30 p.m.

The round trip takes four hours and costs \$10, with reservable departure times from several locations in Visalia. Once visitors reach the Giant Forest Museum, they can hop on a free in-park shuttle system that hits all the major sites at 15-minute intervals.

It's also possible to take a KART bus from the Hanford transit center to at least one of the Visalia locations where the Sequoia shuttle takes off from.

Riders headed to the park from Visalia don't have to pay the \$20 entrance fee charged for day-use private vehicles.

It all added up to the perfect outing for Visalia residents Bud and Joan Erickson, who were visiting the park on Friday on their fifth wedding anniversary,

"I wouldn't drive up here anymore, not when you can take this," said Bud.

The Ericksons, both of them retired, enjoyed the scenery as it changed from orange groves to foothills to pine trees and finally to vistas of distant, snow-flecked granite peaks shimmering in the warm spring air.

The shuttle ride takes about the same amount of time that it does to drive the road in a private vehicle.

It may even be quicker.

As cars backed up Friday at the Ash Mountain Entrance Station on Highway 198, the shuttle zipped by without stopping.

"That was great on Memorial Day. There was a line of cars backed up from the entrance station to Three Rivers," said driver Anthony Cornett.

Cornett drives the shuttle back and forth between the park and Visalia when he's not ferrying visitors around Giant Forest in larger buses.

With Cornett at the helm Friday, the shuttle climbed smoothly from Three Rivers. The air conditioner cranked out plenty of cool air as the brand new, 15-seat Ford powered its way up the steep grade.

Almost imperceptibly, the scenery shifted from the oak and grassland of the foothills to pine trees and greener undergrowth. Then the unmistakably massive Sequoias began to appear, culminating in the Gen. Sherman Tree, said to be the world's largest living thing.

City of Visalia and National Park Service officials are hoping that droves of people will choose to enjoy the experience from shuttle rather than their own vehicle.

"The implementation of the shuttle is a way to reduce traffic and parking congestion to, from and within the park, [lessen air pollution](#) and boost tourism for Valley communities," said Monty Cox, City of Visalia transit manager.

The bus is already a hit with elderly visitors, according to Cornett and fellow driver Salvador Frausto.

"It's great for people that can't drive, especially seniors. They like it because they can get up here to see all this," Frausto said.

The Ericksons, happily taking in the views from their shuttle seats, agreed.

"It's nice to be able to look out there and see things. I think it's great, really," Joan said.

#### INFO YOU CAN USE

The round trip shuttle ride from Visalia to Giant Forest costs \$10. Riders aren't charged entrance fees. Discounts are available for some groups. Reservations should be made online a day before you plan to make the trip. To find out more, visit [www.sequoiashuttle.com](http://www.sequoiashuttle.com)

### **Proposal to clean SoCal air would ban new wood-burning fireplaces**

by the Associated Press

Sacramento Bee, Friday, June 1, 2006

LOS ANGELES -- Wood-burning fireplaces would be banned in all new homes in much of Southern California under an anti-smog plan given initial approval by regional air quality regulators Friday.

The plan to help reduce harmful pollution and meet federal emissions standards also would bar wood-fueled blazes in all fireplaces on especially smoggy days.

The board of the South Coast Air Quality Management District, meeting in Diamond Bar, approved a 2007 update of its regional anti-smog plan. In addition to regulating fireplaces, the wide-ranging plan seeks to reduce soot from diesel engines and to curb ozone smog levels in order to meet federal Clean Air Act standards by 2024.

Its measures involve commercial and residential developments, industrial facilities and such common equipment as restaurant charbroilers. The AQMD said the plan is expected to cost \$2.3 billion annually, but benefits, mainly from reduced health effects, will amount to \$14.6 billion annually.

The California Air Resources Board will consider the overall plan later this month. If it is approved it must then go to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for approval. Another AQMD vote is scheduled for September to finalize the fireplace regulations.

There are an estimated 1.9 million homes with fireplaces in Southern California out of about 5 million total housing units, regulators said.

Air district staffers say a daily reduction of 192 tons of nitrogen oxides, an ingredient in harmful particulate pollution, is needed across the region to meet the federal requirements, and that 7 tons of that could come from restrictions on fireplaces.

The fireplace ban for new homes would cover Los Angeles, Orange and portions of Riverside and San Bernardino counties. There also could be about 20 days a year when the smog is so thick and the air so unhealthy that burning wood in all fireplaces would be prohibited, the AQMD estimated.

Regulators say unsafe levels of fine particulate pollution are responsible for 5,400 premature deaths and 2,400 hospitalizations a year in Southern California - leaving no target, including fireplaces, too small.

"Everyone must do their fair share to clean the air, from the largest business to the individual consumer," said Barry Wallerstein, the AQMD's executive officer. "Wallerstein said.

But critics, including homebuilders and real estate agents, say the regulations could hurt sales.

"A fireplace - especially a beautiful fireplace, and what people normally mean by that is a wood-burning fireplace - it's the thing people like to have" when they buy a home, said real estate agent Barbara Burner, who works for Century 21 in Thousand Oaks.

Jane Carney, a Riverside attorney and AQMD board member, said there aren't any easy rules left to help reduce fine particulate air pollution.

She noted alternatives are available, including natural gas logs.

### **Clean air plan OKd by Southland regulators**

**If fully implemented, fireplace use could be severely restricted. Several officials express reservations about those parts of the proposal.**

By Janet Wilson, Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times, Sat., June 2, 2007

Southern California air regulators Friday approved a comprehensive clean air plan that, if fully implemented, could place stringent restrictions on home fireplaces.

But individual elements of the plan, approved unanimously by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, must be separately passed by the board in order to become law. A September vote on the fireplace measure is scheduled, but several members who approved the larger plan say they may not ultimately support those restrictions.

"We all have to do our part, including ... the citizens of this region ... but I do not believe that we can have a Gestapo approach to fireplaces," said Riverside County Supervisor Roy Wilson, whose district could be hit hardest if the proposals pass.

Those proposals include a ban on wood-burning fireplaces in all new homes in Los Angeles, Orange and portions of San Bernardino and Riverside counties and a ban on wood-fueled fires in some areas during winter pollution spikes. It would also require homeowners in the most highly polluted areas of the Inland Empire to remove or close off fireplaces and wood stoves, or install costly pollution control devices on them, before selling a house.

Carla Walecka, head of the Realtors Committee on Air Quality advising the agency, said the home sale provision could snarl sales in western Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

"Point of sale enforcement is the slowest, most inefficient method that the district could choose to reduce fine particles emitted by older wood stoves and fireplace inserts," Walecka said. The approach would "complicate tens of thousands of property transfers" in an already cooling market, she said.

Board members said it was vital to take every step necessary to clear the region's air, the worst in the nation.

"Air pollution has created a silent epidemic responsible for up to 5,400 premature deaths each year" in Southern California, said William Burke, board chairman of the agency that oversees air quality in L.A. and Orange counties and portions of Riverside and San Bernardino counties. "We must go beyond business-as-usual solutions to achieve healthful air for Southland residents."

The fireplace regulations as currently proposed would reduce a small portion — an estimated 7 tons a day on average — of the 192-ton-a-day reductions in nitrogen oxides necessary to bring the region into compliance with the federal Clean Air Act. Nitrogen oxides are a key ingredient in both smog and particulate pollution.

Burke and other board members said they had been ordered by the California Air Resources Board to develop regulations on commercial charbroilers and fireplaces and were required to do so under state law because other air districts have done so, including the San Joaquin, Sacramento and Bay Area districts.

Burke said he thought public attention to and dismay over the fireplace portions of the mammoth plan were "misplaced. This document is 1,600 pages long, and they want to focus on fireplaces.... We're at a crossroads here on public health."

The plan approved Friday also contains requirements for reducing soot and other pollutants from cars, trucks, refineries and other industrial sources. Local officials said these measures would do far more than fireplace restrictions and urged the state and federal government to join the agency in pushing for even more aggressive reductions in those areas.

Still, Burke said, it's tough asking ordinary people to make changes that hit close to home to protect the larger environment.

"I got a text message from my [business] partner in the middle of the meeting saying 'Save My Fireplace,'" laughed Burke. "Now that's intense lobbying."

## **Blame coal for huge disparities in states' carbon emissions**

By SETH BORENSTEIN, AP

In the Fresno Bee, Sat., June 2, 2007

America may spew more greenhouse gases than any other country, but some states are astonishingly more prolific polluters than others - and it's not always the ones you might expect.

The Associated Press analyzed state-by-state emissions of carbon dioxide from 2003, the latest U.S. Energy Department numbers available. The review shows startling differences in states' contribution to climate change.

The biggest reason? The burning of high-carbon coal to produce cheap electricity.

-Wyoming's coal-fired power plants produce more carbon dioxide in just eight hours than the power generators of more populous Vermont do in a year.

-Texas, the leader in emitting this greenhouse gas, cranks out more than the next two biggest producers combined, California and Pennsylvania, which together have twice Texas' population.

-In sparsely populated Alaska, the carbon dioxide produced per person by all the flying and driving is six times the per capita amount generated by travelers in New York state.

"There's no question that some states have made choices to be greener than others," said former top Energy Department official Joseph Romm, author of the new book "Hell and High Water" and executive director of a nonprofit energy conservation group.

The disparity in carbon dioxide emissions is one of the reasons there is no strong national effort to reduce global warming gases, some experts say. National emissions dipped ever so slightly last year, but that was mostly because of mild weather, according to the Energy Department.

"Some states are benefiting from both cheap electricity while polluting the planet and make all the rest of us suffer the consequences of global warming," said Frank O'Donnell, director of the Washington environmental group Clean Air Watch. "I don't think that's fair at all."

He noted that the states putting out the most carbon dioxide are doing the least to control it, except for California.

Several federal and state officials say it's unfair and nonsensical to examine individual states' contribution to what is a global problem.

"If the atmosphere could talk it wouldn't say, 'Kudos to California, not so good to Wyoming'," said assistant energy secretary Alexander "Andy" Karsner. "It would say, 'Stop sending me emissions.'"

Some coal-burning states note that they are providing electricity to customers beyond their borders, including Californians. Wyoming is the largest exporter of energy to other states, Gov. Dave Freudenthal told The Associated Press.

He said two-thirds of the state's carbon footprint "is a consequence of energy that is developed to feed the rest of the national economy. That doesn't mean that somehow then it's good carbon, I'm just saying that's why those numbers come out the way are," Freudenthal said.

And the massive carbon dioxide-spewing and power-gobbling refineries of Texas and Louisiana fuel an oil-hungry nation, whose residents whine when gasoline prices rise.

However, some of the disparities are stunning.

On a per-person basis, Wyoming spews more carbon dioxide than any other state or any other country: 276,000 pounds of it per capita a year, thanks to burning coal, which provides nearly all of the state's electrical power.

Yet, just next door to the west, Idaho emits the least carbon dioxide per person, less than 23,000 pounds a year. Idaho forbids coal power plants. It relies mostly on non-polluting hydroelectric power from its rivers.

Texas, where coal barely edges out cleaner natural gas as the top power source, belches almost 1 1/2 trillion pounds of carbon dioxide yearly. That's more than every nation in the world except six: the United States, China, Russia, Japan, India and Germany.

Of course, Texas is a very populous state. North Dakota isn't, but its power plants crank out 68 percent more carbon dioxide than New Jersey, which has 13 times North Dakota's residents.

And while Californians have cut their per-person carbon dioxide emissions by 11 percent from 1990 to 2003, Nebraskans have increased their per capita emissions by 16 percent over the same time frame.

Officials in Wyoming, North Dakota and Alaska say numbers in their states are skewed because of their small populations. But Vermont, Rhode Island and the District of Columbia are similar in size and have one-12th the per-capita emissions of Wyoming.

A lot of it comes down to King Coal.

Burning coal accounts for half of America's electricity. And coal produces more carbon dioxide than any other commonly used U.S. fuel source. The states that rely the most on coal - Wyoming,

North Dakota, West Virginia, Indiana - generally produce the most carbon dioxide pollution per person, but also have the cheapest electric rates.

States that shun coal - Vermont, Idaho, California, Rhode Island - and turn to nuclear, hydroelectric and natural gas, produce the least carbon dioxide but often at higher costs for consumers.

It's unfair to pin all the blame on the coal-using states, said Washington lawyer Jeffrey Holmstead, who as an attorney at Bracewell Giuliani represents coal-intensive utilities and refineries. Holmstead is the former Bush administration air pollution regulator who ruled that carbon dioxide was not a pollutant, a decision that was overturned recently by the U.S. Supreme Court.

"Coal-fired generation is the most economical, least expensive way to produce power almost anywhere in the world," he said. He argued that outlawing such plants would have little overall impact globally; however, the U.S. has long been the leading global source of carbon emissions.

Instead of trying to wean themselves from coal, Texas government officials went out of their way to encourage the state's biggest utility, TXU Corp., to plan for 11 new coal-burning power plants that would have produced even more carbon dioxide. The strategy collapsed when an investor group buying TXU cut a deal with environmentalists to drop plans to build most of the coal plants.

The Texas state agency charged with monitoring the environment declined to comment on carbon dioxide emissions. Spokeswoman Andrea Morrow said the gas "is not a regulated pollutant." Frank Maisano, a lobbyist and spokesman for Bracewell Giuliani, which also has offices in Texas, defended the state saying, "these net exporters of energy are always going to produce more carbon dioxide."

Emissions from generating electricity account for the largest chunk of U.S. greenhouse gases, nearly 40 percent. Transportation emissions are close behind, contributing about one-third of U.S. production of carbon dioxide. States with mass transit and cities, such as New York, come out cleaner than those with wide expanses that rely solely on cars, trucks and airplanes, like Alaska.

Alaska, which stands out for its carbon dioxide production, also stands out as one of the early victims of climate change. Its glaciers are melting, its permafrost thawing, and coastal and island villages will soon be swallowed by the sea. Alaska ranked No. 1 in per-person emissions for transportation, which includes driving, flying, shipping and rail traffic.

That's not the state's fault, says Tom Chapple, director of the state Division of Air Quality. Its sheer expanse requires a lot of air travel. And Anchorage ranked No. 2 nationally in air cargo traffic.

For people who want to reduce their household emissions, or their "carbon footprint," the state where they live really does matter.

After seeing Al Gore's documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth," Gregg Cawley used one of the many calculators available online to determine his "carbon footprint." The University of Wyoming professor lives in a small one-bedroom apartment and drives a moderately efficient Subaru, so he figured he contributes less to global warming than the average American.

But the calculations showed otherwise. They suggested Cawley produces more carbon dioxide than most Americans. Even if he reduced his energy consumption, the numbers would hardly budge. "My God," he thought, "what do I have to do to my lifestyle to change this?"

Then he changed his home state in the equation. He took out Wyoming and plugged in Washington state.

"I came in way low. I said, 'That's the problem. I live in the wrong damn state.'"

That simple hypothetical change of address cut his personal emissions by nearly three tons of carbon dioxide a year.

*Associated Press writers Bob Moen in Cheyenne, Wyo.; Paul J. Weber in Dallas; Dan Joling in Anchorage, Alaska; Terence Chea in San Francisco; and Mike Hill in Albany, N.Y., contributed to this report.*

## **Dueling tours paint rosy, dire pictures of L.A. port**

**One group lauds the seaport in its 100th year as an 'artery for wealth.' The other warns of the need to curb pollution, noise and traffic.**

By Louis Sahagun, Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times Sunday, June 3, 2007

Separate bus tours promoted clashing visions of the Port of Los Angeles on Saturday: One explored its historic path to success, the other decried its toxic sprawl.

A big blue bus chartered by social justice group Liberty Hill Foundation rolled through what organizers described as "sacrifice zones" of pollution and heavy industry. At the same time, a fleet of white buses led by port public relations officials celebrated the harbor's centennial this year with a tour called "Steppin' Back in Time."

Their paths crossed about 11 a.m. with a simultaneous stop at Banning's Landing on the Wilmington waterfront.

For Liberty Hill, it was a place to talk about the need to curb increasing diesel emissions, noise, and truck and train traffic. Under a blue tent a few yards away, the other group learned about Phineas Banning, called the "Father of Los Angeles Harbor" for his role in positioning the area for future success as one of the world's great seaports.

Nodding toward the blue tent where port officials were handing out centennial buttons, pens and "Steppin' Back in Time" pamphlets, Michele Prichard, Liberty Hill's director of special projects, said, "They're focusing on the sunny side of this economic engine in an effort to put a positive spin on its deleterious effects on air quality."

Arley Baker, head of public relations for the port, disagreed. "We just want to communicate that there is a major Pacific gateway in Los Angeles, an artery for wealth and commerce."

The Liberty Hill bus carried about 30 activists and half a dozen tour guides, including Andrea Hricko, an associate professor at USC's Keck School of Medicine. Its first stop was a working-

class neighborhood of stucco homes adjacent to the Conoco Phillips Refinery.

Against a backdrop of refinery towers spewing white plumes of smoke into the air above the neighborhood where children rode scooters and skateboards, resident Ruben Mireles, 75, told those on the tour about a Christmas celebration "about 15 years ago when a big cloud of smoke came over and made us sick."

Speaking in Spanish into a portable public address system, Mireles added, "About seven years ago, there was an explosion and we felt the shock wave. The night before last, I was awakened by a bad smell and I couldn't breathe."

Nearby, port tour-bus guides showered passengers with cheery historical anecdotes and impressive statistics. Many of the passengers, who live in the harbor communities, said they enjoyed the opportunity to learn about the landmarks.

The busiest port complex in the nation generates 259,000 regional jobs and \$8.4 billion in annual wages and tax revenue. It provides the United States with 43% of its annual imported goods.

It is also about to get even bigger.

With the recent approval of the Clean Air Action Plan, which aims to reduce port-generated air pollution by 45% over the next five years, the Los Angeles-Long Beach port complex plans to expand existing terminals, build new rail yards and widen roads to allow more trade than ever.

The projects will also introduce an array of environmentally friendly technologies.

But Liberty Hill tour guides pointed out that state air pollution specialists attribute about 2,400 premature deaths a year to port-generated diesel emissions. The 16,000 trucks serving the port daily spend 50% of their time idling, exposing drivers and local residents alike to dangerous exhaust fumes.

Along a route between the docks and a rail yard five miles to the north are seven schools, where students have been exposed to some of the region's highest levels of diesel emissions.

The No. 1 reason children in that area miss school? Asthma.

"Great tour," said Rafael Aguilera, a representative of the environmental group Green L.A. "It's clear that there is an urgent need to address the disproportionate impact on port communities and ensure that port and publicly funded projects don't make a grave situation worse."

The port-sponsored tours featured six stops, including the Point Fermin Lighthouse, built in 1874 in San Pedro to aid safe passage between the Channel Islands and the harbor; the Ft. MacArthur Military Museum, also in San Pedro, where military defenses were stationed from 1920 through World War II; and the Drum Barracks in Wilmington, the last remaining Civil War-era military facility in the Los Angeles area.

Patricia Benoit, director of a group called Friends of Banning's Landing, saw benefits in both tours.

"The port is about money, business and growth; the environmental activists are about keeping the port clean. They can't help but clash," she said. "But that kind of friction is good. We need the port to do its job and the community to hold them in check."

## **Greenland ice melt speeds up**

**Emissions controls: Pelosi to push for California-style cap-and-trade system to reduce greenhouse gases**

Zachary Coile, Chronicle Washington Bureau  
S.F.Chronicle, Saturday, June 2, 2007

Washington -- House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, back from a trip that took her to the ice sheets of Greenland, said the House will push forward with legislation to create a California-style cap-and-trade system to slow global warming -- despite President Bush's insistence on more talks with other nations.

Pelosi made clear that Democrats plan to aggressively challenge Bush over climate change this year. The president has opposed any mandatory cuts in greenhouse gases, but this week said he would support emissions-reduction targets that each nation would aspire to, but would not be required to meet.

Pelosi, at a news conference in the Capitol on Friday, said she was stunned at the firsthand evidence she saw in Greenland of faster-than-expected melting and movement of ice sheets. The San Francisco Democrat said the rapid melting showed the problem is much too dire to be addressed with voluntary emissions cuts.

"The president continues to be in denial," she said. "He says now he believes that global warming is happening, and he accepts the science that it is. But if that were so, if he truly understood that, he could not have come up with a proposal that is aspirational. He would have to come up with a commitment that is real."

During her trip to Europe with other lawmakers, where they met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, among others, one question came up at every meeting: Will the U.S. Congress pass a cap-and-trade bill soon?

Pelosi pledged that legislation to cap emissions and establish a carbon-trading system would be introduced in the House later this year, and she wants to try for a vote before year's end.

"I'd like to see it passed this year. It just depends on how late we get out" for the winter holiday recess, she said. "But ... the signal will be clear that Congress will act upon cap-and-trade legislation in this Congress."

A cap-and-trade system refers generally to a plan in which a limit for greenhouse gases is set and those that emit the gases -- autos, industries, governments -- would be required to meet the caps or trade for the credit of someone who emitted less than their limit.

California regulators are drawing up plans for a market-based trading system under a state law enacted last year calling for a 25 percent cut in the state's greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. California recently signed agreements with Oregon, Washington, Arizona, New Mexico and Utah - as well as with British Columbia -- to form a cross-border emissions market.

Pelosi's push for a vote on a bill this year also is a challenge to several Democratic committee chairmen, including House Energy and Commerce Chairman John Dingell of Michigan and Rep. Rick Boucher of Virginia, who chairs the subcommittee that is writing climate change legislation. Dingell, a close ally of Detroit automakers, and Boucher, who represents a coal-producing district in southwest Virginia, have pursued a slower approach to crafting a cap-and-trade scheme.

Pelosi's trip took her to London, where Prince Charles arranged a meeting with European business leaders who support mandatory emissions limits. The European Union has set a goal of a 20 percent reduction from 1990 greenhouse gas levels by 2020. Pelosi said lawmakers discussed in detail what was working -- and not working -- in Europe's trading system.

Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass., chairman of Pelosi's newly created House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, said the Europeans have modeled their program on the successful U.S. cap-and-trade scheme to lower sulfur dioxide emissions to address acid rain.

"One message that we received over and over again is that the industries of Europe are embracing this," Markey said. "What they've been saying is they want it to be mandatory and not voluntary. They want to know what their goals have to be. And then they will be able to invest in the new technologies."

Pelosi hopes to pass an "energy independence" package before July 4, which could include new incentives to boost renewable energy production. But she expressed some misgivings about new proposals by coal-state lawmakers to subsidize coal-to-liquid fuels -- which could increase greenhouse gas emissions.

"We can't have a situation where (we are) increasing, exacerbating the problem," she said, adding that she wants more money for research into capturing and storing carbon dioxide released by burning coal.

Senate Democrats also plan to take up energy legislation this month. California Sen. Barbara Boxer, chairwoman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, is gathering support from her colleagues for cap-and-trade legislation that she hopes to move to the Senate floor this fall.

## **Sixth-graders take home top poster, essay honors Winners get \$500 toward bicycles and safety accessories**

By Nick McClellan, Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Saturday, June 2, 2007

A pair of sixth-graders took grand prize honors in the county's fifth annual Make A Difference in Air Quality student essay and poster contest.

The contest challenged students from Tulare, Farmersville, Visalia, Porterville and Strathmore to create essays and posters that encourage Valley residents to do their part in improving air quality.

Rachelle Riezebos, a Central Valley Christian School student, submitted the winning poster, a multicolored effort detailing the ways ordinary people can improve air quality. Among the poster's suggestions: Plant trees, recycle and carpool.

Rachelle said that she sought to inform Valley residents that, by coming together to do the little things, "we can help make our air cleaner."

Verenice Botello, a Royal Oaks Elementary School student, submitted the winning essay, titled "How My Family Helped the Environment and Made Money Too!" It discusses the ways her family conserves energy, such as using dimmers and solar panels and only using the air conditioner when the outdoor temperature reaches 101 degrees.

Verenice said her essay caught the judges' attention because of its well-researched facts, such as keeping a home at 74 degrees can cost 25 percent more than keeping the same home at 78 degrees.

Grand prize winners will receive \$500 gift cards, courtesy of Visalia City Coach, Mangano Homes Inc. and Mission Care Group, to buy bicycles, helmets and safety accessories. Other winners will receive \$250 gift certificates. The awards will be presented June 18 at the Tulare County Association of Governments meeting.

Verenice said she plans to use her prize to buy a bike and a skateboard. Rachelle had not decided what to do with her winnings.

There were 411 entries in this year's contest.

Editors note: This is the winning essay in the "Make A Difference in Air Quality" student essay and poster contest. Verenice Botello is a sixth-grader at Royal Oaks Elementary School.

By Verenice Botello

My family conserves energy in many ways. We recycle once a week. My friends and I ride our bikes to school three times a week. My family and I do many things to conserve energy and save money too, as I will demonstrate.

First, my family goes to the recycling center every week. Once a week we go and recycle everything that we can, like bottles, cans, plastic soda and plastic water bottles. Last week I received \$20.34 for the items I took in. The week before that, my sister made \$12.07.

I estimate that by the end of this month, we should be able to make at least \$70, and the great thing is that we are helping our environment by not mixing up our trash with out recyclables, and in return my sister and I keep everything we make.

Second, our air conditioner is only used when the temperature is above 101 degrees. We keep our air conditioner temperature control at the lowest comfortable setting. We found out that it costs 25 percent more to keep a room at 74 degrees than at 78 degrees. We also found out that it costs 39 percent more to keep a room at 72 degrees than at 74 degrees.

For this reason, our family utilizes natural ventilation and solar attic fans (which means that they operate with the energy from the sun). At night, we open the windows to let all the cool air in.

During the day, we draw the curtains where the sun hits the house. We have a liner on our windows to reduce heat energy from the sun. We use our ceiling fans instead of the air conditioning when it gets too warm.

Ceiling fans are good because they can cool down a room and circulate the cool air throughout the house. Our fans save energy because they only use about 10 percent of what a whole-house air conditioning unit uses. (For example, if your cost for air conditioning is about \$100 that month, you could save \$90 if you would have used your ceiling fans).

I have found that a fan consumes 1 to 3 cents per hour worth of energy while an air conditioner consumes over 8 cents of energy per hour. Using the air conditioner is our last alternative to cooling our house.

Third, we have many home energy savers, for example, light dimmers. They consume a little energy and reduce lighting levels. Air deflectors direct air from the air vents way from the walls and into the room.

We close the vents when the room is not in use. The heat reflectors in our house direct heat into the rooms to save energy. Last year, my dad purchased solar panels and installed them on our home. Besides saving energy, we also got a refund from the light company.

Lastly, I would like to share what I have found out about the little things we do in our house to conserve energy, help our environment and save money. Water heaters are used an average of 1,075 hours, the yearly cost of about \$362. Water heaters are used to heat the water you shower or bathe in and to wash your clothes.

To save energy, my mom usually washes the laundry with cold water, except the whites, which she washes with warm water, because it takes more to heat the water to hot than to warm. We take baths because you actually use up more water in the shower, especially if you like to take longer showers!

A dryer is used an average of 204 hours and the yearly cost is about \$75. To save energy on the dryer, my mom hangs washed laundry on a clothes line in our backyard when the weather is warm.

Lights don't have an average amount of hours used, but the yearly cost is about \$136. To save energy, we turn off all the lights that are not being used and use light dimmers. We turn off the television and the computer too!

This is how my family and I conserve energy, help the environment and have more money for other things. I am glad that me and my family can contribute to helping our environment and saving energy. I hope that other families can use some of the things that I listed and can also help our environment and save money just like us!

[Fresno Bee commentary, Sunday, June 3, 2007](#)

## **You can go green every day**

By Kelly Delaney

Whether you believe global warming exists, no one can deny that pollution is real and has a negative impact on our environment.

After all, we live in Fresno, which is ranked in the top five cities with the worst air pollution in the country by the American Lung Association.

Even as teenagers, we still can make a difference. Here are some simple things you can do at home or in your surrounding community that can lessen our environmental impact:

Transportation: My friends Stuart and Bob Jones, a senior and a freshman, respectively, at Bullard High School, ride their bicycles to school. "It makes me feel good," Stuart says, "especially when I pass big trucks that are stuck in traffic."

Walking, carpooling and public transportation are other good ideas. If you must drive, change your oil every three months, and make sure your tires are properly inflated. It will save you money.

Around the house: When you buy an electrical product, look for the Energy Star logo. Use compact fluorescent light bulbs; they use 60% less energy than incandescent bulbs and give off a lot less heat. And don't forget to turn the light off when you leave the room.

Unplug your electrical devices when you're not using them. Even leaving a hair dryer plugged in spews carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Recycle waste material, and buy recycled products. Sara Vega, a graduating senior, helped create a recycling program at Bullard. She says she's been able to collect nearly \$1,000 for the school from recyclable material.

Send letters to your local politicians, encouraging them to push for green legislation.

Nature: Tell the grocery buyer in your family to buy fresh, locally grown food; it takes 10 times the energy to produce frozen food. And don't forget to pick up reusable canvas shopping bags -- Longs Drugs sells them for 99 cents each.

Green is fashionable. Next time you're at the mall, look for clothes made of natural materials such as cotton or hemp.

Start a compost pile in an out-of-the-way corner of your yard.

You can fertilize your lawn or garden with your leftover coffee grounds; they're rich with nitrogen. Starbucks gives away free, huge bags of them.

More ideas: [www.climatecrisis.net](http://www.climatecrisis.net); [www.geocities.com/RainForest/vines/4990](http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/vines/4990); [www.thegreenguide.com](http://www.thegreenguide.com).

*Kelly Delaney attends Bullard High School.*

[Sacramento Bee Editorial, Monday, June 4, 2007](#)

## **Editorial: Fuelish sprawl Bill would advance regional planning**

The Sacramento area's award-winning "Blueprint" plan has hammered home two key points.

First, endless sprawl is not inevitable in our region; second, through incentives, local governments can work to contain leapfrog development and promote transit and alternatives to the automobile.

The Blueprint works like this: A regional body -- in our case, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments -- assesses its housing needs over a 50-year period. Each local government determines where its share of housing will go, in concert with protecting watersheds and valuable farmland and designing a workable transportation system.

Since SACOG has control over regional transportation funding, local governments have an incentive to participate. Indeed, several cities have started planning future housing around transit stations instead of spreading it outward on the whims of land speculators.

The Blueprint doesn't have the sweep of regulatory measures -- such as Oregon's urban growth boundaries -- but it has changed the dynamic of local planning decisions. Every time a major project is proposed, people now ask this question: Does it comply with the Blueprint?

That raises another question: Why don't we have Blueprints in every major metropolitan area of California?

In the Legislature, state Sen. Darrell Steinberg of Sacramento is working on a measure that could imprint the Blueprint statewide. Senate Bill 375 would require the California Transportation Commission and regional agencies (those with populations larger than 800,000) to conduct the kind of modeling and planning that SACOG has done in this region.

If local governments comply with the growth scenarios envisioned by a region, they would be exempted from certain requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act. That's a significant incentive. At times, misuse of CEQA has hampered urban renewal and transit-friendly development.

There are many reasons to support this bill. Across the state, Californians are driving more miles each year for work, school and errands. If you add up all these "vehicle miles traveled," you will find that such miles are rising faster than the state's population. That adds to our problems of traffic congestion and air pollution.

Blueprint offers an antidote to smog and the need to use cars for every last trip or errand. Right now, each household in the Sacramento region drives about 50 miles per day. Without the Blueprint, SACOG estimates that per-household vehicle mileage would increase 10 percent by 2035. With the Blueprint, communities would grow in a more compact form and transit would become more viable. As a result, SACOG estimates that per-household vehicle mileage would decrease 10 percent by 2035.

Steinberg is promoting SB 375 as part of a Senate package to fight global warming. Blueprint planning, the thought goes, would limit the growth of greenhouse emissions from vehicles and trucks.

That's a timely and reasonable argument, but the real reason to support this bill is much closer to home. Better regional planning will help make the state's metro areas more attractive and livable, and that will allow them to grow and attract jobs in a cleaner, healthier setting.

[Stockton Record, Guest Commentary, Saturday, June 2, 2007](#)

## **Pesticide rules poison state growers**

Chalk up another severe blow to the family farmer - only this blow wasn't delivered by a drought or freeze or invasion of bugs. Instead, it is courtesy of our friendly state bureaucrats and their need to appear green. How pathetic.

In a May 19 story in The Record, some truths were present, but they were mostly obscured by inaccuracies and what appears to be a significant bias on the part of the media.

The headline - "Growers could take hit in pesticide crackdown" - is technically correct. But it would have been more accurate this way: "Unprecedented rules contradict current policy, will result in farms going bankrupt." It's the difference between educating the public and fostering widespread misunderstanding.

I'm a walnut grower. That's what I do for a living, as did my father and my grandfather. If these regulations go forward and severely reduce the already limited amount of substances we can use, the walnut industry in California will cease.

The idea that a "pesticide crackdown" will improve air quality is laughable and not supported by science. The damage from chemicals is far down the list.

One quote hurt working farm families. State regulator Mary Ann Warmerdam said: "Our strategy requires careful balance and close cooperation with environmental and economic stakeholders." Where is the evidence of this? Where's the balance here ? There will only be a bill for \$10 to \$40 million sent directly to growers.

State officials have no desire to achieve "careful balance" and even less willingness to seek "close cooperation."

JoAnn Stuke Diethrich  
*Stuke Nursery Co. Inc., Gridley*

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Saturday, June 2, 2007](#)

### **Why was patrol car left running?**

While I was enjoying dinner on the patio of Bleachers restaurant on McHenry Avenue, two uniformed police officers arrived for what I presumed was their lunch break. They left the patrol car's engine running. I have noticed in the past that it was policy to leave the air conditioning on to protect the dog from excessive heat. As I left the establishment 20 minutes later, I noticed that the car was not a K-9 unit.

If taxpayers are footing the gas bill for the police departments, shouldn't we have concerns given the current gas-price issue and the [valley air](#)? I don't expect an answer; I just want some awareness for all to conserve gas and help in the pollution issue.

TROY WEIS, Ceres