

## **Valley air rules under scrutiny**

Fresno Bee, Thursday, July 26, 2007

Valley air officials plan to address the California Air Resources Board today in Sacramento about requiring earlier compliance with pollution-reduction rules for construction equipment.

Bulldozers, road graders, scrapers and other construction equipment create 8% of the Valley's oxides of nitrogen, a building-block gas for smog and the tiny particle pollution, called PM-2.5.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District wants the state to require earlier compliance with stringent standards. The move will help the district achieve both the federal smog and PM-2.5 standards.

The state air board's staff is expected to recommend the accelerated compliance requirement. The governing board will decide on the recommendation.

## **Foul mood in the air**

### **Poll: Valley residents want stricter pollution regulations**

By Hank Shaw - Capitol Bureau Chief  
Stockton Record, Thursday, July 26, 2007

SACRAMENTO - Californians of all regions and political persuasions think the state should impose further restrictions on businesses and farmers in order to fight air pollution and global climate change, according to poll results released Wednesday by the Public Policy Institute of California.

The survey also included a special poll of San Joaquin Valley residents' views about air pollution. The Valley's air is regularly ranked among the worst regions in the nation and is linked to roughly 1,200 deaths a year, according to the Kirsch Foundation in 2006

Nearly two-thirds of Valley residents would support tougher regulations on industry but are split on imposing those regulations on agriculture.

## **FIGHTING FOUL AIR**

See the whole poll at [www.ppic.org](http://www.ppic.org).

Stockton-area residents are less inclined to support farm strictures than are those living around Fresno and Bakersfield. Those regions have worse air quality and far more large corporate farms than the San Joaquin-Stanislaus-Merced area.

The Delta breeze enjoyed most evenings also appears in the poll results. Northern San Joaquin Valley residents are less concerned about their air quality than those living farther south, where the breeze does not reach.

The survey of 2,500 Californians and an additional 1,001 San Joaquin Valley residents found strong majorities of Democrats, independents and even Republicans supporting stronger efforts to fight pollution, even if it costs more for business to operate under those efforts. The overall survey of Californians had a 3 percent margin of error, while the poll of Valley residents had a margin of error of 2.5 percent.

The poll did not ask respondents what their opinions might be if increased restrictions made the products they buy costlier.

Nearly two-thirds of California Republicans support Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's and the Legislature's call to reduce the state's greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2025. Margins are larger among other groups.

More than seven in 10 Republicans also think government should force automakers to build more fuel-efficient vehicles, a view counter to many Republican members of Congress. Eighty-two percent of all likely voters would support the idea.

Vast majorities of Californians also want government to spend more money on alternative energy such as solar, wind or ethanol production.

Republicans differ from the rest of California only in that they strongly support more oil drilling off the California coast and expanded reliance on nuclear power. No other group supports that.

The survey also gauged Californians' opinion of Schwarzenegger and President Bush. Schwarzenegger gets good marks from 59 percent of likely voters, but only 25 percent think Bush is doing a good job. This is a historic low.

The surveys were conducted in both English and Spanish from June 28 to July 18.

## **Senators, EPA head tangle over Calif emissions waiver request**

By ERICA WERNER | The Associated Press

In the Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, July 26, 2007

Democratic Senators accused EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson of foot-dragging Thursday on California's request for a federal waiver to limit greenhouse gas emissions from cars and trucks.

Johnson disputed the characterization.

"I would respectfully disagree with foot-dragging," Johnson told a hearing of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee chaired by Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif.

"It takes time for our staff to do a thorough review," he said.

Boxer rejected that excuse.

"California is going to sue to get action, and the other states are standing behind California," she said.

Johnson got some support from the committee's top Republican and a leading skeptic of global warming, Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma. Inhofe displayed a chart labeled "The Iceman Cometh" and contended that temperatures in California are going down - a contention Boxer immediately disputed.

"I'm having trouble understanding the need for this waiver," Inhofe said. "Rushing this process is unacceptable, in fact it would be arbitrary and capricious."

The EPA is weighing whether to grant California a waiver the state needs to put in place a law that would cut greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 25 percent from cars, and 18 percent from sport utility vehicles, beginning in 2009.

The federal Clean Air Act allows California special status to implement its own pollution controls; other states can then adopt California's standards or stick with the federal regulations.

If California gets its waiver, at least 11 other states have enacted laws to follow in its footsteps. The states that have adopted the California regulations include: Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington. Other states, including New Mexico and Florida, are moving to adopt them.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger also has threatened to sue the EPA if it does not act on the state's waiver by Oct. 1, but Johnson has only committed to make a decision by the end of the year. He didn't budge on that deadline during Thursday's questioning.

California submitted the waiver request in December 2005 but the EPA didn't begin to consider it until after a Supreme Court decision in April of this year that specified EPA had authority to regulate carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

## **Governor slips in polls, especially on warming**

### **Public opinion of Schwarzenegger falls after doubts cast on 'green credentials'**

By Steve Geissinger, MEDIANEWS SACRAMENTO BUREAU  
Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, July 26, 2007

SACRAMENTO — Californians overwhelmingly believe global warming is a serious threat but are unimpressed with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's six-month, highly publicized international campaign on the problem, a poll released Wednesday shows.

Instead, Californians want more progress to protect the environment and say they are willing to pay for it, but have been disappointed so far this year, according to the survey by the San Francisco-based Public Policy Institute of California.

As a result, the governor's ratings have slipped six points on overall job performance since January, when he signed an executive order to curb greenhouse gas emissions, and have dropped eight points on how he's handling environmental issues.

Schwarzenegger, with 52 percent backing for his overall job performance, barely retains majority approval.

The governor's scorecard on the environment — while he's recruiting other states and nations to match California's emission reduction goals — has dropped from a majority, 55 percent, to a minority, 47 percent.

PPIC President Mark Baldassare attributed much of Schwarzenegger's declines to a concerned, disappointed public.

"Actions speak louder than words," Baldassare said. "The governor has been promoting an important cause worldwide, but Californians want to see more action.

"Last year, the governor and lawmakers made lots of progress on issues such as global warming and there was excitement they'd be building on that this year," he added. "Instead, they're seeing Republicans and Democrats going back to their corners."

Baldassare and analysts said Schwarzenegger's "green" credentials also have recently been put to the test.

They attribute the governor's environment-rating decline, in part, to recent hits his image has taken on misused "flex-fuel" cars — reported by MediaNews — and controversial Air Resources Board decisions.

Schwarzenegger spokesman Aaron McLearn discounted the poll, saying California has earned a "reputation as a leader on combating climate change" and that its programs "are being replicated all over the world."

"The governor will continue his leadership on this issue to ensure that California remains the worldwide leader on protecting the environment," McLearn said.

Tim Hodson, director of the Center for California Studies at California State University, Sacramento, said the governor should not be blamed for not satisfying "unreasonable expectations" from an "impatient society."

"Global warming and other environmental problems defy quick solutions," Hodson said. "Progress is made over years and decades."

But David McCuan, a political science professor at Sonoma State University, suggested the poll reflected a public that was seeing through what had become a political gimmick, used by other politicians in the past.

"Schwarzenegger was looking for alternative sources of political capital and a higher profile through the lens of green initiatives," McCuan said. "The more things change in Sacramento, the more they remain the same."

Gains from the governor's international quest to promote California's global warming fight were also eroded by controversies, said Melissa Michelson, a political science professor at Cal State East Bay in Hayward.

"Schwarzenegger's credibility on environmental issues took a big hit earlier this month when it was revealed that the state had paid millions of dollars for a fleet of flex-fuel cars that were actually running on gasoline instead of ethanol, creating even more pollution than the state's old cars," Michelson said.

"This made it look like his environmentalism was all hot air, and no substance. Add to this the suggestion that the policy for buying the fleet was changed to benefit General Motors, a long-time Schwarzenegger supporter, and for many Californians, they see sleazy politics as usual," she said.

Baldassare said he was surprised by a broad indication that Californians were ready to pay more — for everything from cars to groceries — to reduce air pollution.

"We have to wonder about the gap between behavior and poll results," said Jack Pitney, a political science professor at Claremont McKenna College. "It's easy to tell a pollster that you're willing to sacrifice for a cleaner environment. But it's harder to do it."

The telephone survey of

2,500 Californians was conducted from June 28 to July 15. The margin of error is plus or minus 2 percentage points.

## **U.S. offers way to atone for carbon guilt**

**To offset emissions, individuals can buy vouchers that the Forest Service will use to plant CO2-absorbing trees.**

By Claudia Lauer, Times Staff Writer  
L.A. Times, Thursday, July 26, 2007

WASHINGTON — You take public transportation to work, use energy-saving lightbulbs and turn off the air conditioner when you're not home — but still you feel somewhat guilty that your lifestyle isn't totally pollution-free.

The federal government may have an answer for you.

For years, companies have been allowed to compensate for greenhouse gas emissions by purchasing "carbon offsets" — vouchers for investment in alternative energy sources, tree-planting and other projects that can mitigate global warming.

Now the idea is spreading to individuals, with the Forest Service's announcement Wednesday that it will be the first federal agency to offer personal carbon offsets through an initiative called the Carbon Capital Fund.

"We came up with the idea because everyone is looking at what they can do in terms of climate change," said Bill Possiel, president of the National Forest Foundation, a nonprofit partner of the Forest Service. "The money goes to a restricted fund for projects on national forests."

Trees and forests are "carbon sinks," Possiel said, because they draw carbon dioxide — the main greenhouse gas blamed for global warming — out of the atmosphere and store it for long periods of time.

The Forest Service, an agency within the Agriculture Department, estimates that the 155 forests it oversees absorb 10% to 15% of the nation's carbon emissions and that planting through the new initiative will increase that amount.

Under the program, individuals can use a "carbon calculator" at <http://www.carboncapitalfund.org> to figure out the size of their carbon footprint. Then, they can buy offsets at \$6 per metric ton of carbon dioxide. An average family of four is responsible for 19 to 30 metric tons of carbon dioxide a year, so the offsets would cost \$114 to \$180.

"People have an opportunity to contribute to the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests not only by countering climate change, but also by replanting forests for the benefit of future generations," Forest Service chief Gail Kimbell said in announcing the initiative.

There are other programs that allow individuals to purchase carbon offsets, but environmentalists have criticized them for insufficient regulation and lack of proof of the funds' use. That's not the case with the Forest Service program, Possiel said.

"We have third-party verification, a company that looks at our calculations but also does on-site verification," he said. "A lot of programs have verifications through computer models. The important component for us is the ground truth."

Possiel said that almost all of the money would go to a restricted fund for planting trees, improving native wildlife habitat, and restoring land damaged by wildfires and other natural disasters. A small portion would be spent on the third-party verification.

The Forest Service will start the program with two projects: one in Payette National Forest in Idaho and the other in Custer National Forest in Montana and South Dakota.

For almost eight years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has had a similar program for companies and large groups.

That program was opened to individuals in April, an agency spokesman said.

However, unlike the Forest Service initiative, in which the government and the National Forest Foundation are directly responsible for the offset purchases, the Fish and Wildlife Service program funnels contributions to organizations, such as the World Wildlife Fund, that restore habitat and plant trees.

## **Pollution-cholesterol link to heart disease seen**

**The combination activates genes that can cause clogged arteries, UCLA researchers say.**

By Marla Cone, Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times and other papers, Thursday, July 26, 2007

Strengthening the link between air pollution and cardiovascular disease, new research suggests that people with high cholesterol are especially vulnerable to heart disease when they are exposed to diesel exhaust and other ultra-fine particles that are common pollutants in urban air.

Microscopic particles in diesel exhaust combine with cholesterol to activate genes that trigger hardening of the arteries, according to a study by UCLA scientists to be published today.

"Their combination creates a dangerous synergy that wreaks cardiovascular havoc far beyond what's caused by the diesel or cholesterol alone," said Dr. André Nel, chief of nanomedicine at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and a researcher at UCLA's California NanoSystems Institute. He led a team of 10 scientists who conducted the study, published in an online version of the journal *Genome Biology*.

Although diet, smoking and other factors contribute to the risk of cardiovascular disease — the leading cause of death in the Western world — scientists have long believed that air pollution, particularly tiny pieces of soot from trucks and factories, plays a major role, too.

For years, scientists around the world have reported that on days when fine-particle pollution increases, deaths from lung diseases, heart attacks and strokes rise substantially. Riverside County and the San Gabriel Valley have among the worst fine-particle pollution in the nation.

The scientists say their study, conducted on human cells as well as on mice, is the first to explain how particulates in the air activate genes that can cause heart attacks or strokes.

The researchers exposed human blood cells to a combination of diesel particles and oxidized fats, then extracted their DNA. Working together, the particles and fats switched on genes that cause inflammation of blood vessels, which leads to clogged arteries, or atherosclerosis.

The team then duplicated the findings in living animals by exposing mice to a high-fat diet and freeway exhaust in downtown Los Angeles. The same artery-clogging gene groups were activated in the mice.

The scientists reported that diesel particles may enter the body's circulatory system from the lungs, and then react with fats in the arteries to alter how genes are activated, triggering inflammation that causes heart disease.

Other research has shown similar inflammatory damage in lungs exposed to fine particles. Diesel exhaust has also been linked to lung cancer, asthma attacks and DNA damage.

"Our results emphasize the importance of controlling air pollution as another tool for preventing cardiovascular disease," said Ke Wei Gong, a UCLA cardiology researcher who was one of the study's authors.

In many urban areas, including the Los Angeles region, ultra-fine particles are the most concentrated near freeways, mostly from diesel exhaust, which is spewed by trucks, buses, off-road vehicles and other vehicle engines.

For decades, California and local air-quality regulators have been ratcheting down particulate emissions from trucks and other sources, but the airborne levels in most of the Los Angeles region still frequently exceed federal health standards.

"There are a few hot spots throughout the country that compete with Los Angeles from time to time, but in general, we tend to have the highest levels here," Nel said.

Exposed in a mobile laboratory moving down the freeway, the mice breathed a concentration of fine particles, 362 micrograms per cubic meter of air. That was five times higher than the peak that people in the San Gabriel Valley were exposed to last year.

However, humans breathe polluted air every day for decades, whereas the mice in the study were exposed five hours per day, three days per week, for eight weeks.

"The levels were high, but they came from real freeway exhaust so they were not artificially high," Nel said. "It was almost within the realm of what we are exposed to."

Diesel particles contain free radicals, which damage tissues, and so do the fatty acids in cholesterol.

The study aimed to find out what happened when these two sources of oxidation came in contact.

In the cells exposed to just the cholesterol or just the diesel, the effects on the genes were much less pronounced. More than 1,500 genes were turned on, and 759 were turned off, when diesel particles were combined with the fats.

"Now that we see this genetic footprint, we have a better understanding of how the injury occurs due to air pollution particles," Nel said.

The UCLA scientists hope to transform the gene changes to a biomarker, which experts can then use to predict which people are most susceptible to heart disease from air pollution.

The smaller the particle, the more harm it can cause. More artery-clogging genes were activated in mice exposed to the ultra-fine particles in diesel exhaust than in those exposed to larger particles in the air. Smaller particles generally come from sources of combustion — mostly vehicles.

### **Ozone hampering plants' absorption of carbon dioxide Pollution seems to limit the ability of flora to offset greenhouse gases.**

By Amber Dance, Times Staff Writer  
L.A. Times, Thursday, July 26, 2007

Rising levels of ozone pollution near the ground are damaging the ability of plants to take up carbon dioxide, reducing their potential to act as a counterbalance to greenhouse gas accumulation, scientists said Wednesday.

When affected by projected high levels of ozone, plants can absorb up to one-third less carbon dioxide than healthy plants, the researchers found.

The finding adds a new component that will have to be factored into climate models used to assess the future effects of global warming, they said.

The study, published online by the journal *Nature*, was the first to consider the indirect effect of ozone on vegetation.

"It points out a real gap in our knowledge of climate change," said David Karnosky, a global change scientist at Michigan Technological University who was not associated with the study.

Ozone forms when nitrogen oxides and volatile hydrocarbons meet in the presence of sunlight. The precursors to ozone come primarily from the burning of fossil fuels, although plants also emit carbon compounds that can participate in the reaction.

High in the stratosphere, ozone is beneficial, shielding Earth from harmful radiation. In the lower atmosphere, it functions as a greenhouse gas and is an air pollutant that can make it hard for people to breathe.

Ozone pollution is particularly high downwind of industrial areas across the eastern United States, Southern California and parts of Texas.

The gas attacks plants by breaking down their cells, reducing growth and causing premature aging.

While the U.S. has been trying to limit nitrogen oxide emissions, ozone levels are creeping upward because of continued burning of fossil fuels.

In some areas of the world, ozone levels are above 40 parts per billion. Some computer models project that 40 parts per billion will be the global norm by 2100 and that levels will exceed 70 parts per billion in some areas, according to the study.

The researchers, led by Stephen Sitohy, a climate scientist at the Met Office Hadley Center for Climate Change in Britain, used computer models to analyze how plant life would respond to increasing levels of carbon dioxide and ozone.

Sitohy and his colleagues projected that the largest reduction in carbon absorption would take place over North America, Europe, China and India.

"In those areas where ozone is a very large driver, the capability of those trees planted to sequester carbon is going to be limited," Karnosky said.

The scientists have not calculated how the ozone factor will affect temperature predictions.

### **Number of environmental cops decreasing**

By Rita Beamish, Associated Press

In the Fresno Bee, S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Thursday, July 26, 2007

Fewer U.S. environmental cops are tracking criminal polluters these days, their numbers steadily dropping below levels ordered by Congress. They are pursuing fewer environmental crimes in a strategy by the Bush administration to target bigger polluters.

The number of the Environmental Protection Agency's criminal investigators has dropped this year to 174, below the 200-agent minimum required by Congress, even as the EPA's overall criminal enforcement budget rose nearly 25 percent over three years to \$48 million, according to EPA records.

An internal memorandum from one of the agency's top lawyers, obtained by The Associated Press, said the EPA is violating the U.S. Pollution Prosecution Act of 1990, which requires the agency to employ at least 200 criminal investigators.

The agency's Criminal Investigation Division, made up of gun- and badge-carrying agents, investigates the most serious environmental violations.

In the legal memo, criminal office counsel Michael Fisher said Congress intended to increase criminal prosecutions under pollution laws by setting minimum staffing levels. Fisher wrote the memo to Assistant Administrator Granta Nakayama. Fisher did not return telephone calls and e-mails from The Associated Press over two days.

"If you have fewer cops on the beat, you end up with fewer cases," said Eric Schaeffer, who resigned as head of EPA's civil enforcement organization in 2002. He has accused the Bush administration of weakening environmental protection.

Schaeffer heads an advocacy group, Environmental Integrity Project, that compared five-year averages of the Bush and Clinton administrations and found a significant decrease in the numbers of criminal pollution investigations and civil lawsuits and the amounts of fines assessed under President Bush.

However, civil settlements requiring pollution control spending increased.

Nakayama acknowledged in an interview with The Associated Press that the number of the EPA's criminal investigators has dropped further, from 179 to 174, since Fisher wrote his memo in February. The reductions stem from transfers and retirements. The agency is accepting applications for four openings.

Nakayama said the EPA is reinvigorating criminal enforcement with an emphasis on pursuing high-impact cases, such as the recent felony air pollution convictions against CITGO Petroleum Corp. and convictions and fines worth millions of dollars against pipe and foundry divisions of McWane Inc. of Birmingham, Ala.

The EPA's overall criminal caseload - investigations that could lead to prosecutions later - is declining, according to the agency's figures. It has opened fewer investigations every year since 2002, when there were 484 new investigations and 216 agents. Last year, the number of new cases fell to 305.

The 1990s saw an overall increase in new criminal investigations and increases in the number of agents during seven of 10 years.

"It is difficult to believe that environmental crime suddenly declined precipitously after Bush took office. It is more likely that the administration's enthusiasm for criminal prosecution declined," said Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., chairman of the House Energy and Commerce committee, who spearheaded the 1990 law.

In a new investigation, Dingell's committee is looking at EPA's criminal enforcement operations and management, including duties of criminal investigators as well agents in the separate homeland security and protective service units. It also is demanding records from EPA's investigation of past drinking water contamination at Camp Lejeune, the Marine base in North Carolina, which ended with no prosecution.

The EPA acknowledged that criminal investigators sometimes are pulled off cases to check routes and guard EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson when he travels, although an eight-person team separate from the criminal division is dedicated to his protective detail. A 2003 inspector general's report criticized such diversions, first disclosed by the AP and the Sacramento Bee.

Those started after Sept. 11, 2001, when the administrator received bodyguards, and criminal agents for a time helped with other homeland security duties.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Thursday, July 26, 2007:](#)

### **Bravo for Florez**

State Sen. Dean Florez cares about clean air and about equality. I appreciate his questioning the campus culture that degrades women. I look forward to having Dr. John Welty's solution. If he can't admit the need for changes, then perhaps the change should start with Dr. Welty. He has not demonstrated actions for achieving women's equality.

*Harriet Ingram, Fresno*