

## **Public chimes in heavily on ethanol plant**

By Eiji Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel Thurs., Oct. 18, 2007

An ethanol plant proposal in south Hanford's industrial area got public comments -- quite a few of them.

Many support the project, saying that biofuels like ethanol are the answer for America's 20-million-barrel-a-day oil habit.

But others aren't so excited. They question the plant's impact on air quality and inner-city traffic created by 354-a-day truck trips, as well as impacts on the local water supply.

Wednesday night, both sides on the issue were heard inside the Hanford City Council Chambers, as some 30 people showed up to the public meeting and nearly a third of them asked questions and made comments on the Great Valley Ethanol plant proposed for south Hanford's industrial area.

The Bakersfield-based company hopes to build and operate a new ethanol plant on a 112-acre parcel at the southwest corner of Iona and 10th avenues in the Kings Industrial Park. If built, the Great Valley Ethanol plant would produce 63 million gallons a year of corn ethanol that would be used as a gasoline additive replacing MBTE.

"I'm for it," Chuck Leal of Hanford said after the meeting. "It's great to have this sort of review because everybody is concerned about the environment."

Leal did in fact question the nitrogen oxide (NOx) and greenhouse gas emission from the plant operation, which a city-hired consultant for the environmental study described as "significant and unavoidable."

John Westermeier with Kleinfelder also said Great Valley Ethanol plans to capture carbon dioxide that comes out of the distilling process to carbonate water for beverages as a side operation. He said a significant greenhouse gas emission will still occur, although explained that he is erring on the side of caution in his assessment because of the Valley's substandard air quality.

For Leal and some others, the fuel-saving benefits of ethanol outweighed the emission issue.

"We need to do something, at least attempt to get us out of crude oil consumption," Leal said.

Ray Greer, who lives nearby and runs an auto repair business, agreed.

"Added traffic is bringing the nitrogen oxide up -- everything that comes out of combustible engines of trucks and trains. Catalytic converters can take care of that," Greer said during the meeting. "I think (officials at Great Valley Ethanol) are trying to be as clean as they can. Everything else looks good in the EIR."

Greer also said the plant would "help our area" because its grain by-products -- a material of high nutritional value -- will be sold to area dairymen as livestock feed.

But Andre Booker, who lives just southeast of the proposed plant, expressed disappointment with the EIR and openly opposed the project. His concerns: the smell, traffic and air pollution.

"There are going to be 354 truck trips a day? I still think this is not the right project for our area," Booker said. "We're not in attainment with NOx. Why in the hell do we want to do it here?"

Joe Florez of Hanford was also concerned that the project might cause too much inner-city truck

traffic.

"Why do all these trucks have to come here?" Florez said, calling the increased traffic on 11th and 10th avenues "problematic."

Christi Gilliland of Hanford disagreed with Florez.

"Traffic isn't going to be a concern. If you're hauling ethanol, you're not going to go through residences. You'll use Highway 43," she said.

Gilliland, a native of Nebraska where numerous ethanol plants are operating, supported the project.

But Florez pointed out that based on the draft EIR, 29 percent of truck traffic would be anticipated on 11th Avenue and 23 percent on 10th Avenue.

There are currently four ethanol plants operating in California, including one in Madera, and three under construction. The Hanford site is one of three plants that are in the permitting process.

The public has until Nov. 12 to mail in comments to the city.

A final document -- containing public comments and responses -- will then come before the planning commission and the city council in late December for approval. Concerned residents will have their last chance to speak during those approval processes.

## **Historic bill in Senate to fight warming**

### **California law a model for new measure**

Zachary Coile, Chronicle Washington Bureau  
S.F. Chronicle, Friday, October 19, 2007

Washington -- A bipartisan group of senators, borrowing heavily from California's efforts to fight climate change, fired the starting gun on what's expected to be a long global-warming debate in Congress with a proposal for limits on greenhouse gases affecting every major segment of the nation's economy.

Lawmakers, industry groups and environmentalists have waited months for the bill, which was introduced Thursday by Sen. John Warner, R-Va., and Sen. Joe Lieberman, an independent from Connecticut.

The bill, expected to be the centerpiece of the Senate's efforts to address climate change, would cap emissions and gradually reduce them using a market-oriented cap-and-trade system in which allowances to emit greenhouse gases would be bought and sold.

"Today will be remembered as a turning point in the fight against global warming," said California Sen. Barbara Boxer, chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

The bill requires cuts in carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases from electric utilities, transportation and manufacturing, accounting for about 75 percent of U.S. emissions.

The bill would cap greenhouse gases at the 2005 emission level starting in 2012 and gradually reduce them to 1990 levels - a 15 percent reduction - by 2020. The measure requires deeper cuts over the long term: a 65 percent reduction from 1990 levels by 2050.

"The goal should be to keep the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere below 500 parts per million," Lieberman said. "That will avoid what (scientists) describe as a high risk of severe global warming impacts here in the United States ... but also around the world."

The bill would not pre-empt tougher climate rules enacted by states like California and would offer incentives to states that act early.

California enacted the first economy-wide limits on greenhouse gases last year; initial regulations are set to take effect in 2010. The law, AB32, intends to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020. California and a dozen other states also are battling in court and with the Bush administration to cut vehicle emissions of greenhouse gases.

Warner acknowledged that the new limits would burden industry and taxpayers. But he said less painful approaches - like the Bush administration's call for voluntary cuts - would not be enough to meet the global threat of climate change.

"The basic difference between the administration's approach and our approach is that we feel voluntary will not achieve the goals, the leadership that the United States of America simply must take ... to join the other nations of the world," Warner said.

Environmentalists mostly praised the bill as a good first step, though some groups said the emissions cuts were not deep enough. Some scientists estimate that reductions of 80 percent below 2000 emissions levels will be needed to avoid the worst impacts of rising temperatures.

"Senators Lieberman and Warner have offered serious preventative measures that will take us a long way to preventing catastrophic climate change," said Kevin Knobloch, president of the Union of Concerned Scientists. "But it needs improvement if we're going to restore the patient to full health."

Industry groups were skeptical of the measure, saying the emissions cuts could hurt the competitiveness of U.S. companies by increasing their energy costs.

"We believe the bill's proposed greenhouse gas emissions reductions are 'too much, too soon,' " said Jack Gerard, president and CEO of the American Chemistry Council, a trade group of plastic and chemical manufacturers. He warned the bill would "turn energy markets upside down, causing massive reductions in coal usage and enormous increases in natural gas and renewable fuels usage."

Cynics noted that previous climate bills have failed in Congress, including a similar measure sponsored by Lieberman and Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona. But sponsors of the measure say rising public concern over global warming and the leading role played by Warner, one of the Senate's most respected Republicans, gives this measure a better chance.

Several Republicans have signed on as co-sponsors, including Sens. Elizabeth Dole of North Carolina, Norm Coleman of Minnesota and Susan Collins of Maine. "I'm convinced this bill does represent a tipping point," Collins said Thursday.

Sen. James Inhofe, the Oklahoma Republican and leading climate change skeptic in Congress, took to the Senate floor to denounce the bill. He warned it could cost average families several thousands of dollars in additional energy costs.

"These are things that are very, very costly," Inhofe said.

The bill's sponsors say the bill has several cost-containment measures, including a "bank and borrow" system that lets greenhouse emitters save their allowances to pollute for future years, or borrow from future year's allowances to meet the goals.

The measure would also create a Carbon Market Efficiency Board, an appointed seven-member body that could loosen the rules on borrowing future credits if the price of carbon goes too high. However, all emitters would still have to meet the bill's targets over the long term.

The cap-and-trade system would work basically this way: A company that released more greenhouse gases than permitted would have to buy allowances for the extra pollution. The allowances would be sold in the market from a pool that came from companies that cut their emissions below their required cap.

Some environmentalists were still unhappy with the bill's system for handling these allowances, which permit companies to emit greenhouse gases. Environmental groups would like to see them auctioned off and the proceeds go for consumer rebates and incentives for clean energy projects. Industry groups say an auction-only approach would be too costly to meet.

Warner and Lieberman have tried for a compromise that would start with auctioning off about one-quarter of the allowances, and increasing the number sold to 73 percent by 2036.

But Friends of the Earth president Brent Blackwelder warned that bill's approach "means that polluters will be rewarded with pollution permits worth tens or hundreds of billions of dollars or more."

Boxer said she or another senator would introduce an amendment to test support for a 100 percent auction system. "We'll see if we can get 51 votes," she said.

About half of the proceeds from the auctions would go to deploying clean energy technologies like solar, wind and geothermal energy as well as biofuels and plug-in hybrids. The other half would help poor people pay their energy bills and weatherize their homes, as well for training for "green-collar" jobs and aiding species put at risk by warming.

Lawmakers plan a subcommittee hearing on the bill next week, and Boxer is pledging a vote in her committee by the end of the year.

## **Rural lowans cope with smell of hogs**

By Henry Jackson, Associated Press

In the Sacramento Bee and Modesto Bee Fri., Oct. 19, 2007

LORIMOR, Iowa - Mayor Kent Forbes has learned a hard truth about small-town life in Iowa: Sometimes it stinks.

That's not a figure of speech. His tiny southern Iowa town is surrounded by hog farms, where tons of manure fill the air with a biting ammonia smell.

Farm odors are nothing new in a state that has long been a national leader in hog, corn and soybean production. But a steady proliferation of huge hog confinements - many with upward of 5,000 hogs - has drawn complaints from longtime lowans and concerns that the odor could hinder efforts to attract businesses.

And all residents can do is stay indoors.

State legislators have placed minimal restrictions on the hog industry, and a federal court has ruled that confinements can't be sued under the Clean Air Act if they agree to pay a small fee and allow the Environmental Protection Agency to monitor their emissions.

"I don't think the (state) has been aggressive on this at all," said Barb Kalbach, board president of Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, a grass-roots group that helps rural residents fight the confinements. "And I don't think the state would tolerate this stuff from any other industry."

The hog confinements are fairly new in Iowa, first popping up in the early 1990s after the practice was popularized in North Carolina. By housing thousands of hogs in one area, managers can keep costs low and meet consumer demand for a consistent product.

The factory farms have mostly replaced smaller family operations, which were scattered enough to limit their unavoidable stench.

"Hogs have been in Iowa forever, but they were always far less concentrated ... " said Bruce Babcock, director of Iowa State University's Center for Agricultural and Rural Development. "Now, there are so many hogs on one site and it can really smell."

The operations typically set up shop near small, rural towns, where land is cheap and officials are eager for any new business that offers jobs and increased tax revenue.

"The livestock industry is crucial to a number of our rural communities," said state Sen. David Johnson, the ranking Republican on the agriculture committee. "Without that livestock they run the risk of withering on the vine."

Johnson said the state is committed to regulating confinements, pointing to the first meeting later this month of a livestock odor study committee.

For many, though, the state's efforts have been mere platitudes, and word of a proposed hog farm causes panic.

"When you hear about one of these coming in you, you think you're going to have to move, that you've got to get away from it," Kalbach said. "But then you think, 'My goodness! Who will buy it?'"

Three years ago, developers proposed a 5,600-head hog farm about a mile from Kalbach's corn and soybean farm near Dexter, a town of 800 about 30 miles west of Des Moines.

The confinement won an initial permit, but activists appealed to the state's environmental commission, which ruled the operation would be too close to residents.

The ruling amounted to a rare reprieve. In many cases, residents fail to organize an effective opposition, and proposed sites are often so remote that officials refuse to stop them.

State Agriculture Secretary Bill Northey, himself a corn and soybean farmer, is sympathetic to residents' complaints but defends Iowa's efforts to combat odors.

He said state and local officials have rejected some operations, and he noted the difficulty of quantifying something as ephemeral as smell.

"Odor is inherently a complicated kind of thing," Northey said. "It's just like odor from a city or a factory plant. It's hard to measure and people are sensitive to it in different ways."

In May, he wrote several officials with the Iowa Farm Bureau to tell them he planned to undertake an odor study, according to e-mails obtained by The Associated Press using Iowa's open records law.

"I think we ought to consider conducting this out of the public eye to avoid a political sideshow," Northey wrote. "We also need to conduct this with a firm eye to the political impact on the next legislative session. ... There are some risks in an effort like this, but then again there are risks in doing nothing."

In towns like Lorimor - which has no grocery, one bar/restaurant and a single gas station - the smell is just one more factor contributing to a decades-long slide.

Its annual community garage sale this summer was ruined after hog farmers spread manure on their fields.

"No one came out," said Forbes, the mayor. "People had to shut their windows. The smell was so thick!"

Farther north, Shirley Phillips, a tourism and economic development official, said she's seen some improvement, but air quality can be a problem in Sac City and other towns in Sac County. "In the past, I've called all the operations around our city limits before and asked them not to spread manure if we are having a business in town," Phillips said.

## **State ready for showdown against EPA**

**Monday is the deadline California set to get waiver for emissions rules**

"California was never not granted a waiver," Reilly said, citing the state's history of cutting-edge regulations that were adopted by other states.

California made a "persuasive case" that it has been granted waivers with no rejections and demonstrated "the adverse impact of climate change on water supply, air quality and overall health," the Congressional Research Service, a nonpartisan arm of Congress, declared in a 16-page report.

Mary Nichols, head of the Air Resources Board, recently briefed members of Congress on the stakes involved in the waiver case.

Democrats in the state's By Frank Davies, Medianews Staff  
Contra Costa Times, Friday, October 19, 2007

WASHINGTON -- California officials from Sacramento to Washington say that law, history, politics and even the Nobel Peace Prize are on their side in one of the state's signature environmental ventures -- claiming the right to regulate emissions of greenhouse gases from cars and light trucks.

But that may not be enough. Next week, state officials are prepared to go to federal court to force the Environmental Protection Agency's hand so that California and 14 other states can enact restrictions that would, by 2016, reduce carbon dioxide emissions from vehicles by 30 percent.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger "believes we can't afford to wait any longer," spokesman Bill Maile said Thursday.

California and the other states need a waiver from the EPA under the Clean Air Act to enforce their own regulations. EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson has promised a decision by the end of the year.

The state filed its request 22 months ago, and waiting two more months for that decision is not an option, state officials say.

Citing Clean Air Act rules, Schwarzenegger notified Johnson in April that the state would sue after 180 days if there was no EPA decision. The deadline runs out Monday.

A lawsuit "is inevitable if they don't act by the deadline," Maile said.

State officials and environmental groups heard this week that the EPA might consider granting a temporary waiver while national greenhouse gas rules are considered, but the EPA denied that was in the works.

Johnson "will make a final determination on the waiver request by the end of the year," spokeswoman Margot Perez-Sullivan said.

She said the EPA is reviewing more than 100,000 written comments and reams of technical data concerning the request it has received since May.

The EPA has faced mounting pressure to comply with California's request. In April, the Supreme Court acknowledged that global warming has real impact and ruled that the EPA can regulate carbon dioxide as an air pollutant.

Last month, a federal judge in Vermont, William Sessions, ruled after a 16-day trial that the auto industry did not face an "undue burden" in complying with Vermont's new emissions regulations, which are identical to California's.

This week, a Republican who headed the EPA under former President Bush., William Reilly, said that Johnson should grant the waiver.

"This is a major test," Reilly said. "This has taken exceedingly long. The Supreme Court ruled carbon dioxide is a pollutant. That was the only argument against it, and now it's gone."

Al Gore's Nobel Peace Prize added to the attention on the issue.

Just as important, lawyers say, the United Nations panel of scientists who studied climate change shared the award, and that adds to their credibility in litigation that focuses on the need to reduce carbon emissions.

President Bush, who has resisted mandatory caps on emissions, declared during a two-day summit on climate change that "Our guiding principle is clear: We must lead the world to produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions."

Fred Krupp, the president of Environmental Defense, has worked with states on their regulations and with corporations on plans for emissions controls.

He sees the California case as critical, noting that it and the 14 other states that want tougher restrictions comprise 44 percent of the nation's population.

"There will be a big public outcry like we haven't seen if the EPA turns this down," Krupp said.

Since the Clean Air Act was enacted in the 1960s, California has enjoyed special status in enacting regulations that are more stringent than federal rules on all sources of pollution.

To do that, it needed waivers from the EPA, and in more than 50 cases, without exception, a waiver was granted, even when industries that would be affected by the restrictions argued that they caused a hardship.

congressional delegation appealed to Johnson in a letter to make a prompt decision.

Rep. Zoe Lofgren of San Jose, who heads the state's Democrats in Congress, said "it's pathetic that a decision has taken this long."

Democrats are worried that the lobbying efforts against the waiver by Bush administration transportation officials and the auto industry mean that "the fix is in," as Rep. Henry Waxman of Los Angeles put it, and that the EPA will turn down the request.

Two staffers on Capitol Hill, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Democratic members were looking at the possibility of getting Congress to override an unfavorable EPA decision, making it a global warming and states' rights test case.

But Krupp said such a strategy would face major obstacles, adding that he was still hopeful that the EPA would grant the waiver.

"This decision will be the defining mark of Stephen Johnson's tenure," Krupp predicted.

## **Emissions pose no risk, report states**

By Kristin Bender, Staff Writer

Contra Costa Times, Friday, October 19, 2007

Neighbors say the smell of burning plastic is still in the air near Pacific Steel Casting despite findings from an independent environmental health consultant showing that emissions from the plant do not exceed permissible levels.

Pacific Steel Casting, a family-owned business that has operated in West Berkeley for 73 years, has been at the center of complaints from residents about headaches, nausea and a tightness in their chests because of a foul odor.

The company, which makes steel castings for truck parts, medical equipment and sewer pipes, also was sued by three groups because of odor and alleged toxic emissions during the past few years.

But the recently released health risk assessment report -- completed by Environ in Emeryville and paid for by Pacific Steel -- shows that cancer risks and noncancer hazards for those exposed to plant emissions and for those living or attending school or day care near the facility do not pose a significant risk.

"This report has determined that emissions from Pacific Steel Casting do not exceed notification levels for neighbors living in area zoned for residential or light industrial use. The results show that Pacific Steel is not required to make any changes to reduce the risk to the public," according to a company statement.

The assessment was mandated by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District under a state air pollution control law, the Air Toxics Hot Spots Act of 1987.

The law requires California facilities to report the types and quantities of toxic substances they routinely release into the air and make changes to reduce any risks.

The report is good news for the plant, but it could be another year before the air district signs off on the findings. It must be reviewed by the California Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment in the next 180 days, said air district spokeswoman Karen Schkolnick. The city of Berkeley also will do an independent evaluation of the findings.

"(Pacific Steel) is certainly in a waiting pattern," Schkolnick said. "At this point, they are waiting to see if there will be any additional requests for information or if there is a requirement for revisions because we haven't issued our approval, and we won't for a while."

Residents and community groups don't agree with the findings. In August, Global Community Monitors released preliminary data that showed levels of manganese and nickel much higher than those deemed safe by the World Health Organization and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"I think (Pacific Steel) is Berkeley's greatest environmental concern," said Berkeley community activist L A Wood, who has done a dozen of the environmental sampling tests since May.

West Berkeley artist Michele Pred said she complained to the air district about 10 days ago because of a foul smell in the air for two days straight.

"It's the same old burning brakes, pot handle smell. It's like burning plastic," Pred said. "I did make a report, and I sent out a call for everyone to do the same because it was so bad."

Pacific Steel has been fighting neighbors and legal battles for several years.

Last year, under a settlement with the air district, Pacific Steel was required to install a \$2 million carbon absorption unit to reduce odor and emissions.

The company also settled with Communities for a Better Environment in Oakland earlier this year, promising to reduce its hazardous air pollutants by at least two tons annually. A third lawsuit from Neighborhood Solutions of Oakland is still pending.

"The company has made significant improvements. We are not perfect, but we are doing a significantly better job of capturing emissions, and we will try to be even better," company spokeswoman Elisabeth Jewel said.

Jewel added that the company last month installed a newer, larger filter system to capture metals on one of its three plants. The company also made interior changes to increase the efficiency of the ventilation system, she said.

Oakland City Council President Ignacio De La Fuente, the vice president of the union representing 700 Pacific Steel workers, called the assessment good news.

"In the last several years they have done tremendous work in dealing with neighbors," he said.

## **Environmental group sues FirstEnergy over coal-plant emissions**

By Dan Nephin, Associated Press Writer  
Contra Costa Times, Friday, October 19, 2007

PITTSBURGH—An environmental group has sued FirstEnergy Corp., claiming it violated federal and state air pollution laws at a coal-fired power plant in western Pennsylvania.

PennFuture sued Akron, Ohio-based FirstEnergy Corp. on Thursday. It had notified the company in May that it intended to file suit over alleged pollution at the Bruce Mansfield plant in Shippingport, about 30 miles northwest of Pittsburgh.

The plant violated opacity standards, which relate to how much emissions obscure background objects, at least 250 times between November 2002 and March, according to PennFuture.

The Clean Air Act contains a provision that lets citizens bring enforcement lawsuits after notifying the alleged violator and state and federal environmental agencies. Washington-based Environmental Integrity Project, a nonprofit public interest group that works on enforcement issues, is co-counsel.

"People living next to this plant are breathing in a cocktail of pollution regularly," said Stephanie Kodish of the Environmental Integrity Project.

Ellen Raines, a FirstEnergy spokeswoman, said the company has not seen the suit and could not comment on specifics. But she said "the issue we believe this to be regarding is an aesthetics issue."

"The Bruce Mansfield plant is a leader in environmental controls," she said. Its pollution control systems remove 99 percent of particulate matter, or soot, 95 percent of sulfur dioxide, 80 percent of mercury and up to 90 percent of nitrogen oxide, she said.

Paul Lampe, a plaintiff who lives about a quarter-mile from the plant and can see its two stacks from his house, says the company paid him \$700 for damage to his garden when black soot covered his plants last year.

The company has also cleaned soot from his property, but he said, "You can't buy a new set of lungs and your health back."

Charles McPhedran, a PennFuture attorney, said group wants the pollution to stop and for opacity monitoring to be conducted more frequently than the current one hour per week.

"The neighbors of this plant are fed up by the lack of action by FirstEnergy, and they are determined to put an end to the constant specter of air pollution," he said.

PennFuture also said the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Environmental Protection are not doing enough to stop pollution from the plant. A call to the EPA was not immediately returned.

Helen Humphreys, a DEP spokeswoman said the plant is under a consent order and agreement on opacity issues. She also said technology doesn't exist for continuous monitoring of opacity on the type of pollution control the plant is using.

In January, the DEP fined FirstEnergy \$25,000 for releasing an oily soot from the plant that covered more than 300 homes in July 2006. The fine was the maximum under the state's Air Pollution Control Act.

The company has said the soot releases in 2006 and this year were related to equipment maintenance.

[Editorial in Contra Costa Times, Friday, October 19, 2007](#)

### **Contractors not the best solution for port**

THE PORT OF OAKLAND and citizen groups concerned about air and noise pollution affecting nearby West Oakland neighborhoods appear to be establishing some common ground on how to attack the problems.

Both a proposal by port officials and a report by the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy suggest that trucking firms operating at the port switch from using independent contractors to using employees.

The reason is independent contractors generally don't maintain their trucks as they should, which leads to increased pollution. Truck traffic at our nation's fourth busiest container port was projected to grow from 10,000 truck trips per day in 2000 to 22,000 in 2010.

Most of the cargo -- 83 percent -- is moved by truckers who are independent contractors. They're often immigrants who work 11 hours a day and earn about \$10 per hour -- 25 percent make less than \$7.64.

Their gross pay is \$66,187, but they net \$30,490 after expenses, which includes upkeep of their rigs. Thus, their diesel-powered rigs tend to be older, dirtier and less well-maintained than those operated by trucking company employees.

Traffic and pollution, major problems in neighborhoods near the port, have prompted several community meetings and need to be addressed. The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach also are demanding that trucking companies start using employees to haul their cargo.

The Port of Oakland reportedly wants to institute a change in which independent operators would drop from more than 80 percent of the haulers to 30 percent to 40 percent. That's a dramatic drop, but the outcome would be a newer, better maintained, cleaner and less polluting fleet of trucks moving in and out of port each day.

Though port officials argue that ships are a greater source of pollution, large cargo vessels operate under international standards and thus are less easily regulated by local ports than trucks. Still, Oakland-based Earthjustice sued the EPA earlier this month for its failure to meet a deadline for setting emissions standards for ships. The port also is pursuing plans to use railroads and such waterways as the Delta to connect with inland truck terminals, limiting the growing number of big rigs traveling Bay Area roadways. But that's a ways off.

Requiring cleaner trucks and addressing pollution in neighborhoods near ports is one of those ideas whose time appears to have come. It's positive for local residents and port officials to find common ground on which to address such problems.

The Port of Oakland is an important cog in the Bay Area's diverse economic engine, but to thrive, it also must address local problems. Some truck firms don't like the plan, but it's in everyone's interest to address such health problems.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the signing of SB 719 by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. For more information, contact Maricela \(559\) 230-5849.](#)

### **Limpiando el aire que respiramos**

**El gobernador firma iniciativa que ayudará a mejorar la calidad del aire en el Valle Central.**

El Sol, Friday, October 19, 2007

VISALIA — Esta semana, los residentes del Valle podrán sentirse algo optimistas respecto a la calidad del aire que respiramos y al que se le atribuyen problemas como el asma.

Es que el gobernador Arnold Schwarzenegger firmó la propuesta de ley SB 719, presentada por Michael Machado (Demócrata, Tracy) y apoyada por numerosas organizaciones políticas, ambientalistas, religiosas y de base.

Particularmente activas fueron diferentes organizaciones del Valle Central, considerado el área más contaminada del estado.

"Es un verdadero triunfo", dijo entusiasmada Liza Bolaños, coordinadora de la Coalición para la Calidad del Aire del Valle central, de la cual forman parte numerosas organizaciones del Valle. "Hemos luchado por esto durante cinco años".

La nueva ley, firmada el domingo 14 de octubre, permite al gobernador nombrar un médico y un científico a la Mesa Directiva del Control de la Polución del Aire del Valle de San Joaquín. Ambos especialistas deberán ser residentes del área y tener conocimientos sobre los efectos en la salud ocasionados por la polución.

También se incluye en dicha Mesa Directiva a dos representantes de ciudades del Valle. De esta manera cambiará radicalmente la composición y la dinámica de la Mesa Directiva, actualmente integrada por 11 miembros: ocho representantes provienen de la Mesa de Supervisores de los Condados del Valle y tres de las ciudades (van rotando).

Los activistas del medio ambiente estiman que de esta manera las comunidades más pequeñas —y más contaminadas— del Valle tendrán una voz en el organismo directivo de la calidad del aire, muchas veces acusado de respetar más los intereses de las industrias que de los ciudadanos.

"Siempre se habla de la cuestión económica, nunca de los efectos en la salud de la gente," comenta Bolaños. "Confiamos en que esto cambiará."

En junio de este año, el gobernador Schwarzenegger se expresó duramente ante la falta de acción para mejorar la calidad del aire en el Valle. "Cuando uno de cada seis residentes del Valle tiene asma y uno de cada cinco niños tienen que llevar un inhalador a la escuela, es un llamado a la acción", comentó entonces, de acuerdo a un comunicado de prensa de la Coalición con motivo de la firma de la SB 719.

Dicho documento alaba al gobernador por su aprobación a la propuesta y expresa un elevado optimismo sobre el futuro de la calidad del aire en el Valle.

"Pero la lucha continuará para lograr la justicia ambiental para todas nuestras comunidades habitadas por personas de bajos ingresos y de color en todo el Valle", dijo Ray León, del Proyecto de Política Latina de Mejora Ambiental y miembro de la Coalición según el mismo comunicado.

[Stockton Record editorial, Friday, October 19, 2007:](#)

## **A breath of fresh air**

### **Machado's legislation will have a lasting impact on the Valley**

If there are fewer cases of asthma in the Valley, state Sen. Michael Machado's five-year effort will have been worth it.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has signed the Linden Democrat's bill changing membership of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's governing board.

Normally, expanding an 11-member board to 15 isn't something to be encouraged. However, two of the four new members will be representatives from Valley communities who are experienced in dealing with lung diseases and air quality science.

They're needed to provide valuable urban and public health perspectives.

If there is one less death because Valley air is cleaner and healthier, Machado deserves credit for his determination to make this agency's membership more equitable and representative.

The air board has broad regulatory power but for too long has been dominated by board of supervisors members largely representing rural and agricultural interests. The result has been a rural-agricultural imbalance in its rulings and enforcement.

"Cleaning the Valley air is everyone's responsibility," said Machado, one of only three Valley lawmakers to vote for the legislation. Sen. Dean Florenz, D-Shafter, and Assemblyman Juan Arambula, D-Fresno, were the others.

Machado and clean-air activists hope their can be reconciliation and cooperation with those board members who vigorously opposed the changes.

It might take awhile, but Machado's legislation is a "step in the right direction," said Carolina Simunovic of the Fresno Metro Ministry, who is a proponent of the board's expansion. If Valley residents ultimately can breathe cleaner air, Machado's efforts will have paid off for everyone.

[Letter to the Merced Sun-Star, Friday, Oct. 19, 2007:](#)

### **Raceway to disaster**

I have two things I want to vent on this time.

First, since every airport in the Valley has "Yosemite" in the name, how can adding it to the Castle Airport name increase interest in the use of Castle as an airport? It will be "ho-hum" another Yosemite to most companies and individuals. Also, the choices in names that have been in the paper dishonor Loren Castle and the retirees who served at Castle, including myself.

Second, where are the naysayers on the Wal-Mart Distribution Center when it comes to the raceway? Just because the raceway would be on the opposite side of Merced doesn't mean the added pollution would not affect them.

If the raceway were in operation full tilt, there would be twice the pollution as the Wal-Mart Center and probably fewer local jobs. With the state-required changes in diesel fuel the pollution would be half what the naysayers are predicting. Wal-Mart is already singing 900 jobs that would take a lot off the unemployed list.

The raceway is already costing taxpayers money whereas Wal-Mart doesn't really need taxpayers' money to build or operate.

Now, what are the arguments against my comments?

*William L. Roberts, Merced*

[Letter to the Sacramento Bee, Friday, Oct. 19, 2007:](#)

### **ARB isn't doing course correction**

Re "Clearing the air," editorial, Oct. 5: The action the state Air Resources Board took in September on the San Joaquin Air Quality Management Plan was not a course correction as you state, but compliance with the board's instructions to staff at its June 14 meeting preceding adoption of the San Joaquin Valley plan.

The board instructed staff to explore additional actions that could be included to further reduce emissions and accelerate improvements in air quality. At its September meeting, the board added 26 to 31 tons of nitrogen oxide reduction to the state commitment and promised to work with the San Joaquin district to identify additional reductions.

These are appropriate and commendable actions, which should, as stated in an ARB press release, "improve ozone air quality in the San Joaquin Valley by some 90 percent by 2018." Note that this is not a commitment to meet the federal eight-hour ozone standard by 2018. Additional measures that are needed to meet the eight-hour ozone standard by 2024, or earlier if possible, await identification.

*Robert Sawyer, Oakland*  
*Former Chairman, State Air Resources Board*