

Renewable energy could power Valley economy

By Jeff St. John / The Fresno Bee

Tuesday, Dec. 4, 2007

Renewable energy -- from solar power farms to biomass plants that convert crops to biofuels and dairy waste to natural gas -- is booming, and the central San Joaquin Valley is poised to capture a large share of that boom.

That's the message that the San Joaquin Valley Clean Energy & Fuels Conference brought to Fresno on Monday, as businesspeople, elected officials and community members met to talk over how the Valley can position itself to prosper from the rapidly growing industry.

"The San Joaquin Valley will begin to prosper when we move into these new energy technologies, because we have the resources to make it happen," U.S. Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Pleasanton, told an audience of about 300 at the Fresno Convention Center.

With plenty of sun and some of the nation's most productive agricultural land, the Valley already is home to many renewable energy projects, including ethanol and biodiesel plants, dairy waste-to-natural gas projects and photovoltaic solar farms.

In fact, Fresno is distinguished with some landmark solar projects, including a 2-megawatt solar array at Fresno Yosemite International Airport that is among the largest at any airport in the nation, and a 1.2-megawatt solar power system at California State University, Fresno, that is among the largest at any U.S. university.

But with the industry growing by leaps and bounds -- driven by concerns over global warming, national energy security and the threat of worldwide petroleum depletion -- the Valley must seek to attract even more investment, conference organizers said.

And that in turn could lead to more and better-paying jobs for Valley residents, as well as play a part in improving the region's poor air quality, they said.

"We need to be working on those opportunities that unite us all," said Pete Weber, a board member with California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, a public-private partnership formed by Gov. Schwarzenegger to tackle the region's economic, environmental and social problems.

The San Joaquin Valley Clean Energy Organization -- a group created by the partnership to organize and assist companies and public agencies seeking to build the region's renewable energy portfolio -- co-hosted Monday's event to seek input from conferencegoers on how it should focus its efforts, director Paul Johnson said.

The group has formed a partnership with the 25 x 25 Initiative, a group of business and political leaders that is pushing for America to produce 25% of its energy from renewable sources by 2025, Johnson said.

The city of Visalia also signed on with the group to seek ways it can become a model "green city," said Visalia Deputy City Manager Leslie Caviglia.

State mandates calling for drastic reduction of greenhouse gases and increasing utilities' portfolio of renewable energy sources will drive investment in renewable energy, said state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter.

But the government shouldn't neglect the need to improve air quality in the Valley while it seeks ways to cut back on greenhouse gases that cause global warming, he said.

State Assembly Member Juan Arambula, D-Fresno, said several state laws passed this year will help boost renewable energy investment, including a law that provides incentives for solar water heating systems and another that provides about \$100 million for clean energy research.

Arambula said he hopes to push for a bill next year that will encourage private investment in renewable energy projects in the Valley.

Cutting edge ideas on display at clean energy conference

By Seth Nidever

Hanford Sentinel, Tuesday, Dec. 4, 2007

In a building that looks like a greenhouse, Jake De Raadt has cutting-edge technology that turns cow manure into electricity-generating methane at his Lemoore dairy.

Too bad it's not profitable enough for him to run it right now.

De Raadt's situation highlights the pitfalls and the promises of clean air fuels and technologies, several of which were on display at a clean energy conference held in Fresno on Monday.

Motivation for the conference is provided by several looming environmental deadlines, among them a landmark 2006 greenhouse gas reduction law that requires California businesses to reduce emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and a separate clean air mandate to dramatically cut San Joaquin Valley smog by 2024.

From ethanol plants to ultra-low emissions irrigation pumps to manure-powered electricity, clean energy technology is becoming more commonplace in the San Joaquin Valley's agricultural economy as environmental regulation spurs more research into lower pollution technologies

Companies, government agencies and environmental groups came to Fresno Monday to figure out what is available -- and what needs to be made available -- to help industries comply.

Several clean energy technology firms were there to tout the benefits of biofuels and biogas -- the stuff coming out of De Raadt's methane digester.

The discussion identified various types of biofuels that can be made from a variety of crops.

Kings County farmers already produce a substantial amount of corn, some of which will be available for ethanol production in plants in the San Joaquin Valley.

There was talk at the conference of using plant products to make biodiesel, a reputedly cleaner-burning version of the current petroleum-based diesels.

And there was talk of installing more methane digesters to harness the power of 1.5 million milking cows on more than 2,000 dairies statewide.

But the conference also showed the barriers to such talk becoming reality.

The conclusion for biofuels was that, except for the fuel additive ethanol, they won't be in widespread use for some time to come -- if ever.

The conclusion for biogas is that there are still a lot of glitches that have to be worked out.

They include overlapping regulatory agencies, not enough research about the effectiveness of methane digesters and lack of cooperation from utilities, according to Ricardo Amon, manager of the Energy in Agriculture program at the California Energy Commission and one of the presenters at the conference.

California needs to require PG&E to buy the excess power that methane digesters produce, Amon said.

Under De Raadt's current arrangement -- called net metering -- he gets credit off of his PG&E electricity bill for every kilowatt that goes from his digester to power his dairy.

The problem for him is he doesn't get paid for the extra power his digester produces -- a lot of it. It goes onto the grid and PG&E claims it, he said.

De Raadt said he is trying to negotiate a contract whereby he will get paid for the extra.

"There is definitely a lot of potential ... if you get a fair return for the electricity you are generating," De Raadt said.

De Raadt's methane digester may be the only one in Kings County.

Dino Giacomazzi, who runs a dairy just east of Hanford, said he decided against one.

"There's a lot of claims being made in this industry that aren't necessarily backed up by a lot of solid science," he said.

Giacomazzi is thinking about covering a manure lagoon, flaring off the methane and selling the emissions reduction credits on the open market.

California's new greenhouse gas reduction law allows businesses to buy and sell emissions reduction credits like shares of stock.

The biggest barrier to methane digesters is the current unwillingness of the utilities to pay market rates for gas or electricity, Giacomazzi said.

Giacomazzi is currently implementing another practice that cuts emissions: Conservation tillage.

It involves a tractor pulling a complicated apparatus that plows, tills, compacts and plants in one pass over the field, a practice that cuts diesel emissions.

It also does something called carbon sequestration, which basically means the less you till the ground, the less carbon gas is released into the atmosphere.

Giacomazzi pointed out that he adopted conservation tillage because it gives "the same or increased yields with dramatically reduced labor costs and tractor passes in the field."

"Environmental benefits go hand-in-hand with economic benefits. They aren't mutually exclusive," he said.

Study: Drivers face higher risk of cancer

By Francine Brevetti, staff writer

Tri-Valley Herald, Wed., Dec. 5, 2007

OAKLAND - Ghermai Ogbe has driven his truck to pick up and deliver cargo at the Port of Oakland for the last six years.

His livelihood, however, may be killing him.

"If we go to the port and the port is busy, you have 150 trucks idling for half an hour. It's not healthy for us," Ogbe said.

A study released Tuesday by the national Natural Resources Defense Council and the Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports, based in Oakland, said truck drivers who serve the Port of Oakland on a daily basis have a higher risk of cancer because of the emissions of diesel fuel.

Diesel particulate matter emitted by trucks is estimated to cause 70 percent of the total cancer risk from air pollution, the study reports.

Diane Bailey, scientist with the NRDC's environment and health program, said the amount of diesel particulate exposure at the port increased the health risk to twice the level deemed safe by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

The surrounding neighborhood of West Oakland, where one in five children is diagnosed with asthma, is also at risk, said community activist Margaret Gordon, representing the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project.

The study was conducted by inserting air monitors in the cabs of seven truck drivers for a total of 68 hours. When samples were taken, Bailey said, "The diesel levels were 10 times higher than the level in residential areas of Oakland."

Five of the drivers reported health difficulties including back pain, breathing problems, asthma and eye problems, the study said.

Doug Bloch, director of the Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports, said truck drivers who serve the port are helpless to change the situation. Because they are independent contractors, they cannot afford to buy newer, clean trucks or fit their equipment with technology to reduce emissions.

"They earn on average \$8 an hour and have no health insurance," Bloch said.

The coalitions urged the port to use its leverage as a landlord to exact efficiencies from trucking companies and clean up the port's truck fleet.

However, Bailey and Bloch noted that trucking companies do not own trucks and that truck drivers themselves are ill-equipped to make these changes. Therefore, they urged the Port of Oakland to follow through on its proposal that trucking companies employ truck drivers rather than using them as independent contractors. In this way, the trucking companies would finance the acquisition of cleaner trucks and give their drivers health benefits and a living wage.

Since the port made this proposal earlier this year, it has tempered its commitment to this plan in public statements.

Bailey said the California Air Resources Board is expected Friday to set regulations on air quality at the state's ports.

Port of Los Angeles marks 100 years since its creation

By Art Marroquin, Staff Writer

LA Daily News, Wednesday, December 5, 2007

San Pedro Bay had been struggling as a port for nearly a half-century, but the mud flats surrounding the inland harbor failed to excite railroad magnate Collis P. Huntington.

So rather than run his Southern Pacific Railroad down to San Pedro, Huntington bought more than 200 acres in Santa Monica in the hope of bolstering his vision for a "Port Los Angeles."

He built a wharf that extended 4,720 feet into the Pacific Ocean, attracting more than 300 cargo ships during its first year in 1893.

"He wanted people to think his port was close to Los Angeles, when in fact it wasn't," said Ernest Marquez of West Hills, who chronicled Huntington's efforts in his 1975 book "Port Los Angeles: A Phenomenon of the Railroad Era."

"If he was successful, then the region's economy would have been at the mercy of Southern Pacific and that would have been disastrous," Marquez said.

While Huntington tried to get his Santa Monica port recognized as the official harbor for the Los Angeles region, efforts were already under way to bulk up the port in San Pedro.

U.S. Sen. Stephen M. White, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and Los Angeles Times Publisher Harrison Gray Otis believed the port should be a city-operated enterprise and pushed efforts to build a "Port of Los Angeles" in San Pedro Bay.

"Those men saw potential for the mud flats in San Pedro," Marquez said. "They believed the harbor could be developed by lots of digging and dredging."

To a lesser extent, interests in Redondo Beach and Playa del Rey had tried to enter the fray, but those efforts quickly fell by the wayside, setting the scene for an epic battle that became known as the "Free Harbor Contest."

Congress established the River and Harbor Act of 1896, which created a commission to decide whether federal funds should go to Santa Monica or San Pedro.

Three years later, Congress put its money on San Pedro and breakwater construction began a short time afterward.

"There was no way a harbor of this magnitude could have been developed in Santa Monica because there are too many cliffs on the beach, and it was wide open to the ocean," Marquez said. "San Pedro was favored because the harbor went inland and protected ships from the open seas."

The city of Los Angeles then annexed a 16-mile strip of land to connect to the port in 1906. The communities of San Pedro and Wilmington were annexed three years later.

The city's newfound ownership of the port gave rise to a new harbor commission, a three-member panel appointed in 1907 by then-Mayor A.C. Harper.

The 100th anniversary of the harbor commission's creation will be marked during a celebration at 4 p.m. Sunday.

The bash will include historical displays, refreshments, boat shows and a performance by Taiwan's Evergreen Symphony Orchestra. A fireworks display is set for 7 p.m.

The first commissioners - George H. Stewart, Frederick William Braun and T.E. Gibbon - regularly met in downtown Los Angeles and made "big news" during the rare occasions they traveled about 20 miles south to San Pedro, according to Geraldine Knatz, executive director for the Port of Los Angeles.

The panel didn't have a budget and its members often had to pay for expenses out of their own pockets, she said.

"When the voters approved the annexation and bond improvements for port improvements, the money went to the Board of Public Works, not the harbor commissioners," Knatz said. "It got so bad that all the commissioners resigned in disgust by 1913."

The first harbor commission faced many of the struggles that persist today, such as building new infrastructure and bolstering regional economic development, Knatz said.

"When you read through the meeting minutes from 100 years ago, you learn that nothing really changes," Knatz said. "There will never be enough money, you'll be lobbied by different interest groups, and you'll always have to deal with residents who live near the port. It's always going to be hard."

The port has come a long way since those early years, with the arrival of cargo container ships in 1937, the advent of towering gantry cranes during the late 1960s and, more recently, an environmental push aimed at reducing diesel emissions from ships and trucks.

About 15.8 million cargo units passed through the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach last year, accounting for more than 40 percent of the nation's imports. That number is expected to double by 2020 and nearly triple by 2030, according to local economist John Husing.

Additionally, some 500,000 people in Southern California are employed directly and indirectly by port-related businesses, Husing said last month.

"The port is a vital part of our national economy, but it is just as important locally, providing good jobs for generations of local residents," said Los Angeles City Councilwoman Janice Hahn, whose 15th District includes the port.

To remain competitive, the port must continue to grow while also keeping the environment in mind, Husing said.

Several shipping companies operating at the Port of Los Angeles are studying expansion options that call for environmentally friendly accommodations, such as AMP technology that allows container ships to "plug in" to a generator and operate on electrical power while docked, rather than idling on their diesel engines.

China Shipping was the first company to use the technology at the Port of Los Angeles, resulting in the elimination of 300 tons of pollution-forming nitrogen oxides since 2004, according to port officials.

"Growing green is imperative if any kind of expansion is going to happen," Knatz said. "It's always difficult to be out front on these issues, but we can't afford to be a follower."

Indeed, the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach approved a clean air plan in 2006 aimed at reducing emissions by 50 percent over the next five years.

The ports are poised in 2008 to roll out the plan's first provisions, including a so-called Clean Trucks Program that calls for replacing or retrofitting about 16,000 diesel-spewing big rigs with cleaner-burning vehicles by 2012.

"The time has come for us to truly commit to cleaning up our air and limiting emissions from the port," Hahn said. "It is my hope that working together, we can finally have both a productive and efficient port, but also clean and healthy communities."

States will ask EPA to regulate airline emissions

By Barbara De Lollis
USA TODAY, Wed., Dec. 5, 2007

In the latest attempt to force the U.S. government to do more to tackle global warming, California and a group of other states and environmental groups are expected to ask the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to crack down on airline emissions, according to newspaper reports Wednesday.

California Attorney General Jerry Brown is expected to file a petition with the EPA asking the agency to impose limits on aircraft emissions of carbon dioxide, the most prevalent greenhouse gas.

"Global warming is such a big challenge that wherever we can reduce greenhouse gases, we must do so. The EPA has abdicated its responsibility in this area for years, and it won't do its job until it's legally required to do so," Brown told the *San Francisco Chronicle* in a report published Wednesday.

Among those said to be joining California's effort are the states of Connecticut, New Jersey, New Mexico and Pennsylvania, plus New York City and the District of Columbia, Earthjustice, Friends of the Earth, Oceana and the Center for Biological Diversity.

U.S. airlines' largest trade group, the Air Transport Association, on Wednesday disputed the need for the government to limit greenhouse gas emissions for airlines.

"The commercial airlines already are driven to be as fuel efficient and environmentally conscious as possible," said David Castleveter, spokesman for the ATA. Fuel costs account for about 28% of an airline's operating costs.

U.S. airlines have improved their fuel efficiency 103% since 1978, Castleveter says, and ATA member airlines have committed to another 30% fuel efficiency improvement by 2025.

But the petitioners want the government to act, especially as air traffic grows. The Federal Aviation Administration predicts air traffic will rise 60% by 2025. The *Chronicle*, citing EPA figures, says aircraft account for up to 12% of greenhouse gas emissions produced by the U.S. transportation sector.

Europe has already taken steps to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from aircraft. Last month, the European Parliament backed plans to cap greenhouse gas emissions on airlines flying within or into the 27-nation European Union. The airlines will be subject to the rules in 2011. The program, which involves buying and selling of pollution allowances, has been criticized by U.S. airlines.

The three environmental groups participating in today's filing say the EPA could lower aircraft pollution by forcing airlines to change the way they operate and encourage investment in new technology, according to the *Chronicle*. The petition says airlines can reduce fuel consumption by cutting the time planes are permitted to idle on runways and requiring the use of only one engine when they taxi to gates.

Brown pursues emissions limits on airlines

By Michael Gardner, Copley News Service
San Diego Union Tribune, Wed., Dec. 5, 2007

SACRAMENTO – Attorney General Jerry Brown will take California's campaign to curb global warming to the skies today, petitioning the Bush administration to impose greenhouse gas emission standards on airlines.

Brown's petition faces long odds. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has stalled California's plans to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from cars, and it may be reluctant to burden an airline industry staggered by high fuel costs and just emerging from an economic downturn.

Nevertheless, Brown insisted that the state must push ahead.

"This is their job. They've been passive, complicit," Brown said in an interview. "We have to hammer on the door."

Four states, the city of New York and leading environmental groups joined in filing the petition.

The Federal Aviation Administration estimates that 3 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions can be traced to aircraft. The FAA projects domestic airline emissions will grow 60 percent by 2025.

In a statement, the EPA said it would review the petition but staunchly defended its policy of encouraging voluntary reductions that have paid dividends.

"In 2006, EPA climate change efforts prevented an estimated 100 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions – equivalent to the annual emissions from more than 60 million vehicles," according to the statement.

California has targeted automobiles and light trucks but not aircraft in its ongoing effort to reduce carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas linked to global warming.

Brown conceded that imposing standards on foreign carriers may be problematic.

The Air Transport Association, an airline trade group, said it welcomes a review of engine standards.

"They will decide engine regulation isn't necessary because the airlines are already motivated to be as fuel-efficient as possible," said Nancy Young, the airline association's vice president of environmental affairs.

Fuel is the No. 1 expense – overtaking labor costs. By moving to save fuel airlines are, in effect, significantly reducing emissions, Young said.

Petition Seeks Curbs on Plane Emissions

By Terence Chea, The Associated Press

S.F. Chronicle, Washington Post and other papers, Wed., Dec. 5, 2007

SAN FRANCISCO -- A coalition of states and environmental groups is urging the federal government to curb global warming pollution from planes and other aircraft.

California, Connecticut, New Jersey, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia plan to file a petition Wednesday asking the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from domestic and foreign aircraft departing or landing at American airports.

"We want the EPA to take their head out of the sand and actively promulgate rules to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," California Attorney General Jerry Brown told The Associated Press. "The EPA has taken a very passive and unimaginative approach to combating global warming."

Aviation is responsible for about 3 percent of the country's overall carbon dioxide emissions, and the Federal Aviation Administration expects domestic aircraft emissions to rise by 60 percent by 2025, according to the petition.

The petition asks the EPA to develop rules to reduce aircraft emissions by requiring operators to boost fuel efficiency, use cleaner fuels or build lighter, more aerodynamic airplanes.

Earthjustice, an Oakland-based environmental law firm, plans to file a similar petition on behalf of Friends of the Earth, Oceana and the Center for Biological Diversity. The city of New York and California's South Coast Air Quality Management District joined the states' petition.

EPA officials said the agency will review the petitions after they're filed but defended its efforts to combat global warming.

"The U.S. has invested over \$37 billion on climate change science, technology and tax incentive programs _ more than any other country in the world," the EPA said in statement.

The Air Transport Association, which represents the country's major airlines, said establishing a greenhouse gas emissions standard for aircraft engines was not necessary "when the commercial airlines already are driven to be as fuel efficient and environmentally conscious as possible."

U.S. airlines have doubled their fuel efficiency over the past three decades and are committed to boosting fuel efficiency by another 30 percent by 2025, according to the ATA.

California and several conservation groups filed a similar petition in October asking the EPA to limit emissions of heat-trapping gases from cargo ships, cruise liners and other oceangoing vessels.

Attorney General Brown petitions EPA to regulate aircraft emissions

Jane Kay, Chronicle Environment Writer
S.F. Chronicle, Wed., Dec. 5, 2007

Air travel contributes to global warming, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency should curb carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases emitted from airplanes, according to petitions expected to be filed today by California, four other states and three environmental groups.

California Attorney General Jerry Brown and the other petitioners want the EPA to start imposing tough limits on plane emissions within six months. The federal government now does not regulate greenhouse gas emissions from aircraft or any other vehicles, including cars and trucks.

"Global warming is such a big challenge that wherever we can reduce greenhouse gases, we must do so. The EPA has abdicated its responsibility in this area for years, and it won't do its job until it's legally required to do so," Brown said Tuesday.

Brown said it is "rather shocking that states and citizens have to go to court to do what the EPA is paid to do."

Aircraft account for up to 12 percent of greenhouse gas emissions produced by the U.S. transportation sector, according to the EPA. And without stricter emissions controls, it will only get worse: By 2025, U.S. air traffic is expected to rise by 60 percent, according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

Because planes travel miles above Earth's surface, they have a disproportionate impact on climate change, scientists say. Gases and particles more potently form ozone, a greenhouse gas, when released in the upper troposphere and lower stratosphere than when emitted on the ground, they say.

In addition, the pollutants and water vapor discharged high in the atmosphere can alter greenhouse gas concentrations. The vapor can cause formation of condensation trails, or contrails, and heat-trapping cirrus clouds, which many scientists believe accelerate the warming effect.

The petitions are directed at EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson. On Tuesday, the agency issued a statement saying it would review the petitions when it received them. Federal law allows the agency 180 days to respond.

The EPA statement also noted that the United States has invested more than \$37 billion on science, technology and tax incentive programs relating to climate change. Voluntary programs such as Energy Star have prevented millions of tons of greenhouse gas emissions, it said.

Today's petitions are the most recent attempt by environmental groups and some states, including California, to force the EPA to do more to combat global warming. In October, California filed a petition with the EPA urging it to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from ships. The state has been fighting in court for years to defend its law that regulates carbon dioxide emissions from cars and trucks sold in the state.

In 2005, the EPA tightened its emissions limits on nitrogen oxides for new commercial aircraft engines, coming into alignment with the United Nations' International Civil Aviation Organization's international standards for conventional pollutants. Nitrogen oxides, along with other pollutants, produce ozone.

The international group doesn't have limitations on carbon dioxide. Last month, the European Parliament gave preliminary approval to require reductions in carbon dioxide from airplanes flying out of Europe beginning in 2011.

In a companion petition, three environmental groups - Friends of the Earth, Oceana and the Center for Biological Diversity - argue that the EPA could effectively reduce aircraft pollution by requiring short-term changes in how airplanes operate and encouraging long-term investment in new technology.

"Aviation greenhouse gas emissions are increasing faster than voluntary improvements in fuel efficiency," said Alice Thomas, an attorney with Earthjustice, the San Francisco legal group that filed the petition on behalf of the environmental groups.

Some changes in aircraft operations that could occur now include reducing how long planes are allowed to idle, using only one engine when taxiing and better controlling engine thrusts during takeoffs and landings.

Airlines could use improved technology and design to reduce the weight and drag of their planes, which would reduce the use of fuel. Airplanes could be lightened and streamlined if they were made using lightweight composite materials and differently designed wings and propellers, the environmentalists' petition said.

That petition cites strides in aeronautic research, including the new Boeing 787 Dreamliner that will be in the air beginning next year. The plane is made of lightweight carbon composite, uses some new engine technologies and is 20 percent more fuel efficient than aircraft of similar size, the petition said.

It's clear that the federal government has authority to regulate aircraft, particularly under a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling, the petitions say. In April, the court ruled that under the Clean Air Act, the EPA can regulate any pollutant that contributes to "air pollution which may reasonably be anticipated to endanger public health or welfare."

Already global warming poses "serious threats to public health and welfare," including an anticipated decrease in water supplies in California, which leads the nation in the production of fresh vegetables and specialty crops, the state's petition said.

California faces an increase in wildfires, more frequent and more intense heat waves and smog, as well as a decrease in tourism that depends on its snowpack and healthy forests, it said.

Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New Mexico, Connecticut and Washington, D.C., and New York City officials plan to file similar petitions with the EPA Wednesday.

Aircraft emission cuts urged

California joins others in petitioning the EPA for new restrictions.

By Margot Roosevelt, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times, Wed., Dec. 5, 2007

Charging the Bush administration with a "gross dereliction of duty," California Atty. Gen. Jerry Brown said he would petition the Environmental Protection Agency today to crack down on rising aircraft emissions that contribute to global warming.

"This is a battering ram," said Brown, who is joined in his petition by four states, New York City, the District of Columbia and Southern California air pollution officials. "Climate change is the most important environmental issue facing the U.S. and the world. We have to keep pounding on the White House door until they finally wake up."

The petition comes as diplomats gather in Bali to revive international negotiations on climate change, and it opens a new front in the battle to ratchet down the emission of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol did not directly cover aviation, and the U.S., which is responsible for almost half of global aircraft exhaust, has fought efforts to cap emissions under the International Civil Aviation Organization, a United Nations body.

Aviation accounts for about 2% of worldwide carbon dioxide emissions. But jet-fuel exhaust, unlike the tailpipe pollution of cars and trucks, occurs miles above the Earth's surface in the delicate stratosphere, where it creates swaths of icy condensation, boosts ozone levels and magnifies the heat-trapping effect.

Pressure is mounting on governments worldwide to enact new rules. But the airline industry, battered by bankruptcies, terrorist threats and anger over flight delays and crowding, sees regulation as unnecessary.

The Air Transport Assn., a trade group for U.S. airlines, says carriers have doubled their fuel efficiency since 1978. And the companies say they are already adopting the sorts of measures the EPA might require, such as investing in lighter aircraft, winglets to reduce drag and cutting-edge software to direct routes. They are embracing more gradual landing approaches and reducing idling, they say.

"We are not afraid for EPA to look at this question," said Nancy Young, the Air Transport Assn.'s vice president of environmental affairs. Young noted that the aviation industry "drives 8% of the world economy" but is projected to account for only 5% of global emissions by 2050. "That's good bang for the buck," she said.

Still, in the U.S. as well as in such developing nations as China and India, air travel is booming, recovering from a lull after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and subsequent plots. Over the next half-century, aircraft emissions are expected to triple, according to the U.N.'s International Panel on Climate Change.

That makes aviation a particular concern, because global carbon dioxide pollution must be slashed by at least 80% by mid-century, according to scientific consensus, if the worst effects of climate change -- including rising sea levels, catastrophic wildfires, floods, spreading deserts, water shortages and species extinction -- are to be avoided.

Earthjustice, an Oakland-based legal group, was to file a similar petition today on behalf of three national environmental groups: Oceana, Friends of the Earth and the Center for Biological Diversity.

"There is an unrelenting global demand for increased air transport of both passengers and goods," said Alice Thomas, an Earthjustice attorney, noting that the U.S. and China recently signed an agreement to double passenger flights by 2012.

In Europe, the push for restrictions is even stronger. In August, 1,200 protesters tried to block an expansion of London's Heathrow Airport on the grounds that it would exacerbate global warming. And, last month, the European Parliament voted to bring aviation into its emission-trading system, requiring all airlines flying within or into Europe, including U.S. carriers, to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by 10% or buy pollution credits from other companies. The measure is expected to be approved by EU governments early next year, and would take effect in 2011.

In the U.S., emissions from domestic flights have grown by 15% since 1990, while passenger miles have increased more than fourfold over the same period. Of particular concern is the rapid expansion of corporate and private jet travel.

"The math is simple," Air Transport Assn. President James May testified before Congress this year. "Carrying 250 people and cargo across the country in a single plane burns a lot less fuel than over 30 separate corporate jets, each flying six people."

In September, the association pledged to improve fuel economy an additional 30% over the next 18 years. It is also lobbying Congress for a satellite-based air traffic control system, which, it

estimates, would save as much as 15% in fuel.

The petitions to spur federal rules for airline emissions follow efforts, led by California, to force car and truck manufacturers to slash the tailpipe emissions of carbon dioxide. The state has sued the EPA to allow it to enact its own tailpipe rules. And in October, Brown filed a petition, along with environmental groups, asking the EPA to crack down on greenhouse gas emissions from oceangoing vessels.

Joining Brown's aviation petition were Connecticut, New Jersey, New Mexico and Pennsylvania. The South Coast Air Quality Management District -- the smog control agency for Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties -- also signed on.

There is no specific deadline for the EPA to respond to the petition.

EPA spokeswoman Margot Perez-Sullivan declined to address the issue of aircraft regulation.

However, she noted that various voluntary programs last year "prevented an estimated 100 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions, equivalent to the annual emissions from more than 60 million vehicles."

Senators focus on emissions

Boxer leads committee that will consider 150 possible amendments to legislation intended to limit warming

By David Whitney, MCCLATCHY WASHINGTON BUREAU
Contra Costa Times Wed., Dec. 5, 2007

WASHINGTON -- After 20 hearings and countless speeches on the Senate floor warning of the risks of failure, a key committee starts work today on historic legislation to dramatically reduce global warming.

It's a tall order. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee's chairwoman, Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., the chamber's leading liberal, said she was up to the task.

"This is the biggest week of my life," she said Monday.

Critics, led by the committee's senior Republican, Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma, also are energized for the fight.

Inhofe is a global warming skeptic who says rising temperatures have more to do with cyclical changes than with the burning of fossil fuels such as oil and coal.

By midday Tuesday, Republicans had filed more than 150 possible amendments. Inhofe has complained bitterly that the sweeping legislation, intended to cut carbon dioxide emissions by more than half by 2050, will impose huge costs on consumers and will hurt oil- and coal-producing states such as his.

Matthew Dempsey, spokesman for the committee minority, said Republicans wouldn't maneuver to delay or kill the legislation.

"It's a foregone conclusion it's going to pass," he said.

Rather, he said, the committee meeting "will provide Senator Inhofe and committee members the opportunity to raise major concerns about the bill, including the severe economic harm this bill will place upon American families and the American economy."

The legislation was introduced by Sens. Joseph Lieberman, I-Conn., and John Warner, R-Va.

It would cap emissions and reduce them by 60 percent by 2050 through an allocation system under which companies are assigned pollution credits that can be bought, sold and traded.

The bill has the endorsement of leading industry and environmental organizations, but it also has its critics. Among the complaints is that it doesn't reduce greenhouse gas emissions enough and rewards the coal industry by initially offering cost-free emission credits based on historic pollution levels.

Boxer will try to fix some of these complaints in a rewrite of the bill that she will offer at the start of today's session.

The changes would add additional controls on emissions by companies that burn natural gas, thus improving the 2050 goal to an overall 70 percent reduction, and would shorten by five years the period that industry would be assigned no-cost pollution credits, to trim the advantage of coal-burning companies.

Her version also will add to the billions of dollars in benefits that states will draw on from the sales of the emission credits to cover such things as transportation improvements and help for low-income families with their higher fuel bills.

Although the legislation won't be as aggressive as California's landmark global-warming law, it has broad backing among environmentalists and won California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's endorsement this week.

"We are well aware that our goals for climate stabilization cannot be achieved without similar efforts by the rest of the country," the governor said in a letter to Boxer.

The committee action comes as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is opening in Bali, Indonesia. Boxer hopes to lead a Senate delegation to the Bali talks with the legislative victory in hand.

"If this gets out of committee, it will send a powerful signal to the nation and the world that change is indeed coming," Boxer said. "This will be the most far-reaching global warming bill in the world."

Nations Divided at Climate Conference

By Michael Casey, The Associated Press
Washington Post, Wed., Dec. 5, 2007

BALI, Indonesia -- Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd urged the United States to follow his country's lead and ratify the Kyoto Protocol, while rich and poor nations appeared divided Wednesday over what a future climate change pact should look like.

Rudd signed documents this week to formally adopt the accord that caps greenhouse gas emissions, reversing a decade of Australian resistance and leaving the United States as the only industrialized country to refuse to sign on.

"Our position vis-a-vis Kyoto is clear cut, and that is that all developed and developing countries need to be part of the global solution," the newly elected prime minister told the Southern Cross Broadcasting radio network in Australia.

"And therefore we do need to see the United States as a full ratification state," he said.

His comments put further pressure on the United States at the U.N. Climate Change conference in Bali, where nearly 190 nations hope to launch a two-year negotiating process that will result in a pact to replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

Failure to continue reducing emissions, experts warn, will almost certainly lead to catastrophic droughts and floods, and deaths linked to heat waves and disease.

The 175-nation Kyoto agreement of 1997 requires 36 industrialized nations to reduce their emissions of heat-trapping "greenhouse gases" — carbon dioxide and some other industrial, agricultural and transportation byproducts — by an average 5 percent below 1990 levels by 2012.

The United States says it wants to be part of the negotiations on a follow-up accord, but refuses to endorse mandatory cuts in emissions favored by the European Union, choosing instead to focus on funding renewable energy projects and improving energy efficiency.

While the conference is in its early days, differences already were emerging, mostly over what should go into the "Bali roadmap," which will lay out the subjects for discussions in the years to come.

Japan, for example, offered up a proposal that doesn't include targets, while the EU has come out with a detailed wish list that includes demands for industrialized countries to take the lead in approving mandatory cuts, strengthening the carbon market and boosting funding to help poor countries adapt.

Meanwhile, delegates and activists say poor countries led by the Group of 77, which represents 132 mainly developing countries and China, have demanded that rich countries speed up the process of providing them with technologies that would help reduce pollution or improve energy efficiency.

They also want funds to adapt to the impact of global warming.

Meena Raman, chairman of Friends of the Earth International, said marathon debates over the issue, some running late into the night, indicated that the West wasn't taking their concerns seriously.

"How on earth can you talk about targets if you don't want to engage on the scope, the depth and need of technology?" she asked reporters. "In the last two days, the sincerity and urgency that is needed and goodwill from the (West) is not happening."

Few had criticism for Australia, however.

Rudd's Labor Party swept to power last month, ending more than 11 years of conservative rule under former Prime Minister John Howard, a staunch ally of President Bush.

Rudd has said he wants Australia to become a broker through "creative middle-power diplomacy." Though small by population, it is wealthy, developed, and has influence among its allies like the United States and Britain, as well as trade partners such as China.

"We've had a bad record on climate change," said Rudd, who is due to arrive in Bali next week. "It's time to put that behind us. I believe that we now need to do whatever we can to bridge the gap between the developed and developing worlds, because right now the gap is huge."

In addition to the United States, he said, China and India, which refuse to sign any deal that would slow their own pace of development, must be prepared to make commitments in the fight.

[Fresno Bee editorials, Wed., Dec. 5, 2007:](#)

Valley ripe for renewable energy source growth

With new resources would come new well-paying jobs.

Fresno and the Valley are poised to play a prominent role in one of the most promising growth industries of the near future -- renewable energy. That's not news to many in the Valley who are already moving in that direction, but it's a message that needs to reverberate in every city council and county board room, in every business and in every school.

How to go about that was the topic of the San Joaquin Valley Clean Energy and Fuels Conference held in Fresno on Monday, and it's good to see such attention focused on this critical area.

The benefits of this economic opportunity are numerous: We must reduce our reliance on imported oil, much of it from nations that are not our friends. We need cleaner forms of energy to aid in the vital task of cleaning the Valley's air. We need the economic boom that will accompany the new technologies of renewable energy. We need the national and international focus -- and prestige -- that will attach to this new technological wave.

The Valley is a natural venue for this development. Solar power, for instance, is a perfect fit in a region with long, hot summer days and abundant sunshine even in winter. An agricultural powerhouse like the Valley is perfectly positioned for growth in the production of biodiesel fuels and ethanol. The large number of dairies in the Valley produce large amounts of waste, a big problem that could be converted to a major asset with technologies for producing natural gas from that waste.

We already have a good start toward this new frontier, with a number of major solar projects completed or under way. The Valley's universities, such as Fresno State and UC Merced, are obvious and necessary catalysts and incubators for the research and development that will spawn new technologies.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands of new jobs hang in the balance, and we're talking about jobs that pay very well in an industry that has a bright future.

To meet that need, local schools will have to begin preparing students in the disciplines that will be required by new renewable energy enterprises -- science, math, biology, engineering. If local residents are not up to speed in those areas, they won't get the jobs that may be created. It would be a terrible shame if newcomers moved into all those high-paying jobs and left existing residents out of the picture.

There are opportunities here that rival those created in the Silicon Valley in the 1980s, and renewable energy may turn out to be a more stable high-tech boom than computers. We can't miss this chance.

Daunting global weather forecast

California can expect intense storms, droughts.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize this year, recently released a report summarizing the consensus of IPCC scientists on the Earth's warming atmosphere. Its findings are daunting for every nation of the world, and for California.

Think the weather has seemed relatively warm in recent years? According to the panel, 11 of the past 12 years (1995-2006) rank among the 12 warmest years in recorded history, dating back to 1850, for global surface temperatures.

The IPCC is unequivocal in concluding that greenhouse emissions, largely from the burning of fossil fuels, are contributing to warming temperatures and rising oceans. Sea levels have risen about a half-foot in the past century, and are now rising even faster because warmer temperatures are melting ice sheets and expanding molecules in sea water.

How high will these oceans rise? Some computer models show that, without a significant reduction in greenhouse gases, the Greenland ice sheet could melt sometime after 2100. Such a steady melt-off would lead to a 23-foot increase in sea levels, according to the IPCC report. That would submerge most of San Diego, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Yet even with less dire projections, the future does not bode well for California. Earlier this year, some people scoffed when the Independent Science Board of the Bay-Delta Authority said the state should prepare for 28 to 39 inches of sea level rise by 2100. The latest IPCC report suggests that those forecasts are on target, with perilous consequences for the Delta and the state's water systems.

The more immediate concern may be how the storm pattern is likely to change.

Although scientists acknowledge that it's difficult to forecast regional (as opposed to the worldwide) impacts of climate change, they expect California to experience more intense storms and droughts in the future.

The average yearly snowpack is likely to decrease. That means that big rains will fall on barren (and possibly fire-charred) Sierra slopes. The velocity of runoff coming off the mountains will increase because there will be less snow to buffer it.

For the next two weeks, delegates from the United States and 190 countries are meeting in Bali, Indonesia, for a major United Nations conference on climate change. Alone among the world's industrial powers, the United States is resisting a post-Kyoto framework that would set mandatory caps on greenhouse gases, as California has placed on its own industries.

The consequences of these talks could be as fundamental to our lives as the weather, our water supply and our public safety.

That's one reason California is sending its own delegation to the U.N. meeting. Cal-EPA Secretary Linda Adams is tentatively slated to speak to a plenary session next week. She and others hope the Bali talks will be a turning point in the fight against global warming.

**[Letters to the Fresno Bee, Wed., Dec. 5, 2007:](#)
'Off the deep end'**

In reply to "Two Views" on global warming (Vision Nov. 18): The issue would be better defined as global pollution. Al Gore and his followers should be given credit for giving the issue the recognition it deserves, since there is no argument that breathing cleaner air and being able to see our beautiful Sierras daily would be only two of countless benefits.

I contend that proponents of global warming go off the deep end when they maintain that man is the cause of climate change in every region of our planet. To have such mighty presumptions is totally absurd.

Were there pollution-spewing SUVs, coal mines and jetliners during the steamy climate of the era of the dinosaurs?

Beware of proponents of any politically inspired or manufactured issues. Politicians who refuse to have extended debates or refuse to even be interviewed at length to defend their causes only raise a multitude of red flags about their motives. Passing laws because people, politicians or the

ever-powerful media reach a consensus on any matter is dangerous, since there can be unforeseen consequences.

Shirley Folland, Fresno

We need energy bill

I urge our elected representatives to support efforts to pass a strong and clean energy bill before the end of the year. Such a bill should contain the federal renewable electricity standard of 15% by 2020, as passed by the House, and improvements to car and truck fuel economy, as contained in the Senate bill.

There is no greater threat to our environment than global warming. A 15% renewable electricity standard would put in place the immediate action necessary to begin reducing greenhouse gas pollution. Energy produced from clean, renewable sources -- like properly sited wind and solar power -- is good for the environment, reduces air pollution that affects our health and our children's health, and provides a boon for the economy. The renewable electricity standards in the House bill also allow utilities to use energy efficiency to reach the goal of 15%.

Renewable energy is a key step, but we also need to address fuel economy for vehicles. It has been many years since corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards have been raised. The Senate bill modestly improves CAFE standards to 35 mpg by 2020. That improvement is key to a successful energy package as well.

Howard Clark, Clovis

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Attorney General Jerry Brown's warning to President Bush's administration on a potential second lawsuit that will demand a tighter control on aviation emissions. For more information, contact Claudia Encinas at (559) 230-5851.

California podría demandar al gobierno federal por sobrecalentamiento

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Wed., Dec. 05, 2007

El procurador general de California, Jerry Brown advirtió sobre una segunda potencial demanda de su estado contra la administración del presidente, George W. Bush para exigir control de la contaminación del aire que provoca la industria de la aviación.

Brown, un ex gobernador de California y favorito en encuestas para recuperar ese cargo, dijo que es "más bien sorprendente que los estados y los ciudadanos tengan que ir a cortes para exigir a autoridades ambientales federales que hagan su trabajo".

La aviación produce el doce por ciento de la contaminación el aire que causa el fenómeno invernadero, o sobrecalentamiento terrestre.

California mantiene otra demanda contra Washington, DC para destrabar la ley más estricta contra la contaminación.