

## **District checks air quality near foundry West Berkeley neighbors had complained that foul odor caused headaches, nausea**

By Kristin Bender, staff writer

Tri-Valley Herald, Wed., January 9, 2008

BERKELEY — The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is spending roughly \$750,000 over the next year or so to monitor the air near Pacific Steel Casting, the West Berkeley steel foundry neighbors say emits a foul odor and hazardous toxins.

The air district put the mobile air monitoring trailer last month at Sixth and Camelia streets, about three blocks from Pacific Steel, in the wake of a bevy of problems related to the foundry.

"It's long overdue," said Berkeley community activist L A Wood.

The foundry's problems have included three lawsuits over odor and emissions in the last few years and dozens of complaints from residents about headaches, nausea and a tightness in their chests because of a foul odor.

"The goal here is to locate these trailers in various impacted communities over time so we can better quantify air quality issues in those areas," said air district monitoring manager Eric Stevenson. The district has 31 air monitoring sites around the Bay Area.

Stevenson said the cost of the trailer, a white boxy structure on wheels, was \$250,000. Staff time and other costs for 12 to 18 months — the length of time the trailer will stay in West Berkeley — could run an additional \$500,000.

The trailer is equipped with air monitors on top and computerized monitoring equipment inside. It's surrounded by a barbed wire fence.

Pacific Steel spokeswoman Elisabeth Jewel toured the trailer Tuesday with a few city officials and air district staff members.

"We are interested to see what the data is," she said. "There's never been so much data about air quality in West Berkeley before. The important thing to remember is it collects data from multiple sources and there is no way to distinguish what emissions are coming from what sources."

The air district's trailer comes in the wake of independent testing by volunteers with the Global Community Monitor of San Francisco. Between April and November, a group of volunteers used a portable particulate monitor to conduct 66 tests on rooftops in two dozen locations near the steel foundry.

Denny Larson, the executive director of Global Community Monitor, called the air district's trailer a win for the community.

"It's a huge victory that the trailer is up, and the community, for the first time, will get an idea of what they are breathing and find out where it's coming from," Larson said.

Larson said his group should be credited for helping bring the trailer to West Berkeley.

"They got the ball rolling and started generating data. Before that it was just finger pointing in the other directions, and studies based on calculations rather than actual measurements," Larson said.

Last summer, Global Community Monitor 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.

The air district is still reviewing that data. The group expects to make their final findings public by Jan. 29.

Meanwhile, the health risk assessment report for Pacific Steel will be presented to the public at 6 p.m. today at a community meeting at West Berkeley Senior Center, 1900 Sixth St. Staff from the air district and the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Health will answer questions.

The health assessment was mandated by the air district under a state air pollution control law.

The report, conducted by Environ in Emeryville, a paid consultant for Pacific Steel, shows that cancer risks and non-cancer hazards for those exposed to facility emissions and for those living, attending school or day care near the facility do not pose a "significant risk."

Public comments on the report will be accepted until Jan. 31. Comments or a request for the report should be sent to Scott Lutz, manager of the toxic evaluation section, by e-mail at [slutz@baaqmd.gov](mailto:slutz@baaqmd.gov).

## **Utility turns sludge into fuel Brown grease oozes from pan to tank**

By Doug Oakley, Staff Writer  
Contra Costa Times, Wed., Jan. 9, 2008

A dream of producing a million gallons of biodiesel fuel a year from local restaurant sewage is closer to reality for a small group of scientists thinking big at the East Bay Municipal Utility District.

The utility's treatment plant near the Bay Bridge currently processes about a million gallons a month of coarse, dirty kitchen grease that goes down local restaurant sewer lines.

About four years ago, scientists started researching whether the sludge could be turned into fuel.

In August, they finished a pilot program that produced 50 to 100 gallons of fuel a month, proving the conversion could be done on a massive scale.

Unlike other biodiesel producers who take used fryer oil or "yellow grease" from restaurants and turn it into fuel, the utility is working with "brown grease," which until now has only been turned into fuel in tiny amounts inside laboratories, said Donald Gray, a senior civil engineer who came up with the idea to produce it on a large scale.

Brown grease is the most difficult to turn into biodiesel because it is so dirty, full of plastic, food and water that needs to be separated, said Ben Horenstein, manager of environmental services. And when burned, it tends to give off air-polluting sulfur.

"We were taking the grease and processing it through our treatment facilities. Then there was this concept that we can do what other people are doing with yellow grease," Horenstein said. "We've run four diesel trucks on it with 100 percent biodiesel and different blends, and we've had a lot of success."

If the results of tailpipe emissions tests come out clean at the end of this month, Gray said scientists at the utility plan to urge the board of directors to construct a plant that could produce

enough biodiesel to fuel the 300,000 gallons its diesel engines suck up each year -- and a whole lot more.

"We're not really sure what we would do with the excess (up to 700,000 gallons a year)," Gray said. "There's the potential of selling to the trucks that go right by us on the way to the Port of Oakland. Or we could work out (a plan to sell) to another public agency."

Although a plant could cost anywhere from \$900,000 to \$4 million to build, and the process is expensive by itself, the utility is in a good position to go forward because restaurants pay it to take the grease off their hands, said Horenstein.

"The interesting thing is we think we would break even, given the current price of diesel. But if you project the price out over 15 years, that's where the savings come in," Horenstein said. "Our interest is, 'Can we be sustainable, do the right thing and make it cost-effective?'"

Horenstein said that unlike the city of Berkeley, which lost a couple of diesel engines when it started running 100 percent biodiesel in its trucks a couple of years ago, his engines have "done super; we've had no adverse effects."

Alicia Chakrabarti, assistant engineer at the utility, proved that the biofuel could actually be made on a large scale, after doing research on paper.

She said there are environmental drawbacks to producing biofuel from crops such as soy beans, because oil, gas and land are used to grow the crops in the first place. "So if we can produce fuel from a waste, it's very exciting," Chakrabarti said. "There are other ways to derive energy from waste such as producing methane for electricity but to have something that can replace transportation fuel, that's even more exciting."

Gray said it's satisfying to be able to prove with strict scientific standards that making biofuel from sewage grease is possible.

"There are other groups producing it from brown grease, but in very small batches, and I'm not even sure they have looked at whether it meets (engine and air quality) standards," Gray said. "It's harder with brown grease. For example, if you screw up the process, you get soap instead of fuel."

## **East Bay utility nears biofuel milestone**

By Doug Oakley, STAFF WRITER

Tri-Valley Herald, Wed., January 9, 2008

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## **Congress funds bus service between Dublin, Livermore Project to relieve congestion to eventually cost \$22 million**

By Eric Kurhi, staff writer

Tri-Valley Herald, Wed., January 9, 2008

A program for bus service between the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory was granted \$3 million in federal funds, and officials hope to see service start early next year.

"That was certainly a nice chunk of money to have earmarked for us," said Dublin Mayor Janet Lockhart, who is also chair of the Livermore-Amador Valley Transit Authority board.

She said that is only a small part of the \$22 million the project will eventually cost. But the authority, Lockhart said, is constantly finding sources of revenue.

"We're applying for a lot of grants such as clean air grants," Lockhart said.

"These will be new hybrid diesel-electric vehicles, and we're hoping that a new, rapid bus connection will take a considerable number of cars off the streets."

The federal funding came through the efforts of Reps. Jerry McNerney, D-Pleasanton, and Ellen Tauscher, D-Alamo, who were approached by Tri-Valley mayors with the idea to use such bus lines to relieve roadway congestion. "The congestion on Interstate 580 is all too familiar to Tri-Valley residents and anyone who is forced to sit in what often resembles a parking lot during the morning and evening rush hours," said McNerney in a statement.

"(It means) lost productivity, increased vehicle emissions, and people spending more time in their cars and away from their families."

The planned Livermore lab-BART station service is part of the East Bay Bus Rapid Transit program, which already provides service along some major arteries such as San Pablo Avenue.

The rapid lines use a system of signal sensors that detect when a bus is approaching and extend the green light.

They also will benefit from bus-only lanes that bypass intersections prone to congestion.

The Dublin-to-Livermore line will operate every 15 minutes between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. from the BART station down Owens Drive and Santa Rita Boulevard. It would then take Stanley Boulevard to Railroad Avenue before jogging down to East Avenue and the lab.

Existing routes would remain the same, although once service begins on the new line, peak-hour service along Route 10 would be reduced from every 15 minutes to every 30 minutes.

## **More Euro cities impose congestion fees**

By Jeffrey Stinson, USA TODAY

Wed., January 9, 2008

LONDON — Several European cities are following London by charging or fining drivers in the crowded central part of the city, only the fees are aimed at reducing pollution along with congestion.

As European cities try to clear air pollution that is generally worse than in the USA, the Italian city of Milan and the German cities of Berlin, Cologne and Hanover are imposing the charges as people go back to work this week after the New Year's holiday.

In Milan, drivers must pay up to \$14.70 a day for an "eco-pass" to enter the central city. A vehicle entering Berlin's "environmental zone" must have a special color-coded sticker, based on the emissions level of the model vehicle, or face a fine of \$58.80 and a penalty point on the driver's license.

"Europe is more densely populated than the United States," says Peder Jensen of the European Environment Agency in Copenhagen. "You build up a large concentration of pollution in small areas. U.S. cities are spread out."

The steps come as the European Parliament voted last month for new air quality standards that limit emissions of small, noxious particulates, which are similar to U.S. limits imposed in 1997. The European Commission estimates the proposed standards, if adopted by all European Union nations this year, could reduce early lung-disease deaths by 230,000 by 2020, a 40% reduction compared with 2000.

Jensen says meeting the standards will be "a challenge." He says there is a debate whether pollution fees like Milan's will solve the problem or if they are just a way "for cities to look green."

London has had a "congestion charge" since 2003. The daily toll of about \$16 a day has reduced traffic by 26% and has cut pollution considerably, although how much is still being assessed, Mayor Ken Livingstone's office says. If London has reduced pollution as much as it has traffic, Jensen says, that is progress.

"We think it can work," says Juergen Resch, director of the environmental group Deutsche Umwelthilfe in Berlin. "Up to 60% of the particulates are a result of traffic."

Some drivers, such as Valentina Martinetti, 43, of Milan, questions whether the fees will really cut pollution, because the restricted area is only 3 square miles at Milan's center.

"The traffic will be higher around the city and will not have any effect on pollution overall," she says.

[Lodi News Sentinel commentary, Wed., January 9, 2008:](#)

### **To save the polar bears, we might have to give up our Tundras and Tahoes**

The state has decided to sue the EPA for its decision to protect automakers from strict California environmental laws. Attorney Gary Moonroof has blamed the transportation industry for billions of dollars that taxpayers expect to spend on damages caused by carbon dioxide.

"If automobiles had never been invented, we wouldn't be having this problem now," said the balding Moonroof. "If Henry Ford were alive today, he'd be tried for treason."

Recently, District Judge David Denial struck a stinging blow to Moonroof's claim. The judge said that the prominent attorney does not seem to know the difference between carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide. His holding also stated that Moonroof presented no scientific evidence to reasonably conclude that auto emissions are making any difference with the Earth's temperature.

"Since 97 percent of carbon dioxide is created by the oceans, this lawsuit should be directed at Mother Nature, not the automakers," wrote the judge in his decision.

Moonroof was obviously disappointed in the ruling. "We have plenty of proof," he said. "Al Gore's 'An Inconvenient Truth' should be enough to convince anyone."

The state's attorney was referring to the fact that any movie which wins a Hollywood award for "Best Documentary" is proof well beyond a preponderance of the evidence.

"Just give me the same jury that freed O.J.," said Moonroof. "If I can just reassemble that group of scholars, I know we would get a judgment in our favor."

The state attorney continued by predicting that once the jury saw a movie with polar bears drowning, it would be all over for the carmakers.

An attorney for the automakers scoffed at Moonroof's claim. "He doesn't seem to know that the polar bear population has actually increased over the last 40 years, and that these creatures can actually swim," said Stan Shyster. "If they are just willing to paddle a little bit to the south, I'm sure they would be welcomed with open arms in communities like Seattle, Portland or San Francisco."

Moonroof is not discouraged by Judge Denial's decision. If the EPA suit is dismissed, he vowed his next step would be to sue Mother Nature.

"We've been trying to locate her to serve a subpoena," he said. "So far, she's been quite elusive. We think she may have fled to Mexico."

In the meantime, the ambitious attorney may take his case directly to the people. Moonroof feels that Americans would be solidly behind his plan.

"Our country is only a small fraction of the Earth's surface and population.

But until we remove all automobiles from the roads, or at least tax them \$20,000 apiece annually, this great environmental crisis will not subside," he said.

Moonroof assured news people that China and India would follow, once the United States sets the moral example.

"Hang on to your hats and open your wallets," he told reporters. "I have the utmost confidence that we will lower the temperature of our warming solar system."

[Washington Post editorial, Wed. Jan. 9, 2008:](#)

### **Congress and Climate Change**

#### **The presidential contest should not stop legislative work on global warming.**

THE HOUSE and Senate will return to Washington later this month with a host of problems and issues to address and, this being an election year, the certainty that they won't address most of them. But presidential politics should not be an excuse to impede action on the Lieberman-Warner America's Climate Security Act. The U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that the effects of global warming may be irreversible if action isn't taken within the next decade. The world -- and the United States in particular -- can no longer fiddle while the planet warms.

Under the bill sponsored by Sens. Joseph I. Lieberman (I-Conn.) and John W. Warner (R-Va.) a price would be placed on carbon through a declining cap in greenhouse gas emissions each year between 2012 and 2050. For the right to pollute, companies in the manufacturing, transportation and electric-power sectors would have to purchase and trade allowances. Such a price would discourage emissions and encourage efficiency and the development of new technologies.

The Lieberman-Warner measure, an amalgamation of several other climate-change bills worked on in the Senate last year, deserves a vigorous debate. The implications it would have for the economy and the American people demand it. Such a discussion, combined with the action and debate over the House-Senate energy bill signed by President Bush last month, would demonstrate a level of urgency and engagement in Congress that has not been matched at the White House.

The president's thinking on global warming has evolved over time, but he still balks at legally binding limits on carbon dioxide emissions, either through international agreements or the Lieberman-Warner bill.

That shouldn't stop Congress from pushing ahead with legislation that would signal that the United States is ready to be an active part of the response to climate change.

[Letters to the Fresno Bee, Wed., Jan. 9, 2008:](#)

### **Get rid of leaf blowers**

I am very grateful that the subject of those "nasty" leaf blowers hasn't died down. We need to deal with this problem very soon.

The Environmental Protection Agency is putting all these new regulations on smog control, such as automobile exhaust and fireplace emissions (and that's a good thing), yet at the same time, it's letting some gross polluters slide.

As our air grows worse, we are seeing more and more people suffering from more exaggerated forms of allergies and other breathing ailments such as asthma. Blowing trash and leaves around doesn't dispose of the problem, but instead moves it elsewhere. And it's not just the dust and particles that effect us, there are other issues such as the noise and smoky exhaust fumes that these little machines emit.

Have you ever spent some hard-earned money to get your car washed just in time to drive past a gardener blowing some "pollution" into the street and all over your nice, clean car? The "con" list of these "pesky machines" goes on and on. I agree with people like Kim Thurman and Vicky Shoquist (letters Jan. 3). Something needs to be done.

*John Hernandez, Clovis*

### **Proud farmer**

Re Kevin Hall's Dec. 29 opinion in Valley Voices: I have been farming in the San Joaquin Valley since 1951, working the earth by hand and graduating to becoming a landowner and agricultural producer. I am certain I am not the only farmer who feels punched by Mr. Hall's commentary on farming "myths."

Farmers do care about air quality. We expend a great deal of resources oiling and wetting access roads, shredding orchard waste, changing to more efficient pump motors and closely following guidelines for chemical use.

Mr. Hall's alleged farming information is derived from computer printouts and a calculator. He has not farmed; has not experienced the stress of drought, freeze, labor problems, market tumbles leading to financial ruin or had to comply with the ever-increasing official paper documentation or its proper interpretation.

To opine that we farmers are fraudulent without Mr. Hall having the benefit of relevant life experiences borders on incompetence.

Farmers in the Valley do feed the world. I am proud to be a part of that heritage.

*Melissa Howard, Fresno*

[Letter to the Patterson Irrigator, Sat., Jan. 5, 2008:](#)

### **Jobs needed, not houses**

It seems to me that most people against the West Park project are retired residents. They have enjoyed their life in this beautiful community and don't want to see it changed. Unfortunately, the group is not diverse in ethnicity, age or economic background. For the rest of us who don't have

time to attend meetings all over the county, we need prosperity for the next generation. This generation needs jobs.

I find it ironic that the city of Patterson says it is for jobs, just not for this many jobs. Patterson needs thousands of jobs to fill its empty houses and the thousands of houses it plans to build. Where do they think these people will work? Are they going to join the two-hour commute to the Bay Area, adding even more to the pollution and congestion? If they worked in the county, there would be less pollution and greater quality of life for all of us. We need jobs, not houses.

*Adriana Perez, Modesto Junior College student, Patterson*