

## **Fresno State project may face air fine Campus Pointe threatened with \$75,000 per day.**

By Russell Clemings

The Fresno Bee, Sunday, Jan. 13, 2008

Air pollution regulators are threatening fines of \$75,000 per day against California State University, Fresno, over its much-debated Campus Pointe development.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District made the threat last month in a "notice of violation." The notice charged that the university and developer Ed Kashian have not complied with a requirement that such projects undergo district review and possibly pay fees for their effects on air pollution.

Kashian and the university have not yet responded to the letter, a district official said. Both sides said the dispute revolves around a technical issue -- whether the project was approved by California State University trustees before or after the district's rule took effect in March 2006.

"In our opinion, there was a kind of tentative approval given back in November of '05, but the actual final approval, legally, was in March of '07," when trustees approved the project's final environmental impact report, said Wayne Clarke, the district's Central Region compliance manager.

Ultimately, what's at stake is money -- how much is not yet known -- for a district program aimed at compensating for any new air pollution created by a development project.

The \$167 million Campus Pointe project is to be built on university land just east of the Save Mart Center at Shaw Avenue and Highway 168. It will include 540 apartments, a 200-room hotel and conference center, a 14-screen theater and 230,000 square feet of retail and office space.

Kashian said he has already taken steps to reduce his project's air pollution potential, such as public transit improvements and a project design that encourages walking instead of driving.

He questioned whether the district's fees would be spent on other local air pollution control projects or used for other purposes elsewhere.

"I am not going to send any more money to Sacramento or Washington unless they show me how it's going to benefit our community," he said.

Construction on the first housing at Campus Pointe is ready to begin once building permits are issued, Kashian said.

The university and the developer have until Jan. 31 to respond to the district's notice. After that, the notice warns, the district may "seek full civil penalties and injunctive relief." The maximum fine under state law is \$75,000 per day, the notice says.

## **Tulare to offer ethanol pumps**

**City to become one of first in America to offer new E85 blend fuel.**

By Jeff St. John

The Fresno Bee, Friday, Jan. 11, 2008

TULARE -- Tulare will soon become one of the first cities in California where drivers can fuel up on E85, a blend of 85% ethanol and 15% gasoline.

Out at Stanley's Food Mart and Shell service station on M Street in Tulare, work crews broke ground this week on a new E85 fueling station expected to come online by mid-February.

For station owner Dennis Stanley, the move to E85 comes with some uncertainty. While California has about 300,000 "flex-fuel" vehicles able to run on E85 as well as gasoline, only one station in the state, located in San Diego, now offers the fuel to the public.

But Stanley's two new E85 pumps and the 10,000-gallon tank he's installing are part of a big push -- funded with federal and state grants and backed by major automaker General Motors and Sacramento-based ethanol producer Pacific Ethanol Inc. -- to bring the fuel to California.

Over the coming months, 15 new E85 stations backed by that partnership are set to open in California, said John Boesel, chief executive of CALSTART, a Pasadena-based nonprofit organization that's managing the effort, started in late 2006.

"This is an important first step to building an E85 refueling network in California," he said. While more than 1,000 E85 stations dot the country, most are in the Midwest, where much of the nation's ethanol is produced.

And while many flex-fuel cars able to run on E85 are now in the hands of California drivers, the lack of the fuel's availability might mean those owners don't realize they have fueling options, Boesel said.

Stanley, for his part, said he has seen a lot of word-of-mouth interest in E85 from customers driving flex-fuel vehicles.

"I think the fact that we'll be able to retail it at less than gasoline will also be a good draw," he added. He expects to sell E85 for 20 cents to 30 cents less than gasoline, or possibly even cheaper.

As for customers, Stanley is looking to nearby Highway 99 and waiting to see if the right price will draw enough flex-fuel vehicle drivers to make it worth his while.

"If I can save the customer money and still make a fair margin on it, it will definitely be a win-win deal," he said.

## **Air board targets pollution at ports**

### **Agency proposes its first comprehensive rule to reduce emissions at Bay Area facilities**

By Denis Cuff, Staff Writer

Contra Costa Times, Monday, Jan. 14, 2008

Worried that air pollution from ports is threatening neighbors' health, the Bay Area's clean air agency has proposed its first comprehensive rule to reduce emissions from the ports of Oakland, San Francisco, Richmond, Benicia and Redwood City.

The requirements are likely to stir plenty of debate and questions.

Because ports are magnets for such a wide variety of mobile pollution sources -- ships, trains and trucks -- it's not clear yet what is practical and politically feasible to limit.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District Board, however, is determined to curb emissions from ports, especially at Oakland, a hot spot for concentrations of toxic diesel soot that can aggravate the risk of asthma attacks and heart and lung problems, regulators say.

"Ports are vitally important to our Bay Area economy, but we cannot afford to overlook the health effects of port air pollution any more," said Mark Ross, a Martinez city councilman who chairs the air district.

"We need to work with the ports on how to do this," Ross said. "We're forcing their hand so they come up with emission reductions plans, so we don't have to impose it on them."

Port representatives said it's hard to assess the proposed rule or its compliance costs because it leaves so many issues to be worked out.

"We agree more needs to be done to improve air quality, whether there is a rule or not," said Marilyn Sandifur, spokeswoman for the Port of Oakland.

The port already has taken many pollution-reduction measures, such as helping drivers pay to acquire 70 cleaner diesel trucks and helping others qualify for state money to install pollution filters in their engines.

Environmentalists say it's not fair for port neighbors to breathe dirtier air so Americans can get cheaper tennis shoes imported through local ports.

An air district study last year found that areas downwind of ports and freeways have the region's highest concentrations of toxic air emissions, including diesel. Ports also add to regional pollution loads.

Some 6 percent of the Bay Area's fine soot particles -- called particulates -- comes from sources at the Port of Oakland, the fourth-busiest container port in the nation, according to a port study last year.

Under a draft rule proposal now out for public comment, the air district would require an inventory to estimate the tons of fine particles, sulfur dioxide and smog-forming gases from each of the five ports.

The district would set an overall pollution cap and a series of targets for percentage cuts to be met. Compliance measures could include getting cleaner engines and fuels for trucks and trains, or getting ships to plug into the electric grid for power while in port instead of spewing soot from their diesel engines.

Even as it demanded cuts, the air district would continue to offer grants and subsidies for trucks, ships and trains to convert to cleaner technology to cut diesel emissions, said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the nine-county air quality district.

"It's a carrot-and-stick approach," Broadbent said.

The district also is looking into a different approach to the rules that would not involve an overall emissions cap.

The district might require measures such as cleaner engines in a certain number of trucks by a certain time.

Jim Matzorkis, executive director of Richmond's port, said ports are concerned that an overly strict pollution cap could hurt them.

"If we are told we can only accept certain kinds of trucks or trains, that could put us out of business," he said. "The plan needs to be realistic. All the ports are committed to having cleaner air."

Cutting pollution at public ports such as Richmond and Oakland is complicated because private companies or individuals own the trucks, trains and ships that haul cargo in and out of the port. Some terminal operations are privately operated, too.

This raises the question: How can ports get their many users to act in concert to get cleaner air?

Ross said he believes ports have contractual and business relationships with ships, truckers, railroads and other port users that gives ports leverage to demand cleaner operations.

Environmentalists say that whatever rule is adopted, the air district should write the measure to produce specific gains in improving public health, such as reducing the number of childhood asthma cases in West Oakland.

"It's not enough to set some tonnage goal to meet. We need to find the spots where the pollution is causing a health impact and fix it at a local level," said Brian Beveridge, executive director of the Oakland Environmental Health Indicators Project, a community group.

Beveridge said the air district will be in a better position to write its rules when the state and the air district release a study later this year on the health risks in West Oakland of breathing pollution.

Henry Clark, executive director of the Richmond-based West Contra Costa Toxics Coalition, said he is glad the air district is taking steps to reduce port pollution, as Southern California officials have done in recent years with the Long Beach and Los Angeles ports.

"Port pollution has been largely ignored for a long time," Clark said. "It would be a great leap forward for environmental justice to provide relief for people living near the ports."

## **Rule would cut pollution at Bay ports**

### **Emissions at Oakland blamed for high risk of asthma, heart and lung problems**

By Denis Cuff, Staff Writer

Tri-Valley Herald, Monday, January 14, 2008

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The Bay Area air board, however, is determined to curb emissions from ports, especially at Oakland, a hot spot for concentrations of toxic diesel soot that can aggravate the risk of asthma attacks and the heart and lung problems, regulators say.

"Ports are vitally important to our Bay Area economy, but we cannot afford to overlook the health effects of port air pollution anymore," said Mark Ross, a Martinez city councilman who chairs the Bay Area Air Quality Management District Board.

"We need to work with the ports on how to do this," Ross said. "We're forcing their hand so they come up with emission reductions plans, so we don't have to impose it on them."

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## **Court declines pollution case**

The Associated Press

In the S.F. Chronicle, N.Y. Times and other papers, Monday, Jan. 14, 2008

WASHINGTON-The Supreme Court declined Monday to hear industry complaints that the Environmental Protection Agency should have dropped some old clean air safeguards when it imposed a more stringent air quality standard for ozone.

EPA concluded that its existing standard for ozone exposure was inadequate to protect public health and the agency has estimated it will cost \$9.6 billion a year in increased costs for polluters to comply with the new one.

When regulators relax a standard as opposed to imposing a tougher one, the Clean Air Act contains a section designed to ensure that air quality won't deteriorate in an area.

Safeguards, which regulators refer to as "anti-backsliding" requirements, call for control measures on polluters.

Industry objected in the case of the revised ozone standard when EPA concluded it could use the "anti-backsliding" requirements, even though the agency was imposing a tougher standard rather than easing one.

In raising the ozone standard, regulators had dropped a few of the requirements, but they were reimposed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, which ruled against industry.

The EPA is imposing requirements, regardless of whether they are needed to attain the new, more stringent ozone standard, industry lawyers wrote in asking the Supreme Court to take the case.

Petitioning the court were the National Petrochemical & Refiners Association, the American Chemistry Council, the American Petroleum Institute and the Utility Air Regulatory Group.

Separately, businesses in Baton Rouge, La., also asked the Supreme Court to hear their objection to EPA's position on the new ozone standard.

Lawyers for the businesses said that if Louisiana is forced to revise its pollution control plan, over 150 Baton Rouge businesses will be forced to pay \$65 million to \$100 million a year, threatening thousands of jobs in an economy still overwhelmed by the impact of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, local business groups told the court.

The cases are National Petrochemical v. South Coast Air Quality Management District, 07-311, and South Coast v. EPA, 07-333.

## **Auto Industry Shows Off Fuel-Efficiency**

Modesto Bee, Monday, January 14, 2008

DETROIT (AP) - Hybrids, advanced diesels and green alternatives are pushing aside the traditional displays of speed and chrome at this week's Detroit auto show, a nod to a new fuel-efficient reality for car makers. Automakers, only weeks after Congress approved tougher fuel-efficiency requirements, are broadening their array of cars that get more on a gallon of gasoline, cutting carbon dioxide emissions and using alternative power sources.

## **Streetcar Plan Has Money and Desire Funding Approved for N. Va. Network**

By Michael Laris

Washington Post, Monday, January 14, 2008

Plans to build a Northern Virginia streetcar network, once considered fanciful, received a major boost last week, when officials unanimously voted to give the project its first big infusion of funding.

The project was among the top dollar winners in the funding package passed Thursday by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, the body instituting new regional transportation taxes put in place last year.

It also was the focus of sparring in the long-running philosophical contest between advocates of mass transit and those who emphasize the need for major road construction to address the Washington region's snarled traffic.

Backers hope the initial 4.7-mile Columbia Pike line, which will connect Pentagon City in Arlington County to the Skyline area of Fairfax County, will seed a much broader streetcar network, which eventually could stretch from Alexandria to Tysons Corner.

"It is one of the most important things we can do to move people in Northern Virginia and deal with [air pollution](#) and global warming," said Authority Chairman Chris Zimmerman, who also is a member of the Arlington County Board.

The proposal also fits with the vision followed for decades by Arlington of directing development near transit, such as along the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor. Development policies put in place in 2003 allow Columbia Pike landowners to build bigger projects if they follow strict rules intended to make the area more attractive.

"Having a sidewalk cafe next to buses that are pulling up, with the exhaust fumes and the noise they make, is not as inviting," Zimmerman said. The project, estimated to cost \$138.5 million, "will have effectively paid for itself" in added revenue from new development, he said.

But Bob Chase, president of the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance and a proponent of the transportation taxes, said the streetcar and other projects "fail the regional significance test" given Northern Virginia's vast need for improved roads. He said that trolleys are an antiquated and unjustified solution and that too many of the projects backed by the authority are primarily local in scope.

"This sets a bad precedent," Chase said, adding at a public hearing before the authority's vote that members should suppress their urge "to bring home the local bacon. You have to check your local hats at the door."

Fairfax Board Chairman Gerald E. Connolly (D-At Large) was among authority members who argued that the group's initial funding choices would have regional impact. "We're going to do a lot of roads," he said, but "we have to have a balanced approach."

Connolly also said the legislation giving the authority the power to raise funds says that each jurisdiction should benefit based on the amount it contributes. "This is a political coalition," Connolly said, adding that such smaller jurisdictions as Falls Church need to see results just as larger communities do.

The \$392 million spending plan approved by the authority last week covers 2 1/2 years and includes more than \$150 million for Metro, as well as a list of projects small and large, from bike trails and a municipal garage in Falls Church to an interchange at routes 7 and 659 in Loudoun County and the widening of Route 1 in Prince William County, among other projects. The authority approved \$36.9 million for the streetcar project.

The plan is contingent upon the authority prevailing in a case brought before Virginia's Supreme Court last week challenging its right to raise taxes.

Streetcars have been popularized in such communities as Portland, Ore., and are planned for the District as well, starting in Anacostia. In the Columbia Pike plan, the line will generally run along the outside lane of traffic, beside the curb. Streetcars share the lanes with other cars and can get caught in traffic snarls just like other vehicles, but there are plans to synchronize traffic lights with their travel.

Skeptics, such as Arlington Republican activist Wayne Kubicki, worry that the streetcar project will cost more than current projections and might not have the advertised development and congestion-alleviation benefits. "It sounds half-cooked," Kubicki said.

Supporters said streetcars take less time at stops, because people can prepay and quickly enter multiple doors, and they can carry more people along a route than is possible with buses. More than 14,000 people ride buses along Columbia Pike daily, and officials said the maximum number of riders that buses could carry is about 20,000. Streetcars could handle 25,000 to 30,000 riders, they said.

Backers also cite the psychological benefits of rail, saying people who would not ride buses are more likely to at least occasionally give up their sedan or sport-utility vehicle for a streetcar, just as they do for Metro. The project could also reassure those considering developing property along the tracks, especially during an economic downturn, according to Peter Owen, a member of Arlington's transportation advisory commission.

"If you see the government is digging a huge hole and sticking in steel rails and putting wires up, you know that streetcar's going to be there, even if there's a rough patch two or three years down the road," Owen said.

*For an animated view of the streetcar's path from project backers, go to <http://www.piketransit.com/downloads/PTI-Columbia-Pike-Streetcar.wmv>.*

*For the list of projects approved last week by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, go to <http://www.thenovaauthority.org/meetings.html> and click on Six Year Plan Projects. (Amounts for later years not yet set.)*

[Fresno Bee commentary, Sat., Jan. 12, 2008:](#)

## **How to get a free tuneup, clean air, too**

By Roger Teschner

As director of the Advanced Transportation Technology and Energy Initiative (ATTEi) at Fresno City College, I have worked with Valley Clean Air Now (Valley CAN), a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving air quality in the San Joaquin Valley, to implement their Tune In and Tune Up program throughout the Valley since 2005. The Tune In and Tune Up program provides free emissions testing and \$500 repair vouchers to any participant whose vehicle fails the emissions test.

This highly successful program is dedicated to making significant improvements in the Valley air pollution problem by reducing the pollution from older vehicles.

A major component of this emissions program is education.

As the liaison to the 14 community college campuses in the region, I have developed relationships with local community colleges that offer student automotive programs. At each event, we set up a series of canopies labeled diagnostics.

After the participants get their vehicles' emissions tested, they are instructed to drive to the canopies for free under-the-hood checks. The students, with supervision from their instructors, follow checklists of possible problems to locate on the vehicle. At any given time, there are more than 20 vehicles in diagnostics with more than 25 students getting firsthand experience with customers and their vehicles.

A Tune In and Tune Up event often brings in more than 300 vehicles for emissions testing and more than 200 vehicles for diagnostic testing. This live preparation for their future in the automotive industry is invaluable, as this real-life experience cannot be taught in a classroom.

For 20 years, I worked for General Motors doing program research, development and delivery in Detroit and in various training center management positions. Throughout this time, I also worked with various colleges to create and maintain a partnership to recruit, educate and graduate entry-level technicians.

During my tenure, I never saw a program like Tune In and Tune Up that targeted the source of air pollution while educating our future automotive employees on the importance of air quality and providing them hands-on experience with future customers and vehicle-related problems.

In addition to hosting the Tune In and Tune Up event, Valley CAN, through ATTEi, has provided each participating college with an \$8,000 grant to purchase emissions-related equipment for their automotive programs. Most state-funded colleges are on tight budgets, and this type of donation is invaluable as a tool for current and future students.

The result is that each participating college can purchase the advanced technology equipment it needs, plus acquire hands-on diagnostic experience for its students.

The importance of this event to our community is improved transportation efficiency, awareness of alternative energy choices and solutions to immediate vehicle air-pollution issues validated by enthusiastic local community participation.

This emissions-reduction program has been held at seven of the 14 campuses in the Valley. The next campus to participate will be Reedley College.

The students will participate in Tune In and Tune Up early in 2008.

This Tune In and Tune Up will be different than most, as it will be partially funded through a grant from the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, and it will outreach to environmental

justice communities including the neighboring city of Parlier. A similar event was held at Arvin High School last summer, with the high school automotive students doing the vehicle diagnostics.

With the outpouring of support from past hosting community colleges that have partnered with Valley CAN, Reedley College is very excited to engage its automotive students in this learning experience.

*Roger Teschner is director of the Advanced Transportation Technologies and Energy Initiative at Fresno City College.*

[Sacramento Bee Editorial, Sunday, January 13, 2008:](#)

### **Editorial: Going green? Ban gas-powered leaf blowers**

Sacramento Mayor Heather Fargo says her No. 1 priority for Sacramento is "being green." In her State of the Downtown address she mentioned lots of possible action steps. But she missed a big one: banning gas-powered leaf blowers.

Sacramento should follow the lead of other California cities and pass a simple ordinance: "It shall be unlawful for any person, including any city employee, to operate any portable machine powered with a gasoline engine used to blow leaves, dirt and other debris off sidewalks, driveways, lawns or other surfaces within the city limits."

Leaf blowers are a noise nuisance, a high-pitched whine that makes concentration impossible for anybody nearby. They kick up dust that contains fertilizers, pesticides, animal feces, soil and allergens such as mold and pollen. A California Air Resources Board brochure about air pollution and particulate matter advises: "Avoid using leaf blowers."

The dust they spread is torture for people with asthma or other respiratory ailments - and a health threat to the gardeners who wield them. A gasoline-powered leaf blower generates as much tailpipe emissions in one hour in a concentrated area as a car does over 350 miles.

And they're unnecessary. In three tests conducted by the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power in 1998 involving gas-powered leaf blowers and battery-powered leaf blowers, it turned out that a rake and broom wielded by a 50-year-old grandmother were as mighty as leaf blowers. They were also faster and cleaner.

Many California cities, including Los Angeles, ban gas-powered leaf blowers. If Sacramento is serious about "being green," it should join them. While the industry might squawk, Sacramentans will be eternally grateful.

[Tracy Press Editorial, Friday, January 11, 2008:](#)

### **Our Voice**

### **Stanford study may be the key for the courts to rule for California's tailpipe regulations.**

No one around the smoggy San Joaquin Valley should be surprised that the state has sued the federal Environmental Protection Agency for denying a waiver allowing California and 15 other states to regulate emissions from motor vehicles. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger had vowed he would do so if the waiver wasn't approved, and the former body builder and movie action hero usually is a man of his word.

The denial, because the EPA determined that there weren't any "compelling and extraordinary conditions" in California, was the first out of the more than 50 times that the state has requested and received a waiver. Congress gave California the right to seek waivers 41 years ago under provisions of the federal Clean Air Act. Theoretically, there are two sets of air-quality regulations in the nation - the federal government's and California's. Actually, there has been just one - California's. That's because the other 49 states have the option to choose the more stringent California rules, and industries like the automakers usually have had to comply with California standards to remain in business.

Advocates of the California standards for greenhouse gas emissions may have won a major air-quality battle last year when the U.S. Supreme Court determined that regulating carbon dioxide falls within the Clean Air Act. However, the federal government may have won the war when the justices said regulating emissions was a federal responsibility.

If the EPA were declared the winner, Californians who contend with smog and other air pollutants would be the ultimate losers, even if the upgraded federal miles-per-gallon standards for vehicles reduce tailpipes emissions. California's carbon-dioxide standards do it more aggressively and faster. California officials have argued that their more aggressive law would require the auto industry to cut emissions by one-third in new vehicles by 2016.

Will the federal courts support the EPA's waiver denial because of recent Supreme Court decision? It may come down to whether California has "compelling and extraordinary conditions" or not. A new Stanford University study, which has been accepted for publication by *Geophysical Research Letters*, may tip the issue in California's favor. The research says carbon dioxide-induced warming causes an estimated 1,000 additional deaths - at least 300 deaths in California - and many more cases of respiratory disease every year in the U.S. for every 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit rise in the Earth's atmospheric temperature. Computer simulations support the theory that warming speeds up ozone production much faster in areas, such as the San Joaquin Valley, that are already heavily-polluted.

This should be enough to compel the federal courts to at least study the Stanford research before making a decision.

[S.F. Chronicle commentary, Sunday, Jan. 13, 2008:](#)

### **My New Year's resolution**

By Robert M. Pringle

The Bush Administration's servile EPA recently blocked efforts by California and 16 other states to impose stricter auto-emissions standards than those required under federal law, provoking outrage and indignation among environmentally concerned consumers. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has sued the EPA over this move; if that suit is successful, Schwarzenegger likely will earn my first-ever Republican vote.

But while we sorely need forward-thinking leadership and legislation to reduce carbon emissions, this controversy illustrates yet again that we cannot wait passively for the government to prod us into better behavior. As legal wrangling drags on, and as international efforts like the recent U.N. climate conference in Bali yield nothing but delays, we are wasting time we don't have.

It is past time to put our actions where our sentiments are. As economists - including many key accomplices to the climate-change foot draggers - persistently remind us, the market will follow where the consumers lead. In the Bay Area, we already have ample proof of this concept where carbon emissions are concerned. It is difficult not to notice the proliferation in San Francisco of billboards and radio spots touting the energy efficiency of cars like the Toyota Prius and Mini Cooper (to say nothing of the proliferation of the cars themselves).

But we can and should do much more. I am repeatedly appalled by how much we all drive - myself included. My car, a 2004 Honda Civic Hybrid, gets 40 miles per gallon, which is 45 percent higher than the industry standard. But that fact means little if it seduces me into driving more. And I'm afraid that it does. I try to use CalTrain for my 30-mile commute from San Francisco to Palo Alto, but on some rainy mornings, public transportation just seems too onerous. As I drive myself south on 101, which is typically clogged with other solo drivers, I sometimes half-heartedly console myself with this thought: "At least I'm driving a hybrid."

An online quiz tells me that if everybody did exactly what I do, we'd need 4.7 Earths to hold us all. I could quibble with the precision of that estimate, but I cannot dispute the general conclusion: My lifestyle betrays my vision of a world without oil wars and climate refugees, and of a lasting co-existence between humans and polar bears.

In this, I'm not alone. Many of us in the Bay Area, myself again included, are proud of being relatively progressive. Yet we are also relatively prosperous, and we are accustomed - I would even say addicted - to many of the comforts and conveniences that prosperity affords. (For example: I am writing this from seat 13D of a Texas-bound Super 80.) We ignore the disconnects between our ideals and our actions because it makes us feel good, and because we are perhaps doing better than many of our neighbors and fellow citizens. Needless to say, however, the consumption of the average American is not the right standard.

Let us hope for a speedy and successful challenge to the EPA's arrogant and shortsighted decision, and for legislation mandating more environmentally responsible behavior. But let us also recognize that each of us is capable of thumbing his or her nose at the EPA and the climate-change deniers that it currently serves: We still determine what we buy, and we don't need EPA approval to ride BART and Muni.

In 2008, I will drive less, use taxis less, take the bus more, buy more local products. That will be a meaningful rebellion, and a much more useful contribution than my self-righteous indignation. I will sacrifice some convenience in the process, but convenience is a trivial thing, especially since I'll feel much better about myself. Besides, you meet interesting people on the bus.

*Robert M. Pringle is a graduate student in the Department of Biological Sciences at Stanford University and a San Francisco resident.*

[S.F. Chronicle commentary, Sunday, Jan. 13, 2008:](#)

**Open Forum**

## **To beat climate change, breaking the mold isn't enough**

By Dan Hamilton

There's a big hole in the Kyoto Protocol: Airline emissions aren't covered. This emission omission has officials in California and Europe worried, so each acted recently to plug the hole. In December, ministers from 27 different countries agreed to cap carbon emissions from aircraft flying to and from the European Union. California joined a host of other U.S. states and municipalities to petition the EPA to institute a similar system on all aircraft flying to and from American airports.

The new EU system, slated to go into effect in 2012, would cap carbon dioxide emissions for European and foreign airplanes alike, while allowing airlines to buy and sell pollution credits on the EU carbon market. The initiative is yet another signal of EU determination to tackle the climate change issue. EU governments agreed last spring to cut their greenhouse-gas emissions by as much as 30 percent by 2020.

Not surprisingly, Europe's airline industry is critical of these demands. While it has resigned itself to the prospect that some EU airline emissions scheme is inevitable, it warns about higher costs to passengers and makes the point that the EU could reduce emissions 12 percent simply by putting its single market under a single sky of air traffic control.

There are some big holes in the plan - big enough for an Airbus to fly through. Cost estimates vary wildly. Other pollutant emissions from airplanes - water vapor, contrails or nitrogen oxides - aren't included. The cost implications for travelers are uncertain, but could result in fare increases ranging from 3 to 15 percent. The plan could undermine a groundbreaking U.S.-EU deal to open transatlantic skies that promises roughly \$7 billion worth of cost reductions and a boost in transatlantic travel by up to 24 percent. The pollution credit scheme could mean windfall profits for some companies and major losses for others. It is a unilateral approach to a global problem.

Undaunted, EU activists are pressing ahead, and have found American allies - not in Washington, but in California and a host of other states. The states have petitioned the EPA to impose a cap-and-trade system, similar to that of the EU, on domestic and foreign aircraft departing or landing at American airports.

This European-Californian pincer movement has raised the stakes in the battle both parties have been having with the Bush administration over global environmental regulation.

The Bush administration believes the EU scheme will prove unworkable, and has rejected such a system at home. It places its hopes on technology innovation and improved air traffic management and infrastructure. Federal officials have warned the Europeans that they risk breaking international law if they force non-European airlines into their system. The United States engineered an agreement among the majority of countries in the International Civil Aviation Organization, aviation's global rule-making body, against any unilateral actions - but that only energized the EU to press ahead. If the EU proceeds along its current path, the United States will almost certainly charge the EU with unfair trade practices before the World Trade Organization.

California and its partners, however, have rushed to Europe's defense. California's petition asserts that the right of countries to regulate greenhouse-gas emissions from foreign aircraft operating within their airspace is consistent both with international law and obligations under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change.

This new alliance has scrambled things quite a bit. In recent years, Europeans castigated the Bush administration's unilateralism while extolling their own multilateralist virtues. This time, Washington is the multilateralist and Brussels the unilateralist - and California and its partners have come to Brussels' aid.

The California-Europe one-two punch is breaking the mold of traditional diplomacy. Stymied by the Bush administration's intransigence on climate change, countries and regions are bypassing Washington to form new partnerships. Last year, California and other U.S. regions joined a number of EU countries to form the International Carbon Action Partnership charged with developing carbon markets through mandatory cap-and-trade systems. In November, a "Santa Barbara Consensus" advocating radical action to tackle climate change was released by a prominent group of European and American opinion leaders.

Activists on both sides of the Atlantic are hoping that their newfound partnership can set the stage for U.S. action at home and abroad, should the policy door open in Washington following the November elections. They will be better able to walk through that door, however, if they use the time they have now to fix the flaws in their cap-and-trade plans for aviation.

[Washington Post commentary, Sunday, January 13, 2008:](#)

### **It Happened to Him. It's Happening to You.**

By Michael Novacek

The news of environmental traumas assails us from every side -- unseasonal storms, floods, fires, drought, melting ice caps, lost species of river dolphins and giant turtles, rising sea levels potentially displacing inhabitants of Arctic and Pacific islands and hundreds of thousands of people dying every year from air pollution. Last week brought more -- new reports that Greenland's glaciers may be melting away at an alarming rate.

What's going on? Are we experiencing one of those major shocks to life on Earth that rocked the planet in the past?

That's just doomsaying, say those who insist that economic growth and human technological ingenuity will eventually solve our problems. But in fact, the scientific take on our current environmental mess is hardly so upbeat.

More than a decade ago, many scientists claimed that humans were demonstrating a capacity to force a major global catastrophe that would lead to a traumatic shift in climate, an intolerable level of destruction of natural habitats, and an extinction event that could eliminate 30 to 50 percent of all living species by the middle of the 21st century. Now those predictions are coming true. The evidence shows that species loss today is accelerating. We find ourselves uncomfortably privileged to be witnessing a mass extinction event as it's taking place, in real time.

The fossil record reveals some extraordinarily destructive events in the past, when species losses were huge, synchronous and global in scale. Paleontologists recognize at least five of these mass extinction events, the last of which occurred about 65 million years ago and wiped out all those big, charismatic dinosaurs (except their bird descendants) and at least 70 percent of all other species. The primary suspect for this catastrophe is a six-mile-wide asteroid (a mile higher than Mount Everest) whose rear end was still sticking out of the atmosphere as its nose augered into the crust a number of miles off the shore of the present-day Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. Earth's atmosphere became a hell furnace, with super-broiler temperatures sufficient not only to kill exposed organisms, but also to incinerate virtually every forest on the planet.

For several million years, a period 100 times greater than the entire known history of Homo sapiens, the planet's destroyed ecosystems underwent a slow, laborious recovery. The earliest colonizers after the catastrophe were populous species that quickly adapted to degraded environments, the ancient analogues of rats, cockroaches and weeds. But many of the original species that occupied these ecosystems were gone and did not come back. They'll never come back. The extinction of a species, whether in an incinerated 65-million-year-old reef or in a bleached modern-day reef of the Caribbean, is forever.

Now we face the possibility of mass extinction event No. 6. No big killer asteroid is in sight. Volcanic eruptions and earthquakes are not of the scale to cause mass extinction. Yet recent studies show that troubling earlier projections about rampant extinction aren't exaggerated.

In 2007, of 41,415 species assessed for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, 16,306 (39 percent) were categorized as threatened with extinction: one in three amphibians, one quarter of the world's pines and other coniferous trees, one in eight birds and one in four mammals. Another study identified 595 "centers of imminent extinction" in tropical forests, on islands and in mountainous areas. Disturbingly, only one-third of the sites surveyed were legally protected, and most were surrounded by areas densely populated by humans. We may not be able to determine the cause of past extinction events, but this time we have, indisputably: We are our own asteroids.

Still, the primary concern here is the future welfare of us and our children. Assuming that we survive the current mass extinction event, won't we do okay? The disappearance of more than a few species is regrettable, but we can't compromise an ever-expanding population and a global economy whose collapse would leave billions to starve. This dismissal, however, ignores an essential fact about all those species: They live together in tightly networked ecosystems responsible for providing the habitats in which even we humans thrive. Pollination of flowers by diverse species of wild bees, wasps, butterflies and other insects, not just managed honeybees, accounts for more than 30 percent of all food production that humans depend upon.

What will the quality of life be like in this transformed new world? Science doesn't paint a pretty picture. The tropics and coral reefs, major sources of the planet's biological diversity, will be hugely debilitated. The 21st century may mark the end of the line for the evolution of large mammals and other animals that are now either on the verge of extinction, such as the Yangtze River dolphin, or, like the African black rhinoceros, confined to small, inadequately supportive habitats. And devastated ecosystems will provide warm welcome to all those opportunistic invader species that have already demonstrated their capacity to wipe out native plants and animals. We, and certainly our children, will find ourselves largely embraced by a pest and weed ecology ideal for the flourishing of invasive species and new, potentially dangerous microbes to which we haven't build up a biological resistance.

Of course people care about this. Recent surveys show a sharp increase in concern over the environmental changes taking place. But much of this spike in interest is due to the marked shift in attention to climate change and global warming away from other environmental problems such as deforestation, water pollution, overpopulation and biodiversity loss. Global warming is of course a hugely important issue. But it is the double whammy of climate change combined with fragmented, degraded natural habitats -- not climate change alone -- that is the real threat to many populations, species and ecosystems, including human populations marginalized and displaced by those combined forces.

Still, human ingenuity, commitment and shared responsibility have great potential to do good. The IUCN Red List now includes a handful of species that have been revived through conservation

efforts, including the European white-tailed eagle and the Mekong catfish. Narrow corridors of protected habitat now connect nature preserves in South Africa, and similar corridors link up the coral reefs of the Bahamas, allowing species in the protected areas to move back and forth, exchange genes and sustain their populations. Coffee farms planted near protected forests and benefiting from wild pollinators have increased coffee yields. New York's \$1 billion purchase of watersheds in the Catskill Mountains that purify water naturally secured precious natural habitat while eliminating the need for a filtration plant that would have cost \$6 to \$8 billion, plus annual operating costs of \$300 million. Emissions of polluting gases such as dangerous nitrogen oxides have leveled off in North America and even declined in Europe (unfortunately emissions of the same are steeply rising in China). Plans for reflective roofing, green space and increased shade to cool urban "heat islands" are at least under consideration in many cities.

These actions may seem puny in light of the enormous problem we face, but their cumulative effect can bring surprising improvements. Yet our recent efforts, however praiseworthy, must become more intensive and global. Any measure of success depends not only on international cooperation but also on the leadership of the most powerful nations and economies.

The first step in dealing with the problem is recognizing it for what it is. Ecologists point out that the image of Earth still harboring unspoiled, pristine wild places is a myth. We live in a human-dominated world, they say, and virtually no habitat is untouched by our presence. Yet we are hardly the infallible masters of that universe. Instead, we are rather uneasy regents, a fragile and dysfunctional royal family holding back a revolution.

The sixth extinction event is under way. Can humanity muster the leadership and international collaboration necessary to stop eating itself from the inside?

*Michael Novacek, a paleontologist, is senior vice president and provost of the American Museum of Natural History. He is the author of "Terra: Our 100-Million-Year-Old Ecosystem -- and the Threats That Now Put It at Risk."*

[Fresno Bee commentaries, Sunday, Jan.13, 2008:](#)

## **TWO VIEWS: Activists should organize boycotts of China's polluting industries**

By Alan Tonelson

WASHINGTON -- As made painfully clear by last month's international conference, the world's governments keep moving toward a global warming strategy that actually boosts greenhouse gas emissions and weakens industry and all its economic and strategic benefits in the United States and elsewhere in the developed world.

The key is super-green Europe's growing support for a grand bargain that would strictly curb greenhouse gas emissions in rich countries like the United States, while placing only minimal restraints on the full-throttle economies of massive new polluters like China and India.

The Bush administration has resisted so far, but a new Democratic president could well seal this deal. Since most rich-country manufacturing is much cleaner than most Third World manufacturing, greenhouse gas emissions would keep surging -- fueled partly by American, European and even Japanese companies seeking Third World pollution havens. As a result, economic hollowing out would accelerate in the high-income world with most Americans suffering disproportionately.

Preventing this looming train wreck requires revolutionizing the politics of global warming -- fast. The U.S. should take the lead by slashing its imports from China and thus shrinking to globally sustainable proportions Beijing's bloated, hyper-polluting industrial base.

An already huge, metastasizing carbon footprint alone would justify special attention for China. Its own figures show that the People's Republic should pass the U.S. as the world's largest source of greenhouse gases this year.

According to the authoritative Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, however, China's carbon-dioxide emissions per unit of output are five times greater than America's. Small wonder that the International Energy Agency recently reported that China's emissions growth nowadays exceeds emissions growth from all other countries combined.

China's booming use of fossil fuels is the major reason. The country, for example, just passed Japan to become the world's second-largest oil consumer, after the U.S., and it has generated more than one-third of the growth in world oil demand since 2002. China is a huge coal user as well.

If this record simply reflected natural economic progress and still-lagging pollution control technology, the case for targeting China would be weaker. Yet China's greenhouse gas machine is anything but a free-market creation.

As documented in a study last year by the Peterson Institute, it stems mainly from the communist regime's use of trade protection, subsidies and other measures to boost advanced -- and energy-intensive -- industry whatever the consequences.

Along the way, Beijing has super-charged growth -- and pollution -- by heavily subsidizing energy use in manufacturing and by failing almost completely to enforce its own environmental regulations.

As a result of this government intervention, China has become a much larger manufacturer. And hundreds of billions of dollars worth of manufacturing has fled Europe and the U.S. -- where clean manufacturing is advanced and environmental regulations widely enforced -- to an environmentally irresponsible country where even the cleanest manufacturing is significantly dirtier.

Waiting for China's environmental consciousness to catch up with its industrialization is the most widely discussed alternative to pressing for Chinese agreement to serious and uniform global emissions curbs.

But because of its industrial shift, China's emissions have increased, not decreased, as it has prospered.

Trade limits are the best lever available because so much of China's growth and employment creation -- and thus the job security of its leaders -- depends on exporting. And the U.S. is by far the largest end-use market for Chinese exports.

Environmentalists have long warned that major action is needed right away to prevent further damage from global warming. If they mean it, they'll start using their formidable talent to promote the downsizing of China's trade-driven greenhouse gas machine.

*Alan Tonelson is a research fellow at the U.S. Business & Industry Council in Washington, D.C., and the author of "The Race to the Bottom."*

## **TWO VIEWS: Greedy multinationals are responsible for shrouding China with smog**

By Wayne Madsen

WASHINGTON -- Economic boycotts of nations are inherently a bad idea, whether they are intended to force political, social or environmental policy changes.

It does not matter whether the targeted country is Cuba, North Korea, Iran or Sudan. Current calls for boycotting Chinese-made goods produced in polluting factories are unfeasible and nearly impossible to implement.

Multinational companies that have moved their factories to China and other nations in an effort to escape various domestic laws, including environmental legislation and regulations, should be required to ensure that their off-shore factories comply with international regulations on reducing carbon emissions.

It is the movement of industries from the United States and other industrialized countries that has caused China to become the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases. The manufacturing bonanza in China has resulted in more coal-fired power plants coming on line in China, resulting in increased carbon-dioxide emissions.

A blanket boycott of Chinese goods actually would hurt the Chinese people more than the pollution regulation-evading firms that have moved their manufacturing plants to China.

Much of China's population still lives in rural areas, and they are not contributing to global greenhouse emissions. Few Chinese own cars compared with the United States, where multi-car households are common. Omnibus sanctions against China simply are not feasible and would hurt the wrong people.

It makes much more sense for the U.S. government to encourage the establishment of green industries that could sell environmentally beneficial products and services to China to help that burgeoning industrial nation to cope with greenhouse gas emissions.

So far, California has led the way in green technology development, while the Bush administration continues to drag its feet on green tech.

It must not be forgotten that China ratified the Kyoto Protocol on reducing greenhouse gases -- but without targeted emission-reduction mandates.

Chinese President Hu Jintao has spoken in favor of energy efficiency in China and creating an "environmental civilization." But with a Bush administration that has refused to lead on global climate change and rejected the Kyoto treaty, China, India, Brazil, Mexico and other emerging industrialized countries have not felt compelled to act decisively on curbing emissions.

Moreover, China has consistently pointed to the American rejection of Kyoto to defend its own decision not to comply with greenhouse-emission limits.

And one cannot ignore the hidden hand of American and other multinational companies as being the principal architects behind China's noncompliance. While some multinational firms claim that they are committed to emissions curbs at home, they are not as supportive when it comes to their factories in China.

There is also the specter that neoconservatives who have no concern about global climate change may use a green boycott of China for purely political purposes. Neoconservative geopolitical planners have made no secret of their desire to curb the influence of China on the international scene.

Chinese scientists at the recent Bali summit on global climate change showed some willingness to discuss emissions caps. Chinese scientists are seeing how China's belching of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere is destroying many of China's natural habitats, including important agricultural areas.

But with the second largest greenhouse gas emitter -- the United States -- dragging its feet, China will not feel compelled to take action. Engaging China on the environment, not economic boycotts of Chinese products, is the only viable answer for dealing with the specter of global climate change.

*Wayne Madsen is a contributing writer for the liberal Online Journal.*

[L.A. Daily News commentary, Saturday, Jan. 12, 2008:](#)

## **Polluted logic for port, LAX**

By Ruth Galanter, Columnist

RALPH Waldo Emerson said that "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." If that means that sometimes flexibility is required to permit innovation or to recognize changes in circumstances, I agree.

But what about a foolish inconsistency?

Consider, for instance, how differently city officials, environmentalists and big business view pollution at the Port of Los Angeles and Los Angeles International Airport.

The port and the airport have many similarities. Both are major contributors to California and the city's economy. Both are magnets for ground traffic, with its resulting congestion and air pollution. Both are major generators of on-site air pollution from the giant vehicles (container ships and airplanes) which dock there. In both cases the pollution blows primarily inland, where its worst effects fall on lower-income and mostly-minority communities.

With respect to the port, environmentalists and public officials decry the effects on poor and minority communities. They want to put a halt to business with any company that can't or won't comply with complex rules to reduce pollution. With great fanfare and success, the Natural Resources Defense Council has sued the port and won.

But with respect to the airport, environmentalists have joined a coalition put together by the late Miguel Contreras when he served concurrently as head of the County Federation of Labor and a member of the Board of Airport Commissioners. The coalition's position, and city officials have so far agreed, is that instead of trying to remove the negative environmental impacts, the BOAC should pay off the affected communities with job-training programs (for airport-related jobs) and payments to government entities such as the Lennox School District.

In exchange, members of the coalition agreed they would not object to or file suit over the James Hahn-sponsored plan to "modernize" (read: expand) LAX. (Every Los Angeles mayor has a plan for LAX expansion, and the only way to keep them straight is to call the plan by the name of the relevant mayor.)

But parts of the Hahn-sponsored plan have been scrapped, while others maintained, and a new Antonio Villaraigosa-appointed commission is developing a new plan. Still, the Natural Resources Defense Council tells me its old agreement means it will have no objections to the current expansion plan, either.

So what have we got here: At the port, air pollution is bad for the health of both workers and neighbors and should be significantly reduced. At the airport, it doesn't matter.

But the environmentalists and city officials are not alone in their foolish inconsistency.

While the organized enviros remain silent on LAX pollution, the economic-development partisans of the city's big-business organizations insist beyond all reason that only LAX can satisfy the region's need for aviation and must therefore expand (sorry, "modernize"). Yet these same interests seem unperturbed that Mexico is on track to steal business from our port, where all major projects have been stalled since 1999.

Big business is very worried that international air travelers might fly to Salt Lake City if they were asked to bypass LAX for Ontario (which, by the way, is closer to Disneyland than LAX is). But it's apparently unconcerned that Mexico's developing ports with rail links directly to the Midwest could let international cargo bypass our region entirely.

Even California-destined cargo could easily travel by rail to Texas, New Mexico or Arizona and then be trucked here. And it will be, if our own port and its sister port in Long Beach don't find a way to compete for business - and not just for greenness - with Mexico's new and expanded ports.

There is one major difference between the port and LAX, which seems so far to have escaped notice: Container ships have to dock at the ocean, while airplanes can land anywhere there is a big enough space for an airport. The same agency that owns 3,500-acre LAX already owns 11,000 acres in Palmdale, purchased in the 1970s for a new airport. For the San Fernando, San

Gabriel and Antelope valleys and Ventura County, an airport anywhere north of the Santa Monica Mountains made accessible by new roads would be the same kind of major economic engine as LAX and the Port of Los Angeles - but much easier to reach.

*Ruth Galanter is a former member and president of the Los Angeles City Council, on which she served for 16 years.*

[Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Editorial, Monday, Jan. 14, 2008:](#)

### **Ag deserves a clean-air voice**

Thumbs down to California Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, for his continued opposition to the appointment of Fresno County Supervisor Judy Case to the California Air Resources Board.

Case would take the seat that is reserved for a member of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Fresno and Tulare counties are among the members of that district.

Florez believes Case is not strict enough in advocating for clean air. Case is a nurse and grew up on a farm in Sanger. She often considers the position of agriculture when deciding on issues relating to air quality.

Case was among those who twice voted to delay until 2024 requirements that the San Joaquin Valley meet federal mandates for clean air. The federal Environmental Protection Agency agreed. In fact, sticking to the earlier deadlines would have exposed the Valley to unnecessary sanctions. Case and other members of the Valley air board argued that setting the shorter deadlines would have been impractical considering current technology.

The San Joaquin Valley has been making progress in improving air quality, and we wish that Sen. Florez would recognize that. We also see no harm in having an advocate for agriculture on the CARB board.

Allow progress to take place in California according to a realistic schedule and with the full cooperation of its diverse interests.

[Mountain Enterprise, Commentary, Friday, Jan. 11, 2008:](#)

### **\$10 Million Pay-Off by Tejon to Air District Is Back Room Deal**

By Linda MacKay

Very recently Tejon Ranch and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District made arrangements for the district to receive over \$10 million for air quality mitigation for Tejon Ranch Company's planned Tejon Mountain Village housing development in Lebec.

Last year the California Air Resources Board sited a mobile air monitor in Lebec. It told our communities that Lebec had worse air pollution than downtown Los Angeles and Burbank. Mountain Community residents are worried about this alarming information.

The Mountain Communities wouldn't even have known about the sweet deal that Tejon and the air district were arranging if a reporter hadn't called and informed a resident just three days before the item was to be discussed at the air district's meeting in Fresno. Our community wasn't informed by the agency and didn't have sufficient time to arrange to attend the meeting several hours up the road. We've asked the air district for the minutes. We haven't received them yet, but we were told that the board approved unanimously to accept the money.

Shame on Tejon Ranch and shame on the air district for making what appears to be a back room deal. The Environmental Impact Report for Mountain Village hasn't even come out yet. Tejon Ranch has had an air monitor in the area of their proposed development for almost 3 years but they have refused to let the public see any of their data from the monitor. There is no way of knowing what Tejon should be mitigating for without knowing what is going on now.

Tejon and the air district's sweet deal violates the nature of California Environmental Quality Act that provides communities adequate opportunities to participate in the process of approving large projects like Mountain Village. This all looks like a payoff to ensure approval and many in our

community are offended! Especially after all the 'community-friendly' promotional material Tejon Ranch has sent out to local residents. Tejon tells us they want to be good neighbors, but to arrange what appears to be sneaky tactics behind our backs doesn't seem very neighborly to me.

*MacKay, of Lebec, is literally a neighbor of Tejon Ranch. She is co-founder of the local Boys & Girls Club and a member of the Mountain Communities Town Council. She is concerned about how worsening air quality at El Tejon School will affect students who must spend their days there.*

*Barry Zoeller, spokesperson for Tejon Ranch Company, said he will respond to this OpEd in next week's issue of The Mountain Enterprise. The director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has also been invited to comment.*

[Letters to the Fresno Bee, Sunday, Jan.13, 2008:](#)

### **It could be worse**

I am a rule follower. I will never burn a fire in my fireplace on days it is prohibited. However, when allowed, I do occasionally have one. It will be a very sad day when we can no longer burn wood.

It seems almost daily someone writes to say how horrible someone like me is. Will those people who are angry with me drive cars anywhere today? Did they drive cars on the days they wrote? Will they use lawn mowers today?

How would they feel if they could only drive on specified days? Or if they were told that someday they will not be able to have cars at all? I would love to go back to "horses and buggies" or riding a bike to get somewhere, or even walking to get from one point to another. And when I got home from my journey, I could enjoy a nice, warm, cozy fire without having to check first to see if it was allowed or worry about how awful someone thought I was.

I am offended when someone refers to the mindset of "fire good." I guess some people out there think "exhaust good."

*Jonna Richardson, Fresno*

### **'A good trade-off'**

In response to Ronald Adevisian's letter Jan. 7: I was amazed at the shortsightedness of his comments regarding changes we all need to make to clean the air now and for future generations. He cited as lowering our quality of life "no Fourth of July fireworks, no Christmas lights, no warm winter fires, no summer barbecues, two-hour bus trips every day to work."

I see just the opposite effect of tremendously improving our quality of life. Just imagine all of us improving our physical fitness by riding our bikes to work. Imagine less obesity, and as a result, less heart disease, cancer, diabetes. Imagine cleaner air clearing up asthmatic conditions.

Yes, a nice warm fire is wonderful. But isn't a better quality and perhaps longer life a good trade-off? Not to mention the benefits to our environment.

*Susan Dvorak, Fresno*

### **'Fighting for clean air'**

L.W. Johnson's letter titled "Hidden agenda" [Jan. 5] implies that the purpose behind lawsuits the Sierra Club has filed to clean the Valley's dirty air is only to make money for its lawyers. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Seven years ago, the three San Joaquin Valley chapters of the Sierra Club, along with Valley residents, Latino Issues Forum and a coalition of Valley doctors, became concerned about the lack of progress in cleaning up our Valley's air. As a result, they began filing lawsuits against the Environmental Protection Agency and the local air district to force these recalcitrant agencies to enforce clean air laws.

Since then, the three Sierra Club chapters and their supporters have either prevailed or negotiated favorable settlements in at least eight cases, forcing the government and major polluters to take legally required actions to clean our air.

The Sierra Club is proud of its record in fighting for clean air, and it will continue to sponsor such litigation whenever it appears necessary to do so.

*Gerald D. Vinnard, Chair, Executive Committee  
Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter*

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Sat., Jan. 12, 2008:](#)

### **Too many people drive when walking is easy**

Fresno has some of the worst pollution in the United States. Part of this problem is the amount of carbon being pumped out of cars on a daily basis. A problem I see every day is people adding to the pollution problem by driving to school when they live only walking distance away.

As a student who walks to and from school every morning, I see students and even teachers in my neighborhood driving their cars to and from school when they live less than a block away. It kills me that they are too lazy to walk and are causing the environment harm. Shouldn't the teachers be setting a good example for students?

I hope people will read this and become more conscious of the decisions in their lives. Cleaning up pollution does not seem close in our future, and it saddens me that people seem to just not care, especially young adults. So I ask: Do we really want this generation to be the future of our world?

*Minami Espiritu, Age 16  
Central East High School, Fresno*

[Letters to the N.Y. Times, Sat., Jan. 12, 2008:](#)

### **Yonkers and the Leaf Blowers**

Re "Public to Weigh In on Leaf Blower Ban" (Westchester and the Region, Jan. 6):

As a longtime supporter of the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers in Yonkers, I wonder why your article about the City Council's expected vote to override the mayor's veto of the ban didn't feature more quotes from supporters. (I would note that the vote has been postponed until Jan. 22.)

While the noise pollution is certainly a major problem with leaf blowers, the air pollution caused by these devices creates far greater risks, as many prominent members of the medical and scientific community have testified.

Yonkers has a high rate of childhood asthma. The medical experts' desire to address this problem has led several to testify, on more than one occasion, at the many meetings of the Yonkers City Council where the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers has been discussed.

You report that Mayor Philip A. Amicone "said that due process warranted the veto so that people directly affected by the ban had a chance to voice their concerns."

The City Council meetings were a matter of public record, well publicized and open to all. I was present in November when the Council unanimously passed the ban. Not a single voice was raised in opposition.

Where were Joseph Tinelli, president of the New York State Turf and Landscape Association, and the others who oppose the ban that evening?

The residents of Yonkers deserve no less attention to their public health than those of other Westchester municipalities.

*M. J. Territo*

*The writer is president of the Armour Villa Colony Association.*

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A vast number of Yonkers residents have publicly supported the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers.

I wish your article had noted that the ban is supported by residents of numerous homeowner associations; representatives of organizations like the American Lung Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Westchester League of Women Voters and the Federated Conservationists of Westchester County; and Jeff Byrne, director of the asthma program at St. John's Riverside Hospital, and Michael J. Spicer, president and chief executive of Saint Joseph's Medical Center.

*Emily Simpson*

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses an additional lawsuit against EPA filed by Los Angeles-area agency over ship exhaust in ports. For more information, contact Claudia at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

### **Los Ángeles podría presentar demanda adicional contra la EPA**

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Monday, January 14, 2008

La Administración Distrital de Calidad del Aire en el Área de Los Ángeles advirtió el fin de semana que solicitó a la Agencia Federal de Protección Ambiental (EPA) establecer reglamentos más estrictos contra la contaminación en su puerto marítimo o de lo contrario enfrentará una demanda adicional.

La administración informó que está; imposibilitada de proteger la salud de 16 millones de personas si carece de un reglamento adecuado, que depende de la EPA.

La oficina regional advirtió que podría presentar una demandan adicional a otra colectiva que contra la EPA interpusieron 16 estados en una corte federal.

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Maricela Velásquez

Senior Public Information Representative

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