

San Joaquin County set to go 'green' via purchasing policy

By Ross Farrow

Lodi News Sentinel, Wednesday, February 20, 2007

San Joaquin County is going green.

The Board of Supervisors approved a plan on Tuesday to encourage county employees to pursue environmentally friendly purchases. But in approving the plan, supervisors requested a more specific set of goals to hold its staff more accountable.

"If we don't set goals, we're not going to get there," Supervisor Victor Mow said.

The "green purchasing policy" encourages each county department to make purchases that are durable and long-lasting, conserve energy and water, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, minimize toxics, pollution and hazards to work and community safety.

The policy also encourages using recyclable material to reduce the amount of garbage being taken to the county landfill.

"It is the socially responsible thing to do," Mow said.

Supervisor Steve Gutierrez said he would like to know what each county department is doing and recognize departments that do a great job being green.

In approving the "green purchasing" policy, supervisors asked its staff to set some specific goals for county employees.

Types of green products county will encourage:

- Recycled paper and paper products.
- Composting trees and other plants.
- Recycled cement, concrete, glass and asphalt.
- Anti-freeze without ethylene glycol.
- Recycled plastic.
- Remanufactured tires and products made from recycled tire rubber, including rubber mats and playing field surfaces.
- Recyclable insulation.
- Recycled paint.
- Soy-based printing ink.
- Recycled traffic signs, cones, parking stops and barricades.

Source: San Joaquin County Purchasing Department.

Can you name that pollution particle's source?

UC Merced researcher says he can, but his proposal lacks funds.

By Mark Grossi / The Fresno Bee

Wednesday, Feb. 20, 2008

You might have just breathed microscopic bits of debris from a dairy, an almond orchard or a tomato field. It might not matter to you how much came from the dairy, the orchard or the field. But wouldn't it help air quality officials sharpen their attack on pollution in the San Joaquin Valley if they knew?

A researcher for the University of California at Merced thinks so.

Wolfgang Rogge, an associate professor of engineering, says he can analyze the particles and trace them back to farm fields, dairies and feed lots where they originated.

But state and regional air officials have not granted him \$390,000 to survey actual farms and determine how much debris comes from each type of agriculture.

He said he pitched his idea in November to the California Air Resources Board. Rogge hasn't heard from the board, but he remains convinced that the research would help the Valley.

"If we get the funding, we can identify the biggest sources and get more pollution control for the buck by tweaking our controls on those sources," he said.

The state board did not respond to requests to comment on Rogge's proposal.

One official with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District says research money has been channeled into evaluating farm pollution control measures. But he said the district is impressed with Rogge's approach.

"His proposal has potential -- more potential than others we've seen," said James Sweet, air quality analyst and project planner.

"But we have limitations on resources. He is looking at the source of the pollution. We are evaluating the other end, the pollution controls."

For such wind-blown debris, the Valley is a long way from being healthy by the stringent state standard, which this region violates almost 150 times per year.

But air quality authorities focus on less-protective federal standards, because they carry costly sanctions for failure to meet deadlines and achieve clean air.

By the federal standard, it has been years since the Valley has had an official violation for this pollutant, called PM-10 and made up of chemicals, bits of plants and other coarse particles.

Valley air officials said PM-10 has decreased greatly over the past several years due to new regulations. Farmers now water unpaved roads and make fewer passes with machinery when they prepare their fields for planting.

Still, more than half of the remaining problem comes from farming operations, according to state statistics. Regional air officials said they will continue working on reductions to avoid future federal violations.

Rogge wants to contribute, having already written two studies published in the journal *Atmospheric Environment*. His studies discuss detecting such particle contents as sugars in crops and fatty acids from cattle.

Now he needs to collect samples at farms, dairies and feed lots.

He can identify the sources of the debris and determine how much of it comes from each place.

Rogge said his work may show that one type of farm needs more controls while another is spending too much money on unnecessary controls.

"It may turn out that very simple control measures will take care of the problems," he said. "But we won't know until we have measured the amount of particulate matter coming from each type of farm."

Ethanol-based gas arrives at a Tulare County service station

By Luis Hernandez

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, Feb. 20, 2008

TULARE - E85, the ethanol-based alternative fuel, is finally available in Tulare County.

Stanley's at Cartmill Avenue and M Street is now dispensing E85, making it the first public service station in the San Joaquin Valley where such fuel is available. E85 is an option only for flexfuel vehicles.

"The opportunity to be first [in the Valley] is a big deal to us," said Dennis Stanley, the station's owner.

Tulare's station is the third public E85 dispenser in the state, said Tulare Public Works Director Lew Nelson. The others are in Davis and the San Diego area.

The E85 dispensing pumps were funded in part by \$133,500 in government air-quality grants.

The balance of the \$247,000 necessary for the project was loaned by the city of Tulare to provide a fueling place for the city's 46 E85 flexfuel vehicles. The loan is being repaid at 5 cents per gallon for every gallon of E85 sold by the station.

At \$2.49, E85 is cheaper than regular unleaded gas. A blend of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gas, E85 also burns cleaner and is better for the environment, Stanley said.

E85 does have its opponents, however, including those who say a vehicle uses more E85 than straight gasoline to travel the same distance.

Not all vehicles are designed to run on E85, though Nelson said operators across America have observed non-flexfuel vehicles filling up with the fuel. That's a big no-no, he said.

"E85 will cause significant and expensive damage to a vehicle not designed to run on it," Nelson said.

Warning signs are posted on the pumps, Stanley said, and pamphlets with information are available at the Tulare station.

But those who can take advantage of E85 should, he said.

"They shouldn't hesitate," Stanley said. "For a flexfuel vehicle, it's a home run."

Technology drives dairy products at expo

By Cecilia Parsons

Capital Press Ag Weekly, Friday, February 15, 2008

TULARE - Forget sex, what sells at World Ag Expo is technology.

Companies savvy about the needs of western dairies are offering products that remove odors, clean water and reduce air pollution.

Technology is the focus at the Dairy Technology Center where exhibitors brought a huge array of products for dairies including five that were judged as the best five new dairy products.

Greeley, Colo.-based company Bella Health Systems even brought a live heifer for the debut of their new product. Judged one of the top five dairy products at the expo, their system includes a rumen bolus, readers and software. Other companies are using the bolus for permanent identification and tracking purposes, but marketing director Joe Rettedal said their device offers a temperature sensor.

"With the portable or fixed reader, the cow enters the milk barn and if her temperature is elevated, that alerts the dairyman. He can take care of her before her problem becomes noticeable, like going off feed," Rettedal said. The bolus remains in the cow and the heat-sensing chip is guaranteed for the life of the cow, he said.

He said they expect to add a little more excitement to their display on the final day of the show when the bred heifer is raffled off to a lucky winner.

Less hands on, but still a draw for dairymen is an automatic transmission for feed mixers.

Trioliet company representative Norbert Schaaf explained that very large mixers that handle up to 20 tons of feed at a time could have a difficult time mixing those loads when full. He said their Shifttronic power gearbox starts out at a much lower gear and is self adjusting by weight.

"We've worked on these in the field for the last three years and just introduced this on our mixers last year," Schaaf said. Besides the mixing capability, Schaaf said it could be powered by a much lower horsepower tractor, saving fuel.

"You can save enough fuel in a year to buy this," Schaaf claimed.

Some products are a little more difficult to demonstrate. Van Beek Natural Science of Orange City, Iowa, was using a large flat-screen TV to show how their product cuts odors and sanitizes dairy-free stalls.

Their Thermocal Neutralizer, a limestone product, is mined in Dubois, Idaho, said company representative Jim Zomer. He said it is becoming very popular with dairies that need to cut down on odors and reduce bacteria counts in bedding.

"We have a customer who uses this on his calf hutches like whitewash. He said the day after he sprays the flies are gone," said Zomer.

Business in California is increasing. He said the company is sending four tractor-trailer loads of the material every month to the San Joaquin Valley.

An Idaho dairyman's odor problems with his storage lagoons prompted Agrakey Solutions' development of a new product the company brought to the expo. Company president Ryan Mallett said creating oxidative conditions in dairy wastewater represents the most cost effective solution for reducing odor and emissions from dairies.

"While we were using this on lagoons, we found it was also helping the soil where dairy lagoon water was applied," Mallett said. By improving health, growers were finding yields increased by as much as 15 percent.

"They can do it with less water, too," Mallett said. "In Idaho they can use nine sets instead of 10, that's 10 percent less water."

The nine dairy cows in the Semex display were oblivious to the attention they were drawing as they munched on hay. The cows, all from California dairies, are from Semex bulls.

"We brought them to show what kind of cows we make for dairies," said Adam Johnson of Semex. The Canadian-based company sells dairy genetics in 116 countries, he said. Semen to produce the cows costs from \$20 to \$150.

Other products' popularity reflects the huge price jump in dairy feeds over the last year. Pat Collins of AgTriton USA said molasses prices have risen right along with corn. A staple in dairy feeds, it adds energy and texture to the feed. Collins said they are making an alternative that adds both energy and protein to dairy rations.

"We've seen the really take off. We've had six or seven dairies contract with us in the last 30 days," said Collins.

City Council decides to peer review Wal-Mart impact report

A second consulting firm will examine the first firm's study for \$18,800.

By Leslie Albrecht

Merced Sun-Star, Wednesday, Feb. 20, 2008

The report on how a Wal-Mart distribution center would affect Merced's environment will be double-checked for thoroughness and accuracy.

The City Council voted unanimously Tuesday night to hire consultants to comb through the environmental impact report on the proposed Wal-Mart distribution center to spot any weaknesses. Irvine-based consultants RBF Inc. will do the work, called a peer review, for \$18,800. Wal-Mart will pay the bill.

RBF Inc. will read and analyze the entire report, then alert city staff to any shortcomings. They could suggest changing some wording in the impact report, or they could recommend that new data be collected.

The environmental impact report on Wal-Mart's proposed distribution center hasn't been released to the public yet. Consultants EDAW Inc. started work on the impact report in June 2006. So far the report has cost \$441,800, all paid by Wal-Mart.

Right now city staff are looking at a draft version of the document. When the report is finished, probably in late April, the public will have 45 days to read it and submit comments.

The impact report is meant to give the public and city leaders an accurate picture of how building the distribution center will affect traffic, air quality, ag land, noise levels, public health and other

environmental issues. Consultants who worked on the report visited a Wal-Mart distribution center in Apple Valley to observe traffic and collect data on noise.

The City Council must certify the environmental impact report before it makes the final vote on the distribution center.

Wal-Mart wants to build the distribution center on 230 acres of land between Childs and Gerard avenues, west of Tower Road. The 1.2-million-square-foot complex would operate 24 hours a day. It's projected to employ 600 full-time workers in its first year of operation. Approximately 450 trucks would drive into the center every day and another 450 would leave the center each day.

In other action:

The council and Planning Commission both unanimously approved a draft sphere of influence boundary for the general plan update. The sphere of influence is the area the city intends to develop over the life of the general plan, about the next 20 years. The city expects a draft of the general plan update to be released to the public in June.

The council approved a funding agreement with the Merced Dog Owners Group to provide water fountains, bulletin boards and other amenities at a dog park slated for the corner of Yosemite Avenue and R Street.

The council gave the OK for consultants Michael Brandman Associates to prepare an environmental impact report for Merced Gateway East, an 80-acre retail and commercial development planned between Mission and Gerard avenues, east of Coffee Avenue.

Air board considers limits on rebates

Homeowners who replace fireplaces with gas stoves and gas inserts may qualify for \$600 rebates

By Denis Cuff, Staff Writer

In the Contra Costa Times and Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, Feb. 20, 2008

The Bay Area's air pollution board today will consider restarting but adding more restrictions to a popular program offering \$600 rebates to homeowners who replace smoky fireplaces and stoves with cleaner heating devices.

The first rebate program opened and closed abruptly last month when consumers from the nine Bay Area counties snapped up all \$100,000 of the incentives in less than 48 hours.

Now a board committee recommends allocating \$400,000 for more rebates but tightening eligibility rules.

Under the committee proposal, the \$600 rebates would be restricted to homeowners who switch to gas stoves and gas fireplace inserts.

Wood-burning devices would be ineligible this time around -- even low-emission, EPA-certified wood stoves, fireplace inserts and pellet stoves, according to the plan.

"We should not be enticing people to buy wood-burning devices when we are considering a rule to possibly ban wood fires on (high-pollution) Spare the Air nights," said Mark Ross, chairman of the public outreach committee of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District board and a Martinez city councilman.

The air district last year proposed a rule to ban wood fires on bad air nights to reduce fine particle pollution, a health threat that can cause a variety of lung and heart problems. More hearings on the rule will come later this year.

Some wood stove owners are unhappy with the proposed rule, saying that those with EPA-certified wood stoves and fireplace inserts should be exempt from a burning ban.

The public outreach committee also has proposed eliminating \$300 rebates previously offered to replace open hearth fireplaces and old wood stoves with ceramic logs heated by gas flames.

The \$300 rebate would cover the entire price of some gas-fired logs sold at some stores, but the rebates were intended to cover only a portion of the new heating devices, air district administrators said.

Many details about the timing and registration process for the rebates have yet to be worked out.

Port of Long Beach board approves clean trucks program

The Associated Press

In the S.F. Chronicle, Contra Costa Times and other papers, Wednesday, Feb. 20, 2008

Long Beach, Calif. (AP) -- The Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners on Tuesday approved the final elements of a clean air initiative aimed at reducing pollution from trucks hauling cargo through the Port of Long Beach.

The commissioner voted unanimously to adopt several facets of the so-called clean trucks program, which looks to replace and modernize older-model trucks with ones that spew fewer harmful emissions.

An after-hours call to the California Trucking Association was not immediately returned.

The program sets up a system for identifying and monitoring the trucks that enter the port so they can be monitored for compliance with security, maintenance and health insurance requirements.

Trucks operated by independent drivers or part of a trucking company fleet will be eligible to register for the program. Early drafts of the plan would have restricted access only to trucks operated by trucking companies, edging out the thousands of independent owner-operators that now haul cargo through the port and its neighboring Port of Los Angeles.

The commission also adopted other elements of the program, including a proposal to push back the date when it will begin charging a \$35 fee per loaded cargo container to October 1. It had previously been set for June 1.

That measure, approved in December, is expected to raise around \$1.6 billion to help pay to replace thousands of older diesel trucks with cleaner-burning models.

The commission voted on a \$2 billion financing plan for truck owners looking to upgrade their vehicles.

Exploding economic growth in Asia is expected to triple the cargo container volume at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach over the next two decades.

That has raised concerns over the impact of pollution from trucks, ships and other vehicles at the ports is having on surrounding communities.

The two ports combined represent America's largest port complex and account for more than 40 percent of all containerized cargo entering the U.S. annually.

The ports' harbor commissions have each sought to enact a sweeping clean air initiative, which aims to slash air pollution from port trucks by 80 percent within four years.

Under the proposed plan, only trucks built after 1993 will be able to haul cargo through the ports beginning in 2010. Two years later, all trucks servicing the ports must meet 2007 federal emission standards.

Cities Step Up Tree Plantings

By John Curran, The Associated Press

In the Washington Post, Contra Costa Times and other papers, Wednesday, February 20, 2008

BURLINGTON, Vt. -- Increasingly, trees are the new must-have for American cities.

Some prodded by environmental awareness, some by regulatory edict, they're stepping up tree plantings in hopes of improving air quality, reducing energy consumption and easing storm water flows.

And a four-man team of scientists at the University of Vermont is helping urban planners and foresters gauge the existing "tree canopy" -- or cover -- in their cities and set realistic goals for increasing it.

Their expertise has been tapped by public and private groups in New York, Boston, Washington, D.C., and several Maryland towns eager to green their cities with the help of private property owners.

"Everybody's trying to do their best to improve tree canopies and work with developers and urban planners to make sure they remove as little tree canopy as possible in their projects," said Mark Buscaino, executive director of Casey Trees, a not-for-profit in Washington, D.C., that works to green the nation's capital.

"The benefits are many. First, there's the environmental. Trees cool things. They remove particulates in the air. They're linked to mitigating storm water flows, which is an enormous problem in all urban areas because there's so much impervious surface."

Generally speaking, tree canopy refers to the part of a city that's shaded by trees. Quantifying size was once an elusive task.

But the UVM scientists, working with a research scientist from the U.S. Forest Service, have used computer programs and their own expertise to combine satellite images with aerial photos and tax maps to ascertain tree canopy size and break it down by parcel, determining which trees are on public land and which are on private land.

"If you don't even know what you have, you can't make any decisions," said Jarlath O'Neil-Dunne, a geospatial analyst with the team. "It wasn't that people didn't want to plant trees or didn't want a tree canopy program. But they needed the hard data to make decisions. That's where we came in."

The group consulted on a study of Baltimore's ecosystem in 2002, and word of their methods spread.

Their expertise dovetailed with a growing awareness among elected officials that trees could be more than decorations for urban areas.

In addition to giving off oxygen, they cool the air, limit sun exposure and act as sponges for precipitation, catching rainwater and releasing it gradually instead of having it flow directly into storm sewers.

Charlie Lord, executive director for the Urban Ecology Institute in Boston, has worked with the scientists.

"They help you gather the data, analyze it and help you answer the basic questions -- 'Where do we have trees?' 'Where don't we have trees?' -- and the more sophisticated ones, like 'Where would we plant to improve our carbon footprint?' or 'Where are the best places to plant to improve our water quality?'" Lord said.

The group's work helped the city of New York establish the goals for a 1-million-tree initiative that kicked off last fall, aiming to plant that many trees over a 23-year period.

"It really kicked off everything, from a policy perspective, a natural resource management perspective, a planning perspective. It helped us set our sights on 1 million trees," said Fiona Watt, chief of forestry and horticulture for the New York Department of Parks and Recreation.

"People used to overlook trees in cities," said Watt. "They're now viewed as increasingly important because of the work of scientists who've helped us quantify those benefits. The environmental benefits and property value benefits are quantifiable, but the social ones are harder. They make us feel good, they improve our moods, they make neighborhoods more beautiful.

"Tree canopies can make neighborhoods more cohesive and bring people together, bonding them over this common resource," she said.

The fruit of the team's work may not be visible yet, but it will be eventually. In the world of forestry, there's an old proverb: "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The next-best time is today."

COUNTDOWN TO BEIJING

Breathing Lessons

Washington Post, Wed., Feb. 20, 2008

U.S. Olympic Committee scientists developed a cloth mask with a carbon filtration system designed to filter out pollutants for U.S. athletes to wear in Beijing when they are not competing. USOC officials say they will recommend that athletes arrive in Beijing, one of the world's most polluted cities, as late as possible and remain indoors during days when the air quality is very poor.

They will also urge them to consider wearing the masks, which fit over the nose and mouth and resemble common surgical masks, when they are out and about in the city. The masks have been tested at a number of events in Beijing, though some athletes have been reluctant to wear them, officials said.

"What we are doing is clearly working with all of our teams and athletes and managing their expectations," USOC chief executive Jim Scherr said. "One of those expectations is that the air quality might not be what they are used to for international competitions."

O'Malley Lends Support To Controls On Emissions

Business Groups Express Concern Over Expense

By Lisa Rein, Washington Post Staff Writer

Washington Post, Wednesday, February 20, 2008

Maryland lawmakers began to consider a proposal yesterday for one of the nation's most ambitious sets of controls on carbon dioxide emissions, as the state seeks to be a leader in the effort to curb the gases that contribute to global warming.

Business executives expressed concern that regulations required by the global warming solutions bill would push up already high electricity prices and make Maryland less competitive. But Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) endorsed the bill yesterday, boosting its chances for passage during the General Assembly's 90-day session.

"There are some who wonder, 'Will we be able to adapt economically?'" the governor said, flanked by lawmakers and environmental leaders. "We really don't have a choice." Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. (D-Calvert) and House Speaker Michael E. Busch (D-Anne Arundel) said the bill would get serious consideration in their chambers.

The legislation would mandate that greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, cars and trucks, factories and other energy consumers in the state's economy drop 25 percent from 2006 levels by 2020 and 90 percent by 2050.

California, New Jersey and Hawaii have set strict reduction goals in the last two years.

Maryland, with its thousands of miles of shoreline, is particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels caused by climate change, said O'Malley and the bill's lead sponsors, Sen. Paul G. Pinsky (D-Prince George's) and House Majority Leader Kumar P. Barve (D-Montgomery).

"Opponents say, 'Let's put this off,'" Pinsky told the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee. "That's what happened in New Orleans."

While the bill sets reduction goals, it does not specify how they would be met. Instead, the Maryland Department of the Environment would recommend strategies for how each industry would meet the targets.

Supporters say the state has begun to clear the path, starting with passage two years ago of a law mandating reductions in pollution from large coal-fired power plants. Last year, Maryland

joined a group of states working to strengthen the effort through a mechanism for buying and selling pollution credits known as a cap and trade system.

Another law passed last year limits carbon dioxide emissions from car tailpipes; Maryland and other states are fighting the Bush administration in court in an effort to implement the law.

The bill now on the table would mandate carbon caps. The administration is recommending changes that would make such caps an option for some industries but not a requirement. Other strategies to reduce emissions would be voluntary or incentive-based, administration officials said -- those designed to coax homeowners to reduce their energy use, for example.

"Just these programs would get us close to the 2020 goal," Environment Secretary Shari T. Wilson told lawmakers yesterday.

But business and labor groups said the lack of specifics about which industries would be required to cut emissions had convinced them that the proposal would jeopardize Maryland's dwindling manufacturing jobs.

"In order to make steel, you have to produce CO₂," said Gene L. Burner of the Manufacturers' Alliance of Maryland, warning that the jobs of 2,500 steelworkers could disappear. "The only way to stop is not to make it."

Other critics said Maryland's contribution to global warming is so minor as to make regulatory action useless.

"If you totally eliminate all of Maryland's greenhouse gases, you won't see any difference in the climate-change issue," Michael Powell of the Maryland Industrial Technology Alliance, a manufacturing industry group, told the committee.

Others questioned the fairness of penalizing Maryland power plants when much of the state's pollution comes from outside the state.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses South Coast Air Quality Management District will have public workshops available to gather public testimonies regarding damages caused by pollution. For more information on this or any Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Autoridades ambientales de California reunirán testimonios públicos sobre daños por contaminación

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, February 19, 2008

La Oficina de Administración de la Calidad del Aire en el sur de California informó que llevará a cabo audiencias públicas para recoger testimonios sobre el impacto de la contaminación en la salud de millones de residentes.

La oficina refirió que las audiencias se basan en un reciente estudio, calificado como el más completo en su tipo, que señala daños respiratorios y cardíacos entre los pobladores.

Tanto las autoridades ambientales del estado de California como las federales identifican a la región como la que tiene el aire más contaminado en el país.

Las reuniones se llevarán a cabo en la Iglesia de Santa Lucía, en Long Beach.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses a refinery plans to the increase of oil production in Bakersfield, a high polluted zone in California.](#)

Aumentaría producción en refinería de zona altamente contaminada en California

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Monday, February 18, 2008

Una refinería en las inmediaciones de Bakersfield, California, proyecta aumentar su producción de gasolina en 65 por ciento para cubrir un déficit de combustible en el estado.

La refinería sin embargo se ubica en la segunda zona con el aire más contaminado en el país, después de Los Ángeles y el Valle de San Joaquín.

California ha reducido en 60 por ciento sus refinerías en las últimas tres décadas, y requiere de mayor producción de combustible.

El proyecto en Bakersfield depende de aprobaciones del condado de Kern, de la Oficina Distrital de Control de la Contaminación del Aire del Valle de San Joaquín, y de la Agencia federal de Protección Ambiental.