

Valley lawmakers offer support for Rosedale refinery expansion

Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2008

Three Central Valley lawmakers have voiced support for Big West of California refinery expansion.

In an opinion letter submitted to The Californian Monday, Assembly members Nicole Parra, D-Hanford, and Jean Fuller, R-Bakersfield, along with Mike Villines, R-Fresno, said increasing production at the Bakersfield refinery will help secure domestic fuel supplies and invigorate the local economy with an infusion of new jobs and taxes.

"Despite our differences, one thing we can agree on as Republicans and Democrats is that more production and refining of oil and gas in the Central Valley is key to increasing our domestic supply, lowering prices and keeping our economy moving forward by providing jobs," they wrote.

The refinery's expansion would build new equipment to boost gasoline and diesel production from a combined 1.7 million gallons a day to about 2.8 million gallons a day without increasing crude oil coming into the facility. Following the expansion, the refinery would produce 4 percent of the state's gasoline demand, up from 2 percent, and 12 percent of diesel used in the state, up from the 9 percent.

Big West officials have said the \$700 million project will create about 100 new jobs at the facility. They've stopped short of saying the added fuel will bring down prices at the pump locally.

The legislators' support of the project comes about a month before the Board of Supervisors will vote on whether to approve the project.

Going green to save green

Wind, solar & sewer gas power may counter high PG&E rates

Dennis Wyatt Managing Editor

Manteca Bulletin Tues., Sept. 16, 2008

Manteca may literally take the wind out of the rising cost of buying power from PG&E.

City staff is exploring ways of harnessing the wind, sun and even sewer gas in a bid to insulate municipal service ratepayers as much as possible from rising electricity costs. PG&E just had a rate increase and has two more coming in the next eight months. The power bill for running the wastewater treatment plant alone comes to more than \$1.1 million a year.

At the same time, Councilman Vince Hernandez won over another ally in his bid to wean as many city vehicles as possible off imported oil when Mayor Willie Weatherford expressed the belief the time has come to seriously look at converting vehicles to liquid natural gas. He noted it would cost less, burn cleaner as the exhaust creates water, and extend the life of vehicles.

The mayor said it was clear that the state and federal governments aren't going to do anything about stemming the high cost of energy or finding new sources for power and that it was up city to do what it can.

Councilman Steve DeBrum inquired about selling air quality credits that creating green energy sources to power part of the wastewater treatment plant would generate.

While a government entity like Manteca can't trade such credits or take advantage of tax credits for solar projects, third parties can. The South San Joaquin Irrigation District at one point contemplated doing just that until they penciled the project out a second time and found they could do it themselves for even less money by using tax-free bonds.

Public Works Director Mark Houghton was directed to continue working with the SSJID to pursue the solar project option. What is being discussed is the irrigation district building the solar plant

and operating it and then selling the power to Manteca for substantially less than PG&E does.

Houghton is also working with a firm that would collect methane gas- a byproduct of the wastewater treatment process - and store it until peak power times and use it to operate a co-generation plant to flatten power loads and reduce the municipal PG&E bill.

At the same time, windmills are being considered.

The public works department will get in contact with a firm that is putting together a proposal to power much of the San Joaquin County Office of Education on Arch Road with wind mills generators.

Power costs figure heavily into a rate study that is going before the Manteca City Council on Oct. 6 that calls taking the monthly residential rate up from \$33.06 to \$51.25 by 2013. That reflects a rate increase over the five years in excess of 50 percent.

The rate study is keeping with municipal policy to review enterprise funds every five years to make sure that they are being adequately funded to cover maintenance and operating costs as well as any replacement needs to avoid the system from going into disrepair, violating state and federal water act laws, and making sure they are self-supporting through payments from those who use the system.

The study reviewed the current financial status of the fund projected operating and capital costs for the next five years.

The increases are being attributed to skyrocketing energy costs - the plant uses \$1.1 million in electricity in a given year - as well as other needs such as:

- build the operating reserve up to the equivalent of four months.
- creating a depreciation sinking fund to replace several thousand feet of aging large pipeline that is nearing the end of its useful life.
- meeting more stringent state standards that are now in place for the collection and treatment of wastewater.

Bitter Creek management meeting coming up

Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2008

A public meeting on the proposed management plan for the Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge will be held at 6:30 p.m. Sept. 30 in Frazier Park.

The meeting is being held to gain public input on a plan to restore native grasses to 9,400 acres of the refuge in order to restore native plant species and provide habitat for endangered animals. One proposal in the plan calls for controlled burning on large swaths of grassland, which has stirred air quality concerns from some in surrounding communities.

The meeting will take place at Cuddy Hall, 335 Lakewood Place in Frazier Park.

A comment period has been extended through Sept. 30. Written and verbal comments will be taken at the meeting.

Details on the plan can be found at www.fws.gov/hoppermountain/index.html.

Written comments can be e-mailed to mike_stockton@fws.gov, or mailed to Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box 370, Maricopa, CA 93252.

Forum on air pollution and children's health

By Denis Cuff, Contra Costa Times
Contra Costa Times Mon., Sept. 15, 2008

BENICIA — A free public forum on how air pollution affects children's health will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday at the Benicia High School performing arts theatre, 1101 Military West.

Speakers include Ira Tager, director of the UC Berkeley School of Public Health's Prevention Research Center, Paul Roberts, an air pollution researcher with Sonoma Technologies Inc., and Jenny Bard, regional clear air programs director for the American Lung Association of California.

Topics include how children attending schools near busy roads or freeways can be affected by air pollution.

The forum is sponsored by Benicia First, a local citizens group that promotes sustainable development.

Breathmobile brings hope of clear, deep breaths to youngsters Mobile clinic to help young low-income asthma patients breath easier

By Cecily Burt, Oakland Tribune
Contra Costa Times Mon., Sept. 15, 2008

Every year, emergency rooms are clogged with low-income youngsters who cannot catch their breath, their asthma symptoms aggravated by unhealthy air and a lack of regular medical treatment and medication to manage their illness.

But help is on the way. Starting next month, a unique mobile relief effort called the Breathmobile, staffed with a doctor, nurse, pulmonary specialist and driver, will visit schools in Oakland, Emeryville and Berkeley to diagnose kids with asthma, dispense medical instructions and medications, and best of all, make return visits every six to eight weeks to check on their patients and make sure everything is OK. All for free.

The rolling medical clinic — actually a specially outfitted Van Hool bus — is coming to Oakland courtesy of the efforts of Dr. Washington Burns, executive director of the Prescott Joseph Center for Community Enhancement on Peralta Street in West Oakland. Asthma rates are disproportionately higher in the area, mainly because of invisible soot and diesel particulates emanating from ships, trucks and heavy machinery, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of cars that pass through daily on two major freeways.

"The lack of funds for doctor visits and drugs creates economic disparity," Burns said. "Here people will be given the same care you or I can afford."

Burns spent 30 years in the lab at California Pacific Medical Center before taking over the reins of the center years ago. He heard about the success the mobile program was having in low-income communities in Los Angeles, where, like Oakland, asthma often goes undiagnosed or untreated until it reaches a crisis stage that requires a trip to the emergency room.

"The concept was hatched in Southern California in 1995 as a way to serve low-income families who had trouble traveling for treatment to community health clinics, said Francene Lifson, executive director of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, California chapter, who was part of those early efforts.

What started as one van has now grown to nine in Los Angeles and surrounding counties, with a 10th expected to roll out in Long Beach in a couple of months, Lifson said. There are also vans in Chicago, Baltimore, Phoenix and Mobile, Ala. This will be the first in Northern California.

The bus has an intake station where a survey is gathered to collect medical histories, a nursing station to gather basic medical information such as blood oxygen, pulse and temperature, and a special pulmonary station outfitted with a spectrometer to measure lung function. The final station

is the doctor's office, where all the data has been transferred to make a diagnosis and treatment plan.

An on-board computer system will track the cases to develop statistics on its usefulness in reducing chronic asthma symptoms and emergency room visits.

In Los Angeles, the Breathmobile program is credited with reducing asthma-related school absenteeism from 30 percent to 10 percent; emergency room visits from 24 percent to 8 percent; and hospitalizations from 7 percent to 2 percent, said Fellita Jones, project manager for the Breathmobile program.

Burns said the bus visits 22 to 23 schools a month, seeing students accompanied by a parent. The program is designed to treat children with asthma only; those with other illnesses and respiratory problems will be referred to clinics for treatment.

"Asthma is a manageable disease, not like cancer or AIDS or other diseases," Burns said. "We can treat them so they can function like any other child."

The van cost \$154,000, and the program's annual operating costs are estimated at \$500,000 a year, which includes salaries for the medical staff and driver, insurance, gas and maintenance, but no van payments.

So far, the Breathmobile has picked up several sponsors, including the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, among others, but it needs more help.

"The way I see it, asthma is a community disease and the community should help with the disease," Burns said. "A \$1 here, a \$1 there. "... I grew up in the South and I remember the missionaries would say just give a dollar. If you get a million donations, that's \$1 million."

To contribute money to help fund the van operations, send checks to the Prescott Joseph Center Breathmobile Project, c/o Dr. Washington Burns, 920 Peralta St., Oakland, 94607.

The Breathmobile will be open to the public Thursday from 2 to 6 p.m. in front of Scott's Restaurant, 2 Broadway in Jack London Square.

Burbank cabbies pumped about hybrid taxis

Initially skeptical, they find they like the cars' thriftiness and even roominess, and say their customers do too.

By Bob Pool, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
LA Times, September 16, 2008

Eyes rolled at the cabbies' layover lot next to Burbank's Bob Hope Airport when drivers learned about the hybrid taxi rollout.

A taxicab company applying for permission to work in Burbank was promising city officials that all new cabs added to its fleet would have low-emission hybrid engines or use alternative fuels such as compressed natural gas.

Drivers who for years have appreciated the roominess and ruggedness of retired Ford Crown Victoria police and CHP cars that have been converted into cabs wondered what was in store for them.

What came next was \$4.60-a-gallon gasoline.

All of a sudden the small but efficient Toyota Prius started looking good to those who drive as much as 300 miles a day carrying around strangers in their back seats.

To their surprise, their fares appreciated the hybrids too.

"Most of my passengers really like it. Some think it's small, but I'd say 97% of them like this car," said cab driver Káren Malkhasyan.

"It's comfortable. It's roomy, even for me."

To demonstrate, Malkhasyan, 35, of Glendale, slipped his 6-foot frame into the driver's seat of City Cab No. 688, which was parked in a row of larger taxis at the airport layover lot on Cohasset Street.

The 2004 Prius is one of three that his company uses. Malkhasyan shares it with another driver. It has about 250,000 miles on its odometer.

"No major problems with it. I get around 40 miles per gallon. I think new ones get even more," he said.

Malkhasyan said some cabbies were skeptical when the hybrids began surfacing in local taxi companies' fleets. That's because distances in Los Angeles are great and the combination of fast freeway traffic and brake-riding, stop-and-go surface street congestion is tough on cabs.

"The first time they saw these they said it's like a toy, there's no room for luggage, you can't drive passengers because they won't like it," he said of other drivers' reaction to the Prius.

But they don't say that anymore.

With travelers carrying fewer bags because of increased airline charges, there's plenty of luggage space in the back of the Prius, above its hybrid battery compartment. "It's as much space as that Crown Victoria has," Malkhasyan said, pointing to a rival company's cab parked in front of his Prius.

The big Ford had high-occupancy-lane access stickers and a "CNG" decal. Malkhasyan popped open the trunk to show that the compressed natural gas cylinder takes up part of the luggage space. The remaining space for bags was about the same as in a Prius.

City Cab also owns Chevrolet and Nissan hybrids, he said.

United Independent Taxi, the company that pledged to Burbank officials that future new cabs will either be hybrids or alternative fuel vehicles, uses the Prius, Nissans, Toyota Camrys and Ford Escape hybrids, said President Melese Adamu.

"The investment is high, between \$26,000 and \$32,000. The drivers choose the vehicles," Adamu said.

Because United is a taxi association, its drivers buy their own cars.

Burbank officials, who in May granted United a permit to field 20 cabs in their city, closely monitor the 130 authorized taxis. They keep Burbank fares at the same rate as neighboring Los Angeles.

In Los Angeles, city Transportation Department leaders are preparing to introduce an alternative fuel/hybrid taxi program of their own for the 2,303 cabs authorized to work within their city limits.

Officials say San Francisco, Seattle and New York City -- which hopes to replace its 13,000 taxicabs with hybrids over the next five years -- are ahead of them.

"We're researching the issue very carefully. We want to do it right," said Tom Drischler, taxicab administrator for Los Angeles. "We really want to get something going this year. We hope to present a program to the Board of Taxi Commissioners this fall."

One complicating factor is the Los Angeles requirement that cabs have safety partitions to protect drivers. Before the thick plastic shields were mandated in 1993, taxi drivers were being murdered at a rate of one every 18 months. Since then, only two cabbies have been killed by robbers in their car, Drischler said.

"It's hard to put a safety shield in a Prius," but surveillance cameras might be an option, he said.

Most Los Angeles cabs are retired police cars picked up at auction and refurbished for a total cost of about \$6,500, he said. "With hybrids, they'll have to come up with a \$25,000 investment."

At the airport taxi lot in Burbank, United cab driver Bereket Haile picked a 2008 Nissan Altima hybrid in June when he replaced his Crown Victoria at his own expense. In two months he put 4,500 miles on it, registering between 32 and 34 mpg.

"I didn't try for a Prius. There was a wait," said Haile, 63, who lives in Inglewood. "Passengers all give very good comments about this car. But I don't know how long it will last. It's not heavy-duty."

Haile cut the conversation short when he was dispatched to pick up a fare at the airport terminal.

He drove about a mile from the layover lot and helped Lisa Brown and her 4 1/2-year-old son, Otto, into the Nissan's back seat.

He made a quick trip with the pair to the Courtyard Marriott hotel in Sherman Oaks, where Brown and her son were staying on a family visit to Los Angeles. She was surprised to learn that she was riding in one of the Los Angeles area's few hybrid cabs.

"The ride was fine, this is a perfect taxicab," said Brown, 36. "I'm used to these. We have them in San Francisco, where we're from."

Back at the Burbank airport, travelers David Egdes and Heather Harrison hailed cabs in front of the 1930s-style passenger terminal.

Egdes, who is 6-foot-5, drew a 2004 Crown Victoria Yellow Cab.

"I'd be very much in favor of taking a hybrid cab. I've sat in one. It's a little tight for driving, but it's all about the environment," said Egdes, 45, of Encino.

Harrison, 53, of Berkeley settled into the back seat of a 2004 Prius from City Cab with 230,000 miles on it.

"Oh, this is a hybrid?" she said. "That's excellent. That's what they all should be."

Judge refuses to let snowmobiles roam Yellowstone

By BOB MOEN Associated Press Writer
Contra Costa Times Tues., Sept. 16, 2008

CHEYENNE, Wyo.—A federal judge in Washington, D.C., threw out plans Monday to allow more than 500 snowmobiles a day into Yellowstone National Park, drawing sharp criticism from Wyoming's congressional delegation and snowmobiling advocates but praise from conservationists.

The National Park Service's Winter Use Plan would have allowed 540 snowmobiles to go through in Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks and the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Memorial Parkway every day, starting this winter.

But U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan said in an order that the plan would increase air pollution, disturb wildlife and cause too much noise in the nation's first national park.

"According to NPS's own data, the (plan) will increase air pollution, exceed the use levels recommended by NPS biologists to protect wildlife, and cause major adverse impacts to the natural soundscape in Yellowstone," Sullivan said in the order.

Wyoming Republican Sens. Mike Enzi and John Barrasso denounced the ruling.

"National parks are for the benefit and enjoyment of the people, and judges and lawyers seem to forget or purposely discount that sometimes. That's sad," Enzi said.

"Wyoming experts are the best stewards of our land, not radical federal Washington judges," Barrasso said.

Yellowstone Superintendent Suzanne Lewis declined comment until Sullivan's ruling could be reviewed.

Conservationists sued the National Park Service to stop the winter use plan, saying snowmobiling in the park causes noise and air pollution. They want snowmobiling eliminated or at least reduced in the park.

Park officials said they averaged about 290 snowmobiles a day in 2006, the most recent number available. Conservationists argued that allowing 540 snowmobiles, a cap higher than that average, would not help solve the park's problems.

"This ruling will restore the quiet and the clean air in Yellowstone for everyone to enjoy," said Amy McNamara, director of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition national parks program.

Three pro-snowmobiling groups, including the Haslett, Mich.-based International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association, intervened in the case on the government's side. Association Director Ed Klim said his group would review the ruling before deciding whether to appeal.

Klim said the groups believe the Department of the Interior and Park Service "did an outstanding job" developing the snowmobile plan.

U.S. District Judge Clarence Brimmer said he had not had a chance to review Sullivan's ruling in its entirety. But in light of Sullivan's order, Brimmer asked lawyers in the Wyoming case to present options for his court to give the Park Service for the coming winter.

"The way it is right now there will be no winter activities in the park, but we feel that Judge Brimmer will come forward with a remedy and we will have winter activity," said Jack Welch, of the BlueRibbon Coalition, a motorized advocacy organization based in Idaho.

The National Park Service must redo the plan, Sullivan said.

The next winter season begins Dec. 15.

In the late 1990s, as many as 1,400 snowmobiles a day visited Yellowstone, contributing noise and [air pollution](#) that critics in Congress and elsewhere said was inappropriate for the country's first national park.

Judge Rejects Plan for More Snowmobiles at National Parks

By Jim Robbins

N.Y. Times, Tuesday, September 16, 2008

HELENA, Mont. — A federal judge ruled Monday that the Bush administration's plan to allow more than 500 snowmobiles a day into Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks was not in keeping with the National Park Service's responsibility to protect the parks.

The judge, Emmet G. Sullivan of Federal District Court in Washington, said park planners had failed to reconcile their mission to protect the parks' environment with the increase in air pollution, the disturbance to wildlife and the impact on visitors that the snowmobiles would bring.

"The plan clearly elevates use over conservation of park resources and values," Judge Sullivan wrote in his 63-page ruling.

The order vacates the plan, which would have authorized 540 snowmobiles a day into the parks, and orders the park service to prepare another. Environmentalists, who have long argued that the park service ignored science to reach the decision to allow so many snowmobiles into the park, were delighted.

"There have been four studies and \$10 million spent, and every study shows the best way to get people in the park and protect it is through snow coach access, not snowmobiles," said Chris Mehl, a spokesman for the Wilderness Society in Bozeman, Mont., one of the parties to the lawsuit. "This upholds the promise and possibility of Yellowstone."

Environmentalists favor access to the park in winter only by snow coach, which is a van or bus on large skis or treads. They say these vehicles have a far less adverse impact on the environment.

Others who filed suit were the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, the National Parks Conservation Association, the Winter Wildlands Alliance, and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Those who sought more snowmobile access were disappointed. "We are not surprised," said Ed Klim, president of the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association in Haslett, Mich. "Judge Sullivan has ruled on this issue before and in this manner."

"This is not the end of the issue," Mr. Klim added. "We will be successful in our appeal."

The ruling throws the coming winter season in the parks into some confusion. Al Nash, a spokesman for Yellowstone, said officials there were still reading the document and could not comment on what it meant for this year's snowmobile season. "We'll open as scheduled on Dec. 15 for the winter," Mr. Nash said. "But we don't know yet how the judge's decision will impact this."

Environmentalists are encouraging park officials to keep the number of snowmobiles around 260 a day for the coming season — the average number that have used the parks for the past five years — and eventually to phase them out.

Whether snowmobiles should be allowed at all in Yellowstone, the nation's oldest national park — and if so how many — is the most contentious issue facing the National Park Service, based on the volume of public comments during the planning process.

Environmentalists claim that the great appeal of Yellowstone in winter is its solitude, and that studies show that noise, even from the quieter, cleaner snowmobiles now in use violates Yellowstone's standards. They say exhaust from the machines pollutes the park, and that snowmobiles stress wildlife already are under duress because of snow and cold temperatures.

But snowmobilers say the newest generation of machines is far cleaner and quieter, and they note that riders must be accompanied by a guide, reducing the possibility of contact with wildlife.

A separate hearing on snowmobiles is being heard in federal court in Cheyenne, Wyo., in a different lawsuit brought by the State of Wyoming and Park County, which borders Yellowstone.

Among other things, the plaintiffs want the court to increase the number of snowmobiles the park service plan allows to 720 a day.

States Aim to Cut Gases by Making Polluters Pay

By Felicity Barringer and Kate Galbraith

N.Y. Times, Tuesday, September 16, 2008

Ten states from Maryland to Maine are about to undertake the nation's most serious effort yet to tackle climate change, putting limits on carbon dioxide emissions from utilities and making them pay for each ton of pollutants.

The program is due to get off the ground in nine days, but already there are worries that it may fail to reduce pollution substantially in the Northeast, undermining a concept that is being watched carefully by the rest of the country, by Congress and by European regulators.

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, or RGGI, will cap emissions for 233 plants. By putting a price on the carbon dioxide they emit, it gives plants a financial incentive to clean themselves up, with the proceeds channeled to energy-saving and renewable energy programs in each state.

The states will set their own limits, with each issuing tradable permits, or allowances, for carbon pollution. On Sept. 25, utilities will start bidding at auction for allowances, which they can later sell — mimicking the so-called cap-and-trade programs that effectively reduced acid rain in the 1990s.

The concept has been praised by environmentalists and state officials. But the emissions cap was based on overestimates of carbon dioxide output, which has dropped sharply from 2005 to 2006 and is on a lower trajectory than anticipated.

So auction demand may be weak at the start, with millions of allowances the states planned to sell not immediately needed. And with the cap on emissions most likely to be higher, at least initially, than the plants' actual carbon-dioxide output, it may be many months before utilities have an incentive to cut pollution.

As traders watched the RGGI dynamic evolve, the already low price of carbon futures fell by about 40 percent in the last three months in this country, according to Evolution Markets, a brokerage firm.

"The supply of allowances is more than what the market needs," said Milo Sjardin, head of the North America division of New Carbon Finance, a research and analysis firm. "Prices are not going to be high, not for the foreseeable future." He also noted that the market was also "not going to produce a lot of emission reductions" as long as the supply of allowances outstrips utilities' need.

The trading of carbon dioxide allowances exists in Europe, and in a small way in this country; some companies have taken part in trading on the Chicago Climate Exchange, which opened in 2003. But the market has been voluntary and participation largely experimental.

Because it makes participation in a pollution-capping scheme mandatory, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (known as RGGI and pronounced "reggie") is already spurring more trading in anticipation.

Both the Chicago exchange and the New York Mercantile Exchange have recently made it possible to trade future RGGI allowances.

The trading scheme would hold carbon emissions to 188 million tons annually through 2014, and scale them back by 2.5 percent each year through 2018. The cap was set in 2004, based on analysis by energy experts and some pressure from the regulated utilities to keep the ceiling at or above the anticipated emissions. The states planned to issue allowances covering that amount. The cap takes effect Jan. 1, 2009, in New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and all six New England states — Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.

Phil Giudice, the commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources, said, “The 188 million tons estimate was put together a number of years ago from both an analytical aspect and, not surprisingly, a political one.”

But in the end, emissions from the 10 states went down instead of up. After growing from 176.9 million tons in 2002 to 184.5 million tons in 2005, they dropped in 2006, the most recent year for which there is complete data, to 164.5 million tons. Estimated emissions for 2007 are 172.4 million tons, according to Environment Northeast, a research and policy organization.

State officials attribute the regional drop to lower demand because of mild weather, a slowing economy and utilities shifting from higher-carbon fuels to lower-carbon ones like natural gas.

As long as emissions remain below 188 million tons, however, the number of allowances will exceed the companies' need. The states have set a floor price of \$1.86 per ton; allowances will not sell below that level.

If buyers do not snap everything up, leftover allowances will be rolled over to future auctions, which take place quarterly. The next auction is in December. New York, New Jersey, Delaware and New Hampshire, which will not issue allowances in the auction this month, may participate at that time. In addition to power companies, financial institutions, environmentalists and other groups can also bid.

The auction program is intended to hold pollution steady and eventually reduce it through market mechanisms.

A dirtier plant can buy additional allowances in the secondary market, but it may be expensive — or it can just find a way to cut its pollution. Conversely, a cleaner utility can sell its unneeded allowances.

The carbon market follows a three-year-old European experiment, the first of its kind, that provoked widespread criticism, both because it provided windfall profits for industry and because it did little to control heat-trapping emissions. The question now is whether the Northeastern states can avoid those errors.

“Everyone wants to wait and see what really happens, so there will be far less liquidity right now at the first auction than what you would expect going forward,” said Mr. Sjardin of New Carbon Finance.

Currently, allowances in Europe sell for the United States equivalent of about \$38 a ton, far more than the roughly \$5 a ton that carbon futures sell for here. The heavy reliance on auctions is one thing that distinguishes the RGGI program from its European predecessor. Another is the decision to dedicate the proceeds to programs that will cut carbon emissions. Each state is designating the money to meet the program's energy-efficiency mandate.

Seth L. Kaplan, a vice president of the Conservation Law Foundation, an environmental advocacy group in New England, said that if new investments were put into programs like making existing homes more weatherproof, “the bottom-line effect will be to reduce people’s bills.”

“The rates will go up a little bit but their usage will actually go down,” he said.

Peter Iwanowicz, director of the climate change office at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, said he expected customers’ electric bills to increase less than \$1 a month as a result of the new program. If consumer costs rise higher than that, it could tarnish the cap-and-trade concept just as a new Congress and a new president are considering national legislation along the same lines.

In terms of actual emissions cuts, “it’s a fairly modest first step,” said Franz Litz, a senior fellow at the World Resources Institute, a Washington-based environmental research group. But, he added, “It is made more unique by the fact that a bunch of states came together” to create a regional market.

The companies involved are uncomfortable with fact that the program is regional, not national. In an e-mail message, Jim Norvelle, a spokesman for Dominion, which is based in Virginia and owns the Brayton Point Power station in Somerset, Mass., a 1,560-megawatt behemoth that gets 72 percent of its power from coal, said, “Dominion would rather see a national greenhouse gas policy than a regional one.” Dominion plans to participate in the coming auction.

David Byford, a spokesman for Dynegy, based in Houston, wrote in an e-mail message that a national program would put “all regions on a competitive playing field.” Dynegy owns five plants in the areas governed by the new initiative. Mr. Byford will not reveal whether it will participate in the auction.

This first carbon cap-and-trade program in the country, proposed by former Gov. George E. Pataki of New York, has been five years in the making. It is being watched by Californians, who are designing an even more ambitious, economywide program of regulations, and by Congress, which has considered — and this summer rejected — a national cap-and-trade program.

The Bush administration has steadfastly opposed any mandatory economywide cap on carbon emissions, but has no power to block the 10 states from acting. California, which two years ago passed a law to control greenhouse-gas emissions across the economy, has joined with six other states and four Canadian provinces in a similar effort, the Western Climate

Initiative. This group is still devising the details of their cap-and-trade system.

RGGI will break from the pattern of earlier cap-and-trade programs, which auctioned off only a small percentage of allowances, distributing the rest free. State officials estimated that the vast majority of allowances would be auctioned. The Northeastern states are more restrictive than Europe’s carbon-trading program in the number of credits companies can buy to offset their emissions. Offsets — like credits bought from programs that plant trees to absorb carbon dioxide, or that farm using methods that reduce emissions from the soil — were often seen as a dubious shortcut to real emissions reductions.

Several state officials said companies had been anxious to get the auction process under way. Mr. Giudice of Massachusetts said: “One of the worst things for industry is uncertainty. With uncertainty, risk factors go up for all kinds of capital decisions.”

Even if there are more allowances than emissions at the outset, the gap will not hamper early trading, predicted Ian Bowles, secretary of the Energy and Environment Department in Massachusetts.

Noting that the total amount of allowances can be adjusted in future years if emissions reductions fail to meet the target, he said: "The goal of this program is to curb greenhouse gases. How we set the long-term targets or the number of permits is fundamental to whether we're accomplishing our environmental objections."

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses UC Berkeley analyzes the impact air pollution has on children. For more information on this and other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Analizan impacto de la contaminación en niños

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, September 16, 2008

El director de la Escuela de Salud Pública de la Universidad de California en Berkeley, Ira Tager encabezará este jueves un foro de análisis sobre el impacto de la contaminación del aire en la salud infantil.

En la audiencia, a celebrarse en la escuela preparatoria de Benicia, cerca de Palo Alto, también participarán representantes de la Asociación Americana del Pulmón o de salud pulmonar.

El foro analizará por primera vez cómo los niños se exponen a la contaminación al acudir a clases, por ejemplo, y los efectos que a la larga puede enfrentar en su salud.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses criticism arises on the proposed budget that will finance alternative energy.](#)

Surgen críticas a propuesta para financiar energía alternativa

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Noticiero Latino

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Una propuesta que busca que el estado de California financie con cinco mil millones de dólares la exploración y generación de energía alternativa ha encontrado críticas de activistas porque su principal propulsor es un magnate del sector energético.

Según versiones que circularon este fin de semana en California, la mayor contribución a la campaña de la Proposición 10, a decidirse en las elecciones de noviembre, es una empresa de Texas generadora de gas natural.

California trata de sustituir, por ley, parte de los energéticos que consume con energía alternativa bajo la administración del gobernador, Arnold Schwarzenegger.