

Health, economic benefits of cleaner air tallied

By Stacey Shepard, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian Wednesday, November 12, 2008

Meeting federal clean air standards could prevent 186 early deaths and potentially save \$1.3 billion in medical costs, lost productivity, missed school days and premature deaths in Kern County each year, according to a study released Wednesday.

The study, by Cal State Fullerton researchers, calculated the economic benefits of reducing smog and fine particle pollution in the San Joaquin Valley and Los Angeles area. The two regions have the dirtiest air in the nation and aren't likely to meet federal limits for many years.

If both air basins met national standards, it could prevent nearly 4,000 premature deaths, which would save more lives than preventing every fatal accident in the same area, according to the findings.

It would also prevent 1,950 cases of chronic bronchitis, 1.2 million school absences and 466,880 days of missed work each year.

After tallying medical costs, lost wages and monetary values people would pay to avoid illness and early death, the researchers estimated the annual price tag for non-attainment of clean air standards to be \$28 billion — \$22 billion in Los Angeles area and \$6 billion in the San Joaquin Valley.

"The price we pay every year for not moving faster (to clean the air) is steep," said Jane Hall, an environmental economist at Cal State Fullerton and lead author of the study.

However, local air quality officials were quick to point out the dollar figures are not hard costs to the valley economy. Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said he didn't disagree with the report's findings but "it has to be portrayed in the proper context."

For example, premature deaths in the study account for almost all of the valley's costs — \$5.4 billion of the \$6 billion. But that's not an actual amount of money being lost, he said.

The study's authors said the \$6.6 million value they assigned to each early death came from peer-reviewed studies that estimate how much individuals are willing to pay to avoid the risk of death.

"It's not out-of-pocket costs and it doesn't involve actuarial analysis," Sadredin said. "It's more of a social cost — what people would be willing to pay" to avoid the risk of early death.

But, he said: "Even if one person is dying from air pollution, you have to do everything you can. We don't think the loss of any life is acceptable."

In the San Joaquin Valley, industry has already spent more than \$42 billion to comply with air pollution regulations. Stricter regulations in the next few years will likely cost another \$20 billion, Sadredin said.

Some did take issue with the report's validity.

Joel Schwartz, a Sacramento-based scientist and visiting fellow with the Washington, D.C.-based American Enterprise Institute, said the number of premature deaths reported in the study was inflated.

The study's authors "cherry-picked" research to support a higher number of early deaths and ignored other scientific work to the contrary "to exaggerate the harm and pump up the numbers," he said.

Hall, the study's lead author, said during a news conference that all data and methods used in the study were peer-reviewed and recommended by agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and National Academy of Sciences.

Study names new price of pollution

Dirty air costs \$6.3b, causes more than 800 deaths.

By Mark Grossi

In the Fresno Bee, Merced Sun-Star and other papers, Thursday, November 13, 2008

There's a new annual price tag for breathing dirty air in the San Joaquin Valley: \$6.3 billion, mostly because more than 800 people die years earlier than they should.

That's more fatalities due to bad air than car accidents, said nationally known economist Jane V. Hall, who Wednesday released her latest analysis of poor air quality in this region.

The dollar and death figures are nearly twice as high as Hall found in her first study two years ago, partly because stricter federal standards are in force. The new standards assume more people are harmed by bad air.

But she also said new research indicates microscopic specks of soot and chemicals are more dangerous than previously thought.

"There is a clearer consensus that lives are being shortened," she said.

The study, funded with a \$90,000 grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, is intended to jolt residents, regulators and political leaders.

Hall, a California State University, Fullerton, scientist, worked with researchers Victor Brajer and Frederick W. Lurmann on the study, which also covered the South Coast Air Basin.

The study points out the continuing need to battle air pollution, said Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. But he also said people still should understand air quality has improved.

"Things are not getting worse. These bigger numbers are the result of a new standard," said Sadredin. "But this study does give the Valley good justification to advocate for more support in fighting air pollution."

The premature deaths and mounting costs are unacceptable, said Liza Bolaños, coordinator for the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition, a nonprofit group representing public health and environmental organizations.

"We have the capacity to clean this up," she said. "This is a wakeup call."

Hall and the other researchers said more than half the state's residents -- 20 million people in the Valley and South Coast -- are exposed regularly to unhealthy levels of ozone and particle pollution.

The researchers combined the cost of breathing dirty air in both basins, arriving at a total of \$28 billion. Health care costs and time lost at work are included in the total, but more than 80 percent of the cost is related to the value of the estimated 3,800 lives lost prematurely each year.

Microscopic specks called PM-2.5, which are more prevalent in colder weather, are the biggest worry. Most of the region's \$6.3 billion cost is the value of people who die prematurely from exposure to PM-2.5.

Fresno last year had 75 bad days for PM-2.5, Bakersfield had 68 and Visalia 64. In the north Valley, Modesto had 39 bad days. This region is considered one of the worst in the state for such pollution.

"In the San Joaquin Valley, 100 percent of the residents are exposed to fine particle pollution at some time during the year," said Hall.

The PM-2.5 comes from many sources, such as diesel engines and fireplaces. But it also forms in the moist winter air when ammonia from dairy waste combines with vehicle exhaust.

Fresno County residents suffer the Valley's biggest effects, with the loss of 212 people each year, valued at \$1.4 billion, according to the report. The county also has the Valley's highest yearly total

of non-fatal heart attacks related to air quality -- 156. PM-2.5 pollution has been linked to heart disease.

Hall and Brajer said the Valley's 823 annual air-related deaths occur about 14 years sooner than they should.

The cost of each premature death is set about \$6.7 million, a figure based on mainstream economic and federal studies of social value. Such figures have been used in economic analysis of social problems for decades, researchers said.

"We're not trying to value a single person," said Brajer. "This is a social value on reducing the risk of early death."

Report: Bad air costs state

By The Madera Tribune - Keith Pendleton
Madera Tribune Thursday, November 13, 2008

Ozone and particulate pollution caused 3,812 deaths in 2006 within the South Coast and San Joaquin Valley air basins, according to a study led by Dr. Jane V. Hall, an economics professor at California State University, Fullerton. In contrast, there were 2,521 automobile fatalities in the same year.

The 20 million residents of the South Coast and San Joaquin Valley air basins, over half the population of the state of California, usually live in the worst air in the country, according to the study. Only Houston, Texas, rivals the two air quality districts for greatest air pollution, but Houston tends to receive more rain, which increases air quality.

Madera accounts for 137,000 of that 20 million based on 2007 population estimates according to the study.

The report found that dirty air costs the California economy \$28 billion annually. The air pollution cost factors include lost wages that workers and their families absorb and sick-leave employers pay, and costs to hospitals and insurance companies of pollution-related hospital visits, as well as premature deaths.

Note: The above article has been shortened from its published form in The Madera Tribune newspaper.

Study puts \$6B price tag on bad air Northern Valley escapes most of bad health effects

By Ken Carlson
Modesto Bee, Thursday, November 13, 2008

A study puts a dollar amount on the adverse health effects of air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley.

It's \$6 billion or \$1,600 per person each year, according to university researchers who released the study Wednesday.

The lead authors at California State University, Fullerton, considered the human toll from air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California, where 20 million people live and the air is usually considered the dirtiest in the nation.

By meeting federal standards for smog and minute particles known as PM2.5, the study said, the regions could avoid \$28 billion in costs associated with premature deaths, asthma attacks, chronic bronchitis, hospital admissions, emergency room visits and lost work time.

"There is a clear consensus that lives are shortened because of air pollution, that kids miss school and people go to emergency rooms," said Jane Hall, a CSUF professor and leading expert on environmental economics.

Reducing the amount of tiny soot particles that residents breathe would save more lives than eliminating motor vehicle fatalities in the two regions, the researchers said.

Air pollution is not so bad in the northern part of the eight-county San Joaquin Valley air basin, compared with the southern counties. Still, residents of Stanislaus, San Joaquin and Merced counties are exposed to unhealthy levels of ozone 30 to 45 days of the year and high concentrations of particles almost 50 days a year.

The study estimated that every year in Stanislaus County there are 100 premature deaths to adults related to air pollution, as well as 2,100 asthma attacks, 43,814 cases of bronchitis or respiratory symptoms, 70 nonfatal heart attacks, 39 hospital admissions for lung and heart problems and 50 ER visits for children with asthma. The pollution causes 8,120 lost work days and 13,500 days of children being absent from school.

The cost to individuals and families is \$695.1 million in Stanislaus County, \$764.3 million in San Joaquin County and \$266.6 million in Merced County. The calculations included the cost of missing work and school, medical expenses and other associated costs.

The findings were released as the California Air Resources Board considers whether to approve regulations to clean up emissions from diesel trucks, which are considered a major contributor to air pollution.

Proposals before the board next month would require exhaust filters on heavy-duty diesel trucks starting in 2010, with nearly all these trucks upgraded by 2014. In addition, long-haul truckers would have to cut greenhouse gas emissions through the use of alternative fuels, aerodynamic trailer designs and low resistance tires.

The trucking industry counters that imposing the costly regulations during the economic downturn would severely threaten the livelihood of truckers.

"We share in the goal of reducing emissions," said Julie Sauls, vice president of external affairs for the California Trucking Association. "What we would like to do is find ways to reduce emissions without crippling the business that everyone relies on."

Karen Caesar, an ARB spokeswoman, said the state is supposed to comply with federal air quality standards by 2023. The air board has said the truck regulations would prevent 9,400 pollution-related deaths between 2010 and 2025 from cancer, cardiovascular disease and other conditions.

"We have been in constant conversations with the trucking industry," Caesar said. "There are financing options and we are sensitive to the fact the economy is in a downturn."

Study: Meeting air quality standards could save lives and dollars

By The Record

Stockton Record, Thursday, November 13, 2008

STOCKTON — Meeting federal air quality standards would prevent 110 premature deaths each year in San Joaquin County, and save \$761 million that is lost annually due to lower productivity, hospital admissions and other factors, a new study says.

The study by a preeminent air pollution expert at California State University, Fullerton, is an effort to quantify the effects of pollution on the lives of everyone in the San Joaquin Valley and the South Coast Air Basin.

The report was released this morning, one month before the California Air Resources Board considers controversial new rules to clean up dirty diesel trucks. The authors of the study said they believe action is needed to clean the air, but said they were not advocating for any specific policy.

"We've made substantial progress, but there is a lot more to be done," said Jane Hall, author of the study. "The price we pay every year for not moving faster is steep."

One think-tank critic said today that he believes the study's findings are exaggerated, and that the authors ignored other studies suggesting tiny particulate matter known as PM2.5 is not as great a health risk as portrayed.

"It's clear that the harm from today's historically low air pollution levels is only a tiny fraction of what the ... report claims," said Joel Schwartz, a visiting fellow with the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

Bad air costing state's economy billions

Jane Kay, Chronicle Environment Writer
S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, November 13, 2008

California has the worst air in the country, and 20 million people living in the dirtiest regions account for billions of dollars a year in economic losses because of premature death, chronic illness, hospitalizations and missed school and workdays, according to a new study.

These economic costs, from breathing soot swirling in the air in the winter and smog in the summer, are the highest in the Los Angeles Basin and San Joaquin Valley, areas rivaled only by Houston for filthy air, the study said.

"Most people cannot choose the air that they breathe, and there is a clear scientific consensus that people's lives are shortened by air pollution. Kids are made sick. Workdays are lost," said Jane Hall, professor of economics at California State University Fullerton and the leader of the team that did the study and has researched the impact of air pollution for two decades.

The cost of air pollution in the two regions - which are the top violators of the federal Clean Air Act - is estimated at \$28 billion a year. But because the state's economy is closely integrated, the costs in these hubs of manufacturing, shipping, entertainment and agriculture put a damper on all of California, the researchers found.

The financial burden on families, hospitals, health maintenance organizations and employers from premature deaths and respiratory and heart problems in the two regions - home to more than half the state's population - fans out to the rest of state, the economists found.

Counties in the Los Angeles metropolitan region on average exceeded ozone standards up to 120 days a year between 2005 and 2007, with the most days in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The San Joaquin Valley on average exceeded ozone standards up to 139 days a year; the counties with the greatest number of days with high ozone levels were Tulare, Stanislaus, Merced and Madera. The Los Angeles region exceeded particulate standards up to 48 days a year, and in the valley, up to 76 days a year. To comply with federal standards, both regions would have to cut their ozone and particulate levels in half.

In comparison, so far this year, the Bay Area's air quality has exceeded the federal ozone standard on 12 days and the particulate standard on five days.

The researchers found that when children miss school - and their parents miss work - productivity falls, costs increase and prices rise for goods and services that come from that region. Those costs are passed on to the rest of the state. For example, if people who are insured by Kaiser Permanente are sick more often in the valley, the cost of statewide operations increases and is passed on in premiums to everyone in the health care system, the researchers said.

The study found that in the San Joaquin Valley, the cost of air pollution comes to more than \$1,600 per person per year, which would translate into a total of nearly \$8 billion in savings if federal ozone and particulate matter standards were met.

In the Southern California counties, the cost is more than \$1,250 per person per year, nearly \$22 billion in savings if the standards were met, the study said.

By meeting federal air quality standards, the regions could avoid annually 3,860 premature deaths among those age 30 and older, 13 premature deaths in infants and 1,950 cases of adult

onset chronic bronchitis. Cleaner air could prevent 2,760 hospital admissions, 141,370 asthma attacks, 2,800 emergency room visits and 466,880 lost days of work, the study said.

Critics from groups such as the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank that comments on government health standards, have said the mortality estimates may be overstated in studies that link exposure to ill health.

However, the researchers said they used data and methodology widely accepted by the Environmental Protection Agency and other experts.

Arthur Winer, professor of environmental health sciences in the UCLA School of Public Health, said Wednesday that he hadn't seen the new study. But he thought it important that such studies examining the economic benefits of meeting health standards and improving public health were conducted. Typically, cleanup studies are conducted on costs of controlling emissions on such sources as diesel trucks or factories, but there wasn't a balance with studies examining the costs of illness, he said.

The research team includes Hall and fellow Cal State Fullerton economics Professor Victor Brajer, plus Frederick Lurmann, manager of exposure assessment studies at Sonoma Technology Inc. in Petaluma. The \$90,000 study, peer-reviewed by scientists at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, was financed by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Study: Calif dirty air kills more than car crashes

By Tracie Cone, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, N.Y. Times and other papers, Thursday, November 13, 2008

FRESNO, Calif.—Lowering air pollution in Southern California and the San Joaquin Valley would save more lives annually than ending all motor vehicle fatalities in the two regions, according to a new study.

The study, which examined the costs of air pollution in two areas with the worst levels in the country, also said meeting federal ozone and fine particulate standards could save \$28 billion annually in health care costs, school absences, missed work and lost income potential from premature deaths.

The price tag amounts to \$1,600 annually per person in the San Joaquin Valley and \$1,250 in the South Coast Air Basin.

Researchers at California State University-Fullerton sought to assess the potential economic benefits that could be achieved by reducing air pollution to levels within federal standards.

"For decades there has been a tug of war over what to do about air pollution," said Jane Hall, lead author of the study at Cal State Fullerton. "We are paying now for not having done enough."

To illustrate its point, the study noted that the California Highway Patrol recorded 2,521 vehicular deaths in the San Joaquin Valley and South Coast Air Basin in 2006, compared to 3,812 deaths attributed to respiratory illness caused by particulate pollution.

Studies have indicated a relationship between ozone and particulate pollution and asthma and other respiratory problems, including chronic bronchitis. They also have connected particulate pollution with an increase in cardiovascular problems.

Hall and colleague Victor Brajer analyzed ozone and fine particulate concentrations across the two basins in 5-by-5 kilometer grids from 2005 through 2007. The researchers applied those numbers to the health affects they are known to cause, then assigned peer-reviewed economic values to each illness or death that could result.

"It may be tempting to think California can't afford to clean up, but in fact dirty air is like a \$28 billion lead balloon on our economy," Hall said.

The findings were released Wednesday as the California Air Resources Board considers controversial new regulations to reduce diesel truck emissions, a move that could cost 170,000

business owners \$5.5 billion. According to a board staff report, the savings in health care costs would be \$68 billion by 2020 if the regulations were adopted next month.

The Cal State Fullerton study says that particulate pollution levels must fall by 50 percent in both regions for health and economic benefits to occur, something they acknowledged would be "very difficult to achieve."

If pollution levels were to improve to federal standards, the study says residents of the two air basins would suffer 3,860 fewer premature deaths, 3,780 fewer nonfatal heart attacks and would miss 470,000 fewer days of work annually. School children would miss more than 1.2 million fewer days of school, a savings of \$112 million in caregiver costs. There also would be more than 2 million fewer cases of upper respiratory problems.

"As a society we make decisions to spend money on things such as railroad crossings or air traffic control—things that improve safety," Brajer said. "There are a lot of ways society spends money to make things safer, and that's what we're trying to get at."

Dirty air costing county billions

By Susan Abram, Staff Writer

L.A. Daily News, Thursday, November 13, 2008

Los Angeles County loses more than \$12 billion a year when children miss school, adults skip work and hospitals treat asthma attacks because of bad air quality, according to a report released Wednesday.

The study, which focuses on Southern California and the San Joaquin Valley, found that dirty air caused by ozone or tiny particulates contributes to more than 3,800 premature deaths each year.

In fact, the cost to treat sick infants was about 90 percent, or \$11 billion, of the total loss.

"Over time, lives are shortened and people made sick because of pollution," said Jane Hall, lead author and economist at California State University, Fullerton.

The study found that 95 percent of residents living in the Southern California region are exposed to life-threatening pollutants on a regular basis.

"Kids miss schools, work days are lost and so on," she said.

Hall and her team looked at air quality from 2005 to 2007 to find the economic impacts from dirty air. While the team provided no solutions except for the federal government to continue to impose tighter restrictions, it said California loses \$28 billion annually in costs attributed to bad air.

"In many California counties, (bad air quality) contributes to more deaths than car accidents," Hall said.

"Given the state of California's economy, imagine what could be done if that \$28 billion was being spent productively," she added.

Among the study's findings for Los Angeles County:

380 respiratory-related hospital admissions last year.

59,100 asthma attacks.

1,175 visits to the emergency room by children.

More than 653,000 days of school missed.

Nearly 242,000 days of work skipped.

The largest contributing factor is where people live, the authors found.

Researchers found that the dangers of pollution are moving beyond the poor and minority neighborhoods.

That can be seen in the San Fernando Valley, where another study released in September found ozone levels rose in the West Valley, while particulate matter increased in eastern communities in 2007.

Particulates are microscopic-size debris that can cling to the lining of lungs. Particulate levels in the Valley decreased from 1999 to 2005, but then rose slightly in 2006 and 2007, according to the San Fernando Valley Economic Research Center at California State University, Northridge.

Many of the communities in the Northeast Valley include clusters of auto dismantlers, junkyards, defunct landfills, recycling facilities and gravel pits - all ingredients for pollution that can aggravate asthma.

Ground-level ozone can cause short-term health effects including chest pain, coughing, and nose and throat irritation. It is linked to increased symptoms for those with asthma and bronchitis.

Pulmonologist Dr. Thomas Yadegar from Providence Tarzana Hospital said in addition to man-made pollution, wildfires and Santa Ana winds also contribute to hospitalizations.

"When there are fires or winds, many patients will call or will stay indoors because they know the air quality is bad," he said.

Meanwhile, the South Coast Air Quality Management District said Wednesday the number of days of unhealthy air quality for ozone climbed slightly this smog season compared with 2007.

The air in Southern California exceeded the federal eight-hour standard for ozone on 120 days this year compared with 108 days in 2007 and 114 in 2006.

"This year's numbers show that we need to remain diligent and aggressive in seeking all feasible means to reduce emissions and improve air quality," SCAQMD board Chairman William A. Burke said in a written statement.

Southern California has enacted the strictest air-quality requirements in the nation, according to local officials.

Officials said this year's hotter-than-normal season began earlier, possibly contributing to the increase in the number of unhealthy days.

"Although smog levels in the Southland declined dramatically during the past few decades, progress has slowed in recent years," according to the SCAQMD.

"With new regulations in place or expected in the near future, particularly those targeting diesel emissions, we hope to see air quality progress accelerate in the coming years," Burke said.

**California economy loses \$28 billion yearly to health effects of pollution
Most of the losses are attributable to 3,000 annual deaths, a Cal State Fullerton study says.
The study underscores the economic benefits of meeting federal air quality standards.**

Louis Sahagun

L.A. Times, Thursday, November 13, 2008

The California economy loses about \$28 billion annually due to premature deaths and illnesses linked to ozone and particulates spewed from hundreds of locations in the South Coast and San Joaquin air basins, according to findings released Wednesday by a Cal State Fullerton research team.

Most of those costs, about \$25 billion, are connected to roughly 3,000 smog-related deaths each year, but additional factors include work and school absences, emergency room visits, and asthma attacks and other respiratory illnesses, said team leader Jane Hall, a professor of economics and co-director of the university's Institute for Economics and Environment Studies.

The study underscores the economic benefits of meeting federal air quality standards at a time when lawmakers and regulators are struggling with California's commitment to protecting public health in a weak economy.

The \$90,000 study does not propose any particular action. But in an interview, Hall said, "We are going to pay for it one way or the other. Either we pay to fix the problem or we pay in loss of life and poor health. . . . This study adds another piece to the puzzle as the public and policy-makers try to understand where do we go from here."

The California Air Resources Board is scheduled to vote Dec. 11 on whether to adopt broader rules that would force more than 1 million heavy-duty diesel truckers to install filters or upgrade their engines. Truckers and agribusiness have argued against stricter regulation, saying it is too expensive for them to invest in clean vehicles at a time of economic uncertainty.

Mary Nichols, chairman of the air resources board, said the findings will "be useful to all of us. Our board members hear on a regular basis from constituents who are concerned about the costs of regulations, and seldom hear from people concerned about their health because they are collectively and individually not as well organized."

In the meantime, the two regions continue to pay a steep price for generating air pollution ranked among the worst in the country. In the South Coast basin, that cost is about \$1,250 per person per year, which translates into a total of about \$22 billion in savings if emissions came into compliance with federal standards, Hall said. In the San Joaquin air basin, the cost is about \$1,600 per person per year, or about \$6 billion in savings if the standards were met.

The savings would come from about 3,800 fewer premature deaths among those age 30 and older; 1.2 million fewer days of school absences; 2 million fewer days of respiratory problems in children; 467,000 fewer lost days of work and 2,700 fewer hospital admissions, according to the study.

The study noted that attaining the federal standard for exposure to particulates would save more lives than lowering the number of motor vehicle fatalities to zero in most of the regions examined.

The hardest hit were fast-growing communities in Kern and Fresno counties, where 100% of the population was exposed to particulate concentrations above the average federal standard from 2005 to 2007. High rates of exposure were also found in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, where diesel soot is blown by prevailing winds and then trapped by four mountain ranges.

Considered the most lethal form of air pollution, microscopic particulates expelled from tailpipes, factory smoke stacks, diesel trucks and equipment can penetrate through the lungs and enter the bloodstream. Exposure to these fine particles has been linked to severe asthma, cancer and premature deaths from heart and lung disease.

"In the South Coast basin, an average 64% of the population is exposed to health-endangering annual averages of particulates," Hall said, "and in the most populated county -- Los Angeles -- it is 75%."

"In most years, the South Coast and San Joaquin basins vie with the Houston, Texas, area for the worst air pollution trophy, but this year we took it back," she said. "That's not a prize you want to be handed. Essentially, imported T-shirts and tennis shoes are being hauled to Omaha and the big-rig diesel pollution stays here."

Nidia Bautista, community engagement director for the Coalition for Clean Air, described the findings as "staggering, and a reminder that health is too often the trade-off when it comes to cleaning the air."

Angelo Logan, spokesman for the East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, put it another way: "At a time when government is handing out economic stimulus packages, we could use an economic relief package to help us deal with environmental impacts on our health, families and pocketbooks."

Hall agreed. "This is a drain that could be spent in far better ways," she said.

The price of Southern California's dirty air: \$22 billion

By Pat Brennan

O.C. Register, Thursday, November 13, 2008

If you've ever wondered about the health costs of air pollution, a Cal State Fullerton economist has an answer: \$22 billion for the South Coast air basin, which includes Orange County.

Jane V. Hall, a professor who specializes in environmental economics, looked at a variety of data to add up costs to the South Coast and San Joaquin air basins — both consistently among the dirtiest in the nation.

She and co-authors Victor Brajer and Fred Lurmann found that the South Coast basin, including parts of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties, and all of Orange County, would save \$22 billion in health costs if state and federal health standards were met for ozone and fine particle pollution.

South Coast and San Joaquin combined would save \$28 billion; in the two regions, air pollution is believed to contribute to 3,800 premature deaths a year.

"There's a clear consensus among experts: lives in fact are shortened and people are made sick by pollution," Hall said Wednesday. "Kids miss school, there are more non-fatal heart attacks, work days lost and so on."

The \$90,000 study, paid for by the Hewlett Foundation, captures the cost to families of missed days of work because of illness related to air pollution, sick leave paid by employers, costs to HMOs and insurance companies from hospital treatments, and premature deaths, among other costs.

For people who live in the South Coast air basin, it boils down to \$1,250 per person per year.

The report focused on two high priority pollutants, ozone and fine particles. A breakdown for Orange County shows a cost savings of \$56 million if the standards for ozone are achieved, and \$2.8 billion for attaining fine particle standards.

The federal target date for the South Coast basin to reduce fine particle pollution — particles 2.5 microns in size or less — is 2015; to hit the ozone standard, 2024.

Although the South Coast Air Quality Management District uses different methods for assessing the health costs for air pollution, Hall's findings appear to be consistent with the air district's analysis, spokesman Sam Atwood said.

California official reportedly a candidate for top EPA post

Democrat Mary Nichols, chairwoman of the state's Air Resources Board, held a high-level position in the federal agency in the Clinton administration.

By Margot Roosevelt

L.A. Times, Thursday, November 13, 2008

Mary Nichols, the savvy negotiator who is leading California's complex effort to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, is reportedly a candidate to head President-elect Barack Obama's Environmental Protection Agency.

Nichols, 63, is chairwoman of the state's powerful Air Resources Board. She was a high-level EPA official under President Clinton, serving as the agency's assistant administrator for air and radiation.

Appointed to head the state air board by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger last year, the Los Angeles Democrat and former environmental attorney has energetically mediated between business and environmental advocates in designing the nation's first regulatory program to control global warming pollution.

She has been sharply critical of the EPA under President Bush for declining to regulate carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases and for refusing to allow California and other states to enact curbs on such gases from automobile tailpipes.

Other candidates for the federal job, according to green groups, include Robert F. Kennedy Jr., an environmental lawyer who has garnered praise for his efforts to combat river pollution, as well

as criticism for his opposition to an offshore wind project near his family's compound on Cape Cod, Mass.

Also said to be under consideration for the position, which oversees a \$7.2-billion budget, are Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius; Kathleen McGinty, former head of Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection; Ian Bowles, head of Massachusetts' Energy and Environmental Affairs agency; and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Lisa Jackson. Nichols said she has not lobbied for the job but is "honored and pleased to be considered." Obama transition spokesman Tommy Vietor declined to comment on "speculation," adding, "People are playing Washington guessing games."

Lawmaker says action on warming will take time

Dina Cappiello, Associated Press

In the S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, November 13, 2008

Washington - -- Congress will not act until 2010 on a bill to limit the heat-trapping gases blamed for global warming despite President-elect Barack Obama's declaration that he will move quickly to address climate change, the chairman of the Senate Energy Committee predicted Wednesday.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., said that while every effort should be made to cap greenhouse gases, the economic crisis, the transition to a new administration and the complexity of setting up a nationwide market for carbon pollution permits preclude acting in 2009.

"The reality is, it may take more than the first year to get it all done," Bingaman told a carbon markets conference here.

Instead, he said, Congress is "ready to go" early next year on legislation to boost energy savings in buildings and transportation and to require utilities to produce more electricity from renewable sources like windmills and solar panels.

Obama advisers and members of his transition team said this week that climate change remains a priority for the incoming president.

Jason Grumet, a senior environmental adviser to the president-elect and on the short list for a position in the White House, predicted at the same conference Wednesday that it is going to be a "very, very busy 2009" on climate.

Obama could begin to tackle global warming without Congress, by giving California permission to regulate global warming gases from motor vehicles and by issuing regulations under the existing Clean Air Act. The Supreme Court said in April 2007 the government has authority under current law to regulate carbon dioxide, the most prevalent greenhouse gas. The Bush administration, however, said the three-decades-old clean air law is the wrong tool and would cripple the economy.

"Action can take many forms, and it could include administrative action, legislative action or both," said Sen. Barbara Boxer. The California Democrat has primary jurisdiction over climate change legislation because she chairs the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

When asked if she expects a bill to be enacted next year, Boxer said: "I believe there will be major action on energy independence, which includes climate change."

Drew Hammill, a spokesman for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, declined to rule out congressional action in 2009 on climate change but added that it will require "a significant amount of time to reach bipartisan consensus."

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"We should not silo the economic crisis and the climate crisis," said Larry Schweiger, president of the National Wildlife Federation. "What we ought to be doing instead of 'drill, baby, drill' is be looking for a green shovel to dig our way out of this."

But even some advocates concede that a global warming bill that limits greenhouse gases will take time. A similar bill last year got only 48 votes and fell victim to a filibuster.

Season's first no-burn day is Thursday

By Stacey Shepard, Californian staff writer
Thursday, Nov. 13, 2008

Thursday is the first no-burn day for valley portions of Kern County and applicable areas of Frazier Park.

On a no-burn day, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District prohibits burning in fireplaces, woodstoves or outdoor chimineas.

Homes with no natural gas service or where wood-burning is the sole source of heat are exempt.

The no-burn season runs from Nov. 1 through the end of February.

Need to know the day's burn status? Here are a few ways to find out:

- Call 1-800 SMOG INFO
- Go [here](#), or subscribe to the Daily Air Quality Forecast e-mail [here](#).
- Check *The Californian's* weather page in the newspaper.

Air district bans burning in Tulare County

Tulare Advance Register Thurs., Nov. 13, 2008

The use of fireplaces and wood stoves is prohibited today in Tulare County, the season's first use of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District restriction.

Also affected are Fresno and Kings counties and the Valley air basin portion of Kern County.

The prohibition applies to burning wood, pellets and manufactured fire logs and also fire pits or chimneys. Air today is rated "unhealthy for sensitive groups."

The same rating is expected Friday.

Bingaman: Global warming on Congress' back burner

By Dina Cappiello, Associated Press Writer
Contra Costa Times, Thursday, November 13, 2008

WASHINGTON—Congress will not act until 2010 on a bill to limit the heat-trapping gases blamed for global warming despite President-elect Obama's declaration that he will move quickly to address climate change, the chairman of the Senate Energy Committee predicted Wednesday.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., said that while every effort should be made to cap greenhouse gases, the economic crisis, the transition to a new administration and the complexity of setting up a nationwide market for carbon pollution permits preclude acting in 2009.

"The reality is, it may take more than the first year to get it all done," Bingaman told a carbon markets conference here.

Instead, he said, Congress is "ready to go" early next year on legislation to boost energy savings in buildings and transportation and to require utilities to produce more electricity from renewable sources like windmills and solar panels.

Obama advisers and members of his transition team said this week that climate change remains a priority for the incoming President.

Jason Grumet, a senior environmental adviser to the president-elect and on the short list for a position in the White House, predicted at the same conference Wednesday that it was going to be a "very, very busy 2009" on climate.

Obama could begin to tackle global warming without Congress, by giving California permission to regulate global warming gases from motor vehicles and by issuing regulations under the existing Clean Air Act. The Supreme Court said in April 2007 the government has authority under current law to regulate carbon dioxide, the most prevalent greenhouse gas. The Bush administration, however, said the three-decades-old clean air law is the wrong tool and would cripple the economy.

"Action can take many forms and it could include administrative action, legislative action or both," said Sen. Barbara Boxer. The California Democrat has primary jurisdiction over climate change legislation since she chairs the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

When asked if she expected a bill to be enacted next year, Boxer said: "I believe there will be major action on energy independence, which includes climate change."

Drew Hammill, a spokesman for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declined to rule out congressional action in 2009 on climate change but added that it will require "a significant amount of time to reach bipartisan consensus."

Environmentalists, emboldened by a larger Democratic majorities in Congress and a Democrat in the White House, are championing an all-in-one approach. They argue that green energy would cure the nation's energy and economic woes while also solving climate change problems.

"We should not silo the economic crisis and the climate crisis," said Larry Schweiger, the president of the National Wildlife Federation. "What we ought to be doing instead of 'drill, baby, drill' is be looking for a green shovel to dig our way out of this."

But even some advocates concede that a global warming bill that limits greenhouse gases will take time. A similar bill last year got only 48 votes and fell victim to a filibuster.

Congress and the incoming Obama administration are under increasing pressure from the international community and states to do something on climate change. In September, 10 northeastern states launched the first mandatory carbon market in the U.S.—the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. And in December 2009, representatives from major countries will meet in Copenhagen to negotiate a new international treaty to curb greenhouse gases for 2012 and beyond.

U.S. leadership is essential, the head of the U.N. Secretary-General's climate change team said Wednesday.

"A global deal can only be meaningful if the U.S. is part of it," said Janos Pasztor. "The world is looking to the U.S. to lead in the energy revolution domestically and globally."

Bingaman said Congress will not be influenced by international expectations.

BLM sued over air quality, ozone in NM

By Susan Montoya Bryan, Associated Press Writer
Contra Costa Times, Thursday, November 13, 2008

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—Two environmental groups are suing the Bureau of Land Management, alleging that the federal agency has failed to curb ozone levels and safeguard air quality in northwestern New Mexico from oil and gas industry emissions.

Dine CARE and WildEarth Guardians filed the lawsuit Wednesday in federal court in Santa Fe.

The groups contend the BLM—which oversees oil and gas activities in the San Juan Basin, one of the largest natural gas fields in the nation—is responsible for allowing ozone pollution in the region to rise to dangerous levels.

The lawsuit argues that the BLM leased more than 22,000 acres during quarterly oil and gas lease sales in April and July without addressing ozone pollution or requiring air pollution controls.

"Communities throughout the Four Corners region, including our communities on the Navajo Nation, are struggling with harmful air pollution, a legacy of dirty energy development," said Anna Frazier of the Navajo environmental group Dine CARE. "We need clean energy solutions that leave a legacy of clean air and healthy children."

According to the lawsuit, BLM allegedly violated federal environmental law by going forward with the leases without preparing environmental impact statements and without providing a timely opportunity for public involvement.

The groups want the court to stop the BLM from executing the lease sales until the agency complies with the National Environmental Policy Act.

Although they had not seen the lawsuit, BLM officials said Wednesday they did not violate NEPA.

The BLM said it has been working with the industry in an effort to minimize venting of gases and to control emissions from oil and gas equipment in the field. The agency also requires oil and gas companies to meet all current environmental requirements, including state air quality standards, when they apply for a drilling permit.

"This is something we've been addressing for quite some time," said Tony Herrell, BLM's deputy director for minerals in New Mexico. "This is an issue that if we hadn't been working on it for the last eight to 10 years, we would be in a much worse case than what we are now."

Dine CARE and WildEarth Guardians argue that oil and gas operations are the largest source of ozone forming pollution in northwestern New Mexico.

WildEarth Guardians said state air quality monitors recently indicated ozone levels in the region were at an average of 77 parts per billion, exceeding the new federally allowed limit of 75 parts per billion.

The groups said concerns about ozone aren't limited to New Mexico. They point to other parts of the West, including Wyoming, that are experiencing unhealthy ozone levels that they claim are tied to oil and gas activity.

If the lawsuit is successful, Dine CARE and WildEarth Guardians hope they can force the BLM to address the impacts of oil and gas on clean air throughout the West.

"With public health at stake, it's time for the Bureau of Land Management to start being a part of the solution, not the problem," said Jeremy Nichols, climate and energy program director for WildEarth Guardians.

Kathleen Sgamma, director of government affairs for the Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain States, argued that ozone is just the latest argument being used by environmental groups that are trying to halt oil and gas development.

She said ozone pollution in the San Juan Basin stems from multiple sources, not just oil and gas. She pointed to vehicle emissions and a pair of coal-fired power plants in the region.

"It's a multifaceted problem. It's not as simple as some special interest groups would like to have you believe," she said, adding if the groups got their way and "regulated oil and gas out of existence, the ozone problem would not go away."

Sgamma said the Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain States is working with the Western Regional Air Partnership to inventory oil and gas emissions in the San Juan Basin and throughout the West. She said the data is expected to give industry and state regulators a better understanding of the sources and help them identify ways to reduce emissions.

On the Net:

BLM: <http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en.html>

Dine CARE: <http://www.dinecare.org/>

WildEarth Guardians: <http://www.wildearthguardians.org/>

Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain States: <http://www.ipams.org/>

Schwarzenegger summit: A sizable carbon footprint

By Samantha Young, Associated Press Writer

In the Modesto Bee, Contra Costa Times and other papers, Thursday, November 13, 2008

SACRAMENTO—Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, seeking to influence a United Nations conference on climate change next month, is convening a global summit on greenhouse gas emissions next week in Los Angeles.

His conference, announced six weeks ago, itself will be a sizable source of the gases blamed for contributing to global climate change, according to an analysis by The Associated Press.

The AP obtained a list of the more than 1,400 invitees through a California Public Records Act request. If all of them made the trip, their roundtrip air travel alone would discharge more than 2,554 metric tons of carbon dioxide—a so-called carbon footprint equivalent to that produced from 424 cars driven for a year.

The Schwarzenegger administration said it plans to account for those carbon emissions and said the value of the conference will outweigh those concerns. It will provide two days of workshops on how industries can reduce their emissions, how governments can encourage environmentally friendly businesses and related topics.

Lisa Page, a spokeswoman for Schwarzenegger, said the administration expects 700 invitees and staff to attend the summit. The emissions generated from all their travel, energy used at the hotel, food and other services would be offset, she said.

The money will fund alternative energy projects in Brazil, China, India, Russia and Idaho, she told the AP.

In addition, attendees will be provided room keys, name badges, lunch boxes and coffee cups made of recycled material. Water bottles will not be provided, and all leftover food will be donated.

"Governor Schwarzenegger is leading by example and taking thoughtful, thorough steps to offset the carbon footprint of every last piece of this summit," Page said. "Through the collaborative actions that will be developed at this summit, the participating states and provinces will go a long way to reducing greenhouse gas emissions around the world."

Linda Adams, secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency, said the conference has been designed to show global leaders how states, local governments and businesses can begin cutting emissions before they face binding international targets.

"Until they know how they can achieve their targets, they are going to be worried about making a commitment," said Adams, a Schwarzenegger appointee. "California's position is we can't wait. We need to get started now."

She said having people together at a conference will foster relationships between local leaders who otherwise may never have interacted.

Schwarzenegger announced the summit publicly at the end of September, with e-mailed invitations following a couple weeks later. In doing so, he set out a relatively modest goal—to produce a declaration of understanding for the U.N. to consider.

Adams said the summit was in the works months before the official announcement.

Schwarzenegger got the idea in April after attending a conference at Yale University during which 18 states pledged to take action on climate change, she said.

When he announced the two-day conference, the Republican governor said he hoped the ideas it generated would inform U.N. negotiations next month over a new global climate treaty. The U.N. is sending its deputy of climate change policy to the conference.

Schwarzenegger said the summit will produce declarations and memorandums of understanding, including one to protect tropical forests from deforestation.

The administration issued a news release this week saying the summit's goal was "to develop creative, collaborative actions to advance the global climate agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that will be negotiated in Poland in December and in Copenhagen next year."

Schwarzenegger, who has built a reputation for aggressively addressing climate change by setting state targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, also wants participants to discuss how to pair economic growth with environmental protection.

The AP calculated the summit's carbon footprint using a 31-page list of invitees the governor's office provided in response to the public records request. Identifying information and even the country was missing for hundreds of those on the list. AP's own research filled in the gaps.

The invitee list covered 31 countries—including China, Indonesia, India and Australia—36 states and Washington, D.C.

To determine the overall greenhouse gas effect, the AP calculated the roundtrip carbon footprint to Los Angeles for each of the more than 1,400 people on the list.

It did so using an online carbon calculator that was used by the United Nations for its climate conference last year in New York. The German-based Web site, *atmosfair*, is ranked as the most accurate by Tuft's University, which has examined the dozens of Web sites used by people and organizations seeking to determine their carbon output from travel.

Officials flying from overseas will account for the bulk of the emissions—with travel from Indonesia, China and other parts of Asia discharging the most greenhouse gases.

For example, the roundtrip flight on a commercial jetliner of confirmed attendee Ing H. Fauzi Bowo—the governor of the Indonesian province of Jakarta—will produce 10.8 metric tons. That's roughly the equivalent of consuming 22.8 barrels of oil, according to an estimate by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

By comparison, a roundtrip flight from Chicago to Los Angeles discharges less than a tenth of the emissions. A reporter traveling from Sacramento to Los Angeles to cover the summit would produce four-tenths of a metric ton of carbon.

The AP analysis did not factor the emissions from transportation to and from airports or the hotel stay in Beverly Hills. It also did not include travel for some 200 people invited from Southern California who likely would drive or take the train.

Some of those planning to attend Schwarzenegger's summit said they will offset emissions on their own—a process by which people write checks to groups that plant trees or promote alternative energy projects as a way to make up for the greenhouse gases produced by their travel. The so-called carbon offsets have become popular as awareness of global warming has increased.

The Climate Group, a nonprofit environmental organization, buys emission credits for all its travel, said Michael Allegretti, the group's director of governmental relations. He said it was a worthwhile expense to share strategies for cutting greenhouse gases.

Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch, a nonprofit environmental group not invited to the event, said he was not concerned about the travel impacts associated with Schwarzenegger's summit because Schwarzenegger was bringing attention to global warming.

Not everyone agrees that spending money to offset travel-related pollution works as stated. Sending money to groups may not be a direct trade-off for the amount of carbon produced by an intercontinental flight, said Ken Caldeira, a scientist at the Carnegie Institution's department of global ecology at Stanford University.

"The carbon from flying in a plane will still be in the atmosphere a thousand years from now, but there's no assurance a tree will be around that long," he said. "There's some concern you're trading apples for oranges."

U.N. Report Sees New Pollution Threat

By Andrew Jacobs

N.Y. Times, Thursday, Nov. 13, 2008

BEIJING — A noxious cocktail of soot, smog and toxic chemicals is blotting out the sun, fouling the lungs of millions of people and altering weather patterns in large parts of Asia, according to a report released Thursday by the United Nations.

The byproduct of automobiles, slash-and-burn agriculture, wood-burning kitchen stoves and coal-fired power plants, these plumes of carbon dust rise over southern Africa, the Amazon basin and North America. But they are most pronounced in Asia, where so-called atmospheric brown clouds are dramatically reducing sunlight in many Chinese cities and leading to decreased crop yields in swaths of rural India, say a team of more than a dozen scientists who have been studying the problem since 2002.

Combined with mounting evidence that greenhouse gases are leading to a rise in global temperatures, the report's authors called on governments both rich and poor to address the problem of carbon emissions.

"The imperative to act has never been clearer," said Achim Steiner, executive director of the United Nations Environment Program, in Beijing, where the report, titled "Atmospheric Brown Clouds: Regional Assessment Report With Focus on Asia," was released.

The brownish haze, sometimes more than a mile thick and clearly visible from airplanes, stretches from the Arabian Peninsula to the Yellow Sea. During the spring, it sweeps past North and South Korea and Japan.

Sometimes the cloud drifts as far east as California.

The report identified 13 cities as brown-cloud hotspots, among them Bangkok, Cairo, New Delhi, Seoul and Tehran. In some Chinese cities, the smog has reduced sunlight by as much as 20 percent since the 1970s, it said.

Rain can cleanse the skies, but some of the black grime that falls to earth ends up on the surface of the Himalayan glaciers that are the source of water for billions of people in China, India and Pakistan. As a result, the glaciers that feed into the Yangtze, Ganges, Indus and Yellow rivers are absorbing more sunlight and melting more rapidly, researchers say.

According to the Chinese Academy of Sciences, these glaciers have shrunk by 5 percent since the 1950s and, at the current rate of retreat, could shrink by another 75 percent by 2050.

"We used to think of this brown cloud as a regional problem, but now we realize its impact is much greater," said Prof. Veerabhadran Ramanathan, who led the United Nations scientific panel. "When we see the smog one day and not the next, it just means it's blown somewhere else."

Although their overall impact is not entirely understood, Professor Ramanathan, a professor of climate and ocean sciences at the University of California, San Diego, said the clouds might be affecting rainfall in parts of India and Southeast Asia, where monsoon rainfall has been decreasing in recent decades, and central China, where devastating floods have become more frequent.

He said that some studies suggest that the plumes of soot that blot out the sun have led to a 5 percent decline in the growth rate of rice harvests across Asia since the 1960s.

For those who breathe the toxic mix, the impact can be deadly. Henning Rodhe, a professor of chemical meteorology at Stockholm University, estimates that 340,000 people in China and India die each year from cardiovascular and respiratory diseases that can be traced to the emissions from coal-burning factories, diesel trucks and kitchen stoves fueled by twigs.

"The impacts on health alone is a reason to reduce these brown clouds," he said, adding that in China, about 3.6 percent of the nation's annual gross domestic product, or \$82 billion, is lost to the health effects of pollution.

The scientists who worked on the report said the blanket of haze hovering over Asia and other parts of the world might be mitigating the worst effects of greenhouse gases by absorbing solar heat or reflecting it away from the earth. Greenhouse gases, by contrast, tend to trap the warmth of the sun and lead to a rise in ocean temperatures.

Mr. Steiner, the head of the United Nations environment program, said the findings complicated the global-warming narrative. The brown clouds mask the impact of the greenhouse gases, he said: Without the blocking effect of the smog, he said, climate change would be far worse.

"All of this points to an even greater and urgent need to take on emissions across the planet," he said.

Vest Monitors 'Individual' Air Pollution

By Amanda Gardner, HealthDay Reporter
Wednesday, November 12, 2008

WEDNESDAY, Nov. 12 (HealthDay News) -- Scientists have used the novel idea of a "pollution vest" to determine that individual exposure to air pollution can harm a person's heart health beyond whatever damage that community-level exposure can cause.

"The challenge of air pollution is that what people are exposed to and what most studies talk about . . . rarely represent the micro environment of what's in your house," explained American Heart Association spokesman Dr. Russell Luepker, Mayo professor of epidemiology and community health at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. "People have been working to try to get individual monitors that people can wear, so they can know what people are really inhaling as opposed to what they might be inhaling a mile away from where the monitor was."

"People shouldn't panic, but it's important that people be aware that air pollution is a contributor to cardiovascular disease," said Robert Bard, co-investigator of a study that was presented Wednesday at the heart association's annual scientific sessions, in New Orleans. "Things people can do include supporting legislation for cleaner air initiatives and, if somebody has cardiovascular disease, they may consider avoiding exposures to air pollution during peak levels, because this can potentially be a trigger for a cardiovascular event. Things everyone can do include limiting commutes and contributing less to production of pollutants."

[L.A. Times editorial, Thursday, Nov. 13, 2008:](#)

Schwarzenegger and global warming

It might be better if our governor just vents concern about climate change and doesn't sign any global deals at an upcoming summit.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger will get a break next week from the miserable business of trying to solve California's wrenching budget woes, jetting to Los Angeles to take on a role he genuinely seems to relish: standing on the international stage as a leader on climate change. This will probably be his last chance to play the part, and we wish him well. But it's past time for this particular show to close.

Schwarzenegger has emerged as a national leader on global warming, the one whose name most frequently comes up in foreign capitals when international cooperation on reducing carbon emissions is discussed. Al Gore might have a Nobel Prize, but Schwarzenegger heads a state that, if it were a country, would rank among the 10 biggest economies in the world. Given the Bush administration's unwillingness to seriously address the problem, Schwarzenegger's initiatives to mandate hard emissions targets and set up carbon-trading schemes with other states and Canadian provinces make him this country's most forward-thinking governor, and its greenest Republican.

But our superstar is about to be upstaged. President-elect Barack Obama is even greener than Schwarzenegger, and he intends to pursue federal policies similar to California's. That's a positive development because Schwarzenegger's pursuit of international climate pacts is in danger of doing more harm than good.

The Governors' Global Climate Summit kicks off Wednesday at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, bringing together governors of several U.S. states and environmental ministers from a host of important countries, including Brazil, China and India. Schwarzenegger has attended similar gatherings before -- last year, he made a splash at a major United Nations conference on global warming -- and they typically amount to little more than feel-good exercises for countries that want to promote their concern about climate change without actually doing very much to stop it. Yet, occasionally, business gets done at these meetings that might be better left undone.

Indonesia will announce at the governors' summit that it wishes to join California's carbon-trading program. That could mean polluters in California would be granted permission to emit greenhouse gases here in exchange for buying "offsets" in Indonesia that compensate for the damage -- for example, a California refinery might buy a chunk of rain forest in Indonesia to act as a carbon sink. Schwarzenegger seems to favor such offsets, but they would undercut the effectiveness of the program. It's extremely hard to verify whether offsets reduce carbon as much as the amounts claimed, and they discourage innovation because they use existing technology to clean the air somewhere else rather than encouraging new technology to clean it here.

The cap-and-trade schemes advanced by both Schwarzenegger and Obama aren't the ideal way to fight global warming (carbon taxes would be far simpler and more effective), but they could work -- as long as the programs are tightly regulated and monitored. That's nearly impossible to do across borders, which is why even California's plan to trade carbon credits with Canadian provinces is problematic. Getting involved with distant and corruption-plagued countries such as Indonesia would be outright disastrous. So while we appreciate the international goodwill Schwarzenegger will generate next week, this is one global conference at which we'd be happy to see nothing accomplished.