

## **Wasco planners OK park project**

Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2008

The Wasco Planning Commission approved plans Monday for a 1,600-acre industrial park that would house an ethanol plant and other businesses.

The project will go before the City Council for final approval in March. The vote was 3-2 in favor of the project, according to Tom Frantz, chairman of Association of Irrigated Residents, a local environmental group.

The only identified occupant so far is Rose City Renewables, which plans to build an ethanol plant that will generate 60 million gallons of biofuel a year using corn brought in by train from the Midwest.

Wasco city leaders spearheaded the industrial park project to create new jobs. Wasco has the county's highest unemployment rate and most low-income families, said Jake Raper, head of the city's planning department.

The project could create up to 3,000 jobs through new businesses in the park and spin-off jobs in related industries, Raper said.

Environmental groups have expressed concern the park takes 600 acres of farmland out of production without mitigation. The groups also oppose the ethanol plant, saying it will create [air pollution](#) and increase traffic and odors. They also point to recent studies that show converting corn to fuel is not efficient and strains world food supplies.

Brian Pellens, Rose City's chief operating officer and a Bakersfield resident, has said the plant will be one of the cleanest in California and is a sound solution to reducing reliance on imported oil. He rejects claims that ethanol is not a viable fuel alternative.

## **Asthma discussion set for Wednesday**

By Sentinel Staff

Hanford Sentinel, Monday, Feb. 11, 2008

HANFORD -- The public is invited to attend a discussion on new national guidelines that may improve life for asthma sufferers at 4 p.m. Wednesday at the Kings County Health Department Health Annex, 330 Campus Drive.

The Kings County Asthma Coalition and Central Valley Family Health will co-sponsor the free discussion which will be led by Dr. David Nunez, head of the California Asthma Public Health Initiative.

Nunez will discuss the new guidelines, which include the following recommendations: Regular follow-up with health providers, regardless of whether the patient is experiencing symptoms, a new approach of ongoing assessment/monitoring of asthma control, routine use of lung function tests in the outpatient setting, careful attention to the role of environmental exposures and sensitivities and assessment of control measures to reduce exposures.

## **Extending 'cap and trade' across state lines**

David R. Baker, Chronicle Staff Writer

San Francisco Chronicle, Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2008

California regulators trying to create a "cap and trade" system for limiting greenhouse gas emissions want to extend their reach beyond the state's borders, placing restrictions on out-of-state power plants that sell their electricity here.

Under a proposal drafted by the California Energy Commission and the California Public Utilities Commission, anyone delivering electricity into California's energy grid would be included in the cap and trade system, which would place limits on carbon dioxide emissions and then let companies buy and sell credits for producing the gas.

The two commissions also want all of the state's utilities to generate more than 20 percent of their energy from renewable sources, such as the sun and the wind. California's three big investor-owned utilities, including Pacific Gas and Electric Co., already have to ensure that 20 percent of the power they sell by the end of 2010 comes from renewable sources, but municipal utilities, such as the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, don't.

Both far-reaching ideas come from a set of recommendations that the two commissions released late Friday. They drew praise from the Sierra Club, one of the many organizations trying to shape California's climate change policy.

"It looks like these officials are taking their global warming issues seriously," said Bill Magavern, a lobbyist for the environmental group. "They are certainly on the right track."

A PG&E spokesman said the company is still studying the proposal. But PG&E in general supports the idea of a cap and trade system.

Under a landmark law passed in 2006, California is trying to cut its production of heat-trapping greenhouse gases. To do so, California may create a cap and trade system, either by itself or in conjunction with neighboring states. Congressional Democrats are pushing for a national cap and trade system, as well.

Within California, responsibility for creating the system rests with the state's Air Resources Board, which regulates air pollution. The energy commission and the utilities commission oversee the state's electricity industry - a major source of carbon dioxide - and were asked to provide recommendations on the proposed system. Their joint proposal would have to be adopted by the air board in order to take effect.

The two commissions argue that a carbon trading system would need to include out-of-state generators because they supply 20 percent of California's electricity.

So the commissions recommend that any company delivering power into California's energy market be included in the cap and trade system. That approach would include the state's investor-owned utilities and its municipal utilities.

The two commissions suggest that at the start of a cap and trade system, the government should auction some of the credits for emitting carbon dioxide, rather than allocating all the credits for free to the companies that will be included.

Finally, the commissions suggest that the trading system not include the companies that provide California with natural gas. Those companies could be added later, after the system has been established.

## **PUC seeking permits for imported electricity**

Los Angeles Times, Feb. 12, 2008

California regulators are recommending a program that requires utilities to obtain permits for emissions at out-of-state power plants that generate electricity sent into the state and endorsed a cap-and-trade system that allows polluters to trade permits.

Regulating emissions at the point of delivery into the California electricity system is preferable because the most populous U.S. state imports a fifth of its power, the Public Utilities Commission said in a proposal on its website dated Feb. 8. Those imports from neighboring states represent more than half of the greenhouse gases generated to supply California.

The recommendations are part of an effort by state regulators to reduce greenhouse gas emissions blamed for global warming to 1990 levels by 2020. Regulations to meet the targets are scheduled to take effect in 2012.

"The fundamental question is how do you deal with covering greenhouse gas emissions associated with imported electricity," said Joshua Bushinsky, western policy coordinator with the Pew Center on Global Climate Change in Arlington, Va.

An alternative plan that was rejected by the Public Utilities Commission would have regulated greenhouse gases at the power retailer, which potentially would "interfere with the functioning of the wholesale electricity markets," the commission report said. "Wholesale prices from low-emission generation would rise."

[A cap-and-trade system requires power plants and other polluters to obtain permits for emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere. The permits can be traded if the power plants are able to keep their emissions below a certain threshold.](#)

The system may allow the electricity industry to curb emissions at a lower cost and can be combined with mandatory reductions, the Public Utilities Commission said.

The proposal will be considered by the California Energy Commission on March 12 and the Public Utilities Commission on March 13

## **Retailers to hold mine to higher gold standards**

**Tiffany, Fortunoff and others oppose an Alaskan operation over environmental worries.**

By Margot Roosevelt

Los Angeles Times, Feb. 12, 2008

Environmentalists want you to buy organic roses, and human rights groups tout conflict-free diamonds.

Now, just in time for Valentine's Day, jewelry retailers are stepping up a campaign that aims to discourage the mining and sale of "dirty gold."

A group of prominent jewelers including Tiffany & Co., Helzberg Diamonds and Fortunoff will announce today that it opposes the massive gold and copper Pebble Mine planned for Alaska's Bristol Bay watershed, site of the world's largest sockeye salmon run.

The jewelers' "Bristol Bay Protection Pledge" marks a new front in the "No Dirty Gold" initiative waged by environmental and human rights groups against destructive mining practices.

It is the first time that retailers, which have hitherto limited themselves to supporting general rules for mining, have joined in a campaign to halt a specific mine.

An estimated 80% of the gold used in the U.S. is for jewelry. And gold mines -- typically huge open pit operations where tiny veins of metal are ground from millions of tons of rock -- produce an average of 76 tons of waste per ounce of gold.

[The resulting air and water pollution have made metals mining the leading contributor of toxic emissions in the U.S., according to the Environmental Protection Agency.](#)

"There are places where mining does not represent the best use of resources," Michael Kowalski, Tiffany's chairman and chief executive, said in an e-mail. "In Bristol Bay, we support . . . the salmon fishery as the best bet for sustainable, long-term benefit. For Tiffany & Co., and we believe for many of our fellow retail jewelers, this means we will look to other places to source gold."

Sean McGee, a spokesman for the Pebble Mine, said the jewelers had not contacted the mine's developers, a partnership of Vancouver, Canada-based Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd. and London-based Anglo American.

"There is a lot of common ground between the Dirty Gold camp and the approach we are taking," he said. "We support high environmental standards for mining. If the fisheries can't be protected, we won't advance the project."

The campaign to clean up gold mines echoes the opposition to so-called blood diamonds, sold to finance conflicts in developing nations.

In the last few years, jewelers, working with nonprofit groups and the mining industry, set up a system to ensure diamonds as "conflict-free." Now the "ethical jewelry" movement is preparing to expand with a certification program for gold and silver.

"It's what's happening in the marketplace," said Stephen D'Esposito, president of Earthworks, a Washington-based advocacy group for mining reform. "Jewelers are highly sensitive to consumer concerns about the impact of the products they buy. It is a trend you see with food, coffee, wood, even sneakers."

At the moment, retailers cannot tell where their gold has been mined. But in the coming year, D'Esposito said, jewelers will take the first steps to establish a chain of custody from mine to store.

A set of standards is under negotiation between mining companies, jewelry retailers and environmental and human rights groups.

So far, 28 companies, including eight of the 10 largest jewelry retailers in the U.S. have endorsed the "No Dirty Gold" campaign's "Golden Rules." The measures seek to ensure that gold is mined without threatening fragile ecosystems, that waste is not dumped into waterways and that workers' rights are protected.

Signatories include Wal-Mart Stores Inc. and Sterling Jewelers Inc., which markets Kay Jewelers and Jared the Galleria brands.

Earthworks wants all 28 companies that signed the Golden Rules pledge -- and others -- to also sign the Bristol Bay pledge. So far, only five have done so (besides Tiffany, Helzberg and Fortunoff, they are Ben Bridge Jeweler and Leber Jeweler Inc.).

Wal-Mart, the nation's biggest jewelry retailer, is reviewing the measure.

"We are committed to sourcing gold and other metals produced under the highest social, human rights and environmental standards," spokeswoman Linda Blakley said.

Worldwide shortages and skyrocketing prices for gold and copper are fueling the push for Pebble Mine, which holds an estimated \$300 billion in gold, copper and molybdenum. Northern Dynasty executives say the mine will bring well-paying jobs to an impoverished area of rural Alaska.

If the mine, which lies on the edge of two national parks, gains the necessary permits from the state of Alaska, it would involve excavating as much as 12 billion tons of earth which, after extracting the ore, would fill 10 square miles of impoundments. Two dams would be built to hold the waste.

"These lands were selected by the state of Alaska for their mineral potential, an important part of the rural economy," McGee said.

But Dan Consenstein, head of the Renewable Resources Coalition, an Alaska-based group that opposes the project, said pollution from the mine would destroy the fishery, a globally significant resource and economic backbone of the area.

A coalition of native villages, sports fishing lodges and environmental groups has filed a ballot initiative to stop the mine, but the mining companies are battling it in court.

## **UN Seek New Leaders on Global Warming**

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
New York Times, Feb. 11, 2008

UNITED NATIONS (AP) -- Virgin CEO Richard Branson offered Monday to set up an "environmental war room" to lead the world's efforts to find a fix for global warming.

The British billionaire, speaking at the start of a U.N. debate on climate change, said it would be run by a world figure in global warming and could serve as "a tool for the U.N." to ferret out good ideas and calculate each nation's costs.

"The 'war room' will be independent of politics," Branson said. "But in the end it will need the United Nations, governments and other organizations to help make sure implementation happens."

Branson outlined the idea at a press conference with U.N. General Assembly President Srgjan Kerim and actress Daryl Hannah, and then again at a luncheon for the delegates attending the two-day debate.

The need for developing nations and the world's cities to take over the lead on the fight against global warming was a common refrain among diplomats, mayors and business leaders -- though they recognized it will take the inclusion of the United States and China, the world's biggest emitters of greenhouse gases, to fix the problem.

"This is just as important as stopping nuclear proliferation. This is just as important as stopping terrorism," New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg said.

The General Assembly is trying to shape overall U.N. policy on climate change, including how nations can adapt to a warmer world, and to generate support for the U.N.-led negotiations that are intended to craft a new climate treaty by 2009.

"In such a case of emergency, leadership is needed," said Kerim, a Macedonian diplomat and economics professor. "This planet does not know where the borders are."

Kerim said the U.N. cannot address climate change alone without broad cooperative efforts for more research, new technologies and renewable energies.

Cities are ready to lead the change with national governments and international organizations, said Letizia Moratti, the mayor of Milan, Italy.

"It's time for all national leaders to stand up, and be honest and responsible about the cost of climate change for future generations and for ourselves," Moratti said.

Nearly 100 countries have signed up to speak at the debate, and 20 were sending ministers. "Climate is interwoven into every aspect of development," said Tim Wirth, president of the U.N. Foundation, a private group that supports the world body's work.

[Bloomberg proposed a new U.S. tax on carbon emissions, rather than the market-based approach to letting governments and companies swap emission rights that most in Congress favor.](#) He called on the United States to set "real and binding" targets to reduce the greenhouse gases blamed for warming the planet, in contrast to the current U.S. strategy that largely relies on voluntary approaches and spending for research and technology.

"We are not waiting for others to act first," Bloomberg said. "I believe that the American people are prepared for our responsibility to lead by example."

A U.S.-sponsored meeting in Hawaii of delegates from the 16 nations that emit the most pollutants ended earlier this month without concrete targets for slashing greenhouse gas emissions, but participants -- including the European Union and the United Nations -- praised what they saw as a new willingness by the United States to discuss possible solutions.

Delegates from nearly 190 nations had agreed in December at a U.N.-brokered conference in the Indonesian resort island of Bali to adopt a blueprint to control global warming gases before the end of next year.

"Developed countries need to take a clear lead, but success is possible only if all countries act," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said. "The more ambitious the commitments by developed countries, the more actions we can expect from developing countries."

The next treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol when it expires in 2012 could shape climate change for decades to come. The Kyoto pact requires 37 industrial nations to reduce greenhouse gases by a relatively modest 5 percent on average.

Ban, who proposes the world redirect spending of up to \$20 trillion over two decades for cleaner energy sources, said the challenge is huge: "We have less than two years to craft an agreement on action that measures up to what the science tells us."

## **Simple solutions for home energy savings**

By Alex Breitler

Stockton Record, Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2008

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger tells his kids to turn off the lights when they leave the room. He follows them around the house until they listen.

And if all else fails, he unscrews the bulbs himself.

"Even though they think that I'm a little crazy, it works," the governor once said. "Now they never leave the room without turning off the lights."

Climate change can't be blamed solely on billowing smokestacks, or on the cars and trucks that clog our freeways. It is time, experts say, to point the finger at ourselves - at our own homes.

Each time you do that half-full load of laundry, leave a light on for just a couple of minutes or crank up the heat just 1 degree, you may be contributing to climate change. Our energy, after all, still comes largely from the burning of fossil fuels, which releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

### **The appliances**

What about all of your appliances?

- Check heating and cooling equipment regularly. Change filters every three months and, if a unit is more than 15 years old, consider replacing the whole thing. You could save as much as 20 percent on heating and cooling costs.
- All those lights you leave on at night account for about 10 percent of your electric bill. Consider longer-lasting compact fluorescent bulbs, which use only 25 percent of the energy consumed by standard bulbs. Also, while the old incandescent bulbs should always be turned off, it's actually more cost-effective with fluorescent bulbs to leave them on if you leave the room for 15 minutes or less.

### **The last resort**

If all else fails, consider a professional audit. Pacific Gas and Electric Co. and Lodi Electric Utility will send someone to your home or business to give you suggestions on energy savings.

Other resources:

- Lodi Electric Utility's online home energy calculator, [www.lodielectric.com](http://www.lodielectric.com).
- How much power do various appliances use, and how much do they cost you? See [www.fypower.org/res/energy\\_costs.html](http://www.fypower.org/res/energy_costs.html).
- For information on rebates that can make energy-efficient appliances more affordable, check out PG&E's Web site at [www.pge.com/res/rebates/](http://www.pge.com/res/rebates/).

### **Simple solutions**

Here are some simple steps to making your home energy efficient -- a do-it-yourself home audit, courtesy of the state of California (for more, see [www.fypower.org](http://www.fypower.org)):

First, make a list of known air leaks in your home; if you can plug them, you might save as much as 30 percent on your energy bill.

- Feel along the baseboards or the edge of the floor, and at junctures between the walls and ceiling. Check electrical outlets, window frames and weatherstripping around doors, fireplace dampers and attic hatches.

- See if you can rattle windows and doors -- that means air is probably leaking around them. You can seal those leaks by caulking or weatherstripping.
- Consider replacing old windows and doors; if that's too costly, install plastic sheets over the windows.

### **The next step**

Still don't know where those darned drafts are coming from? Time for a little test.

- Close all exterior doors, windows and flues.
- Turn off all combustion appliances such as gas furnaces or water heaters.
- Turn on all exhaust fans in the kitchen and the bathrooms, or use a large window fan to suck air out of the rooms. This will push air through all those invisible cracks and leaks, making drafts easier to detect.
- Try lighting an incense stick around suspect areas and watch the smoke swirl.

### **The outside**

OK, the inside of your house looks good. But what about the weather-beaten outside? Check exterior corners, where the siding and the chimney meet, and where the foundation and bottom of the siding meet.

Even if your walls are sound and those cracks have been caulked, your home may still lose significant amounts of heat if it's not properly insulated.

Especially in older homes, the insulation installed at the time of construction might not be enough.

- Inspect the attic. See if the hatch is insulated. Check to be sure that pipes, ductwork and chimneys are sealed.
- See if there is a "vapor barrier" under the attic insulation. It might be a plastic sheet or paper. If there's no barrier, you might coat the interior ceilings with vapor barrier paint; this reduces the amount of water vapor that can pass through the ceiling.
- Checking the walls of your house for insulation can be a real pain. Turn off the circuit breaker for electrical outlets in the wall (and don't forget to test them first!). Then remove the cover plate and gently feel around inside the wall with a thin, long stick or screwdriver. If you feel a little resistance, you probably have some insulation there. Ideally the entire wall cavity will be filled.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Sunday, Feb. 10, 2008:](#)

### **Abuses of CEQA law are widespread**

With shameless abandon, lawyers and monied players are abusing the state's premier environmental law -- the California Environmental Quality Act.

CEQA was enacted in 1970 so citizens could identify development projects that posed an unacceptable environmental impact, and change them or challenge them.

Over the years, various interests have hijacked this law for nonenvironmental purposes, and conservation groups have looked the other way.

All of us know about "neighborhood groups" that have exploited this law to prevent construction of affordable housing. Corporations have used CEQA in an attempt to stifle competition.

Labor unions are an even larger abuser of CEQA. In recent years, labor groups have used environmental lawsuits, or the threat of such suits, to stop or slow down power plant construction, hospital expansions and housing developments.

The unions' lawyers always seem to disappear once a developer has signed an agreement to hire only union labor.

Critics call this practice "greenmail," a polite term for legal extortion. The combined effect is to drive up the cost of new houses, hospital beds and other projects, with little or no benefit for the environment.

Consider the example of William Kopper, a former mayor of Davis, near Sacramento.

Kopper is threatening to sue various projects in Yuba County over alleged CEQA violations. Kopper won't disclose his clients, but his history is well known.

In the late 1990s, the Mid-Valley Trades Council hired Kopper to challenge the impacts of a proposed racetrack in Yuba County. After the trades council reached agreement with the developer, Kopper dropped his objections.

A few years ago, Kopper sued to halt Roseville's westward expansion. The lawsuit was dropped after developers signed a project labor agreement with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 340, the United Association Local 447 and the Sheet Metal Workers Local 162.

Oddly, environmental leaders in California have remained mum while this hijacking of environmental law occurred.

Their silence reflects a marriage of convenience between labor and environmental groups and, possibly, some financial entanglements.

For several years, a group called California Unions for Reliable Energy has used CEQA to slow or block power plants, including a geothermal plant in Imperial County.

As it happens, CURE employs a law firm founded by Tom Adams, the current president of the California League of Environmental Voters.

Defenders of CEQA should be outraged. They also should be worried. As the abuses and misuses mount, they create ammunition for industry groups that would like to see California's landmark law revoked or seriously weakened.

Greenmail hurts CEQA's credibility. Why are leading environmentalists complicit with their silence?

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2008:](#)

### **Make sure you buy 'Real California Milk'**

California's dairy families labor under the strictest environmental regulations on the planet. In 2004, air quality legislation was passed that led to first-ever regulations for farms. Last May, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board promulgated 122 pages of new regulations for dairies. Nowhere else are dairy farmers subject to such regulation.

California farmers care about our communities and our environment and have always been on the leading edge. Since 1998, California dairy farmers have worked collectively to enhance water quality through the California Dairy Quality Assurance Program. Our producers have voluntarily constructed methane digesters to harness methane and generate electricity (a difficult chore given the lack of ability to sell excess electricity to utility companies). Further, the state's dairy families have implemented a menu of best-management practices to reduce emissions and enhance air quality.

Last October, the California Milk Advisory Board unveiled a terrific new program to encourage California consumers to purchase dairy products made with "Real California Milk." Buying California-produced milk and dairy products has the added benefit of stimulating our local economy while reducing greenhouse gases created by shipping milk into California. I encourage everyone to ask for Real California Milk when you go to the store. Made in California, by Californians, for Californians.

**LINDA LOPES**, Turlock

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the new fee that will target carbon dioxide polluters, such as SHELL in Northern California. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at (559) 230-5851.

## **Propone California cambios sin precedente contra la contaminación del aire**

Noticiero Latino,  
Radio Bilingüe, Monday, Feb. 11, 2008

Autoridades ambientales del norte de California propusieron el fin de semana una nueva tabulación de tarifas de multas por cantidades de contaminación al aire.

La medida, de aprobarse sentará un nuevo precedente de California en el país.

La idea de la Oficina Distrital de Control de la Calidad del Aire en la Bahía de San Francisco impondría un pago de 4.2 centavos de dólar por cada tonelada métrica de dióxido de carbono.

Por ejemplo, una refinería de la empresa Shell en el área tendría que pagar cerca de 190 mil dólares anuales por contaminación y ese dinero se usaría para mitigar efectos.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Florida joins 18 other states in the lawsuit against EPA over the right to regulate automobile emissions.

## **La Florida se suma a demanda federal para combatir el calentamiento global**

**By Manuel Flores**

Noticiero Latino,  
Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2008

La península floridana se sumó a otros 18 estados de la Unión Americana en una demanda contra la Agencia federal de Protección Ambiental (EPA, en inglés), sobre el derecho a regular las emisiones de los vehículos.

Dicha demanda fue impulsada por el gobernador de California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, buscando combatir el calentamiento global; su colega floridano Charlie Crist firmó una ley para reducir también los autos con gases contaminantes.

El sector del transporte representa alrededor del 46 por ciento de las emisiones de dióxido de carbono a nivel estatal; hace poco, Crist invitó a avanzar en el uso de energías alternativas como el etanol y el hidrógeno.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the Automotive Industry prepares itself against new environmental laws.

## **Prepara la industria automotriz cabildeo contra leyes ambientalistas**

Noticiero Latino  
Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, Feb. 12, 2008

La industria automotriz ha pugnado esta semana por aumentar su cabildeo en Washington, DC, para impedir que entren en vigor leyes estatales que impondrían mayor control a la contaminación vehicular.

En una reunión en California, donde hay unos 30 mil industriales, la nueva presidenta de la Asociación Nacional de Distribuidores de Vehículos, Annette Sykora dijo que en lo que respecta a leyes ambientales "la pelea apenas comienza".

Según asistentes a la reunión, en San Francisco, mejorar el rendimiento de los autos para reducir la contaminación aumentaría unos seis mil dólares al precio en que se vende al público cada vehículo.