

Parents team up to advocate pesticide buffer zones

BY KIMBERLINA ROCHA

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Thursday, June 19, 2008

Rosalinda Avitia, a member of the Agricultural Worker Health and Housing Commission, and other Visalia parents are teaming up with representatives from the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment in hopes of setting up pesticide protection zones around schools in Tulare County so that aerial and ground pesticide applications will no longer be used.

Currently, regulations are in place restricting farmers from spraying pesticides within a quarter mile of a school while classes are in session or 24 hours before school begins. The restriction includes labor camps and residential areas, said Tulare County Assistant Agricultural Commissioner Bill Appleby.

Appleby said barring pesticide use within a quarter mile of every rural school would be impossible. He estimates that measure would affect 22,000 acres of farm land.

"As a county, we can't have that happen," he said. "There are too many crops in operation. Tulare County is a big agricultural county; our whole economy revolves around it."

Avitia and other supporters are not giving up.

So far, she said, they have collected 1,500 signatures and have enlisted school districts in Cutler-Orosi and Lindsay for support.

Organizers are hoping to add Visalia Unified School District to that list.

Ivanhoe, Union, Elbow Creek and Goshen elementary schools are among the 14 schools in the county that have been identified by the organization that are within a quarter mile of agricultural fields.

They feel the day-to-day operations of pesticide applications near schools put children's health at risk in addition to contributing to [air pollution](#).

"It's about working together," she said. "To me, it's just a matter of being sensitive and responsible of where we live and what we're breathing."

Request to the school board

Avitia and Gustavo Aguirre, assistant director of organizing for the CRPE, approached the school board members at a May 13 board of trustees meeting.

Aguirre said he would like to have aerial and ground pesticide applications barred from areas around schools.

His organization has been working on the project for two years in getting letters of support from community agencies and school districts, he said.

He wants the community to work in unison in finding better methods in regard to spraying agricultural fields.

"I believe the farmers could continue to work, but they can be more responsible," he said in Spanish. "We need to work together and support one another so that the health of the community is protected."

Visalia Unified has yet to enlist its support. Board president Juan Guerrero said the board has "tabled" the resolution to support pesticide protection zones until Aguirre and his organization finalize the guidelines with the Tulare County Ag Commissioner's office.

Appleby said he and Agricultural Commissioner Gary Kunkel continue to meet with CRPE among other anti-pesticide advocacy groups.

"We're just continuing our discussions," he said. "We ask they meet with other [agricultural] commissioners and not just Tulare County."

Another parent's concern

Parent Ana Martin, whose 9-year-old daughter Andrea Martin attends Linwood Elementary School, has joined Avitia's plight.

Even though agricultural fields are more than a mile from the Linwood Elementary campus, she said, Martin still worries about her daughter's health.

"I'm very concerned for my child and for other families who live near fields," she said in Spanish. "The climate is changing, and as a parent I want to change so many things. But that's going to take a lot of hands to get that accomplished."

Commuters get free rides on Spare the Air day

Staff Report

S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, June 19, 2008

Commuters will get free rides on various public transportation systems today - the only free-ride Spare the Air day this year.

In the past, air quality and transportation officials offered free rides several times a year on Spare the Air days when ozone levels were expected to exceed federal standards. The move was an effort to lure drivers out of their cars.

But budget constraints prompted authorities to limit the free rides to one day a year, which costs about \$1.8 million in rides. Officials also want to emphasize to drivers that every day should be a Spare the Air day and that public transportation should be the rule.

Among the agencies offering free rides are: AC Transit, Altamont Commuter Express, BART, Caltrain, Capitol Corridor, Golden Gate Transit and Ferry, Marin County Transit, Samtrans, Muni, VTA and WestCAT.

Investment negotiations to be launched

China and U.S. see opportunities for both countries

By Martin Crustinger, The Associated Press

In the Contra Costa Times, LA Daily News and other papers, Thursday, June 19, 2008

WASHINGTON - The United States and China have agreed to launch negotiations on an investment treaty that holds out the promise of greatly expanded opportunities for U.S. companies in China's vast market.

The two countries, concluding high-level economic talks, also pledged greater cooperation to deal with energy shortages and global pollution.

The agreements were announced Wednesday by Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, who said he believed the initiatives would produce "significant progress" on two priorities both nations share.

The announcements came as the two countries concluded two days of talks aimed at defusing simmering economic tensions.

Paulson and Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan participated in a joint signing ceremony in the Treasury's ornate Cash Room to wrap up the fourth round of a series of talks known as the Strategic Economic Dialogue.

Paulson said the 10-year cooperative agreement would allow the two countries to address "some of the most important and difficult challenges facing our nations and the world today -- energy security, environmental sustainability and climate change."

The announcement Wednesday represented a fleshing out of details of an agreement that was initially announced at the last round of talks in Beijing in December.

Paulson said the framework would focus on five major areas -- electricity, air, water, transportation and conservation of forest and wetland ecosystems.

McCain calls for building 45 new nuclear reactors

By DAVID ESPO, AP Special Correspondent

in the Modesto Bee, Thursday, June 19, 2008

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. - Sen. John McCain called Wednesday for the construction of 45 new nuclear reactors by 2030 and pledged \$2 billion a year in federal funds "to make clean coal a reality," measures designed to reduce dependence on foreign oil.

In a third straight day of campaigning devoted to the energy issue, the Republican presidential nominee-in-waiting also said the only time Democratic rival Barack Obama voted for a tax cut was for a "break for the oil companies."

McCain said the 104 nuclear reactors currently operating around the country produce about 20 percent of the nation's annual electricity needs.

"Every year, these reactors alone spare the atmosphere from the equivalent of nearly all auto emissions in America. Yet for all these benefits, we have not broken ground on a single nuclear plant in over thirty years," he said. "And our manufacturing base to even construct these plants is almost gone."

Even so, he said he would set the country on a course to build 45 new ones by 2030, with a longer-term goal of adding another 55 in the future.

"We will need to recover all the knowledge and skills that have been lost over three stagnant decades in a highly technical field," he conceded.

Later, at a news conference, McCain said he favors steps to reduce the time plant owners need to obtain the necessary permits. He suggested U.S. companies use common technology to shave the time in takes to bring a new nuclear facility on line. He also said a decision by President Carter three decades ago not to pursue fuel reprocessing technology should be reversed.

In an appearance before an audience at Missouri State University, McCain also said, "We will need to solve complex problems of moving and storing materials that will always need safeguarding."

Shortly after he spoke, a participant in a campaign-organized round-table discussion of energy, retired Marine Corps Gen. James Jones, said obtaining the necessary construction permits can take five years. "We should be able to cut that in half," added Jones, a former NATO commander who is now chief executive officer of the U.S. Chamber Institute for 21st Century Energy. He also is on the board of Chevron.

Jones flew to Missouri aboard the campaign's chartered jet although, ironically, Democrats recently disclosed that his name has figured in Obama campaign discussions of potential Democratic vice presidential running mates.

McCain's motorcade drove by a few dozen sign-carrying demonstrators protesting the Iraq War. One audience member interrupted his remarks by standing and shouting that the Arizona senator had taken millions from the oil industry.

A dramatic spike in worldwide oil prices has pushed the cost of gasoline to \$4 a gallon and more, and made energy a domestic political issue in a way it has not been since the days of the Arab oil embargo of the 1970s.

On Tuesday, McCain delivered a speech in Texas in which he made the case for a nationwide effort to reduce dependence on foreign oil, including additional drilling in U.S. coastal waters, and said he would begin laying out specific proposals in the coming days.

With his appearance in Missouri, he began making good on that promise.

The Republican presidential contender said Missouri gets about 85 percent of its electricity from coal, an abundant natural resource in the U.S.

"Perhaps no advancement in energy technology could mean more to America than the clean burning of coal and the capture and storage of carbon emissions," he said.

With the \$2 billion in federal funds, he said, "We will build the demonstration plants, refine the techniques and equipment, and make clean coal a reality. This single achievement will open vast amounts of our oldest and most abundant resource. And it will deliver not only electricity but jobs to some of the areas hardest hit by our economic troubles."

It was the second straight day McCain has criticized Obama, the Illinois senator who will collect the Democratic presidential nomination this summer, a few days before McCain lays claim to the GOP nomination.

Obama has said McCain's support for additional offshore oil drilling is evidence that he would effectively give the country another term of the Bush presidency.

"I guess the senator has changed his position since voting for the 2005 Bush energy bill - a grab-bag of corporate handouts that I opposed," McCain said. "Come to think of it, that energy bill was the only time we've ever seen Senator Obama vote in favor of any tax break - and it was a tax break for the oil companies."

McCain opposed the 2005 measure and said at the time it was larded with billions in unnecessary tax breaks for the oil industry.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, June 19, 2008:](#)

Who says pollution is bad?

Our state air quality officials have done it again. They are going to save us. With all the people dying from tiny specks of chemicals, dust and soot, all of which are so small they go through lungs and into arteries where they compete with cholesterol to clog arteries, it's a wonder there are any of us left for the air quality officials to protect.

Those farmers who furnish our food, those oil companies that furnish our gas, plastics, carpets, medicines and many of life's comforts, those trains and trucks that haul our goods, and those dairies and refineries and factories are in jeopardy because we have "people problems."

People problems are those who meet and somehow decide what is good for you and me because they somehow know better than we do.

I'll bet you didn't know that PM 2.5 consists of tiny specks of chemicals (whatever they are), dust (everyone knows what that is, I guess) and soot (another, whatever it is). And that these linger in the winter air to nail you and clog your arteries and set you up for a stroke.

You probably didn't know that all our trees, flowers, weeds and grasses give off oxygen and methane, some good, some not so good, but we need them too.

It's the people problems we don't need. If we could just get them to use their superior intelligence to find some more oil for us and help build more refineries, we could have a lot more goodies made out of hydrocarbons and be happier in the process.

DICK DARROW, Bakersfield

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Thursday, June 19, 2008:](#)

Only one solution

Victor Davis Hanson and most Americans just don't get it. The energy crisis is not just about finding more oil to get prices down. We can drill for oil until we ruin our environment and it won't help the long-term solution.

It won't appreciably change our dependency on foreign oil. It won't halt our need to protect our oil interests in the Middle East with an enormous drain on our treasury. It won't stop inflation or the deportation of American dollars to foreign countries. It won't stop the pollution of our cities and towns. It won't stop the rise of global warming. It won't stop the eventual rise of oil prices once again and it won't halt the out-of-control depletion of this extremely essential resource.

There is only one available solution that would immediately begin to help and completely eliminate these problems in about 10 years -- the electric vehicle. Put the internal combustion engine in the barn with the horse and buggy, and get on with it. Let's retrofit and replace these toxic-spewing gas-guzzlers starting now, and add only wind and solar generation as needed. See greencarcongress.com/

David L. Drown, Oakhurst

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses federal government approves that California regulate heavy-duty trucks at ports. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at (559) 230-5851.

Aprueba gobierno federal que California regule camiones en los puertos

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Wednesday, June 18, 2008

La Comisión Marítima federal accedió a que California regule la contaminación que ocasionan decenas de miles de camiones que a diario transportan mercancías de los puertos marítimos del estado.

En respuesta a una demanda de los puertos de Long Beach y Los Ángeles, los más grandes de California, la comisión determinó que "no desea retrasar innecesariamente el programa de protección a la calidad del aire".

Los puertos son los principales focos de contaminación aérea de California, y contribuyen a unas 24 mil muertes prematuras anuales, según estudios oficiales y extraoficiales.