

Buena Vista class wins iPods in contest

By Victor Garcia

Visalia Times Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Friday, April 17, 2009

When Buena Vista School fifth-grade teacher Terry Bessinger told her class they had won the Kids for Clean Air contest, they didn't believe her.

It was April 1.

"The kids thought I was playing an April Fools Day joke on them," Bessinger said.

Her class indeed had won the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District contest and was one of two Tulare County schools to do so. Strathmore Elementary was the other.

Schools were recognized Thursday at the organization's governing board meeting in Fresno.

"We are a small school district so it was nice for us to win," Bessinger said about her rural Tulare district.

Each of her 23 students won an iPod Shuffle and Bessinger won \$250 for her classroom, she said.

"For a lot of these kids, this is their only chance to get an iPod," Bessinger said.

Fourth- and fifth-graders Valley-wide were given the opportunity to bring in clean-air pledges.

Brenda Turner, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District spokeswoman, said students were given pledge cards that asked a person to check five things that would help air quality. Students circulated those cards among their family and other community members.

"Some of the things could be calling [the air district] before lighting up a fire, using alternative transportation [or] replacing older light bulbs in their home for energy-efficient ones," Turner said.

Winners were selected in each category based on the number of pledges each student obtained, Turner said. Classrooms had to average at least 2.5 pledges per student, she said.

"Buena Vista collected 287 pledges," Turner said.

Students worked on the contest between January and March.

"My kids kept asking for copies [of the clean-air pledge cards]," she said. "They are learning that they are the ones who can help change things, and then they take what they learn to the community."

Environmental report on Wal-Mart's Merced center draws mostly support

By Scott Jason

Merced Sun-Star, Friday, April 17, 2009

Merced's Civic Center has yet to be overwhelmed with criticisms and questions about the environmental report chronicling the proposed Wal-Mart distribution center's effects on the area.

Of course, the deadline is still a week away.

As of Thursday, the city had received letters from Caltrans, Madera County, the Central California Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Native American Heritage Commission.

An additional 50 letters in support or against the project have also been submitted, though they don't offer any specific criticism or pose questions.

Comments supporting the project outnumber ones against it by nearly a nine-to-one ratio. Most residents cite the need for jobs as a top reason for it to be built.

Wal-Mart has said it will hire 1,200 full-time workers by the time the 24-hour-a-day center is in full swing.

Though supporters have been more vocal so far, the Stop Wal-Mart Action Team at various public forums has continued to voice its concerns about the project's impact.

A group of opponents went before the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District board Thursday to remind it of the 1.1 million-square-foot project's implications.

In a letter to the board, it noted that 72 tons of nitrogen oxides and 32 tons of particulate matter -- dust and soot -- will be created each year by the distribution center.

It asks that the district be vigilant in protecting the city's air.

If Wal-Mart's project is approved, it will have to pay a one-time fee for its pollution, District Director of Permit Services Dave Warner said.

The district charges \$9,350 for a ton of nitrogen oxide and \$9,011 for a ton of particulate matter.

The money collected goes into a fund that helps improve air quality by giving \$100 million in grants every year.

Top projects include upgrading truck fleets and replacing water pumps, Warner said.

The district will also comment on the draft report.

The number of comments affects how long it takes before the final report is issued.

In the case of Riverside Motorsports Park, the most controversial development in recent history, more than a thousand comment cards were sent to the county.

Hundreds of letters were mailed as well.

It took 10 months before the final report was released.

For the Wal-Mart project, 37 people have urged the city to approve the distribution center as quickly as possible.

Four people said they were against it being built. Another nine asked for more time to read the 441-page review, a request the city denied last month.

All comments on the project must be in by 5 p.m. April 27.

The third-party firm that wrote the draft environmental impact report must then respond to the critiques and make any changes to the report before issuing it in its final form.

The report, and essentially the project itself, then goes before the City Council for approval or denial.

If it's approved, Wal-Mart hopes to break ground in early 2010.

Specially engineered feed could lead to less gassy cows

By Seth Nidever

Hanford Sentinel, Thursday, April 16, 2009

Imagine a cow fed with specially engineered food and probiotics in its gut to reduce the amount of methane it belches. That's the vision that Dairy Management Inc. is pursuing with dollars derived from every hundred pounds of milk trucked off U.S. dairies.

The idea is to reduce methane, a potent greenhouse gas that cows belch as they chew their cud. Greenhouse gases are blamed for global warming.

According to Thomas Gallagher, CEO of the U.S. Dairy and Dairy Management Inc.'s Innovation Center in Rosemont, Ill., cutting the dairy industry's emissions by 25 percent would be equivalent to removing about 1.25 million passenger cars from the nation's roads every year.

The research could have a huge impact in California.

There are approximately 300,000 head of stock on Kings County dairies, with an estimated 2.5 million animals on dairies statewide.

Those dairies will soon face regulation for greenhouse gases under California's landmark greenhouse gas reduction law passed in 2006, said Frank Mitloehner, a livestock air quality specialist at University of California Davis.

Local dairy producers expressed interest in the research.

"If we can learn to feed cows to produce less methane, I'm all for that," said Riverdale dairyman Tom Mendes.

But they also worried about cost at time when dairy margins are being stretched to the breaking point.

"These 'less gassy' feeds will certainly be more expensive to produce and therefore, more expensive for a dairy farmer to purchase. Since we are price takers, we wouldn't be able to pass on increased costs associated with these new technologies," said Durbin Pedro, a dairy operator near Hanford.

They also took a cautious approach to just how much greenhouse gases cows produce.

According to a University of Arkansas estimate cited by the Associated Press, the dairy industry contributes less than 2 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

"As long as it is scientific and consumers are willing to pay more for our product, I have no problem reducing our greenhouse gases," said local dairyman Chuck Draxler.

Riverdale dairyman Jamie Bledsoe said that he's already reducing his cows' gas production by feeding them high-ruffage diets instead of rich grain mixes that boost milk production.

The higher ruffage diets are a cost-cutting measure to deal with low milk prices in the recession.

Joaquin Contente, a Hanford area dairyman, expressed interest in generating clean energy from what comes "out of the back end of the cow."

Several dairy operations in the region have methane digesters designed to take cow manure and turn it into clean electricity. However, they report that issues with the utilities and with local air district requirements have prevented the projects from operating profitably.

"We're all open to new ways of doing things," Mendes said.

INSIDE WASHINGTON: Pricey bus test a bust

By Matthew Barakat - Associated Press Writer

In the Modesto Bee, Friday, April 17, 2009

FALLS CHURCH, Va. -- It seemed like a good idea, perhaps one that could be emulated nationwide: a fleet of electric buses to ease congestion in one of Washington's traffic-choked suburbs in an environmentally friendly way.

Congress provided earmarks of nearly \$2 million to make it happen. But about 10 years later, the buses serving the small, prosperous city of Falls Church aren't electric, their usage has leveled off at half of what was projected, and the city is considering scrapping the system.

Taxpayers subsidize the service at a whopping \$8 per ride, in most cases enough to pay for a cab ride.

It seemed like a good idea to its proponents, perhaps one that could be emulated nationwide: a fleet of electric buses that would ease congestion in one of metropolitan Washington's traffic-choked suburbs and do it in an environmentally friendly way.

The GEORGE system has become another demonstration of the risks of congressional earmarks - spending provisions in the law that doles out money for specific projects in their home states or districts.

"That little earmark is a microcosm of the problem," said Leslie Paige, spokesman for Citizens Against Government Waste.

After two contractors failed to provide suitable clean-running electric buses for the system, the city ended up with diesel buses - albeit ones equipped to reduce emissions.

And at many points on the route, the GEORGE bus stops overlap or are less than a block away from regional bus routes that also connect to Metrorail, the Washington area's large subway system.

Earmarks have become a particularly contentious part of the federal budget process. President Obama campaigned against earmark spending, but last month signed a \$410 billion spending package that included 8,000 earmarks costing \$5.5 billion.

Transportation projects are an earmarking favorite. A 2007 report from the Transportation Department's inspector general found that in 2006, Congress had taken an \$847 million federal program for bus funding and earmarked \$814 million of it for pet projects, leaving almost nothing to be allocated under the traditional merit-based funding formula.

Meanwhile, Falls Church is deciding whether to continue the GEORGE service. A city of about 12,000 inside the Capital Beltway, it would have to pay as much as \$600,000 to maintain service next year, according to city manager Wyatt Shields. Bus systems in the nearby suburbs of Fairfax, Alexandria and Arlington provide an average subsidy of \$2 per ride or less. Shields recommends eliminating the service.

But the system still has supporters, and the city council is looking at ways to make the system more efficient.

Its biggest booster, city councilman David Snyder, said the earmarks will only waste taxpayer money if the city gives up on GEORGE. "It's up to us (on the city council) now to make sure the earmark isn't wasted," he said.

The idea for GEORGE came from a former mayor in the 1990s who was impressed by electric buses he rode in Chattanooga, Tenn.

A working group was formed to study feasibility. But it was a series of congressional earmarks, shepherded by Rep. Jim Moran, D-Va., that got the project off the ground. Moran is a member of the House Appropriations Committee, which controls earmark spending.

Service began in December 2002, with the buses primarily delivering Falls Church commuters to two Metrorail stations on opposite ends of the city. Initial projections estimated ridership of about 144,000 annually. But ridership has never exceeded 75,000 and now stands at about 70,000.

Falls Church resident Jeff Proctor said he occasionally uses the bus to connect to Metrorail. The GEORGE bus, which costs 50 cents a ride, stops directly in front of his apartment.

"I think it's ridiculous," he said. "If I had to pay \$8 I'd just take a cab, right? It seems silly to subsidize it at that level."

Paige said GEORGE demonstrates many of the problems with earmarks. Among them is the temptation to throw good money after bad, with local governments on the hook for heavy operating subsidies to justify the money spent to establish the system.

"Earmarks become like a seed for even more wasteful spending further on down," she said.

Moran, a defender of the earmark system who has requested a \$2 million earmark in the upcoming budget cycle for neighboring Arlington County's bus service, said the federal government can no longer continue subsidizing the GEORGE service, but he doesn't see the earmark as a waste.

"We gave it our best shot," he said. "If we hadn't had this financial depression or recession we probably could have continued. But in tough fiscal times like this, you have to make tough choices. That doesn't mean it wasn't a good idea."

Bill helps hybrid cars

By Brendan Riley - Associated Press Writer

In the Modesto Bee, Friday, April 17, 2009

CARSON CITY, Nev. -- A Nevada Senate panel voted Thursday for a measure that would help to promote plug-in hybrid cars by letting them use car pool highway lanes even if only one person is in the vehicle.

AB163, routed to the Senate floor on a unanimous vote by the Energy, Infrastructure and Transportation Committee, was proposed by Assemblyman James Ohrenschall, D-Las Vegas, who described it as a toned-down version of a bill that didn't win approval in 2007.

Under Ohrenschall's plan, the state Transportation Department would determine which low-emission, energy-efficient vehicles could use the high-occupancy vehicle, or HOV, lanes.

There are about five miles of such lanes in the Las Vegas area now, and Ohrenschall said that could increase to 15 miles within a year, Ohrenschall said, adding, "So it's going to become more of an incentive to purchase these vehicles."

The lawmaker also said the bill would make it optional rather than mandatory for authorities to allow the hybrids in the HOV lanes. That way, the hybrids could be cut off from the HOV lanes if they got too crowded, he said.

Of an estimated 2.3 million vehicles registered in Nevada, there are only about 11,400 hybrid autos, lawmakers were told.

In related action, an organization promoting a zero-emission vehicle, or ZEV, corridor on about 240 miles of Interstate 80 between Berkley, Calif., and Reno held a brief news conference outside the Legislature to discuss that effort.

Susan Clark of the Renewable Energy Accelerator said the University of California and Nevada System of Higher Education have agreed to develop a feasibility study for the corridor. The study will focus on charging stations and other infrastructure needs as well as government involvement in setting up the corridor.

"We have now assembled the best and brightest in Nevada, while engaging our neighbors in California, to leverage its renewable energy resources, excellent business climate and sophisticated networks to make sure that northern Nevada is the epicenter of an accelerated American ZEV economy," Clark stated.

EPA takes first step toward climate change regs

By H. Josef Hebert, Associated Press Writer

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Friday, April 17, 2009

WASHINGTON—The Environmental Protection Agency has concluded that carbon dioxide and five other greenhouse gases are a danger to public health and welfare, taking the first step to regulating pollution linked to climate change, The Associated Press has learned.

Such regulation would have widespread economic and social impact, from requiring more fuel efficient automobiles to limiting carbon dioxide emissions from power plants and industrial sources, changing the way the nation produces energy.

The EPA will announce its proposed finding Friday, triggering a 60-day comment period before issuing a final ruling, said congressional officials who have been briefed by the agency. They spoke on condition of anonymity because an announcement had not yet been made.

The EPA has concluded that the science pointing to man-made pollution as a cause of global warming is "compelling and overwhelming." The blame goes mainly to carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels.

The six greenhouse gases "pose a threat to public health and welfare," the EPA has determined. It also will say tailpipe emissions from motor vehicles contribute to climate change.

The EPA action was prompted by a Supreme Court ruling two years ago that said greenhouse gases are pollutants under the Clean Air Act and must be regulated if found to be a danger to human health or public welfare.

The Bush administration strongly opposed using the Clean Air Act to address climate change and stalled on producing the so-called "endangerment finding" demanded by the high court in its April 2007 ruling.

The court case, brought by Massachusetts, focused only on emissions from automobiles. But it is widely assumed that if the EPA must regulate emissions from cars and trucks, it will have no choice but to control identical pollution from power plants and industrial sources.

While the EPA clearly indicates by its action Friday that it is ready to pursue regulation under the Clean Air Act to address the threats of global warming, the agency also will say that it prefers the problem be dealt with more broadly by Congress, the officials said.

Congress is considering imposing an economy-wide cap on greenhouse gas emissions along with giving industry the ability to trade emission allowances to mitigate costs. Legislation could be considered by the House before the August congressional recess.

EPA to Propose Regulating Greenhouse Gas Emissions

By Juliet Eilperin, Staff Writer

Washington Post, Friday, April 17, 2009

The Environmental Protection Agency today plans to propose regulating greenhouse gas emissions on the grounds that these pollutants pose a danger to the public's health and welfare, according to several sources who asked not to be identified.

The move, coming almost exactly two years after the Supreme Court ordered the agency to examine whether emissions linked to climate change should be curbed under the Clean Air Act, would mark a major shift in the federal government's approach to global warming.

Former President George W. Bush and his deputies opposed putting mandatory limits on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases for years on the grounds that it would harm the economy; Congress is considering legislation that would do so but it remains unclear whether it can pass the proposal and enact it into law in the near future.

Late last month EPA sent the White House a formal finding that greenhouse gases endanger public health and welfare; the Office of Management and Budget signed off on the determination Monday.

When reached this morning, EPA spokesman Allyn Brooks-LaSure declined to comment on the matter.

President Obama pledged to limit greenhouse gases as a candidate, but has urged Congress to send him a bill that would cap them and allow emitters to trade pollution allowances nationwide. EPA administrator Lisa P. Jackson, in a speech at the Aspen Environment Forum last month, emphasized that the administration still hopes the country will develop a legislative answer to the question of how best to limit greenhouse gases.

"The best solution, and I believe this in my heart, is to work with Congress to form and pass comprehensive legislation to deal with climate change," Jackson said. "We hope to avert a regulatory thicket where governments and businesses spend an inordinate amount of time fighting. We are not looking for a doomsday solution."

According to a congressional aide who's been briefed on EPA's proposal, the agency indicates its preference for legislative action in the finding itself. But the endangerment finding also makes a broader case that the U.S. must act to limit greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, according to the aide, saying the science underlying its determination is "compelling and overwhelming."

The agency also is planning to include a "cause or contribute" finding for cars, which implies that not only are greenhouse gases dangerous in general, but that such emissions from cars and trucks are reasonably likely to contribute to climate change.

Some business groups, such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, have warned that if the federal government regulates carbon dioxide under the Clean Air Act it will end up imposing an enormous regulatory burden on small operations such as individual stores and even some office buildings.

EPA must hold a 60-day public comment period before finalizing its finding, and it would then have to look at regulating individual sectors of the economy, such as motor vehicles and power plants. Those two sectors account for roughly half of the nation's carbon dioxide emissions.

In a teleconference with reporters this week David Doniger, policy director for the Natural Resources Defense Council's climate center, said he did not think the agency would target small emitters of greenhouse gases if it began regulating emissions under the nearly 40-year old Clean Air Act.

"That is just not true," said Doniger. "EPA is able to focus on the big stuff, the big sources of global warming pollution."

Even before the formal announcement, experts predicted the decision would transform the federal government's role in regulating commercial operations across the country. Roger Martella, who served as EPA's general counsel under Bush and is now a partner at the firm Sidley Austin in Washington, issued a statement saying, "The proposed endangerment finding marks the official beginning of an era of controlling carbon in the United States."

"This means that EPA's mission of environmental protection will burst outside those bounds and place it on the stage as one of the most influential regulators of both energy use and the greater economy in the upcoming year," Martella added. "The proposal, once finalized, will give EPA far more responsibility than addressing climate change. It effectively will assign EPA broad authority over the use and control of energy, in turn authorizing it to regulate virtually every sector of the economy."

Many opponents of regulating carbon dioxide will now turn their attention to Congress, hoping to achieve a more modest cap on greenhouse gases through the legislative process than one that could be imposed by the federal government.

Fred Singer, who heads the Arlington, Va.-based Science and Environmental Policy Project and has repeatedly questioned the idea that humans contribute to climate change, said in a statement that the EPA proposal "is based on shoddy science and would impose a huge economic burden on American households . . . Congress must stop this unwarranted action by means of legislation, but without committing the same errors as EPA."

Greenhouse emissions endanger human health: EPA

By Deborah Zabarenko and Tom Doggett, Reuters
In the Washington Post, Friday, April 17, 2009

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Friday declared that greenhouse gas emissions like carbon dioxide endanger human health and welfare, clearing the way for possible U.S. regulation.

The EPA said it found that "greenhouse gases in the atmosphere endanger the public health and welfare of current and future generations" and human activities spur global warming.

"These high atmospheric levels are the unambiguous result of human emissions, and are very likely the cause of the observed increase in average temperatures and other climatic changes," the agency said in its finding, released online at epa.gov.

Regulation is not automatically triggered by the finding, the agency said. There will be a 60-day comment period.

The environmental agency said motor vehicles contribute to rising greenhouse emissions and the "threat of climate change."

It said five other greenhouse gases also endanger health and contribute to global warming in addition to carbon dioxide -- which is emitted by natural and human-made sources, including coal-fired power plants, oil refineries and fossil-fueled vehicles.

The other five gases are methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride.

EPA to review system gauging air emissions

By Blake Morrison and Brad Heath
USA TODAY, Friday, April 17, 2009

In a move that could signal a fundamental shift in how industrial pollution is regulated, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has pledged to reconsider how it estimates the amount of toxic chemicals that refineries and petrochemical plants release.

The EPA's plans, outlined in a letter sent to Houston Mayor Bill White earlier this month, offer no assurances that the process for estimating chemical releases will be changed. But the letter does detail a variety of steps the agency will take to try to develop a more complete picture of what the industries emit. Among the steps: comparing chemicals actually released by Houston refineries to the pollution estimates those companies are required to disclose under public right-to-know laws.

Based on such comparisons, the agency would examine the formula it uses to predict emissions at facilities across the nation, the letter indicated. White, environmentalists and others have contended for years that those estimates underestimate what industries release into the air.

"This would apply to every refinery in the country," said Elena Craft, a toxicologist with the Environmental Defense Fund, a non-profit advocacy group. "If the refining industry is underreporting the emissions, then we're underestimating the health risks. These are pollutants that cause cancer — that end people's lives."

In December, a USA TODAY investigation used those emissions estimates to identify schools in toxic hot spots — locations where chemicals from nearby industries appeared to permeate the air. Children are particularly susceptible to the chemicals, and a dozen of the schools where problems appeared most pronounced were in Harris County, Texas, which includes Houston and other parts of the industrialized ship channel.

White charged in a July letter to the EPA that emissions estimates "significantly undercount" the level of pollution in his city, the nation's fourth largest. He cited studies that indicated emissions "can be 100 times greater" than the estimates.

In a response to White, dated April 7, the EPA's acting assistant administrator essentially agreed. "We share your concerns about the accuracy of emissions estimates," Elizabeth Craig wrote. Her letter said the EPA had begun to develop a new way to account for "upsets" — accidental chemical releases that are generally unaccounted for in emissions estimates.

"Sometimes a single upset can release as much (pollution) as a full year's of 'business as usual,'" said Elena Marks, Houston's director of health and environmental policy. "Getting them to acknowledge that the current protocols are inaccurate and incomplete was the huge first step. And the huge next step is getting them to say, 'And we're going to fix it.' "

The EPA's response offers a number of dates for possible changes — some this year, some next.

EPA finds greenhouse gases pose a danger to health

By H. Josef Hebert, Associated Press Writer
In the L.A. Daily News, Friday, April 17, 2009

WASHINGTON—The Environmental Protection Agency has concluded that carbon dioxide and five other greenhouse gases are a danger to public health and welfare. It is the first step to regulating pollution linked to climate change.

Congressional sources told The Associated Press that EPA will announce its proposed finding Friday and begin a comment period before issuing a final ruling. The EPA also will say tailpipe emissions from motor vehicles contribute to climate change. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the finding hasn't been announced.

The action was prompted by a Supreme Court ruling two years that said greenhouse gases are pollutants under the Clean Air Act and must be regulated if found to be a human health danger. U.S. declares warming gases are health threat

Obama administration move is aimed at prodding lawmakers to regulate

Charlie Riedel / AP

MSN.com, Friday, April 17, 2009

WASHINGTON - Having received White House backing, the Environmental Protection Agency declared Friday that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are a significant threat to human health and thus will be listed as pollutants under the Clean Air Act — a policy the Bush administration rejected.

"This finding confirms that greenhouse gas pollution is a serious problem now and for future generations," EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said in a statement.

The move could allow the EPA to regulate greenhouse gases, but it's more likely that the Obama administration will use the action to prod Congress to pass regulations around a system to cap and then trade emissions so that they are gradually lowered.

Indeed, the EPA emphasized that the congressional route was preferred to EPA regulation. "Both President (Barack) Obama and Administrator Jackson have repeatedly indicated their preference for comprehensive legislation to address this issue and create the framework for a clean energy economy," the EPA said in its statement.

The EPA last month sent its proposal to the White House Office of Management and Budget, which reviewed and approved it. By law, the decision includes a 60-day public comment period before being finalized.

The EPA concluded that six greenhouse gases should be considered pollutants under the 1970 Clean Air Act, which is already used to curb emissions that cause acid rain, smog and soot.

Discussion to begin on regulation

But its declaration does not spell out how or what to regulate. Instead, the EPA and lawmakers are expected to begin that discussion.

Congress is considering imposing an economy-wide cap on greenhouse gas emissions along with giving industry the ability to trade emission allowances to mitigate costs. Legislation could be considered by the House before the August congressional recess.

The chairman of the Senate Environment Committee, Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., urged the EPA to use the Clean Air Act to start "cutting greenhouse gas emissions right now."

"However," she added, "the best and most flexible way to deal with this serious problem is to enact a market based cap and trade system, which will help us make the transition to clean energy and will bring us innovation and strong economic growth."

Potential health impacts from warming, EPA scientists said in their recommendations, include:

- longer and more severe heat waves;
- increased smog in some areas;
- dangerous flooding caused by stronger storms;

- and diseases, including malaria and dengue fever, related to flooding and warmer weather.

Jackson on Friday said curbing greenhouse gases fits in with Obama's call for "a low carbon economy" as well as lawmakers' actions toward clean energy and climate legislation. "This pollution problem has a solution," she said, "one that will create millions of green jobs and end our country's dependence on foreign oil."

Shift started with Supreme Court

The Bush administration refused to regulate greenhouse gases as a pollutant under the Clean Air Act, even though the U.S. Supreme Court in 2007 prodded the federal government to do so.

In his first week in office, Obama directed the EPA to review a decision by the Bush administration denying California and other states the right to control auto emissions, which, along with pollution from coal-fired power plants, are a major source of greenhouse gases.

Environmentalists praised the EPA move, but urged the administration to use the Clean Air Act until Congress comes up with a plan.

The EPA should be required "to follow up with standards under the Clean Air Act, the nation's most effective environmental law, to curb carbon pollution from our cars, power plants and other industrial sources," said David Doniger, climate policy director at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Frank O'Donnell, director of Clean Air Watch, said he expected federal limits on "emissions from the biggest sources, including power plants and motor vehicles."

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other industry lobbying groups oppose using the Clean Air Act to regulate emissions.

"It will require a huge cascade of (new clean air) permits" and halt a wide array of projects, from building coal plants to highway construction, including many at the heart of economic recovery plan, Bill Kovacs, a vice president for environmental issues at the chamber, said when the EPA's recommendations were made last month.

Other critics have noted that the Clean Air Act regulates any stationary source — from a gas station to a power plant — that emits more than 250 tons of a pollutant a year. That would place thousands of smaller sources under onerous federal rules, those critics say.

Supporters of stricter regulations say the Clean Air Act could be revised to exempt smaller sources and focus on large ones like power plants.

Some industry groups support a legislative approach focusing on cap and trade, but even there they are cautious.

"While regulation can be challenged in court if it oversteps precedent, legislation is for keeps," said Scott Segal, director of the Electric Reliability Coordinating Council, a power industry trade group. "Therefore, any legislative proposal on climate change must have reasonable timetables and targets, adequate cost containment, and must be sensitive to technological constraints and international competition."

Nations working on new treaty

The United States is under pressure to take some action on global warming in advance of negotiations on a new international treaty in December.

The Obama administration has vowed to step up participation, and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton even has a climate envoy.

The Bush administration refused to participate in the current treaty, the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, citing a lack of participation by developing countries and harm to the U.S. economy. In the late 1990s, during the Clinton administration, the Senate balked at ratifying the agreement.

Sustainable San Mateo County report highlights transportation projects

By Elizabeth Pfeffer, San Mateo County Times

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Friday, April 17, 2009

MILLBRAE — About \$1 billion in transportation projects over the next five years may serve as San Mateo County's path to environmental, economic and social prosperity, according to a new report.

Sustainable San Mateo County introduced the key findings of its annual "Sustainable Indicators" report Thursday on the platform of the Millbrae Caltrain Station — with periodic interruptions by passing diesel-powered commuter trains.

"When we get electric trains, they'll be much quieter. Right, Chuck?" Board of Supervisors President Mark Church yelled to Caltrain Chief Operating Officer Chuck Harvey over the noise.

The report, which also covers a range of local trends from education and water usage to unemployment, showed that San Mateo County had generally good air quality in 2008, earning an A from the American Lung Association.

However, the report also highlighted the negative effects of carbon dioxide emissions, which officials said are heading in the wrong direction. Pacific Gas and Electric Co., for example, has been generating less power from hydroelectric sources due to California's drought conditions, the report said.

Tyler Hammer, executive director of Sustainable San Mateo County, said the report serves as a useful blueprint for policymakers.

"We believe that what gets measured gets managed," he said.

Public-transit usage was at an all-time high in 2008, with the average weekday seeing about 130,000 riders, according to the report.

Federal, state and local agencies have committed to curbing emissions and dependency on fossil fuels and boosting public-transit usage through a variety of projects over the next five years, including the electrification of Caltrain, the establishment of a new ferry hub in Redwood City and the implementation of the Grand Boulevard Initiative on El Camino Real.

Electric trains eventually will reduce emissions by 80 percent to 90 percent over current levels, according to Sustainable San Mateo County. Caltrain also is planning to replace one-third of its bus fleet with low-emission vehicles, Harvey said.

While the report shows how the \$1 billion in transportation improvements will propel San Mateo County toward greater sustainability, some worry that the price is more than local agencies can bear.

Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, chairwoman of the SamTrans board of directors, used Thursday's news conference as an opportunity to point out the potential budget crisis SamTrans is facing, given its commitment to additional services.

"Without additional funding, the structural budget deficit will put us out of business in a few short years," she said.

The report will be available to the public online for the first time this year at "Sustainability Hub," a Web site that will be launched Tuesday to coincide with Earth Day. The site also will offer tips on leading a sustainable lifestyle and will house the Bay Area's first "green" jobs board.

Other highlights of the report include a major increase in solar panel installation, a decrease in gasoline consumption and improved children's health.

Some low points include fewer high school seniors meeting state university requirements, increasing beach closures due to poor water quality and longer waiting lists for homeless shelters.

Residents want more tests on fire debris after asbestos detected

By Peter Hegarty, Alameda Journal

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Friday, April 17, 2009

Some Alameda residents are calling on city officials to carry out more environmental tests on debris from last month's fire at the former U.S. Navy base after they said an independent laboratory found asbestos in a chunk that landed in a woman's front yard.

The piece blew a mile from the scene of the March 29 fire before it drifted down outside Denise Lai's Pacific Avenue home.

"It was like black snow," Lai said. "I had heavy, non-freeable asbestos in my yard. Can you imagine what was landing between my property and the fire?"

City officials said they believed the debris does not pose a health hazard after they met Monday with representatives from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and other agencies. But officials also pledged to investigate any reports from residents who have safety concerns.

"The amount of debris that possibly contained asbestos was minimal," Fire Chief Dave Kapler said. "And asbestos isn't easily released into the air unless it's broken up or something else happens to it."

Officials this week were waiting for the final report from the air quality district.

The agency noted that it did not receive any complaints during the fire from nearby residents, despite about a 7 mile-per-hour wind blowing ash and debris westward, according to its initial report.

The two-alarm fire gutted the former military storage facility and burned for about 19 hours before it was extinguished.

The three-story structure was vacant since the late 1990s and did not have electrical power or utilities. Youths frequently broke into the property for parties, painted graffiti and committed other vandalism.

Just hours before the blaze firefighters responded to two smaller "nuisance" fires at the 63-year-old building.

The cause of the fire remains unknown.

Investigators consider it suspicious, however, Fire Marshall Ken Rankin said.

After the fire began, flames could be seen from as far away as the Oakland hills, where Kapler said residents called 911, thinking the fire was at Jack London Square.

Oakland firefighters were the first on the scene, the chief said.

Alameda residents reported falling ash and debris as far away as Otis Drive, a road which links the city's main Island with Bay Farm Island and Oakland International Airport.

The drifting smoke led firefighters to issue a health advisory for everyone within a mile east of the building as they worked to contain the blaze.

Lai said she had debris that landed in her front yard tested by the Western Analytical Laboratory, which is based in Arleta.

The piece, measuring about 2 inches by 1 inch, contained about 10 percent non-freeable asbestos, according to the report. It came from the building's roof.

"The fear is that, even though it's non-freeable asbestos, it will be disturbed and broken apart and then it gets free," said Liz Williams, who lives on a houseboat near the scene. "And then it becomes microscopic particles and gets into people's lungs."

EPA: El Toro toxic runoff poses no risk to Irvine residents

Authorities say removal of TCE plume is proceeding as planned.

By Sean Emery
The Orange County Register, Friday, April 17, 2009

IRVINE-The Environmental Protection Agency has determined that toxic runoff from the former El Toro Air base poses no threat to nearby residents, backing the city and water district's contention that ongoing cleanup efforts are proceeding as planned.

City officials hope the EPA's determination will allay concern about the toxic plume, which resulted from more than 30 years use of a solvent with trichloroethylene, or TCE, which was later found to be a carcinogen. The removal of the TCE is among a handful of cleanup projects making way for the Great Park and adjacent development.

Authorities have continually assured residents that the plume, which extends under the base and nearby Woodbridge neighborhoods, is too far down and too low a concentration to pose a real health risk. The plume ranges in depth from about 150 feet under the base to 300 to 1,000 feet under Woodbridge, according to Irvine Ranch Water District estimates.

A small but vocal group of skeptics have questioned the effectiveness of the cleanup, however, including several former Marines and El Toro commercial airport proponents who in a series of online articles and e-mails accused local leaders of covering up the scope of the contamination.

The EPA, in a recently released letter to the city, noted that the current cleanup effort is going as expected. The Navy and the Irvine Ranch Water District have created a system to extract the contaminated water and treat it at a nearby desalter plant, where the TCE is filtered out and disposed.

Once stripped of the TCE, the water is used for irrigation. The Navy is footing the bill for the project, which is expected to cost more than \$30 million and last decades.

IRWD officials say that no detectable levels of TCE have been found in Irvine's water supply. Trace amounts of TCE were found in a well near Santa Ana, but the water never made it to the drinking water system, IRWD officials say, and the contamination is believed to be linked to an industrial use in Santa Ana, not El Toro.

Responding to concerns from some cleanup critics that TCE vapor could drift into the homes above the plume, EPA officials claimed that their own monitoring of the contamination shows the TCE to be too low a concentration to pose a risk to air quality. The EPA noted that the risk of TCE vapor comes when contaminants are at the top of a water table, rather than deeper down, such as the TCE plume.

At Tuesday's City Council meeting, Councilman Larry Agran said the city spent "significant" time and resources investigating the cleanup critics' claims.

"But just because somebody makes an allegation, doesn't necessarily mean there is a sound basis to it," Agran said.

Bill Turner, a past critic of the cleanup who runs eltoronow.com , said that after meeting with water district staff and seeing the new information he currently believes Irvine's water "is safe, and always was safe."

"They make some good arguments about how the homes are safe from vapor intrusion," Turner said. "However, if I owned a house over that plume, I would like it tested just to be sure."

The EPA findings come as Navy officials work to complete a five-year review of their efforts to clean-up an air base that was once considered one of the nation's most contaminated military installations.

The cleanup encompasses both city-owned Great Park land and the adjacent areas owned by Lennar Corp. which plans to build residential, commercial and industrial developments around the park. Along with the TCE cleanup, the Navy is also dealing with leaks from aging sewer systems and the capping of old landfills.

The Navy expects to complete a draft version of the five-year cleanup review next month, said Debra Theroux, co-chair of the El Toro Restoration Advisory Board.

Pa. agency wants air quality study at W.Pa plant

The Associated Press

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Friday, April 17, 2009

SHIPPINGPORT, Pa.—The Pennsylvania Department of Health has recommended an air quality study around a western Pennsylvania coal-fired power plant to see if emissions are causing health risks.

FirstEnergy Corp.'s Bruce Mansfield plant has failed federal air-quality standards for more than a decade and is listed as a "high-priority violator" by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Residents have complained for years that the plant's pollution has caused illnesses ranging from cancer to hair loss.

The DEP made its recommendation Wednesday. FirstEnergy says it will comply with any testing the state wants.

Lisa Graves-Marcucci, who represents an environmental group that's suing FirstEnergy, says the testing is overdue.

[Washington Post Editorial, Friday, April 17, 2009:](#)

The EPA Readies a Hammer

Jolting Congress into action on greenhouse gases

As soon as next week, the Environmental Protection Agency could follow through on an order from the Supreme Court to either declare carbon dioxide a pollutant or to say why it isn't. That decision could usefully signal to the world that the United States is serious about regulating greenhouse gas emissions. But it should also send a shiver down Congress's collective spine. Because the regulation of carbon will have a profound effect on the American economy, this vital task should be the responsibility of Congress, not of unelected officials at the EPA.

The EPA does have the authority under the Clean Air Act to regulate air pollutants that have "effects on [public] welfare," "on . . . weather, . . . and climate, . . . as well as effects on . . . personal comfort and well-being." Emitted greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide, will have such effects. The Supreme Court's 2007 ruling in Massachusetts v. EPA affirmed this when the majority concluded that the EPA had the authority to control emissions from motor vehicle tailpipes and ordered the agency to issue an endangerment finding. Then-EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson was close to doing so on the basis of public welfare, but he opted for another public comment period after intense pressure from the Bush administration.

The probable and impending endangerment finding by current EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson would fulfill the court's mandate and then require Ms. Jackson to devise regulations for the transportation sector. But having declared greenhouse gases a pollutant, the agency would have to set about the long process of regulating such gases from all other sources as well. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce expresses concern about the impact of such regulation on the construction industry, because residential and commercial buildings are larger sources of global-warming pollution than are motor vehicles. Rep. John D. Dingell (D-Mich.), then-chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, predicted last year that seeking to control climate change with such piecemeal regulation would lead to a "glorious mess."

The best way to stop this from happening is for Congress to adopt a more rational scheme, by putting a price on carbon with a tax (ideally) or a cap-and-trade market. Next week, Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.), the current chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, will hold hearings on the discussion draft of comprehensive energy legislation that he and Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), chairman of the energy and environment subcommittee, released before the Easter recess. While the proposal details many ambitious programs for renewable energy and efficiency, it is noticeably mute on the contours of a cap-and-trade system. Specifically, it doesn't

say whether the pollution allowances would be auctioned or a portion given away to industry to ease the transition to a carbon-constrained economy. This is an important question, one whose answer will have a profound impact on the way Americans live -- one of many basic issues that should be settled by their representatives in Congress.

[Visalia Times Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Editorial, Friday, April 17, 2009:](#)
Tulare Cheers

There are many reasons to cheer Tulare people and businesses. We give Tulare Cheers to the following:

- Cheers to Terry Bessinger's fifth-grade class at Buena Vista School for winning the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's Kids for Clean Air contest.
- Cheers to all who participated in the planting of trees along J Street to preserve Tulare's status as a Tree City USA.
- Cheers to the Mattos family at Four Star Dairy, which beat high odds by overseeing the birth of quadruplet calves this week (though only three survived).
- Cheers to the children preparing for the Tulare County 4-H Fair, which continues over the next three weekends.
- Cheers to the percussionists from Tulare Union High School, Tulare Western High School, Cherry Avenue Middle School, Mulcahy Middle School, Los Tules Middle Schools and Sundale Union School who will perform at tonight's Drum Fest 2009. The event starts at 7 p.m. at the Tulare Union High School gym.

[Fresno Bee Smog Blog, Thursday, April 16, 2009:](#)
IPod Shuffles and healthier air all around

By Mark Grossi

The local air district today handed out hundreds of iPod Shuffles to schoolchildren who persuaded people to sign pledges honoring the tough, new fireplace burning restrictions.

Officials said the iPods were part of a successful campaign to raise public awareness and lower PM-2.5 levels, which officials say have dropped dramatically in the last six years.

I own an iPod Shuffle that cost \$50. It's great for downloading National Public Radio broadcasts. Children use them for popular music.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District found a discount. The cost for 800 Shuffles was about \$23,000, officials said. Does anyone have a problem with spending that much money on iPods?

The campaign featured far more than schoolchildren and iPods, though. The publicity reached into radio, television and print media. The district even got a boost from Duraflame, which chipped in more than \$100,000. The manufactured Duraflame logs burn much cleaner than regular wood.

Back to the reductions. Since 2005, the number of unhealthy days in the Valley dropped from 62 to 14, according to district numbers. The PM-2.5 peaks on the worst days have dropped nearly 40% in Fresno.

The public has bought into the idea of cleaning wood smoke out of the Valley on stagnant winter days, officials say. At the same time, health studies show people still have lung problems even with much lower levels of PM-2.5.

[Letter to the Bakersfield Californian, Friday, April 17, 2009:](#)
We will miss Big West

This is in response to the Community Voices article by Nelson Castro ("Some options for Big West refinery," March 3).

What began as a distant Mohawk refinery in the 1930s would evolve as a major processor in Kern County's 100-year legacy as a prodigious petroleum resource.

However, today the NIMBYs have won. The Kern County Planning Department got off on a sour note in March 2007 when they villified, via The Californian, Flying J's Clean Fuels modernization/expansion, specifically citing air quality (reactive organic gases and nitrogen oxides, which contribute to ozone and more particulate matter in the air), hazardous materials located at the site, and traffic on Rosedale Highway.

In the two years hence, Flying J's Clean Fuels project has raised more eyebrows and outcries perceiving the use of HF (Hydrofluoric Acid) alkylation as a threat to public safety (but can be safely contained, according to Nelson Castro).

It's ironic that a company with such good intentions of modernization and efficiently processing Kern County's richest resource -- euphemized as "black gold" -- into clean-burning, cheaper fuels is demonized to the point of near extinction.

Too bad that one of California's largest refineries is shutting down and none to replace it. Too bad that we could be looking at fuel shortages, higher prices and possibly long lines at the pumps, a la 1973.

But there is hope. Could we be looking at new competition for the Northwest Promenade? Let's call it the Big West Promenade.

J. B. Selvidge, Bakersfield

[Letter to the Modesto Bee, Friday, April 17, 2009:](#)

Riverbank Earth Day event great fun

I was extremely disappointed in the lack of coverage at Riverbank's annual Beyond Earth Day. This is the third year of the event, and it has become one of the premier Earth Day events in Stanislaus County.

This year's event included an H2O Splash-off, at which Riverbank tap water was pitted against French and American bottled water. In a blind taste test, attendees selected Riverbank tap water by a 2-to-1 margin. Seedlings were given away, as were coffee grounds for compost. Individuals signed a carbon footprint pledge board; alternative fuel vehicles were on display and prizes were given to winners of the Earth Day recycling poster contest. The contest had more than 1,500 entries.

Wheels of fortune were spun for energy saving light bulbs and children could make their own tomato plant with compost. Air quality, fuel emissions, a bike rodeo, entertainment with an environmental twist and valuable information was available for free to the public.

*Rich Holmer
City Manager, City of Riverbank*

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses climate change workshop. Galapagos will be the site for an international workshop on the effects of climate change. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Taller sobre efecto climático

EFE

El Diario NY, Friday, April 17, 2009

Quito/EFE — El archipiélago ecuatoriano Galápagos será la sede de un taller internacional que analizará los efectos del cambio climático para el ser humano y para las islas, informaron hoy los organizadores en un comunicado.

El encuentro se realizará del 20 al 24 de este mes y se enmarca en el proyecto Análisis de Vulnerabilidad y un Plan de Adaptación al Cambio Climático en las Islas Galápagos, que desarrollan conjuntamente el Ministerio del Ambiente, el Parque Nacional Galápagos,

Conservación Internacional de Ecuador, el Fondo Mundial por la Naturaleza (WWF) y la Fundación Charles Darwin (FCD).

De acuerdo con un comunicado del Ministerio del Ambiente, el taller analizará la vulnerabilidad de la biodiversidad y del bienestar humano en Galápagos ante el cambio climático.

El evento congregará a destacados oceanógrafos, biólogos, climatólogos, manejadores de áreas protegidas, sociólogos y economistas, entre otros, así como a varias instituciones y usuarios locales, detalla el boletín.

Uno de los objetivos de los científicos será definir las medidas de adaptación y las acciones prioritarias a tomar para enfrentar los efectos del fenómeno climatológico y la generación de recomendaciones para proteger la biodiversidad y preparar a la sociedad local.

"Galápagos tiene condiciones únicas en el mundo para medir los impactos del cambio climático en la biodiversidad y sistemas socio-económicos. Estos impactos afectarán, de manera directa, la forma de vida de las comunidades locales, que dependen del turismo, la pesca y la agricultura", explica el texto.

Las Islas Galápagos deben su nombre a las grandes tortugas que la habitan, y sus reservas terrestre y marina contienen una rica biodiversidad, considerada como un laboratorio natural, que permitió al científico británico Charles Darwin desarrollar su teoría sobre la evolución y selección natural de las especies.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses a green corridor for Los Angeles, a project that will be established along the Los Angeles River. A new partnership with Clean Tech LA and a coalition formed by various universities, businesses and local municipal government propose to create thousands of green jobs.](#)

Un corredor verde para Los Ángeles

Anuncian alianza para promover la tecnología limpia

Isaías Alvarado

La Opinión, Friday, April 17, 2009

Convertir a Los Ángeles en un laboratorio que integre al cuidado ambiental con el desarrollo económico es el propósito de una coalición que ayer formaron varias universidades, grupos empresariales y el gobierno municipal.

La alianza Tecnología Limpia para la ciudad o Clean Tech LA, forma parte del proyecto denominado Nuevo Corredor Ecológico, localizado a lo largo del río Los Ángeles, el cual busca atraer empresas "verdes" y crear miles de empleos de ese tipo.

Quienes se sumaron al "sueño" de transformar esta metrópoli en la "capital de la tecnología ecológica" fueron el Ayuntamiento, la Universidad de California en Los Ángeles (UCLA), la Universidad del Sur de California (USC), el Instituto Tecnológico de California (Cal Tech), la Cámara de Comercio del Área de Los Ángeles, entre otros.

La principal misión de dicha alianza es colocar al municipio a la vanguardia en el alcance, comercialización, producción y despliegue de tecnologías limpias, así como promover el desarrollo de capital y fuerza de trabajo.

"Es importante invertir nuestro capital intelectual en programas que mejoren la calidad de vida", mencionó Gene Block, rector de USC.

Un día después de su informe anual de gobierno, donde se comprometió a continuar impulsando políticas favorables al medio ambiente, el alcalde Antonio Villaraigosa aseguró que el éxito de una metrópoli se halla en la innovación que en ella se implemente.

"Todavía no somos la ciudad más limpia del país, pero somos la que va más lejos y más rápido" en ese proceso, subrayó el edil, luciendo una corbata, precisamente, verde.

La integración de las tres universidades más importantes de la región impulsará al mismo tiempo la competitividad de esta zona, en un mercado global que cambia rápidamente, recalcó Jean-Lou Chameau, presidente de Cal Tech LA.

El rector de USC confió de igual manera que el fuerte bloque científico integrado por las instituciones superiores traerá un mejor panorama a Los Ángeles. "Tenemos un cúmulo de facultades que se encuentran a la delantera nacional e internacionalmente en la investigación de paneles solares, celdas de hidrógeno, nanotecnología y muchos otros campos importantes para el desarrollo de tecnología limpia en el sector empresarial", dijo.

En la conferencia también se presentó la página electrónica de la alianza: www.cleantechla.org.

En cuanto a la energía solar, tras la derrota en las urnas de la Medida B en marzo pasado, el plan de energía alternativa de la Alcaldía, que plantea instalar 1.3 gigawatts de energía solar —equivalente al 10% de la demanda de electricidad de los próximos 11 años— se implementará "muy pronto", anticipó también el alcalde Villaraigosa.

La Medida B pretendía captar recursos público para que el Departamento de Agua y Energía municipal (DWP) produjera 400 megawatts de energía solar. El alcalde consideró "un crimen" que actualmente sólo se generen 12 megawatts de este tipo de energía, en una ciudad con tantos días soleados.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the CO2 emissions created by spam mail is equivalent to the emissions created by 3 million automobiles.

Correos basura producen tanto CO2 como 3 millones de automóviles

Periódico de Mexico, Friday, April 17, 2009

PARIS, (AFP) - Los correos indeseables, conocidos como "spam" y que inundan los buzones electrónicos, producen cada año tanto dióxido de carbono (CO2) como 3,1 millones de automóviles, según un estudio de la sociedad McAfee, especializada en la seguridad informática.

Según el informe, que analizó el "impacto ecológico" de 62.000 millones de correos basura enviados en el mundo en 2008, "el spam consume 33.000 millones de kilovatios/hora (Kwh)" al cabo de las cinco etapas de su vida: creación, envío, recepción, almacenamiento y consulta.

Esto equivale al consumo de 2,4 millones de hogares estadounidenses, con emisiones de gas de efecto invernadero equivalentes a las producidas por 3,1 millones de automóviles, precisó McAfee.

La selección, la visualización y la supresión de dichos mensajes por internautas, así como la búsqueda de los correos "legítimos" interceptados por Error por los filtros instalados en los ordenadores, representan casi un 80% del consumo de energía vinculado al "spam".

El filtrado efectuado por los fabricantes de antivirus vale por un 16%, operación "útil, pero que sería más eficaz si el problema fuese tratado desde sus propios orígenes", según el estudio.

Fundamentado su afirmación, el estudio cita el ejemplo de un sitio web (McColo) conocido por su importante contribución a esta plaga, cuyo cierre en noviembre de 2008 permitió disminuir, de un día para otro, en un 70% el volumen mundial de correo basura. Es decir, como si se hubiesen retirado de la circulación 2,2 millones de automóviles.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses actor Wilmer Valderrama is an ecologist. As part of his promise to the environment, he helped plant trees in New York as part of creating awareness in reducing the wasteful impact on the environment.

Wilmer Valderrama el ecológico

Ayudó a plantar árboles en Nueva York

EFE

Univision, Friday, April 17, 2009

NUEVA YORK - El actor de origen venezolano Wilmer Valderrama mostró su compromiso con el medio ambiente al ayudar a un grupo de niños de Nueva York a plantar árboles en un jardín comunitario de la ciudad.

Manos a la obra

La voz del protagonista de la popular serie de dibujos "Handy Manny" ("Manny a la obra" en Latinoamérica y "Manny Manitas" en España) pasó así la mañana con escolares neoyorquinos en uno de los seiscientos jardines que Nueva York destina al uso público.

"Nuestro planeta es maravilloso y en él viven animales demasiado bonitos como para dañarlo", dijo durante el acto Valderrama, quien añadió que "el hombre no debería ser la causa por la que la evolución natural de la Tierra se viera alterada".

El actor, que posó sonriente junto al conocido "Manitas" que da nombre a la serie infantil, añadió que para reducir el impacto sobre el medio ambiente apaga la luz cuando no la necesita, controla el uso del agua cuando se ducha, recicla y utiliza electrodomésticos de bajo consumo.

"Lo que hagamos ahora tendrá consecuencias en el futuro, así que debemos esforzarnos para mejorar el desarrollo medioambiental", destacó Valderrama, conocido también por su papel de Fez en la serie estadounidense "That 70s Show".

Además, junto a representantes de la alcaldía y estudiantes neoyorquinos, el joven actor de origen venezolano se impregnó las manos de pintura verde y plasmó sus huellas en uno de los muros del jardín comunitario.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses transportation: President Obama announces strategic plan for high speed trains in the U.S.](#)

TRANSPORTE: Obama anuncia plan estratégico para impulsar trenes de alta velocidad en EEUU

Impacto USA, Thursday, April 16, 2009

Washington, 16 abr (EFE).- El presidente de EE.UU., Barack Obama, anunció hoy un plan estratégico para impulsar una red de trenes de alta velocidad que requerirá una inversión inicial de 8.000 millones de dólares y 1.000 millones anuales durante al menos cinco años.

Junto a su vicepresidente, Joe Biden, y al secretario de Transporte, Ray LaHood, Obama expuso los detalles del plan, que busca reducir la dependencia de los automóviles y estimular el desarrollo económico.

Según el mandatario, se prevén dos tipos de proyectos. Uno crearía nuevos corredores para trenes de alta velocidad del tipo que se han creado ya en Francia, España y en Japón, y otro implicaría incrementar la velocidad de líneas ferroviarias ya existentes.

La estrategia de Obama requiere de entrada una inversión de 8.000 millones de dólares, procedentes del paquete de recuperación y reinversión, y 1.000 millones anuales durante al menos cinco años, inversión que ya figura en el proyecto de presupuestos del ejercicio fiscal de 2010.

El plan del Gobierno de EE.UU. identifica diez posibles corredores de alta velocidad que podrían recibir fondos federales.

Las líneas ferroviarias que Obama quiere construir se centran sobre todo en el corredor del lado este del país, aunque también aparecen dos en la costa del Pacífico.

El Gobierno también concederá fondos para el Corredor Noreste (NEC) -desde Washington a Boston- con el fin de mejorar la única red de alta velocidad existente actualmente en el país.

La Administración Federal del Ferrocarril comenzará a adjudicar a finales del verano las primeras ayudas, indicó la Casa Blanca.

La primera ronda de adjudicaciones se centrará en proyectos que pueden ser rápidamente puestos en práctica, mientras que la segunda incluye corredores enteros ya planificados, y después habrá fondos adicionales para corredores que aún no pueden ser iniciados.

La visión de Obama sobre una red ferroviaria de alta velocidad es, según la Casa Blanca, un espejo de la del presidente Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1961), padre del sistema de autopistas interestatales, las cuales revolucionaron la manera en la que los estadounidenses viajaban por carretera.

El mandatario considera que los trenes de alta velocidad tienen el potencial de reducir la dependencia de EE.UU. del petróleo extranjero, reducir las emisiones de dióxidos de carbono, impulsar el desarrollo económico y ofrecer a los viajeros más opciones.

"Mi plan ferroviario de alta velocidad conllevará innovaciones que cambiarán la manera en la que viajamos en EE.UU. Tenemos que comenzar a desarrollar un transporte limpio y eficiente desde el punto de vista energético que definirá a nuestras regiones para los próximos siglos", indicó Obama.

El presidente añadió que la creación de una gran red de alta velocidad "generará muchos miles de empleos en la construcción durante varios años y puestos permanentes y una mayor actividad económica en los puntos de destino".

Con el anuncio del plan, Obama cumple parte de una promesa electoral de realizar la mayor inversión en infraestructuras en el país desde la década de 1950, para crear millones de empleos y reactivar la economía.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Presidents Obama and Calderon have agreed on a collaboration effort to work on climate change.](#)

Acuerdan Obama y Calderón marco de cooperación sobre cambio climático

Frontera Info, Thursday, April 16, 2009

MÉXICO, D.F.(Agencias) El presidente de Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, y su colega mexicano, Felipe Calderón, anunciaron un acuerdo marco sobre energía y cambio climático que permitirá el intercambio de información y cooperación técnica y política.

El acuerdo marco se centrará en áreas como las energías renovables, la eficiencia energética, el uso de bosques y tecnología de carbón limpio, entre otras, indicó la Casa Blanca.