

Public Meetings

Lodi News Sentinel, Monday, April 6, 2009

Tuesday

Galt City Council

Key items:

- Discuss agreement with Galt Joint Union School District to take over services provided by the Boys and Girls Club.
- Adopt final General Plan 2030 policy document.
- Consider increasing utility rates.
- Consider a 2.5 percent cost of living increase for the Galt Public Services Unit.
When and where: 7 p.m., Galt City Hall, Council chambers, 380 Civic Drive, Galt.

Lodi City Council shirtsleeve

Key item:

- Receive an update on the Lodi Energy Center.
When and where: 7 a.m., Carnegie Forum, 305 W. Pine St., Lodi.

Lodi Unified School District board

Key items:

- Budget reductions.
- Notice of Completion for Lodi High School's new gymnasium/cafeteria expansion project.
When and where: 7 p.m., McNair High School, 9550 Ronald E. McNair Way, Stockton.

San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors

Key items:

- Oral report on Delta water activities and legislation with possible board direction.
- [Oral presentation by Seyed Sadredin, air pollution control officer with the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District.](#)
- Agreement for consulting engineering services for the Thornton community improvements study.
- Approve plans for the Flag City streets resurfacing project.
- Request exemption from the hiring freeze to fill the children's services administrator.
- Oral presentation on the county's new Web site.
- Appointments to the Harmony Grove Church Advisory Committee in Lockeford.
When and where: 9 a.m., courthouse, 222 E. Weber Ave., seventh floor, Stockton.

Water plan to let MWD buy Salton Sea source

By Michael Gardner, U-T Sacramento Bureau

San Diego Union-Tribune, Monday, April 6, 2009

SACRAMENTO – Six years ago, a historic deal to share Colorado River water was celebrated with barely a wave of recognition to one of its more obscure provisions.

But that section looms large today.

If put into effect, the plan could bring an additional 700,000 acre-feet to Southern California over the next 10 years – roughly equivalent to building a temporary reservoir without investing a dime in concrete.

Further, the deal could generate about \$166 million to help restore the slowly dying Salton Sea and rejuvenate the depressed Imperial Valley economy.

But with all of its promise, the proposal has pitfalls. The plan would shrink the sea and create more blown dust, which has been linked to high rates of childhood asthma.

There is also the possibility that state taxpayers could be liable for repairing long-term environmental harm caused by a large water transfer.

Nevertheless, leading California water interests, including the San Diego County Water Authority, are quietly working to advance the plan as widespread water rationing draws closer to becoming reality.

The provision was crafted as part of the seven-state agreement that reallocated water out of the Colorado River and set parameters for Imperial Valley farmers to sell some supplies to the San Diego region.

At the same time, deal-makers required that the Imperial Irrigation District fallow enough land so that a predetermined amount of water would flow to the shrinking Salton Sea, a hypersaline wildlife haven straddling Imperial and Riverside counties.

That's where the little-noticed section of the pact comes into play.

To solidify support for the broader deal, language was inserted allowing the Metropolitan Water District to buy the water that the Imperial district is being required to send to the sea to keep up water levels and protect fish and wildlife.

In return, Metropolitan will pay for programs designed to minimize air-quality problems and repair other environmental impacts associated with the plan.

If launched this year, a long-shot possibility, the plan would funnel \$166 million to projects along the sea that have been stalled by state budget problems.

Metropolitan's water take would be delivered incrementally, capped at a cumulative 700,000 acre-feet – enough for 1.3 million households for a year.

“The sooner the decision can be made, the better,” said Roger Patterson, Metropolitan's representative in the talks.

New supplies are essential, say the water agencies involved. In two weeks, the Los Angeles-based wholesaler is expected to impose mandatory rationing on its customers, including the San Diego County Water Authority.

“Metropolitan is interested in having as much water as possible going to the coast. The more water Metropolitan has, the better situation we are in,” said Halla Razak, who monitors Colorado River issues for the San Diego authority.

Much is at stake inland. There, officials in Imperial and Riverside counties are trying to develop the sea as a recreation destination and geothermal energy production hub. A new agreement could lift a legal yoke from some farmers who have been required to fallow land to send water to the sea.

“The whole process can only benefit us,” said Andy Horne, who oversees natural resources development issues for Imperial County.

Developers have been cautious, waiting to determine whether the state will implement its \$8.9 billion, 75-year blueprint to revitalize the lake, California's largest. The undertaking would create a lake about one-fifth the size for boating, swimming and fishing. More than 60,000 acres of marshland would be set aside, and the salt would be isolated in a sectioned-off part of the sea.

The nearly two-year-old restoration plan has not yet caught on even among the most water-aware lawmakers, who are preoccupied with the drought, water bonds that could pay for new dams, and the potential collapse of the economically and environmentally vital Sacramento Delta.

“Our issues are equally as important, yet have taken a back seat,” said Brian Brady, general manager of the Imperial Irrigation District. “Even before this latest financial meltdown the state has been really dithering around with it.”

The administration of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger must sign off on the new water proposal, but his Natural Resources Agency secretary, Mike Chrisman, remains uncommitted until some issues, particularly the state's future liability, are resolved.

Key parties, including the San Diego authority, did commit up to \$133 million for environmental improvement programs directly associated with the previous river-sharing deal. But that sum might not cover the price tag of those programs. If that occurs, the additional cost would fall on the state, Chrisman said.

Funding remains the top obstacle, Chrisman said.

"It's going to be a hard sell," he said.

That's why the proposal involving Metropolitan buying water and paying for some mitigation is being pursued so aggressively, say those involved.

"It could be a real trigger point" for revitalizing the sea, said Horne, who was a key part of the original river-sharing debate as an Imperial Irrigation District director.

That doesn't sway clean-air advocates, already disturbed by large amounts of dust blowing off the shore.

"This would be just making the scenario worse," said Luis Lechuga, who monitors Imperial Valley issues for the American Lung Association of California. "We're not closed off to any proposal, but we do have serious concerns."

On the surface, the new Metropolitan water sale does not seem to offer benefits to the Imperial Valley.

But the proposal is attracting support there because it could overturn the original river-sharing requirement that some land be left unplanted to create more water for the sea. Currently, 20,000 acres are idle, costing laborers their jobs and businesses their sales.

The district says investing in water-saving practices would conserve the same amount of water sent to the sea that could be used for farming.

"Fallowing land doesn't create jobs," Brady said. "Planting does."

Beijing extends limits on car use for cleaner air

Associated Press

In the S.F. Chronicle, USA Today, Contra Costa Times and other papers, Monday, April 6, 2009

BEIJING, China (AP) -- China's capital announced a year's extension for traffic restrictions aimed at reducing congestion and improving air quality — a lighter version of rules launched to clean up Beijing for the Olympics.

The measures take a fifth of the city's 3.61 million vehicles off roads each weekday, according to the Beijing Traffic Management Bureau.

The restrictions were first announced in October following public debate over whether to extend traffic restrictions that helped keep skies clear during the 2008 Beijing Olympics. They were set to expire at the end of this week.

The traffic bureau said on its Web site Sunday that the capital will continue to keep a third of government vehicles off the road altogether.

The remaining government cars, together with privately owned vehicles, will still be banned from roads one day a week on a rotation basis according to license plate numbers, the traffic bureau said. The restrictions, which come into effect in the coming week, do not apply on weekends.

Police wagons, emergency vehicles, buses and taxis will continue to be exempt from the restrictions.

During the Olympics, half of Beijing's 3.3 million private vehicles were taken off the road on alternate days depending on whether their license plates ended in odd or even numbers. Those curbs were lifted in September.

The scheme during the games gave Beijing's 17 million residents a chance to experience clear summer skies as the city recorded its lowest August pollution levels in 10 years.

PUC to put SDG&E power-cutoff plan to public Fire-weather proposal set for 2 local hearings

By Onell R. Soto

San Diego Union-Tribune, Sunday, April 5, 2009

After months of listening to telephone companies, water districts and disability-rights advocates criticize a plan to cut off power to parts of San Diego County during fire weather, state regulators are set to hear from the public.

The California Public Utilities Commission will consider opinions from residents this week on whether to approve a controversial proposal that San Diego Gas & Electric says will reduce the risk of fire when the weather is dry and windy.

"Everybody's worried about it," said Lisa Darroch, a Jamul mother who is worried about children being in school without power or communication on hot days. "What's going to happen to our kids?"

Darroch plans to testify at a hearing in Alpine on Tuesday night. A second hearing is scheduled for Wednesday in Valley Center

The plan could affect nearly 150,000 people, including residents of Fallbrook, Escondido, Poway, Lakeside, Ramona and Alpine.

Power would not likely be cut to all the fire-prone areas at once, but only in areas where risk is the highest, SDG&E spokeswoman Stephanie Donovan said. That would translate to one or two power shut-offs a year, affecting about 10,000 homes and businesses, she said.

Visitors to SDG&E's Web site will be able to monitor conditions at 17 weather stations, each corresponding to an area of the county facing shut-off, Donovan said.

Power would be cut when the National Weather Service declares a red-flag warning; humidity is below 21 percent; moisture in dead plants is 10 percent or less and in living plants 75 percent or less; and sustained winds are above 34 mph or are gusting above 54 mph, with sustained winds above 29 mph.

The shut-offs, lasting up to 72 hours, are needed to prevent power lines from arcing in high winds and sparking massive wildfires of the sort that swept through the county in 2003 and 2007, Donovan said.

SDG&E is lobbying for regulatory approval; executives visited PUC officials in San Francisco last week to tout the plan.

Opponents have raised a variety of concerns in recent filings with the PUC.

School officials said they would have to cancel classes if they don't have electricity. Disability advocates said people who rely on power for medical equipment would have health problems.

Water districts warned they would be unable to pump water for firefighters, and recalled how Ramona residents were not allowed back home for a week after the 2007 fires because a crucial pumping station lacked power.

AT&T said cell phone and land-line service would be lost after a few hours – even outside the affected area – as backup batteries run out of juice. And cable companies said people would lose a link to the outside world, television and the Internet.

All of them said they would face increased costs as a result of SDG&E's proposals, whether from spending millions of dollars for diesel-powered generators or, in the case of schools, losing state funds because students miss class.

"I have never seen quite as broad a coalition uniformly opposed to an SDG&E proposal," said Michael Shames, executive director of UCAN, the nonprofit Utility Consumers' Action Network.

Shames said he's against the plan because it might increase fire risk rather than reduce it. People are more likely to use candles, cook with fire and mess up while using a generator if they don't have power, he said.

"SDG&E's solution actually worsens the problem," Shames said.

Additionally, power lines aren't the only cause of backcountry fires, so the threat continues even if the power is out. Shames also said that adding a bunch of backup generators could increase air pollution, something that regulators should consider in light of state environmental laws.

In a filing with state regulators, Shames said approval of SDG&E's shut-off plan would likely face a legal challenge.

If the company insists on cutting power, it should give backcountry residents solar-power systems with backup batteries, something that would also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, he said.

Shames also suggested that SDG&E charge customers less for power that they can't count on to be on all the time.

As with others, he would like the PUC to evaluate the possible costs of cutting power versus the benefits SDG&E cites.

"The cost-benefit analysis is so important," Shames said. "It helps guide the decision makers about which elements of SDG&E's plan make sense and which don't."

SDG&E officials don't see it that way.

"Even if the exact costs and burdens are not known, the citizens and ratepayers of the San Diego area cannot risk another catastrophic wildfire," Keith Melville, a company lawyer, wrote in a PUC filing. "This is not a cost-benefit debate for SDG&E; we consider it an issue of public safety."

SDG&E first proposed cutting off power last year, pulling back when the PUC said it would like to review the proposal and water districts sued. The lawsuit was dropped, but the districts say they are ready to go back to court if necessary.

The SDG&E proposal came as the company began mounting a legal defense from multimillion-dollar lawsuits from homeowners, government agencies and insurance companies, which blame it for starting massive wildfires in 2007.

Investigators with PUC determined that arcing from SDG&E lines was responsible for three of those fires, one of which also involved cables owned by Cox Communications.

SDG&E also is asking to reword Rule 14, which governs conditions under which it can cut power. Critics say that's so SDG&E won't face legal liability when it decides to pull the plug.

"In their effort to protect their liability and protect their costs, they're going to shift costs unreasonably on us," said Gary Arant, general manager of the Valley Center Municipal Water District.

To be ready for power outages, the district would have to spend \$3 million over the next three to five years, increasing rates to its customers, Arant said.

SDG&E, which doesn't plan to reimburse most customers for losses as a result of losing power, said that's not its problem. Power can go out at any time and customers should be ready, it said.

"SDG&E is not legally obligated to compensate any customer for costs of emergency preparedness," Melville wrote in the PUC filing.

Florez uses Web to announce lieutenant governor bid

Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, April 4, 2009

It was hardly new news -- but was delivered in a pretty new way -- when state Senate Majority Leader Dean Florez announced his bid for lieutenant governor Friday.

Florez, D-Shafter, did it via a live Web cast during which he also answered questions submitted from people throughout the state.

In his introduction and in answering queries, Florez highlighted his work on issues including farmworker safety, [air quality](#), food protections and keeping government accountable and efficient.

He vowed to continue working on those topics plus just about everything else from a "new" and "fresh" perspective: education, water supplies, animal welfare and jobs.

The number of people watching varied, according to an indicator on the site, but got up to about 100. You can learn more about Florez's candidacy at [Deanflorez.com](#).

It's always Earth Day at Connecticut trash museum

By Dave Collins, Associated Press Writer

USA Today, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Saturday, April 4, 2009

STRATFORD, Conn.—In a waterfront industrial area near the Bridgeport line, the trucks keep dumping trash and the school buses keep dumping children.

Eight-year-old Matt Carlucci is in awe as soon as he walks through the front door of The Garbage Museum, confronted immediately by a colorful, 12-foot-tall dinosaur made out of junk. "Trash-o-saurus" resembles something out of the animated movie "Robots."

Pennsylvania sculptor Leo Sewell, who grew up near a dump, fashioned the 24-foot-long piece out of old "no parking" signs, cell phones, shoes, license plates, sunglasses, plastic toys and anything else he could get his hands on. Visitors are given a list of things to find on the dinosaur, and it's no easy feat.

"It's pretty cool," Matt said during a trip with his third-grade class from Sherman, Conn., on a recent Friday. "All the garbage on it, how big it is and how much it weighs."

The sculpture is 2,000 pounds, representing the average amount of garbage and recyclables each person in Connecticut discards each year. Like all the exhibits, "Trash-o-saurus" was designed with the goal of teaching how important recycling is.

The museum opened in 1993 at the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority's recycling center in Stratford, "before 'green' was cool," a fact sheet says. About 32,200 people visited the museum and took part in its off-site programs last year, a record.

"We don't know of any other museums dedicated to garbage and recycling in the country," said Paul Nonnenmacher, a spokesman for the CRRRA, a quasi-public state trash agency.

The agency also operates a sister facility, The Trash Museum, in Hartford that drew more than 27,000 people last year.

Educators at the Stratford museum are preparing for upcoming Earth Day programs, but they consider every day to be Earth Day.

"What's exciting is the kids go home and tell their parents what they can recycle, said Sotiria Montanari, the museum's education supervisor.

While the dinosaur sculpture is popular, children have just as much fun in the viewing area over the center's sorting area, Montanari said. Trucks dump recyclables from 20 area towns, to the tune of 60,000 tons a year.

Huge piles of plastic bottles look made to jump into. Stacks of newspapers and cardboard fill another area. An assembly line of workers sorts the materials, which are crushed and sold as commodities to produce new products. Some buyers even make carpets and fleece jackets out of the recycled plastic, which can be turned into fibers.

Back down a flight of stairs near the dinosaur, children can play in a general store complete with a cash register, old cereal boxes and other reusable items.

An exhibit with stacked soda cans shows how making aluminum out of recycled materials creates 95 percent less air pollution and 97 percent less water pollution than mining bauxite.

Visitors can walk through the tunnel of a big, brown and plastic "composting pile" that has fake worms, bugs and pieces of fruits and vegetables sticking out of it. Educator Robin Bennett can show you a real composting pile, and how a special kind of worm eats the garbage and converts it into what looks like dirt. (Reality check: the "dirt" is mostly worm poop.)

The "Trash Bash" activity imprisons helmet-wearing contestants behind chain-link fence doors and makes them answer questions. If the answer is wrong, others are given the green light to dump trash on them from an overhead opening.

There are also art exhibits made from reusable stuff, including a life-size mannequin made from crushed and colored milk containers strung together with pipe cleaners.

And everything in the museum is cleaned once a year by a special cleaning company, Nonnenmacher said.

It all makes for a fun hour or two, but visitors say they also walk away with new knowledge and appreciation.

"You can see where all the garbage goes," said 10-year-old fifth-grader Brooke Hiatt of Milford. "You can see how and where it goes and the process of recycling stuff. I've learned that recycling is better than just wasting. If you waste, you can pollute your environment."

The CRRRA's trash trivia includes:

- The average American throws away 3.5 pounds of trash a day.
- Americans throw out 2.5 million plastic bottles every hour.
- The average American uses 650 pounds of paper a year.
- 1,500 aluminum cans are recycled every second in the United States.

Looming over all the good things at the museum is the chance it might have to close this year because of money problems. The recycling plant's long-term contracts with buyers just happen to be expiring June 30, at a time when commodity prices have plummeted because of the bad economy.

Museum officials have launched fundraising efforts, including a public call for donations and the selling of recycled glass tiles for \$50 apiece that can be personalized before being placed in a dinosaur wall mural.

The museum also started collecting \$2 entrance fees from visitors in September. Kids 3 and under free. A recent IRS ruling helped, making donations to the museum tax-deductible.

Information about the efforts to keep the museum open is being posted on the Web at

<http://savethegarbagemuseum.blogspot.com/>.

The CRRRA has even applied for federal stimulus funding, because it has a "shovel-ready" project that would upgrade and automate the recycling center.

Nonnenmacher said the museum will probably have enough money at the start of the new fiscal year on July 1 to run for a couple of months. What happens after that remains unclear. The museum needs \$200,000 to \$250,000 to operate each year.

"We're guardedly optimistic," Nonnenmacher said. "But people are starting to offer us help. We have got our finance people scrambling."

It's a scramble visitors hope succeeds.

"It's possibly one of the most important things to give to a child—teaching them the impact they have on the environment and the difference they can make just by themselves," said Joe Carlucci, father of recent visitor Matt Carlucci.

Slowdown's gift to Beijing: cleaner air

By TINI TRAN, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, USA Today, Contra Costa Times and other papers, Saturday, April 4, 2009

BEIJING, China (AP) -- Last summer, Xu Demin struggled to cut emissions from his coal-fired factories as part of China's all-out effort to clean the air for the Beijing Olympics.

He could have simply waited six months. This spring, overseas demand for his farming and construction machinery plummeted, forcing him to close two plants and lay off 300 workers.

The global economic slowdown is helping to accomplish what some in China's leadership have striven to do for years: rein in the insatiable demand for coal-powered energy that has fed the country's breakneck growth but turned it into one of the world's most polluted nations.

Beijing, China's normally smog-choked capital, is breathing some of its cleanest air in nearly a decade, as pollution-control efforts get a sizable boost from a slowing economy.

"It's like the sky I saw overseas. I can see clouds. I've seen days here like I've seen in Europe or the U.S.," Xu says, his voice echoing in the cavernous space of his idle factory outside Beijing.

An Associated Press analysis of government figures backs up his observations: In the second half of last year, a period that included the Olympics in August, Beijing recorded its lowest air pollution readings since 2000, according to data from the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

The average monthly air pollution index was 74, about 25 percent lower than the previous seven years. Earlier data were not available.

Experts see several reasons for the improvement, including the relocation of some of Beijing's dirtiest factories outside the city and the partial continuation of traffic limits imposed for the Olympics.

Perhaps most significant has been the economic downturn. Even elsewhere in China, where no Olympic pollution measures were imposed, the level of dirty air is down.

Chak Chan, who has published studies on China's air quality, warns the relief offered by the slump is temporary. "But if taken as an opportunity to do more in terms of energy efficiency and clean technology, then it can have a long-term effect in improving air quality," said Chan, a professor at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

For now, the cleaner air is a vindication of sorts for Beijing. China won its bid to host the Olympics partly on the promise that it would lead to a cleaner capital.

The government spent billions of dollars to clean up the air. It followed that spending with two months of drastic measures, temporarily shutting factories across five provinces, suspending

construction in the capital, and ordering drivers to idle their cars every other day from July to September.

The results were dramatic, with air pollution index hitting record lows in August and September. Viewers around the world watched some sporting events take place under crystal blue skies.

In an assessment released in February, the U.N. Environmental Program said carbon monoxide levels fell 47 percent and sulfur dioxide 38 percent during the two-week Olympics. Even Beijing's worst pollutant — tiny particles of dust, soot and aerosol known as particulate matter 10 — was reduced by 20 percent. The U.N. report praised China for investing in long-term solutions such as public transport, urban parks and renewable-energy vehicles.

City officials also kept some traffic limits in place after the Olympics. Car owners are banned from driving one day a week, depending on their license plate numbers.

Air pollution, while not as low as in August and September when the harshest restrictions were in place, has remained far below recent years. From October through February, the average monthly pollution index was 82.

On a recent sunny morning, Li Heng, 66, joined dozens of seniors in Beijing's Ritan Park for a daily round of tai chi, the slow breathing exercises.

"I think the air is much better recently. We can take very deep breaths and the air feels fresh," he said, inhaling and exhaling loudly before thumping his chest.

It's not just Beijing. Southern China, home to many of the country's export-producing factories, has seen clear improvement.

Many cities in Guangdong province, where 62,400 businesses closed last year, have seen a drop in the number of badly polluted days, according to data on the Guangdong Provincial Environmental Protection Bureau Web site.

For example, the factory city of Dongguan reported more than a dozen days in the first half of 2008 when the air pollution index topped 100, a level considered unhealthy for sensitive groups including infants and the elderly. But in the second half of the year, there were only two such days.

Not all cities saw improvements. But across a sampling of seven key cities, the average number of badly polluted days halved between the first and second half of 2008.

A similar phenomenon was seen when the Soviet Union collapsed, causing the industrial haze over the Arctic to drop by nearly 50 percent, said Kenneth Rahn, an atmospheric chemist from the University of Rhode Island who has studied air quality in China.

"In principle, a reduction in economic activity can and will reduce air pollution," he wrote in an e-mail response. "I would expect something similar for China but of lesser magnitude."

During boom times, demand for electricity was so high in Guangdong's Pearl River Delta that companies often endured rotating blackouts. Some installed their own generators, which burned low-grade, dirty fuel.

But since last fall, blackouts have been few, and generators are seldom used.

Environmental advocates say the downturn presents an opportunity for the government to move more aggressively to shut the dirtiest plants and enact stricter emissions regulations.

"The fact that the economy has slowed down has made it easier to stick to their plans to consolidate and close plants," said Deborah Seligsohn, director of the China climate program for the U.S.-based World Resources Institute.

Seligsohn said she is encouraged by the fact that China's \$586 billion economic stimulus plan includes funding for better technology and infrastructure that could benefit the environment.

In Guangdong, the slowdown could spur long-held plans to transform the region from dirty, labor-intensive manufacturing to cleaner high-tech industries.

Wang Xiaoming, director of communication for the Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau, said he hopes companies will take advantage of the slowdown to install more energy-efficient and cleaner technology.

"This period is an opportunity for each factory to adjust their production methods. If they were operating at full capacity, they would never have the time for this," he said.

It's advice that Xu, 59, has taken to heart as he seeks to reinvent Beijing Famed Machinery, his two-decade-old company.

With production down 75 percent this year, he has now decided to focus his energy on what had largely been a side project: making and selling machines that turn agricultural waste into what he calls "green coal" — fuel pellets that burn more cleanly than coal.

"It's up to us whether we can turn crisis into opportunity," he said. "This is a good time for our biomass product."

The longtime business owner even draws inspiration from the late founding father of communist China: "As Chairman Mao said, under certain circumstances, the bad thing can lead to a good result."

[Letter to the San Diego Union-Tribune, Friday, April 3, 2009:](#)

Air board chairman responds to editorial

Regarding "Greens gone wild/State regulators' newest targets: plasma TVs and black vehicles" (Editorial, March 30):

As chairman of the state Air Resources Board, I believe the Union-Tribune does itself and California a disservice by claiming as fact the humorous but unfounded rumor that the board was considering banning black paint for cars in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Quite the opposite, ARB has challenged inventors to create paint in all colors to reflect heat from the sun. Yes, even black paint. It's part of California's innovative effort to look for ways to make cars less polluting. Cooler cars need less air conditioning, which saves fuel, reduces pollution and helps gasoline budgets go further. This program was never at any point intended to limit consumer color choices or ban any colors for cars.

A major goal of California's programs to reduce greenhouse gas emission is to drive technology to find innovative and creative solutions to energy efficiency, clean energy, cleaner fuels and also, in this case, darker paints or pigments that are able to do a better job of reflecting the sun's rays that heat the car. We are confident that many of these innovations will be discovered and developed in California, helping ensure that we provide the patents, products and projects for the growing clean technology global market.

Mary D. Nichols, Sacramento (California Air Resources Board, Chair)

[Fresno Bee editorial, Monday, April 6, 2009:](#)

Blueprint panel chooses a denser path for Valley development

Counties should adopt the higher standards quickly.

Valley leaders looked at a range of choices in setting the desired density of residential housing in the region, from an unsustainable status quo to a bold leap into a more urban future. They stuck to the middle ground.

Elected officials from each of the eight counties represented in the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Planning Process voted last week for a future development target of 6.8 homes per acre, compared with 4.3 now. The figures are an average for an entire county.

A majority of those attending a public meeting on the new standards in January supported the highest level of density - 10 homes per acre - and we would have preferred that more aggressive third option as well. But it's a start.

The figures aren't binding on individual counties, but here are good reasons for each to adopt the new standard. State funding for transportation and other infrastructure could be affected by the extent to which the counties adopt higher standards in their own general plans.

The highest densities, as always, will occur in existing cities. Suburbs and rural areas may actually see little change in their development patterns under the new standards, so long as greater urban densities push the county averages to the higher figure.

That's a step the Valley must take anyway. Too much valuable farmland is lost to sprawl each year, and the resulting traffic and congestion foul our air. It's also more costly for cities and counties to deliver services over wide and sparsely populated expanses.

Greater densities will also permit the development of transportation alternatives such as light rail, which will help reduce our reliance on oil and result in cleaner air.

Such new development will also help satisfy the demand for housing in city centers that offers a more urban lifestyle, one that's not widely available in the Valley today.

It's a future we should embrace, and the decision of the blueprint panel is a good, though small step in the right direction.

[S.F. Chronicle editorial, Sunday, April 5, 2009:](#)

A bottom-line deal on gas station vapor

Some drivers like the tangy scent of gasoline when filling the tank at the gas station. For others, pumping fuel is minor-league pain marked with drips on the pavement and an unruly hose.

But a gas-pump pit stop means something else for state regulators. Gasoline vapors are a source of air pollution, sending up tons of smog-causing ingredients every day in California. It's a problem that needs a solution in a state with some of the nation's dirtiest air.

That's why, since 2000, Sacramento has pushed for ever-more elaborate gaskets and spill-proof nozzles. Of the state's 11,000 stations, up to a quarter have balked at complying, with operators citing the \$11,000 per pump cost.

The regulatory showdown came this week after Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger weighed in at the last minute on the side of protesting gas-station owners. Instead of facing fines and shutdowns for not installing cleaner equipment, he asked the state Air Resources Board to hold off for a year on the April 1 deadline.

Feeling the pressure, the smog board gave in. It pushed the problem back to regional air boards to work out individual deals with station owners who haven't installed the required hardware. In

effect, the mid-week deadline was, well, vaporized, giving recalcitrant operators a major break. As long as the stations pledge to improve, they won't be fined or padlocked, it turns out.

It's not the first time that California's vaunted clean-air rules were toned down. Earlier this year, in a rush to complete an overdue budget, legislators slipped in an amendment that postponed a mandate to update diesel engines in bulldozers and heavy equipment to minimize emissions. In both cases, the argument was all about money, with business winning out after pleading hardship in tough economic times. California's leaders - especially Schwarzenegger - may want to push the state's ultra-green image while cutting quiet deals that undercut this pose. On the gas-nozzle issue, he was joined by state Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, a Sacramento Democrat, who backed the enforcement delay.

Fuel nozzles may seem like a ridiculously small thing to worry about. How can a few minutes spent pumping gas be a problem? But smog board officials say that without fuel-trapping technology, gas station pumps would be the fourth-largest source of volatile organic chemicals, a key smog-causing agent.

Prior pump controls dating back to the 1970s have caught up to 90 percent of this ingredient, and the new controls would boost this figure to 95 percent.

If that sounds like a tiny increase, the difference amounts to 10 tons per day of smog-forming vapor, according to Tom Cackette, an air board deputy director. His agency has studied "how much money to spend to get pollution out of the atmosphere" and the resulting gas nozzle rule is justified, he said.

Still, station operators have a compelling case. Nearly 90 percent are small businesses, with the remaining 10 percent run by major oil companies. Getting a loan to pay for the new equipment is hard, these businesses claim. Many had waited for manufacturer competition to bring the costs down, but that never happened. In a state with a 10.5 percent jobless rate, shutting down corner gas stations and the blue-collar work they provide doesn't make sense.

These are compelling arguments for a modest delay. But the state should make sure that pollution controls aren't forgotten or delayed again. The rules should be a breath of fresh air.

[Lodi News Sentinel, Letter to the Editor, Saturday, April 4, 2009](#)

Grandfather worries about the future

Please bear with me. I am 67 years old and scared for my kids, grandkids and generations beyond. The debt and tax situation is insane.

Take the so-called cap and trade (Orwellian lie!), for example. The dope-smoking alternate universe pin-heads think that we have an excess of carbon emissions. Mind you, this is the same caliber of "gov-kratz" that told us in the early 1900s that horse drawn carriages were still a viable industry. Back to the truth — our planet is actually low on carbon emissions. The only dangerous gases that concern me are those coming from the our federal officials.

I am sitting here looking at my "6th grade calculator" and our finite sum of the goods and services produced in the USA. What alarms me is that the money supply has expanded by 471 percent in the last five months. That is a recipe for disaster !

OK, I am going to step down off my soap box before I fall off.

Larry Gullicksen, Lodi

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the Green political party; from its origin it has been considered an environmentalist organization interested fundamentally in the conservation of the](#)

environment. It offers a platform for environmental justice and citizen participation. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at (559) 230-5851.

Plataforma medio ambiente

Jorge Emilio González M.

El Universo, Saturday, April 04, 2009

El Partido Verde es, desde su origen, una organización política ambientalista, interesada fundamentalmente en el cuidado y conservación de la naturaleza y el medio ambiente.

En nuestros principios institucionales sobresalen el desarrollo sustentable, la justicia ambiental y la participación ciudadana. Estos principios nos acompañan en nuestra labor política para promover un ambiente sano, que permita un desarrollo económico equilibrado para el país y conservar una óptima calidad de vida para sus habitantes.

Queremos seguir siendo el partido que representa las causas ambientalistas en México; por ello hemos realizado estudios para analizar las características ambientales que hoy tiene nuestro país, proyectando propuestas para establecer nuestra plataforma electoral 2009, y que permitan corregir los daños ocasionados por las actividades de los habitantes, logrando abarcar todos los aspectos relativos a la conservación de la naturaleza y herramientas para el desarrollo sustentable.

A raíz de los estudios realizados, detectamos que un problema en ascenso en nuestro país: la situación del agua, la cual ha ido en detrimento de la población; ejemplo de ello es que 11 millones de mexicanos no tienen acceso a este vital líquido, siendo que éste es un requisito para la concreción de todos los demás derechos humanos. Por lo cual, el Partido Verde Ecologista de México buscará garantizar el acceso al agua a todos los habitantes del país, estableciendo claramente este derecho dentro de nuestra Carta Magna.

También falta mucho por hacer para tener mejores condiciones atmosféricas. Recordemos que el combate a este tipo de contaminación es un problema mundial con el cambio climático, que en nuestro país se ha manifestado a través de fenómenos meteorológicos y alteraciones climáticas. Por tal motivo, el partido en la LX Legislatura presentó una iniciativa para la expedición de la Ley General de la Calidad del Aire, que tiene por objeto garantizar el derecho de toda persona a respirar un ambiente adecuado. Debido a su importancia para el ambiente, estamos comprometidos para promover esta ley, con la finalidad de que sea aprobada y traiga consigo beneficios para la población mexicana.

Otra amenaza que tienen los recursos naturales es la grave situación originada por la pérdida de bosques y selvas. México actualmente se ubica entre los 10 países con mayores tasas de deforestación, perdiendo cerca de un millón de hectáreas de estos ecosistemas.

Nuestro trabajo estará dirigido a propuestas que beneficien la conservación de los bosques y selvas, mediante su protección a través de estímulos económicos y con la promoción de incentivos a actividades productivas diversificadas como el turismo alternativo.

Una de las cartas fuertes que tenemos como país es la biodiversidad, siendo considerado a nivel mundial como un país megadiverso. Sin embargo, esta riqueza es amenazada constantemente por el tráfico ilegal de especies, la cacería furtiva, la sobreexplotación de poblaciones silvestre y la destrucción de sus hábitats.

En este sentido nuestro trabajo estará enfocado a promover la capacitación de jueces, ministerios públicos y policías para el combate al tráfico de especies silvestres. Asimismo, se pretende fortalecer el Sistema de Áreas Naturales Protegidas y reformar la Ley General de Vida Silvestre a fin de hacer una conservación efectiva de las especies en peligro de extinción.

Estas son solamente algunas de las propuestas que conforman nuestra plataforma electoral. Son resultado de las demandas de la sociedad, que se ven plasmadas en el trabajo previo del Partido Verde.

Gracias al apoyo ciudadano hemos logrado importantes avances, como la incorporación del derecho a un ambiente saludable en nuestra Carta Magna. En el Partido Verde no nos conformamos con esto. Queda mucho por hacer, y es por eso que esperamos seguir contando con el soporte de los mexicanos para hacer realidad estas propuestas.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses G20 decisions did not convince the green movement in making climate changes a priority. Ecologist considered the great leaders to fail in their responsibility of putting the climate crises at the head of their priorities and lost a valuable opportunity to assure a long term plan for the world's health economy and environment.](#)

Las grandes decisiones del G20 no convencieron a los verdes

Diego Moctezuma

El Periódico de México, Saturday, April 04, 2009

La buena cara de los gobernantes del Grupo de los 20, las reacciones alcistas del mercado de dinero y los destellos que parecen luces al final del túnel abierto por la gran crisis global, no convencen a los ecologistas, que consideran que los líderes “fracasaron en su responsabilidad de poner la crisis del clima a la cabeza de su orden del día y perdieron una oportunidad clave para asegurar a largo plazo la salud económica y ambiental del mundo”. Es la visión de Greenpeace, un organismo defensor de la Tierra que lucha desde hace décadas por la salud del planeta y sus habitantes. Para ellos los resultados de la Cumbre de Londres no son buenos augurios.

“El cambio climático quedó al final del comunicado del G20, como un tema para después. Esto no refleja la seriedad y la urgencia que el asunto requiere. Se consiguieron cientos de miles de millones de dólares para el Fondo Monetario Internacional y el Banco Mundial, pero para hacer la transición a una economía verde –que paliaría la crisis financiera pero también la ambiental– no hay dinero sobre la mesa, sólo aspiraciones vagas”, opina John Sauven, director ejecutivo de Greenpeace en el Reino Unido.

Dijo que “mientras la catástrofe del clima sigue su curso, los líderes del G20 sólo toman medidas cosméticas. Un compromiso financiero claro con la inversión en crear empleos verdes habría sido el pedal de arranque para detonar una economía verde que nos permita enfrentar el cambio climático. Frente a la Cumbre del Clima de Copenhague a fines del año, el G20 le ha fallado al mundo perdiendo una oportunidad vital para resolver ambas crisis simultáneamente, la económica y la del cambio climático”.

El ríspido Sauven no tiene duda del fracaso, por ello Greenpeace afirmó que los gobernantes fallaron por no haber asignado el dinero necesario para financiar el crecimiento verde de economías nacionales e internacionales, pese a que el presidente de Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, llamó a una acción global para enfrentar el cambio climático.

La cumbre necesitaba que las naciones ricas del G20 destinaran por lo menos 1% de su PIB a medidas verdes, y que el resto de los países haga todo lo que pueda para reducir su dependencia de energías sucias como el petróleo y sus derivados, y basar su desarrollo en el uso de las energías renovables. La ciencia muestra que el cambio climático está acelerándose y que hay un lazo muy fuerte entre lo económico y la supervivencia del clima del planeta. Una crisis del clima a gran escala aumenta la posibilidad de migración, hambre y extinciones masivas. Habrá pobreza permanente en los países en desarrollo y se estrangulará el crecimiento de las naciones desarrolladas.

La organización ambientalista alerta que el costo probable de los impactos del cambio climático estará por encima de 20% de los egresos globales anuales, sin contar las muertes de seres humanos y la extinción de especies. Enfrentarlo y canalizar la inversión en tecnologías bajas en carbón representaría una fracción, 1 o 2% del PIB global.

Esta inversión, urgente y necesaria para estimular la economía en tanto se reducen las emisiones contaminantes, apoyaría los esfuerzos para alcanzar un efectivo acuerdo global sobre

el clima en la reunión de diciembre próximo en Copenhague, donde el platillo principal será el Protocolo de Kyoto.