

Data show state air improvement

Stockton Record, Saturday, May 16, 2009

SACRAMENTO - Annual air quality data released Thursday show "dramatic improvement" in both the Central Valley and Southern California over the past two decades, state officials reported.

Harmful ozone, a precursor to smog, has declined 10 percent in the Valley since 1990; tiny particles of dust, soot and smoke have declined 20 percent since 1999, the California Air Resources Board said.

Gains have been made despite population growth, more trucking and increased port activities.

The state credited its own regulations as well as the actions of regional entities such as the [San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District](#). But some areas, including the Valley, still do not meet federal standards for key pollutants.

The state tabulates more than 10 million air quality measurements each year and compiles them in a database available to the public.

Air districts to help gas stations unable to comply with new rules

By Michael Gardner, U-T Sacramento Bureau

San Diego Union-Tribune, Tuesday, May 19, 2009

SACRAMENTO – Lawmakers have struck a compromise to help gas stations struggling to comply with costly new clean-air regulations at a time of tight credit and declining profits.

Under legislative pressure, local air districts have agreed to concessions for stations that couldn't meet the April 1 deadline, including a cap on fines and a refund of most penalties already collected.

In return, lawmakers will not permanently weaken the statewide regulations that require stations to install new dispenser hoses and underground pollution-control systems.

Legislation is not required.

"We had no desire to put anybody out of business or create undue financial hardship," said Senate President Pro Tempore Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento. "But we didn't want to just wipe away environmental laws."

Assemblyman Martin Garrick, R-Solana Beach, a leading defender of station owners, supports the deal.

"It just makes sense that air districts would agree to work with station owners instead of fining them or closing them down. When stations close down, it hurts everyone; prices go up for consumers, people are laid off, and business owners lose their investments," Garrick said.

The California Air Resources Board in 2000 adopted new standards to control the amount of pollution released each time motorists fill up, and provided stations with extensive lead time.

The new vapor-recovery systems are designed to trap more smog-forming compounds than older equipment does – as much as 10 tons daily. That is equivalent to taking 450,000 cars off the road, regulators estimate.

State officials say about 70 percent of the state's more than 11,000 stations have complied or are close to doing so.

But granting extensions drew fire among air-quality advocates who didn't want to see important clean-air rules undercut. Others argued that those escaping penalties would have an unfair competitive advantage over owners who invested in systems that can cost more than \$50,000 per station.

The agreement will provide relief for station owners who acted in good faith to comply but couldn't secure financing, find contractors or obtain a construction permit before the April 1 deadline.

Penalties will be capped at \$1,000 until Dec. 31, and fines already collected in excess of \$1,000 will be returned.

Even before the compromise, the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District had not issued any fines nor cited any stations for noncompliance.

"We're trying to be as business-friendly as possible," Robert Kard, the county's air pollution control officer, said recently.

California agrees to new, tougher national emissions standards

By Renee Schoof, McClatchy Newspapers

Sacramento Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, May 19, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Starting in 2012, U.S. cars and trucks will have stricter fuel emissions standards - up to 39 miles per gallon for cars and 30 mpg for trucks by 2016 - under a proposed new standard President Barack Obama plans to announce Tuesday, a senior administration official said Monday night.

As part of a deal with automakers, California agreed it would defer to the national standard and would not establish its own tougher emissions rule if it receives the waiver under the Clean Air Act that it's been seeking from the Environmental Protection Agency, the official said. The EPA hasn't made a final decision about the waiver, the official said.

U.S. automakers had insisted on a uniform national standard, arguing it would be impossible to comply with different state rules.

The standard the Obama administration will propose will be the first U.S. restriction on greenhouse gas emissions and the nation's strongest fuel efficiency requirement.

The national program would reach the same goal in emissions reductions that California sought by 2016 but would start more slowly. Overall emissions would be cut by a bigger amount because the policy would apply to the whole country, and not just to California and states that wanted to follow its lead.

Much of the reduction of gases that trap heat in the atmosphere would come from better fuel efficiency. Burning less fuel means a vehicle emits less carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas. But improvements in cars mandated in the new standards also will reduce three other gases causing global warming - methane, nitrous oxide and hydrofluorocarbons.

The 2016 rates compare with today's 27.5 mpg for cars and 23.1 mpg for trucks.

The improvements will add \$600 in costs per vehicle beyond the \$700 cost of the latest CAFE (corporate average fuel economy) standards. Consumers will see savings in reduced fuel use, and people who buy cars on a 60-month loan might end up finding the slight increase in the monthly cost is made up in fuel savings, the official said, briefing reporters under White House rules that required anonymity.

The program will save 900 million metric tons of greenhouse gases through 2016, the equivalent of shutting down 194 coal plants, the administration said. It would become final after a comment period, but the car companies and California have committed to supporting it, reducing the likelihood of major changes.

The new standards will require all cars get cleaner. Previous CAFE standards allowed companies to offset less efficient cars by making some that were more efficient.

But the government does not plan any other carrots or sticks to get Americans to buy smaller cars. The official briefing reporters said consumers would still be able to pick from a range of vehicle sizes.

The agreement came out of talks between automakers, California, the EPA and the Department of Transportation. The Bush administration denied the waiver to California, and the state

remained adamant in seeking it. President Barack Obama said before he was elected that he supported it.

"This is a very big accomplishment, and it's really one where the credit belongs to the president but also to California and to environmentalists who pushed very hard for these California standards and defended them at every turn, and to the automakers who are agreeing to this," said David Doniger, an attorney who directs the climate policy program at the Natural Resources Defense Council. "All four of these interests - the feds, the states, the environmentalists and the auto companies - have found a way to come together around a very sensible solution."

David McCurdy, president and chief executive officer of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, said automakers would continue to work with the administration on the details of the program. The national standard would do away with the problem of conflicting standards from state agencies and would give automakers certainty for long-term planning for new vehicles, he said.

McCurdy said automakers wanted to get a national policy finished and move on.

"Alliance members are supporting measures that reduce carbon dioxide even more, like low-carbon fuels, advancements in battery technology and consumer incentives to get more advanced technology autos on our roads," he said.

"This is good news for all us who have fought long and hard to reduce global warming pollution, create clean energy jobs and reduce our dangerous dependence on foreign oil," said Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., the chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Daniel J. Weiss, director of climate strategy at the Center for American Progress, a policy research group that advocates policies in line with the administration's, said besides helping with a move away from foreign oil, the standard would save Americans money because cars would go farther on a gallon of gas. He said it also would spur businesses to develop clean-energy technologies, creating jobs.

And the policy will help the United States compete with China, he said. Chinese leaders "have already announced their intention to become the worldwide leader in the production of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles."

Auto emissions deal a win for California

The state is the model for a compromise with U.S. carmakers and the federal government to curb greenhouse gases.

By Jim Tankersley and Richard Simon, staff writers
L.A. Times, Tuesday, May 19, 2009

Reporting from Washington -- The agreement that the Obama administration will announce today forcing dramatic reductions in vehicle greenhouse gas emissions and improvements in auto mileage marks a potentially pivotal shift in the battle over global warming -- and a vindication of California's long battle to toughen standards.

After decades of political sparring, legal challenges and scientific arguments over climate change, three of the central players -- the federal government, major U.S. automakers and California -- have found that the time has come to suspend hostilities and make a deal.

For cars and trucks, the agreement would establish a single nationwide standard that would require a 30% reduction in carbon dioxide and other emissions from vehicles sold in the United States by 2016.

The new limits are projected to reduce U.S. oil consumption by about 5% a year. The nation currently uses about 7.1 billion barrels a year.

For its part, California will essentially accept the national standard as a substitute for the state's own tough emission requirements. The Obama standard is designed to achieve the same level of emission cutbacks as the California rule, but automakers will be given more time to adapt.

Completing the three-way deal, automakers will pledge to drop their effort to block the California rules through legal challenges.

"Everybody wins," said David Doniger, policy director of the Natural Resources Defense Council's climate center. "It's going to cut carbon pollution. The drivers of these cars are going to save money at the pump. It's going to cut our national oil dependence."

During the Bush administration, California unsuccessfully sought federal permission to tighten its vehicle emission standards. The Obama administration had ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to reexamine the issue.

Not everyone hailed the agreement Monday. "We think these new mandatory fuel standards are most unfortunate," said Myron Ebell, an energy expert with the pro-market Competitive Enterprise Institute. "They will price people out of larger vehicles and force them into smaller vehicles."

But in embracing a deal, the major parties appear to have concluded that some kind of action on greenhouse gases was inevitable and that their separate interests were better served by compromising now than by further delay. President Obama will announce the deal in Washington, joined by California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and others.

A White House official, briefing reporters Monday on condition of anonymity, said the agreement would push new vehicles sold in the U.S. to average 35.5 miles per gallon in 2016, up from 25 mpg today. The agreement, coupled with increased fuel-efficiency requirements that Congress approved in 2007, would add \$1,300 to the price of a new car in 2016, the administration estimated.

Neither the Obama plan nor the rules California has sought to impose include explicit mileage requirements. But capping the greenhouse gas emissions that scientists blame for global warming would effectively require better mileage.

In 2002, California passed a law to reduce vehicle emissions, but auto industry lawsuits held up its enforcement. The state also needed a waiver from the EPA, which refused -- even after a series of court rulings in the state's favor.

Bush administration officials said they wanted a single nationwide standard that would unite the greenhouse gas regulations and tougher fuel economy standards that Congress approved in 2007.

Officials cast such standards as a key to encouraging the design and sale of the fuel-sipping cars that Obama calls vital to the Detroit automakers' recovery -- and crucial to the international fight against global warming.

Detroit has never liked the idea of government telling it what kind of cars to build, but its power to head off tougher emission standards was undercut by a series of events that decreased its political influence -- including the financial troubles of General Motors Corp. and Chrysler, which made the companies more open to government demands for fuel-efficient vehicles, especially after they needed federal money to stay afloat.

In addition, Rep. John D. Dingell (D-Mich.), a powerful ally of the auto industry, was ousted as chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and replaced by Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Beverly Hills), an advocate of tougher standards. And during last year's presidential campaign, both Obama and Republican nominee Sen. John McCain of Arizona backed

California's efforts.

Obama's EPA also issued a draft ruling last month declaring greenhouse gases a danger to public health, subject to regulation under the Clean Air Act. The proposal singles out cars and trucks, which comprise about one quarter of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

The EPA began public hearings on the proposal Monday.

Assuming the reductions come to pass, a trip to a dealership in 2016 might prove remarkably different than one today. Rows of SUVs and full-sized luxury cars could be replaced by highly efficient compact sedans powered by hybrid drive trains, small SUVs running on clean diesel motors and possibly electric cars that emit no greenhouse gases.

Jeff Holmstead, a senior EPA official under President Bush, said he saw the deal as a vindication of the Bush administration's approach.

"It looks like the Obama administration is agreeing with the Bush administration that there needs to be a national standard and that it doesn't make any sense to have multiple state standards," Holmstead said.

But Capitol Hill Democrats welcomed the deal. Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), an author of the House energy bill who also co-wrote the 2007 bill increasing fuel economy standards, said, "President Obama has solved the energy and economic policy equivalent of a Rubik's Cube."

Obama to announce auto mileage, emissions standards

By Ken Thomas and Philip Elliott, The Associated Press
In the Washington Post, Tuesday, May 19, 2009

WASHINGTON -- President Barack Obama's new fuel and emission standards for cars and trucks will save billions of barrels of oil but are expected to cost consumers an extra \$1,300 per vehicle by the time the plan is complete in 2016. Obama on Tuesday planned to announce the first-ever national emissions limits for vehicles, as well as require an overall or industry average fuel efficiency standard at 35.5 miles per gallon.

Carol Browner, the White House energy and climate director, publicly confirmed the new initiative in appearances on morning network news shows, calling it a "truly historic" occasion and saying tougher standards are "long overdue."

The plan also would effectively end a feud between automakers and statehouses over emission standards _ with the states coming out on top but the automakers getting the single national standard they've been seeking and more time to make the changes.

Obama's proposed change in rules would for the first time combine pollution reduction from vehicle tailpipes with increased efficiency on the road. It would save 1.8 billion barrels of oil through 2016 and would be the environmental equivalent of taking 177 million cars off the road, said senior administration officials speaking anonymously, ahead of the announcement.

New vehicles would be 30 percent cleaner and more fuel-efficient by the end of the program, they said.

The plan, to be proposed in the Federal Register of pending rules and regulations, must still clear procedural hurdles at the Environmental Protection Agency and the Transportation Department. Automakers expressed their support for the plan. "We're all agreeing to work together on a national program," said Dave McCurdy, president and CEO of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers.

Administration officials said consumers were going to pay an extra \$700, anyway, for mileage standards that had already been approved. The Obama plan adds another \$600 to the price of a vehicle, a senior administration official said, bringing the total cost to \$1,300 by 2016.

That official said the cost would be recovered through savings at the pump for consumers and if gas prices follow government projections.

Under the changes, the overall fleet average would have to be 35.5 mpg by 2016, with passenger cars reaching 39 mpg and light trucks hitting 30 mpg under a system that develops standards for each vehicle class size. Manufacturers would also be required to hit individual mileage targets.

Browner, who headed the EPA during the Clinton administration, said the industry told the administration "they wanted to make cleaner cars and what they needed was the government to give them predictability and certainty so that they could make the investments toward cleaner cars."

In a battle over emission standards, California, 13 other states and the District of Columbia have urged the federal government to let them enact more stringent standards than the federal government's requirements. The states' regulations would cut greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent in new cars and trucks by 2016 _ the benchmark Obama planned to unveil for vehicles built in model years 2012 and beyond.

The Obama plan gives the states essentially what they sought and more, although the buildup is slower than the states sought. In exchange, though, cash-strapped states such as California would not have to develop their own standards and enforcement plan. Instead, they can rely on federal tax dollars to monitor the environment.

The auto industry will be required to ramp up production of more fuel-efficient vehicles on a much tighter timeline than originally envisioned. It will be costly; the Transportation Department last year estimated that requiring the industry to meet 31.6 mpg by 2015 would cost nearly \$47 billion.

But industry officials _ many of whom are running companies on emergency taxpayer dollars _ said Obama's plan would help them because they would not face multiple emissions requirements and would have more certainty as they develop their vehicles for the next decade.

Auto executives, including General Motors Corp. CEO Fritz Henderson, and executives from Ford Motor Co., Toyota Motor Corp., Honda Motor Co., Daimler AG and others planned to attend the White House event along with United Auto Workers President Ron Gettelfinger, Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm and California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Browner was interviewed on CBS's "The Early Show" and ABC's "Good Morning America."

House panel to begin debating climate change bill

By Richard Cowan, Reuters

In the Washington Post, Tuesday, May 19, 2009

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. lawmakers were set on Tuesday to begin wrangling over a climate change bill aimed at reducing carbon dioxide and other pollutants with Republicans objecting that the legislation would burden the economy with higher energy costs.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee was digging in for several days of arduous debate over the Democrats' 932-page bill. Chairman Henry Waxman has predicted his panel will have enough Democratic support for approval this week.

But first, Republicans are expected to try to surgically remove the heart of the proposal -- the establishment of a "cap and trade" system that would gradually reduce the amount of greenhouse gases that utilities, steelmakers, oil refineries and other companies could emit.

President Barack Obama has put climate control legislation at the top of his agenda and would like to see significant progress by December, when world leaders meet in Copenhagen to consider coordinated steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"Our economy is suffering, we are squandering billions of dollars to feed our addiction on foreign oil and our environment is overheating," Waxman said during legislator's opening statements on the bill on Monday.

With its mandate to reduce emissions 17 percent by 2020 from 2005 levels, Waxman said the bill would shore up the U.S. economy by encouraging new high-tech jobs while avoiding the ecological disasters linked to global warming.

Republicans predicted energy costs would skyrocket under the bill and they have reportedly prepared hundreds of amendments to try to modify the Democratic bill.

Joe Barton, the senior Republican on the committee, warned Waxman: "You are about to embark on an episode of putting the entire American economy, which is the world's largest, through an absolute economic wringer."

Even so, with a 36-23 majority in the committee, Democrats are likely to defeat Republicans' moves to kill cap and trade.

Under cap and trade, an ever-decreasing number of carbon pollution permits would be available and companies that still lack the technology to meet the lower pollution requirements could buy more permits from companies that no longer need their full quotas.

Obama to tap consumers for emission, mpg standards

By Ken Thomas and Philip Elliott, The Associated Press
In the Washington Post, Tuesday, May 19, 2009

WASHINGTON -- President Barack Obama plans to propose the first-ever national emission limits for cars and trucks as well as average mileage requirements of 35.5 miles per gallon by 2016 _ all costing consumers an extra \$1,300 per vehicle. Obama's plan couples for the first time pollution reduction from vehicle tailpipes with increased efficiency on the road. It would save 1.8 billion barrels of oil through 2016 and would be the environmental equivalent to taking 177 million cars off the road, senior administration officials said Monday night.

The plan also would effectively end a feud between automakers and statehouses over emission standards _ with the states coming out on top but the automakers getting a single national standard and more time to make the changes.

The plan still must clear regulatory hurdles at the Environmental Protection Agency and the Transportation Department. The administration officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because the formal announcement by Obama was scheduled for Tuesday.

New vehicles would be 30 percent cleaner and more fuel efficient by the end of the program, according to officials familiar with the administration's discussions. The officials also spoke on condition of anonymity because the formal announcement had not been made.

Administration officials said consumers were going to pay an extra \$700 for mileage standards that had already been approved. The comprehensive Obama plan would add another \$600 to the price of a vehicle, a senior administration official said.

The extra miles would come at roughly a 5 percent increase each year. By the time the plan takes full effect, at the end of 2016, new vehicles would cost an extra \$1,300.

The cost would be recovered through savings at the pump for consumers who choose a standard 60-month car loan if gas prices follow government projections, according to one official.

In a battle over emission standards, California, 13 other states and the District of Columbia have urged the federal government to let them enact more stringent standards than the federal government's requirements. The states' regulations would cut greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent in new cars and trucks by 2016 _ the benchmark Obama planned to unveil for vehicles built in model years 2012 and beyond.

The Obama plan gives the states essentially what they sought and more, although the buildup is slower than the states sought. In exchange, though, cash-strapped states such as California would not have to develop their own standards and enforcement plan. Instead, they can rely on federal tax dollars to monitor the environment.

A 2007 energy law requires carmakers to meet at least 35 mpg by 2020, a 40 percent increase over the current standard of about 25 mpg. Passenger car requirements have remained unchanged at 27.5 mpg since 1985, drawing complaints from environmental groups that the government has been slow to push automakers to produce more fuel-efficient vehicles.

The auto industry will be required to ramp up production of more fuel efficient vehicles on a much tighter timeline than originally envisioned. It will be costly; the Transportation Department last year estimated that requiring the industry to meet 31.6 mpg by 2015 would cost nearly \$47 billion.

But industry officials _ many of whom are running companies on emergency taxpayer dollars _ said Obama's plan would help them because they would not face multiple emissions requirements and would have more certainty as they develop their vehicles for the next decade.

"For us, that clarity, not having to address a patchwork of conflicting laws and regulations across our country, is a significant win," said David McCurdy, a former Oklahoma congressman who leads the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, a trade group which represents 11 vehicle manufacturers.

Auto executives, including General Motors Corps. CEO Fritz Henderson, and executives from Ford Motor Co., Toyota Motor Corp., Honda Motor Co., Daimler AG and others planned to attend the White House event. United Auto Workers President Ron Gettelfinger also planned to attend.

Henderson said the automaker, which faces a June 1 deadline by which it may be forced to file bankruptcy, was "fully committed" to the administration's approach. His company and Chrysler LLC have received billions in government loans during a dramatic downturn in car sales and weakened economy.

Toyota Motor Sales USA President James Lentz also issued a statement in support of the single benchmark.

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, praised the move, which allows him to declare victory on policy and dodge a tricky budget question on how to pay for it.

"Today, we're seeing what happens when California leads on energy and the environment and doesn't waiver, doesn't get bogged down, doesn't let obstacles get in the way," Schwarzenegger said.

It also provides a reason for Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm, a Democrat who is being considered for the Supreme Court vacancy, to visit the White House. Obama spokesman Robert Gibbs said Granholm's visit was primarily for the autos event but wouldn't comment if she would meet with Obama about the soon-to-be-vacant court position.

A March 2008 decision prevents states from setting their own limits on greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles, but Obama has ordered the EPA to reconsider the ruling.

The EPA was already working toward establishing federal greenhouse gas emissions standards for new motor vehicles when it made a preliminary determination in April that six greenhouse gases _ four of which are released from automobiles _ endanger human health and welfare.

Before the new Obama proposals would even have a chance at being implemented, the EPA would have to approve those findings. Hearings began on Monday.

Obama to drive up miles-per-gallon requirements

By James R. Healey

USA TODAY, Tuesday, May 19, 2009

The Obama administration is set to announce Tuesday what will amount to a sweeping revision to auto-emission and fuel-economy standards, putting them in the same package for the first time.

It would require cars and trucks to average 35.5 miles per gallon by 2016, according to a senior administration official who refused to be named until the official briefing today. That would be up from 35 mpg in 2020 under the standard set by the 2007 Energy Act.

It also would boost the average price of a new vehicle \$600 on top of the \$700 price boost already envisioned in the 2007 law, for a total of \$1,300.

Carol Browner, the White House energy and climate director, publicly confirmed the initiative in appearances on morning network news shows Tuesday, calling it a "truly historic" occasion and saying that such tougher environmental standards have been "long overdue."

The plan also would effectively end a feud between automakers and states over emission standards — with the states getting tougher standards, but automakers getting the single national standard they've been seeking, and more time to make the changes.

If a fragile compromise among often-warring factions — federal regulators, states and automakers — can last through the rulemaking process, the new regulations would be the first to blend emissions and fuel-economy standards, becoming perhaps the most dramatic suite of auto rules since the Clean Air Act of 1970. That law set auto-pollution standards for the first time and banned poisonous lead, which was used as a lubricant, from gasoline.

"The president has succeeded in bringing three regulatory bodies, 15 states, a dozen automakers and many environmental groups to the table," noted Dave McCurdy, CEO of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, a trade group representing most major automakers. "Multiple issues" remain to be resolved, however, he said.

To streamline the rulemaking process, the two agencies mainly responsible — the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Transportation — would work jointly, almost unheard of, the administration official said.

The regulations would limit, for the first time, the amount of carbon dioxide vehicles could emit. The only way to cut that much CO₂ is to burn less fuel. CO₂ is vilified as a major greenhouse gas (ghg), blamed for global warming.

"Groundbreaking," said the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group.

"Unprecedented — the first time the federal government would require reductions in global-warming pollution," said Daniel Weiss, senior fellow at the not-for-profit Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank.

Key: California has agreed to follow the new federal standards, instead of imposing its own, at least until 2016, the administration official said. That gives automakers the single, nationwide standard they long have sought. California, plus 13 other states and the District of Columbia, previously asked for a waiver allowing them to impose stricter ghg standards than the current federal ones.

As detailed by the administration official, the plan requires improvements in fuel economy — via reductions in ghg emissions — for all cars and light trucks, based on their size. By 2016, cars will have to average 39 miles per gallon and trucks, 30 mpg.

The mileage numbers you'll see on new vehicles will be significantly lower, however, because those are calculated differently.

If the regulations encourage automakers to build smaller cars — the administration official said they won't — highway safety could decline. Statistics show small cars are less safe in crashes.

And decades of sales numbers show American buyers prefer larger vehicles, moving down in large numbers only under the duress of high fuel prices or economic hard times.

If the regulations result in less-appealing vehicles, they will be "a very convoluted way" of trying to tailor buyer habits to environmental concerns, says Jack Nerad, market analyst for Kelley Blue Book, a car-shopping service.

Contributing: Sharon Silke Carty

Vehicle Emission Rules to Tighten U.S. Would Also Raise Fuel Mileage Standards by 2016

By Steven Mufson

Washington Post, Tuesday, May 19, 2009

The Obama administration today plans to propose tough standards for tailpipe emissions from new automobiles, establishing the first nationwide regulation for greenhouse gases.

It will also raise fuel efficiency targets to 35.5 miles per gallon for new passenger vehicles and light trucks by 2016, four years earlier than required under the 2007 energy bill, sources close to the administration said.

The measures are significant steps forward for the administration's energy agenda by cutting greenhouse-gas emissions that contribute to climate change and by easing U.S. dependence on oil, most of which is imported.

The administration is embracing standards stringent enough to satisfy the state of California, which has been fighting for a waiver from federal law so that it could set its own guidelines, sources said. Govs. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R-Calif.) and Jennifer M. Granholm (D-Mich.) will be among a variety of state and industry officials who plan to attend an announcement today, according to sources close to the administration.

The deal has been under negotiation since the first days of the administration. It represents a compromise among the White House; the state of California; and the auto industry, which has long sought national mileage standards and has waged an expensive legal battle against the California waiver. The industry will get its national standard, but at the price of one that approximates California's targets. Industry officials said they would drop all related lawsuits.

David McCurdy, president of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, said that the agreement reached late Sunday night would provide the industry with "clarity and predictability."

That predictability won't come cheap. A senior administration official said the new standards would raise the cost of an average car by \$1,300, \$600 of which could be attributed to the rules being announced today. The remaining increase would stem from previous energy policy.

"Consumers can retain choice but for more fuel-efficient cars. Every single category of car will be more efficient," the official said, noting that fuel savings would offset much of the higher cost.

The announcement planned for today marks a major change in tone from the Bush administration, which had rejected California's waiver in March 2008, barring states from setting their own limits on greenhouse-gas emissions from automobiles. At the time, 13 other states and the District of Columbia were also seeking permission to impose standards similar to California's.

Obama had ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider the ruling.

Under the compromise, the federal government would establish two sets of standards, one for mileage and one for tailpipe emissions of carbon dioxide.

The Transportation Department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration would set the new fuel-economy standards, which would raise the average fuel efficiency of a new car by 30 percent. Cars, for instance, would need to average 39 miles per gallon by 2016, while light trucks would need to reach 30 mpg.

The EPA, using its power to regulate carbon dioxide emissions under a 2007 Supreme Court ruling, plans a tailpipe emissions standard of 250 grams per mile for vehicles sold in 2016, roughly the equivalent of what would be emitted by vehicles meeting the mileage standard. Vehicles sold in 2009 are expected to emit about 380 grams per mile, industry sources said. The EPA needs to go through a rulemaking process to allow responses before the standards would go into effect.

One person involved in the negotiation said the Supreme Court's ruling on regulating emissions helped push companies to bargain because they feared the prospect of having to comply with separate EPA standards in addition to those from NHTSA and California.

"That's what brought the companies to the table," the person said.

In addition, many of the automakers that originally fought California's standards are now struggling for survival and in a weaker position to fight. Their opposition also waned after last year's high gasoline prices and consumers' newfound frugality shifted the mix of vehicles being sold toward more fuel-efficient models. General Motors said yesterday that in 2008, its cars got an average of 29.7 miles a gallon, higher than the 27.5 requirement; its new trucks got 23.2 mpg, higher than the 22.6-mpg requirement for last year.

"We are pleased that President Obama is taking decisive and positive action as we work together toward one national standard for vehicle fuel economy and greenhouse gas emissions that will be good for the environment and the economy," Ford said in a statement.

The EPA is also expected to impose restrictions on greenhouse-gas emissions resulting from leaks of air-conditioning coolant in vehicles. The automakers would be able to use some credits for complying with those regulations to offset a small part of fuel-efficiency requirements, sources familiar with the talks said.

California made modest concessions in the negotiations. From 2012 to 2015, the new mileage standards will be slightly less stringent than required under California's rules, which will be amended. In addition, EPA and NHTSA will use the federal approach of pegging standards to the "attributes" of vehicles, such as size and engine type, said sources familiar with the negotiations. California, by contrast, used just two broad categories of vehicles.

Sources close to the administration said the EPA would still grant a waiver to California at the end of June, but that the state would not exercise it in light of the new national standards.

Proponents of tougher fuel-efficiency standards hailed reports of today's announcement.

"If media reports are true, after years of oil price inflation, policy stagnation and automotive industry litigation, President Obama has solved the energy and economic policy equivalent of a Rubik's Cube," said Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), who was a principal author of the 35-mpg standard that Congress adopted in 2007.

"In addition to dramatically reducing the global warming emissions from our vehicles, this move will slash our dependence on oil and make us more energy independent," Sierra Club executive director Carl Pope said in a statement. "Congress put us on the road toward more fuel efficient vehicles two years ago when it passed the first increase in fuel economy standards in more than 30 years. Now President Obama is dramatically accelerating our progress."

Obama wants tougher tailpipe emissions law

By Matthew Yi, Sacramento bureau
S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, May 19, 2009

Sacramento -- President Obama today will announce a national standard for tailpipe emissions patterned after California's pending rule requiring automakers to build more fuel-sipping vehicles and make drastic cuts in greenhouse gases, a senior administration official said Monday.

The federal standard would be less stringent than California's regulation, which awaits a waiver from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, but it could have a larger impact in fighting global warming by involving all 50 states, the official said.

Obama's plan is a compromise that includes the support of automakers who have fought California's request for a waiver, arguing for a nationwide fuel-efficiency standard rather than what they've billed as a patchwork of state rules.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is scheduled to be with Obama today when he makes the announcement, applauded the president.

"California's relentless push for greenhouse gas reductions from automobiles is paying off not just for our state," he said, "but for all Americans, for our environment, for automakers and our economy."

The federal standard, expected to face a monthslong federal rule-making process, would require automakers to increase fuel efficiency beginning with the 2012 model year. Automakers' fleets would have to average 39 mpg and light trucks and SUVs would be required to reach 30 mpg by 2016 - four years faster than federal law now requires.

Current federal standards require 27.5 mpg for cars and 22.3 mpg for SUVs and light trucks.

The regulation would reduce nationwide oil consumption by 1.8 billion barrels while cutting carbon dioxide emissions by the equivalent of taking 177 million cars off the road or closing about 190 coal-fired power plants, the White House official said on condition of anonymity.

"What this means is that there's going to be more choices on cleaner vehicles" for consumers, the official said.

Automaker support likely

Automakers are expected to support the president's plan.

"For seven long years, there has been a debate over whether states or the federal government should regulate autos," said Dave McCurdy, president and CEO of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers. "President Obama's announcement ends that old debate by starting federal rule-making to set a national program."

For California, with its landmark legislation signed by Schwarzenegger in 2006, the move is a huge step toward reaching its goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2020.

California Sen. Barbara Boxer, who chairs the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, said Monday she is pleased by the president's efforts.

"This is good news for all of us who have fought long and hard to reduce global warming pollution, create clean-energy jobs and reduce our dangerous dependence on foreign oil," she said.

The federal government's 2016 goal for the new standard is nearly identical to California's regulation on auto emissions, which since 2005 has awaited a waiver from the EPA. Under then-President George W. Bush, the agency refused to grant California and 13 other states the exemption, relying largely on the same argument as automakers that fuel efficiency should be regulated nationwide.

The states filed a lawsuit against the federal government, but litigation became moot when Obama followed through with his campaign promise to ask the EPA to re-examine the states' waiver requests.

California officials expect the EPA to grant the waiver soon, with the state's regulation taking effect 45 days after that. Once the federal standard is in place, California would switch to the nationwide standard, which would give automakers more time to ramp up to the 2016 goal than California's regulation.

Positive reaction

Sen. Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills (Los Angeles County), who authored AB32, the state's bill regulating tailpipe emissions, called the deal among federal government, states and automakers a win-win scenario for California and the rest of the nation.

"This cleans up our **air**, reduces our dependence on foreign oil and continues to allow California to lead the way, while encouraging a federal standard for emissions," she said Monday before flying to Washington for today's announcement.

How the president's emissions plan works

Federal rule:

Starting with the 2012 model year, the average mpg for new vehicles sold in the United States would increase about 5 percent a year. By 2016, cars must reach an average of 39 mpg while SUVs and light trucks would average 30 mpg.

California rule:

The state would begin enforcing its fuel-efficiency regulations with 45 days of a waiver from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, then switch to the federal standard beginning in 2012.

Impact:

While California's regulation is more aggressive at first, its emissions goal for 2016 is nearly identical to the federal standard proposed.

Retail center 'moving forward'

Builder slows pace, but city still expects Wal-Mart

By Ken Carlson

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, May 19, 2009

CERES -- The company that wants to develop a Wal-Mart Supercenter here told shareholders early this month that it is slowing the pace of new projects because of the recession.

Florida-based Regency Centers Corp. is a national developer of grocery-anchored shopping centers and has developed almost 200 centers since 2000. Its chief executive officer said at the company's annual meeting May 5 that it will invest in new projects with caution.

So what does that mean for the Ceres center?

"We have heard nothing at this time that it means the Ceres project is on hold," City Manager Brad Kilger said Friday. "We have been having weekly meetings with the development team, including Regency, and they have given us every indication they are still moving forward."

Pete Knoedler, a vice president of investments for Regency, said through an assistant that the company could not comment at this time.

A Wal-Mart representative said the project is still viable, despite the tough economy. "We continue to see our customers looking for ways that we can save them money, particularly with their food purchases," said Aaron Rios, a Wal-Mart spokesman. "We are still working on that store."

The Colliers International real estate firm is marketing the proposed 26-acre center at Mitchell and Service roads near Highway 99 with a potential opening in September 2010, although a Colliers representative said that is optimistic.

According to the marketing literature, the center would have 304,000 square feet of commercial space anchored by a 195,000-square-foot Wal-Mart Supercenter. It would be slightly smaller than the Wal-Mart Supercenter in Stockton. The remainder of the Ceres center would have retail stores, shops and restaurants.

Supercenters are larger than regular Wal-Marts and sell general merchandise and groceries, including fresh meat, fruit and vegetables.

Rios said the timeline for building and opening the center depends on city approvals. A draft environmental study should be completed in a couple of months. Planning Commission hearings on Mitchell Ranch could start in late fall, followed by hearings before the City Council.

Kilger said the shopping center could be built and opened within a year of issuing city permits, which could place the opening of Mitchell Ranch in late 2010 or the first half of 2011.

At its annual meeting, Regency announced a plan for steering the company through the recession. It recently cut dividend payments to shareholders and has laid off 100 employees, or 18 percent of its work force, since early 2008.

The company noted, however, that grocery-anchored shopping centers are fairly resistant to a recession. The sale of more than \$300 million of company stock will cover capital needs for the next three years.

"A lot of projects that have (opened) recently have struggled, but this project is still pretty far out," said Ben Rishwain, an associate retail specialist for Colliers. "We have had interest from some pretty strong tenants."

He said he expected to know more after talking with potential tenants, architects and others at a Las Vegas convention over the weekend.

Rios said Wal-Mart is awaiting release of the environmental impact report, which will tell what improvements are needed to mitigate effects on traffic, [air quality](#), noise and public services.

The Mitchell Road turnoff on Highway 99 would be the main freeway access to the center. Traffic counts at Mitchell Road and Highway 99 have exceeded 110,000 vehicles per day; there is no estimate on how much additional traffic the supercenter would generate.

For years, the state Department of Transportation has planned a new interchange on Highway 99 to replace the Mitchell Road turnoff and the Service Road crossing. There is no need to build the interchange before the shopping center is allowed to open, said Tom Westbrook, a senior planner for Ceres.

EPA urged to act on climate, not wait for Congress

By Dina Cappiello, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, L.A. Times and other papers, Monday, May 18, 2009

Arlington, Va. (AP) -- The Environmental Protection Agency should not wait for Congress before taking steps to control the gases blamed for global warming, supporters of federal greenhouse-gas regulation said Monday.

The EPA hearing is the first of two public forums on the agency's April finding that concentrations of carbon dioxide and five other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere pose dangers to human health and welfare — and that emissions from new motor vehicles and engines are contributing to the problem.

The proposal could eventually lead to regulation of greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act, starting with emissions standards for motor vehicles.

"We must reduce greenhouse gas emissions now without further delay and without waiting for a perfect solution," said Navis Bermudez, speaking on behalf of New York Gov. David A. Paterson.

"While we also hope that Congress enacts comprehensive federal climate change legislation, we believe EPA can act now under the existing Clean Air Act without waiting for such legislation."

The House Energy and Commerce Committee began work on that legislation Monday afternoon. The bill — the American Clean Energy and Security Act — would for the first time limit the emissions blamed for global warming from large industrial sources.

The EPA proposal has put pressure on Capitol Hill to take action, a point raised by some lawmakers at the meeting Monday.

"If Congress does nothing, then greenhouse gases could be regulated administratively through the EPA without input from members that represent diverse constituencies nationwide," said Rep. Gene Green, D-Texas.

Which proposal will ultimately win out depends mostly on Congress. The House bill would largely pre-empt the EPA from forcing industries to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions under the Clean Air Act. Instead, it writes a new chapter that would put a price on each ton of pollution and allow industry to decide how to meet increasingly more stringent targets.

President Barack Obama has made it clear that he prefers new legislation to cope with the problem.

In his weekly radio address Saturday, the president called the bill "a plan that will finally reduce our dangerous dependence on foreign oil and cap the carbon pollution that threatens our health and our climate."

The agency was compelled to weigh in on the threat posed by greenhouse gases after a 2007 Supreme Court ruling found them to be air pollutants.

Industry groups and Republicans quickly sounded the alarm, saying the finding could eventually prompt the EPA to regulate pollution from a whole suite of sources and burden an already troubled economy.

That view was reiterated Monday by Bryan Brendle, director of energy and resources policy for the National Association of Manufacturers.

Brendle told EPA officials the Clean Air Act was ill-suited to deal with the global problem of climate change and would "pre-empt ongoing congressional debate on an issue that would impact all sectors of a struggling economy."

Supporters tried to head off those criticisms Monday.

"We are concerned that other commenters have used hyperbole to describe the consequences of potential endangerment finding claiming it will wreak havoc ... we disagree strongly," said Nancy Kruger, deputy director of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies, which represents state and local air pollution control agencies.

More than a hundred people signed up to testify at the EPA hearing, including environmentalists, scientists, religious leaders and climate change skeptics.

The House Energy committee intends to complete work and vote on the climate and energy bill by the end of the week. But Republicans concerned that the 932-page proposal will drive up energy prices and harm the economy are expected to drag out the proceedings by offering hundreds of amendments.

[Commentary in the Washington Post, Tuesday, May 19, 2009](#)

Let's Have Cap and No Trade

By David Sokol

The adage that everyone wants to go to heaven but no one wants to die is on display again as the House considers a massive 932-page climate-change bill, introduced by Reps. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Ed Markey (D-Mass.), that would establish a "cap and trade" system for carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions. Its sponsors say it will keep low- and middle-income consumers whole while the United States cuts emissions 83 percent below 2005 levels by 2050 and transitions to a clean-energy economy.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

On paper, the Waxman-Markey bill puts a cost on carbon dioxide by imposing a ceiling, or cap, on greenhouse gas emissions and then setting up a market for regulated industries -- such as the electric power sector -- to buy and sell allowances to pollute under that cap. As the cap is reduced each year, market participants will exchange allowances in a complex auction market.

If you liked what credit default swaps did to our economy, you're going to love cap-and-trade. Just read Title VIII of the bill, which lets investment banks, hedge funds and other speculators participate in the cap-and-trade market. They don't have emissions to cut; they have commissions to make.

The real hidden catch of the cap-and-trade system, though, is that it will require consumers to pay twice: first for emission allowances and then for the construction of new low- and zero-carbon power plants.

Congressional estimates of government revenue from the sale of cap-and-trade allowances range from hundreds of billions to trillions of dollars. Contrary to assurances from the bill's sponsors that utility customers wouldn't have to pay these costs for the first decade, some coal-dependent utilities would be forced to purchase more than half of their allowances when the program is scheduled to begin in 2012. Would these allowances reduce our greenhouse gas emissions? No; that would come when consumers footed a second bill -- for the cost of their utilities either to retrofit coal and gas plants to capture carbon -- something that cannot be done today on a commercial scale -- or to shut them down and build non-carbon-producing nuclear plants and wind farms instead.

In fact, to the extent that cap-and-trade auctions increase ratepayers' bills, they will impede utilities' ability to develop a less carbon-intensive infrastructure.

Markets thrive on volatility. Electricity utilities, on the other hand, are highly regulated to ensure price stability -- not volatility -- for their customers. The Waxman-Markey bill imposes a market-based (read: unregulated) trading program on a highly regulated industry that must make enormous long-term and least-cost capital decisions to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. In an unprecedented and unwise fashion, it turns American industry over to the federal Environmental Protection Agency by giving the agency the authority to change the rules on allowances every five years. Is this sound public and economic policy? I think not.

If Congress wants to achieve 83 percent reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, the electricity sector can get there, but there is no need for that first cost. Get rid of auctions, speculation, trading, new Wall Street "products" (yes, the bill allows for credit default swaps and carbon derivatives) and the trillions of dollars in government revenue that may end up being spent on other programs. Get rid of the 12 new advisory boards, committees and other institutions established under the Waxman-Markey bill. Focus instead on the most efficient and inexpensive way to cut carbon dioxide emissions.

The solution? Keep the cap and remove trading from the equation: Mandate that the industry, over the same 40-year period, simply limit its emissions to the same levels proposed in the Waxman-Markey bill. This can be accomplished with a clear plan that gives states an option: Either they participate in a cap-and-trade program or they elect an alternative compliance mechanism to reach the same greenhouse gas emission goals by working with their utilities to develop a 40-year program of shutting down aging coal plants, retrofitting plants to capture carbon dioxide if the technology becomes available, and/or building zero-carbon energy plants. More important, the carbon dioxide reductions in this proposal can be achieved while providing

adequate time to plan to minimize price shock and economic dislocation. It is the states, through their public utilities commissions -- not the federal government -- that have both the interest and obligation to manage citizens' costs while transitioning to a carbon-free future.

This transformation of our entire electricity sector won't be cheap, but it would be less expensive than the double cost of a complex cap-and-trade program followed by that same transformation.

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, May 19, 2009](#)

Life on the (motorcycle) chain gang

You recently ran an editorial from another newspaper advocating smog inspections and restrictions on motorcycle customization.

When we are all in the big socialist prison camp together, the prisoners walking around with the big smiles will be the tree huggers. They will rejoice knowing that we have all reduced our carbon footprints to the minimum by giving up everything that made us a free people.

No thanks to more motorcycle restrictions.

Bob Lombardi, Modesto

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday May 19, 2009](#)

Gas stations need a break on air rules

Our nation continues to cope with a deep recession. The state's unemployment rate is at a historic high. The state's budget crisis is in a free fall as tax receipts have plummeted.

Yet, bureaucrats at the California Air Resources Board and local air pollution control districts are not recognizing the economic impact and the financial strain of their decisions to enforce new and expensive regulations.

Contrary to public statements, local air districts are shutting down gas stations and putting people out of work. Stations have been fined to the tune of \$943,815 statewide for not complying with the Enhanced Vapor Recovery Regulation.

Given the toll of these regulations on workers, we support Senate Bill 507, a legislative proposal to extend the effective date of enforcement for a year. This measure will be heard Wednesday in the Senate Environmental Quality Committee.

In light of our economic climate, it is irresponsible for regulators to ignore the financial impacts of their actions on workers and their families. They need to right this wrong for 3,200 gas stations and their employees and pass SB507.

Dave Cox, R-Fair Oaks
Roderick D. Wright, D-Los Angeles
Ron Calderon, D-Montebello
State senators, Sacramento

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses new standards on emission limits for new automobiles. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Límite federal a emisiones de autos

Se considera un rendimiento de combustible de 42 millas por galón

KEN THOMAS y PHILIP ELLIOTT / Associated Press
La Opinión, Tuesday, May 19, 2009

WASHINGTON.— El presidente Barack Obama lanzará hoy nuevas normas de eficiencia de combustibles, además de una meta más amplia para reducir la contaminación de los escapes de los vehículos, lo que marcará la primera vez que los límites a los gases con efecto invernadero estarán vinculados a normas federales para automóviles y camiones.

Autoridades que conocen las conversaciones con la administración aseguran que las normas requerirán estándares de ahorro de combustible para las camionetas aumentará a cerca de 26 millas por galón (MPG) en 2016, mientras que para los autos subirá a 42 mpg de las 25 actuales.

El nuevo reglamento será más estricto que las 35 mpg para 2017 establecido por el estado de California. Las leyes de 2007 requieren que los fabricantes de autos aumenten el promedio de ahorro de combustible de su flota a 35 mpg para 2020

California, otros 13 estados y el Distrito de Columbia han pedido al gobierno federal que les permita exigir normas más estrictas que las del gobierno federal. Las regulaciones de los estados reducirían las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero en 30% en los automóviles y camiones nuevos para 2016.

Las autoridades dijeron que el anuncio es un avance hacia la meta del 30% para 2016, comenzando con los modelos año 2011 y posteriores.

Se espera que la propuesta coordine dos estándares independientes para eficiencia de combustibles y emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero de los vehículos, con el objetivo de lograr automóviles que rindan más millas por galón y que tengan sistemas de aire acondicionado que contaminen menos, dijo Roland Hwang, director de política para vehículos del Consejo de Defensa de los Recursos Naturales. El grupo ambientalista ha conversado sobre los próximos cambios con la Casa Blanca en las últimas semanas, aseguró.

Hwang dijo que espera que la norma sobre los gases con efecto invernadero establezca un límite de un equivalente a casi 35 millas por galón para la flota de vehículos para 2016.

Una ley sobre energía de 2007 exige a los fabricantes de automóviles lograr al menos 35 mpg para 2020, un aumento de 40% con respecto a la norma actual de unas 25 mpg. Las exigencias para automóviles para pasajeros han permanecido en 27.5 mpg desde 1985. Esto ha generado quejas de grupos ambientalistas, que aseguran que el gobierno ha sido lento en presionar a los fabricantes de automóviles para que produzcan vehículos con mayor eficiencia del combustible.

Los fabricantes de automóviles han pedido una norma nacional única y aseguran que una cantidad de diferentes regulaciones hará daño a una industria que ya se encuentra en graves dificultades económicas, y que hará muy poco para solucionar el calentamiento global.

La medida de Obama también concluiría de manera eficaz el litigio entre los estados y los fabricantes de automóviles, que intentaron bloquear la regulación por estados. Las nuevas reglas federales harían que los fabricantes de los estados abandonaran los juicios. Dos empresas de automóviles que han formado parte del juicio, General Motors Corp. y Chrysler LLC, recibieron miles de millones de dólares en préstamos del gobierno en medio de una enorme caída de las ventas de automóviles y una economía debilitada.

Una decisión de marzo 2008 prohíbe a los estados establecer sus propios límites para emisiones de gases con efecto invernadero provocados por los automóviles, pero Obama ordenó a la Agencia de Protección Ambiental de EE.UU. que reconsiderara la decisión. California y los demás estados pidieron permiso a EPA para establecer una norma para reducir los gases con efecto invernadero de los automóviles.

Jennifer Granholm, gobernadora demócrata de Michigan, que está siendo considerada para un puesto vacante en la Suprema Corte, asistirá el martes a un evento en la Casa Blanca sobre normas de emisiones de automóviles, dijo un miembro de la administración que habló con la condición de permanecer en el anonimato debido a que los detalles del evento no se habían anunciado todavía.

El gobernador de California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, republicano, viajará a Washington para un anuncio con respecto a la solicitud de California sobre normas federales de emisiones de automóviles, dijo Aaron McLearn, portavoz de Schwarzenegger. McLearn se negó a ampliar la información.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses President Obama presented today a national plan against climate change.

El presidente Obama presenta hoy plan nacional contra cambio climático

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, May 19, 2009

El presidente Barack Obama presenta hoy el plan nacional contra las emisiones de gases automovilísticas que ocasionan el cambio climático y perjudican la salud de los estadounidenses. De acuerdo con un adelanto de la Casa Blanca, el plan equivale a retirar de circulación 177 millones de automóviles. El programa se basa en imponer a la industria automotriz nuevos modelos que ofrezcan mucha mayor distancia de recorrido por menor consumo de gasolina. El proyecto no solo beneficiaría al medio ambiente sino que ahorrará en promedio a cada conductor unos mil 300 dólares anuales en combustible. Los cambios comenzarían entre ahora y el año 2012, pero para el 2016 los automóviles que se vendan en el país rendirán en promedio 35 millas y media por galón de gasolina. La administración Obama analiza si ayudará a los consumidores a sustituir viejos autos contaminantes por los futuros modelos.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the impact on border towns by climate change will be analyzed as heat temperatures keep rising.

Analizarán impacto del cambio climático en la frontera

EFE

La Opinión, Tuesday, May 19, 2009

TUCSON, Arizona (EFE).- Un ambicioso proyecto internacional a cargo del Instituto Sky Island con sede en Tucson analizará el impacto del cambio climático en las especies de flora y fauna que habitan a lo largo de la zona fronteriza.

Sergio Ávila, miembro de Sky Island Alliance, dijo que el proyecto, que empezará a fines de mes y durará aproximadamente tres años, servirá para la investigación, educación y conservación de la diversidad biológica y ecológica de la región fronteriza, con especial concentración en la frontera entre Arizona y México.

Según Ávila, la franja fronteriza que incluye los límites mexicanos en la zona conocida como de Islas Serranas es un "mosaico" de diversidad ecológica que presenta especies propias de climas tropicales provenientes del sur de México, templadas y calientes del desierto de Arizona-Sonora y el Chihuahuense.

Este proyecto, que lleva el nombre de "Evaluación de la Biodiversidad de Archipiélago Madreño (MABA por sus siglas en inglés), es financiado en gran parte por la Fundación Ambiental Veolia de Francia, creada en el 2004 como una de las primeras del sector privado en ese país.

La fundación apoya proyectos no lucrativos y comunitarios que contribuyen al desarrollo sostenible, con enfoque especial en conservación ambiental y biodiversidad en todo el mundo.

Instituciones académicas, universidades, científicos, investigadores, el sector privado y voluntarios formarán parte del proyecto que se enfocará en el impacto de los cambios climáticos en esta región y la explotación de recursos naturales.

"Solamente en estos momentos en el sur de Arizona ya tenemos una semana superando los 100 grados Fahrenheit, estas temperaturas se adelantaron tres semanas de su ciclo normal", dijo Ávila.

"Nosotros, los humanos, tenemos aire acondicionado en el trabajo o nuestras casas, pero los animales no tienen como protegerse, deben adaptarse a estos cambios que afectan su existencia como especie", agregó.

En la última década, esta región también se ha visto afectada considerablemente por una fuerte sequía.

El estudio abarcará las diferentes estaciones y cambios climáticos de la región, como son el intenso calor del verano, las lluvias y el invierno.

El proyecto estará integrado en tres partes, la primera de educación, que permitirá que en él participen estudiantes de escuelas locales.

La segunda parte se concentrará en la investigación y participarán universidades de Arizona y Sonora, para hacer estudios en diversas partes de la región

Mientras que la tercera fase será la de conservación aplicada, por medio de la cual se desarrollarán planes de acción para establecer proyectos de restauración y conservación de los recursos naturales.

"No queremos que éste sea un plan más que se quede solamente en papel, queremos que se tome acción al respecto y lograr un cambio positivo que beneficie a la región", dijo el ecologista.

También se busca establecer convenios con propietarios privados para generar alternativas económicas al mismo tiempo que se protegen los recursos naturales.

"Este proyecto representa un plan visionario y audaz de acción para investigar, proteger y diseminar información sobre la increíble riqueza biológica de la región", dijo Thomas Van Devender, director del proyecto MABA y quien se ha desempeñado durante 25 años como investigador científico del Museo del Desierto Arizona-Sonora.

"Esta área es reconocida mundialmente como una región crítica de biodiversidad, pero la integridad ecológica de la región está amenazada severamente por transformaciones demográficas y económicas, algunas prácticas de utilización de la tierra, la escasez de agua y un clima cambiante", agregó Van Devender.

Enfatizó que la ciencia con la participación y educación comunitaria debe actuar rápidamente para conservar este "tesoro global".