

Plan to clear valley air has EPA's OK

By Ken Carlson

Modesto Bee, Saturday, December 12, 2009

The federal Environmental Protection Agency said Friday it has approved a state plan and rules to meet an ozone health standard in the San Joaquin Valley starting in 2010.

The rules are for meeting the federal one-hour standard for ozone, or smog, in the eight-county San Joaquin Valley air basin. In a lawsuit filed last year, activists charged the EPA was slow in taking action on measures for meeting the one-hour standard and an eight-hour ozone standard in the valley.

"The rules and commitments in the plan are now enforceable by EPA and the public," said Deborah Jordan, director of the air division for the EPA's Pacific Southwest region. "Today's action lays the groundwork for attainment of the more protective eight-hour ozone standard."

The EPA took action on more than 20 measures to improve air quality, such as smog checks, consumer products and rules for livestock operations.

According to the EPA, it is requiring California and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to strengthen five of the rules, including a fee for major polluters if the area does not meet the one-hour ozone standard next year and a rule for reducing emissions from dairies.

The valley has to meet the one-hour ozone standard in 2010, 2011 and 2012 to satisfy the EPA.

Update: Air quality forecast and woodburning rules

Merced Sun-Star, Monday, December 14, 2009

MERCED

AQI Forecast for 12/14/2009: 39 Good (PM2.5)

School Flag color for 12/14/2009: Green

Fireplace/Wood Stove Burning Status for 12/14/2009: Please burn cleanly

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

Daily Air Quality Forecast

More information about the Daily Air Quality Forecast can be found at:
<http://www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/forecast.htm>.

More information about the Fireplace/Wood Stove Burning Status can be found at:
<http://www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/WoodBurnPage.htm>.

Public input sought on Lodi Energy Center

Maggie Creamer

Lodi News Sentinel, Saturday, December 12, 2009

The California Energy Commission staff will hold a public workshop Monday to discuss the Lodi Energy Center, a 255-megawatt natural gas powered plant.

The commission's staff has recommended that the commission license the plant. The workshop will allow the public to participate in discussions about how the plant could affect air quality, biology, cultural resources, visual resources and other topics covered in the staff's assessment of the project.

The meeting will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the California Energy Commission, Hearing Room B, 1516 9th Street, Sacramento.

The project will be on 4.4 acre site next to the White Slough wastewater plant.

Climate negotiators eye the 'forgotten 50%' of greenhouse gas pollutants
While the U.S. has focused on CO2 emissions, some nations are pushing for measures to curb black carbon, HFCs and methane, which they say will be easier to achieve and will show quick results.

By Jim Tankersley, staff writer

L.A. Times, Monday, Dec. 14, 2009

Reporting from Copenhagen - International negotiators are quietly making progress here on steps to reduce "stealth" pollutants that contribute to climate change, including soot, refrigerants and methane gas, which together account for nearly as much greenhouse gas pollution as carbon dioxide.

Carbon dioxide, of course, is the poster gas for global warming. Disagreements over how to reduce its emission from cars, factories and power plants have dominated the Copenhagen climate talks so far.

But carbon dioxide accounts for only half the world's greenhouse gas emissions. And while top leaders postured and negotiated over a host of issues related to carbon emissions in the first week of the summit here, behind the scenes diplomats have worked toward compromises on a few simple strategies to reduce the other pollutants that cause global warming.

Those sources include so-called black carbon, soot from incompletely burned fossil fuels and biomass, including that produced by ships and cooking stoves that collects in the atmosphere and on ice and prevents sunlight from being reflected back into space; hydrofluorocarbon chemicals, known as HFCs, used in refrigerators and air conditioners worldwide; and methane, which emanates from coal mines and landfills.

Many scientists and environmentalists say reducing the "forgotten 50%" of pollutants will be faster, easier and substantially cheaper than cutting carbon dioxide, and could buy the world time in its climate clock race.

"We can eliminate -- not just cut -- one of the six greenhouse gases this week," said Durwood Zaelke, a longtime environmental lawyer who is president of the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development. "This can buy us more than a decade of delay" against the worst effects of climate change, he said.

Even as developing and developed nations have clashed over several issues, there has been broad support for the goal of reducing non-CO2 emissions. However, some nations are worried about moving to phase out HFCs before enough replacement chemicals are produced.

Negotiators here, however, are heavily focused on the high-profile issue of reaching a deal on CO2 emissions -- particularly the Obama administration, which stands to lose political capital at home and abroad if no such agreement materializes.

The administration appears loath to push provisions that could distract from the focus on carbon dioxide. At the same time, environmental advocates in Copenhagen say they worry that the "forgotten 50%" could slip out of a final agreement unless the United States champions their inclusion more vigorously.

"There is a huge political opportunity for a clear administration win on an issue where they desperately need one," said Paul Bledsoe, a former Clinton White House official who works on climate-change issues, and who joined Zaelke in urging the Obama team in January to act quickly on the "forgotten 50%" of emissions. "So far, they've left it languishing."

President Obama has repeatedly called for phasing out HFCs and the Environmental Protection Agency has taken strides to reduce the United States' black carbon output. American officials are set to unveil a modest black carbon spending initiative this week.

Because HFC regulation is handled through a decades-old treaty that aims to phase out pollutants that deplete the ozone layer, writing an HFC declaration into the agreement, a U.S.

official said in Copenhagen, is "not something that we think is necessary."

Action on black carbon and hydrofluorocarbons is a particularly appealing goal for island nations concerned that the world may be nearing "tipping points" of global warming, in which increased greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere start a chain reaction of temperature rise that would lead to their nations being swallowed by rising seawater.

The island nations are desperate for measures that will reduce warming in the short term. Black carbon is an ideal target because it stays in the atmosphere for only a few weeks, compared with 100 years for carbon dioxide, meaning that if black carbon emissions were eliminated, atmospheric heat-trapping would drop quickly.

In addition, the world has a successful track record of replacing harmful chemicals akin to HFCs, which replaced ozone-depleting refrigerants in the 1980s and '90s. Many scientists say HFCs could be replaced by either existing chemicals or those that chemical companies will quickly produce in the event of a phase-out, if the ozone treaty history is a guide.

Over the last week, Zaelke, Bledsoe and their allies in several national delegations to the talks have pushed to include a few sentences in a new climate agreement, which they say would allow the world to move swiftly against both substances.

One provision would create a fast-acting program to tackle several non-carbon-dioxide contributors to the greenhouse effect, including black carbon. The fund would go toward providing nations with more efficient cookstoves or paying them to reduce black carbon output from shipping.

Another provision would simply direct the parties to the Montreal Protocol -- a 1987 treaty that phased out chemicals depleting the ozone layer -- to phase out HFCs using the same mechanism. Under the Montreal Protocol, ozone-depleting chemicals were phased out quickly and, at a \$2.4-billion total cost, far more cheaply than any large-scale proposed reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

European, South American and island-nation delegates have pushed for those measures, which have been included in the most recent key draft texts that have circulated among negotiators.

But U.S. officials maintain that the Montreal parties don't need help from a climate agreement to regulate HFCs, even though the signatories decided at their last meeting to wait for direction from climate negotiators before going ahead with a phase-out.

U.S. negotiators appear bogged down in intense discussions over basic components of carbon dioxide emissions limits, such as whether developing countries will make clear in the agreement that they will carry out reduction pledges and that they are open to international verification that they are meeting their commitments.

Other delegates say that if the United States championed the non-carbon-dioxide proposals in a final agreement, it could gain support from developing nations that have complained of being marginalized -- and perhaps help break the carbon-dioxide logjam.

"In the middle of all the despair and animosity," said Romina Picolotti, Argentina's former environmental secretary, "there's this big opportunity . . . to get a fair deal here on something."

Climate talks stall over requirements for rich nations

Developing countries accuse industrialized nations of forsaking Kyoto Protocol

By Juliet Eilperin

Washington Post, Monday, December 14, 2009

COPENHAGEN -- Global climate talks ground to a halt Monday morning when a large bloc of developing countries complained that rich nations are abandoning the pact that has governed climate policy for more than a decade, though work continued behind the scenes on a new agreement.

The group of developing nations, known as the G-77, accused the United States and other industrialized countries of forsaking the Kyoto Protocol, the climate agreement that imposes emission limits on nearly every developed nation.

Although Kyoto exempts emerging economies from binding cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, the United States and other rich nations want a new climate agreement to apply to major developing nations. The G-77 countries are pushing back against that approach, saying they do not want to give up the legal treaty now in effect for an uncertain pact could pose less stringent requirements and would not deliver the worldwide emission cuts they seek.

"The killing of the Kyoto Protocol, I can say, will mean the killing of Africa," said Mama Konaté, a member of Mali's delegation. "Before accepting that, we should all die first."

Connie Hedegaard -- the Danish minister chairing the U.N.-sponsored talks -- met behind closed doors with African delegates and, according to several sources, resolved the initial impasse. But formal talks remained suspended this afternoon.

Hedegaard will take several of the contentious issues that remain out of the hands of negotiators and put them before the ministers who have arrived in Copenhagen for high-level meetings, according to a source familiar with her plan who asked not to be identified.

The spectacle continued inside the Bella Center, however, as two women dressed as angels held signs saying "Don't Kill Kyoto" as photographers snapped away. Other activists formed a human chain in order to demonstrate their solidarity with the African delegates.

Ed Miliband, Britain's energy and climate change secretary, told reporters the Danes hoped to leave open the question of whether Kyoto would provide the basic framework of a new agreement, and whether a final pact -- which will not be completed until 2010-- would continue to offer two tracks.

"I'm sympathetic to the developing-country view that they don't want the Kyoto track to be ended before we have new legal instruments in place," Miliband said. But he added that any final pact would have to depart from Kyoto because "it would be irresponsible for the climate" to not have major emerging economies make different climate commitments from the past.

Noting that an unprecedented number of world leaders -- including President Obama -- would be arriving in Copenhagen this week to join the talks, Miliband said that "ministers and negotiators need to get their act together."

David Waskow, climate change director for Oxfam America, said the outcome of the current standoff could help determine what happens at the talks this week. "Things are hanging in the balance," he said.

U.S. unveils plan to rev up clean technology in poor nations

Nations pledge funds to make renewable energy more accessible

By Juliet Eilperin

Washington Post, Monday, December 14, 2009

COPENHAGEN -- Energy Secretary Steven Chu on Monday announced a five-year, \$350-million international plan to deploy clean technology in developing countries. The effort that includes such things as putting solar lanterns in poor households and promoting advanced energy-efficient appliances worldwide, administration officials said.

The Climate Renewables and Efficiency Deployment Initiative is an attempt by the United States and other industrialized nations to help curb energy consumption in countries that will help determine if global greenhouse emissions keep rising or level off.

"No matter what pledges are made here in Copenhagen, global emissions cannot be cut without widespread deployment of clean energy technologies," said Paul W. Bledsoe, a spokesman with the D.C.-based National Commission on Energy Policy.

The initiative -- which includes \$85 million from the United States and donations from industrialized nations such as Italy and Australia -- aims to make energy-saving technology that already exists cheap enough to penetrate markets in India, parts of Africa and elsewhere. It is distinct from the major financing package the United States is expected to unveil this week as part of a broader climate deal.

Michael A. Levi, an energy and environment fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, said the launch was unlikely to affect the ongoing negotiations here, "but it will have a big impact on climate change and actual energy use."

In Copenhagen, street protests pushing for a more ambitious climate agreement continued as a few dozen ministers met behind closed doors with Connie Hedegaard, the Danish minister chairing the U.N.-sponsored climate conference. Danish police imposed strict controls on the second day of demonstrations, detaining at least 200 activists. Meanwhile, Christian leaders including Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa led an ecumenical service focused on global warming.

The question of how much rich nations are willing to pay poor ones to secure emission cuts continued to dominate the talks on Sunday. Negotiators working on a provision that aims to curb deforestation, which accounts for roughly 15 percent of global greenhouse-gas emissions, were forced to take out language calling for cutting deforestation in half by 2050 because of uncertainty surrounding financing.

But groups dedicated to preserving tropical forests, such as Conservation International and the Nature Conservancy, said the language was still in flux and might be restored.

Chu, the fourth member of President Obama's Cabinet to arrive here, addressed attendees at the climate talks on Monday. The plan to deploy clean technology -- which comes out of the ongoing meeting of the world's biggest greenhouse-gas emitters known as the Major Economies Forum -- aims to lower the costs of solar home systems and lanterns; enforce quality control for these products; and coordinate international standards, labels and incentives for high-efficiency appliances.

It also includes \$50 million for a renewable-energy program under the World Bank, which will advise poor countries on national renewable-energy strategies and help fund some of the capital costs for renewable ventures.

Kateri Callahan, president of the Alliance to Save Energy, welcomed the initiative as "moving us in the right direction," but emphasized that the program would have to deliver on its promises.

"It can't just be words," she said. "The words have to translate into action."

A number of nonprofits, including the D.C.-based Solar Electric Light Fund and India's Barefoot College, have already funded solar-power projects in impoverished communities that have allowed these to leapfrog over conventional electricity sources.

But the systems, including solar lanterns that can replace polluting kerosene wick lamps, are still too expensive for many in the developing world to afford, and their quality varies. An administration official familiar with the new initiative said it could cut the cost of these devices by as much as half.

Emerging economies such as China and India have ambitious renewable-energy targets as part of their national climate strategies, and the wind and solar industry representatives are more visible at the climate negotiations this year than ever before. On Monday, solar associations from 16 nations and the European Union are releasing a report titled "Seizing the Solar Solution," projecting the combined production of European and U.S. solar industry alone can reduce carbon dioxide emissions by nearly 1 billion metric tons by 2020.

US reveals fund for green tech in poor nations

The Associated Press

In the Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Monday, December 14, 2009

WASHINGTON -- The White House on Monday announced a new program drawing funds from international partners to spend \$350 million over five years to supply developing nations with clean energy technology to curb greenhouse gas emissions and reduce global warming.

The program will contribute to distribution of solar power alternatives for homes, including sun-powered lanterns, supply of cleaner equipment and appliances and a push to fund and put in place renewable energy systems in the world's poorer nations.

The funding plan grew out of the Major Economies Forum (MEF) established among the world's top economies earlier this year, with a decision to produce detail plans and spending at the July summit meeting in L'Aquila, Italy.

The U.S. share of the program will amount to \$85 million with the remainder coming from Australia, Britain, Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland, the White House said in a statement by spokesman Robert Gibbs.

He said President Barack Obama had assigned Energy Secretary Steven Chu to coordinate with partners in the MEF to insure immediate action on the program.

The White House said the U.S. and its partners in the effort "have been working to develop a suite of technology action plans, which lay out options for ambitious government action on 10 key clean energy technologies: advanced vehicles; bio-energy; building energy efficiency; carbon capture, use and storage; high-efficiency, low-emissions coal; industrial energy efficiency; marine energy; smart grid; solar energy; and wind energy."

The plan was announced in conjunction with the ongoing U.N.-sponsored climate change summit in Copenhagen, Denmark. Obama will attend the gathering later this week.

Chu and four other members of Obama's Cabinet already are at the summit, where delegates have focused so far on the question of how much developed nations will contribute to poor countries to help them develop clean energy technology to mitigate emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that are blamed for rising global temperatures.

A sober note from the IEA

By Steven Mufson

Washington Post, Monday, December 14, 2009

The International Energy Agency sounded a sober note today, politely warning that even if the Copenhagen summit reaches an agreement along the most ambitious terms being discussed, it won't be enough.

The IEA report is also a reminder of just how enormous the energy industry is. The Energy Department secretary, Steven Chu, is going to announce a \$350 million fund to invest in technology. But it's a drop in the bucket in the energy world, less than what's spent on research and development by any one of a number of major oil companies.

Even the \$100 billion to \$200 billion in investment in clean energy being debated by negotiators seems modest compared to the size of the task.

IEA today said that "to support a global transition to more efficient, low-carbon energy systems, the IEA estimates that \$10.5 trillion (with \$8.3 trillion in end-use) are needed by 2030. With such effort, global CO2 emissions would decline after 2020, and be lower than today's level by 2030."

That's what the IEA says is needed to keep atmospheric carbon dioxide at 450 parts per million, the level many policymakers say is needed to limit climate change to 2 degrees. Leading climatologists, however, say 350 ppm is what's needed.

IEA executive director Nobuo Tanaka says in the agency's release that "the results in the 2020-2030 decade will be crucial, as this is when most new technologies need to be deployed. The wave of investments that will come with the economic recovery must be climate friendly. A strong

signal is needed now. Every year of delay adds USD 500 billion to the energy sector cost of reaching 450 ppm."

Here's how the IEA is figuring it:

"With energy accounting for 84 percent of global CO₂ emissions, the IEA has analysed what needs to be done to limit the long-term concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to 450 parts per million (ppm) of CO₂ equivalent, in line with a 2°C increase in global temperature. On current trends, unless new measures are taken, global energy-related CO₂ emissions will reach 40 Gigatonnes (Gt) by 2030 (29 Gt in 2007) and continue rising thereafter, whereas climate stabilisation requires emissions to peak around 2020 and then decline."

"The 450 Policy scenario of our flagship publication World Energy Outlook 2009 is the right path to green growth but it is a radical departure from current trends," Mr. Tanaka stressed. "For instance, the world would need to retire a significant portion of today's coal-fired electricity plants before the end of their lifetime - by 2030, early closures around the world would amount to the equivalent of today's total coal-based power generation in Japan, EU and the US. Around 60 percent of global electricity production in 2030 would need to come from a mix of renewables (37 percent), nuclear (18 percent) and plants fitted with carbon capture and storage (5 percent). Another illustration is the dramatic shift needed in car sales, with hybrids, plug-in hybrids and electric vehicles representing 60 percent of sales in 2030, from around 1 percent today."

Save sea life, spend \$7.6 billion to retrofit power plants. Guess who'll pay?

By Teri Sforza, Register staff writer
O.C. Register, Monday, Dec. 14, 2009

The \$7 million sea lion?

True, far more sea mammals meet inglorious ends at San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station than at any other power plant in California, according to the state.

We're talking 558 sea lions and seals entrapped over 15 years, of which 429 died.

It's not just a matter of cute sea mammals. Some 3.6 million fish wind up in San Onofre's intake system each year, though most are caught by screens and returned to the ocean largely unharmed, SCE says. There are also some 6 billion fish larvae caught up in the works; those presumably perish. And don't forget the two sea turtles that have died there since 1983.

How much are these lives worth? If new rules barring power plants from using ocean water to cool their systems take effect next year, the bill will be some \$3 billion - just to retrofit San Onofre alone. Each of its two reactors would have to be shut down for almost two years to make the changes.

And the cost of all this will ultimately fall to the good customers of Southern California Edison (which runs the nuclear plant). The numbers are so big that no one wants to translate it into cost-per-average-household just yet.

The state's no-ocean-water-to-cool-power-plants rule would apply to 18 other plants in California - including the one in Huntington Beach - and the total bill for retrofitting them is estimated to be well over \$7.6 billion. (Note that these estimates come from the power companies; the state is calling for independent studies to determine compliance costs).

Does this meet the common-sense test? Many don't think so. SCE officials say it would impact the state's ability to provide reliable electrical power to a growing populace, [as well as impact air quality](#).

The State Water Resources Control Board was to vote on the new rules this month, but that's been put off until the new year as negotiation on the whens, hows, whys and whats of the new rules continues.

COUNTING THE CARNAGE

“There are 19 electrical power plants located in California that use marine or estuarine waters as a source of cooling water with the capacity to withdraw over 15 billion gallons of water per day,” the state says. “The intake structures for power plants that use once through cooling impinge (trap against screens) and entrain (draw through cooling water systems) marine life to the detriment of the marine environment.

“Annually, impingement currently results in mortality to over 2.6 million fish, and entrainment currently results in mortality to over 19 billion fish larvae. Clean Water Act Section 316(b) requires that the location, design, construction, and capacity of cooling water intake structures reflect the best technology available for minimizing adverse environmental impact.”

Most of the power plants were built decades ago, and are still using ancient technology. This sucking in of vast quantities of ocean water to cool power plants is no longer “the best technology available,” the state says. They should buck up and move into the 21st century. The state aims to protect the environment “without disrupting the critical needs of the State’s electrical generation and transmission system.”

Other options to using ocean water include “dry-cooling,” which uses giant radiators to condense steam; “wet-cooling,” which uses evaporation towers; and using recycled wastewater rather than ocean water. Compliance dates would vary from plant to plant - with San Onofre’s being about a dozen years from now.

NOT SO FAST, SCE SAYS

SCE says the picture painted by the state of San Onofre’s impact on local marine life “omits several rather significant details.

“First, a one-of-a-kind fish protection technologies built into San Onofre’s ocean water intake system protects 94 percent of fish drawn into the plant’s intake system, and then SCE’s artificial reef project off San Clemente and its wetlands restoration project in Del Mar more than compensate for the rest as well as for fish eggs and larvae that are drawn into San Onofre’s cooling water system,” SCE spokesman Gil Alexander told us by email.

This, SCE says, raises a common sense question: Why would the state ask utility customers to pay billions more in the name of protecting coastal fish when San Onofre already has a net positive impact on local marine life?

“This common sense test is just the beginning of SCE’s concerns,” Alexander wrote. “The utility believes the new policy could not be implemented at San Onofre. The utility is telling regulators that engineering challenges and space needed to retrofit cooling towers at San Onofre make them infeasible. SCE also doubts it could obtain the necessary permits to retrofit the plant. One reason is that a preliminary analysis has found that cooling towers could be worse for the environment than ocean water cooling.

That’s because cooling towers would impact on Southern California air quality.

Of further concern: The 19 coastal power plants in question represent 40 percent of the state’s entire generating capacity. “There are questions about whether the state could keep the lights on if the policy forces coastal plant shut-downs,” SCE says.

The email from Alexander continues:

“SCE is also concerned this new water use policy could short circuit other important California environmental initiatives. For example, the California Independent System Operator, the energy agency charged with keeping the lights on statewide, has found that all 19 coastal plants are needed to back-up large increases in variable renewable power sources if California is to achieve its 20 percent renewable energy goal, let alone move beyond it to the 33 percent level the governor has set. And because San Onofre emits virtually no smog-forming pollutants or carbon, shutting it down temporarily or permanently would move the state in the opposite direction of its aggressive greenhouse gas reduction goals.

SCE says it supports the broad policy the State Water Resources Control Board is pursuing - reducing the impact on the marine life of California's coastal power plants that use ocean water cooling systems. It says San Onofre already practices this ideal. To support this view SCE points to a statement by Peter Douglas, Executive Director of the California Coastal Commission, the state agency that permitted San Onofre. That regulatory body required SCE and its customers to spend millions building artificial reefs and restoring fish habitat in the San Dieguito Lagoon as compensation for the marine life that San Onofre impacts. Douglas has stated (August 8, 2009, story in North County Times) that "As far as we're concerned, those impacts have been addressed."

The latest version of the policy should be completed in January, and is expected to come up for a vote by the State Water Board in February.

Stay tuned.

Explaining basics of the Copenhagen climate summit

The Associated Press

In the Modesto Bee, Sunday, December 13, 2009

World leaders are arriving in Copenhagen this week to forge the framework of a plan to limit the causes of global warming, seeking to prevent catastrophic changes to the climate.

Q: What would such a framework involve?

A: There are two key elements:

Agreeing how much carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases each industrialized country should be allowed to produce and how much such major developing countries as China and India should aim at restraining the growth in their emissions.

-Agreeing how much wealthy countries should pay poor nations to help them protect themselves from climate change and to shift away from burning coal or oil, which contribute to climate change. These nations also lack the money to build seawalls against rising oceans, to cope with unusual drought and to deal with other effects of climate change.

Q: How much would carbon dioxide emissions be limited?

A: That's one of the sticking points. This past week in preliminary talks, a key document suggests options that range from nearly eliminating global emissions to cutting them in half by 2050.

More specifically, it suggests rich countries like the U.S., by the year 2020, should cut emissions by 25 to 40 percent of the amount produced in 1990. So far, industrial nations' pledges to cut emissions have amounted to far less than the minimum. The U.S. proposal is for a 3 to 4 percent cut - a sign of the vast chasm that must be bridged. The European Union is committed to a 20 percent cut.

Q: What about emerging countries like China and India?

A: These countries are moving rapidly to bring electricity and modern conveniences to their citizens. There is some consensus that they should not be required to follow draconian carbon reductions. But China recently surpassed the U.S. as the world's biggest producer of greenhouse gases, and the U.S. for one, wants much stricter limits than China will accept.

Q: How much money are wealthy nations likely to pay poor countries?

A: The U.N. has called for \$10 billion annually in the next three years. The European Union has pledged \$3.6 billion a year. It's still unknown how much other wealthy nations, such as the U.S. and Japan, will contribute. The U.N. says much higher amounts will be needed in 10 years.

Q: What would happen if no action, or too little action, is taken?

A: By some leading estimates, temperatures by 2060 could be at least 4 degrees Celsius (7 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than preindustrial levels. Oceans, already expanding from warmth

and melting glaciers, would rise, increasing coastal flooding; a chain reaction of climate changes is projected to lead to harsher, more widespread droughts and more powerful storms.

U.S. intelligence and defense agencies say such environmental changes can lead to energy insecurity, water and food shortages, and social instability. That could mean more military involvement and massive disaster relief.

Q: Are the proposals on the table now enough to prevent climate upheaval?

A: Experts say the pledges in recent days would fall far short. That benchmark is anything more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above temperatures before the Industrial Revolution when man started widespread use of coal and other fossil fuels. If larger reductions are not set now, they will have to come later and be more painful, scientists say.

Q: Some people, including some in the U.S. Congress, don't trust the science predicting cataclysmic climate change. How do we know global warming is man-made and that it will lead to such cataclysmic upheaval?

A: The notion of warming comes from basic science: Carbon dioxide traps heat. CO2 has built up tremendously in the atmosphere, and temperatures are rising. The carbon buildup has occurred because of the explosion in fossil fuel use in our industrial age.

In 1988, U.N. agencies organized the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a network of 2,500 of the best scientists in climatology and related fields, who assess the huge volume of scientific studies on climate. In 2007, in their latest assessment, they found it "very likely" that most observed warming is due to greenhouse gases. Rapid change is already occurring, in the swift summer melt of Arctic sea ice, for example.

Lack of money could hurt forest deal

By Michael Casey, Associated Press Environmental Writer
In the Modesto Bee, Sunday, December 13, 2009

COPENHAGEN -- A proposal aimed at saving the world's tropical forests suffered a setback Sunday, when negotiators at the U.N. climate talks ditched plans for faster action on the problem because of concerns that rich countries aren't willing to finance it.

Most of the headlines at climate talks have revolved around greenhouse gases that come from coal, oil and other fossil fuels. But the destruction of forests - burning or cutting trees to clear land for plantations or cattle ranches - is thought to account for about 20 percent of global emissions. That's as much carbon dioxide as all the world's cars, trucks, trains, planes and ships combined.

So a deal on deforestation is considered a key component of a larger pact on climate change being negotiated in Copenhagen.

On Sunday, language calling for reducing deforestation 50 percent by 2020 was struck from the text being considered. And the document only mentions financing without saying how much would go to the more than 40 developing nations in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

The Europeans want to put in a shorter-term goal, "and the rain forest nations are saying that we are happy to have a goal as long as it's balanced by appropriate funding ... which is missing from the text," said Federica Bietta, the deputy director of the Coalition for Rain Forest Nations. The group represents most of the countries that could take part in a forest scheme.

Antonio Gabriel La Vina, the lead negotiator in the forest talks and author of the latest draft, downplayed the changes and said it was a compromise between those who wanted hard targets and those who didn't.

Environmentalists earlier this month hailed the forest talks as one area where negotiations were progressing and some suggested they could serve as a catalyst to inking a larger climate deal here in Copenhagen.

But they have fallen victim to the same bickering between rich and poor nations which has slowed progress on the wider agreement. There are still no firm figures on financing or cutting greenhouse gas emissions in the larger agreement.

The program called REDD, for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation, would be financed either by richer nations' taxpayers or by a carbon-trading mechanism - a system in which each country would have an emissions ceiling, and those who undershoot it can sell their remainder to over-polluters.

Under carbon trading, the rich countries would pay the poor ones to keep their forests intact, and earn new carbon credits to cover their own emissions.

Policymakers see forest conservation as a cheap and easy way to start tackling global warming. It could end up reducing by 50 percent the cost of halving carbon emissions from 1990 levels by 2030, according to the Eliasch Review, a report sponsored by the British government.

Louis Verchot, who is following the forest talks for the Center for International Forest Research, said he was concerned that the weaker targets and lack of financing in the deforestation agreement could delay its implementation in some countries.

"Until you know how much money you have and what you are aiming at ... it's hard to get the ball rolling," Verchot said.

Environmentalists on Sunday also jumped on negotiators for weakening the deforestation targets and watering down some language on safeguards aimed at protecting biodiversity and the rights of native people.

Chief negotiator La Vina, of the Philippines, defended the text, insisting it was significant that any safeguards were in the agreement at all and that anyone who cares about human rights should "rejoice."

"I'm optimistic that we will get an agreement that is good for the forest, good for the climate and good for the people," he told an audience at a daylong event dedicated to forest issues.

Farm Bureau chief to fight climate change bills

By Chuck Harvey

Capital Press, Thursday, December 10, 2009

ANAHEIM -- Carbon emissions legislation in both houses of Congress could make fruit and vegetable prices unpalatable for many Americans, choke government efforts to improve nutrition programs prioritized under the new farm bill and force replacement of large chunks of farmland with forests.

That is the belief of Bob Stallman, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation. Stallman, speaking at the California Farm Bureau annual meeting in Anaheim Dec. 7, addressed proposed Senate and House bills aimed at reducing carbon emissions, Waxman-Markey HR2454 and the Kerry-Boxer Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act in the Senate.

Stallman also discussed the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, which he said had untenable emission level requirements. Emissions must be reduced to 1990 levels by 2020.

"Farmers in other states certainly don't envy you in California," Stallman said. "It is no secret that you are faced with the greatest environmental regulations of any state in the country."

He said the federal legislation, if approved, would boost food costs by about \$33 billion by 2020 and \$51 billion by 2030.

"That is why we need your support for Farm Bureau's national campaign to defeat federal climate change legislation," Stallman told the audience. The campaign is called "Don't Cap Our Future."

At the consumer level, annual food costs would increase by about \$2,300 per household, Stallman said.

Stallman warned that under the House bill, as much as 17 percent of U.S. land used for food production would be idled and planted in trees. And trees planted would not necessarily be fruit or nut trees.

"Most incentive payments will go to people who choose to grow and maintain trees for greenhouse (gas) reduction, rather than food producers," Stallman said.

Stallman said both bills before Congress would increase energy costs, which translates into higher food costs for consumers. The legislation would also lead to higher fertilizer costs, he said, adding that the legislation has no provision for replacing the energy deficit that would be created. In addition, American producers would be put at a competitive disadvantage with other countries, Stallman said.

He cautioned that federal carbon control legislation could be counterproductive to some programs receiving additional funding under the new farm bill, also known as the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008. The new farm bill provides an extra \$10.4 billion for food and nutrition programs, an extra \$4 billion for conservation programs and an extra \$2.3 billion for specialty-crop programs.

The House bill would cut greenhouse gas emissions by 17 percent, compared to 2005 levels in 2020; by 42 percent in 2030 and by 83 percent in 2050. Supporters of the bill say it would break America's dependence on foreign oil, make the U.S. the world leader in clean energy jobs and technology, cut global warming pollution and promote energy security.

What does it mean?

The Associated Press, Thursday, December 10, 2009

A big meeting in Copenhagen. A cap-and-trade bill in Congress. And now, a determination by the Environmental Protection Agency that global warming pollution is a threat to public health -- a move that clears the way for the first-ever federal regulations targeting climate-changing emissions.

Confused about the EPA's action on greenhouse gases?

Here are some questions and answers about what was announced by the EPA on Dec. 7 and what it means for international climate negotiations, action in Congress and global warming in general:

Q: What did the EPA do exactly?

A: The EPA classified six greenhouse gases -- carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride -- as pollutants that threaten the health and welfare of the American people. This will compel the federal government -- unless it is blocked by Congress -- to regulate emissions of greenhouse gases for the first time under the 1970 Clean Air Act. The government already controls releases of sulfur dioxide, ground-level ozone, nitrogen oxides and carbon monoxide under the law.

Q: Why did the EPA decide to do this?

A: A 2007 Supreme Court ruling declared that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are air pollutants as defined by the Clean Air Act and that the EPA had the authority to regulate them if they are found to endanger public health and welfare. It directed the EPA to make that determination. The Bush administration never acted on the court order. By contrast, the Obama administration found the science overwhelming and announced it would set the first-ever greenhouse gas standards for automobiles and would move to control heat-trapping emissions from large industrial sources such as factories and power plants. The endangerment finding was needed to make those proposed rules a reality.

Q: How would the EPA regulate greenhouse gases?

A: The agency has plans to do something similar to what it does for other pollutants, by requiring new and expanding factories and power plants to install best-available technology to reduce heat-

trapping pollution. For automobiles, it has drafted the first-ever greenhouse gas emissions standards that would require automobiles to be more fuel-efficient than they are today. But industry worries that the EPA could go further -- regulating greenhouse gases from small sources such as buildings, farms and small businesses. The Obama administration has said it does not intend to do that.

Q: What would these new regulations cost?

A: It's not yet clear. The cost for power producers, which would probably be passed onto electricity customers, would depend on what technology the EPA requires. Pollution reductions could come from installing carbon-capture technology, reducing energy use through efficiencies or shifting away from fossil fuels. The EPA estimates it will cost automakers about \$60 billion to meet planned fuel economy requirements. The cost to power plants and factories are likely to be more.

Q: Isn't Congress also trying to pass legislation to control greenhouse gas emissions?

A: Yes. In June, the House of Representatives passed a bill that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 17 percent by 2020 and about 80 percent by 2050. But the Senate, which has been tied up with legislation to reform health care, is not expected to vote on the bill until next spring. Both versions of the bill limit how the EPA can use the Clean Air Act to regulate emissions, but to differing degrees.

Electric concept boat charges onto scene

'A great idea' — vessel to debut at Parade of Lights tomorrow

By Mike Lee, Staff writer

San Diego Union-Tribune, Saturday, Dec. 12, 2009

An environmentally friendly concept boat that a group of fishing buddies dreamed up five years ago will make its public debut tomorrow night during the 38th annual San Diego Bay Parade of Lights.

If plans pan out, the holiday show will be the first of many appearances for a line of solar-electric boats fashioned by Electro-Mariner Corp. of Sorrento Valley. The vessels will cost about 20 percent more than their conventional counterparts, but they won't emit all the air pollutants of combustion engines.

The first boat, Charge It, is a 25-foot express-style vessel that its owners call a "mule" because it's an amalgam of parts and ideas. A more sophisticated, shallow-hull prototype on the drawing board for next year will be about 8 feet longer and 15 times more powerful.

"We have got a winner here," said Robert Ferran of Clairemont, an engineer and avid fisherman who founded the company. "We are talking about jobs for hundreds and hundreds of people in San Diego if this company gets off the dock."

Boaters are intrigued by the concept, though some say widespread adoption probably will be driven by fuel prices. The higher they go, the more attractive solar-electric models look.

"It's a great idea," said Mike Anderson, director of the Massachusetts-based American Boating Association. "The marine industry should applaud because we have been really fuel inefficient. It's been driven by years and years of inexpensive fuel. ... Stuff like this starts to bring the marine industry into the green world, too."

At the Boat Owners Association of the United States in Virginia, spokesman Scott Croft said electric boats aren't likely to gain mass appeal for several years. That's partly because makers of conventional boats are introducing environmentally conscious designs that will compete with electric models.

But Croft sees a future for companies such as Electro-Mariner. "The good news is it's in California, and Californians appreciate the green aspect more than a lot of other folks," he said. "They may be in the right spot."

Ferran has spent \$600,000 of his own money to finance Charge It. He expects the bigger, commercial version to sell for about \$500,000. Electro-Mariner's officials figure their technology will cut fuel expenses by 90 percent and allow buyers to quickly recoup the premium.

"I think we can change the boating industry over to something that the public wants and can afford," Ferran said.

His goal is to broaden the market base by adding Electro-Mariner's propulsion and energy-storage systems to boat brands that customers already know.

"What's exciting to me is the fact that nothing like this exists," said Alan Leff of Point Loma, one of about a dozen sweat-equity partners in Electro-Mariner. "All of the other electric boats are not oceangoing. They are mainly for calm inland waterways."

The company emerged in 2004, when Ferran decided to do something about the thousands of dollars he was spending on fuel for his fishing adventures. He also saw the need for green transportation — something like how the Toyota Prius has affected the auto world.

"(Ferran) looked at me and said, 'What do you think about an electric boat?' " Leff recalled. "I said, 'You mean one with a diesel generator?' "

That wasn't what Ferran envisioned. Driven by concerns about water and air pollution, he insisted on a solar-electric model that could be recharged by the sun or dockside power. The approach allows for a machine that's much less noisy and requires much less maintenance than one with a combustion engine.

The concept inspired Ferran's team.

"I look at it like our Hewlett-Packard project," said Scott Harris of Mira Mesa, referring to the computer maker that started in a Palo Alto garage. "I get off work, and then I go work on the boat."

By 2006, Electro-Mariner had a patent for a hull design and tested small-scale models in swimming pools. The company focused on a catamaran hull at the time but eventually switched to an express-style hull because it's more popular with fishermen.

Next, the partners restored a dilapidated, 25-foot boat and retrofitted it to haul batteries, electric motors and solar panels, which sit atop the cabin canopy. During two years of tinkering, they encountered challenges such as how to safely place batteries near water and people.

The team ended up using a 48-volt system, which minimizes the exposure risk. They also designed an electronic system to monitor the batteries and the "power plant" area, which is expected to consist of one or two 150-horsepower motors.

Charge It can be recharged overnight when connected to dockside power outlets that are readily available at Southern California ports, or it can harness sunlight. The solar option takes at least a week to fully recharge the batteries, making it best suited for boaters who go out a few times a month.

Inventors around the country have spent decades developing and marketing electric boats. Their designs generally are limited to placid waters such as lakes and slow rivers.

"It is certainly a niche market," said Ellen Hopkins at the National Marine Manufacturers Association, a Chicago-based trade group for boat makers. "For the most part, (electric models) are smaller boats because ... they just don't have the overall speed that a lot of boaters are looking for."

Ferran is betting his prototype will change that perception as battery technology improves. His company's literature said Electro-Mariner boats will be able to run at 20 knots for one hour or at nine knots for four hours.

"It's comparable in all respects except range," Ferran said.

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The Associated Press

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[Stockton Record Editorial, Monday, December 14, 2009](#)

Shifting into a lower gear

Air board considers delaying diesel pollution rules because of recession

The California Air Resources Board is considering slowing implementation of strict new diesel engine upgrades designed to cut pollution from the state's thousands of big rigs.

This is a reasonable stance at a time of great economic stress. How stressful can be seen by the 20 percent reduction in air pollution this year simply because so many tractor-trailer rigs have been idled by the recession.

Adopted in 2008, the new rules will cost the trucking industry an estimated \$4.5 billion over the next 15 years as the fleet is converted to trucks with less polluting engines. But over the next two decades it is also estimated that the new rule will prevent 9,400 premature deaths.

Clearly, adoption of the cleaner diesel rules is a matter of urgency and ARB members made it clear they weren't going to shift adoption into reverse, only consider dropping it into a lower gear.

Just as clearly, there is good reason to do so as trucker Al Nunes exemplifies.

Nunes owns A.C. Trucking in Manteca. Since the anti-pollution rules were adopted last year, his business has dropped 23 percent, he said.

That's not the result of the rules, but the recession.

The good news is the recession will end. In fact, there are signs it is waning.

The bad news is that pollution that is taking lives will not abate unless we act. Nunes, as most in the trucking industry, is willing to do his part.

"We feel strongly that this rule can be accomplished," he said, "but it needs to be done over a long period of time."

California is required by federal law to clean up pollution and meet federal air standards by 2014. The state diesel rules are scheduled to take effect in 2011. Nearly a million vehicles must be replaced or retrofitted with smog traps, filters or cleaner-burning technology.

By 2014, all trucks must have soot filters. By the time the rule is fully implemented in 2023, no trucks or buses in California can be more than 13 years old unless equipment was installed to cut nitrogen oxide emissions.

Even with a 20 percent reduction in pollution because of idled trucks, air quality in the San Joaquin Valley still does not meet federal standards. And as the recession recedes and more and more big-rigs are put back on the road, pollution will increase even more.

"What we are not going to do," said ARB Chairwoman Mary Nichols, "is to back away or back down from the need to make progress on reducing the single most serious cause of health-harming pollutants in the state."

The board shouldn't, but neither should the board be blind to the reality of the recession and the toll it's taken on the state's trucking industry.

To simply demand compliance to an arbitrary deadline risks destroying whole segments of an industry vital to the economic well-being of the state.

That said, our air must be cleaned up. Childhood asthma rates in the Valley are disturbingly high largely because of air pollution. That means, the trucking industry must clean up its fleet and once without the recession, the industry is out of excuses for delay.

[Modesto Bee Editorial, Monday, December 14, 2009](#)

Air board right to delay diesel rules

The California Air Resources Board voted last week to delay implementing tough new rules on emissions from diesel trucks and buses.

It was the right move, though it should have come sooner, and the air board suffered a loss of credibility because Chairwoman Mary Nichols did not inform the board about an agency statistician who lied about his credentials in preparing a health study on diesel emissions.

A peer review panel since has reviewed the statistician's work and found it to be sound. But Nichols should have known better than to withhold that information from her fellow board members.

The air board's reputation and its ability to protect health rest on strong science and analyses that reflect economic reality. Obviously, the economic reality has changed since the diesel regulations were adopted a year ago. With fewer trucks on the road, air board scientists reported that diesel emissions are 20 percent lower this year than they previously had predicted.

Because of the recession, trucking firms are not in a position to pay for the regulations, which are projected to cost \$4.5 billion over the next two decades. Big and small firms have had to reduce rates, lay off drivers and idle their trucks.

On top of that, a credit crunch has made it difficult if not impossible for them to obtain the financing to pay for the soot traps and cleaner-burning engines.

Last week after hearing from 80 witnesses, most of them distressed truckers, the board wisely agreed to modify its regulations. Members directed staff to come back in April with options that could slow the phase-in of the rules in the early years — especially for small companies. The options might include expanding exemptions and providing additional incentives for truckers to install filters.

The board did not walk away from its rules altogether, as some trucking industry officials had requested. Diesel fumes and dirty air take a toll on public health and the state's economy, and the board rightly recognizes that threat. Furthermore, in 2014, California faces a federal deadline to meet clean air standards. Without reductions in emissions from diesel trucks and buses, the state will not be able to meet that deadline and could face sanctions, including denial of federal transportation funds.

[Stockton Record, Guest Commentary, Monday, December 14, 2009](#)

Environmentalism is but another shakedown

By Charles Krauthammer, Washington Post columnist

In the 1970s and early '80s, having seized control of the U.N. apparatus (by power of numbers), Third World countries decided to cash in. OPEC was pulling off the greatest wealth transfer from rich to poor in history. Why not them? So in grand U.N. declarations and conferences, they began calling for a "New International Economic Order."

The NIEO's essential demand was simple: to transfer fantastic chunks of wealth from the industrialized West to the Third World.

On what grounds? In the name of equality - wealth redistribution via global socialism - with a dose of post-colonial reparations thrown in.

The idea of essentially taxing hard-working citizens of the democracies in order to fill the treasuries of Third World kleptocracies went nowhere, thanks mainly to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher (and the debt crisis of the early '80s). They put a stake through the enterprise.

But such dreams never die. The raid on the Western treasuries is on again, but today with a new rationale to fit current ideological fashion.

With socialism dead, the gigantic heist is now proposed as a sacred service of the newest religion: environmentalism.

One of the major goals of the Copenhagen summit is another NIEO shakedown: the transfer of hundreds of billions from the industrial West to the Third World to save the planet by, for example, planting green industries in the tristes tropiques.

Politically it's an idea of genius, engaging at once every left-wing erogenous zone: rich man's guilt, post-colonial guilt, environmental guilt.

But the idea of shaking down the industrial democracies in the name of the environment thrives not just in the refined internationalist precincts of Copenhagen. It thrives on the national scale too.

On the day Copenhagen opened, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency claimed jurisdiction over the regulation of carbon emissions by declaring them an "endangerment" to human health.

Since we operate an overwhelmingly carbon-based economy, the EPA will be regulating practically everything. Not since the creation of the Internal Revenue Service has a federal agency been given more intrusive power over every aspect of economic life.

This naked assertion of vast executive power in the name of the environment is the perfect fulfillment of the prediction of Czech President (and economist) Vaclav Klaus that environmentalism is becoming the new socialism, i.e., the totemic ideal in which government seizes the commanding heights of the economy and society.

Socialism having failed so spectacularly, the left was adrift until it struck upon a brilliant gambit: metamorphosis from red to green. The cultural elites went straight from the memorial service for socialism to the altar of the environment. The objective is the same: highly centralized power given to the best and the brightest, the new class of experts, managers and technocrats. This time, however, the alleged justification is not abolishing oppression and inequality but saving the planet.

Not everyone is pleased with the coming New Carbon-Free International Order. When the Obama administration signaled (in a gesture to Copenhagen) a U.S. commitment to major cuts in carbon emissions, Democratic Sen. Jim Webb wrote the president protesting that he lacks the authority to do so unilaterally. That requires congressional concurrence by legislation or treaty.

With the Senate blocking Obama's cap-and-trade carbon legislation, the EPA coup d'etat served as the administration's loud response to Webb: The hell we can't. With this EPA "endangerment" finding, we can do as we wish with carbon. Either the Senate passes cap-and-trade, or the EPA will impose even more draconian measures.

Forget the economic effects of severe carbon chastity. There's the matter of constitutional decency. If you want to revolutionize society you do it through Congress reflecting popular will. Not by administrative fiat of EPA bureaucrats.

Congress should not just resist this executive overreaching, but trump it.

Do it now. Big Brother isn't lurking in CIA cloak. He's knocking on your door, smiling under an EPA cap.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2009:](#)

Air panel's decision wise, belated

Diesel rule adjustments reflect tough economy, but bad moves hurt board.

Even before Wednesday's hearing began, it was clear that the California Air Resources Board was prepared to roll back the tough regulations on truck and bus diesel emissions it approved last December.

As its staff report stated, the down economy already had reduced at least some of the pollution that prompted the regulations in the first place. With fewer trucks on the road, air board scientists reported that diesel emissions are 20% lower this year than they had previously predicted.

Because of the recession, trucking firms are not in a position to pay for the regulations, which are projected to cost \$4.5 billion over the next two decades. Both big and small firms have been forced to reduce rates, lay off drivers and idle their trucks.

On top of that, a credit crunch has made it difficult and in some cases impossible for them to obtain the financing they need to pay for soot traps and cleaner-burning truck engines the new air board regulations require.

After hearing from 80 witnesses, most of them distressed truckers, the board wisely agreed to modify its regulations but not abandon them.

Board members directed staff to come back in April with different options that could slow the phase-in of the new rules in the early years -- especially for small companies. The options might also expand exemptions and provide additional financial incentives for truckers to install filters.

The board did not walk away from its rules altogether, as some trucking industry officials had requested. Diesel fumes and dirty air take a toll on public health and the state's economy as well, and the board rightly recognizes that threat.

In 2014, California faces a federal deadline to meet clean air standards. Without reductions in emissions from diesel trucks and buses, the state will not be able to meet that deadline and could face sanctions, including denial of federal transportation funds.

Although the Air Resources Board made the right call last week, it took it months to do so -- unnecessarily. It also is troubling that CARB Chairwoman Mary Nichols did not inform the board about an agency statistician who lied about his credentials in preparing a health study on diesel emissions.

It took the San Joaquin Valley's representative, Dr. John Telles, to demand accountability on this issue before CARB leaders did the right thing. Nichols' behavior in this matter is especially troubling, and has given board critics plenty of ammunition.

A peer review panel has since examined the statistician's work and found it to be sound. Nichols should have known better than to withhold that information from her fellow board members. She has broken trust with board members, and that won't be easy to repair.

The air board's reputation and its ability to protect health rest on strong science and analyses that reflect economic reality. The board's reputation has slipped with its handling of the diesel regulations.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2009:](#)

Climategate changes rules for scientists

If, in the near term, anything comes of Climategate, the latest skirmish in the battle over the science of climate change, we hope it is this: That researchers will more fully appreciate the fact that the world is watching, that a vocal contingent will always doubt conclusions that support the idea of man-made warming, and that their work is being "reviewed" in a way few scientists have ever experienced. But then, most of them already knew that.

Delegates at the international climate talks currently under way in Copenhagen don't seem especially concerned about the controversy, which involves "revelations" gleaned from hacked e-mails sent from or to members of the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit in England, which were posted on the Internet last month. Skeptics say the e-mails provide evidence that scientists have falsified data to exaggerate the threat of global warming.

Those in Copenhagen might choose to ignore the Anglia debate, but the political reality of the global-warming discussion, at least in the U.S., is that skeptics will seize on every perceived inconsistency and misstep and call it proof supporting a contrary position.

In that sense, Climategate is much like the controversy over the falsified academic credentials of a California Air Resources Board researcher who compiled data on the health effects of diesel exhaust in support of tough new regulations. Diesel emissions are undeniably harmful to the

human lung, but one researcher's failure to compile an honest resume has cast doubt on the agency's entire body of work relative to the issue. CARB, its credibility shaken, was compelled to suspend the new rules.

Climategate isn't likely to derail Copenhagen, but it will taint the legitimacy of any decisions from the summit -- at least among U.S. skeptics, who in turn have the ear of politicians.

The only way climate-change researchers can erase the perception that they are "cherry-picking" data -- if in fact it's possible to change perceptions -- is to weigh all legitimate data and accept the fact that the evidence may not be as consistently supportive and irrefutable as they'd like. But then they've done that, too. One example: Michael Mann, a Penn State climate researcher whose e-mails were among those cited by critics, authored a 1999 study that's hardly been kept secret: "Northern Hemisphere Temperatures During the Past Millennium: Inferences, Uncertainties and Limitations."

We think of scientific study as a process that produces black-and-white answers, but research is full of rivalry, pride and pressure -- human failings that are magnified when politics plays the sort of role we've see here.

In an era when both sides of all politically charged environmental issues have their own scientists, it's more important than ever for researchers -- no matter who's signing their checks -- to weigh and share data with open minds. In a world of competing facts, it's more of a necessity than ever.

[Letters to the Fresno Bee, Sat., Dec. 12, 2009:](#)

Now this is pollution

It's probably wishful thinking, but is it possible the environmentally correct San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which fearlessly determines if and when you can fire up your fireplace, might consider employing some of that boldness by taking a stand on the plan to turn Jesse Morrow Mountain into a huge rock mining operation that would make a fireplace seem like a rose garden?

Eli Setencich, Sanger

[Contra Costa Times guest commentary, Saturday, Dec. 12, 2009:](#)

Readers Forum: Supporting local businesses helps the Bay Area community

By Joe Field

THE ONGOING state budget crisis bleeds over into county and municipal budget cuts, with threats of school closures and service reductions leading the news almost every day in these trying economic times.

The season of giving and shopping continues with Black Friday and its \$42 billion gross sales having come and gone. An estimated 95 million Americans bought something online Cyber Monday with a total of nearly \$1 billion.

How do our local and state budget problems connect to big-box and online shopping? To begin with, non-taxed cyber-sales mean a loss of state and local tax revenue. Bringing that home, that means a loss of revenue to fund fire departments, road repairs, schools and libraries.

Sales at big-box retailers and online also impact our community in many other ways:

Studies have shown that for every dollar spent at a big chain store such as Wal-Mart, only 13 cents of that dollar gets put back into the local economy. Spending the same dollar at a locally owned business recirculates 45 cents into the local economy.

The entrepreneurial spirit of local business owners drives America's economic innovation and prosperity, creating a key way for families to move out of low-wage jobs and into the middle class.

Local businesses put less of a demand on our roads, sewers and public services and generate more tax revenue per sales dollar helping local and state budgets.

Locally owned businesses also are more likely to be the customers of local printers, wholesalers, attorneys and other service businesses, helping to expand the local entrepreneurial spirit while adding even more to local and state tax coffers.

Locally-owned businesses donate twice as much per dollar to local nonprofits, charities and events than huge retail corporations.

Independently owned businesses, catering to a wide variety of customers' tastes and interests create greater consumer choices for all of us.

Local businesses give our community character and are the ultimate "social networking sites."

Local businesses are more eco-friendly since they are "people-sized," not corporate-sized. Local businesses consume less land, create less traffic and air pollution while being closer to residents.

A diverse business climate market of thousands of small businesses is the best way to ensure innovation and broader consumer choices over the long-term.

In short, there's a high local cost for those who only shop for a low price. Imagine the huge impact if everyone started by shifting just 25 percent of our spending away from large corporate-owned chain stores and online merchants and instead spent that money locally. It would begin a positive trend of good news for everyone.

Field is owner Flying Colors Comics & Other Cool Stuff in Concord.