

Palin likens global warming studies to 'snake oil'

By Judy Lin - Associated Press Writer

In the San Francisco Chronicle and Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, February 9, 2010

REDDING, Calif. -- Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin called studies supporting global climate change a "bunch of snake oil science" Monday during a rare appearance in California, a state that has been at the forefront of environmental regulations.

Palin spoke before a logging conference in Redding, a town of 90,000 about 160 miles north of the state capital. The media were barred from the event, but The Associated Press bought a \$74 ticket to attend.

Palin said California's heavy regulatory environment makes it difficult for businesses to succeed, a point that is shared by many business leaders in the state.

She criticized what she said were heavy-handed environmental laws. As Alaska governor, for example, she said she sued the federal government to overturn the listing of polar bears as a threatened species.

As Alaska North Slope wells dry up, the state is examining offshore drilling for oil and natural gas reserves. Protections for polar bears under the Endangered Species Act could thwart those explorations, according to Palin and her successor, Alaska Gov. Sean Parnell, who has picked up the cause.

Palin told the audience that filled the 2,000-seat Redding Convention Center that she disagreed with the science the government used to support the listing.

"We knew the bottom line ... was ultimately to shut down a lot of our development," she said during her 40-minute speech, which was followed by a 20-minute question-and-answer session. "And it didn't make any sense because it was based on these global warming studies that now we're seeing (is) a bunch of snake oil science."

Palin urged the federal government to allow states to make such decisions for themselves.

Her comments were well-received by the audience members, many of whom brought copies of her book, "Going Rogue," in hopes of getting Palin's signature. A second Palin speech in Redding scheduled for the evening was sold out.

The events were hosted by the Sierra-Cascade Logging Conference.

Palin made her appearance in a state that often has led the nation on environmental regulations, from restricting automobile pollution to greenhouse gas emissions.

The state's Global Warming Solutions Act, which passed in 2006 and has been championed by Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, requires greenhouse gas emissions statewide to be cut to 1990 levels by 2020.

But that and other state environmental laws have come under increasing attack from Republican state lawmakers.

Last week, the secretary of state cleared the sponsors of a ballot petition seeking to suspend the 2006 law until the state unemployment rate falls to 5.5 percent and stays there for a year. Republican gubernatorial candidate Meg Whitman has criticized the law as being too much of an economic burden while businesses are trying to recover from the recession.

Palin also weighed in on the Obama administration's efforts to secure a climate change treaty during the international conference held recently in Copenhagen.

"Yeah, I don't think much of it," Palin said.

She said it was "providential" that President Barack Obama did not return from Denmark with a clear victory after questions arose about figures used in the scientific studies to promote conservation.

"The weather will not change with the proposals," she said.

Palin struck a sympathetic tone with the crowd, saying she shares the timber industry's worries of cumbersome lawsuits by environmental groups.

"California is tough in this respect," Palin said. "Man, it is expensive to do business here and to get anything done ... I do think there's hope though, because more Americans are becoming aware of the absurdity of such a situation. Maybe California is just a little behind the times."

Palin said she believes there's a way to harvest timber without damaging the environment but has grown frustrated by environmental activists who want to "lock up the land."

"We sought to protect the diversity of our forests and our wildlife while sustaining jobs and subsistence for residents of our state," Palin said of her efforts as governor in trying to develop a vision statement for the Tongass National Forest in Alaska. Conservation groups and the U.S. Forest Service have fought for decades over management of the country's largest national forest.

She defended herself as a conservationist.

"We really do love our trees," Palin said. "I named my daughter Willow. Isn't that granola enough for them?"

Idaho, others prepare for California egg exodus

Associated Press

LA Times, Monday, February 08, 2010

Idaho is among several states watching to see if a California animal cruelty law drives flocks of big egg farms there to fly the coop.

California voters in 2008 approved Proposition 2, banning cramped cages for laying hens by 2015.

Neither Idaho nor Nevada, where officials are aggressively courting the Golden State egg industry, have restrictions on "battery cages" that leave chickens little room to spread their wings.

Idaho Sen. Tim Corder has no desire to change that in his state. Industry should decide, Corder insists.

Still, the Senate Agriculture Committee chairman does want to revamp rules governing where and how giant poultry farms are operated to skirt pitfalls that accompanied explosive growth of Idaho's dairy industry. His state went from 180,000 cows in 1990 to 530,000 in 2009 to become the third-biggest milk producer after California and Wisconsin, but the arrival of mega-dairies caught regulators flat-footed and prompted environmentalists to call foul.

"The time when agriculture can sweep in and do whatever it wants and nobody will say anything about it until it's too late, that time is past," said Corder, R-Mountain Home. "If we're going to do this, let's do it right from the start."

Corder, whose poultry plan is due for discussion in the Idaho Capitol this week, isn't alone in thinking henpecked California egg producers may come calling.

Following Prop 2, Nevada officials want to poach their share of a possible egg exodus.

"We've contacted various members of poultry associations, especially in the California market," said Kathy Johnson, Pershing County's economic development director. "We're not trying to play predator. We're simply offering an option."

One University of California-funded study before the 2008 ballot measure concluded costs would rise 20 percent, including equipment investments and use of more feed, and result in virtually all egg production leaving after six years. Only 5 percent of U.S. egg production comes from non-caged hens.

California is the nation's fifth-largest egg producer, with 5 billion eggs annually. Iowa is tops, with 14.3 billion. Idaho and Nevada aren't even close.

So far, Debbie Murdock, executive director of the Assn. of California Egg Farmers, hasn't heard of any impending relocations to Idaho, Nevada or elsewhere.

Still, Prop 2 has her members' feathers ruffled.

"We have 20 million hens in this state," Murdock said. "It's a huge expense for us to have to move. It's a huge expense for us to change our housing. A move like this, especially in this economic climate, can be very scary."

The Humane Society of the United States, which backed Prop 2, says the industry is claiming the sky is falling to frighten other states from pursuing similar measures. And similar measures are coming: Michigan's governor signed legislation in October requiring more room for hens, while Ohio plans a vote next November.

Even without new laws, retailers like Bentonville, Ark.-based Wal-Mart Stores Inc. are independently demanding suppliers treat their chickens humanely, said Paul Shapiro, the Humane Society's factory farm campaign director.

"You see a shift in the marketplace, not because they are compelled to do so by law, but because they don't want to be selling a product that's criminally cruel to produce," Shapiro said.

Pam Juker, an Idaho Department of Agriculture chief of staff, concedes Idaho regulators struggled to keep pace when big dairies began targeting cheap Idaho land to build 5,000-cow dairies two decades ago. [Air and water pollution](#) concerns emerged, as did a backlash over smells. Today, a legal stink lingers between the Idaho Dairymen's Assn. and counties over power to regulate feedlots.

"The laws and rules had to be developed alongside the industry growth," Juker said. "With this (Corder's) proposed legislation, it will help to have the regulatory structure in place before a new industry settles in."

The Idaho Conservation League has highlighted nitrate threats to southern Idaho groundwater from millions of tons of dairy manure. Justin Hayes, a spokesman in Boise, said poorly regulated poultry farms could make things worse. He hasn't endorsed Corder's bill.

"There's not currently enough oversight of where we place dairy manure," Hayes said.

Even if California poultry operations don't find Idaho, Corder is sure others will.

Des Moines, Iowa-based Hy-Line North America last year opened a new facility in Burley, in southern Idaho, that hatches million of hens to be shipped elsewhere. And last month, commissioners there approved zoning changes to allow a broiler chicken plant to house up to 4 million birds. One thousand employees would process some 13,000 birds an hour.

"They aren't just coming," Corder said. "They're already here."

New US climate change agency proposed

By Randolph E. Schmid, Associated Press

In the Washington Post, Monday, Feb. 8, 2010

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The Obama administration is proposing a new agency to study and report on the changing climate.

Also known as global warming, climate change has drawn widespread concern in recent years as temperatures around the world rise, threatening to harm crops, spread disease, increase sea levels, change storm and drought patterns and cause polar melting.

Commerce Secretary Gary Locke and Jane Lubchenco, head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, planned to announce today that NOAA will set up the new Climate Service to operate in tandem with NOAA's National Weather Service and National Ocean Service.

NOAA recently reported that the decade of 2000-2009 was the warmest on record worldwide; the previous warmest decade was the 1990s. Most atmospheric scientists believe that warming is largely due to human actions, adding gases to the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels such as coal and natural gas.

Researchers and leaders from around the world met last month in Denmark to discuss ways to reduce climate-warming emissions, and a follow-up session is planned for later this year in Mexico.

"More and more people are asking for more and more information about climate and how it's going to affect them," Lubchenco explained. So officials decided to combine climate operations into a single unit.

Portions of the Weather Service that have been studying climate, as well as offices from some other NOAA agencies, will be transferred to the new NOAA Climate Service.

The new agency will initially be led by Thomas Karl, director of the current National Climatic Data Center. The Climate Service will be headquartered in Washington and will have six regional directors across the country.

Lubchenco also announced a new NOAA climate portal on the Internet to collect a vast array of climatic data from NOAA and other sources. It will be "one-stop shopping into a world of climate information," she said.

Creation of the Climate Service requires a series of steps, including congressional committee approval. But if all goes well, it should be finished by the end of the year, officials said.

In recent years, a widespread private weather forecasting industry has grown up around the National Weather Service, and Lubchenco said she anticipates growth of private climate-related business around the new agency.

While most people notice the weather from day to day or week to week, climate looks at both the averages and extremes of weather over longer periods of time. And understanding both weather and climate, and their changes, are vital to much of the world's economic activity ranging from farming to travel to energy use and production and even food shipments and disease prevention.

Atmospheric scientists have long joked that climate is what you expect and weather is what you get. But greenhouse warming is changing what can be expected from climate, and researchers are seeking to understand and anticipate the impacts of that change.

China Releases First National Pollution Census

NY Times, Tuesday, February 09, 2010

BEIJING (AP) -- China said Tuesday that its first national pollution census has mapped more than 5 million sources of industrial, residential and agricultural waste throughout the country, but that the results won't be publicly available for now.

The world's largest polluter now has a year to use the results to shape its next five-year environmental plan. Ministries are also studying the possibility of an environmental tax, China's vice minister of environmental protection, Zhang Lijun, told a news conference.

Detailed data from the first pollution census will be released to the public "in the future," Zhang said.

In the meantime, the results remain out of the view of an increasingly vocal Chinese public. Only the government and officials at relevant ministries have access to it.

"This is an incredibly ambitious source survey of pollutants," said Deborah Seligsohn, principal adviser for the World Resources Institute on China's climate and energy issues. "In terms of giving them an excellent basis for being able to manage and track what they're doing, it's a huge step forward."

The survey puts China ahead of other developing countries in having a detailed map of who is polluting and where.

The census, which took two years and 570,000 staff to complete, also includes agricultural pollution for the first time in China's pollution studies.

"That's huge," Seligsohn said. "Many challenges China faces in terms of water quality come from organic pollution rather than from chemicals."

China's database of 5.9 million pollution sources included in the census is not yet publicly available -- which environmental groups picked up on right away.

"We urge the government to immediately establish a strong platform through which the public could easily access a wide range of pollution data," Sze Pang Cheung, campaign director for Greenpeace China, said in a statement.

Opening up the survey results would let the Chinese public monitor the country's biggest polluters and the worst polluted areas, said Yu Jie, head of policy and research programs for The Climate Group China.

"In this regard, it would be big progress. But if those data are only open to governments, then this civil society function doesn't work," she said.

Chinese citizens are more and more outspoken about environmental issues, with a number of recent protests of proposed incinerator projects in the south.

Others have gone ahead and mapped major pollution sources on their own, posting the results online.

Despite the wealth of new information, Zhang said "basically, there was nothing that surprised us."

It was not clear whether China would conduct the survey regularly.

[O.C. Register, Monday, Feb. 8, 2010:](#)

Editorial: Bipartisan pushback on EPA carbon policing

Amid worldwide challenges to global warming theory, bipartisan opposition is forming in Congress as prominent Democratic voices join Republican critics of the Obama administration's pending greenhouse gas regulations.

Two powerful Democratic committee chairmen – Missouri's Ike Skelton and Minnesota's Collin Peterson, of the House Armed Services and Agriculture committees, respectively – joined Missouri Republican Jo Ann Emerson in advancing a bill to abolish the Environmental Protection Agency's finding that greenhouse gases are dangerous, which empowered the agency to regulate the emissions.

"If Congress doesn't do something soon," Mr. Peterson said, "the EPA is going to cram these regulations through on their own. I have no confidence that the EPA can regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act without severe harm to all taxpayers."

The House bill comes as the Senate considers its own amendment to the Clean Air Act to strip the EPA of authority to regulate the emissions. The House and Senate efforts would roll back the EPA to its original mission, which never considered greenhouse gases to be pollutants.

The EPA, meanwhile, is preparing regulations that will, in effect, give unelected bureaucrats control over the economy, which is likely to substantially increase energy and consumer prices, without affecting global temperatures. Even global warming zealots concede that if all nations had conformed to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol's proposed emission limits, temperatures would be essentially unchanged. But the restrictions would have severely harmed nations' economies. The Senate in 1997 wisely rejected Kyoto, 95-0.

Congress may be motivated by the economic downturn, declining global temperatures for more than a decade and almost daily revelations that global warming's so-called "settled science" is, at least, flawed, and perhaps rigged.

The latest in a series of damaging revelations was a disclosure of errors in the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change claim that global warming could cut African crop production up to 50 percent in 10 years. The claim has appeared in IPCC summary reports and in speeches by its chairman and secretary-general, arguing to cap greenhouse gases. African nations based \$100 billion in reparations demands from the U.S. and other developed nations partly on that assertion.

However, the claim wasn't based on peer-reviewed science – a situation similar to hyped claims about glaciers melting in the Alps, Andes and Himalayas, Amazon rain-forest depletion and severe hurricanes and floods. "On reading (IPCC documents) I cannot find support for the statement about African crop yield declines," said professor Chris Fields, the new lead author of the IPCC climate impacts team.

Republican Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming late last week called for an independent investigation of IPCC climate reports, and for its chairman, Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, from India, to resign. "The integrity of the data and the integrity of the science have been compromised," Mr. Barrasso said.

For too long Congress and others believed these assertions, whether from the supposedly credible IPCC or global warming zealots. It's good to see prudent caution before it's too late.

[The SF Chronicle Gate blog, Monday, Feb. 8, 2010:](#)

Make your fireplace more efficient

By Cameron Scott

I often joke that if the beautiful fireplace in my apartment actually worked, I would never move. Maybe it's not really a joke: Nothing compares to an evening by the fire.

But fireplaces are shockingly inefficient: just 10 percent, which, as far as I understand it, means that you're basking in a mere 10 percent of the heat generated. The rest goes up the chimney.

And burning wood creates substantial particulate pollution, which is why fires are banned on Spare the Air days.

Must you, then, give up the exquisite pleasure of a fire? No; thankfully, there's the fireplace insert.

Alright, first the bad news: Inserts only work if you have a functional chimney, which is fairly rare in our earthquake-prone region.

But, if you are among the lucky few, an insert can increase [pdf] your efficiency to 65 or 75 percent. How it works: An insert offers a glass-enclosed fire. By controlling how much air enters the fire, the insert decreases how much already-heated air is drawn from your living space and slows the fire down, significantly reducing its particulate pollution and the amount of wood used. Most also have fans to blow warm air out into the surrounding room. (More on how inserts work here.)

If your insert hits the higher 75 percent efficiency rating, the Feds will foot a 30 percent of the cost — which runs between \$1,500 and \$2,500.

You can expect to save 20 to 40 percent of your home heating costs. And to spend evenings by the fire.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Google impulses an integration of clean energy politics. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Impulsa Google políticas de integración de energía limpia

Manuel Ocaño
Noticiero Latino
Radio Bilingüe, Monday, February 8, 2010

La herramienta cibernética de búsqueda, Google promueve una propuesta de integrar energías limpias. Dan Reicher, director de Iniciativas de Clima y Energía de Google, a quien foros como la cumbre mundial de cambio climático en Copenhague y el Congreso han consultado para acordar políticas globales dijo que la necesidad de abordar la crisis climática proporciona nuevas oportunidades para reconstruir el sistema de energía estadounidense, con base en propuestas de integración complementaria de energías limpias. Google propone también imponer límites a la contaminación y adoptar políticas de energía que complementen los esfuerzos.