

## **Bill would clear path for oil project approvals**

By John Cox, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, July 10, 2011

A bill advancing through the state Legislature could help Kern County's oil industry by providing a clearer path of approval for certain drilling-related activities.

Senate Bill 682, sponsored by Sen. Michael Rubio, D-Bakersfield, proposes to assign the state Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources direct responsibility for overseeing underground injection of produced gases, a common if controversial method of disposing of oil field byproducts such as hydrogen sulfide, or sour gas.

DOGGR, as the division is known, has regulated such projects for more than a decade. But since new leadership was installed at the division two years ago, a backlog of underground injection applications has grown to about 200, frustrating oil companies and local politicians who say the delays are stalling investment and potential job growth.

"We want someone to process those applications -- either deny or approve them so we can put people to work across the San Joaquin Valley and, particularly, Kern County," Rubio said in a phone interview.

DOGGR has taken no official position on the bill and therefore declined to comment. But earlier this year the division acknowledged a slowdown in project approvals, a situation it blamed on inadequate staffing and the complexity of engineering and geological issues involved. It has also pointed to a lack of clear legal authority to regulate what it considers an environmentally risky practice that has the potential to contaminate sources of drinking water.

On Thursday, despite opposition by the Sierra Club, the bill cleared the Assembly Environmental Safety & Toxic Materials Committee by a vote of 8-0. It is scheduled for consideration soon by the Assembly Natural Resources Committee.

Representatives of the Sierra Club's California lobbying arm could not be reached for comment Friday.

The head of the California Independent Petroleum Association expressed hope that the bill, if signed into law, would help expedite oil companies' injection applications, some of them as much as two years old.

"This allows (DOGGR) to consider those old permits," CIPA CEO Rock Zierman said.

"We really appreciate Sen. Rubio's leadership on this," he added.

Rubio said the bill represents the "first step" in a longer process of addressing DOGGR's concerns about underground injection projects. Related issues still to be worked out, he said, regard how California oil producers handle toxic waste, water and other environmental issues.

## **Free car smog testing today at fairgrounds**

Merced Sun-Star and Modesto Bee, Saturday, July 9, 2011

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and Valley Clean Air Now, a nonprofit, will provide Merced-area drivers who have owned their car for at least six months a free vehicle emissions test.

The event will be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. today at the Merced County Fairgrounds, 900 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, in the 11th Street parking lot.

If the vehicle doesn't pass the test but can be repaired, the driver will receive a voucher for up to \$500 in emission related repairs at a local Gold Shield-certified smog check station.

A maximum of 525 vehicles will be tested on a first-come, first-served basis. There will be free food and drinks while supplies last.

For program information, visit [www.vrrrm.org](http://www.vrrrm.org).

For event information e-mail [MercedEvent@valley-can.org](mailto:MercedEvent@valley-can.org) or call (800) 806-2004.

## **San Joaquin air district seeks funding for projects**

**(Note: The headline is in error and should have stated that the District is providing funding for projects. The papers have been contacted to correct the error in the headline.)**

In the Merced Sun-Star and Modesto Bee, Saturday, July 9, 2011

MERCED — The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is requesting proposals for projects that demonstrate bold, innovative and creative emission-reduction technologies as part of the district's Technology Advancement Program. The district is seeking technology demonstrations in the areas of renewable energy, waste solutions and mobile sources to improve valley air quality.

The district released the Request for Proposals for new projects July 5. About \$1.4 million is available and is expected to fund five to eight projects that will demonstrate the feasibility of new emission-reduction technologies necessary to meet state and federal air-quality standards, the district said in a news release.

A portion of available funding is a result of collaboration between the district and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the Clean Air Technology Initiative. The initiative is a partnership of local, state and federal agencies working with the private sector, nonprofits and academia.

"We will not achieve our goal of clean, breathable air unless we accelerate the development and deployment of new technologies," Jared Blumenfeld, regional administrator for the EPA's Pacific Southwest Region, said in the release. "This grant funding will help bring near-zero emitting technologies to market while creating green jobs in the San Joaquin Valley." The district's Technology Advancement Program was launched in 2010. Current projects include solar energy storage, next-generation off-road diesel retrofit, advancement of hybrid vehicle technology, and low-emission uses of biogas. These projects will demonstrate and accelerate deployment of technologies to reduce directly emitted particulate matter and/or nitrogen oxides.

Proposals must be received by Friday, Aug. 19, at 5 p.m. Complete information is available at: [www.valleyair.org/Grant\\_Programs/TAP/tap\\_idx.htm](http://www.valleyair.org/Grant_Programs/TAP/tap_idx.htm).

On July 21 at 9:30 a.m., the district will hold an in- person workshop for interested technology proponents. The workshop will be held at the District's Fresno office via videoconference from the Modesto and Bakersfield offices, and potentially the EPA's San Francisco and Los Angeles offices.

For more information about the Valley Air District, visit [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) or call the Modesto regional office: (209) 557-6400.

