

Visalia Times Delta, Tuesday, Sept. 4, Modesto Bee, Monday, Sept. 3, Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, Sept. 2 and Fresno Bee, Saturday, Sept. 1, 2012

Follow science of air pollution

By Seyed Sadredin

Any objective and honest discussion about San Joaquin Valley air quality must start with an expression of gratitude to Valley businesses, farmers and residents for their large investment toward clean air, and an acknowledgment that those sacrifices have paid off in substantial improvements in air quality in the past 20 years. The facts are impressive and a source of pride to all of us who live and work in the Valley:

Air pollution from Valley businesses and farms has been reduced by over 80%.
The Valley has seen the cleanest winters and summers on record over the past four years.
In 2011, the air basin had just three days of 1-hour ozone violations, compared to 56 days in 1996.
We have reached federal attainment of standards for coarse particulates (PM10).
The air basin's northern counties are very close to attaining the current 8-hour ozone standard.
Valley-wide, we have fewer days with unhealthy air quality and more days with good air quality.

However, we still have a long way to go in our journey toward clean air. Latest science has compelled the federal Environmental Protection Agency to impose more stringent health-based standards that will be extremely difficult for the Valley to meet.

We have already employed virtually all available control technologies and strategies on pollution sources within the Valley and are at a critical juncture as we craft our latest "air quality management plan" for submittal to EPA. We are going through the public process to prepare a plan for attaining the latest federal standard for fine particles (PM2.5) and we need input from all businesses and residents.

We cannot afford to follow the one-size-fits-all approaches often prescribed by the federal government or special interest advocates. We need to follow the latest, best science and deploy a good dose of common sense. For instance, the latest science indicates that reducing volatile organic compounds or ammonia -- key pollutants emitted from large dairies in the Valley -- will do little to help reduce particulate or ozone concentrations in the Valley. Therefore, suggesting new controls on dairies as the "silver bullet" for air pollution problems is analogous to treating a patient who is having cardiac arrest with a perfumed acne medicine. Getting rid of the dairies will make some parts of the Valley look better and smell better. But it will do little to reduce particulates and ozone that have deadly health impacts.

Valley businesses and farmers (including dairies) are already subject to the nation's toughest air regulations. Further emissions reductions require significant advancement in technology and active participation by Valley residents in reducing pollution from our day-to-day activities. Over 80% of our particulate and ozone problems come from mobile sources of emissions, of which trucks are the largest source. In fact, 50% to 60% of truck traffic in the Valley is pass-through with no business stops in the Valley.

There is no other region in the nation that faces a more difficult task in meeting more stringent air quality standards. However, we can meet these standards if we develop a plan that adapts the Valley's clean air strategy to prioritize those factors that most effectively address public health needs. Toward that end, we should pursue a multifaceted strategy:

- Investment in research and development of new, cost-effective clean air technologies
- Prioritize measures that reduce pollutants with greatest impact on public health
- Consider episodic measures that reduce key pollutants in locations with greatest impact on public health
- Hold our neighboring regions accountable for their contribution to our air pollution
- Pursue land-use approaches that minimize growth in vehicle miles traveled
- Public partnership with the private sector to expedite deployment of cleaner trucks, vehicles and technologies
- Public participation in reducing pollution from daily activities

In short, we have to follow the science and be strategic with our limited resources. We have great faith in this course, and in our mutual efforts, to take us the rest of the way.

Seyed Sadredin is the executive director and air pollution control officer of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Valley contest seeks art that pushes clean air

Bee Staff Reports

Modesto Bee, Sunday, Sept. 2, 2012

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is looking for creative student artists to enter the 2013 Healthy Air Living Kids' Calendar contest.

Each year, valley students from kindergarten through high school help the air district create a colorful, engaging calendar that is distributed throughout the eight-county air basin. It's a great reminder to valley residents that even though our air quality is improving, we can all do our part to make it even better.

The Kids' Calendar is a four-color, bilingual wall calendar that carries pertinent clean-air messages and showcases valley students' artistic abilities. The district prints 20,000 copies, which are distributed at no cost to schools, community groups, health care facilities, churches and nonprofit organizations throughout the valley.

Here are the guidelines for creating a winning Healthy Air Living Kids' Calendar entry:

- Paper should be placed sideways (landscape orientation) so it is 8½ inches high and 11 inches across.
- Artwork should be in color.
- Artwork should contain a message about how to live a healthy air life. Some examples from past calendars are: "Clean air rocks!" "Haz un cambio. Camina en lugar de manejar"; "We can all help clean the air."
- Bilingual and Spanish messages are encouraged.

Fourteen drawings will be selected for the calendar. Artists must include their name and address, phone number and-or e-mail contact, age, grade and school on the back of the artwork. Please mail art flat, not folded, to 2013 Kids' Calendar, Valley Air District, 1990 E. Gettysburg Ave., Fresno 93726, or turn in your art at the nearest district office.

See winning drawings for the 2012 calendar and get more information about the 2013 contest at www.valleyair.org/kids/clean_air_calendar_contest.htm and www.healthyairliving.com/upcoming-events/kids-calendar-contest.htm.

For more information about the air district, call (209) 557-6400.

Annual student-calendar contest seeks art

Hanford Sentinel, Saturday, Sept. 1, 2012

The San Joaquin Valley Air District is looking for creative student artists to enter the 2013 Healthy Air Living Kids' Calendar contest.

Each year, Valley students from kindergarten through high school help the Air District create a colorful, engaging calendar that is distributed throughout the eight-county air basin.

The Kids' Calendar is a four-color, bilingual wall calendar that carries pertinent clean-air messages and showcases Valley students' artistic abilities. The district prints 20,000 copies, which are distributed free of charge to schools, community groups, health care facilities, churches and nonprofit organizations throughout the Valley.

Here are the guidelines for creating a winning Healthy Air Living Kids' Calendar entry:

- Paper should be placed sideways (landscape orientation) so it is 8-1/2 inches high and 11 inches across.
- Artwork should be in color.
- Artwork should contain a message about how to live a Healthy Air life. Some examples from past calendars are "Clean air rocks!" "Haz un cambio. Camina en lugar de manejar." "We can all help clean the air."
- Bilingual and Spanish messages are encouraged.

Fourteen drawings will be selected for the calendar. Artists must include their name and address, phone number and/or e-mail contact, age, grade and school on the back of the artwork. Mail art flat, not folded, to 2013 Kids Calendar, Valley Air District, 1990 E. Gettysburg Ave., Fresno, CA 93726, or turn in your art at the nearest district office.

Winning drawings for the 2012 calendar and more information about the 2013 contest are at <http://tinyurl.com/8m5ckrr> and <http://www.healthyairliving.com/upcoming-events/kids-calendar-contest.htm>.

For more information about the air district, call an office in Fresno (230-6000) or in Bakersfield (661-392-5500).

Modesto church sees the light — via solar

By Sue Nowicki

Modesto Bee, Monday, Sept. 3, 2012

After decades of preaching the power of the Son (Jesus), the Modesto Church of the Brethren is harnessing an additional kind of power — energy from the sun.

The west Modesto church, long known for its emphasis on social justice and environmental issues, installed a solar system last week to provide 100 percent of its electricity, with an excess amount helping to pay for the program.

"It's a great project," said Al Wiley, an 85-year-old longtime member who helped build the church's Woodland Avenue facility in 1986. "We are an environmental and peace church, and the enthusiasm was so good, the congregation has financed the project totally with donations and individual loans."

The church investigated different solar systems before it settled on installing 200 panels on unused land about 350 feet from its buildings, said Chuck Messamer, the church's building and grounds committee chairman.

A solar project team looked at putting systems on the roof of the church or a carport, he said. But the roof system would have required removing "a lot of trees that shade our building," and the carport system "was expensive because of having to build a carport, so this was the most economical way to do it."

The team crunched the numbers first. The church's annual electrical cost is about \$16,500.

"If you calculate what the increases would be over a 30-year period, we'd be paying about \$1.1 million over that time," Messamer said. "With this system, we'll probably pay about \$400,000 total. That's where you really see the savings."

In addition to the cut in utility bills, the church will sell excess power to the Modesto Irrigation District, netting about \$100,000 over 10 years.

"We'll use that to pay off the debt," Messamer said.

The project makes sense not only fiscally, but in other ways, he said.

"Just the environmental impact is big," he added. "It's the equivalent of taking a lot of vehicles off the road and taking out carbon emissions. It's basically being good stewards of our environment and good stewards of our finances, too."

Nonprofits eligible for MID rebates

MID spokeswoman Melissa Williams said the Brethren congregation is the first church in the MID's coverage area to install solar.

"We've had some inquiries from other churches, but they are the first to move forward," she said.

Nonprofit groups, including churches, are eligible for MID solar rebates, she added, which can pay 10 percent to 20 percent of a system. But because churches and other nonprofits don't pay federal taxes, they don't receive the federal tax credits that can pay for up to 30 percent of a solar system, "so it doesn't always pencil out (as cost-effective) for them."

Individuals, nonprofit organizations and business can install a solar system and sell excess energy to the MID, Williams said, but they need to get the MID's permission first.

In the case of the Church of the Brethren, Messamer said, the MID had to approve the solar system size before the church could get bids and install it.

"They don't want you to buy a system that makes much more energy than you use," he said.

Williams said the MID has commercial and residential solar users that have contributed 10 megawatts to the system. "One megawatt is enough to power 1,000 homes in the winter or 300 in the summer," she said.

'Other churches will be interested'

The Turlock Irrigation District has 150 residential solar systems in its program, but there are no churches or nonprofit agencies on board, spokesman Herb Smart said.

That doesn't mean others aren't considering a move to alternative energy.

"I think other churches will be interested in this," Wiley said.

They are.

"This is certainly a good idea and something we should look into," said Bishop Stephen Blaire of the Stockton Diocese. He said Catholics long have pushed for an improved environment, but said the diocese has been focusing more on improving the Northern San Joaquin Valley's air quality than installing alternative energy in parishes.

"We don't have any renewable energy source at St. Stanislaus (Catholic Church)," said the Rev. Ramon Bejarano. "I would love to have it, if we had the resources to do it. Our electrical bill for the month of July was more than \$9,000. Wow!"

Ahmad Kayello, imam for the Islamic Center of Modesto, said his community is nearly ready to begin a long-awaited building project, but has not integrated solar power into the already-approved plans.

"We'll have to consider it, to see the cost and if we are allowed to install them," he said.

Leaders from other churches, including Modesto's Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation and First United Methodist Church, have considered a switch to solar, but site challenges along with the cost and state of today's technology haven't made it feasible, they said.

Customers interested in the MID's solar rebates can visit www.mid.org or contact the MID's Solar PV coordinator at (209) 526-7455 or pv@mid.org. For TID solar rebate information, call (209) 883-8222 or visit <http://tid.com/rebates>.