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Attn: Local news, health and assignment editors

Northern region – Modesto

Anthony Presto (209) 557-6472

Central/Southern regions – Fresno

Heather Heinks (559) 994-7591

Spanish-language contact

Ana Stone (559) 230-5851

State selects first-year communities for investment under AB 617

Valley Air District launches community engagement process in Shafter and South Central Fresno

Despite decades of progress and significant reductions in air pollution, the San Joaquin Valley continues to face challenges in meeting the latest federal health-based air quality standards due to its unique geography, frequently stagnant weather conditions, and significant impacts from heavy-duty trucks traveling through the Valley. These challenges are unmatched by any other region in the nation and, when coupled with the Valley's large number of disadvantaged communities, warrant greater attention and investment by the state.

Through implementation of the new AB 617 Community Air Protection Program, new resources have been committed to the Valley to reduce air pollution, improve quality of life, and help the region meet its clean air mandates. Building on the Valley's clean air efforts and investments to date, the District will continue its work to better understand the concerns of the selected communities and identify additional opportunities for working together with local partners to further reduce air pollution and improve quality of life. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) announced today that South Central Fresno (including Calwa and Malaga) and the City of Shafter are the first communities prioritized for investment of additional resources under AB 617, with additional communities to be selected under AB 617 in the coming years.

"The selection of these communities provides additional opportunities to funnel resources into Valley communities and further our mission of improving air quality and public health. The District will continue working with residents, businesses, and agencies throughout the San Joaquin Valley to keep moving forward with clean air efforts and investments," said Samir Sheikh, Executive Director and Air Pollution Control Officer.

The District is announcing the establishment of a steering committee for each selected community and is seeking involvement from interested residents, businesses and other members of the community to help the District understand the specific needs of each community and develop effective clean air strategies. Visit www.valleyair.org/community for more information about the community steering committees or to sign up to receive ongoing email updates on the Valley's AB 617 implementation.

For more information, email AB617@valleyair.org or call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-392-5500).