

Senate passes spending package

Merced Sun-Star

July 28, 2003

By Evan Halper and Jeffrey L. Rabin
Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO - Breaking an impasse that pushed state government to the brink of financial ruin, the California Senate voted 27-10 Sunday to approve a compromise budget that cuts programs, raises fees and borrows billions of dollars.

"Do I like this budget?," Senate Republican Leader Jim Brulte of Rancho Cucamonga asked just before the vote. "Absolutely not. But I do not believe a \$38 billion budget shortfall that was created over three years could be eliminated in one year."

Since announcing the compromise late last week, Brulte and Senate President John Burton, D-San Francisco, had expressed confidence that they would have the necessary votes of at least two-thirds of the membership.

"This is not a budget to be proud of, except for the fact that the people of the state expect a budget to be passed," said Burton. "They expect bills to be paid. And this does that."

The compromise, coming nearly a month after the Legislature missed its constitutional deadline for adopting a spending plan, avoids new taxes and the more severe cuts in government services that financial analysts say are needed to get California's finances on track once and for all.

Instead, lawmakers opted for a plan that leaves the state with a guaranteed deficit of at least \$7.9 billion next year.

The plan goes next to the Assembly, where it could face a bitter fight.

Yet opponents of the plan will have little room to maneuver. Senators prepared to head home for recess after Sunday night's vote, and time for crafting a different budget deal is running out. Local schools are faced with not having the money they need to open in the fall, and cash for major transportation projects will soon stop flowing.

State Sen. Jeff Denham, R-Salinas, whose district includes Merced County, voted against the bill.

"I have repeatedly said I will not vote for cuts to education," he said. "How can we cut education when some of our students can't even pass the exit exam?"

According to an analysis of the budget by the Republican caucus, the plan would increase spending on K-12 schools above those levels Gov. Gray Davis proposed in May by \$1.8 billion.

But higher education will take a hit: The University of California would lose about \$161 million in funding, including \$29 million for research. The California State University system would lose about \$125 million, including money for outreach aimed at low-income students.

Still, Denham said there was some good points in the plan.

“This plan contains no new taxes, \$3.4 billion in spending reductions and reduces the structural deficit to \$7.9 billion next year without relying on phony revenue projections proposed by the Governor.”

The budget approved by the Senate was by all accounts a rush job. Staff members were still working on the bill through the weekend, and many of the lawmakers barely had a chance to review the cuts they were expected to vote on.

Legislative leaders kept it that way deliberately. They wanted to avoid giving lobbyists the opportunity to persuade lawmakers not to vote for the spending plan.

There was plenty in the bill for many groups to dislike.

Health-care advocates were troubled by a 5 percent cut in rates paid to doctors who treat Medi-Cal patients, which will last for at least three years. And they warned that the failure of lawmakers to raise any more new taxes beyond the recent tripling of the vehicle license fee, or car tax, by the Davis administration means things will only get worse next year.

“By not raising revenues, we just postponed the worst of cuts for next year’s budget crisis,” said Anthony Wright, executive director of Health Access California, a group that advocates health care for the poor.

Local governments will lose about \$1.1 billion in state aid.

And some cities are troubled by a tax swap that they say could disrupt their finances for years. It involves the state taking away a half cent of sales tax that currently goes to local governments and using it instead to pay off \$10.7 billion of the state’s deficit over the next five years.

“I could not in good conscience vote for Steve Peace’s plan,” said Denham of the tax-swap plan proposed by the governor’s finance director. “State government over the years has balanced its overspending on the backs of local governments, who’ve been promised a return - but have not received - the funding pilfered from their coffers. To me this is simply more of the same.”

Local governments will be reimbursed with an equivalent share of property tax revenue, but cities heavily dependent on “big box” stores to generate revenue for services such as police and fire protection could suffer a loss.

The state prison system, which Davis had sought to spare from cuts, would see a \$120 million reduction. The savings would be achieved by sending some nonviolent inmates to residential drug treatment programs, expanding education prison programs that give inmates credit toward early release and sending fewer parole violators back to prison.

Despite Republican vows to fight them, the budget also includes significant fee hikes. [Polluting the air](#) and water will cost businesses more, as will using pesticides, building a power plant, mining and logging.

The cost of attending community college will go from \$11 to \$18 per credit. And public university students will see their tuition go up by nearly a third.

Sun-Star copy editor Richard de Give and The Associated Press contributed to this story.

'Spare the Air' is in effect

Hanford Sentinel

July 27, 2003

FRESNO - Today and Monday are forecast to be "Spare the Air Days" in the San Joaquin Valley because of air pollution levels, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Valley residents can help cut back on air pollution by linking car trips, making sure gas caps are in place and using water-based cleaning products.

Parents learn to cope with asthma

By Jim Steinberg

The Fresno Bee

(Published Sunday, July 27, 2003, 5:20 AM)

MADERA -- While their children colored pictures Saturday at the Darin M. Camarena Health Center, parents learned in both Spanish and English the basics about asthma.

About 25 children 6 to 9 years old and their parents asked questions about the chronic illness, its symptoms, treatment and what to do in case of attacks, at an awareness session sponsored by the American Lung Association of Central California.

After lunch, families reviewed devices and medications available to people with asthma. The devices included spacers, designed to foster more even inhalation of asthma medication, and speed flow meters, which measure breathing effectiveness.

Children in his care told pediatrician Dr. Alfredo Garcia they were happy their medications allowed them to run and play outdoors again.

Parents' questions reflected anxiety over children's health should asthma strike.

"What if my child has an attack at school, and there are no spacers?" one parent asked.

A father asked how his son should use a face mask in conjunction with asthma medicine.

Beth Mensch, chief asthma project coordinator at the Camarena center, assured one mother that a steroid prescribed for her child was not powerful enough to do the damage that overdosing athletes suffer.

Still another parent talked about his anxiety that Medi-Cal insurance would not cover his child's multiple asthma attacks.

There is no cure, but asthma can be controlled with doctors' care and prescribed medications, they said. Diagnosing a child's or adult's asthma can be difficult because triggers of the disease vary by individual.

On the whole, polluted air in the San Joaquin Valley does asthma sufferers no good, said health educator Crystal Elcon, but fleeing the area may not be the answer. Air pollutants set off some children's asthma, but molds may trigger it in others.

Fleeing Madera for Santa Cruz, for example, may not work for a child if mold in that damper region would trigger the child's asthma.

Elcon, Kara Zografos of the lung association and health educator Noemi Flores told parents to look out for conditions that may bring on asthma: bad air days, pet dander, dust and dust mites, perfume and other scents, pollen, temperature changes and mold, among others.

Persistent coughing or wheezing make a doctor's visit advisable. The doctor can diagnose asthma and prescribe two categories of medication, Garcia and the health educators said. Bronchial dilators treat acute attacks, and anti-inflammatory medicines provide longer-term control.

Health educators said it is important for schools to make sure that children always have access to their asthma medicine, even if a school nurse is not available.

Literature available during the educational gathering explained the chronic disease.

A child or adult who comes in contact with a relevant trigger, such as dust, pollen or pesticide, suffers inflamed airways. The lining of the airways becomes inflamed and produces more mucus. Muscles that wrap the airways tighten and eventually can block the air supply.

The Valley's bad air might be reason to leave for another area, Garcia said, but many farmworker families cannot afford to leave the area and its agricultural jobs.

Elcon suggested ways to reduce children's exposure to dust and dust mites, common asthma triggers. Change blankets every week. Wash sheets and curtains in hot water. Vacuum homes more often. Don't sweep.

Clean stuffed toy animals. Parents can kill dust mites on stuffed animals by placing them in plastic bags, freezing and removing them.

"Try to modify your home environment," Garcia said.

The air is worse late in the day, he said, so asthma sufferers should curtail their physical activity then.

Health threats can be more difficult to combat for the poor, Garcia said. One way to defeat dust mites is to replace bedding.

"Sometimes we try to give families new mattress covers," Garcia said, "and they don't have mattresses."

Surviving the Heat

More susceptible to Valley temperatures than their juniors, seniors learn to adapt.

By Matt Leedy, The Fresno Bee

(Published Friday, July 25, 2003, 6:21 AM)

Neona Burroughs remembers when Valley summers seemed unbearable until large blocks of ice occasionally arrived at her Fresno home.

Florida Tate tells of unforgiving heat waves when Fresnans cooled their homes with fans alone.

Now the women, who combined to live through more than 100 Fresno summers, are among Valley residents at greatest risk when triple-digit temperatures continue for days on end.

Health experts say the elderly are more likely to suffer heat-related illnesses, become dehydrated or encounter problems with their medications if they can't escape the sweltering weather.

There has been little relief this month as Fresno hit 105 degrees Thursday, making it the 10th consecutive day of triple-digit heat. The streak is expected to continue through at least the weekend.

Before the sun can beat down on the Valley, Tate wakes at 5:30 a.m., starting her day by opening the windows and doors. She allows the morning air to cool her west Fresno home while she cooks both breakfast and dinner.

At noon, the 69-year-old turns on her swamp cooler and hopes for the best. "But it still gets pretty warm," Tate says.

Although there's no denying Fresno's current heat wave, Tate says she's lived through worse. "I was born and raised when we didn't even have swamp coolers."

Evaporative coolers, more commonly known as swamp coolers, can be found on the roofs and attached to the sides of many senior citizens' homes in Fresno. They cost a quarter of the price of central air conditioning and are 80% cheaper to run, according to Shannon Mathis, a Pacific Gas & Electric spokeswoman.

Swamp coolers draw air from the outside and run it against a wet, cool pad. However, they don't work well in very hot or humid climates.

Burroughs, 70, also uses a swamp cooler to temper the southeast Fresno apartment she shares with a light brown Chihuahua named Pixey.

Sitting in an easy chair, with a fan nearby, she recalls when ice was hand delivered in big blocks. Her family would take chips from the ice blocks and place them behind a fan to cool their home.

Now she goes to an air-conditioned cafeteria in her senior citizens' complex when it gets too hot inside her apartment.

Burroughs does most of her errands in the morning and never plans to do much in the afternoon. "I do what I have to do, and when it gets to be this time and it gets hot, I don't do anything," Burroughs says at 3:30 p.m. on another steaming Valley day. "I just get comfortable and quiet and drink lots of water."

Burroughs' routine follows the recommendations of many who work with the elderly.

For those who can't cool their homes, there are air-conditioned "cooling centers" -- typically senior and community centers -- throughout the Valley that are unaffected by rotating power blackouts.

"Let someone else spend the money on PG&E. Go to the mall or a senior center or a community center," says Cory Scholtes, a program coordinator with the Fresno-Madera Agency on Aging.

Low-income seniors also can turn to PG&E for help. Through its Energy Partners Program, seniors can have their appliances, windows and insulation checked for energy efficiency.

For those who qualify, PG&E will pay for refrigerators and swamp coolers, or a \$50 rebate on air conditioners.

When seniors don't come in from the sun, the Valley's heat often takes a toll.

Richard Berquist, an emergency room doctor at Community Medical Center-Fresno, is treating an increasing number of seniors for dehydration and dizziness. He has seen many more whose medical problems worsened with rising temperatures and declining air quality.

Heat, respiratory and thyroid problems can be made worse by the heat, he says.

Berquist warns that several medications contribute to dehydration. They include anti-depressants, antihistamines, psychiatric medications, some eye drops and medications for sleeping disorders, heart problems and Parkinson's disease.

Nancy Guntner, a nurse at Saint Agnes Adult Day Health Center, says seniors are more likely to become dehydrated and sometimes don't know when they're getting too hot.

"Their sensory system doesn't work as well, their taste, their smell and their sense of hot and cold," she says. "And they don't take in as much water as they should."

On hot days, Guntner says seniors should drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day.

The local heat wave is expected to continue into next week. Triple-digit temperatures will remain until at least Wednesday, when the National Weather Service says Fresno could dip slightly to 99 degrees.

The Valley is covered in a dome of hot air that spans from the great basin in central Nevada and western Utah to the four corners of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona.

Meteorologist Modesto Vasquez summed up his forecast for seniors and the rest of the Valley's residents: "It just doesn't look good."

[Letters to the Editor -- The Porterville Recorder, July 28, 2003:](#)

Do something about buses that pollute

Has anyone ever been behind a school bus starting from a stop sign.

It is a choking, airless experience.

The same bureaucracies that want to curtail the rest of us is, in my opinion, the biggest polluting offender.

Clean up those buses before you restrict my wood burning stove.

Woods can burn all winter long but my stove gets the blame. I resent the implementation.

Why don't you try outlawing forest fires next?

It makes as much sense.

John O. Kneisler, Terra Bella

Please try to protect our forests

Currently, the Bush administration has proposed a California "fire protection" plan that would gut established protections for the Sierra Nevada national forests, allowing timber companies to double logging amounts on 11 million acres of Sierra Nevada national forests.

As one of the 86 million yearly visitors to our beautiful forests, I do not want to see our forests overrun by commercial logging under the guise of "fire safety."

More logging just means less fire-resistant old-growth trees, more construction vehicles, lowered water quality and more [pollution](#).

The Forest Service should focus on the important task of reducing hazardous fuels in the zone close to our communities instead of spending time changing the rules so the timber industry can log bigger trees in the backcountry.

Please urge our state leaders and Forest Service decision-makers like U.S. Department of Agriculture Undersecretary Mark Rey to protect our beloved Sierra Nevada forests.

Alykhan Boolani, San Francisco

Activists claim plan to clean air 'flawed'

Lawsuit attacks state air resources board, San Joaquin Valley air district

Tri Valley Herald

July 25, 2003

By Associated Press

FRESNO -- An environmental group sued state officials Thursday over a "flawed plan" to clean particulate matter from the San Joaquin Valley's air, some of the most polluted in the nation.

The Association of Irrigated Residents filed the lawsuit against the California Air Resources Board for allegedly violating state law when last month the agency approved a plan developed by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Brent Newell, an attorney representing the association, said a hearing is scheduled for Nov. 14 in Sacramento Superior Court, where the suit was filed.

Opponents claim the plan doesn't go far enough to clean the air of microscopic bits of dust, soot and smoke kicked up on dirt roads, farm fields and spewed by fires -- particles they blame for hundreds of deaths a year.

The San Joaquin Valley has some of the nation's worst particle pollution, which is largely attributed to agriculture.

The Valley has missed several federal clean air deadlines over the last decade, and if officials fail to produce a federally approvable plan by next year, the EPA has said it will take over. If that happens, the valley could lose millions of dollars in federal highway funds.

Valley officials approved the pollution plan June 19 and state air regulators followed suit a week later. It must now be approved by the EPA before being implemented.

"We begged them to reject the flawed plan," said Tom Frantz, president of the group that calls itself AIR. "They ignored us. Now we intend to force them to protect the public."

The lawsuit centers on how to interpret federal law.

The pollution plan must show a 5 percent reduction of particle pollution or the emissions that cause such pollutants every year until 2010.

Valley air officials say the plan will show reductions in both pollution precursors and actual particle pollution that add up to an overall 5 percent reduction each year. Opponents claim the 5 percent reduction must be registered in one or the other category, not by adding reductions from both.

State air board spokeswoman Gennet Paauwe refused comment on the pending litigation, but said the current plan will clean the Valley's air.

"Our board voted on it and they passed it, so they're pleased," Paauwe said.

Lisa Fasano, a spokeswoman with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said the law is open to interpretation.

"The plan is going to be a challenge for all of us because it is the first time in the nation the 5 percent reduction rule has been applied for particle pollution," Fasano said. "We're looking at it, the state is looking at it, the district is looking at it and EPA headquarters is looking at it to understand how the rule applies."

The plan mandates that farmers comply with strict rules such as curtailing dust and dirt pollution on unpaved roads, and during harvesting and soil preparation.

It also calls for stricter pollution control on construction, demolition and excavation sites that send dust and dirt into the air, and offers developers and builders the option of paying fees to help lower pollution in other areas if they can't reduce pollution on their own work sites.

State sued over pollution plan

S.J. Valley blueprint not strict enough, critics say

The Stockton Record

July 25, 2003

By Audrey Cooper, The Record

A group of clean-air advocates sued the state Thursday, claiming the Air Resources Board violated the law when it approved a sweeping plan to cut the San Joaquin Valley's terrible air pollution.

The Association of Irrigated Residents said "fuzzy math" was used to prove that the plan would reduce particulate pollution by at least 5 percent a year.

Particulate pollution is one of the Valley's major air problems. The microscopic flecks of soot, dust and vapor come from a variety of sources, including wood smoke, businesses and vehicles. The pollution causes asthma attacks, lung disease and premature deaths.

The sweeping blueprint-style plan to reduce pollution was written by Valley Air Pollution Control District air scientists. The plan didn't specify new rules to cut down on pollution. Rather, it provided a sort of road map for air planners to follow that was designed to eventually lead to cleaner air.

The air district's governing board approved the long-awaited plan on June 19. The state Air Resources Board signed off on the plan a week later, despite protests from environmental groups. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also will need to approve the plan, a move expected in a few months.

AIR members complain that state officials should have pressured the air district to write stricter goals.

"It's a fast and loose interpretation of the law followed by fuzzy math," said Brent Newell, the attorney representing AIR.

The plan was supposed to show an annual 5 percent reduction in particulate pollution.

There are two sources of particulate pollution: directly emitted particulates, like dust kicked up by cars traveling on unpaved roads, and chemical emissions such as fumes and vapors that combine in the air to form tiny particles.

Instead of figuring how much pollution actually could be cut, the air district added together the amount of reductions from the two sources.

That's illegal, and so is averaging annual reductions, Newell said.

"This is a central requirement. It's not an annual average. And the law says either particulates 'or' precursor (emissions), not 'and,' " he said.

Richard Varenchik, a spokesman for the state air board, said his agency would not comment on the pending litigation.

A hearing date is expected in about three months, and a decision on the lawsuit could be reached in about six months, Newell said.

This is AIR's second legal action in as many days. On Wednesday, the group sent the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency a notice that it planned to sue over a separate air rule.

Such notices are required before a group can sue the EPA.

Lawsuit filed over valley air plan

The Modesto Bee
July 25, 2003

By Brian Skoloff, The Associated Press

FRESNO -- An environmental group sued state officials Thursday over a "flawed plan" to clean particulate matter from the San Joaquin Valley's air, some of the most polluted in the nation.

The Association of Irrigated Residents filed the lawsuit against the California Air Resources Board for allegedly violating state law last month when the agency approved a plan developed by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Brent Newell, an attorney representing the association, said a hearing is scheduled for Nov. 14 in Sacramento Superior Court, where the suit was filed.

Opponents claim the plan doesn't go far enough to clean the air of microscopic bits of dust, soot and smoke kicked up on dirt roads, farm fields and spewed by fires -- particles they blame for hundreds of deaths a year.

Nation's worst particle pollution

The San Joaquin Valley has some of the nation's worst particle pollution, which is largely attributed to agriculture.

The valley has missed several federal clean air deadlines over the last decade, and if officials fail to produce a federally approvable plan by next year, the EPA has said it will take over.

If that happens, the valley could lose millions of dollars in federal highway funds.

Valley officials approved the pollution plan June 19 and state air regulators followed suit a week later. It must now be approved by the EPA before being implemented.

"We begged them to reject the flawed plan," said Tom Frantz, president of the group that calls itself AIR. "They ignored us. Now we intend to force them to protect the public."

The lawsuit centers on how to interpret federal law.

The pollution plan must show a 5 percent reduction of particle pollution or the emissions that cause such pollutants every year until 2010.

Valley air officials say the plan will show reductions in both pollution precursors and actual particle pollution that add up to an overall 5 percent reduction each year. Opponents claim the 5 percent reduction must be registered in one or the other category, not by adding reductions from both.

State air board spokeswoman Gennet Paauwe refused comment on the pending litigation, but said the current plan will clean the valley's air.

"Our board voted on it and they passed it, so they're pleased," Paauwe said.

Lisa Fasano, a spokeswoman with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said the law is open to interpretation.

"The plan is going to be a challenge for all of us because it is the first time in the nation the 5 percent reduction rule has been applied for particle pollution," Fasano said. "We're looking at it, the state is looking at it, the district is looking at it and EPA headquarters is looking at it to understand how the rule applies."

The plan mandates that farmers comply with strict rules such as curtailing dust and dirt pollution on unpaved roads, and during harvesting and soil preparation.

It also calls for stricter pollution control on construction, demolition and excavation sites that send dust and dirt into the air, and offers developers and builders the option of paying fees to help lower pollution in other areas if they can't reduce pollution on their own work sites.

Panel tackles Calpine station Energy Commission can't agree on how air pollution from plant

Tri Valley Herald

July 24, 2003

By Matt Carter, staff writer

SACRAMENTO -- State regulators can't decide what the rules will be if they let Calpine Corp. build an 1,100 megawatt power plant between Livermore and Tracy.

After spending two years reviewing documents and conducting public hearings, the California Energy Commission postponed issuing a license Wednesday for Calpine's East Altamont Energy Center.

Although the Energy Commission ultimately is expected to approve the plant, disagreements remain about how to best protect residents of San Joaquin Valley cities such as Tracy and Manteca from the air pollution it will produce.

During a two-hour hearing in Sacramento, critics including Tracy resident Bob Sarvey said the Energy Commission should require more "mitigation" -- programs to offset the pollution generated by the plant.

Calpine officials maintain that the company already has agreed to pay for more mitigation than is required by law, and said additional demands could jeopardize the plant's financing.

That issue and others have prompted the Energy Commission to withdraw consideration of the plant's license from its agenda several times since March. But the commission went ahead with Wednesday's hearing -- despite a written warning from Calpine that the terms of the proposed license could make the project "untenable."

As the debate began, Commissioner Robert Pernell was dismayed to learn of Calpine's objections.

"I thought this project was ready to come before the commission, and now I'm hearing there is still (disagreement)" over the proposed license, Pernell said. "Are we ready to vote on this?"

The answer turned out to be no.

At issue is a voluntary agreement between Calpine and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Although the air district has no jurisdiction over the plant, Calpine has agreed to pay it \$1 million if the plant is built.

The money could be used to replace engines that are used to pump water on farms, substituting cleaner-running models. Calpine and the air district maintain that or similar programs would cut at least 67 tons of air pollution per year in the smoggy San Joaquin Valley.

But when Energy Commission staff members performed their own analysis, they determined that Calpine should be required to pay for programs that cut pollution in the San Joaquin Valley by 225 tons a year.

Last month, Pernell and Energy Commission Chairman William J. Keese signed off on a proposed license that would require Calpine to pay for more mitigation than it has volunteered to provide, but less than the 225 tons recommended by Energy Commission staff members.

The proposed license would require Calpine to provide 67 tons of pollution reductions for as long as the power plant is operating -- not just the 7- to 10-year life of the farm engines Calpine has volunteered to pay for.

Attorneys for Calpine said the new requirement wasn't part of the debate, and wasn't put in writing until a 12-page "errata" to the proposed license, signed by Pernell and Keese, was issued on June 16.

Also objecting to the proposed change in the license was Seyed Sadredin, director of permit services for the San Joaquin air district. Sadredin said the change could force Calpine to buy emission reduction credits instead of paying for new programs that cut pollution.

If it builds the plant, Calpine already is being required by Bay Area air quality regulators to pay for 836 tons of emissions reduction credits -- credits other companies earn by cutting their own pollution.

"In our view, it's not acceptable," for Calpine to purchase additional emission reduction credits in the San Joaquin valley, Sadredin said. "You simply buy a piece of paper from a company that's already made these reductions in the past. It will do nothing from this point forward in mitigating this project."

Energy Commission attorney Lisa DeCarlo said Calpine still could choose to honor its agreement with the San Joaquin air district, but should be required to provide pollution reductions for the life of the project. That could mean buying emission reduction credits when the farm engines wear out, or paying for other pollution reduction programs, she said.

In the end, the commission put off a decision, but could revisit the matter when it meets next on Aug. 6.

Keese said the East Altamont Energy Center is unique in that the site selected for the plant is on the boundary of two regional air pollution control districts. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District has jurisdiction over the plant, although most of the pollution it produces will drift into the San Joaquin Valley.

But the Energy Commission is facing the same challenges in an application for a license to build a second 1,110 megawatt plant in the area, FPL Energy's Tesla Power Project. A pre-hearing conference in that case is scheduled for Wednesday in Tracy.

One megawatt is enough generating capacity to supply 750 to 1,000 homes, and the two plants would be among the largest in the state. FPL Energy has a nearly identical \$1 million mitigation agreement with the San Joaquin air district.

Keese said whatever the Energy Commission's decides in the Calpine case should not be considered a precedent. He recommended that the commission hold broader hearings to consider "the appropriate treatment of facilities located in like situations."

The California Energy Commission will hold a pre-hearing conference and visit the proposed site of FPL Energy's proposed Tesla Power Plant Project at 4 p.m. Wednesday, July 30. The plant would be built on 60 acres in eastern Alameda County, just west of the San Joaquin County line and one-half mile north of Pacific Gas & Electric's Tesla substation. For more information call (800) 822-6228 or visit www.energy.ca.gov on the Web.

Ag marketers hear a pitch for ethanol Bill Jones touts Valley as source for fuel additive

Visalia Times-Delta

July 28, 2003

By Luis Hernandez, staff writer

TULARE -- Government, farmers and environmental groups should come together to support the growing ethanol industry in California, former California Secretary of State Bill Jones says.

Ethanol, a gasoline additive produced from corn, can create a market for local farmers and can help reduce carbon dioxide pollutants.

"We are just giving away an opportunity," Jones said. "It's a product that can be produced here."

Jones was the keynote speaker at the National Agri-Marketing Association's conference last week at the Heritage Complex.

Jones and a group of investors recently formed Pacific Ethanol Inc., and they are looking for financing to build two ethanol plants -- one in Visalia, near highways 99 and 198, and another in Madera. Jones said plans call for the Madera plant, a \$50 million project, to be in operation by the fall of 2004.

An ethanol plant could have a huge effect on the local economy. Jones said it would expand the economy by \$110 million, bring in a \$140 million one-time economic boost and create \$1.2 million in tax revenue.

Because ethanol can't be transported by pipes, jobs in the transportation industry would also be created.

Ethanol is mostly produced in the Midwest. California only has two facilities that produce an estimated 8 million gallons a year.

"The state needs 613 million gallons of ethanol this year and 1 billion gallons next year," said Rob Schlichting, a California Energy Commission spokesman.

With low local production and high current and projected demand, California consumers can be vulnerable to high prices when supplies run low. Jones likened the ethanol supply-and-demand scenario to the energy crisis that hit California a few years ago.

"It would be irresponsible not to take this problem head on," he said.

The high demand for ethanol stems from a bill recently passed in the California Legislature that calls for the maximum reduction of carbon dioxide emission from light-duty engines.

One way to reduce the pollutants is to replace methyl tertiary butyl ether with ethanol in gasoline. MTBE is being phased out because it pollutes water supplies.

"In fact, we know it's feasible to blend over 1.5 million gallons of ethanol a year into California's gasoline stream and reduce close to 5 million tons of [carbon dioxide] per year," Jones said.

Producing the ethanol could also prove beneficial for dairy farmers. Ethanol is produced by heating up corn and getting alcohol that is then turned into ethanol.

The byproduct, because of its high vitamin and fat content, can be fed to dairy cows.

"It's a win-win situation," Jones said.

Matt Schmitt, a Cowgreen representative, agreed with Jones.

"[Ethanol production] benefits both the fuel and dairy industry," Schmitt said.

Cowgreen, a company based in Southern California, is also looking to build an ethanol plant, or biorefinery, in Pixley.

Schmitt said Cowgreen's plant would need 85,000 acres of corn grown and the byproduct produced at the plant would feed 130,000 cows every day.

Cowgreen's plant is scheduled to be in operation early next year, Schmitt said.

Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner Gary Kunkle said local growers could supply what Cowgreen's plant would need.

At the moment, local farmers grow \$70 million worth of silage corn and \$1.5 million of grain corn, Kunkel said.

Silage corn, the seventh largest crop in the county last year, is grown specifically to feed dairy cows.

[Letter to the editor, Bakersfield Californian, July 27, 2003:](#)

Heat from ground up

Cleaning up our valley air is an extremely worthwhile effort. Creating "no fireplace burn days" may help considerably. However, there are additional considerations.

In third grade weren't we taught that heat rises? The floors are usually very cold; which in turn, makes a person feel the need for more heat. Turning the thermostat to a higher temperature increases the heating bill, but does not warm the floors. Wouldn't it, therefore, be appropriate to require all home builders cooperate by placing heating ducts and vents at floor level, instead of ceiling level?

The homeowners are being told they must not burn at certain times. It is reasonable to consider and include permanent strategies that would give much needed heat to keep homes comfortable on very cold days.

Janet K. Manning, Bakersfield