

## **Fresno Bee - Letter to the Editor - Wednesday, May 5, 2004**

### **A time for 'heroes' in fight for better Valley air quality**

The April 29 Bee article, "Another air report, another F," mentions the University of California, Davis, and UC Merced professors' interest in the Valley as a perfect laboratory for studying air problems. Let us become heroes in finding solutions that can affect the world.

Various groups often complain that the Valley is unfairly penalized because our unique geography holds in pollutants. Automotive and truck manufacturers complain that they cannot build vehicles to meet local standards that differ from national standards.

It seems downright unfair that crystal-clear areas like San Diego and San Francisco, with hundreds of miles of traffic-choked freeways, have the luxury of winds blowing their smog off into distant lands. One can take an international flight and see the brown air at 30,000 feet -- including over the North Pole.

The scene of the Valley's stagnant air is the blessing of a visible picture of the truth of global air pollution. Let's use our Valley as a model for world awareness and a model for national policies to standardize car, truck and other pollution controls to fit this real picture. The necessary actions continuously referred to as "difficult for the Valley," in truth, need to be acted upon worldwide. Please share a vision of once-again clear, healthy air, with the high Sierra seeming close enough to touch. And share the vision of our heroism, as we demonstrate to the world what can be accomplished for air quality.

Joe Ford Reedley

## **The Madera Tribune -Tuesday, May 04, 2004**

### **Housing development threatens San Joaquin River, group says**

A unique coalition of environmental, agricultural and community organizations will voice their concerns Tuesday regarding a development project that threatens the San Joaquin River as a vital public resource for the Valley.

The group calls for Madera County Board of Supervisors to reconsider an earlier decision to approve Central Green Company's River Ranch Estates, the first expansive urban development given tentative approval in the area north of the San Joaquin River known as Rio Mesa.

The coalition has grave concerns that the project poses a significant threat to the region's water supply, air and water quality, farmers, fish, wildlife and the San Joaquin River Parkway. In a strongly written letter, the entities stated that the project "is not consistent with Madera County planning policies, California's Environmental Quality Act, Senate Bill 610 and Senate Bill 221, as well as other

mandatory legal requirements,” and added that “In order to avoid legal challenges, it is imperative that the Board of Supervisors reconsider the information at hand and deny approval until all of the project’s impacts have been identified, studied, mitigated and adequately addressed as CEQA and state planning law require.”

Entities who sent the letter include the Madera County Farm Bureau, Madera Irrigation District, San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, Fresno Audubon Society, Chowchilla Water District, Gravelly Ford Water District, Friant Water User’s Authority, Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club, Fresno-Madera Medical Society, and the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority. The letter was delivered to the supervisors on Friday.

The problem, the letter says, arises from the precedent setting nature of a poorly planned development, “not only for Madera County, but for the Valley as a whole.”

The letter further states, “The project’s Environmental Impact Report and water assessment are legally deficient under California law, burdensome on Madera County, and susceptible to successful legal challenge if approved. The obvious solution is to refrain from moving forward with this project until a sound infrastructure plan is in place and an adequate Environmental Impact Report is prepared and circulated for public review.”

The concerns highlighted by the coalition in their comments on record to Madera County regarding the project include impacts on water supply, impacts to the San Joaquin River Parkway fish and wildlife, impacts to air quality, impacts to water quality, and inadequate infrastructure plan and inconsistency with Madera planning documents.

### **The Stockton Record - Wednesday, May 5, 2004**

#### **Group: Air regulators ignored pesticide rules**

By Audrey Cooper, Record Staff Writer

A group of clean-air advocates sued state regulators Tuesday, charging them with ignoring rules aimed at cutting pesticide-caused air pollution throughout the state. State officials declined to comment specifically on the lawsuit but denied that enforcement of state pesticide and pollution rules has been lax.

The clean-air groups argue that regulators who control air pollution and pesticides have failed to order cuts in smog-related pesticide use. Those goals called for a 20 percent drop in smog-causing pesticide emissions from 1990 to 2005.

Instead of dropping, pesticide-caused smog has risen steadily in the San Joaquin Valley, the groups claim in the lawsuit filed in a Sacramento federal court.

The groups behind the lawsuit include the Association of Irrigated Residents, Communities and Children's Advocates Against Pesticide Poisoning, the Wishtoyo Foundation, Ventura CoastKeeper and El Comite para el Bienestar de Earlimart (the Committee for the Welfare of Earlimart). Attorneys from the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment are representing the group.

Pesticides -- along with aerosols, cars, animal waste and other sources -- emit volatile organic compounds. VOCs mix with other emissions from sources such as power plants, cars and big rigs. Sunlight cooks the brew of emissions into smog.

The Valley has one of the worst smog problems in the country. The pollution has been linked to cancer, asthma attacks, hospitalizations, reduced breathing ability and other lung diseases. "Californians' lungs are not subsidies for agriculture," said Teresa DeAnda, president of El Comite. State officials paint a different picture. Glenn Brank, a spokesman for the Department of Pesticide Regulation, said pesticides account for less than 5 percent of VOC emissions valleywide. The state also has met its most recent goals for cutting those emissions, Brank said.

According to state promises, pesticide emissions were supposed to drop 12 percent from 1990 to 1999. By 2002, emissions were supposed to fall by another four percent.

Brank said the 1999 goal was met. Data isn't in yet to tell whether the state achieved the 2002 goal, he said. Yet the clean-air groups say their own data shows the 1999 goal was not met and neither was the 2002 goal. Those missed deadlines mean state officials should have imposed new pesticide regulations to deal with the pollution, said Brent Newell, an attorney for the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment. "To say these goals are being met is insulting to people who are suffering through the worst air pollution in the country," Newell said. Newell said that pesticide-caused smog is significant even if it is only 5 percent of the total VOC emissions in the valley. The region's largest source of VOCs is livestock waste, such as waste lagoons found at dairies, comprising 10 percent of the total VOC emissions in the valley.

"Five percent is still a large figure and yet these emissions are unregulated. Looking for voluntary drops in this pollution isn't meaningful regulation," he said.

\* To reach reporter Audrey Cooper, phone (209) 546-8298 or e-mail [acooper@recordnet.com](mailto:acooper@recordnet.com) <<mailto:acooper@recordnet.com>>

**NEW YORK TIMES - May 5, 2004**

## **Court Rulings on Emissions Sharply Split Two Groups**

By MICHAEL JANOFSKY

WASHINGTON, May 3 - The Supreme Court on Monday, for the second time in a week, issued a decision on emission standards for power plants that cheered industry groups while upsetting environmentalists. The two actions came in unrelated cases, the one on Monday involving the Tennessee Valley Authority and the other last Wednesday a regional air pollution control agency in Southern California.

Environmental lawyers, trying to gauge the impact of the decisions, said the cases seemed to reflect a certain hostility by the court toward aggressive steps intended to reduce air pollution.

"The common denominator is that their attitude presents a serious threat to clean air," said Ann Johnston, a lawyer for Clear the Air, a national coalition of environmental groups that work to reduce emissions from old power plants.

To the contrary, said Scott H. Segal, director of the Electric Reliability Coordinating Council, a trade organization for power-generating companies that applauded both Supreme Court decisions as upholding the Clean Air Act and its overall objectives.

"In both cases, we are talking about a mechanism to achieve the goal of clean air," Mr. Segal said. "We're not trying to change the goal."

In the case on Monday, the court refused to hear an appeal by the federal government that would have applied New Source Review, a controversial section of the Clean Air Act governing aging coal-burning plants, to power plants owned by the Tennessee Valley Authority. The court let stand a decision by an appeals court in Atlanta that had said it lacked jurisdiction to rule on the merits of the case - whether the Environmental Protection Agency had properly applied the review - because the means of review, through Administrative Compliance Orders, was unconstitutional and a violation of due process.

Last Wednesday, the court ruled 8 to 1 that the South Coast Air Quality Management District, which sets emission rules in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, cannot impose stricter standards on vehicle fleet operators than those established by the federal Clean Air Act.

Environmental lawyers said the impact of both decisions is poor air quality in regions of the country struggling with excessive pollution.

The T.V.A. case carries the additional possibility that the E.P.A. could lose use of the compliance order, which has become one of its primary weapons in enforcing the Clean Air Act, including New Source Review, which applies to older power plants and requires their operators to add emission-lowering devices any time the plants are modified.

The Bush administration has the option to fight for the merits of New Source Review in the T.V.A. case by refiling the case in a trial court. But that would

involve one federal agency, the E.P.A., suing another, T.V.A., which rarely happens.

Charles Miller, a spokesman for the Justice Department, said no decision had been made.

-----

### **The Stockton Record - May 5, 2004**

#### **Valley district offers mower discounts**

San Joaquin Valley residents can get major discounts on electric lawn mowers this year under a program from the local air-pollution control district.

Residents can get up to \$88 off an electric lawn mower and 50 percent off a reel mower at any Orchard Supply Hardware store in the valley. Resident will need to get a coupon from the air district before they can get the discount on the mowers.

The program begins June 5 and ends June 8, the official beginning of smog season in the valley. For more information or to obtain a coupon, residents should call the air district at (209) 557-6400. Supplies of the coupons are limited. Information: [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org)

### **Modesto Bee - May 5, 2004**

#### **Discount coupons given for clean mowers**

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is handing out coupons to entice people to dump their gas-powered lawn mowers in favor of "Clean Green Yard Machines." Clean machines are electric models or push mowers. They work just as well as gas-powered mowers, air district officials said. And, they added, for every gas mower that gets dumped, the air district gets rid of a machine that can emit as much pollution as 40 late-model cars.

The air district is in a partnership with Orchard Supply Hardware, Black & Decker and American Lawn Mower Co. on the coupon program.

For electric lawn mowers, the coupons offer discounts up to \$88. For push mowers, the coupons are good for 50 percent off.

Coupons can be used from June 5 to June 8 at any Orchard Supply Hardware store in the valley.

The program's ending date is the start of the "Spare the Air" season, when the district issues alerts on days when people are asked to curtail driving and refrain from using gas-powered mowers and leaf blowers, among other equipment that adds to pollution.

Unlike past years, air district officials said, this year's "Clean Green Yard Machines" program does not involve trade-ins. Instead, people are asked to request coupons from the air district and use them during the designated period. Coupons will be available while supplies last.

More information on the Clean Green Yard Machines program is available by telephone from the air district's Modesto office, 557-6400, and online, [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) <<http://www.valleyair.org>>.

### **The Bakersfield Californian - May 5, 2004** **Two Californian staffers earn honors for writing**

Two Californian reporters have earned second-place awards in regional journalism competitions. Eye Street columnist Herb Benham earned a second-place award in feature writing in the 2004 Best of the West competition, which honors excellence in newspapers in 13 Western states.

Benham, an Eye Street columnist for more than 15 years, won for his Nov. 23, 2003, article "A clean house," which told the story of Carrie Mae Hill. Despite her own background of poverty and lack of formal education, Hill demanded excellence from her own children and grandchildren, many of whom went on to earn advanced college degrees. Hill died in November.

"A remarkable story beautifully told about a woman who had her first child at 13, couldn't read until she was 70 and spent her life cleaning houses to put her five children through college -- two earned Ph.D.s," the contest judge wrote. "Perfectly paced, and rich with details."

Unlike many newspaper writing contests, papers of all sizes compete for the same Best of the West awards. In Benham's category, reporters from The Seattle Times and the San Francisco Chronicle won first and third place, respectively. The contest is administered by First Amendment Funding Inc., a nonprofit corporation dedicated to press freedom issues.

Staff reporter Matt Weiser was awarded second place from the Associated Press News Executive's Council for a June 2003 series examining air pollution in the Bakersfield area.

Weiser's "Smog: A Growing Concern" series earned second place in the Fairbanks Public Service Award competition for California and Nevada newspapers with daily circulations of 25,000 to 74,999. First place was awarded to The Tribune of San Luis Obispo.

This is Weiser's second award for the series. The American Planning Association awarded him first place in its annual journalism competition.

### **The Bakersfield Californian -- News Brief -- May 5, 2004**

## **Air district pushes for clean-running lawn mowers**

Valley residents have an opportunity to buy clean-running lawn mowers at steeply discounted prices.

The average gas-powered law mower produces as much air pollution as 40 late-model cars, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. To eliminate some of this smog, the district on Tuesday unveiled its "Clean Green Yard Machines" program.

The program provides up to \$88 off the price of an electric lawn mower, and half off the price of a push mower.

The discounts reduce the price of a new Craftsman electric mower to just \$142, and an 18-inch push mower to just \$45.

Interested buyers must first obtain a coupon from the air district by calling 326-6900. The new mower must be purchased between June 5 and 8, and only at Orchard Supply Hardware.

There is a limited supply of coupons available, so interested residents are advised to act quickly.