

IF YOU THOUGHT LAST WEEK WAS HOT ...

Higher temperatures, rising ocean, loss of snowpack forecast for state

Jane Kay, Chronicle Environment Writer
S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, August 1, 2006

California will become significantly hotter and drier by the end of the century, causing severe air pollution, a drop in the water supply, the melting of 90 percent of the Sierra snowpack and up to six times more heat-related deaths in major urban centers, according to a sweeping study compiled with help from respected scientists around the country.

The weather -- up to 10.5 degrees warmer by 2100 -- would make last month's heat wave look average. If industrial and vehicle emissions continue unabated, there could be up to 100 more days a year when temperatures hit 90 degrees or above in Los Angeles and 95 degrees or above in Sacramento, the report states. Both cities have about 20 days of such extreme heat now.

The report's good news: If emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are significantly curtailed, the number of extremely hot days might increase by only half those figures.

The report, released today by the California Environmental Protection Agency, was prepared by the California Climate Change Center, established three years ago by the California Energy Commission. Scripps Institution of Oceanography and UC Berkeley are responsible for the core research, and about 75 scientists from universities, government agencies and nonprofit groups contributed to the study.

The report is the first under an executive order signed in June 2005 by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger that calls for biennial studies on the potential impact on the state of continued global warming.

"What we wanted to do with the document is summarize the scientific reports so regular citizens can understand the grave concerns that we believe are facing California," said Claudia Chandler, assistant executive director of the Energy Commission.

Climate experts have faith in the reliability of global climate models and their ability to forecast what will happen to the planet as the heat-trapping greenhouse gases continue to build in the atmosphere. However, some scientists have been reluctant to say how global warming might affect specific regions, including areas the size of California. That's because there is debate over whether models are good enough to zoom in on possible local effects of planetary climate change.

But Chandler said the state was depending on the core of scientists who prepared the report to use the best models available to help the state prepare for problems in the not-too-distant future. "We probably won't know until 10 years from now. But that will be too late. We cannot turn our backs on trying to address this very serious situation."

Highlights of the report:

- Hotter weather would increase the risk of death from dehydration, heat stroke, heart attack, stroke and respiratory distress. Under the most extreme scenario, heat-related deaths could increase by four or six times.
- The snowpack, the state's major source of fresh drinking water, could nearly disappear.
- Power demand could go up as much as 20 percent, but hydropower supplies would drop.
- Heat could put stress on dairy cows, which could produce up to 20 percent less milk. Fruit and nut trees could produce smaller, inferior-quality crops. Wine grape quality could be severely affected in all but the coolest growing regions.
- Sea levels would rise, with the possibility of inundating the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, a source of two-thirds of the state's drinking water.

"We looked at agriculture, one of the state's most important sectors, and the increased potential of wildfires," said Chandler.

"We looked at public health from the standpoint of deteriorating air quality and the reduced water from the Sierra Nevada snowpack. We looked at what rising sea levels would mean to the delta's water pumps and levees and to the coastal cities of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland and San Diego."

The study authors based their assessments on what would happen in California under three different emissions scenarios. The amount of emissions would determine the amount of temperature rise over the century as greenhouse gases trapped excess heat that would otherwise radiate into space. These scenarios -- which contain varying assumptions on economic and population growth, use of new efficient technologies and shifts away from the use of fossil fuels -- have been adopted by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a collaboration of 2,000 scientists from 100 countries.

With continued higher emissions, temperature increases are projected between 8 and 10.5 degrees; with medium emissions, temperatures would increase between 5.5 and 8 degrees; with lower emissions, the temperature is projected to rise between 3 and 5.5 degrees.

How the state manages emissions could have a significant impact on how global warming affects California, the report said. For example, if temperatures rise as much as 5.5 degrees, there will be 75 to 85 percent more days of weather conducive to production of unhealthy smog in Los Angeles and the San Joaquin Valley, it said. The days could be cut if emissions stayed at the lower scenario.

Sea levels have already risen about 7 inches along the California coast in the past century. If greenhouse gases continue and temperatures rise into the upper range, the ocean is expected to rise 22 to 35 inches by the end of the century.

A mix of increasingly severe winter storms and high tides is expected to cause more frequent and severe flooding, erosion and damage to coastal structures, the report said.

The report concludes that California policy alone cannot significantly affect the warming planet.

"California alone cannot stabilize the planet. However, the state's actions can drive global progress," the report concludes. If other states and nation's follow California's example of limiting emissions of greenhouse gases, "we would be on track to keep temperatures from rising ... and thus avoid the most severe consequences of global warming."

UK, Calif. Strike Global Warming Deal

By Michael R. Blood, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, Fresno Bee, San Diego Union-Tribune & others Tues., Aug.1, 2006

Long Beach, Calif. (AP) -- British Prime Minister Tony Blair and California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announced an agreement Monday to bypass the Bush administration and work together to explore ways to fight global warming.

The two leaders announced the pact as they met with business leaders on clean energy and climate issues against the backdrop of a BP oil tanker at a terminal in the Port of Long Beach.

"We see that there is not great leadership from the federal government when it comes to protecting the environment," Schwarzenegger said. "We know there is global warming, so we should stop it."

Addressing business leaders during an earlier panel discussion, Blair called global warming "long-term, the single biggest issue we face."

The agreement calls for collaboration on research into cleaner-burning fuels and technologies, and looking into the possibility of setting up a system whereby polluters could buy and sell the right to emit greenhouse gases. The idea is to use market forces and market incentives to curb pollution.

Environmental groups questioned the value of the agreement, calling it little more than a symbolic gesture.

California is looking to cut carbon dioxide - a byproduct of coal, oil and gasoline combustion - and other heat-trapping gases that scientists say are warming the planet. President Bush has rejected the idea of ordering such cuts.

"This is an agreement to share ideas and information. It is not a treaty," said Schwarzenegger spokesman Adam Mendelsohn. "Right now, all we are doing is talking about sharing ideas."

"It will be markets, not governments, that will decide which technologies are chosen in the future. Governments can give clear, credible, long-term signals to the market which will enable companies to develop the technology that will result in cleaner technology, more energy efficient technology," said a Blair spokesman, speaking on condition of anonymity, in line with government policy.

Kristen Hellmer, a spokeswoman for the White House Council on Environmental Quality, said the agreement was "a wonderful amplification" of talks last year between the president and Blair. "It's just another step forward," she said. "This is a way to share ideas, what works and what doesn't work."

For Schwarzenegger, a Republican who is running for a full term in November, the agreement comes at a time when he has been trying to distance himself from Bush in this mostly Democratic state.

His aides disputed speculation that the agreement was an attempt to sidestep the White House. In a conference call with reporters, state Environmental Secretary Linda Adams said the agency is in "constant contact" with federal regulators, but added that there was no discussion with Washington about Monday's agreement.

Craig Noble of the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group, said the pact had symbolic value, but that "the time for talk is over." He urged passage of a proposal, pending in the state Legislature, that would make California the first state to limit greenhouse gas emissions from industrial sources.

"The bottom line is, voluntary is not enough," Noble said.

While partnering with Britain, Schwarzenegger is seeking changes to the state bill that Democrats say would undermine its goals.

Schwarzenegger has proposed creating a board of agency heads who would set emission limits after taking into account the economic effects. Democrats say the independent state Air Resources Board should oversee the program.

The world's only mandatory carbon dioxide trading program is in Europe. Created in conjunction with the Kyoto Protocol, the 1997 international treaty that took effect last year, it caps the amount of carbon dioxide that can be emitted from power plants and factories in more than two dozen countries.

Companies can trade rights to pollute directly with each other or through exchanges located around Europe. Canada, one of more than 160 nations that signed Kyoto, plans a similar program.

Although the United States is one of the few industrialized nations that have not signed the treaty, some Eastern states are developing a regional cap-and-trade program. And some U.S. companies have voluntarily agreed to limit their carbon dioxide pollution as part of a new Chicago-based market.

A main target of the agreement between Britain and California is the carbon dioxide from cars, trucks and other modes of transportation. Transportation accounts for an estimated 41 percent of California's greenhouse gas emissions and 28 percent of Britain's.

Schwarzenegger has called on California to cut its greenhouse gas emissions to 2000 levels by 2010. California was the 12th-largest source of greenhouse gases in the world last year, bigger than most nations.

Blair has called on Britain to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to 60 percent of its 1990 levels by 2050. Britain also has been looking at imposing individual limits on carbon pollution. People who accumulate unused carbon allowances - for example, by driving less, or switching to less polluting vehicles - could sell them to people who exceed their allowances - for example by driving more.

Bush has resisted Blair's efforts to make carbon dioxide reduction a top international priority. After taking office, Bush reversed a 2000 campaign pledge to regulate carbon dioxide emissions, then withdrew U.S. support from the Kyoto treaty requiring industrialized nations to cut their greenhouse gases to below 1990 levels.

The United States is responsible for a quarter of the world's global warming pollution. Bush administration officials argue that requiring cuts in greenhouse gases would cost the U.S. economy 5 million jobs.

Instead, the administration has poured billions of dollars into research aimed at slowing the growth of most greenhouse gases while advocating a global cut on one of them, methane.

Associated Press Writer John Heilprin in Washington contributed to this report.

On the Net:

British Foreign Office:

California Climate Change Portal:

<<http://www.fco.gov.uk>> www.fco.gov.uk <<http://www.fco.gov.uk>>

<<http://www.climatechange.ca.gov>> www.climatechange.ca.gov

<<http://www.climatechange.ca.gov>>

State, U.K. strike emissions deal, bypassing Bush

Carla Marinucci, Chronicle Political Writer

S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, August 1, 2006

British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger -- in an apparent end run around a Bush administration that has stubbornly resisted addressing global warming -- signed a partnership Monday to share technology and scientific research aimed at fighting the effects of worldwide climate change.

The nonbinding accord is the first between the United Kingdom and a U.S. state on global warming, establishing what officials said would be a continuing commitment to focus on the issue.

Blair, emerging after more than an hour from a roundtable discussion with industry leaders on the matter, praised Schwarzenegger for what he called extraordinary leadership on the issue. He said California has led the way in trying to find innovations to tackle a global warming crisis about which there is "no longer any doubt."

"Obviously, for a state as large and obviously as powerful as California to play a part in this is tremendously important," Blair said, adding that the partnership announced Monday "will allow us to explore how as leaders we can combine together in research and technology, but also to evolve market mechanisms that allow us to reduce (carbon dioxide) emissions."

The unusual agreement provided a dramatic contrast to the actions of President Bush, who has rebuffed proposals for such programs and repeatedly dismissed Blair's calls to focus on global warming as a critical international environmental issue.

Though the president only recently, at the Group of Eight summit, acknowledged the human contributions to global warming, Bush administration officials have maintained that mandatory pollution reduction targets would harm world economies and cost millions of jobs in the United States.

California's Republican governor, repeatedly asked Monday by reporters about his environmental differences with the White House, distanced himself from the president.

"The message is that we do not wait for the federal government to act. ... We see there is not great leadership by the federal government when it comes to protecting the environment," Schwarzenegger said. "So that is why as a state, we will move forward because we know it is the right thing to do.

"It's like stem cell research," said Schwarzenegger, who broke with the White House on that issue last week after Bush vetoed a bill that would have expanded federal research on stem cells. "There are many issues like that where I feel that California should lead the way. The White House is not for it. But we are for it. The people of California are for it."

The deal signed Monday commits California, the 12th-largest source of greenhouse gases, to what the Schwarzenegger administration said was an initiative to "aggressively address climate change and promote energy diversity" while cutting greenhouse gases, which are considered a key source of global warming.

It calls for the governments of California and the United Kingdom to cooperate and implement market-based mechanisms and share their best practices that encourage innovation, including the institution of a carbon market that would reward energy-efficient companies. Other aspects of the agreement include jointly studying the economic impacts of global climate change, collaborating on technology research -- including studying the effects of California's effort to create a "hydrogen highway" touted by Schwarzenegger -- and establishing regular exchanges between scientists in both places.

Blair and Schwarzenegger made the announcement Monday while standing at the Port of Long Beach, where a panorama of behemoth oil tankers owned by BP Amoco served as the backdrop for their energy deal.

The statements by both leaders followed a roundtable discussion convened by the Climate Group, a nonprofit consortium of businesses and governments founded by Blair to explore the challenges of global warming. Among those who participated were Lord John Browne, chief executive of BP, formerly know as British Petroleum; James Murdoch, the son of publishing magnate Rupert Murdoch and CEO of British

Sky Broadcasting; John Bryson, CEO of energy giant Edison International; Thomas King, president and CEO of PG&E; and Sir Richard Branson, founder and chairman of the Virgin Group, the parent company of Virgin Atlantic Airways and the Virgin retail megastores.

The announcement of the agreement between Great Britain, the world's fourth-largest economy, and California, the world's seventh-largest, capped the third full day of Blair's visit to California -- the first such visit by a sitting British prime minister. Blair is scheduled to deliver a major address today on the Middle East at the World Affairs Council in Los Angeles.

Officials attending the environmental discussion said the choice of California for the global warming agreement is significant.

"California has a special place in the world. It's the biggest subnational government ... a G-8 economy in its own right," said Steve Howard, chief executive of the Climate Group. "And it's got a long-standing history of energy efficiency, of action on the environment, on air pollution, on energy efficiency, along with high levels of awareness" about the global problems of climate change.

It's also home to a political force that helped push the matter: Schwarzenegger.

In California, "you actually have a governor who has international appeal like no other ... and an appetite for action on climate change. And that's what the world needs at this point in time," Howard said.

But Schwarzenegger's Democratic opponent for governor, state Treasurer Phil Angelides, dismissed the agreement as a political stunt by a governor who has assumed a green mantle but has gutted environmental enforcement while in office.

The event was "classic Arnold Schwarzenegger: a promise to talk about, and perhaps someday do something, on an issue," Angelides said. "The governor's always a showman ... never getting things done."

Environmentalists said the agreement dramatized the Bush administration's isolation on the issue of global warming.

"The president is so out of step with the rest of the world on global warming that our closest foreign ally is now negotiating an international agreement with our biggest state," Philip Clapp, president of the National Environmental Trust, said in a statement. "That is a whole new definition of irrelevance in foreign affairs."

Adam Mendelsohn, communications director for the governor, stressed that the pact "is an agreement to share ideas and information. It is not a treaty." He noted that California has similar agreements "with Sweden to talk about biofuels" and with Mexico on tourism.

Political observers said the meeting served both political leaders well.

"Like Bush, Blair is principally addressing his own domestic audience," said Gerald Dorfman, senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution and an expert on British politics. "Given the fact that he's regarded (in the United Kingdom) as a complete outcast and poodle dog, he is eager to show at any time a measure of independence."

Dorfman said that by focusing during the trip on issues such as the environment, trade and even drug rehabilitation, Blair has appealed "right along the mainstream of British thinking."

Blair "has been a leader on the global (warming) situation, disagreeing with the Bush administration from the beginning," Dorfman said. "It's genuine."

Schwarzenegger walks tightrope on global warming

Mark Martin, Chronicle Sacramento Bureau <mailto:markmartin@sfchronicle.com>
S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, August 1, 2006

Sacramento -- Although Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and British Prime Minister Tony Blair stood together in Long Beach Monday to unveil a largely symbolic agreement to work together to combat global warming, the biggest test of Schwarzenegger's commitment to curb greenhouse gases will come in the next few weeks in Sacramento.

Legislation that would make California a national pioneer in restricting carbon dioxide and other gases is likely to be one of the hottest topics as lawmakers finish the final portion of their session before the November election.

And as Schwarzenegger and Blair announced an unusual agreement that could someday foster cooperation between companies in California and the United Kingdom to help lower emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases, some environmentalists and Democrats complained that Schwarzenegger is seeking to weaken the legislation.

While the governor has said he wants to sign the bill, the administration has suggested changes that many environmentalists say would hurt the state's ability to enforce the caps and would allow some industries to avoid deadlines for compliance.

"There is reason to applaud two high-profile politicians turning a spotlight on global warming," said Bernadette del Chiaro, a lobbyist for the group Environment California. "But at the end of the day, it's meaningless unless there is a true, mandatory emissions cap in California."

For Schwarzenegger, the legislation, which is being co-sponsored by Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez and is a top priority for many Democrats, represents a delicate political balancing act.

The governor announced a proposal last summer to reduce gases like carbon dioxide that cause global warming, and he has already begun to make the idea a centerpiece of his re-election campaign.

But many business groups, including key Schwarzenegger allies like the California Chamber of Commerce, are adamantly opposed to strict caps and are lobbying against the bill. Schwarzenegger risks upsetting industry if he signs the bill, but many political observers believe his global warming rhetoric will look hollow if he doesn't enact the law.

Several environmentalists noted Monday that Blair has enacted caps in his country.

The bill proposes reducing the amount of greenhouse gas emitted in the state by 25 percent by 2020, a target Schwarzenegger proposed last year. The gases are emitted by such sources as cars, power plants and manufacturers.

The measure calls for the state Air Resources Board to implement and enforce the reductions for each industry.

Schwarzenegger, however, has proposed creating a new board, made up largely of his Cabinet secretaries, to take charge of the reductions. He also has proposed allowing the board to change the deadlines for reductions if the deadlines are detrimental to the economy -- a key caveat that has met with resistance.

Núñez said he has a "big problem" with political appointees controlling most of the application of the new law. Members of the Air Resources Board are appointed by the governor but are typically well versed in air pollution issues. Núñez noted that the governor's amendments raise questions about who would enforce the caps if industries or companies didn't comply.

"We need to make sure there are teeth in the bill," he said.

Administration officials insist their amendments are not designed to weaken enforcement of the caps.

"The governor is committed to enforceable caps," Linda Adams, head of Schwarzenegger's Environmental Protection Agency, said in a recent interview.

Núñez said he has spoken with the governor several times about the bill in the last few weeks and has suggested creating a new board, comprising gubernatorial and legislative appointees, that would enact the law.

He said the governor appears willing to negotiate with lawmakers.

The legislation, AB32, will likely have its next hearing in the state Senate's Appropriations Committee in two weeks.

What's New

Valley Voice Newspaper Fri., July 28, 2006

Carl's Jr. in Visalia got a notice from the Air Board that they had cooked a few too many quarter pounders one month last year. Their permit allows them to grill up 450 pounds of meat a day but they went over by four pounds or 16 Happy Stars that month. Not sure what happens if you come in for your burger and the drive thru lady says the Air Board has turned off the grill.

Cellulose based ethanol made from ag waste products is "three to five years off" says Pacific Ethanol's Tom Koehler. **Pacific Ethanol** is reportedly close to signing contracts with companies who have been researching the process, but Koehler told the Voice he could not comment on the prospect. Koehler, the brother of the Pacific Ethanol's CEO Neil Koehler, says the next big step for California ethanol will be approval by the Air Resource Board likely this fall to allow gas blenders to up the percentage of ethanol in California gas tanks to 10 percent from its current 5.7 percent threshold. "The governor has made it clear he supports more biofuels in California," says Koehler, citing Schwarzenegger's recent statement at the company's Madera ethanol plant in the past few weeks.

Sequoia Park is choking on **high ozone levels** this month. Park specialist Annie Esperanza says the Air Quality Index regularly reaches past 160, a level considered unhealthy for everyone. It has been more typical to reach the 100 level in past years, she says. The AQI index for Tulare County as a whole listed on the Air Board web site is from 119 – a level considered unhealthy for sensitive groups. Sequoia would be higher than Kern listed this week at 127. The park has the highest ozone level of any national park as high pressure and temps well over 100 have been visiting California for several weeks.

[Sacramento Bee, Editorial, Monday, July 31, 2006](#)

Editorial: Solar roller coaster Last chance to make SB 1 shine

If California's homes included an extra 1 million solar roofs right now, we'd have 3,000 more megawatts of power during the hottest part of the day. That would shave 6 percent off the peak energy demand that strained the state's electric grid lastweek. It also might prevent utilities from firing up several "peaker plants," which would prevent several thousand pounds of smog-forming compounds from spewing into our air daily.

Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez and Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata could make this solar vision a reality when the Legislature reconvenes. But they also could squander a shining opportunity just when the state needs to get serious about harnessing the sun.

As some may recall, the California Public Utilities Commission took a partial step toward realizing the million-solar-roofs goal earlier this year. The PUC approved the California Solar Initiative, championed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, which called for \$3.2 billion in rebates to help homeowners install solar panels over the next 10 years. A small surcharge on electric bills would finance the rebates.

The commission's action was commendable, but because of its limited jurisdiction, the PUC couldn't enact all the provisions of the governor's original solar plan, which got sidetracked in the Assembly last year. The PUC, for instance, can only require investor-owned utilities, such as Pacific Gas and Electric, to place a solar surcharge on electricity bills. Unless the Legislature acts, municipally owned utilities such as the Los Angeles Department of Power and Water -- which provide 27 percent of the state's electricity -- could ignore solar and buy cheap, dirty power.

Earlier this year, the Legislature seemed poised to correct this deficiency. A revived Senate Bill 1, by Sen. Kevin Murray, D-Culver City, would have required municipal electric utilities ("munis" in the argot of lawmakers and regulators) to collectively implement \$784 million in solar programs. But because of lobbying by the utilities, that language became weaker as the bill moved through the Assembly. Now the solar mandate looks more like a nebulous goal instead of a mandate for the munis. The Assembly also shaved \$650 million off the rebates that consumers could receive for investing in solar.

The weakened bill passed the Assembly last month and now goes to the Senate Energy Committee, which probably will concur and just send it to the floor for a vote.

They should not.

One member of this committee is Sen. Debra Bowen, a Democrat running for secretary of state. Bowen has some issues with solar but generally supports the notion that everyone should share in the burdens and benefits of renewable energies. SB 1 needs to be amended to restore this balance. (Such amendments can only be done in a conference committee, which Perata and Núñez would need to appoint.)

With a few glaring exceptions, SB 1 is a decent bill. It would require homebuilders to offer solar as an option in new subdivisions. It would increase the amount of "credit" that solar panel owners receive for sending power back to the grid. Yet without amendments, the bill wouldn't produce 1 million new solar roofs in 10 years. It would create only the illusion of such.

California doesn't need illusion. It needs more clean power, as quickly as possible. An improved version of SB 1 can make that happen, if Perata and Núñez do their part.

[Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2006:](#)

People here have good record on environment

By FRED SIMON, Bakersfield

Come on. What was Chad Vegas thinking when he so kindly compared Bakersfield to Berkeley? Maybe he got it right.

It was those nasty environmentalists who selected the agricultural lands southwest of Bakersfield as a fine place to grow a Cal State Bakersfield.

It was the vile environmentalists who encouraged Kern County Land Company -- then Tenneco West, then Castle & Cooke -- to bury square mile after square mile of that worthless farmland under houses and McDonald's and Albertsons and Chevrons and Wal-Marts.

It was the crazy environmentalists who wanted to plant a 30-mile long bicycle trail along the Kern River, supported by parks and lakes and thousands of trees -- oh, sorry, that was them.

You know, people here in Bakersfield have a pretty good environmental record, whether local government listens or not. I wonder how much worse our air would be if it were not for a small group of citizens pushing the Board of Supervisors to create an [air quality district](#) in the late 1960s.

The valley would be saddled with a nuclear power plant operated by and for the city of Los Angeles if it were not for citizens who believed in the environment of Kern County.

The Kern River Parkway is a solid example of what a few local citizens can do who believe that our environment deserves better than a concrete-lined river.

Stop complaining about our citizens wanting to protect our city from catastrophes that have attacked other communities that have not had adequate ordinances to protect their hillsides.

Every year we read about homes being destroyed by brush and grasslands fires in areas across the state in which hillside ordinances are ignored or do not exist. And then, the following year, we read that more homes are destroyed in the same areas by floods and mudslides.

These types of problems can be minimized by the adoption of a hillside development ordinance.

What would Chad Vegas prefer?

Another Silver Creek where there is no creek, another Haggin Oaks where there are no oaks, another Grand Island where there is no island, or development of an area in a manner that acknowledges and reflects the uniqueness of hills and ravines and bluffs?

Remember, neither Fresno nor Visalia nor Modesto nor Stockton has physical conditions like those we have here in Bakersfield. The city of Bakersfield can protect our citizens from potential disaster and preserve beauty of our hills and bluffs without turning developers away.

The people of this community may not want to be like Berkeley, but we can certainly do something other than walk in lockstep concurrence with developers who propose to cut our hillsides then run away with their profits.

Fred Simon of Bakersfield is a landscape architect and planner with his own business.

[Letter to the L.A. Times, Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2006:](#)

Stop blowing smoke

Re "Santa Monica Plans Smoking Ban on Promenade," July 28

"It's a free country! I have a right to smoke," some say. "Well, I have a right to breathe smoke-free air," I say. "Cars cause air pollution too," you hear. Yes, they do, but cars provide transportation to work, to visit friends and family, to spiritual centers and to healthcare appointments.

Secondhand smoke does none of that.

It's not a total ban on smoking. People can still smoke in their own homes or cars - and hopefully not harm anyone else (even though the smoke does leak through open windows).

Bonnie Johnstone, Santa Monica