

Local officials to push refuse transfer station

BY DAVID BURGER, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, Aug. 2, 2006

City and county officials are pitching the idea of a refuse transfer station in or around Bakersfield that could expand local curbside recycling and cut air pollution.

Kern County Supervisor Michael Rubio and Bakersfield City Councilmen David Couch and Harold Hanson discussed the proposal with *The Californian's* editorial board Tuesday.

It's a "plan for the future," Rubio said.

The three will ask the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District this fall to help them fund a station that could serve two purposes:

- Enable trash trucks to offload their garbage into natural gas-powered big rigs. The rigs, instead of trash trucks, would haul the loads to Bena Landfill, 17 miles east of Bakersfield on Highway 58 at Tower Line Road.
- Hold a recycling center that could handle the recyclables of 100 percent of Bakersfield residents.

Only between 3 percent to 5 percent of Bakersfield residents participate in a voluntary, \$80-a-year curbside pickup of recyclables, Bakersfield Public Works Director Raul Rojas said.

The air district is most interested in the first part of the plan. Instead of 272 trash trucks making the round trip to the landfill every day, there could be a "car pool" of refuse, he said.

The car pooling, Rubio said, would reduce highway emissions from these refuse trucks by 91 percent and eliminate more than 90 percent of traffic on unpaved landfill roads.

Trucks kick up tiny particles on those roads, further polluting the atmosphere, he said.

The program would also extend the landfill's life as fewer recyclables would be tossed there.

Having a recycling center could make a future citywide recycling program possible. Bakersfield officials have bemoaned the lack of such a program.

The project design is in its infancy, with costs projected to be more than \$10 million. Potential sites are still up in the air but it would total about 20 acres. If all goes well, the facility could be ready in 2010.

Poll finds Californians elevate global warming concerns

The Associated Press
Published in the Madera Tribune Fri., July 28, 2006

SACRAMENTO - Californians rank global warming among their top three environmental concerns, saying it is more of a problem than water pollution and pollution in general, according to a poll released Wednesday.

The annual survey by the nonprofit Public Policy Institute of California found that adults are increasingly listing global warming as the most important environmental issue, believe global warming has already begun and say the state needs to take immediate action to deal with it.

While air pollution and energy issues remain the top two environmental concerns, voters are giving global warming more attention. And that sentiment was realized before the current heat wave that is stifling much of the state.

"There is a growing awareness and concern, including the fact that global warming isn't just melting the glaciers," said PPIC survey director Mark Baldassare.

In fact, eight in 10 residents said they believed warming would seriously threaten the state's economy and their quality of life.

When it comes to the gubernatorial race, 85 percent of likely voters said the candidates positions on the environment were important. Both Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and challenger Phil Angelides have sought to portray themselves as environmental advocates.

While Angelides was the favorite among those who labeled the environment as very important, Schwarzenegger received more support from people who considered the environment somewhat important.

"He's getting fairly significant support from people who care about environmental issues," Baldassare said of Schwarzenegger. "And for a Republican, that is an important political feat on his part."

Schwarzenegger's overall approval rating among adults was 42 percent, higher than 36 percent in May, and his environmental record was supported by 39 percent.

That's better than Californians' opinion of President Bush. Overall, 36 percent approved of Bush's job performance, but just 30 percent agreed with his handling of the environment and 29 percent with his energy policy.

The telephone survey of 2,501 adult residents found that 65 percent of adults want California to act on its own to slow global warming, without waiting for the federal government.

Of those surveyed, 73 percent said they were registered to vote. Only those individuals were asked the election-related questions, according to a copy of the poll questionnaire.

Specifically, two-thirds of likely voters supported a bill moving through the Legislature that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. About three in four adults said the state should set mandatory emission caps of greenhouse gases on oil, electric and natural gas facilities.

They also said lawmakers should reduce California's dependence on fossil fuels and increase funding to develop alternative sources of energy such as solar, geothermal and wind power.

By contrast, most polled said they opposed the construction of more nuclear power plants or oil drilling off the California coast.

The survey was conducted between July 5 and July 18 and was paid for by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

It has an error margin of plus or minus 2 percentage points for questions answered by all the participants, plus or minus 2.5 percentage points for questions asked of all registered voters and plus or minus 3 percentage points for questions asked of participants classified as likely voters.

Six hybrid buses make county debut

Phil Hayworth

Tracy Press, Wed., Aug. 2, 2006

Get out the Spandex and super-cool mirrored shades, because the future is now.

The San Joaquin Regional Transit District today will unveil six new ultra-efficient hybrid buses that will be added to its fleet of 160 regular buses. A total of 50 hybrid buses should be operational by June 2007.

Officials say the buses will radically cut down on pollution and save on gas.

"We figure a bus will get a gas mileage improvement of anywhere from 20 to 54 percent," said Chris Collet, product sales manager with General Motors. The buses will also cut down nearly 90 percent on soot and particulate matter released into the air, Collet said.

Seattle has had 237 of the diesel-hybrid buses in service for the last year, and the city is thrilled with them, Collet said. Yosemite National Park has 18 similar buses in service.

Even better, they'll be easier to ride, said county transit representative Paul Rapp.

"The doors will be wider, there will be no step-up on the bus and the handicapped access will be a ramp rather than a lift," he said.

But they aren't cheap. Each bus costs nearly a half-million dollars, Rapp said. But the county joined a buying consortium and saved 15 percent on each bus.

The county expects the buses will be used for intercity routes between towns such as Lodi, Tracy and Manteca, and later for express service.

The buses will be on display today at the Stockton Arena.

Asia's winds of change carry toxins to Bay Area Monitors fear sharp increase in area pollution as China's economy expands

by Terence Chea of the Associated Press
Tri-Valley Herald, Sat., July 29, 2006

MOUNT TAMALPAIS STATE PARK - On a mountaintop overlooking the Pacific Ocean, Steven Cliff collects evidence of an industrial revolution taking place thousands of miles away.

The tiny, airborne particles Cliff gathers at an air-monitoring station just north of San Francisco drifted over the ocean from coal-fired power plants, smelters, dust storms and diesel trucks in China and other Asian countries.

Researchers say the environmental impact of China's breakneck economic growth is being felt well beyond its borders. They worry that as China consumes more fossil fuels to feed its energy-hungry economy, the U.S. could see a sharp increase in trans-Pacific pollution that could affect human health, worsen air quality and alter climate patterns.

"We're going to see increased particulate pollution from the expansion of China for the foreseeable future," said Cliff, a research engineer at the University of California, Davis.

He has monitoring stations on Mount Tamalpais, Donner Summit near Lake Tahoe and Mount Lassen in far Northern California. Those sites see little pollution from local sources, and the composition of the dust particles matches that of the Gobi Desert and other Asian sites, Cliff said.

About a third of the Asian pollution is dust, which is increasing due to drought and deforestation, Cliff said. The rest is composed of sulfur, soot and trace metals from the burning of coal, diesel and other fossil fuels.

Cliff is studying whether transported particulate matter could affect climate by trapping heat, reflecting light or changing rainfall patterns.

Most air pollution in U.S. cities is generated locally, but that could change if citizens in China, India and other developing nations adopt American-style consumption patterns, researchers say.

"If they started driving cars and using electricity at the rate in the developed world, the amount of pollution they generate will increase many, many times," said Tony Van Curen, a UC Davis researcher who works with Cliff.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that on certain days nearly 25 percent of the particulate matter in the skies above Los Angeles can be traced to China. Some experts predict China could one day account for a third of all California's air pollution.

Dan Jaffe, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Washington, said he has detected ozone, carbon monoxide, mercury and particulate matter from Asia at monitoring sites on Mount Bachelor in Oregon and Cheeka Peak in Washington state.

"There is some amount of the pollution in the air we breathe coming from halfway around the world," Jaffe said. "There ultimately is no 'away.' There is no place where you can put away your pollution anymore."

China's environmental problems are severe and getting worse. Nearly 30 years of relentless industrial expansion has fouled the country's rivers, lakes, forests, farmland and skies.

The World Bank estimates that 16 of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in China, and air pollution is blamed for about 400,000 premature deaths there each year.

Coal-fired power plants supply two-thirds of China's energy and are its biggest source of air pollution. Already the world's largest producer and consumer of coal, China on average builds a new coal-fired power plant every week.

Meanwhile, car ownership is soaring as the country's economy grows about 10 percent a year, contributing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases linked to global warming.

If current trends continue, China will surpass the U.S. as the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the next decade, said Barbara Finamore, who heads the Natural Resources Defense Council's China Clean Energy program, which is helping the country boost its energy efficiency.

"China's staggering economic growth is an environmental time bomb that, unless defused, threatens to convulse the entire planet regardless of progress in all other nations," Finamore said.

Even Chinese environmental officials warn that pollution levels could quadruple over the next 15 years if the country doesn't curb energy use and emissions. Beijing plans to spend \$162 billion on environmental cleanup over the next five years, but the scale of the country's pollution problems is immense.

"There are tremendous opportunities for China to slow the amount of pollution it pumps in the air," Finamore said.

Governor, Blair sign climate deal

They pledge 'urgent action' to fight global warming.

By Peter Hecht -- Bee Capitol Bureau
Sacramento Bee, Tues., Aug. 1, 2006

LONG BEACH -- Declaring California and the United Kingdom partners in an international fight against climate change, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a unique accord Monday to develop plans to curb pollution and avert global warming.

The unusual summit, between the British leader and the governor of a state accounting for the world's sixth-largest economy, was hailed in a joint mission statement as a commitment to "urgent action to reduce greenhouse gases" and promote cleaner technologies.

"I think the evidence of climate change and its danger is overwhelming," Blair said, appearing with Schwarzenegger at the Port of Long Beach. "I think it is now very hard for anyone to dispute it."

Officially, California has no authority to enter into treaties with foreign governments, and the agreement announced by Blair and Schwarzenegger includes no binding requirements to reduce

pollution. Instead, it is a joint pledge by Britain and California to share expertise, ideas and business strategies to respond to climate change.

But the announcement of a shared United Kingdom-California effort to combat the problem appeared to bypass -- and upstage -- the Bush administration in planning ways to cut carbon dioxide and other pollutants scientists blame for global warming.

"We're collaborating on a long-term challenge ... on the single most important issue we face as a global community," Schwarzenegger said. "California is like a nation-state and when we act, the world takes notice."

Schwarzenegger added: "There is not great leadership from the federal government in protecting the environment and that's why we as a state are moving forward."

The United States remains one of the few industrialized nations that haven't signed the Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty that caps the amount of carbon dioxide that can be emitted from power plants and factories.

Bush administration officials declined to attend the meeting sponsored by the Climate Group, a London-headquartered organization promoting solutions to global warming.

The meeting between Schwarzenegger and Blair included their participation in a "Corporate Climate Alliance" roundtable with corporate leaders, including British Petroleum Chairman John Browne, Virgin Air founder Richard Branson, Google co-founder Sergey Brin, Pratt Industries Chairman Anthony Pratt, Edison International President John Bryson and Pacific Gas & Electric Co. Chief Executive Officer Thomas King.

Browne said the business leaders came to a "state that is known for advances in everything" to agree to work toward solutions to global warming "because there is no tradeoff between business that is good for the environment and good business."

Branson said his Virgin Group companies "accept that we have a pretty cataclysmic problem," and pledged to invest in clean technologies, including an ethanol plant in California.

And Brin, the multibillionaire tech executive, said corporate leaders must show they "care about the future" of the planet.

In their joint statement, Blair and Schwarzenegger pledged collaboration on research to understand the economics of climate change, share technology and scientific expertise and develop market-based solutions such as financial credits for cutting pollution.

"Together and in coordination with business and environmental leaders ... we can take actions that protect the planet, are good for the economy and provide greater energy security and diversity," read the mission statement signed by the two men.

It came as the Legislature is weighing Assembly Bill 32 -- a measure that would make California the first state to require power plants and other heavy industry to reduce emissions linked to global warming.

In a departure from President Bush, who opposes imposing mandatory caps on emissions, Schwarzenegger has embraced the bill in concept.

But the Schwarzenegger administration recently floated amendments to the bill that could delay proposed caps on greenhouse gas emissions if the limits would damage California's economy, public health or environment.

About a year ago, the governor released the "Climate Action" report that called for reducing greenhouse gases in California to 1990 levels by the year 2020 -- a 25 percent reduction over predicted levels and 10 percent below the current pollution total of 500 million metric tons a year.

But Craig Noble, a San Francisco spokesman for the Natural Resources Defense Council, said that Schwarzenegger has been reluctant to put enforcement "teeth" into his proposals to fight global warming.

On Monday, while offering limited praise for the governor and Blair for taking on the issue, Noble complained: "We're talking about voluntary steps. But if we're going to reduce global pollution, it has to be enforceable."

Adam Mendelsohn, Schwarzenegger's communications director, said the California-United Kingdom pact is "not a treaty." He likened the accord to past agreements between California and Sweden to promote ideas on biofuel technologies and California and Mexico to promote tourism.

[L.A. Times editorial, Wed., Aug. 2, 2006:](#)

Welcome Hot Air from Arnold and Blair

Global-warming pact between the California governor and British prime minister may not amount to much, but it's a welcome sign.

For all the fanfare that preceded it, the agreement on global warming signed Monday by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is more a promise than a plan. The nation and the nation-state, the two leaders agreed, will collaborate on new, clean-fuel technologies and research the costs and benefits of mandatory emissions trading programs such as those recently put in place in Britain and the rest of Europe. These programs essentially allow businesses to buy and sell the right to pollute, with the goal of reducing pollution overall.

In other words, more study needed.

But that's neither a surprise nor a disappointment - for now. The bigger and more encouraging surprise is that two poll-challenged pols - a roller-coaster governor up for reelection and an embattled prime minister trying to stave off retirement - would turn to global warming as a way to score points. That says a lot about the public's growing concern about the climate crisis. At least in California and Britain.

In much of the United States, unlike in Europe, regular folks don't share this understanding of the crisis. Whether as a cause or a consequence, President Bush has largely ignored global warming or, worse, sowed doubts that it is even happening, a stance that has grown harder to maintain in the face of scientific findings during the last two years.

In fact, business - the constituency so many politicians fear to ruffle by proposing energy regulations - has shown more leadership than many governments on climate change. Business leaders recognize that it is more than simply an environmental issue. It's an energy issue. It's an economic issue. It's a national security issue.

They also recognize the costs of doing nothing. Not only the costs of drought and hurricanes, which we're already paying, but the opportunity cost. They see not just a moral imperative but a market for cleaner energy. The United States, which has always risen to scientific and technological challenges, is in danger of sitting this one out.

But even business leaders acknowledge that they cannot solve this alone. As BP Chief Executive John Browne, who hosted the Blair-Schwarzenegger meeting at BP's Long Beach shipping terminal, said at a meeting Tuesday with The Times' editorial board, the role of governments can't be underestimated even in seeking a market-based solution. "The way government creates regulations determines markets," he said. "And markets determine behavior."

Californians acted on stem cell research when the federal government didn't. Now they're ready for someone to do more than talk about global warming. They want someone to lead.

[Tracy Press, Guest Commentary, Wed., Aug. 2, 2006](#)

Heat rises on global warming

SACRAMENTO - Thirty-one years ago, Newsweek magazine published an extensive account of what it described as a growing scientific consensus of global climate change.

"There are ominous signs that the Earth's weather patterns have begun to change dramatically and that these changes may portend a drastic decline in food production," Newsweek said, adding, "The evidence in support of these predictions has now begun to accumulate so massively that meteorologists are hard-pressed to keep up with it" and "to scientists these seemingly disparate incidents represent the advance signs of fundamental changes in the world's weather."

Global warming? Not quite. The Newsweek article about the emerging scientific consensus was about global cooling and the potential onset of a mini-ice age, akin to the one that chilled the Northern Hemisphere between 1600 and 1900.

Now we are told, of course, that there's a growing scientific consensus about global warming, with hydrocarbon emissions from humankind's economic activities the chief culprit, although there's a significant body of contrary opinion.

Whether global warming is a scientific fact or, alternatively, a theory being propagandized for ideological reasons is still an open question. But it clearly is a political fact and in politics, perceptions are always more powerful than reality, whatever it may be.

The potency of global warming as a political issue is underscored in a new poll by the Public Policy Institute of California, which found that most Californians are alarmed and want the state to take steps to deal with it regardless of what happens at the national or international levels.

"Californians now rank global warming as more important than at any time since we first started asking about it in June of 2000," said PPIC's polling director, Mark Baldassare.

The poll was taken even before California was slammed by a record-breaking and deadly heat wave in mid-July, so it would be a safe assumption that the attitudes found in the PPIC poll have hardened since then.

Not to be punny, but it's a hot potato for Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger as he tries to balance the evident voter interest in doing something about global warming against his very close, mutually beneficial political alliance with business executives. The latter are leery about strict regulations on hydrocarbon emissions, as proposed in legislation, Assembly Bill 32, being advanced by Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez.

The California Chamber of Commerce and other business groups have labeled Assembly Bill 32 a "job killer" that "increases costs for California businesses, makes them less competitive and discourages economic growth with little or no proven environmental benefit by adopting an arbitrary cap on carbon emissions." Schwarzenegger needs business support in his re-election campaign, but has said he wants to push global warming actions, has already undertaken some steps by decree, and is at least a semisponsor of the Nunez bill.

As currently written, Assembly Bill 32 labels global warming a "serious threat" and directs the state Air Resources Board, over a period of years, to monitor greenhouse gas emissions and set standards for reducing them. Having the ARB become the greenhouse gas czar is a key element

of the legislation, one that environmentalists like because of its history of aggressive action on smog, and one that business leaders dislike for the same reason. They envision every business project becoming a battleground, much as occurs under the California Environmental Quality Act, forcing corporations to buy up emission credits to operate.

Schwarzenegger is suggesting that the ARB be taken out of the picture and that the power to set and enforce greenhouse gas emissions be given to a new agency directly under the control of a governor and his appointees - including the power to nix any regulations deemed to be economically harmful. And that's raising the hackles of environmentalists, who see having a governor directly control enforcement as an invitation for business to wield influence through the governor's office.

It will be hot in Sacramento when the Legislature gather for the final, hectic weeks of the 2006 session. And Assembly Bill 32 will be generating much of the political heat rising from the Capitol.

Dan Walters is a state Capitol columnist for the Sacramento Bee. His e-mail address is dwalters@sacbee.com <<mailto:dwalters@sacbee.com>>.

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Wed., Aug. 2, 2006](#)

Bee attacked tallow plants

On July 25, The Bee decried the fact that facilities for the rendering of animal carcasses were overwhelmed. They went on to say that in time, we will be able to consider how we could have been better prepared for the "deadly results of this awful heat wave."

Odd. I seem to remember The Bee spent many years screaming about how awful Modesto Tallow was, and just last year succeeded in closing its doors. Also, on July 16, columnist Jeff Jardine attacked Sisk Tallow for odor problems. Doesn't The Bee see that it bears some responsibility for the lack of rendering facilities?

JACK HIBMA, Turlock

[Tri-Valley Herald, Letter to the Editor, Sun., July 30, 2006](#)

Raise those gas taxes and bridge tolls

LET'S SPARE the air every day. Drastically accelerated global warming due to human activity is widely recognized as fact. Smog and gridlocked traffic have become obvious parts of everyday life.

The time is now for making public transit permanently fare-free. A simple re-ordering of priorities is all it takes. Ideas include a regional sales tax devoted solely to transit operating expenses, along with increased gas taxes and bridge tolls. (Incidentally, I do own a car.)

We have prioritized in the past for freeways for the automobile. Now let's prioritize for free public transit.

Ken Bowers, Oakland

[Tri-Valley Herald, Letter to the Editor, Sat., July 29, 2006](#)

A vote for Bay Meadows development

THOSE WHO VALUE REDUCTIONS in vehicle miles traveled and the associated reduction of frustrating congestion and air pollution should find great merit in the proposed residential community at Bay Meadows.

According to the Association of Bay Area Governments, there are approximately 278,000 jobs within 7 miles of Bay Meadows and more than 100,000 "in-commuters" entering and leaving San Mateo County daily. Placing residential opportunities near these jobs makes sense.

Additionally, whether all of the future residents of Bay Meadows utilize the convenient rail transit or not, to me the more significant reduction in vehicle miles traveled will result because of shorter automobile commuting distances.

Those who are able to commute shorter distances will increase quality time with their families and mid-Peninsula parents and grandparents will have, in Bay Meadows, opportunities for their children and grandchildren to live nearby.

Our quality of life will not improve unless we are proactive. It is easy to be against new development. I have decided to support Bay Meadows and hope that many of your readers will as well.

Georgia Buntrock, San Mateo

NOTE: The following clip in Spanish discusses a Cal/EPA 3-year study warns that by the year 2100 the air in California will be at least 10 degrees hotter than the current temperatures. It also warns that this projection is dangerous because there will be an increase in deaths related to air quality and heat. If you need more information contact Maricela at ext. 5849.

Advierten futuro más seco y caliente para el aire de California

Un estudio de la Agencia estatal de Protección Ambiental de California advierte que para al año 2100 el aire de California será por lo menos diez grados Fahrenheit más caliente que el actual

Aire Libre, California

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, August 1, 2006

Un estudio de 75 científicos californianos determinó que el aire que se respira en este estado será más caliente y seco en el futuro debido a la emisión de gases que sobrecalientan la tierra.

El estudio, de tres años de duración y realizado por encargo de la Agencia estatal de Protección Ambiental de California, (Cal-EPA, por sus siglas en inglés), advierte que para al año 2100 el aire de California será por lo menos diez grados Fahrenheit más caliente que el actual.

El estudio advirtió que esta proyección es muy peligrosa porque se traduce hasta en seis veces más el número de muertes por problemas de salud relacionados con la calidad del aire y por el calor en sí, durante los veranos.