

## **Small engine industry still battling pollution controls**

By Sam Hananel, Associated Press Writer

In the Fresno Bee, S.F. Chronicle and other papers

Wednesday, April 12, 2006

WASHINGTON (AP) - Briggs & Stratton Corp. and its political benefactor - Sen. Kit Bond, R-Mo. - still aren't ready to accept the government's findings about pollution controls on small engines. An Environmental Protection Agency study last month found it's safe to place catalytic converters on lawn and garden equipment to reduce air pollution. That opened the door for California to implement state rules to regulate the highly polluting small engines, and for the EPA to write nationwide rules.

But despite objections from environmentalists and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., the lawn mower engine maker with two plants in Missouri is joining other industry members to fund a new study that is likely to contradict the EPA report.

And they are taking their concerns to a different government agency - the Consumer Product Safety Commission - that may be more receptive to the industry. Bond, who supports the industry-backed study, chairs the Senate spending panel that funds the safety commission.

It's another chapter in the long-running dispute between the lawn equipment industry and the EPA over the small engines. Regulators want to issue nationwide rules this year to limit small engine pollution, and also grant California a waiver to put its own rules in effect. Some manufacturers complain the rules will increase the risk of fires and raise production costs by 30 percent.

Bond has long opposed the tougher standards and last year insisted the EPA study whether catalytic converters could create fire risks. Environmental groups accused Bond of delaying tactics to protect 3,000 Briggs & Stratton jobs in Missouri.

Last week, members of a nonprofit safety group called the International Consortium for Fire Safety, Health and the Environment met with CPSC officials to criticize the EPA report and outline a new study on the fire risks of catalytic converters.

"We expect this to be a full and complete study, which we did not think the EPA study was," said Patricia Hanz, a spokeswoman for Briggs & Stratton in Milwaukee. "We do think the study needs to be done by an independent third party that doesn't have a vested interest in the outcome, which EPA did."

Hanz said the new study will be funded in part by the education and research foundation of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, an industry trade association.

CPSC spokeswoman Julie Vallese said the commission has endorsed the EPA study but remains open to considering other evidence of safety hazards.

"If any information arises that the CPSC believes is good solid data that raises concerns, CPSC will work with EPA to correct any of the problems along the way," Vallese said.

Some in the environmental community say it's no coincidence that Bond controls the safety commission's purse strings as chairman of a Senate Appropriations subcommittee.

"He does control the budget for the CPSC and so is in a position to exert some pressure on them," said Frank O'Donnell, director of the environmental advocacy group Clean Air Watch. "Breathers will continue to suffer the effects of smog if Sen. Bond tries to use this study to delay the much-needed cleanup of these dirty small engines."

Bond spokesman Rob Ostrander calls such speculation nonsense.

"The CPSC is staffed by honest professionals," Ostrander said. "What an insult for some in the environmental community to suggest they can be bought off."

"The EPA study, in coordination with the CPSC, was not a public process so there was no input or comment by members of the public or stakeholder groups," Ostrander said. "Why would anyone be against more information being available?"

California officials have grown frustrated with the delays.

"We don't believe this needs to be studied additionally," said Feinstein spokesman Howard Gantman.

"The EPA did a very exhaustive study and concluded that these catalytic converters can be safe, and we are hoping that the EPA moves expeditiously to allow California to move forward with its efforts to clean up the air," Gantman said.

The new study is expected to be complete later this year.

## **Schwarzenegger wants market-based system to combat global warming**

By Terence Chea, Associated Press Writer

In the Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee, San Diego Tribune, S.F. Chronicle Wed., April 12, 2006

San Francisco (AP) -- Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger called for a market-based approach to reducing industrial emissions of "greenhouse" gases, endorsing a plan to combat global warming that faces opposition from business and Republican leaders.

Speaking Tuesday at a climate change summit at San Francisco City Hall, Schwarzenegger said he supported creating financial incentives to curb the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases and requiring companies to report their emissions.

"Let's work together to create the world's best market-based system to limit and slash emissions," Schwarzenegger said. "Everyone must do his or her part to pitch in and to make sacrifices, to give our environment the type of strong and committed protection that all Californians demand."

Schwarzenegger said he backed ideas in a report released last week by the administration's Climate Action Team, which listed ways to curb emissions from power plants, oil refineries and factories operating in California by 25 percent by 2020.

Schwarzenegger's appearance in San Francisco was the first of a weeklong series of events designed to highlight his stewardship of the environment - a salient issue among the Democratic and independent voters he needs to win back this year to get re-elected in November.

During Tuesday's speech, the governor pointed out his administration's work to protect marine ecosystems, boost energy efficiency, promote solar power, conserve forests and develop hydrogen fuel technology.

"We are showing everyone that we believe nothing is more important than protecting the environment," he said. "We can lead the world both in the environment and job creation."

Schwarzenegger broke ranks with the Bush administration on global warming last June, when he announced an ambitious plan to drastically reduce California's emissions of greenhouse gases over the next 50 years.

After six months of hearings and testimony, the Climate Action Team last week released its report detailing ways to meet those goals. Its recommendations include boosting energy efficiency standards, funding a public education campaign and charging fees to help pay for emissions-reduction efforts.

The most controversial proposal is a "cap-and-trade" program that would restrict the amount of greenhouse gases companies are allowed to emit, then require companies that exceed those limits to buy credits from less-polluting firms.

On the same day, Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez and Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, introduced legislation to cut emissions from commercial sources to 1990 levels by 2020, and give authority to the Air Resources Board to determine how to meet those goals.

"Democrats have led the fight for years on global warming, and we're pleased that the governor is joining us," Nunez, D-Los Angeles, said in a statement Tuesday. "The governor can make a real commitment to reducing greenhouse gases by signing our bill."

Schwarzenegger did not mention the Assembly bill, but said he looked forward to working with the Legislature and other groups to reach the emissions targets set in an executive order he signed last year.

Environmental groups praised Schwarzenegger and the Legislature for taking action on climate change.

"This really puts California on a path to being a leader in dealing with the most important issue of our time," said Karen Douglas, who directs the California Climate Initiative at Environmental Defense, which is co-sponsoring the Nunez-Pavley bill.

But industry groups said increased regulation could drive businesses - as well as greenhouse gas emissions - out of California, which already has some of the nation's highest electricity costs.

"We are at risk of losing some manufacturing, but the biggest risk is we won't get any expansion of current manufacturing," said Dorothy Rothrock, vice president of the California Manufacturers and Technology Association. "You're not solving the problem. You're just moving the greenhouse gases to another location."

After his speech, Schwarzenegger participated in a panel where environmentalists, business leaders and government officials discussed ways to reduce global warming pollution. He told the panelists the state must find a way to curb emissions without damaging California's economy.

"I think the trick is to find a happy medium - to make businesses successful here ... and at the same time take care of the environment," Schwarzenegger said.

While some business leaders worried about the financial impact of capping greenhouse gas emissions, some entrepreneurs said it would create a market for clean, renewable energy.

"It will create new jobs and businesses in California that will be exported around the world," said Bob Epstein, who heads the nonprofit Environmental Entrepreneurs.

## **Governor retreats on greenhouse emissions Schwarzenegger wants cutbacks, but no firm caps until 2010**

By Ian Hoffman, Staff Writer  
Tri-Valley Herald Wed., April 12, 2006

SAN FRANCISCO — After pushing the nation's most aggressive goals for cutting greenhouse gases, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Tuesday disappointed many environmentalists by

backing a go-slow approach, making industry report its greenhouse emissions but not capping those emissions until 2010.

"I think we should start without the caps," Schwarzenegger said in a hearing on greenhouse-gas reductions at City Hall. "I think we can accomplish a lot without the caps. I think with the caps we could really scare the business community, and they might leave California."

Environmentalists said setting a ceiling on releases of greenhouse gases is essential for getting industry to buy cleaner technologies and build more energy-efficient plants.

"What were hearing today is a lot of talk and no action," said Bill McGalvern of the Sierra Club.

Others said it probably would take years for California to set a regulatory cap, as well as a carbon market so that hundreds of power plants, cement factories, refineries and other major sources could buy, sell and trade permits to release greenhouse gases at levels under the cap. But they agreed industry needs to know emissions reductions will be required.

"We think a cap is essential and needs to be put into law now, even if it is not implemented now," said Karen Douglas, director of the California Climate Initiative for Environmental Defense. "To get industry to be serious about how does this work, we think there needs to be a commitment to a cap right now."

Advocates for greenhouse gas reductions at the Union of Concerned Scientists and at the Natural Resources Defense Council chalked up the governor's new position to a matter of timing. "We just hope the governor doesn't get stalled by some business interests who don't want to do anything," said Dan Kalb, coordinator of California policy for UCS.

Flanked by twin, giant photographs of an Austrian glacier, full of ice in 1875 and vanished to reveal grassy alps in 2004, Schwarzenegger asked corporate executives, economists and state lawmakers for advice on curbing emissions in California, the world's 12th-largest source.

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. President and Chairman Peter Darbee said the "problem of global warming is urgent and something we need to deal with."

He prefers uniform federal regulation rather than a patchwork of state limits. But if California is moving toward regulation, Darbee said, "What we think is important is to get the right balance between moving ahead and doing it thoughtfully, so we know that it works."

But some manufacturers and industries warned that greenhouse gas regulations would cost California growth and jobs. Tom Tietz, head of the California-Nevada Cement Promotion Council, said his energy-intensive industry is growing but would be at risk.

"We fear that a cap system would effectively force us to import more cement from foreign nations and other states," he told Schwarzenegger.

Three studies of California's goals for greenhouse gas reductions have found little or positive economic impact, with the governor's own advisory team reporting a net gain of 83,000 jobs.

But Margo Thorning, chief economist for the American Council for Capital Formation, said those studies use "non-mainstream" assumptions. Other studies of greenhouse regulations in the U.S. Northeast and in Europe found substantial costs, including higher heating and vehicle fueling costs for families.

"If they spend more to insulate their houses, they might not be able to spend as much money on other things," she said.

Thorning also voiced doubts that creating a cap-and-trade program would nudge ahead the kind of technological advances needed to capture greenhouse emissions from fossil fuel burning or find new, carbon-free energy sources.

Manufacturers said much the same thing in 1959 when California led the nation in regulating air pollutants, said Mike Peevey, president of the California Public Utilities Commission.

"Everyone said, 'Oh, you can't do this, you'll screw up the economy,'" Peevey said. "We can deal with the cement industry and not thwart its growth. There are things we can do that are thoughtful and logical. But I do think we need caps."

Assemblywoman Fran Pavley of Southern California authored California's law requiring vehicles to cut their greenhouse gas emissions 30 percent and now is co-sponsoring legislation that would firm up Schwarzenegger's goals — cuts to 2000 emission levels by 2010 and to 1990 levels by 2020 — by ordering the state air-pollution agency to come up with reduction strategies.

Climate change is happening faster than many scientists predicted, she said, and California can reap economic benefits by inventing and selling solutions.

"California needs to seize this economic opportunity," Pavley said. "A cap right now would signal the marketplace that we're serious, that we're going to be the home of clean tech to export to other communities."

## **Governor backs reduction of greenhouse gas emissions**

**But an uncertain timeline stirs confusion over how the controls would work.**

By Herbert A. Sample -- Bee San Francisco Bureau  
Sacramento Bee, Wednesday, April 12, 2006

SAN FRANCISCO - Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, against the backdrop of a re-election campaign, on Tuesday announced his support in concept for a system that would force California businesses to measure how much greenhouse gas they emit and establish how to reduce those emissions.

Schwarzenegger's move toward reducing the discharge of ozone-depleting gases appears potentially to have broad voter support while engendering opposition from President Bush and many business leaders, but it also sowed confusion about how his vision would be achieved.

The governor appeared at an administration-orchestrated "Climate Action Summit" of business, political, environmental and academic leaders to tout a report from top aides that calls for a "market-based system" of emissions controls.

That term generally is understood to be a synonym for a "cap-and-trade" plan in which emissions of carbon dioxide, methane and other gases would be limited for each company or industry. Entities whose emissions fall below the caps could sell their excess allotment to others that have exceeded their limits.

In his speech to the summit, Schwarzenegger said the state "must take strong action" to combat greenhouse gases that scientists say are warming the atmosphere, melting polar ice and glaciers and causing many other environmental problems. He noted that an executive order signed last year calls for a drop in greenhouse gases emitted within the state to 2000 levels by 2010, to 1990 levels by 2020 and a further 20 percent drop by 2050.

"Let's work together to create the world's best market-based system to limit and to slash emissions," he said.

But during a subsequent panel discussion, Schwarzenegger suggested that lawmakers wait until 2010 before establishing such a system and cautioned that it should not provoke businesses to leave the state.

"I think we should start out without the caps and ... really shoot for certain goals," he said. The remarks left some environmental activists perplexed.

"He's punting," said Bill Magavern, a lobbyist with Sierra Club California. "He's saying he doesn't even want to consider putting a cap into law for the next four years."

"It was a little bit confusing," said panelist Karen Douglas, a climate change expert with Environmental Defense, a national environmental group. "We think it's essential that a cap be put in place immediately. That doesn't mean that the reductions have to happen immediately."

Terry Tamminen, the governor's special adviser for energy and environment, said later that Schwarzenegger believes there is too little information available on how to structure a cap-and-trade program to establish one now - although he would support legislation establishing a mandatory emission reporting program.

Rather, Schwarzenegger wants to wait until early 2008, the deadline for aides to submit a detailed cap-and-trade proposal, before signing off on firm emission caps, Tamminen said.

"You don't want to impose a cap until you know how these things get done," he added.

But Schwarzenegger clearly rejects the notion forwarded by some business leaders that the federal government, not individual states, should tackle greenhouse gas emissions.

He also rebuffed assertions that California, the 12th-largest emitter of such gases, should delay until China and India address the issue.

It's important "that we don't think so much about what China is doing, what is Europe doing, what is Russia doing, what is George Bush doing," said the governor, who stood in front of a huge picture of a glacier in the Austrian Alps in 1875 and a second picture of the same mountainside in 2004 with no glacier in sight. "California needs to be on the forefront."

Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez welcomed Schwarzenegger's work on the issue but said the governor "needs to walk the walk, not just talk the talk" by signing a bill implementing a cap-and-trade system that he and Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, are sponsoring.

While most of the participants at the summit's first panel voiced support for the cap-and-trade concept, one panelist said it would damage his industry.

Thomas Tietz, who heads the California Nevada Cement Promotion Council and who appeared as a representative of the state Chamber of Commerce, said concrete producers oppose any type of cap-and-trade plan.

"We fear a cap system would effectively force us to import more cement from overseas and other states," he said.

However, several large companies, such as Pacific Gas & Electric and British Petroleum, have expressed support for some type of cap-and-trade system. Further, recent polling has shown that voters favor government action to reduce such emissions.

Schwarzenegger's re-election campaign unveiled a television ad on Monday that extols his environmental record, including his stance on greenhouse gases. When asked about the timing of the ad, spokeswoman Margita Thompson said the Governor's Office does not coordinate gubernatorial events with Schwarzenegger's campaign aides.

## **Governor backs plan to cap gas emissions, allow trades**

**Businesses that top limits would buy credits from others that cut back.**

Bloomberg News

Orange County Register, Wed., April 12, 2006

SAN FRANCISCO - Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said he backs a plan to limit the state's emissions of gases that contribute to global warming by forcing businesses that exceed limits to buy credits from others that cut back.

The strategy, known as "cap and trade," would mirror those used in Europe to curb the output of carbon dioxide and other gases that trap heat in the atmosphere. Schwarzenegger has said California should seek a 25 percent cut in emissions of so-called greenhouse gases by 2020.

"We cannot reduce emissions unless we have market-based solutions, like trading mechanisms, in addition to regulatory solutions," the governor said in a statement distributed at an environmental conference in San Francisco.

Schwarzenegger, a Republican, is embracing a strategy to combat the warming of the world's temperature that is opposed by President Bush and some business groups. The creation of a system for monitoring and establishing credits for greenhouse gas emissions was among those proposed by the state's environmental protection agency last week for meeting the governor's goals.

Schwarzenegger also endorses forcing large businesses to report their emissions of carbon dioxide, the press release said.

Greenhouse gases trap heat in the atmosphere and are considered to be a major source of the rise in global temperatures. California has already passed rules, challenged by carmakers in court, that would force cuts in carbon dioxide emissions from autos, the state's single largest source of emissions.

Also Tuesday, Schwarzenegger released a letter he sent to Bush reiterating the state's request for a waiver from the federal government to allow the auto rules to remain in effect. Those who have sued say only the U.S. government can establish those rules. Ten other states have adopted California's rules.

### **Another proposal**

California Democrats, whose party controls both houses of the state Legislature, proposed a law this month that would make Schwarzenegger's goals for cutting carbon dioxide emissions mandatory. Backers said it would foster technological innovation, while critics such as a group representing local oil producers said it would penalize California businesses.

That measure would target the emissions of companies such as PG&E Corp. and Edison International, the state's two largest utilities, as well as the operators of oil refineries including BP and Chevron Corp.

## **Expect to pay more for gas this summer**

By Craig D. Rose, Staff Writer

San Diego Union-Tribune, Wed., April 12, 2006

If the government's seasonal gasoline forecast is right, typical San Diego vacationers this summer will spend an additional \$8 driving to and from the fabled casinos of Las Vegas compared with last year.

A long weekend in San Francisco? Add about \$13 in driving costs. Figure you'll skip the vacations and just work through July and August? That will cost about \$31 more than last year, if you log 2,500 miles and get 20 miles per gallon.

Blame rising prices at the gasoline pump. And expect a sharp spike in prices between now and Memorial Day.

But the higher costs won't keep people home, the forecasters say.

The Energy Department's seasonal outlook, released yesterday, projected that the nationwide average price for regular gasoline this summer will average \$2.62 a gallon, barring unexpected supply disruptions. That would be up 25 cents from a year ago.

Gas at that price would attract long lines of bargain hunters in San Diego, where motorists now pay an average \$2.89 a gallon for regular unleaded, according to the latest survey by the Utility Consumers' Action Network.

The regional average rose 11 cents a gallon in the past week and nearly 30 cents in the last month, said Charles Langley, who oversees UCAN's gas monitoring project.

Guy Caruso, head of the federal Energy Information Administration, said prices at the pump are likely to rise an additional 10 to 15 cents a gallon in the coming weeks as recent increases in crude oil and wholesale gasoline costs work their way through the system.

He said the main reason for the rise in gasoline prices is the cost of crude oil, which accounts for 19 cents of the projected increase this summer.

Refiners' shifting away from the additive MTBE is increasing the demand for a replacement additive - corn-based ethanol - and adding "a few pennies" of cost to motorists, Caruso said.

Refiners have said they will stop using MTBE May 5, when the federal requirement for a clean-air oxygenate is lifted as part of an energy law enacted last summer.

The petroleum industry agrees with Caruso's analysis, but consumer advocates blame the industry for soaring prices and say California has long been subject to gouging.

Michael Shames, UCAN's executive director, said the petroleum industry is devoid of competition, allowing the dominant companies to reap record profits.

"We are long overdue for a (federal) windfall profits tax," he said.

In the meantime, however, high prices are not expected to dampen demand during the heavy April-to-September summer driving season. Motorists are expected to use 1.5 percent more gas than last summer, the Energy Department said.

Caruso speculated that the economy remains strong enough for consumers to deal with the higher fuel costs without substantially cutting back on driving. But some polls show that expensive gasoline is causing changes in spending habits.

Michael Baker, chief executive of the Bob Baker Auto Group, which owns 10 franchises in the San Diego area, says he's seeing people shopping for sport utility vehicles shrink the vehicle size a notch to save on fuel costs.

"People are more inclined to go with a more compact SUV, but it's still a nominal impact," he said.

Consumers on tight budgets should get a little relief later this summer.

After peaking next month, prices will decline to an average in the April-to-September period of \$2.62 a gallon, Caruso predicted.

Still, Caruso said the projections assume smooth sailing in a market that is prone to refinery disruptions and weather problems. He said he didn't think prices would jump to \$3 a gallon nationwide but that spikes are "certainly possible in any given week" or in some areas of the country.

Of course, retail prices of \$3 a gallon or more for middle and premium grades are already common in San Diego.

The oil industry says California's generally higher prices are caused by the state's requirement for special [clean-air blends](#) of gasoline, fuels that only a few refineries can provide.

About the only consolation for local motorists is that increases here have been somewhat smaller than those elsewhere over the past year.

While gasoline costs today have increased 40 cents a gallon nationally compared with a year ago, the local increase has been about 36 cents a gallon.

Some analysts said the nationwide average could jump quickly as hurricane season approaches. The oil market is likely to be more jittery about the weather this summer in light of the widespread disruption of Gulf Coast oil and gasoline production caused by hurricanes Katrina and Rita last year.

Shames says gasoline market volatility has been worsened by the growing role of speculators. Price volatility caused by speculators buying and selling petroleum and gasoline makes it difficult for consumers to plan and budget for energy costs, he said.

A shortfall in production last year when the Gulf Coast was hit by hurricanes quickly drove gasoline prices to a national average of \$3.07 a gallon.

"News of any developing hurricanes and tropical storms with a potential to cause significant new outages could add to (price) volatility . . . in the latter part of the summer," the report said.

The Energy Department's report also said that crude oil prices are expected to remain high, averaging \$65 a barrel for the year. But it said gasoline costs are expected to outstrip crude prices because of the additional cost of ethanol and compliance with new low-sulfur requirements.

The supply of motor fuel will also be reduced by the shift from MTBE.

Three of the biggest refiners - Valero Energy Corp., Exxon Mobil Corp. and Shell Oil Co. - will cease putting the additive into gasoline beginning May 5. MTBE accounted for about 10 percent of gasoline volume in the areas where it is required to meet clean-air requirements.

Bob Dinneen, president of the Renewable Fuels Association, a trade group that represents the ethanol industry, told a recent Senate hearing that the industry will be able to meet ethanol demand even as refiners move from using MTBE.

[The Washington Post, Commentary, Wed., April 12, 2006](#)

### **Hot Air and Glacial Change: A Case Study**

by Joel Achenbach,

Is there any controversy about climate change? Not at the Smithsonian! The National Museum of Natural History has found a way to open two new climate change exhibits, starting Friday, without a single smithereen of contentiousness. We get just the facts: Planet's getting warmer, arctic ice is melting, Inuit are out of sorts, Siberia is thawing. The future? "Models predict different outcomes," a sign says.

It's all rather low-key. The museum declined to include any stuffed polar bears. The one stuffed caribou is too high on a platform to pet. Nor did anyone realize how cool it would have been to have an Al Gore statue -- one that, every 20 minutes, suddenly starts talking (because, you know, it's really him !!!). Instead we see pictures of dwindling ice caps, and graphs of the greenhouse effect and fluctuating surface albedo. We learn about the primitive atmosphere, the rise of photosynthesis, the Oxygen Boom, the Cambrian Explosion, the hot Eocene, the cold Pleistocene, the comfy Holocene.

There's an interactive globe that would be neat to have in your house if you could be sure it wouldn't break within a week. The 1954 photograph of Pasadena housewives wearing gas masks

and carrying Fight Smog placards is nice, as is the film of Inuit people somehow living in a world where fish come out of a hole in the ice. But there are also sections that you would be tempted to compare to watching paint dry were it not for the danger that a curator might steal the idea for the next climate change exhibit.

The two new exhibits, which run through Nov. 30, were conceived separately and yoked under the label of "Forces of Change." You can enter the hall at either end, meaning you can start with the ice exhibit ("Arctic: A Friend Acting Strangely"-you decide, worst title ever?) and then proceed to the air exhibit ("Atmosphere: Change Is in the Air"-no, that gets the vote here), or you can start with the air exhibit and go to the ice.

The ice-first method might make most sense, simply because it takes the molecule-intensive topic of climate change and puts a human face on it. Much of the conversation on global warming turns on climate models and the IPCC consensus and the North Atlantic Thermohaline Circulation and whatnot, so it's helpful to recall that for many people the issue isn't esoteric.

A testimonial: "Zacharias Aquiaruq, an elder in Arctic Canada, recently described the weather as *uggianaqtuq*, an Inuit word that can suggest strange, unexpected behavior." There are photos of permafrost collapsing, of villages on the verge of being washed away by arctic seas. A set of panels explains how the arctic ice cover reflects solar radiation back into space. We learn that pregnant caribou struggle in soggy snow to reach their calving grounds.

The atmosphere exhibit goes back billions of years, and reveals how life and the air evolved in tandem. A film graphically shows that only Earth has a habitable atmosphere among the worlds of our solar system. We learn of the environmental victory over ozone-destroying chlorofluorocarbons. Poke around and you'll find out that *Eurypterus remipes*, a sea scorpion that ate trilobites, is the New York state fossil.

But are we ruining our atmosphere? Here's a picture of Lyndon Johnson signing the Motor Vehicle Air Pollution Control Act of 1965. Wall text: "Air in the United States is cleaner, but industrialization threatens [air quality](#) in developing countries such as China and India."

Perhaps we should be pleased that the museum has steered clear of the recent public-museum habit of trying to make Americans hate themselves and their ancestors and their civilization. This time there is no attempt to delve into the thorny topic of climate change policy (should we have ratified Kyoto? -- check another museum) or make people feel guilty about their profligate, carboniferous, vain, environment-ravaging lifestyles. There are no wall texts saying, for example, "Because you drove to the museum in a gas-guzzling beast of an automobile, a reindeer just died."

And perhaps we might also note that putting together museum exhibits on climate change can't be easy, [since climate involves air](#), and air is invisible except in places like Los Angeles. The museum has tackled that problem directly, mounting a transparent display case that at first glance and all subsequent glances appears to be empty. The accompanying text says it contains 5.2 cubic feet of nitrogen and 1.4 cubic feet of oxygen and a bunch of trace gases. It lists the market price of these gases, in pennies, and adds, "Value of clean air: priceless."

Clever, but it's still an empty case.

Any exhibit on the atmosphere runs the risk of being gaseous. And then the argon crowd will say that, once again, they didn't get their due, and the helium people will complain in their squeaky voices. The methane guys will make their abominable noises. But many visitors of all persuasions might wonder why there's not more in these exhibits about carbon dioxide.

You can't pick up a newspaper or a national magazine without hearing that greenhouse gas emissions, and specifically CO<sub>2</sub>, are threatening life as we know it. Even *Vanity Fair* has made climate change a cover story, complete with photo illustrations of how rising sea levels would terrorize Martha's Vineyard and the Hamptons. (End. Of. The. World.) So where is the CO<sub>2</sub> in these exhibits? You have to hunt for it. You can find a mention on a panel that is otherwise devoted to a Smithsonian experiment to study how plants absorb carbon dioxide:

"Human activity increases the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere-mainly carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas). The extra greenhouse gas may be trapping too much heat, abnormally raising Earth's temperature."

Asked about the neutral tone of the exhibits, the museum's director, Cristian Samper, said: "We do not advocate a particular solution, just because that's not our role as a museum of natural history. We won't tell you what to think."

When a reporter asked exhibit designer Barbara Stauffer why there wasn't more of a discussion about the role of humans in climate change, she said, "It's about the science." She added, "I think it undermines what we do in the exhibit if we start pointing fingers."

She went further: "It's about functions of the atmosphere. It's not a climate change exhibit."

No argument here.

[The Washington Post, Commentary, Wed., April 12, 2006](#)

### **When Animals Suffer, So Do We**

By Kelly Overton

Do the animal rights nuts know something we don't?

As we observe the growing number of avian flu cases worldwide, bide time until the eventual large-scale outbreak of mad cow disease in the United States and hope what the world experienced in 2004 wasn't just a dress rehearsal for SARS, the time has come to reconsider humanity's treatment of nonhuman animals -- if only for the repercussions to our own health.

In past decades we have removed animals from pastures, sunshine and fresh air to stack them on top of each other in petri-dish-like buildings. As wild animals lose more and more of their habitats, they are forced to live on the perimeters of cities and towns and in a proximity to humans that increasingly appears to be detrimental not only to their health but also to ours.

Our health is being put at risk by our demand for low food prices. In the past decade consumers have chosen low prices over quality in the products and services we purchase -- but animals aren't products that can be endlessly manipulated for lower food costs. As a society it is time to ask ourselves if we are willing to trade our health and the health of our land, [air](#) and water in return for cheap milk, eggs and meat.

Because factory farms are legally recognized as farms -- not the industrial sites they are -- they are exempt from many of our most important environmental laws. The communities surrounding most factory farms have become wastelands from the constant flow of toxic emissions and waste [polluting the air](#), ground and water. Inside the farms, safety and human health also take a back seat to profit. Animals too sick or diseased to stand are dragged or bulldozed to slaughter and into our food supply. Mad cow disease was born of such recklessness and greed -- a desire by corporations to minimize financial losses by using the remains of diseased animals to feed the animals that enter our food supply.

Animals raised on a diet high in antibiotics ensure human consumption of antibiotics, decreasing their effectiveness when we need them to fight infection. The presence of antibiotics in our food and water also encourages the emergence of drug-resistant illnesses. In fact, an increasing number of public health issues are linked to our mistreatment of nonhuman animals -- including the growing human resistance to antibiotics and the many health consequences of global warming.

Meanwhile, the change from a nation whose food was once supplied by thousands of small to medium-size farms spread across the country to a nation now dependent on just a few factory farms in specific areas is inviting disaster. This new concentration of meat and food production in specific geographic corridors allows for one incident of accidental contamination, sabotage or terrorist activity to cripple our food supply.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, or CJD, the human version of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (mad cow disease), can lie dormant for up to 40 years. Once discovered it is too late -- the

disease has proved fatal in every human case to date. The repercussions to human health from factory farming and habitat destruction may not be known for decades, or they may immediately fly into our daily lives via an avian flu pandemic.

It is ironic that animal-borne diseases may very well achieve what human activism has failed to do -- guarantee nonhuman animals more humane lives by making animal welfare synonymous with human welfare. Regardless of how our society arrives at the conclusion, it is time to end one of the most inhumane and shameful chapters in our nation's history.

We humans remain only one species in what has always been a global ecosystem -- an interlinked web of life where the health of one species depends on the health of others. Whether through reckless factory farming, the pollution of waters and the poisoning of the species within them, or the continued rampant destruction of forests and nonhuman habitat, our blatant mistreatment of other species for the benefit of our own is not inviting disaster, it's guaranteeing it. It is time to end the treatment of God's living creatures as products and to begin treating all life forms with respect and reverence before the health repercussions to the human species are irreparable.