

Spare the Air season upon us

By Sarah Ruby, staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Monday, June 5, 2006

Spare the Air season is upon us, a summer tradition aimed at warning people when smog gets dangerous, and asking them to change their habits to make sure it doesn't get worse.

Ozone, smog's chief ingredient, is always going to bother some people, especially those with asthma and other lung ailments. But enough ozone can harm the pinkest lungs, and when the air gets too brown, valley air regulators declare a Spare the Air day. Here's a rundown of the Spare the Air program:

Q: What is ozone?

Ozone is formed when pollution from cars, trucks, refineries, power plants, industrial operations and other sources react in the heat of the sun. Ozone aggravates asthma, reduces lung function and could cause permanent lung damage.

Q: What should I do to protect myself?

Avoid outdoor exertion, especially in the middle of the day.

Q: What is Spare the Air season?

Spare the Air season is a voluntary program in which the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District sends out an alert if the next day's smog levels are expected to be unhealthy for everyone. The season starts Tuesday and runs through September.

Q: How many Spare the Air days should we expect?

A typical Kern season has between 20 and 45 Spare the Air days. Last year Kern had 18, down from 27 in 2004 and 41 in 2003.

Q: Why was last season so mild? Is the air getting better?

Air officials hope so. Last summer was warm enough to cook up standard amounts of smog, but it didn't, said Brenda Turner, spokeswoman for the valley air district. One year can't prove a trend, but air regulators hope their pollution-cutting measures are finally paying off. Last year, the San Joaquin Valley spent 72 days in violation of federal smog standards, down from 109 days in 2004.

Q: How do I find out if it's a Spare the Air day?

Check *The Californian's* weather page, or visit www.valleyair.org.

Q: What should I do to minimize smog pollution?

- Shop on the Internet.
- Link trips instead of running separate errands.
- Car pool.
- Recycle.
- Use an electric starter instead of lighter fluid to start your barbecue.
- Don't top off your gas tank.
- Trade in your old car for a newer one.
- Install energy-efficient appliances.
- Walk to lunch.
- Don't ride off-road vehicles or run gas-powered lawn equipment.
- Make sure paints and solvents are water-based instead of oil-based.
- Do anything that will save gasoline or electricity.

Air district seeks student artwork

Tulare Advance-Register, Saturday, June 3, 2006

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is looking for student artwork for its 2007 Clean Air Kids Calendar.

Valley school students in kindergarten through 12th grade are eligible to enter. Artwork should be in color and contain a message about a way to help clean the air.

Fourteen drawings with clean-air themes will be selected and reproduced in a four-color calendar, and the artists' photos will be featured. The deadline for submissions is Sept. 30.

Entries must contain the child's name, address, phone number, age, grade and school and should be mailed - flat, not folded - to: 2007 Calendar Contest, Valley Air District, 1990 E. Gettysburg Ave., Fresno, CA 93726.

Information: 230-6000.

Kids' art sought for clean air calendar

The Fresno Bee, Friday, June 2, 2006

VISALIA — The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is seeking Central Valley students — kindergarten through 12th grade — to participate in its 2007 Clean Air Kids calendar. The deadline is Sept. 30.

Artwork should be in color and contain a message about a way to help clean the air.

Fourteen drawings with clean-air themes will be selected and reproduced in a four-color calendar and the artists' photos will be featured.

About 20,000 calendars will be distributed free to schools, community groups, health-care facilities, churches and nonprofit organizations.

Details: (559) 230-6000; public.education@valleyair.org.

Local Events

TODAY

The Fresno Bee, Saturday, June 3, 2006

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's annual clean green yard machine program — 9 a.m., College of the Sequoias, 915 S. Mooney Blvd., Lot 7, Visalia. Valley residents will be offered a \$229 discount on an electric lawn mower. Residents must turn in their gasoline-powered mowers to receive the discount. First come, first served. Details: (209) 557-6400 or www.valleyair.org.

2 vie for Fresno Co. District 4 supervisor

Kingsburg marketing consultant challenges Sanger incumbent.

By Kerri Ginis / The Fresno Bee

Friday, June 2, 2006

Fresno County Supervisor Judy Case wants another four-year term representing the residents in District 4 but faces competition from marketing consultant Cynthia Gonzalez.

Case, 53, a Sanger resident, was first elected to the Board of Supervisors in November 1998. She was board chairwoman in 2000 and 2005 and has represented the county on numerous regional and statewide boards and commissions.

Case said she wants to continue serving her district, which covers the southern part of the county, because she still has work to do. She wants to complete road projects in the rural areas, improve the downtowns of smaller communities, increase law enforcement services and reduce air pollution throughout the county.

"I think we've had some successes over the years," she said.

But her opponent said she doesn't think Case has spent enough time responding to complaints from District 4 residents.

"I want to be a full-time supervisor," Gonzalez said last month during a meeting with The Bee's editorial board. "When you have other jobs, you cannot be available to other people."

Gonzalez, 48, said she did not want to comment further on issues until after the campaign is over.

Case disputes Gonzalez's assertions that she is not working as a full-time supervisor. She said she attends many night meetings and makes an effort to visit the cities in her district to talk with residents.

She said she has never seen Gonzalez in the district.

"I know she's from Kingsburg, but I've never had any contact with her," Case said. "Her criticism seems to be that because I work on the weekends at a large hospital to keep my nursing license up, that I'm not a full-time supervisor."

Case is an administrative director at Saint Agnes Medical Center several weekends a month. She also operates a bed and breakfast with her husband.

During her tenure on the board, she said, she reduced the unemployment rate by developing industrial parks in many smaller cities. She also supported opening a new juvenile hall and said she wants a juvenile delinquency court built on the campus.

Case said she's also pushed to expand Highway 180. A new segment from the Highway 168 junction east to Clovis Avenue opened last September. Case said she wants the next segment from Clovis to Temperance Avenue completed as soon as possible.

Gonzalez is a Kingsburg native. Her family owned the Valley Inn Restaurant for nearly 40 years. She has 27 years of business experience and was past president of the Kingsburg Chamber of Commerce.

In 1998, Gonzalez was convicted on misdemeanor charges of resisting arrest, battery and fighting in a public place.

If elected, Gonzalez said, she will work to consolidate law enforcement services and bring more jobs to the district.

Turlock creates blueprint, sticks to it

By Michael R. Shea, staff writer

Modesto Bee, Monday, June 5, 2006

TURLOCK — In a boom market, development usually outpaces planning.

Not in Turlock.

With strict zoning and concentrated-area building plans, city officials have set a high bar for smart growth in the Northern San Joaquin Valley.

Urban planning balances short-term market pressures and long-term quality-of-life goals. The leaders of Stanislaus County's second-largest city have earned a reputation as good administrators of that balance.

How should a city look? What about traffic? Air quality? Can people afford it? These are questions local governments face, but the stakes are higher in the Central Valley because the "rate of population growth is faster than Mexico," according to Michael Teitz.

Teitz is a senior fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California and professor emeritus of city planning at the University of California at Berkeley. He said more homes, stores, businesses and roads are being built in the valley than most anywhere else in the country. It's up to city planners to manage where it goes.

The valley is facing "really serious problems of urban growth," Teitz said. "But you have places like Turlock where they think about these issues quite a lot, but there are other places where that clearly isn't happening."

Smart growth means less traffic, clean air and everyday services available in town, from grocery stores to dry cleaners and auto mechanics.

One city's vision

Since the mid-1990s, Turlock has made several additions to its general plan by targeting specific uses for specific areas — shopping in the northwest near Highway 99, neighborhoods in the north and a planned industrial zone in the southeast.

"They've always had a very clear image of what they wanted in the community," said Carol Whiteside, president and founder of the Great Valley Center, a Modesto-based nonprofit think tank that studies valleywide issues.

"They got the developers to build to the city's term."

City planners have concentrated development in specific places, each with its own builder fees tailored to that particular area. Trying to avoid the Village I fiasco, where low developer fees forced the city of Modesto to cough up millions to pay for roads, storm drains and parks, Turlock is making sure developers pay for improvements to the public land their projects affect.

"When the stars are all aligned the way they were, there's a demand for houses," said Charlie Woods, Turlock's director of community development. "The developers are quick to fill that demand, but we as a city need to set the rules they play by."

Turlock's 1995 northwest plan resulted in the regional shopping area at Monte Vista and Highway 99, with several big box stores and about 75 homes. Through property and sales taxes, the new businesses added more than \$2.5 million to the general fund in their first year. That pays for improvements to roads and utility lines, new firefighters and police officers, such as the 10 planned for the 2006-07 fiscal year.

Some developers didn't like the idea of one central concentration of big-box stores. It fell on the City Council to say, "Too bad."

National retailer Target, which has 1,300 stores in 47 states, optioned a property on the corner of Geer Road and Monte Vista Avenue, just across from California State University, Stanislaus. The store would have instantly boosted city property and sales taxes.

But Turlock didn't want a big-box retailer there. Mayor Curt Andre remembers the "dark night" that the council split its vote and he cast the deciding vote against the superstore.

"On one hand we wanted this new corporate citizen — everybody loves Target — but we knew it was the wrong place," Andre recalled. "Sometimes the right answer is, 'No.'"

Target officials left City Hall and said they wouldn't be back. A few years later, Target opened a store in Monte Vista Crossings Shopping Center, just where city officials wanted it.

The difference: with a highway interchange and open rights-of-way, the western location had roads equipped to handle Target-sized traffic. The college campus didn't. Today city officials are looking for a bookstore, a sporting goods store or maybe a cafe to augment the university neighborhood.

Just down the road ...

Turlock's next large-scale economic development plan — the Westside Industrial Specific Plan — involves 2,632 acres along the highway, south of the Monte Vista shopping area.

Orchards, dairy farms and other agricultural businesses are there now. City planners want to make the undeveloped areas "shovel-ready," with plumbing and utility lines for prospective builders.

But unlike other plans that include relatively straightforward annexations, the area is pocked with various parcel sizes and ownership arrangements.

"This presents an annexation problem," Woods said. "Economic development like this is very slow and very difficult to predict."

The city wants to build an "agri-science industry cluster" of small to medium research, development, manufacturing and food-processing businesses. Officials say they've talked with several firms, but nothing has materialized.

And in the southeast ...

While the west side needs pipes, the south side needs roads. Without better access to Highway 99, any growth to the south would result in too much traffic.

City staff members are working with state and federal officials to bring an exit to the highway south of Lander Avenue where a rest stop now sits.

"It's a financing challenge, but it can be done," Woods said.

One developer has brought plans to the city for almost 500 homes on 123 acres in the area. Without an exit or plans for one, officials have been hesitant to approve, Woods said.

Through Washington, D.C., representation, they've banked \$1.4 million for planning and early construction of the exit.

While retailers and industry build a city's tax base, the market has demanded homes. And lots of them.

Turlock first directed new homes in the north. At near full build-out, the area in the North Turlock Master Plan boasts a new high school, elementary school, community sports complex, parks and 1,000 homes.

California State University, Stanislaus, is just down the road. The mayor likes to point out that someone could go from nursery school through college and never need a car.

Planners expected seven years for the project to flesh out, but five years later, it's hard to find an empty lot in the area.

"Those homes are what Turlock is most proud of and wants to replicate with future development," said Tim Kerr, the city manager.

City planners are watching a slow move toward condominium projects, such as Balboa Park in north Turlock, which they hope will foster more affordable alternatives. East of the northern area, about 850 homes have been approved. About 40 percent are finished. And for the first time in years, some of the homes are being built before being sold — a change that's only happened in the past six months.

Turlock officials would like to see more entertainment-based developments such as a bowling alley, a public golf course, more fine restaurants and maybe a fabric store. But for now, they're happy with the rate of growth.

"Do we want to be like San Jose or Tracy or Stockton, nothing but houses and no community?" the mayor asked. "I don't think so."

Ethanol on the front burner

California gaining toehold in market

By Bruce Spence, staff writer

Stockton Record, Sunday, June 4, 2006

U.S.-produced ethanol as vehicle fuel has become a hot-button topic in this country as resentment burns about high gasoline and fuel prices that show no signs of relenting.

Although a burgeoning ethanol production industry is taking hold primarily in the Midwest using corn as the fodder, California is starting to get a toehold in the market.

Several ethanol plants are either in production or being built in California, and one is being developed in Madera by Fresno-based Pacific Ethanol Inc., founded in 2003.

The company recently announced that it will sell \$145 million worth of common stocks to fund the development of five ethanol-production plants that will produce 220 million gallons annually by the end of 2008 and to build more plants to generate 420 million gallons of ethanol by the end of 2010.

Those plants aim at producing ethanol made from Midwestern corn to be used by California refineries, said Bill Jones, a second-generation farmer and rancher who is co-founder and chairman of the board for Pacific Ethanol, a publicly traded company.

He started looking at the ethanol marketplace in California and the West three years ago and saw a good opportunity, he said. Much of the ethanol market is in the West, he said, yet most of the ethanol was produced in the Midwest.

"We also have a great potential for products coming into new types of ethanol plants," he said. "It's a good market. There's good opportunity today, and there will be an even better opportunity in the future for domestic production in California."

It's too early to judge the impact on the California market because ethanol for vehicle fuel is made primarily from corn, and not much of that is grown in the state except as sweet corn sold as a vegetable or for livestock feed, said Dave Kranz, spokesman for the California Farm Bureau

Federation.

But California's ag industry is watching the potential development of next-generation ethanol - cellulosic ethanol, he said.

That would be made from plant waste material - rice straw, orchard or vineyard trimmings, for example - rather than corn, and that would offer much more potential for California farmers, he said.

"For most farmers in California, it's probably more of a longer-term potential based in large part on new technology that would make ethanol more practical to produce from other crops or some of the leftovers," Kranz said. "Once it gets to the next generation, I think there's a lot of potential for it."

Next generation

When technology and economics come together, he said, farmers will be interested and will participate.

The possibilities for next-generation ethanol is being especially watched by rice growers, who spend from \$15 million to \$20 million a year managing rice straw waste.

Years ago, the straw was burned after harvest, but air-quality concerns put an end to that, and these days, only 12 percent to 15 percent can be burned for disease control, and only 5 percent more used for off-field uses, said Paul Buttner, manager of environmental affairs for the California Rice Commission.

He's encouraged by growing talk from government leaders, including President George Bush and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, about the need to develop bio fuel resources in this country, he said.

"I just hope that translates to programs that are geared to attracting residue materials such as rice straw instead of crops grown for that purpose," Buttner said.

Eager customer

One farmer who would like to see more ethanol production show up in California is Doug Mosebar, president of the state farm bureau.

Mosebar, a Santa Barbara County farmer, bought a vehicle capable of using Ethanol 85, a blend of 85 percent ethanol and the rest gasoline. Not only has he yet to fill up with the stuff, he's not likely to any time soon.

There are about 600-plus gas stations in the nation that offer E85, and only several of them are in California. (The closest to Mosebar's place is in San Diego.)

"It's not in my path yet," he said. "But I feel encouraged that eventually they'll get there. There's a demand there. As we see the price of gasoline going up and more dependence on foreign nations for our petroleum needs, hopefully, that will increase our demand for ethanol production in the United States and in California in particular. So that's an exciting outlook."

Mosebar said that unfortunately, that likely will be a long time away.

It's not practical for California to get involved until the technology advances to the point that farm waste can be efficiently used to produce ethanol, he said.

"I don't think it's a flash in the pan," he said. "When you throw in the fact that we'll be able to get rid of trimmings, waste - recycle - yeah, we would love to do that."
California market

California already is the largest U.S. market for ethanol made from corn, accounting for one-quarter of the national market, said Steve Shaffer, director of the Office of Agriculture and Environmental Stewardship of the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

That's for gasoline made by California refineries, which produce gas with a 6 percent ethanol blend to enhance octane levels, he said.

For California agriculture, it makes sense to produce ethanol in state, he said. California is the largest dairy state in the nation, with corn being heavily used as feed. While two-thirds of corn is starch, which can be converted to ethanol, one-third of the kernel is a high-protein high-value feed, Shaffer said.

"It makes more sense to process corn out here instead of in the Midwest."

Making ethanol is like making beer. Corn, for example, is ground up and cooked. Enzymes are added to convert starch to sugars and yeast is added to ferment that into alcohol, which is then distilled, like whiskey, to remove the water.

One alluring technology is the cellulosic ethanol, which is made using specially developed enzymes that break down woody ag materials such as clippings, manure, rice straw and so on for ethanol production.

Two California biotechnology companies already have each received \$17 million in federal Energy Department funding to develop enzymes for such ethanol productions, Shaffer said.

Shaffer said that since 1981 he has been predicting that ethanol would be widely used as an alternative fuel within the next five years.

He is still holding to that prediction, he said, adding: "But this time I mean it."

Research spark

Sean Snaith, director of University of the Pacific's Business Forecasting Center, that if there is any silver lining to the dark cloud of high fuel costs, it's that they have served to spur research into alternative energy resources.

"Anything that can insulate us from the political instability of many of the oil-producing nations in the long run will be essential to maintaining economic growth," he said.

Ethanol in particular shows much promise, Snaith said, though he doesn't see it as being the one magic bullet that will break this country's oil dependency.

Pacific Ethanol's Jones said the Madera plant is expected to be online this fall, producing 35 million gallons of ethanol annually.

"California has always been the leader in environmental technologies, and this gives California an opportunity to become more energy independent, diversify our fuel sources, generate tax dollars and jobs, and solve these problems we have for fuel supplies in the state," he said.

Globe confronts warming as emissions grow

By Charles J. Hanley, AP Special Correspondent
In the Sacramento Bee, Saturday, June 3, 2006

Britain and Sweden are on target for reducing global-warming gases, but other countries will have to toughen policies and rely on "carbon trading" to achieve their Kyoto Protocol goals by 2012, says a new U.N. report.

In the United States, meanwhile, emissions of so-called greenhouse gases climbed by 16 percent between 1990 and 2004, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said in its latest assessment. The United States, by far the biggest emitter of carbon dioxide and other gases blamed for global warming, rejects the Kyoto pact on reductions.

Against this backdrop of rising emissions and discord over what to do about them, delegates from more than 160 nations on May 26 wrapped up two weeks of semiannual U.N. sessions in Bonn, Germany, on how to confront the threat of climate change. On one track, they began talks on a stricter regime of emissions cuts for Kyoto nations after the 2012 expiration of that 1997 agreement, named for the Japanese city where it was negotiated.

On a second, less formal track, they began a "dialogue," including U.S. representatives, to try to draw Washington and other outsiders into the mandatory controls system.

"Both tracks got going in a fairly smooth way," Richard Kinley, chief U.N. organizer of the sessions, told The Associated Press. "It means there will be some very intensive talks in the next two, three years."

Scientists, meanwhile, are reporting mounting evidence of climate change:

- NASA satellite monitoring shows Greenland glaciers dumping water into the sea at twice the rate of 1996. Such melting land ice is helping raise sea levels, along with the expansion of seawater as it warms.

- The sea around the South Pacific island of Tonga has risen 4 inches in 13 years, according to the latest Australian measurements.

- Warmer water, followed by disease, has killed about one-third of coral reefs at official monitoring sites in the Caribbean since last year.

- Globally the year 2005 was either the warmest or second-warmest since record keeping began in the mid-19th century, according to NASA and the World Meteorological Organization. The warming is accelerating, boosting the mercury every decade by more than 0.3 degrees Fahrenheit (0.2 degrees Celsius), NASA says.

For more than a decade, a U.N.-organized network of scientists has warned of shifting climate zones, rising oceans and more extreme weather events if emissions of heat-trapping gases were not reined in.

The atmosphere today holds more than one-third more carbon dioxide, byproduct of automobile engines, power plants and other fossil fuel-burning, than it did before the Industrial Revolution.

Kyoto, a protocol to the 1992 U.N. climate treaty, mandates controls in 35 industrialized countries that on average would reduce greenhouse emissions by 5 percent from their 1990 levels by 2012, with varying limits assigned to individual countries.

At this point, among 18 countries reporting, "only the United Kingdom and Sweden are projected to meet their individual Kyoto targets with current policies and measures," U.N. experts said in a progress report issued at the Bonn meeting.

Britain, benefiting from a switch from coal power plants to natural gas, projects it will reduce emissions by 19 percent by 2012, surpassing its Kyoto target of minus 12.5 percent. Sweden projects a 1 percent reduction, versus a Kyoto allowance of plus 4 percent.

But such growing economies as Spain and Greece are projected to far overshoot their allowances. Canada, with a targeted reduction of 6 percent, says it is now emitting 30 percent more greenhouse gases than in 1990.

"Countries really have to think about introducing further measures to deal with their emissions," said Kinley.

Some do plan more taxes and incentives to reduce fossil fuel use, the report notes. But the greatest progress may be made via the "Kyoto mechanisms," investment in clean-energy and similar projects in other countries.

For example, the Netherlands, which has a 2012 target of minus 6 percent but currently projects 1 percent growth instead, will get carbon-trading credits for a Dutch wind-power project in India that has just won U.N. approval.

There were 17 Kyoto countries that had not yet reported on their progress.

In Washington, the Bush administration says it will rely on industry's voluntary cutbacks and on government investment in clean-energy technologies to reduce emissions. In April, however, Government Accountability Office auditors reported that supposed voluntary cutbacks are being inadequately monitored.

On May 23, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved a resolution urging the administration to negotiate mandatory cutbacks. Its future in the full Senate is uncertain. The White House objects that Kyoto-style mandates would badly crimp the U.S. economy, and complains that China, India and other poorer but fast-growing economies are not regulated by Kyoto.

Eliot Diringer, an analyst with Washington's private Pew Center on Global Climate Change, said China has signaled some willingness to join long-term efforts to limit warming. But environmentalists expect no change in the U.S. position before 2009 and the end of the Bush administration. Still, Diringer said, the talks begun in Bonn are important.

"It's important that people have a good understanding of the issues," he said, "so that when the political opportunity arises to actually negotiate a deal, they're in a position to do that."

Clarification

Visalia Times-Delta, Friday, June 2, 2006

A story in Thursday's Times-Delta on the Valley Air District's lawnmower exchange was unclear as to the kinds of vehicles that are heavy polluters. Older vehicles tend to be heavier polluters than newer vehicles.

[Modesto Bee, Guest Commentary, Monday, June 5, 2006](#)

Partnership is bringing much-needed resources to valley

By Sheila Carroll, Carol Whiteside and Kirk Lindsay

Last July, Gov. Schwarzenegger created the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley to make recommendations that will improve the economic well-being of the valley and the quality of life of its residents.

The partnership, with eight members of the governor's Cabinet, and public and private members from each of the eight counties, is organized into work groups to address some of the region's biggest issues: economic development; K-12 education; higher education and work-force development; land use, housing and agriculture; transportation; telecommunications; water and energy; air quality; and health and human services.

Each work group is engaging residents from throughout the valley, sifting ideas and developing specific, implementable recommendations for action, some immediate and some more distant. These recommendations will be presented to the governor by the end of the year.

The partnership has been aggressive in listening to the issues, concerns and recommendations of people in all eight counties.

The public meetings have put a broad array of important issues on the agenda -- housing needs, methamphetamine use, air quality, water supply, education, health care, natural resources, parks, Highway 99, economic disparity, telecommunications and regional infrastructure. All concerns, ideas and suggestions are entered into the official record and become part of the consideration of the appropriate work group.

Thursday, the partnership will have a public forum at California State University, Stanislaus. This is a unique opportunity to help identify priorities and shape regional policy for at least the next decade. The partnership's business meeting Wednesday at Stanislaus State also is open to the public.

At the forum, partnership members will hear from local representatives on panels representing the government and economic development stakeholders in the county; then, all interests and members of the audience will be invited to share ideas.

This is a unique opportunity with the focused attention and engagement of eight members of the governor's Cabinet, including Sunne McPeak, a Livingston native and the state secretary of Business, Transportation and Housing.

Members of the state and federal legislative delegations have pledged interest and support. New resources are coming to the region -- the first major statewide commitment to Highway 99, with \$1 billion in proposed state infrastructure bonds; \$2 million for land use and transportation planning to be shared by the Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) and the region's other COGs; a grant to the Great Valley Center for a project demonstrating the value of high-speed broadband for a rural farmworker community; a state park strategy for the region; and more to come.

Finding common ground and leveraging public and private local resources are ways of moving the region toward a more prosperous and successful future. The participation of everyone in this community is welcome and encouraged, especially for Thursday's open forum.

Thursday's 9:30a.m. meeting will be in the event center of the Student Union Building. Look for more information at www.greatvalley.org/sjpartnership/meetings.aspx.

Carroll is a private-sector appointee to the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley. Whiteside is president of the Great Valley Center in Modesto. Lindsey is a member of the California Transportation Commission, and is the liaison to the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley.

[Fresno Bee commentary, Sunday, June 4, 2006:](#)

The great state of voter fatigue

With a snoozer of a state ballot, anticipation for election underwhelms.

By Jim Boren

Even in laid-back California, elections are usually important events that many times establish political trends for the nation. But on the last weekend of the 2006 primary election campaign, few people seem to care that they're supposed to vote Tuesday.

Maybe it's voter fatigue brought on by a string of elections the state has held every year since 2002. Others say there isn't much on the ballot to excite them, even though the Democrats will be selecting a nominee to take on Gov. Schwarzenegger in the fall.

The political atmosphere in the Golden State is a huge turnaround from seven months ago when the special election seemed to confirm a return of California's activist politics of old. Liberals, conservatives, unions, business groups and others had slugged it out in an election that saw almost \$300 million spent by the various sides.

But it wasn't just the politicians and interest groups who were active in the special election. The voters sent a powerful message to Schwarzenegger that he had over-reached with his ambitious government reform package. That forced the governor to change his political strategy, and this year he persuaded the Democrats to help him put an infrastructure bond package on the November ballot.

Everyone thought the voters had become political players again, and public policy was as important to citizens as "American Idol." But this election seems to prove otherwise.

"The apathy is quite surprising considering the enthusiasm for last November's special election and the 2003 recall election," said David Schechter, a political science professor at California State University, Fresno. "But apparently the excitement was very short-lived, and now we're back to the normal routine of complete disregard of government on a daily basis."

Admittedly, the statewide ballot is a real snore this time around. There aren't any provocative propositions that will drive voter turnout, and the races below the Democratic gubernatorial primary are mostly a series of unfortunate contests between career politicians bouncing to offices they hope will keep them employed.

But even so, the Democratic race for governor should draw more attention, with Treasurer Phil Angelides and Controller Steve Westly spending millions to get the chance to face Schwarzenegger in November. It's a fundamental philosophical race between the liberal Angelides and Westly, a mainstream Democrat. This should be a battle that has appeal to most parts of the Democratic Party.

"I'm surprised at the lack of concern that I see from Democratic friends with what's going on," Schechter said. "The primary is so important for Democrats, who are trying to pick someone who can beat the governor."

A recent Public Policy Institute of California poll showed that one-third of Democratic voters were undecided in the weeks leading up to the election. "The PPIC poll was dismal for Democrats," Schechter said.

"Voters don't know who the candidates for governor are and the ones who do know, don't like the candidates."

One danger in the direction of the Democratic gubernatorial contest is that it is expected to be an even nastier race in the last few days of the campaign. That could cause even more voters to stay home because of disenchantment with the negative campaigning.

Fresno County Clerk Victor Salazar said he's "not optimistic" about a strong voter turnout on Tuesday. That's telling. He's usually very upbeat about voter participation, but he said this election is different.

He gauges voter interest on how quickly absentee ballots are returned in Fresno County, and they are coming in much slower than in other elections.

"There are multiple reasons," he said. "There's a lack of competition on the Republican side, and the change from a March primary to a June primary is having an effect. Families are focusing on graduation, summer vacation and other end-of-school activities."

He also said voters are tiring of all the elections without a break, adding that it's having a significant impact on his election workers. He said voter registrars in other counties are telling him the same thing.

"We've had election after election, one after another, and there is definitely voter fatigue," Salazar said. "Our people (election workers) are going to drop."

So we're two days from the primary election and we have election workers busily preparing for an election that most Californians won't participate in. That's too bad.

This is a crucial time for our state, and as many people as possible should be telling our elected officials how to handle issues such as health care, air quality, transportation and the pension crisis that threatens to bankrupt public agencies.

We're a state of 37 million people, and it seems that most of us would rather leave the decision-making to others.

[Visalia Times-Delta editorial, Monday, June 5, 2006:](#)

Fund partnership for the Valley

Thumbs down to members of the state Legislature who are pulling the funding from the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley. We hope that local lawmakers make it plain how much this initiative is needed in our Valley and restore the funding to the proposed state budget.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger only a few months ago established this partnership, a coalition of Valley governments, special interests and businesses. One of the two co-chairs of the partnerships is Tulare County Supervisor Connie Conway, and it includes Ruiz Foods founder Fred Ruiz of Dinuba and California Resources Director and Tulare resident Mike Chrisman are among the panel members.

The Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley is so progressive for a number of reasons. First of course is the need. The Valley has the worst chronic unemployment in the nation and one of the highest poverty levels. It is struggling with solutions to problems such as low economic opportunity, low education level, poor health care, high teen pregnancy rate, high rates of certain kinds of crimes as varied as domestic violence and substance abuse. [It also has the dirtiest air in the nation](#), is critically dependent on precious water resources and has the fastest growing population in California.

Those chronic, seemingly intractable problems call for creative and holistic solutions. Schwarzenegger is foresighted enough to recognize that and apply a specific strategy to find remedies to those unique problems.

In addition, the partnership is the essence of collaboration in our society. It enlists the public and private sector, special interests and advocates, all disciplines and representatives of the entire spectrum of our diverse Valley.

This initiative could serve as a model for other areas of California and the nation. It would be a shame to waste this effort for the want of a mere \$5 million.

We recognize the need for the state to be fiscally prudent, and supporting the Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley is being prudent: It is providing the groundwork and hope for solutions to problems that not only have kept the Valley from being all it can be, but have cost taxpayers here and around the state for the expensive responses to these problems. Failing to fund it would be shortsighted.

[Modesto Bee editorial, Monday, June 5, 2006:](#)

Legislature has let valley down by killing funding for partnership

We ought to be used to this story line by now: The Legislature had a chance to do something useful for the valley besides drain it of tax dollars to be spent in other parts of the state — and the Legislature choked.

This time, the story involves the effort to bring improvements to the valley that the governor inaugurated a year ago. It's known by the cumbersome title of San Joaquin Valley Strategic Action Proposal of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley.

But in plain language, it is a plan to bring state officials, local governments and the private sector into one group to make recommendations for regional solutions to the valley's pressing needs. Among those needs:

The valley has chronic unemployment that is as much as 50percent higher than the state average.

Our air quality is among the worst in the nation.

The valley faces critical issues of water quality and quantity.

The valley is shortchanged in everything from transportation to park space.

Valley schools often are among the poorest-performing in California.

There is a terrible shortage of physicians in many rural areas.

So, the governor proposed to spend \$5million on the effort, seed money for the partnership. A state Senate subcommittee whittled that down to \$1.25 million — a 75percent cut — and now a budget conference committee from both houses has killed it altogether.

The valley's entire Assembly delegation, Republicans and Democrats, has written a letter to the committee's leaders asking that the funds be restored. It's a fine act of bipartisanship by our Assembly representatives, and we hope it succeeds, though initial reaction from the committee leaders was not encouraging.

In the meantime, we remain the poorest part of California, sharing only the crumbs from the state's enormous bounty.

The valley is the fastest-growing region of the state — that exacerbates existing problems, of course — but it will be some time before we begin to have the sort of muscle in Sacramento that the larger regions enjoy.

That leaves us to rely on a sense of fair play and equal treatment that is in very short supply in today's Legislature.

And it leaves us pretty much on our own — again — in addressing the chronic and serious problems the valley faces.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Saturday, June 3, 2006:](#)
Get on board

As of May 26, 238 mayors of cities with populations of more than 30,000 representing 45.4 million Americans have joined the "U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement." The cities who have voluntarily joined this agreement have pledged to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 7% below 1990 levels by the year 2010.

It's very disappointing to note that -- according to the story in The Bee -- there isn't a word about this subject in Mayor Alan Autry's recent "State of the City" speech, nor is the City Council interested.

Although Fresno has taken some baby steps in cleaning its air and reducing its emissions of greenhouse gases, it could and should do ever so much more. It's a win-win situation. By joining 44 other California cities like Sacramento, Stockton, Santa Cruz and San Luis Obispo (which won't cost the city a dime), Fresnoans can do their part in America's grass-roots effort to reverse global warming, help reduce the

Valley's serious air pollution problems and provide many new jobs in the process.

Franz Weinschenk, Fresno

[Lodi News Sentinel, Letter to the Editor, Saturday, June 3, 2006](#)
Supports Richard Dean

History tends to repeat itself, as such, let's hope Richard Dean is elected to the County Board of Supervisors.

What does history have to do with voting for and electing Mr. Dean? We know what we are going to get and that we can count on it, regardless of the special interest groups and political gorillas in our communities.

Richard Dean's commitment to San Joaquin County speaks for itself. Those of us who have been privileged to know Mr. Dean personally while he has taken steps forward in his willingness to serve the public, have watched him manage the challenge of leadership with integrity, honesty and class. I recognize the three attributes listed above are not always synonymous with our elected officials, and for this very reason, we ought to support him fully.

With the numerous issues facing San Joaquin County, we desperately need men like Richard Dean to negotiate the troubled waters of crime, education, air quality, employment, traffic, etc. etc. Mr. Dean is a dedicated and hard working public servant who invests the time and energy necessary to drill down through these confusing and convoluted issues.

This we can count on! Check his record, speak to those who know him well; Richard Dean is a man of honor who can be trusted! He keeps his word and makes decisions based on what is best for our communities. I know his history will repeat itself; this is why I will be voting for Richard Dean.

George Liepart, Lodi

[Letter to the L.A. Times, Monday, June 5, 2006:](#)

Regulating fumigants 'is way overdue'

Re "State to Target Pesticide Pollution," May 30

The Department of Pesticide Regulation is way overdue in finally agreeing to put regulations on fumigants injected into the soil that easily seep into the air and contain high concentrations of smog-forming compounds. Reducing air pollution from pesticides at least 20% by 2008 is the least the department should do, making California an example for the rest of the nation. Considering these fumigants are highly toxic and have neurological and reproductive effects, this is a step in the right direction. I like strawberries, but not that much.

Florence Woolery, Westlake Village

[Letter to the Stockton Record, Saturday, June 3, 2006:](#)

11th Congressional District

Let's check out Pombo's record and see if we want to rehire him.

My major concern is air quality. Pombo has done nothing in his 13 years in Congress to help alleviate the suffering of people with lung conditions.

Pombo has done nothing to improve the air quality of our district.

He's been in lock step with this administration when it came to giving tax incentives to gas-guzzling Hummers and SUVs, plus not demanding an increase in fuel-economy standards.

Would you keep on your payroll someone who doesn't work for your best interests?

Marcia Savage, Lodi