

## **Air-quality citations hit cemetery**

By Jason Kandel and Alex Dobuzinskis, Staff Writers

LA Daily News

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GLENDALE - Grand View Memorial Park, accused of improperly disposing of thousands of cremated remains, has repeatedly been cited for discharging foul odors and smoke, documents show.

Inspectors with the South Coast Air Quality Management District, which enforces air-quality laws in Southern California, paid dozens of visits to the cemetery between 1998 and 2003, after nearly 60 complaints from residents about foul odors, records show.

As a result, the AQMD imposed strict conditions on operations and required \$37,000 in equipment upgrades.

"They were causing a lot of problems. There were a lot of complaints," said Mohsen Nazemi, the assistant deputy executive officer of engineering and compliance for the AQMD. "We did make a lot of visits."

The citations, obtained through a California Public Records Act request, are unrelated to complaints by the state Consumer Affairs Department, which found the cremated remains of some 4,000 people in storage rooms, a trash bin, on the floor and mixed with other remains.

Officials also allege shoddy record-keeping, and said they believe cemetery President Marsha Lee Howard, secretary Moshe Goldsman and two trustees resold grave sites and "loaned" themselves \$40,000 from the cemetery's endowment care fund, which was set up for grounds maintenance, records show.

As a result, officials halted new business in November and are taking the operators to court Jan. 19 for a permanent resolution to the case.

In the meantime, the operators have been ordered not to sell new graves, and Howard, who lives on the property, was removed from day-to-day operations.

Howard; her Woodland Hills attorney, Myles Mattenson; and Goldsman did not return calls Wednesday.

Kevin Flanagan, a spokesman with the Consumer Affairs Department, said he was not surprised by the AQMD citations.

"If they're not following cemetery and funeral rules properly, why would they follow air-quality rules?" he said.

In April 2000, inspectors responded to residents' complaints of black smoke and were greeted by Howard, who said, "I was wondering when I was going to hear from you," according to the documents.

An afterburner for one of the five crematory ovens broke down during a cremation cycle, she told investigators, and the fire department had responded.

"So far, Ms. Howard has received three (notices of violation) and one order of abatement and the complaints keep rolling in," inspector Don Hopps wrote in his notes.

In response to the Consumer Affairs allegations, residents who have loved ones buried in Grand View have filed a lawsuit alleging that remains were removed from graves, grave-site markers were discarded and graves meant for one person were re-used for other burials.

Milton Friedman, a senior legal administrator overseeing the case, said his office has been sending out questionnaires to potential victims in advance of a Feb. 17 court hearing, when attorneys will ask the judge for permission to inspect the property and videotape grave sites.

"We've had quite a few people call us," Friedman said. "Most of the calls have complained about the lack of maintenance, the look of the cemetery. It gets emotional sometimes because there's some family members who've received cremated remains from the cemetery, but now question whether those are the actual remains."

## **Ag News**

Valley Voice Newspaper, Thursday, January 5, 2006

**New machines that chip and shred orchard brush** could help farmers comply with air-quality rules. Equipment manufacturers have developed an array of new wood-chipping machines. Some spread the wood chips on the orchard floor, whereas others allow the chips to be removed. Air-quality rules will prohibit the burning of branches pruned from fruit and nut trees. The ban already applies to some crops.

## **Dump could block views of mountains**

By Kerry Cavanaugh, Staff Writer

LA Daily News

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The proposed Bradley Landfill expansion would raise the dump's height by 43 feet and block some residents' views of the San Gabriel Mountains, plus generating more toxic diesel air pollution in Sun Valley, according to an environmental impact report released Wednesday.

The 5-inch-thick report details potential remedies to lessen the impact of truck traffic, pollution and noise if Waste Management is allowed to expand Bradley and build a trash sorting and transfer facility on site.

The release of the report also begins extensive community education campaigns by landfill operators and opponents, who hope to sway public opinion on the controversial project, which could be the last landfill expansion in Los Angeles.

"For a long time, there's been an interest in having a very public conversation about what's happening at the landfill and in the neighborhood, and this is starting that conversation - what kind of neighborhood we will have for the next generation," said Joaquin Sanchez, an organizer with One-LA, which includes churches, schools and community groups opposed to the landfill expansion.

Waste Management Inc., which owns Bradley, has spent nearly three years developing the environmental report. The landfill is a brown hill in Sun Valley, but it's nearly full. The company wants to raise the height of the dump by 43 feet, or the equivalent of a four-story building, adding 4.7 million cubic yards of space.

That would allow the landfill to accept 7,000 tons of trash per day before the dump closes April 14, 2007. The project would also roughly double the current intake at the green waste and wood waste processing facility to 2,500 tons per day. In 2007, Waste Management would build a facility to receive, sort and reload for transport up to 5,000 tons per day of trash and recyclables.

Waste Management District Manager Doug Corcoran hopes residents will consider the money, jobs and community funds generated by the project, in addition to the environmental impacts. The company has pledged \$2 for every ton of trash dumped in the expanded landfill, which could generate more than \$4 million for the Sun Valley community.

"Take a look about what the impacts really are and then weigh that against what we bring as benefits," Corcoran said. "Hopefully they'll look at it with an open mind. The impacts are not as significant as people would make them out to be."

The environmental impact report will be available at the Valley Plaza, the Sun Valley, Panorama City, North Hollywood and Van Nuys branch libraries. It's also available online at [www.lacity.org/pln](http://www.lacity.org/pln) by clicking on "environmental" and then "draft environmental impact reports."

The community has 90 days to review the report and submit comments on the project. There will be community meetings in Sun Valley during the comment period.

## **Ore. adopts tough emission standards**

by Mitch Lies

Capital Press Weekly, Sat., Dec. 30, 2005

The Oregon Environmental Quality Commission on Dec. 22 adopted temporary rules strengthening the state's vehicle emission standards - in the process, triggering the adoption of similar tough standards in Washington state.

The Washington Legislature in May approved the stricter standards, but made their adoption contingent upon Oregon accepting them. The standards are designed to curb global warming and improve air quality by reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

Commonly called the California emissions standards, the standards are tougher than federal standards. Ten states have adopted them.

The temporary rules won't be permanent in Oregon for six months at the earliest. The commission is expected to revisit the standards at its June 22-23 meeting, at which time it will review public testimony gathered by Department of Environmental Quality staff during a series of yet-to-be scheduled public hearings.

A lawsuit filed by Sen. Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day, and more than a dozen car dealers could block the standards altogether. The suit challenges Gov. Ted Kulongoski's right to strike a provision from a law passed by the Legislature that specifically prohibited the state from spending money on advancing the stricter standards.

The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, which is among plaintiffs challenging Kulongoski's line-item veto, estimates the standards will raise the price of a new car by \$3,000. California officials estimate the standards will raise the price by \$1,000. The alliance further claims that the standards do little to reduce emissions.

The standards will apply to 2009 model and newer vehicles, according to Andrew Ginsburg, air quality administrator for DEQ. Farm equipment is exempt from the standards, Ginsburg said. On-road vehicles older than 2009 models will not be subject to the standards. Also exempt are vehicles over 14,000 pounds gross vehicle weight.

Ferrioli claims in his suit that Kulongoski did not have the authority to strike the provision in the budget bill passed by lawmakers at the close of the 2005 session that barred the state's Department of Environmental Quality from investing resources in adopting the California emissions standards. Kulongoski vetoed the provision from the bill when he signed the bill into law.

"We need standards based on science not political whims," Ferrioli said in a prepared statement he released when he filed the suit in September. "Air quality in our state is improving through incentives, not the type of punitive measures our governor is trying to enact."

Marion County Circuit Judge Mary Mertens James is not expected to rule on the suit until mid-January at the earliest.

[Modesto Bee, Editorial, Thursday, Jan. 5, 2006](#)

## **Proposed new air rules won't clear pollution**

The federal Environmental Protection Agency had a chance to take a bold step toward cleaner air when it proposed new rules for the regulation of particulate pollution. The agency did as little as possible.

The EPA moved to revise the rules only after being sued by environmental and public health organizations. The rules had not changed in eight years, despite ever-mounting evidence of the deadly nature of the fine particles in our air.

A panel of scientists formed to advise EPA officials, as well as the agency's own staff, recommended much tighter controls. Instead, the EPA will keep the current permissible limit for annual average concentrations at 15 micrograms per cubic meter of air. The limit on daily concentrations would be tightened from 65 micrograms to 35 micrograms.

The San Joaquin Valley is home to some of the highest levels of particulate pollution in the country. A state study said such pollution kills more than 1,100 people prematurely in the valley each year. The death toll could be as high as 60,000 across the nation.

The particles in question are called PM2.5 (2.5 micrometers in diameter, less than one-thirtieth the width of a human hair) and the larger PM10. They are produced by diesel engines and wood-burning stoves and fireplaces, and include dust and soot from other sources.

Particulates are the principal pollution problem in the winter months here in the valley, exacerbated by weather patterns that lock the dirty air in close to the ground. Stagnant air keeps the pollution hanging around to do its damage.

The tiny particles burrow deep into human lungs and have been linked to asthma attacks, bronchial infections and other respiratory ailments. They also are blamed for lung cancer and heart disease in some people.

Some studies suggest that long-term exposure has a cumulative effect. Children and the elderly are particularly susceptible.

Given all this evidence, why would the EPA balk at tighter controls? Because industry lobbied heavily against that, and the Bush administration listened, as usual.

The tighter standards environmentalists and scientists pushed for, according to EPA's own analysis, would have reduced air pollution-related deaths in nine U.S. cities by 48 percent. By contrast, the weaker proposal would cut those deaths by 22 percent.

There may still be a chance to get more useful regulations. The EPA can revise the proposed new rules after obtaining public comments and holding hearings. Final regulations won't be issued until September. But it's an uphill battle.

[Stockton Record, Editorial, Thursday, Jan. 5, 2006](#)

## **A wider road to the future**

San Joaquin County is trapped by dramatic population growth and a transportation system that wasn't designed for it.

Highways 4 and 12, each with two lanes, were built for Delta farm use and occasional trips to Contra Costa or Solano counties.

Interstate 205, built in the early 1970s, was created as a 13-mile link between the Bay Area and Interstate 5 - not as the primary artery for thousands of daily commuters.

Highway 99 is an aging link to the 1950s that, along with Interstate 5, now is required to carry an ever-growing number of commuters north and south to work.

So here we sit, gridlocked by poor planning, a failure of aging infrastructure and shortsighted decisions a generation ago.

The long grind to and from work is damaging the environment. [Air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley is among the worst in the nation and consistently fails to meet federal standards.](#)

The traffic jams worsen every day. Since 2000, the county's population has grown from 563,600 to 660,000 - an average increase of 53 new residents each day. Ninety percent of them drive somewhere else to work.

Some solutions must be developed this year on several fronts.

### **Highways 4 and 12**

The county's representatives in Sacramento must get together and deliver more state funding to improve and widen these corridors.

Highway 12 is the less-expensive fix. This dangerous road needs to be four lanes, and lawmakers must work with counterparts in other impacted districts to improve it all the way to Interstate 80. Highway 116 needs to be developed as a back door to Antioch, Pittsburg and the West Pittsburg BART station.

### **Highway 99**

The transportation bill approved by Congress moves Highway 99 a step closer to being included in the federal highway system.

Thanks to Reps. Richard Pombo, R-Tracy, and Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced, \$100 million has been designated for Valley projects.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley approved a \$6 billion plan to widen and improve safety along the highway that links Central Valley cities and funnels agricultural products to market.

State funding won't go far, but it's a vital start.

### **Interstate 205**

Because of the sheer volume of traffic during peak commuting hours, this stretch of freeway must be the highest priority.

The San Joaquin Council of Governments took a risk last year by offering a \$67 million loan to the California Transportation Commission to jump-start a widening project between I-5 and the 11th Street offramp in Tracy. State officials accepted the money but have balked at starting the project because the cost could escalate.

The county's municipal leaders and legislative representatives need to support this project fully. Lawmakers and bureaucrats in Sacramento need to make it a priority.

There have been dozens of studies of the toll long-term, long-distance commuting takes on family

and community life.

We appreciate that BART officials want Valley input on expansion. We appreciate the Altamont Commuter Express' value. The possibility of a high-speed north-south California rail system is reassuring.

However, the reality is San Joaquin County's potential is severely hampered by having only a single viable traffic corridor to the Bay Area. That has to change. The momentum toward widening I-205 must be maintained.

There also needs to be new east-west thinking. A widened and safer Highway 12 is the logical, necessary second outlet for commuters.

If we don't find ways to move people more quickly to and from work, frustration levels will keep rising, the environment will get dirtier, and the county's economic growth and community potential will continue to be stunted.

[Los Angeles Times, Guest Commentary January 3, 2006](#)

### **Beware of 'borrow and build'**

By Rick Cole

RICK COLE is the city manager of Ventura

GOV. ARNOLD Schwarzenegger, armed with a prediction that the population of California will surpass 50 million by 2020, will try out a new message in his State of the State speech this week: infrastructure. But beware, that translates into "reach for your wallets."

"We will need more schools, more energy, more water and more roads, highways, railroads and ports to move our goods around the state and around the world," he announced in a recent preview speech. "Whether it's more money in the state budget or a bond supported by the people, we are going to make it happen."

In an attempt to recover from his recent special election debacle, Schwarzenegger is jettisoning Ronald Reagan's "live within your means" motto and invoking instead Pat Brown's record of "borrowing and building" to accommodate a growing populace.

The magnitude of what he has in mind is stunning. While the Democratic leader of the state Senate is pushing a carefully calibrated \$10.3-billion package to meet the state's infrastructure needs, our Republican governor is talking boldly about a \$26-billion - or "much, much larger" - bond.

But Schwarzenegger's latest bright idea, like his special election initiatives, is deeply flawed. He hasn't taken the time to build a consensus around coherent policies.

Take Schwarzenegger's simplistic call for more roads and highways. Sunne Wright McPeak, his secretary of business, transportation and housing, has warned that throwing billions at expanding the freeway system encourages sprawl and congestion rather than fixing the problem: "As our state continues to grow, **we must address the increasing air pollution**, traffic congestion and 'dumb-growth pattern' that is hurting our economy and environment." We will be paying off the bonds for 30 years, long after the improvements are overwhelmed by the dumb growth they promote.

The "infrastructure crisis" in California is real. Our transportation system, levees, parks and energy supplies are stretched to the breaking point. But bigger isn't necessarily better - even if we could afford to pay the staggering costs.

It's vital to focus on a crisis response that gets the most sustainable, logical and long-term return on investment for California, the world's sixth-largest economy.

Should we double-deck freeways at a colossal cost, or is there a way to use the ones we have more efficiently? Do we need "more water" from dams and canals, or can we conserve more effectively? Should we subsidize suburban sprawl by building more highways, or invest in making our older inner cities more competitive?

The governor dismisses such questions when he tells reporters: "Hey, here are the problems that we have, and let's build."

Sure, his pollsters are telling him that people are fed up with traffic and spooked by the flooding unleashed by Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans' vast infrastructure failures. But haven't we had enough of "sound-bite solutions" and half-baked ballot measures?

The threat of mega-bond mania is that the governor and Legislature will skip the hard work of long-term planning, of weighing detailed proposals and analyzing all the costs and benefits, of compromising and building a consensus for the state's future. Instead, they are poised to simply cut a deal on a list of pet projects that appeal directly to special interests. Those interests will be eager to fund a campaign to convince voters that pork means progress. If they win, we lose. Brown had a guiding vision of California, and he put in place coherent master plans for higher education, transportation and a statewide water system long before he got to the "borrow and build" part. But his enduring legacy is not the list of projects he completed. It's the courage of the leadership he exerted. As he said then: "We are here today to bear a lantern for the future, not carry a torch for the past."

If Schwarzenegger needs inspiration for his State of the State address, he should look beyond "borrow and build" and ask what a visionary like Brown would do if he were alive today. That would surely lead him to seek the strategic solution, not the quick fix.