

## **EPA sued over new valley air regulation**

### **Group says rule won't do enough to cut dust**

Modesto Bee, Saturday, April 15, Bakersfield Californian, San Francisco Chronicle and Fresno Bee, Friday, April 14, 2006

SAN FRANCISCO — An environmental group has sued the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency claiming a new regulation governing air pollution in the Central Valley is too lax.

Earthjustice is challenging the rule over particulate matter with a lawsuit filed Thursday in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

In particulate matter pollution, tiny specks of dust and dirt can linger in the air and become lodged in people's lungs, causing numerous health problems, such as asthma. Agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley, one of the nation's most polluted air basins, is one of the leading causes of particulate matter in the region.

The agriculture regulation, which took effect this year, required farmers to dampen service roads, plant grass between trees and buy updated equipment to reduce dust.

That rule doesn't go far enough to significantly cut pollution, said Paul Cort of Earthjustice.

"As approved, most growers and ranchers could do nothing and still comply with the rule, not improving air quality at all," he said.

The EPA's lawyers have not had a chance to look at the lawsuit and therefore can't comment on it, spokeswoman Wendy Chavez said.

## **More dairy air pollution regulations raise few eyebrows**

By Seth Nidever, Hanford Sentinel, April 15, 2006

Dairy air regulations nearing final adoption are up for one last round of public input.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District posted a final draft for Rule 4570 on its Web site Thursday.

The rule specifies the kind of pollution coming from dairies and requires dairymen to take steps to reduce emissions. The district estimates that dairies are the No. 1 source of volatile organic compounds in the Valley.

These compounds are one ingredient in the smog formation that has helped make the Valley air basin one of the dirtiest in the nation.

About 230 dairies will be affected by the rule, a district press release said. Those include facilities with more than 1,290 cows.

That's 20 percent of Kings County dairies, according to Kings County Planning Agency numbers from 2005.

The rule lists dozens of things dairymen can do to reduce pollution. Some of the practices; such as covering silage piles with plastic tarps and frequent scraping of manure areas - are done now.

Thursday's posting did not generate the kind of disagreement from dairy industry figures that district announcements have in the past.

Controversy has persisted since dairies lost their regulation exemption in 2004. Dairy men fumed at an early district estimate of how much pollution cows were producing and sued. The district, as part of the settlement, agreed to do more research. The new number, released in August, turned out to be higher than the old one.

Some dairy advocates threatened to sue again.

Tension diminished when both sides agreed to fund more research into the sources of pollution on dairies.

The final numbers are expected next month. Early indications show that more pollution may be coming from feed than previously recognized.

Research also suggests the enteric process; what happens when cows chew their food; is a large source of emissions.

Earlier estimates were that manure lagoons were the main source of volatile organic compounds.

J.P. Cativiela, program director at Dairy Community Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship, said the draft rule recognized that "there's no silver bullet to reducing dairy emissions.";

"We think this strategy will go a long way toward reducing emissions from dairies," he said.

The rule will remove 18 tons of volatile organic compounds and 113 to 127 tons of ammonia emissions daily, the district said.

Cativiela expects new research to lead to more pollution reduction options for dairy farmers.

"We think this is a really good first step," he said.

## **Activists sue over dust rule**

### **Environmentalists say the EPA approved a weak, redundant measure to control farm pollution.**

By Mark Grossi / The Fresno Bee  
Saturday, April 15, 2006

Activists sued the federal government this week over a San Joaquin Valley dust control rule, saying powerful farm lobbies swayed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to approve a weak measure.

Earthjustice filed the suit on Wednesday against EPA in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco. EPA officials, who approved the farm dust rule in February, declined to comment on the case.

The Sierra Club, one of the environmentalist plaintiffs, criticized the rule, saying it allows farmers to claim pollution reductions for practices they already use.

"It's Enron accounting at its most dangerous," said Sierra Club member Kevin Hall of Fresno. "They're more concerned with making the numbers look good than with people's lives."

The so-called agricultural conservation management practices rule is considered a landmark control for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Officials worked for many months to design the rule, which contains the most extensive list of options for farm dust control in the country. The practices include fewer tilling passes over farm fields, watering unpaved roads and planting vegetation between rows of trees.

Farm officials praised the rule as innovative because it offers many practical approaches to reduce dust in the nation's most productive farm belt.

Farming is the biggest source of dust in the Valley, according to state Air Resources Board figures.

Particle pollution is blamed in the deaths of more than 1,100 Valley residents each year, according to a state study. Such pollution can lodge in the lungs and trigger asthma attacks.

But air district officials say dust and soot pollution appear to be under control. The Valley has recorded three consecutive years without a violation of the particle standard for dust and soot.

In the coming weeks, officials are expected to ask EPA for status as a clean-air basin for such pollution.

Environmentalists argue that some particulate monitors in rural areas have registered pollution well above violation levels. But air district officials said those monitors are not used for official readings.

Earthjustice attorney Paul Cort said his organization will pursue the lawsuit, no matter how the Valley stands in regard to the particle pollution standard.

"It's a paper game that they're playing with emissions," he said. "We need real emission reduction."

### **Rule change on toxins debated**

BY SARAH RUBY, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Monday, April 17, 2006

If a new federal proposal had been in effect in 2003, 37,132 pounds of toxics released in Kern would not have been documented in detail, according to a report released today by the Environmental Working Group.

The Washington, D.C.-based organization spent six months analyzing data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, applying proposed toxics reporting changes to what was emitted in 2003. If the new rules had been in effect that year, 11 Kern facilities would not have had to give detailed information about toxic chemicals they used, released into the environment or sent to the landfill.

"Without having to report their chemical use to the public, industry doesn't have any incentive to reduce chemical use," said Bill Walker, spokesman for the Environmental Working Group.

Today, facilities that use 500 pounds or more per year of any toxic substance must say where that chemical ended up -- in the air, water or landfill. Chemicals such as lead, mercury and dioxin are so toxic companies must report them no matter how much they use, but the EPA could raise the reporting threshold for other chemicals to 5,000 pounds per year.

"We believe 99 percent of the releases would still be reported if the proposal is finalized," said Jessica Emond, spokeswoman for the EPA. "The (new rules) don't affect the ... amounts facilities are allowed to release."

Companies would be allowed to fill out simpler paperwork for releases that don't meet the 5,000-pound threshold. They would have to say they used a toxic chemical, but not exactly how much or where it ended up.

The new rules could also change facilities' annual reporting requirements to once every two years. The EPA is responding to comments on the proposed rule changes, which could go into effect by December.

Calls to Flying J Inc. and Kern Oil and Refining, two of the local companies who may be affected by this rule change, were not returned.

The annual toxics database, known as the Toxics Release Inventory, was created more than 20 years ago in response to a chemical leak in Bhopal, India. It lets communities look up toxics released by individual facilities, and can be searched at [www.epa.gov/triexplorer](http://www.epa.gov/triexplorer).

Last week, EPA announced that the amount of toxic chemicals released between 2003 and 2004 decreased by 4 percent. The amount of toxic chemicals sent into the air, water or landfills has dropped by 45 percent since 1998, according to EPA. Environmentalists attribute the drop to the Toxics Release Inventory.

"In the midst of that success they want to scale back the program," Walker said.

In all, Kern facilities released more than 3.5 million pounds of toxics in 2003. Environmental Working Group analyzed companies on the cusp of the EPA's rule change, and found more than 37,000 pounds of toxics in Kern wouldn't have been reported in detail. Of those, 27,308 pounds were emitted as pollution "out of a smokestack or out of a discharge pipe," Walker said.

Statewide, Environmental Working Group found the new rules would have kept 1.5 million pounds of toxics from being reported to the public in detail in 2003.

The release of Environmental Working Group's study coincides with hearings today on SB 1478, which would require facilities to continue reporting to the state releases of 500 pounds per year or more. A similar assembly bill, AB 2490, will have a hearing Tuesday in Sacramento.

To check out Environmental Working Group's report, visit [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org).

## **EPA seeks to reduce reporting on toxics**

### **State bills would keep requirements**

By Mike Lee, Union-Tribune Staff Writer

San Diego Union-Tribune, Monday, April 17, 2006

As the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency touts data showing that pollution is dropping nationwide, it's also proposing to sharply reduce the amount of information about some toxic chemicals that companies would have to make public.

Nineteen facilities in San Diego County and 365 others statewide would qualify for the reductions based on their chemical use, according to a report released today by the Environmental Working Group in Oakland.

Also, this afternoon a state Senate committee plans to take up legislation that would maintain the current reporting requirements even if the EPA rollbacks are enacted. A similar bill is scheduled for an Assembly hearing tomorrow.

At issue is the Toxics Release Inventory, a collection of annual reports from about 23,600 facilities nationwide that handle chemicals tracked by the EPA. The program, designed to provide public information about industrial pollutants, was established in 1986 and expanded in 1990.

The pollution database is used by community groups to check on industrial sites such as paper plants, chemical facilities and oil companies. Though the inventory imposes no mandatory pollution controls, it has been used in California to pressure polluters to clean up near populated areas.

Companies commonly view the reporting as an expensive and time-consuming exercise that doesn't benefit the environment.

"It's just paperwork," said Patti Krebs, executive director at the Industrial Environmental Association, a coalition of companies in San Diego.

The EPA announced last fall that it aimed to trim the requirement on industry by raising the threshold for detailed reporting from 500 pounds to 5,000 pounds per chemical handled by a facility each year. The agency said the change would affect only about 1 percent of toxic releases nationwide.

However, it also told Congress that it is considering a sweeping shift from an annual reporting system to an every-other-year requirement.

Public access to the pollution data is widely perceived as one reason that companies continue to reduce their toxic emissions. Critics said the EPA's possible changes would encourage companies to shift their polluting activities to non-reporting years.

Last week, the agency issued a series of news releases based on the Toxics Release Inventory in which it celebrated a decrease in the combined amount of air, water and land pollution from 2003 to 2004.

In California, 1,493 facilities reported a total of 49 million pounds of toxic chemical releases in 2004, down from more than 59 million pounds the year before. That 18 percent decline compares with a 4 percent reduction reported nationwide.

The inventory "helps all of us - regulators, emergency responders, businesses and communities - remain aware of the types and amounts of chemicals being used in neighborhoods throughout the country," said Wayne Nastri, the EPA's administrator for the Pacific Southwest region.

Statements like that confuse advocates of the current data-reporting system.

"(EPA officials) apparently don't grasp the irony of bragging about the success of their reporting program at the same time they are trying to cut it," said Bill Walker, vice president of the Environmental Working Group, which investigates pollution issues.

Today, the group will release an analysis of how the proposed EPA changes would reduce companies' reporting about chemicals in California. If allowed to use a short form instead of the long one, for instance, companies could avoid making public how much of a certain chemical they use and what happens to it.

Based on 2003 numbers, the Environmental Working Group calculated that facilities statewide would handle nearly 1.5 million pounds of hazardous chemicals a year without the current level of disclosure.

San Diego County ranked sixth in the state with 67,959 pounds of chemicals that would gain exemptions under the EPA proposal, according to the environmental group. Local companies that likely would be eligible for reduced reporting include Callaway Golf of Carlsbad, Frazee Paint of San Diego and Fiber-Tech Engineering Inc. of Escondido, the report said.

Two California bills aim to maintain the present reporting requirements. One is authored by Assemblyman Ira Ruskin, D-Redwood City, the other by state Sen. Jackie Speier, D-San Francisco/San Mateo.

"The reason it's important is that this is really the only way for communities to find out what pollutants and how much of a particular toxic chemical is being released in their neighborhoods," said Speier spokeswoman Tracy Fairchild.

Speier's bill, the California Community Right to Know Act of 2006, is expected to be heard today by the Senate's Environmental Quality Committee.

The California Chamber of Commerce and the American Chemistry Council - an advocacy group for the chemical industry - are among the bill's early opponents, in part because the EPA hasn't formalized any changes.

"The state does not need to set up a duplicative reporting regime," said Chamber spokesman Vince Sollitto.

## **Toxics Release Inventory**

The inventory is a large database maintained by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It tracks about 650 toxic chemicals used nationwide. To review the database, visit [www.epa.gov/tri/](http://www.epa.gov/tri/). To find information about specific facilities or locations, click on "TRI Explorer" and follow the prompts.

## **Backers Hope Oil Plan Floats**

**An impact report is due this month on a firm's proposed supertanker dock at Terminal Island.**

By Ronald D. White and Elizabeth Douglass  
Los Angeles Times, April 17, 2006

With Californians slurping more and more fuel, a milestone looms for a controversial drive to build an oil supertanker dock in Los Angeles harbor.

A Long Beach energy company is poised to release an environmental assessment of what would be the West Coast's first terminal for fully loaded oil supertankers, capable of handling a vessel large enough to serve as a shipping crate for the West's tallest skyscraper.

To supporters, the Pacific Energy Partners plan would fill a crucial need in a state that is expected to add 7 million sport utility vehicles and light trucks and 2 million cars by 2025. During the same period, the flow of oil from Alaskan and Californian fields will shrink.

But to detractors, the project is an environmental and safety nightmare. The tankers, they say, will add to the pollution produced by the nation's largest port, which is already the region's largest single source of diesel exhaust emissions.

Three years ago, Pacific Energy began its effort to create a spot at Pier 400 on Terminal Island, at the mouth of the Port of Los Angeles, where supertankers could disgorge their loads. At 1,100 feet long and 200 feet wide, one of these so-called Very Large Crude Carriers can carry more than 2 million barrels of oil.

The big tankers, when fully loaded, can't navigate any West Coast port. So the oil must come on smaller carriers, or the big vessels must anchor miles offshore and transfer their oil by using much smaller ships.

At Pier 400, most of which is devoted to cargo containers, the harbor is deep enough for the supertankers because the huge man-made island originally was envisioned as a home for oil operations. Pacific Energy would build storage tanks for 4 million barrels of oil nearby.

"The infrastructure today is nearly maxed out in terms of its capability to move oil," said David Wright, an executive vice president at Pacific Energy, which owns crude oil and fuel pipelines, storage tanks and petroleum distribution terminals in California, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, several Rocky Mountain states and Canada. Formerly controlled by Denver billionaire Philip Anschutz, the publicly traded partnership is 26% owned by Lehman Bros. and First Reserve Corp., a private equity firm.

The project "truly links L.A. and the L.A. basin with the entire world's crude supply," Wright said. "It can come here as economically as possible using these larger ships."

Pacific Energy executives said the company expected to spend as much as \$300 million on the Pier 400 project, with an additional \$50 million in costs falling to the port.

Several trends are propelling the need for oil-importing facilities. The state's growing demand for oil and its byproducts, the steady decline in California oil production and the need to import more crude oil over greater distances and in larger tankers.

For decades, California was a crude oil exporter but now relies on oil imported from Alaska and foreign countries for 63% of its supply. That percentage will grow steadily as production from the state's largest oil fields in the San Joaquin Valley and the Long Beach area declines by an average of 2% a year.

The gap will grow wider still as California's overall demand increases along with its appetite for gasoline, diesel and other fuels made from crude oil. Soaring demand in Arizona and Nevada, which rely on California for much of their fuel, exacerbates the import problem.

To handle future needs, California will need to boost oil imports 21% by 2015, and by more than 37% by 2025, with the largest increases in the Southern part of the state, according to a study by the state Energy Commission. Because no pipelines bring oil from out of state, petroleum must arrive by water. The commission said that the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach - a vital conduit for half a dozen refineries - are not equipped for the onslaught.

"Most of the required expansion is needed in the Los Angeles Basin, which faces a number of barriers, including scarcity of land, pressure to remove a portion of existing facilities in favor of container cargo facilities, and new standards for marine terminals," the commission said in the 2005 report.

The project has strong support from the port and regional planners.

"The region has a demonstrated need," said David Mathewson, director of planning and environmental affairs for the Port of Los Angeles. "We have the infrastructure here to accommodate that kind of use and we are ready to go."

"The most important thing it offers to businesses and residents in California is more about what it prevents," said Gregory Freeman, vice president of public policy consulting for the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp., a nonprofit business advocacy organization. "It prevents a bottleneck in the supply of crude oil into California."

Environmentalists and neighborhood residents see it differently.

Oil tankers at dock emit more pollution than container ships because the tankers must run engines to force crude into pipelines and storage tanks on shore. Many container ships can shut down their engines and plug into the local electricity grid to run lights and equipment, a technology that only a few tankers worldwide are capable of using.

"It's just going to exacerbate the pollution already felt by those communities," said Shana Lazarow, an attorney for Communities for a Better Environment. "It's going to have a tremendous localized impact."

Wright said Pacific Energy was working to address pollution concerns and had held several community meetings.

Pacific Energy has purchased more than \$13.5 million in "pollution credits" from companies that have shut down other polluting operations, Wright said. And as a pollution control measure, the supertankers would be required to slow down to 12 knots when they are about 40 nautical miles out at sea, twice as far out as other ships.

Some neighbors aren't impressed with the pollution credits, which are sold under a program administered by regional air quality regulators. The credits address overall pollution levels in Southern California, not the air quality in the port's backyard, they said.

"That whole pollution credits approach is disingenuous," longtime San Pedro resident Noel Park said. "The new emissions they have bought credits for will be spewed out right here."

Los Angeles port official Mathewson said Pacific Energy had "some significant challenges ahead of them, but they have expressed a willingness to address all environmental issues."

Park and other nearby residents also worry about the potential for oil spills and explosions because of the project, which would increase the amount of oil coming into the ports. Exxon Mobil Corp., ConocoPhillips and several other companies already operate tanker docks and oil storage terminals there. BP's terminal can accommodate a supertanker once the vessel has lightened its load enough that the ship doesn't scrape the bottom of the channel.

Park complained that oil and petroleum product storage tanks were too close to residential areas and not moved to Pier 400 as originally planned.

"Every day I'm thinking we have to move away," Park said.

To calm such fears, Pacific Energy has produced a thick document that it is handing out to community members, detailing safety measures and pollution prevention.

Pacific Energy, which initially expects to unload as many as 250,000 barrels a day of crude oil at Pier 400, has lined up customers for more than half of that capacity. Valero Energy signed up for 50,000 barrels a day for 30 years, and ConocoPhillips committed to 90,000 barrels a day for 20 years, Wright said.

"It's an important part of our crude strategy because we're having to go out all over the world to get crude," said Scott Folwarkow, director of government affairs at Valero.

The release of the draft environmental impact report, expected by the end of the month, will be followed by a final report, incorporating responses to public comments and an environmental mitigation and monitoring study by the port. To proceed, the project must win approval from the port's five-member Board of Harbor Commissioners and the Los Angeles City Council.

Pacific Energy executives said they hoped to complete the approval process by the end of the year and begin operations by the end of 2007.

## **A Future Without Oil?**

**Proponents of alternative fuels are seeing a rare convergence of technology, money, political will and motivated motorists.**

By Elizabeth Douglass

Los Angeles Times, April 16, 2006

Jon Spallino drives a \$1-million car to work.

Banish any thought of a flashy red Ferrari. Since June, the Redondo Beach resident has been tooling around in a rather pedestrian-looking, two-door Honda FCX.

What matters is on the inside: hope for a future without oil. The Honda runs on electricity from a hydrogen-powered fuel cell tucked under the seats.

"I was sure I would be giving up something in terms of utility or comfort or performance," Spallino said. "As it turns out, I haven't given up anything."

Spallino is part of an accelerating push toward alternative forms of energy. Researchers and investors - and President Bush - are talking hopefully about powering cars and trucks with hydrogen and fuels made from corn, prairie grass, even French fry grease. Despite scientific advances, increased investment and unprecedented political backing, plenty of potholes remain.

The most daunting of those is the magnitude of the task. Cars, trucks, trains, planes and other vehicles account for 7 of every 10 barrels of oil consumed in the U.S.

With such a deep reliance on oil, the transportation world has been nearly impervious to change. Electric-hybrid vehicles are barely a blip, alternative fuels have made only tiny inroads, and a push for more fuel-efficient cars has stalled under the Bush administration.

"In the transportation sector, we've essentially made no progress in the last 25 years," said Daniel Sperling, director of the Institute of Transportation Studies at UC Davis.

Bush's Advanced Energy Initiative, which he promoted in a February tour of research sites, would inject badly needed money into alternative-fuel programs.

Critics say the commitment is paltry. Bush's fiscal 2007 budget seeks about \$150 million for biofuels and \$290 million for hydrogen-related research. By comparison, the government spends an estimated \$150 million a day in Iraq.

But proponents believe the decades of inertia could be broken by a rare convergence of technology, money, political will and motivated motorists.

"I see a broader base of interest and support now than ever before," said James Boyd, a member of the California Energy Commission.

Even the president, a onetime oilman, shifted his stance by declaring in January's State of the Union speech that the country was "addicted to oil" and that it should "move beyond a petroleum-based economy."

Renewable fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel hold the greatest promise of immediately reducing oil consumption because they are available today for use in existing vehicles.

Ethanol is made from organic material such as grain crops, wood chips and agricultural waste. A distillation and fermentation process, similar to what goes on in a brewery, converts corn kernels and the like into ethanol.

The fuel is made from renewable sources, boosts octane levels and pollutes the air less than gasoline does. Regular vehicles can run on gasoline blends of as much as 10% ethanol without changing anything, and the nation's more than 5 million so-called flex-fuel vehicles can use gasoline blends with as much as 85% ethanol.

Government subsidies help keep the cost of ethanol close to that of gasoline, and last year, oil companies blended ethanol into about one-third of the nation's car fuel. In California, ethanol has been widely used as a component of cleaner-burning gasoline since 2004, when the state banned the use of methyl tertiary butyl ether because it contaminates groundwater.

About 4 billion gallons of ethanol were used last year, replacing 170 million barrels of oil. Under a federal mandate, ethanol consumption could almost double by 2012.

"It is the only option we have today in terms of a liquid fuel alternative to gasoline that can be used in the existing distribution system," said Neil Koehler, who has spent half of his 48 years pushing ethanol as a way to loosen crude oil's hold on cars.

Fresno-based Pacific Ethanol Inc., where Koehler is chief executive, recently won an \$84-million pledge from Microsoft chief Bill Gates' investment firm. The company plans to open the first of five ethanol plants this year in Madera County.

Still, ethanol is no silver bullet.

Growing corn consumes oil products - fertilizers and tractor diesel - and processing equipment runs on natural gas or coal. Ethanol contains less energy than gasoline, so vehicles won't go as far on a gallon of fuel. And ethanol comes with its own air pollution headache - although much smaller than gasoline's - because ethanol makes gasoline evaporate more easily, releasing volatile organic compounds, a component of smog.

Today, fuel ethanol is made mostly from corn and other grains in the United States and from sugar in Brazil. But because farm land is limited and those source crops are arguably more valuable as food, experts say the long-term value of ethanol is that it can also be made from plant fibers of all kinds.

Researchers are experimenting with making ethanol from agricultural waste, wood chips and common prairie grasses using enzymes and bacteria. They also are probing termite innards to tap the insect's ability to digest wood. Experts say producing ethanol through those means would use less energy than current methods. But perfecting the process and making it affordable could take as long as six years.

Biodiesel is another alternative fuel gaining momentum.

It is most commonly produced from animal fats or natural oils such as those found in corn and soybeans. Some biodiesel is made from used vegetable oil tossed out by restaurants, giving a vehicle's exhaust the faint smell of fried food.

Production of biodiesel requires simple chemical reactions, which can be carried out in a good-sized refinery or a backyard contraption. The finished product can be sold as is to motorists, but it's more commonly blended into regular petroleum-based diesel in concentrations of 2% to 20% biodiesel. A company backed by country singer Willie Nelson has drawn attention to the fuel by selling BioWillie, a 20% biodiesel blend.

Stephen Flynn is among the converts. More than a year ago, the Valencia resident dumped his gasoline car for a 1996 Chevy Suburban diesel he found on EBay, and he's been filling up with 99% biodiesel ever since. Flynn, a prop master for television commercials, says he goes as much as 500 miles before refueling.

Any diesel engine can operate normally on a low concentration of biodiesel; a high concentration can require minor modifications.

"It runs great and clean," Flynn said. "I don't see any cons."

Biodiesel not only reduces consumption of petroleum-based diesel, thereby cutting harmful vehicle emissions, but also boosts the diesel equivalent of octane and improves lubrication in the engine.

The principal drawback is its expense compared with that of traditional diesel, though the gap has closed substantially with government incentives, tax breaks and the recent rise in diesel prices. In

addition, biodiesel can be difficult to find because it is sold at only about 600 filling stations nationwide.

Flynn solved the problem by joining a co-op in West Los Angeles, where members fill up with 99% biodiesel from a self-serve dispensing trailer set up in a leased section of a parking lot. The group's 40 members pay an average of \$3.40 a gallon for the fuel, a slightly inflated price to help offset overhead costs, according to co-op founder Colette Brooks.

"I'm not going back, even if I have to make it myself," Flynn said of biodiesel.

The most tantalizing alternative fuel of all is hydrogen. It's abundant, packed with energy, doesn't pollute and can be burned by itself or used to power battery-like devices known as fuel cells.

Hydrogen "has the potential of completely eliminating oil use and drastically reducing greenhouse gases," said Sperling of UC Davis. "It's also the most complex in terms of needing to transform both the energy industry and the automotive industry."

Thanks to a proliferation of experimental programs, there are more than 100 vehicles on U.S. roads powered by hydrogen fuel cells or liquid hydrogen, according to the National Hydrogen Assn.

The Spallinos got one of them because they owned a natural-gas-fueled Honda, demonstrating to the car company that the family's members were adventurous and environmentally conscious. When a Honda representative called to offer them the chance to become "the world's first fuel cell family," Spallino said, they promptly signed up.

"I was interested because it's an alternative to oil ... but also because the environmental benefits of a car that emits just a few drops of water were intriguing to me," Spallino said. Hydrogen gas, stored aboard the car in tanks, flows to a stack of fuel cells that create electricity to drive the engine. Unused water drips from the exhaust.

The family leases the car for \$500 a month and must supply critiques of its performance. Spallino uses the FCX to commute to his job as chief financial officer of Southland Industries, an Irvine engineering and construction company.

The roadblocks to the hoped-for hydrogen heyday are considerable. Producers must find cheap and environmentally benign ways to extract hydrogen, and a whole new fleet of cars and fueling stations must be built.

Nearly all of the hydrogen in use today is separated from natural gas using steam and a catalyst. It's the cheapest method but emits some carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas believed to cause global warming. In addition, using natural gas as a hydrogen source doesn't cut the nation's ties to finite fossil fuels.

Once the hydrogen's captured, there's the challenge of transporting and storing it. And people need places to fill up.

Honda handles refueling for the Spallinos with two hydrogen-making test units in Torrance. One strips hydrogen from water, using electricity collected through solar panels. The other collects hydrogen from natural gas. The Spallinos' car goes about 190 miles before it needs a hydrogen refill. Honda estimates that the price of each fill-up could range from less than 10 cents to 39 cents a mile depending on the process used.

"We should place some bets on hydrogen," said Peter Smith, chairman of the National Assn. of State Energy Officials. But, he added, not at the expense of funding near-term solutions.

"Right now we have the best opportunity we've had in a while," Smith said. "Energy is on the news every day."

#### Fueling transport

Cars, trucks, planes and trains consume most of the nation's oil. Sales of alternative vehicles are projected to remain relatively small.

U.S. use of petroleum products by sector

Transportation - 70%

Industrial - 24%

Residential - 4 %

Commercial - 2%

### **Kyoto compliance: Buy your way out**

By Robert Collier

In the S.F. Chronicle, Sunday, April 16, 2006

Tokyo -- As Japan and other wealthy nations belch out increasing amounts of greenhouse gases, there's still one foolproof way for them to comply with the Kyoto Protocol -- spend lots of money on clean-energy programs in other countries.

Since 1990, Japan is preparing to invest heavily in environmentally friendly projects in neighboring China and other poorer nations, as well as in other programs created by the protocol to allow nations to gain credit without cutting their own emissions.

Critics say such programs merely cover over the treaty's failure to bring real change, while supporters say they will help bridge the gap between rich and poor nations.

Since 1990, Japan's emissions rose 7.4 percent by March 2005, according to its government's data, but by as much as 21 percent, according to U.S. estimates.

Japan is planning to take advantage of three mechanisms in the protocol to help close its gap:

-- Clean Development Mechanism. By investing in projects such as high-tech, low-emissions power plants in China, Japanese companies gain credits. The rules for this process were finalized in December. In February, the U.N. agency that administers the Kyoto Protocol approved Nippon Oil Corp.'s plan for a gas recovery and utilization project in the Rang Dong oil field off southern Vietnam.

-- Carbon sinks. These are forest projects that add capacity to soak up carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Put simply, this means selective-cut management of timberland to maximize the amount of foliage. Japan is expecting this activity to reduce the nation's overall emissions by 3.9 percent, at a cost of more than \$100 million per year. Environmentalists call the plan an excuse to throw vast sums of money at the country's heavily subsidized logging industry, which has turned most of Japan's forests into managed tree farms.

-- Emissions credits. Companies and countries that have failed to comply with their cutback commitments can buy credits from companies or countries with excess credits at commodities-style markets such as the European Union Emission Trading Scheme, founded in Brussels last year.

"We would prefer that Japan and other nations reduce their emissions by their own efforts, but these mechanisms are better than nothing," said Mie Asaoka, president of the Climate Network, a Japanese environmental coalition. "What is important is for this to move forward."

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By Seth Nidever, Hanford Sentinel, April 15, 2006

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The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District posted a final draft for Rule 4570 on its Web site Thursday.

The rule specifies the kind of pollution coming from dairies and requires dairymen to take steps to reduce emissions. The district estimates that dairies are the No. 1 source of volatile organic compounds in the Valley.

These compounds are one ingredient in the smog formation that has helped make the Valley air basin one of the dirtiest in the nation.

About 230 dairies will be affected by the rule, a district press release said. Those include facilities with more than 1,290 cows.

That's 20 percent of Kings County dairies, according to Kings County Planning Agency numbers from 2005.

The rule lists dozens of things dairymen can do to reduce pollution. Some of the practices; such as covering silage piles with plastic tarps and frequent scraping of manure areas - are done now.

Thursday's posting did not generate the kind of disagreement from dairy industry figures that district announcements have in the past.

Controversy has persisted since dairies lost their regulation exemption in 2004. Dairymen fumed at an early district estimate of how much pollution cows were producing and sued. The district, as part of the settlement, agreed to do more research. The new number, released in August, turned out to be higher than the old one.

Some dairy advocates threatened to sue again.

Tension diminished when both sides agreed to fund more research into the sources of pollution on dairies.

The final numbers are expected next month. Early indications show that more pollution may be coming from feed than previously recognized.

Research also suggests the enteric process; what happens when cows chew their food; is a large source of emissions.

Earlier estimates were that manure lagoons were the main source of volatile organic compounds.

J.P. Cativiela, program director at Dairy Community Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship, said the draft rule recognized that "there's no silver bullet to reducing dairy emissions.";

"We think this strategy will go a long way toward reducing emissions from dairies," he said.

The rule will remove 18 tons of volatile organic compounds and 113 to 127 tons of ammonia emissions daily, the district said.

Cativiela expects new research to lead to more pollution reduction options for dairy farmers.

"We think this is a really good first step," he said.

### **Diesel Vehicle Demand Expected to Soar in U.S.**

From Bloomberg News

Printed in the Los Angeles Times, April 14, 2006

The U.S. market share for diesel-powered cars and light trucks will almost quadruple by 2015 as automakers meet fuel-efficiency demands and as state emission rules become uniform, J.D. Power & Associates said Thursday.

Diesel vehicles will account for 11.8% of U.S. sales by 2015, increasing from 3.2% last year, the marketing research firm estimated. The worldwide share for such cars and trucks will rise to 34.2% from 24.7% during the period, according to a J.D. Power study.

In the U.S., "diesels will be able to meet the standards in all 50 states and there's a desire to reduce emissions and concern about dependence on imported oil," said Alastair Bedwell, senior manager at J.D. Power Automotive Forecasting in England.

Some of the early diesel growth in the U.S. will come from BMW, DaimlerChrysler's Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen's Audi and Nissan Motor Co., Bedwell said. Current diesel sales in the U.S. are limited mainly to large pickup trucks built by General Motors Corp. and Ford Motor Co. Sales growth has been hindered by a perception that diesels are dirty and noisy and by inconsistent rules among states, Bedwell said.

The regulatory issue will change in 2007 when all states' rules on diesel vehicle emissions will be the same as the tougher standards already enacted by California, said Eric Fedewa, director of global powertrain forecasts at consulting firm CSM Worldwide in Farmington Hills, Mich.

Those standards are slated to be tightened further in 2012.

### **Sniffing out foul odors**

#### **Air quality regulators say landfill may be source of Val Verde smell**

BY JUDY O'ROURKE, Staff Writer

LA Daily News, Sunday, April 16, 2006

VAL VERDE - Air quality regulators are evaluating whether foul odors noticed last week by residents in this semi-rural community originated in the Chiquita Canyon Landfill, and if so, whether they constitute a public nuisance.

A cluster of residents complained about bad smells on Thursday, a day after the South Coast Air Quality Management District conducted an unannounced inspection of the dump and may have identified a possible source of the smells.

"The inspector had concerns about waste that appeared to be not properly covered," said Carol Coy, deputy executive officer of engineering and compliance at AQMD.

An investigation is under way.

Pools of water were found on flat areas on the site, but officials said they likely were formed by recent rains and preliminary findings did not indicate they were caused by liquids leached from waste products.

The dump is set into a canyon southeast of the pastoral town of 1,500. Its owner, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.-based Republic Services Inc., wants to add 33 million tons of trash capacity to the current 23 million tons by expanding the 257-acre working area to a total of 355 acres.

Permits have been sought to allow treated sewage on the site.

Many local residents who have long complained that it wafts bad smells their way also have found a way to coexist with the business.

In 1996, the Val Verde Civic Association shelved its opposition to a planned expansion when the landfill's owner agreed to underwrite a community benefits district - at \$250,000-year until the dump hits capacity in about seven years.

The settlement has funded parks, tutoring programs and seniors' bus passes.

But in February, the civic association accused the county and the landfill operator of failing to properly monitor the operation.

And last September, and again in February, the agency issued public-nuisance complaints against the dump. Both matters are pending.

Coy said the agency is sensitive to residents' complaints and continues to try to determine all possible causes of foul odors.

Inspectors have made two surprise inspections this year.

On Friday, landfill spokesman Josh Gertler said he was aware residents had complained that the dump was the source of foul odors the day before.

"We are proactively and cooperatively working with the AQMD's management to address odor complaints and to develop measures to address these complaints," he said.

He would not elaborate on what the measures are.

"People live much closer to landfills than they used to," Coy said. "This is unusual in this day and age."

Results of the AQMD's investigation could be made public next week. If the dump is found to have caused a public nuisance, a violation notice would be issued.

## **Earth Day visit by Bush planned**

### **President will spend day at Fuel Cell Partnership in West Sacramento.**

By David Whitney / Bee Washington Bureau

In the Fresno Bee, Saturday, April 15, 2006

WASHINGTON — President Bush heads to California next weekend where he will celebrate Earth Day April 22 with a tour of the California Fuel Cell Partnership in West Sacramento. It will be the president's first visit to the Sacramento area since his 2000 election.

Bush is scheduled to arrive Friday in San Jose, where he will participate in a discussion at Cisco Systems Inc. on his initiative to increase the country's competitiveness in technology development.

After the afternoon tour of the West Sacramento fuel cell center April 22, Bush travels to Southern California, where he will attend a National Republican Committee fundraiser at the Toscana Country Club in Palm Springs.

On April 23, Bush will attend church and have lunch with military families at the Marine Corps Air Combat Center at Twenty-Nine Palms.

Gov. Schwarzenegger's press secretary, Margita Thompson, said the governor's office and the White House were still trying to arrange a time when they might meet. "All parties are trying to make it happen," she said.

Environmentalists were amused by Bush's decision to tour the fuel cell center on the 36th annual observation of Earth Day, a celebration of global environmental protection.

Nathanael Greene, a senior policy analyst for the Natural Resources Defense Council in New York City, called the West Sacramento stop "a fig leaf to cover up the emperor's nakedness" on the environment.

Greene said the Bush administration's 2007 request for \$150 million for research into biofuels, which could be used by fuel cells to power pollution-free cars and trucks in the future, is \$350 million a year less than what Congress authorized last year.

"It is disappointing for someone who spoke so eloquently in his State of the Union speech about our addiction to oil and what that means for national security," Greene said.

The West Sacramento facility is home to a partnership of 31 oil companies, car manufacturers and government agencies promoting the commercialization of hydrogen-powered vehicles.

The partnership's facilities include prototype cars, a hydrogen refueling station and vehicle maintenance areas. It is not a research center or production plant. According to its Web site, at least some of its vehicles will be on display at an Earth Day event at the California State University, Sacramento, campus.

## **Increase in smog-producing emissions sought**

By Booyeon Lee

San Diego Union Tribune, Friday, April 14, 2006

ESCONDIDO - San Diego Gas & Electric, which operates the county's second largest power plant here, is seeking permission to release more than three times the previously approved amount of smog-producing nitrogen oxide when the plant is starting up.

The plant, located in the city's business park, is currently allowed to emit 100 pounds of nitrogen oxide per hour during a maximum four-hour period when its turbines are firing up, under guidelines set by the California Energy Commission in 2003.

SDG&E said the plant's annual nitrogen-oxide emissions will not exceed its limit of 124 tons. That yearly cap was recently increased from 104 tons after the company paid about \$2 million as an "offset" cost intended to eliminate pollution sources elsewhere in San Diego County in exchange for increased emissions from Palomar.

Nitrogen oxide results in ozone when it reacts with other compounds in air and sunlight. To put 225 pounds in perspective, in 2005, power plants and boilers in San Diego County produced an average of 2.6 tons of nitrogen oxide per day, according to the state Air Resources Board. That year, county skies absorbed an average of 72,000 tons of the gas, which is also produced by vehicles and numerous other sources.

Just how much additional nitrogen oxide could be released in the air over Escondido if SDG&E's petition is granted is unclear. It depends on how often SDG&E starts the plant, said Michael Lake, associate director of the county Air Pollution Control District.

"It would make a big difference if the plant is started up one or two times a year, as opposed to 50 or 60 times," Lake said.

SDG&E spokesman Ed Van Herik said the company is unable to provide that information now. The California Independent System Operator, which manages most of the state's electricity grid, determines how frequently the plant would be used, he said. The newly built Palomar Energy plant has no track record. The company took the plant over from its parent company, Sempra Resources, upon its completion last month.

Nevertheless, the county's pollution agency is requiring SDG&E to come up with its best guess at how often the plant would be started before its board decides on its petition. "It's a reasonable request," Lake said. "They can bring the best-and worst-case scenarios."

Lake said SDG&E is not alone in the state to request relaxing caps for nitrogen-oxide emissions for plants that require a longer startup period compared to older ones.

Palomar Energy's Escondido plant is one of numerous plants approved in California after the energy crisis of 2000-2001 that use a new and more complicated energy-saving technology. These plants take longer to rev up their turbines to operating speed, Lake said. They are unable to meet air pollution control standards of older plants, which take two to four hours to start up, depending on how long they have been idle.

The Palomar plant recycles energy by using natural gas to power two turbines and generators. Excess heat from those is then captured and used to produce steam to turn a third turbine and generator. As a result, the plant produces 45 percent more energy than older plants and significantly less pollution, according to SDG&E officials.

"It's a longer process, but a cleaner process," Van Herik said.

The longer startup, however, produces more nitrogen oxide. About two-thirds of the plant's annual nitrogen-oxide emissions will occur during the plant's startup periods, Jim McCrank, a Sempra vice president, said in the air pollution district's report.

However, thanks to the plant's new technology, the overall amount of emissions, compared to power plants built 20 years ago, is significant. For example, with air pollution control standards in place, most existing power plants emit 20 parts-per-million of nitrogen oxide, Lake said. Newer plants including Palomar emit two parts per million.

During the past six months, as the Palomar plant was being tested, Sempra requested that the Air Pollution Control District grant seven "variance reliefs," which means the company was not meeting emission standards outlined in its state permit. The district is not alarmed, Lake said. "You can't bring that kind of large equipment in total compliance at get-go," he said.

## **Coal Industry Is on the Rebound**

By James Hannah, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, Washington Post and other papers. Friday, April 14, 2006

Cadiz, Ohio (AP) -- There are new signs of life in Ohio's coal fields.

Coal mining was once king in the state's Appalachian foothills. But the industry went into a nosedive in the 1980s because of falling foreign demand and increased production of cheaper coal from Western states. Mines closed, and a generation of potential miners left their tiny towns to make their livings elsewhere, dealing a hard blow to a region already lagging behind the state economically.

With the skyrocketing cost of oil and new pollution controls, coal is on the rebound. Mines are being reopened, and new miners are being hired.

"The market's very strong," said Bruce Hann, general manager of Central Appalachian Mining of Ohio, which in 2004 reopened the Hopedale Mine near this eastern Ohio town of about 3,300. "It was just an economic decision. It made sense."

Demand for U.S. coal is expected to be a record 1.2 billion tons this year, up from 1.18 billion in 2005, according to the National Mining Association. Production is forecast to be 1.16 billion tons, a 3.2 percent increase over 2005.

Sixty-nine mines opened in Appalachia last year, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The nation's mining work force dropped from nearly 178,000 in 1984 to 75,000 in 2005. Now, miners are in such need in Kentucky that coal companies are running ads and conducting job fairs. Companies in West Virginia are offering pay increases, improved benefits and bonuses to attract new miners and to keep existing workers from being raided by competitors.

Many credit coal's revival to it being seen as an alternative to increasingly expensive oil and natural gas. Others point to the binge in construction of — or plans for — new coal-fired power plants to satisfy the nation's surging demand for electricity.

High-sulfur coal tied to air-polluting sulfur dioxide was once shunned because it was too expensive and dirty to burn, blamed for acid rain and watershed damage. But more power plants are using advanced pollution-controlling "scrubbers" and are better equipped to handle such fuel.

There are about 100 mines and 35 coal companies in Ohio. An estimated 24.6 million tons of coal were mined last year by the state's 2,500 mine workers. That's up from 23.5 million tons in 2004 and 22.3 million tons in 2003, when there were 2,300 workers.

Central Appalachian Mining has hired 25 new miners at Hopedale in the past year, increasing its work force to 190. The company has invested \$14 million for new equipment and expects to work the mine for more than 15 years before the coal runs out.

The workers dig coal in tiny tunnels, most only 5 feet high, more than 500 feet underground. The mine operates seven days a week in two 10-hour shifts.

In the mine, a four-wheeled, 60-ton behemoth called a Continuous Mining Machine — or "the miner" — chews into the coal with big steel teeth that rotate on a drum. The machine tears coal from the wall and quickly fills itself up like a bowl of cereal. Shuttle cars carry the coal to the conveyor belt, nearly spanning the 17-foot width of the tunnel.

The 190 workers are putting out 1,100 tons of coal per shift. That will translate into 1.8 million tons of coal this year, up from 1.4 million in 2005.

Safety measures are taken to prevent cave-ins and injuries from the heavy equipment, but the work is dirty and grueling. Headlamps stab tiny lights through inky blackness, with heavy machinery roaring and coal dust flying.

Jim Allender, a crew leader at the mine, remembers when the coal industry began cutting back.

"You couldn't buy a job in a mine then," said Allender, 47, of Bergholz. "I tried trucking. That didn't work out too good. Coal mining definitely helps the economics in this area."

But the coal comeback raises concerns for those who point out that the region's environment still bears the scars of mining, with polluted waterways, strip-mined hills and damaged watersheds — land that drains water into rivers and streams.

"We're looking for the day when both the extraction and burning of coal can be done a lot better and less harmfully than it is today," said Keith Dimoff, deputy director of the Ohio Environmental Council. "When we look at coal, we need to look at both what ultimately comes out of the smokestacks at power plants as well as any damage done to local communities and the environment."

The Monday Creek Restoration Project, based in New Straitsville, cleans up abandoned coal sites with the help of federal money. Its watershed coordinator, Mike Steinmaus, said Ohio streams were polluted by abandoned coal mines when there were few environmental regulations. Acidic water from abandoned mines and piles of coal waste left streams uninhabitable for fish and other aquatic life.

He said stronger environmental regulation is in effect now, and he agreed that coal offers new hope to communities such as New Straitsville, down to 570 residents compared with 3,000 during the coal boom.

"Without the mines being here, the communities have essentially withered away," Steinmaus said. "It's certainly a social and economic problem."

Mine jobs pay about \$21 a hour, more than most in this area.

"When I was young, there were two options — steel mills or coal mines," said Jeff Sabo, 55, a third-generation miner employed as safety supervisor at Hopedale Mine.

Sabo, a notebook and a package of peanut butter crackers sticking out from the front pockets of his overalls, recounted that he went to work in the mines after leaving the military in 1971 and enrolled at Ohio University at the same time. A philosophy major, Sabo hoped to teach, but he decided to drop out and work the mines full time.

He says he has no regrets. His earnings have helped put his two children through college. One is an architect, and the other a speech therapist.

"This is definitely one of the premier jobs in Harrison County," he said. "It's enabled me to have a good life."

[Fresno Bee editorial, Sunday, April 16, 2006:](#)

### **And in Washington ...**

#### **Auto industry, White House put roadblocks in California's way.**

The Bush administration's attempt to block California from enforcing tougher emissions standards on new cars and trucks is not being ignored by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

To his credit, Schwarzenegger sent Bush a letter this week urging him to let California enforce new rules requiring auto companies to reduce greenhouse gases from their vehicles by 30% by 2016. The federal Environmental Protection Agency needs to issue a waiver for California to enforce the standards. Yet the automobile industry is lobbying against the waiver, claiming (falsely) that the rules represent fuel efficiency standards, which only the federal government has authority to set.

In his letter, Schwarzenegger talked about California's pioneering efforts to control air pollution and the serious consequences of climate change. "Global warming is a grave threat to

California's water supply, our coastline, our environment, our economy and the public health of our citizens," Schwarzenegger wrote. "Global warming is likely worsening the severe weather that has caused so much damage of late in the United States."

On this issue, Bush's supposed support for state self-determination conflicts with his effort to deny that global warming is a reality. There should be no contest. The EPA has granted waiver requests to California more than 30 times in the last four decades. It should do so again, without further delay.

[Modesto Bee, Editorial, Monday April 16, 2006](#)

## **Governor lands on correct side of climate issue**

Credible scientists tell us that global warming, left unchecked, will upend the world's fragile balances. It already is upsetting the fragile balance. Gov. Schwarzenegger is trying to strike between the need to save the planet and not to kill jobs.

Last week, the governor hosted a summit in San Francisco to announce a supposedly bold plan for making California a leader in the fight against global warming. He proposed establishing a system of emission credits that could be traded on an open market. Industries that reduce their emissions below certain standards would earn credits they could sell at a profit to industries unable to meet emission targets. As emission standards become more restrictive, those credits become more valuable — providing incentive to polluting industries to find a cleaner way to operate.

It's a market-based system, but it works only if there are restrictions on total emissions — so-called caps.

But in making his announcement, the governor refused to endorse those caps — essentially making those credits worthless. Industry applauded; environmentalists were miffed. The media was confused because many had been led to believe before the summit that caps would be endorsed. The media wasn't alone in its confusion. One of the governor's key advisers was unsure where Schwarzenegger stood even the next day.

So the governor tried to clarify. Asked if he supports caps on greenhouse emissions, he said he did and could live with a 2012 date for establishing those caps. So, regardless of his zigs and zags, Schwarzenegger has ended up in the right place. California is on the cusp of teaming with other states on a trading system for reducing greenhouse gases that could be a model for the nation and the world.

Under Schwarzenegger's proposal, industries would be required to monitor and report their releases of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse emissions. This would lead to the open market concept, possibly by 2012.

California cannot be an island in the fight against global warming. When acting alone or with others, it must not export its pollution by importing power or by forcing polluting companies across the borders to less restrictive states such as Nevada or Arizona.

At the same time, we and our 35 million fellow residents must lessen our environmental footprint.

Gov. Schwarzenegger deserves credit for elevating awareness of the threat. He has broken with much of the Republican Party on this issue, pushed the state Public Utilities Commission to embrace solar power, and has set targets for California to reduce its greenhouse emissions to 2000 levels in the next five years and to 1990 levels in 15 years.

With caps, the governor has helped to create a meaningful, market-based plan to reduce emissions worldwide. He might not be the most articulate statesman, but it's better to swerve toward a cleaner future than drive his Hummer into smoggy oblivion.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Sunday, April 16, 2006:](#)

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[Fresno Bee commentary, Saturday, April 15, 2006:](#)

### **Digging into Earth Day's annual events**

By George B. Kauffman

Earth Day, begun as an annual event on April 22, 1970, focused public attention on pollution and environmental concerns and made "ecology" a household word.

The world's largest secular holiday and the only event celebrated by more than a half billion people of all backgrounds, faiths and nationalities, it is sponsored by many national and international organizations with outreach programs showcasing the positive contributions that environmental science makes to improve the health of our planet and its citizens.

For example, in Beijing on Jan. 15, environmental activist Paul "Earthwalker" Coleman and his wife, Konomi Kikuchi, accompanied by dozens of volunteers, began the Earth Day Friendship walk through China, Korea and Japan. Intended to inspire the planting of 100 million trees, one for each man, woman and child killed in the last century's wars, it will culminate in Tokyo on April 22. There's more on the net at [www.earth/whats-new.htm](http://www.earth/whats-new.htm). To view the events taking place in California (more than 200 of the thousands of celebrations) visit [www.earthday.net](http://www.earthday.net).

### **Green chemistry**

The American Chemical Society, the world's largest scientific organization, will observe Earth Day with a program showcasing the positive contributions that chemistry makes to our environment and reminding us that all our actions and choices impact the health of our planet. Chemistry contributes to a sustainable earth by recognizing and quantifying environmental pollution and by developing environmentally friendly products and processes.

A special field — green chemistry — develops environmentally benign chemical products and processes in the context of renewable resources. The ACS's 10th annual Green Chemistry & Engineering Conference will be held in Washington, D.C., June 26-30 ([www.greenchem2006.org](http://www.greenchem2006.org)).

The ACS's theme this year, "Soil Chemistry: Dig It!," like last year's theme, "Air — Here, There, Everywhere," is especially timely for the Valley's agrarian economy. As part of Chemists Celebrate Earth Day 2006, the chemical society provides hands-on activities for educators to spice up classroom and laboratory presentations ([chemistry.org/earthday](http://chemistry.org/earthday)). It provides previously published articles and games, sponsors an illustrated haiku contest for K-12 students and underwrites a video contest for college and university students.

The community event is Plant it for the Planet, which includes activities like planting flowers, grass and other plants, with emphasis on soil nutrients, pH, water, temperature, acid rain and erosion. Periodicals such as the Journal of Chemical Education (February issue, [jchemed.chem.wisc.edu](http://jchemed.chem.wisc.edu)) feature articles and experiments on soil chemistry, environmental chemistry and green chemistry.

### **What's happening**

Here are some Earth Day events in and near Fresno:

Barbecue and live music, Apr. 22, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Whole Foods Market, 650 W. Shaw Ave., Fresno.

Earth's Knight, Apr. 22, 6 p.m. to 2 a.m., Madera, electronic music festival with DJs from all over California performing: Charles MacDowell, 674-0943; [secretjungle@aol.com](mailto:secretjungle@aol.com).

Fairy Shrimp Festival, Apr. 22, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., UC Merced, educational Earth Day celebration and arts fair with entertainment: Jim Greenwood, (209) 381-4163; [jgreenwood@ucmerced.edu](mailto:jgreenwood@ucmerced.edu).

Earth Sunday, Apr. 23, 5-6 p.m., Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Friends Meeting House, 17208 Avenue 296, Visalia, CA 93292; Harold Wood, P.O. Box 3469, Visalia, CA 93278, 739-8527; [webmaster2@uuvisalia.org](mailto:webmaster2@uuvisalia.org).

According to George "Elfie" Ballis, every day is Earth Day at Sun Mountain Experimental Center. After more than 10 years of fundraising and designing, he hopes to build the first straw-bale house in Fresno this fall ([www.sunmt.org/strawsunmt.html](http://www.sunmt.org/strawsunmt.html)). You can take a virtual tour of the existing Sun House, operational since 1983, with its solar power and energy conservation.

The Bush administration, while spinning a web of pro-environment propaganda, has rolled back three decades of bipartisan environmental protections in its efforts to benefit its clients in the oil, gas, coal and other industries at the expense of a clean, healthy and safe environment.

On a wide range of issues like global warming, childhood lead poisoning, mercury emissions, climate change, reproductive health, nuclear weapons, energy policy and Arctic drilling, it distorts and censors scientific findings that contradict its policies.

### **What can we do?**

Join the Earth Day Leave No Species Behind Virtual March to stop the unprecedented legislative assault by members of Congress that would harm America's endangered species — including us — threaten our national parks, forests and wildlife refuges and remove protections for our health and the environment we share.

On the Web, it's [earthday.care2.com/campaigns/edvm/register](http://earthday.care2.com/campaigns/edvm/register). A letter protesting the anti-environmental legislation now before Congress will be e-mailed to your congressperson.

George B. Kauffman is a chemistry professor emeritus at California State University, Fresno.

[Visalia Times-Delta, Letter to the Editor, Friday, April 14, 2006:](#)

### **Polluted air is hurting the San Joaquin Valley**

That California has the second worst air in the nation comes as a surprise to me. I always believed it was the absolute worst. And the Central Valley has probably some of the most foul and nasty air in our esteemed Golden State.

Whenever I come back to the Valley after a day on the coast, I am always immediately struck by how wretched it is. It can be like breathing dirt at times. Pollution is not just a mere inconvenience; it is well known that our wonderful air encourages lung cancer and makes it difficult to get needed exercise. This blight upon both our environment and our health is the direct result of our current fossil-fuel based society.

Unless the government decides that we should encourage the use of alternative energy sources, the problem of air pollution will continue to grow. The problem won't end when the Earth runs out of oil. If anything, it'll get worse, because after oil we have the even more lethal substance of coal and coal enough in the ground for centuries.

We have enough of the vice of fossil fuels to turn this planet into a lifeless ball of sludge. Even the feared nuclear energy is much better than what we have now. Having to seal up small amounts of radioactive waste under a remote mountain is a small thing compared to filling the air that all of us breathe with poison.

Of course, I don't think the government cares much about our health to begin with. President Bush doesn't seem to think that America needs an environment in the first place.

Many people in town probably agree with this belief and are calling me a tree-hugging communist right now. What's the big deal if some people get sick, anyways? Well, maybe they'll think otherwise once the Valley is polluted enough for acid rain to fall from the sky. That sure won't help our agricultural economy.

DEVIN KUBERSKI, Visalia

### [LETTER TO THE EDITOR](#)

### **State can do more in fighting air pollution**

Los Angeles Times, April 14, 2006

Re "The state of clean air," editorial, April 10

California does command the leading role in the battle for clean air, but we can do more. An article in The Times on March 25 reported that USC researchers have concluded that deaths from breathing California's bad air may be more than twice as high as previously estimated. And The Times is right to say we can't wait for the feds to act.

That's why BREATHE California of L.A. County encouraged the introduction of the Children's Breathing Rights Act. Passed April 4 by the Senate Judiciary Committee, the legislation would direct a percentage of all air pollution penalties collected in California into a fund for children's health initiatives in the areas where air penalties are assessed. We need to find better ways to curb air pollution and protect our future. Breathing is not optional.

ENRIQUE CHIOCK - President and chief executive

BREATHE California of L.A. County

Los Angeles

[Modesto Bee, Letters to the Editor, Friday, April 14, 2006](#)

### **Catalytic converters for bovine use**

Law enforcement shouldn't have much trouble catching the culprits who are stealing the catalytic converters off cars. All they need to do is check out the local dairymen who are experimenting on how to strap them on those darned flatulent cows. And when they do, goodbye to that good "ole country" smell. That should make the Environmental Protection Agency happy.

DONALD K. HARRIS - Groveland

### **Air study findings raise questions**

So, a new \$80,000 study puts the health problem price tag of valley residents at \$3.2 billion per year. I lived in the Los Angeles basin and didn't get any \$1,000 checks when smog was reduced. How did the study quantify the costs of "460 premature deaths among those age 30 and older?" What is the dollar value of another month of old age?

The "188,000 fewer days of school absence" and "17,000 fewer days of respiratory symptoms in children" seem to conflict with a study referenced on the California Air Resources Board Web page. The CARB study of the impact of pollution levels on school attendance in Southern California communities compared school-day absence levels in the various districts for particulate pollution levels. The absences in the two worst-polluted districts were no worse than absences in the two least-polluted districts. There was no correlation between high and low particulate air pollution levels and school absences.

The next time the Hewlett Foundation wants to pay \$80,000 for a study to get a desired answer, they should try to do a better job.

JIM HOOD - Twain Harte