

Local dairies threatened with lawsuit

By Seth Nidever, Sentinel Reporter
Hanford Sentinel, June 2, 2006

HANFORD - The Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment is threatening a lawsuit against four Kings County dairies for allegedly violating clean air regulations.

The San Francisco-based environmental group claims Endeavor Gold Dairy, the Martin Ranch Family Dairy, the Turner Ranch Family Dairy and the Yokum Dairy were constructed without the required San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District permit and without required pollution controls.

Pollution control district officials disagree.

The four dairies don't have enough cows to require permits, said Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the district.

The threshold is dairies that emit 12.5 tons of volatile organic compounds - or VOCs - per year, Sadredin said.

The emissions estimate made Jan. 1, 2004 was 12.8 pounds of VOCs per dairy cow every year.

Following that estimate, dairies with a capacity of 1,954 cows or more that started construction after Jan. 1, 2004. were subject to regulation, Sadredin indicated.

District officials say Martin Ranch, Turner Ranch and Yokum all started construction after that date, but fall below that threshold.

According to district records, Endeavor Gold Dairy started construction before Jan. 1, 2004.

Since then, Martin Ranch, Turner Ranch and Yokum have filled out applications to exceed 1,954 cows, Sadredin said.

"We're keeping a close eye on them," he said.

As part of the permit requirements, the dairies will be required to implement the best available pollution control technologies.

Such technologies are in a state of flux. Pending research on the source and amount of dairy VOC pollution will change the control technologies dairymen have to implement.

Current estimates make dairies the No. 1 contributor of VOCs in the San Joaquin Valley.

VOCs are one of the ingredients in ozone formation. San Joaquin Valley cities consistently rank among the most ozone-polluted in the United States.

Ozone pollution is linked to lung damage, higher asthma rates and higher risks of respiratory illnesses.

Some dairy owners who are building under the current per cow estimate may have to add new pollution controls if the estimate goes up, Sadredin said.

Another district official said rules are pending to make all existing dairies with 1,000 cows or more - regardless of date they started construction - subject to the best available retrofit control technology.

The retrofit control technology is a list of generally low-impact, low-technology practices older dairies can adopt to comply with air district regulations.

New or expanding dairies face more expensive measures.

Rick McVaigh, deputy air pollution control officer, said the 1,000-cow rule goes before the district's governing board for approval June 15.

District officials also took issue with the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment's claim that the district hasn't fined "a single dairy operator for illegally building without a permit" since dairies lost their air regulation exemption Jan. 1, 2004.

Ten dairies have received notices of violation, Sadredin said. Some did not comply with the required environmental review process under California law, Sadredin said.

Some would be required to pay a fine once they came into full compliance while others would be forced to buy emissions credits, Sadredin said.

Emissions credits allow businesses to buy and sell pollution "credits" in lieu of adopting expensive reduction equipment.

"It's a mischaracterization to say that the district does not enforce these regulations," Sadredin said.

[Note: A correction to the story below has been requested and will run in the Around the Valley section of the paper tomorrow. The actual date of the Fresno event is June 10. Tomorrow's event is in Visalia.]

Around the Valley

Air district offers discounts

Fresno Bee, Friday, June 2, 2006

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will offer Valley residents a \$229 discount on an electric lawn mower during its annual Clean Green Yard Machine program at 9 a.m. Saturday at California State University, Fresno, Lot Q, in Fresno.

Residents must turn in their gasoline-powered lawn mowers to receive the discount.

The event is first come, first served, and good while supplies last.

Details: (559) 230-6000 or visit www.valleyair.org.

Spare the Air season kicks off Tuesday

By RYANNE PERSINGER, Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Friday, June 2, 2006

Michael Cavale does his part to help fight air pollution, such as not burning wood in the fireplace.

He's aware that the Valley has one of the worst pollution problems in the country.

"We need to do something about it," Cavale said.

He is a managing partner at Cavale-Taylor & Co. Insurance Services at 1013 W. Center Ave., which is just one of 700 San Joaquin Valley employers that are registered with the Valley Air District's Spare the Air program.

The annual Spare the Air season starts Tuesday and ends in September.

The program works by allowing employers registered with the free program to be alerted by e-mail or fax when the Valley Air District forecasts a Spare the Air Day, a day when air quality is deemed unhealthy.

Employers can then encourage their employees to use air-friendly alternatives such as riding a bike or carpooling to work instead of driving.

Ozone pollution, a component of smog, is mainly a problem during the summertime because sunlight helps it to form.

"The more intense the sun, the more ozone pollution [there is]," said Anthony Presto, a spokesman for the Valley Air District.

"It's hotter, and we have a lot of hours of sunlight in the day," said Janelle Schneider, a district spokeswoman.

The Valley Air District is urging people to cut down on driving.

Presto said vehicles contribute to about 60 percent of the ozone problem during the summer.

Some other air-sparing tips:

- Share a ride or use public transportation
- Bring your lunch to work, instead of driving to get food
- Run errands in groups, not just one at a time, to cut down on vehicle use
- Use electric rather than gas-powered lawn care equipment
- Use an electric briquette lighter instead of lighter fluid
- Keep your car tuned up and running efficiently

Presto also suggested that, when purchasing a vehicle, shop for the most fuel-efficient model.

Muni cleans up its act: adding 56 hybrid buses New diesel-electric coaches cut exhaust, boost fuel economy

By Becky Bowman, staff writer
S.F. Chronicle, Friday, June 2, 2006

San Francisco's Municipal Railway, which has been criticized for not moving quickly enough toward a more environmentally friendly fleet, took delivery Thursday of the first of 56 diesel-electric hybrid buses.

The buses -- made by DaimlerChrysler at a cost of about \$488,000 apiece -- will not only reduce pollution from the Muni bus fleet, but also improve fuel economy and make service more reliable, officials said.

"Our goal ... is to put a transit system together that improves the quality of life for the citizens, that's effective, that's safe, efficient and that's attractive," said Muni chief Nathaniel Ford.

At a City Hall unveiling of the hybrid bus, Mayor Gavin Newsom said that the acquisition of the 56 vehicles will give Muni the third largest hybrid fleet in the country but that the city should strive to go further.

"We have the -- I think -- rather remarkable ambition of being completely zero emission -- 100 percent emission free -- in our metropolitan transportation system by 2020," Newsom said. "I want us to exceed those goals, which I'm confident we can do."

The hybrid buses will replace Muni's oldest diesel buses, which date back to 1989, agency spokeswoman Maggie Lynch said.

The agency is negotiating the purchase of an additional 30 hybrid buses from DaimlerChrysler, which are being manufactured at the company's plant near Utica, N.Y., Lynch said.

The hybrid buses offer big environmental improvements for San Francisco, said Jared Blumenfeld, director of the San Francisco Department of the Environment. They emit 90 percent less particle pollution than conventional buses and 20 percent fewer greenhouse gases, he said.

The DaimlerChrysler hybrid buses already are a hit in New York City, where New York City Transit already operates 325 of the buses and has another 500 on order, said transit spokesman Charles Seaton.

"They've performed extremely well," Seaton said. "We've experienced a fuel economy savings, which is important. The bus operators like them, and the low floor design has been a hit with customers."

The buses use diesel fuel to power an engine that in turn runs an electric generator. That generator, like the overhead wires for trolley buses, supplies electricity to power the bus.

"I think this is a great step forward, for Muni and for air quality in the Bay Area," said Richard Kassel, director of a clean fuels and vehicles project for the advocacy group Natural Resources Defense Council.

"Just as the Prius is a big step forward for green car technology, these hybrid buses are a major step forward for diesel bus technology."

The buses also can use either biodiesel fuel or be upgraded to use fuel cells, Blumenfeld said.

In 2004, voters passed Proposition I, a ballot measure requiring Muni to replace by 2007 its pre-1991 diesel buses. The agency missed the first deadline of replacing 150 buses last year.

Officials said Thursday that one problem the agency confronted in meeting that deadline has been finding a clean technology bus that's also reliable.

In its testing, for instance, Muni found that compressed natural gas buses couldn't handle San Francisco's hills, Lynch said.

"We have to power vehicles, filled with people, up very steep grades in this city," Lynch said.

Andrew Sullivan, co-founder of the San Francisco transit watch-dog group Rescue Muni, joined officials on a test run of the bus around City Hall after the announcement. He said the addition of hybrids to Muni is "great news" but said he wants to see how the buses operate.

"The key is we have to see how they run in daily, everyday, packed-to-the-gills service," Sullivan said.

Muni's fleet

Diesel buses: 495

Electric trolley buses: 333

Metro streetcars: 151

Historic streetcars: 26

Cable cars: 40

To be added by this fall:

Hybrid buses: 56

Source: Municipal Transportation Agency

[Fresno Bee editorial, Friday, June 2, 2006:](#)

Left out again

Seed money for promising Valley Partnership cut by Legislature.

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

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

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

The Valley has chronic unemployment that is as much as 50% higher than the state average.

Poverty is rampant — the Valley is the new Appalachia.

Our air quality is among the worst in the nation.

The Valley faces critical issues of water quality and quantity.

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

Valley schools are often among the poorest performing in California.

There is a terrible shortage of physicians in the Valley's many rural areas.

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

The Valley's entire Assembly delegation, Republicans and Democrats together, have written a letter to the committee's leaders asking that the funds be restored.

It's a fine act of bipartisanship by our Assembly representatives, and we hope it succeeds, though initial reaction from the committee leaders was not encouraging.

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

In the absence of the political clout that Southern California and the Bay Area have because of their larger populations, there is little besides outrage and pleading that we can do.

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

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

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