

## **Earn money for not driving?**

### **That's one idea in plan to reduce valley smog**

By MICHAEL G. MOONEY - BEE STAFF WRITER

Modesto Bee, Saturday, July 29, 2006

Looking for a foolproof way to make people drive less? Pay them to keep their cars, pickups, sport utility vehicles and minivans parked in driveways or stowed in garages.

Better yet, professor Michael Stevens said Friday, pay them to use an alternative form of transportation, such as a \$50-a-day bonus for anyone who rides a bicycle to work.

Stevens, who teaches biology at California State University, Stanislaus, was among 11 people who spoke during a town hall meeting at the Salida office of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The session was called to solicit ideas on the best way the region can reduce concentrations of its most troublesome types of air pollution — ozone (also known as smog) and particulate matter (specks of dust and soot).

"Most of our pollution comes from cars and trucks," said Seyed Sadredin, the air district's executive director. "These (meetings) are a first step in developing an eight-hour ozone plan.

"This will be a tremendously difficult task to accomplish," he said.

That's because the last major component of the valley's air pollution puzzle is traffic, which is the most difficult to control. The air district has no authority to regulate vehicle pollution; that's up to state and federal government.

So Stevens could be onto something with his \$50-a-day bicycle program.

He also called for more rail service and extending the Bay Area Rapid Transit system to Livermore and, ultimately, into the valley.

Stevens suggested charging a usage fee for trucks and automobiles passing through the valley on Highway 99 or Interstate 5.

The air district staff will consider ideas Stevens and others offered at the town-hall meetings — the Salida session was among six — as officials put together a new pollution plan.

A draft is expected to be completed by the end of September.

Paul Martin, representing the Modesto-based Western United Dairyman's Association, encouraged the district to embrace the incentives rather than continuing to pile on rules, regulations and restrictions.

Martin suggested staff pursue air pollution enterprise zones, which would let farmers and businessmen receive grants or tax credits in return for investing in nonpolluting technologies.

Under its latest mandate, the eight-county region — stretching from Stockton to Bakersfield — must reduce its eight-hour average for ozone. The previous standard was averaged over a one-hour period.

In the valley, ozone is a summertime pollution problem, but it's not emitted from tailpipes or smokestacks.

Instead, said Jessi Hayfer, an air quality specialist, it's the result of a chemical reaction that takes place in the atmosphere — a reaction fed by nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, sunlight and hot temperatures.

Nitrogen oxides are a byproduct of combustion. Volatile organic compounds include gasoline, as well as alcohols and solvents.

Part of the valley's problem is geography — mountains to the east, south and west. Combine that with seasonal temperature inversions (which act like a lid and hold pollutants in the air rather than letting them escape) and an exploding population, and the result is one of the most severe ozone problems in the nation.

While Los Angeles registers higher peak ozone levels, the valley experiences more days with unhealthy levels.

One study estimated the region would save more than \$3 billion a year in health care costs and lost school and work days by attaining the proposed eight-hour ozone and particulate matter standards.

Millions more could be saved in crop damage, other studies have shown, because ozone in the valley is highest in the summer, when crops are growing.

Those points were underscored by Louise Johnson, who represented the Environmental Justice Committee of the Catholic Diocese of Stockton.

"We need to invest more," Johnson said. "Agriculture is still what the valley is all about."

#### **At a glance**

**WHAT HAPPENED:** The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District asked for ideas on how best to meet new federal standards for ozone (smog).

**WHAT'S AT STAKE:** The health of the region's people and its economy. Officials estimate that bad air between Stockton and Bakersfield costs the eight-county region more than \$3 billion a year in health care costs and lost work and school days.

**WHAT'S NEXT:** Development of a draft plan to reduce the valley's average ozone concentration over an eight-hour period. The plan is expected to be ready for public review at the end of September.

### **Task force wants input by Valley governments**

#### **State panel seeks local support of economic blueprint.**

By Jeff St. John

The Fresno Bee, Saturday, July 29, 2006

MADERA — The California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley may have a plan to improve the region's economy, but it can't succeed without the support — and the input — of local government leaders.

That's what members of the state task force told city and county administrators Friday in Madera, as they unveiled a first draft of a plan that could serve as a blueprint for state and federal efforts at economic revitalization in the eight-county region.

"We're coming to you to tell you what we've been doing, what's shaping up for the plan and to get your feedback," Sunne Wright McPeak, state secretary of business, transportation and housing and the partnership's leader, told the administrators.

Given the scope of the plan, which includes suggestions for improving economic development, education, sustainable growth, medical services, transportation and air quality in the Central Valley, buy-in by local governments will be critical, McPeak said, particularly since many of the initiatives will take years to carry through.

The partnership, formed by Gov. Schwarzenegger in June 2005, will be presenting a completed draft of the plan in September, and a final action plan is due by Nov. 1, McPeak said. Given the

short timeline to adoption of a final plan, "We wanted to check in with you as early as possible," she said.

While the draft plan contained few specifics, the administrators quickly pointed out that the success of its initiatives will depend on intense local support.

"If this thing is going to be successful long-term, we need someone in the eight counties who's driving the ship," said Richard Robinson, Stanislaus County chief executive.

Ronald Errea, county administrative officer for Kern County, added that projects that can survive being chopped from the state's budget during lean years should be emphasized.

Fresno County Administrator Bart Bohn also pointed out that local governments may have a hard time giving the necessary level of support to such long-term economic development goals when they're facing pressing needs for public safety and crime-prevention funding.

In that light, Fresno City Manager Andy Souza said, "Just as important as [financial] resources is a sense of urgency," to keep the plan's proposals competitive with the pressing needs of local officials.

"That's when plans stay on shelves, when we lose that sense of urgency," he warned.

Modesto City Manager George Britton also said he'd like to see more emphasis placed on involving state universities and community colleges in the task force's plans for economic development.

"They will be the intellectual engines that drive our ability to develop an educated and educable work force," he said.

McPeak pointed out some of the successes the partnership has achieved so far, such as placing \$1 billion in Highway 99 improvements on a statewide transportation bond measure to be put to a vote in November, securing \$2 million in state funding for regional transportation planning, and helping to form a consortium of Valley health-care training companies to improve nursing training.

The partnership's mandate is scheduled to expire in November, though McPeak, who is leaving her post later that month to head a technology fund for underprivileged communities, said it could be extended.

Still, with all the questions about the partnership's plan yet to be answered, said Madera County Supervisor Gary Gilbert, it has certainly helped the Valley's disparate communities address their needs to the state with one voice.

With a new plan in place that's backed by local government leaders, "We have priorities, and they're Valley-wide priorities," he said.

## **Gas stations repeatedly cited for air pollution**

### **Fines may be too small to spur pump upkeep**

By Mike Lee

UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

July 30, 2006

Most drivers filling up at a gas station lately probably focus on the pump's fast-rising money counter. But the pump is doing more than selling gasoline – it's fighting air pollution.

Each pump's nozzle is designed to keep fumes from leaking into the air and contributing to the formation of smog, which medical experts have linked to health problems such as cancer and lung ailments.

To work right, these vapor recovery systems must be properly maintained.

San Diego County's Air Pollution Control District issued more than 3,400 vapor-related citations to gas stations from 2000 to April 2006. Its inspectors fined the stations more than \$2.8 million, according to records analyzed by *The San Diego Union-Tribune*.

But with penalties averaging less than \$1,000 per gas-vapor violation, it's unclear whether the air district has gotten the attention of gas sellers. The number of citations dropped less than 2 percent from 2000 to 2005.

Environmentalists and other critics contend that major oil companies accept relatively minor fines as a cost of doing business that is cheaper than staying ahead of problems with their vapor recovery systems.

"It's far too easy for some of these industries . . . to violate their permit and basically get a slap on the wrist," said Tim Carmichael, president of the Coalition for Clean Air, an advocacy group based in Los Angeles.

Throughout the county, approximately 1.3 billion gallons of gasoline are pumped into vehicles each year at more than 900 gas stations. Vapor recovery systems collect 10,000 tons of gas fumes annually.

Eight hundred tons of vapor escape into the atmosphere each year, the air district estimates. That's a dramatic decrease from in the early 1970s, when the vapor recovery system was instituted in the county.

Inspectors commonly cite gas stations for using defective equipment or not performing tests to verify that pollution control systems work properly. Typical problems include torn nozzle bellows, which help capture fumes, and liquid gas clogging the vapor recovery system.

More than half of the vapor-related citations in San Diego County were sent to the corporate offices of six oil giants or convenience store chains. Through contractual agreements, these companies often are responsible for the fines even if they don't operate the gas stations. For instance, oil companies might own gas stations' underground storage systems and are thus liable for their gas-vapor compliance.

The most frequently cited company in the county since 2000 was Equilon, which does business as Shell Oil Products U.S. It had 431 citations. Next was BP-Arco with 315, followed by 7-Eleven with 274.

#### Aggressive enforcer

Oil industry leaders blame the vapor-related penalties on finicky equipment, changing regulations and what some see as overaggressive regulators. The county air district is generally viewed as a strict enforcer of vapor recovery rules in California. Similar standards have been adopted by air regulators nationwide.

"We certainly have invested a lot of time working with the air districts and service station operators . . . to improve compliance because obviously we want this (vapor recovery) program . . . to be very successful," said Catherine Reheis-Boyd chief operating officer at the Western States Petroleum Association, a trade group in Sacramento.

Even regulators concede that public use and abuse of gas pumps adds to the problems. Customers, for instance, contribute to air pollution when they top off their tanks, which can clog vapor recovery lines with liquid fuel.

"You could set up a (vapor recovery) system . . . and go back two days later and it may be still (in compliance or) it may be way off," said Dick Smith, director of the county air district.

Starting in September, the district will require station operators to monitor their vapor systems more frequently. The district's five inspectors typically evaluate each station once a year but tend to make more visits to sites that have received citations.

Beginning in 2009, California gas stations dispensing more than 600,000 gallons a year – which is common for stations in major metropolitan areas – must install devices that alert them to vapor recovery problems. If the complications aren't fixed, the devices could shut down the pumps.

#### Equipment troubles

More than 30 years after San Diego County pioneered vapor recovery devices, they continue to prove problematic.

It costs \$30,000 to \$80,000 to install the equipment on pumps at a new gas station, said Jay McKeeman, government relations director for the California Independent Oil Marketers Association in Sacramento.

"California has required innovative technology . . . that has not panned out to be very reliable," McKeeman said. "The industry in this particular regulatory scheme is the lab rat, except that the lab rat has to pay to enter into the maze and it has to keep paying."

Former air district engineer Barney McEntire said that if the oil industry had helped to foster the development of vapor recovery technology – instead of actively opposing it – the systems would perform better today.

In 1972, San Diego County became the first in the nation to regulate vapor recovery at retail fuel pumps, said McEntire, who retired from the district in 2003.

He said the oil industry fought the rules in court and threatened to stop doing business with nozzle makers if they helped the county develop vapor recovery systems.

So, McEntire crafted his own nozzle. At his Santee home, McEntire still has the shiny silver prototype, which features a hose-within-a-hose design.

"When we started, there was no equipment at all for recovering vapor from autos," he said.

Today there are two systems on the market, one that relies on a rubber boot or bellows to gather vapor and another, similar to McEntire's design, that captures vapor in the nozzle. McEntire said neither he nor the air district filed a patent for his invention because they weren't allowed to make money off a device inspired by their regulations.

The gas vapor is collected in underground storage tanks and returned to the respective oil company for reprocessing.

'Long row to hoe'

At the corner of Broadway and North Mollison in El Cajon, the Exxon gas station is like hundreds of others in the county – with one exception. Since 2000, the local air district's inspectors have issued 11 citations to the station, making it one of the region's most frequent offenders of vapor recovery laws.

Owner Gil Moore at New West Petroleum in Sacramento is steamed about the way the county air district has treated him and his 29 stations in the county. New West has been the subject of a county lawsuit over air violations and it has been billed for nearly \$455,000 in penalties since 2000, district records show.

Moore operates stations in four California air districts. He rates San Diego's as the worst for being overly aggressive about minor violations.

Ultimately, Moore said, the fines drive up his cost of business, which is passed on to customers.

"Nothing is going to work perfectly" Moore said. "You have to allow for error or there is no such thing as a gas station."

Air district officials said they use the penalty revenue for such projects as underwriting a program in which residents can exchange gas lawn mowers for less-polluting electric ones and to offset the cost of legal support from the county counsel's office. None of the revenue pays for the salaries of station inspectors.

New West has plenty of company when it comes to vapor recovery challenges.

"The situation . . . is really pretty consistent up and down the state. It's been kind of a long row to hoe here with compliance," said Carol Coy, a top official for South Coast Air Quality Management District, which covers a large part of the Los Angeles area.

In San Diego County, "if (station owners) are not being responsive or they are not paying and settling up the violations . . . we will call them in," said Smith at the air district.

For instance, regulators confronted Shell/Equilon officials after issuing a string of citations to its gas stations in 2000. Company leaders signed a legal agreement with the air district that year, promising to start an enhanced inspection and maintenance program.

Since then, however, records show that the air district has cited Shell/Equilon 371 more times.

In a statement to the *Union-Tribune*, company officials said they regularly work with the air regulators "to ensure compliance with all paperwork and permitting issues." They did not address why their stations had so many violations or specific efforts to reduce vapor recovery problems.

At Exxon Mobil, spokeswoman Paula Chen said the company trains station operators on how to follow California's vapor rules and it sometimes makes them pay for violations.

"We don't take these things lightly. We do what we can to reduce the number of them," she said.

## **Wal-Mart foes show up in red**

### **Display eye-catching but misses city's ears**

By LESLIE ALBRECHT - MERCED SUN-STAR  
in the Modesto Bee, Monday, July 31, 2006

MERCED — Wal-Mart opponents wanted the city to see red, and their plan worked — sort of.

Residents who don't want Wal-Mart to build a 1.2 million-square-foot warehouse in southeast Merced wore red shirts to a public meeting last week about which issues should be studied in the environmental impact report on the project.

But the silent symbol of protest missed its intended mark because no city officials were present.

"It's not a forum on the merits or demerits of the project," Planning Manager Kim Espinosa told the 120-member audience at the meeting's start.

Instead, the meeting was meant to solicit input about which issues — such as air quality, traffic and noise — should be studied when city-hired consultants write the EIR about the proposed distribution center.

For example, how would 450 trucks driving in and out of the center daily affect Merced's already poor air quality, said Randy Chafin of EDAW Inc., the Sacramento consulting group that's writing the report.

Marilynne Parreira, who said she teaches at Golden Valley High School near the proposed Wal-Mart center, asked that the impact report examine specifically how the center would affect Golden Valley students.

"We need to know, how will diesel emissions affect the students' health?" she said. "How will noise levels affect classrooms and students' ability to focus?"

Another audience member said he wanted to know exactly how long trucks would idle at the center, and how much noise they would make when they drop their trailers.

Susan Boykin said a climatologist should contribute to the impact report, because heat waves such as last week's could be caused by new development.

"When we take acres and acres of trees and pave it with acres and acres of asphalt, we are creating heat islands," Boykin said.

John Spitler said he worries the comments won't find their way to the right ears.

The city will solicit comments on what should be studied in the impact report until Aug. 11.

## **Britain and California to join forces on global warming**

By John Heilprin, ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Published in the San Diego Union-Tribune  
2:02 a.m. July 31, 2006

WASHINGTON – Britain and California are preparing to sidestep the Bush administration and fight global warming together by creating a joint market for greenhouse gases.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair and California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger plan to lay the groundwork for a new trans-Atlantic market in carbon dioxide emissions, The Associated Press has learned. Such a move could help California cut carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases scientists blame for warming the planet. President Bush has rejected the idea of ordering such cuts.

Blair and Schwarzenegger were expected to announce their collaboration Monday afternoon in Los Angeles, according to documents provided by British government officials on condition of anonymity because the announcement was forthcoming.

The aim is to fix a price on carbon pollution, an unwanted byproduct of burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gasoline. The idea is to set overall caps for carbon and reward businesses that find a profitable way to minimize their carbon emissions, thereby encouraging new, greener technologies.

Monday's meeting was being hosted by Steve Howard, CEO of The Climate Group, and Lord John Browne, chairman of British Petroleum. British and American business leaders planned to use it to also discuss other ways of accelerating use of low-carbon technologies.

The world's only mandatory carbon trading program is in Europe. Created in conjunction with the Kyoto Protocol, a 1997 international treaty that took effect last year, it caps the amount of carbon dioxide that can be emitted from power plants and factories in more than two dozen countries.

Companies can trade rights to pollute directly with each other or through exchanges located around Europe as long as the cap is met. Canada, one of more than 160 nations that signed Kyoto, plans a similar program.

Although the United States is one of the few industrialized nations that haven't signed the treaty, some Eastern states are developing a regional cap-and-trade program. And some U.S. companies have voluntarily agreed to cap their carbon pollution as part of a new Chicago-based market.

A main target of the agreement between Britain and California is the carbon from cars, trucks and other modes of transportation. Transportation accounts for an estimated 41 percent of California's greenhouse gas emissions and 28 percent of Britain's.

Schwarzenegger has called on California to cut its greenhouse gas emissions to 2000 levels by 2010. California was the 12th largest source of greenhouse gases in the world last year, bigger than most nations.

Blair has called on Britain to reduce carbon emissions to 60 percent of its 1990 levels by 2050. Britain also has been looking at imposing individual limits on carbon pollution. People who accumulate unused carbon allowances – for example, by driving less, or switching to less polluting vehicles – could sell them to people who exceed their allowances – for example by driving more.

Bush has resisted Blair's efforts to make carbon reduction a top international priority. After taking office, Bush reversed a 2000 campaign pledge to regulate carbon dioxide emissions, then withdrew U.S. support from the Kyoto treaty requiring industrialized nations to cut their greenhouse gases to below 1990 levels.

The United States is responsible for a quarter of the world's global warming pollution. Bush administration officials argue that requiring cuts in greenhouse gases would cost the U.S. economy 5 million jobs. Instead, the administration has poured billions of dollars into research aimed at slowing the growth of most greenhouse gases while advocating a global cut on one of them, methane.

## **L.A.'s big import: Overseas pollution**

### **25% of particulates from China**

BY BRENT HOPKINS Staff Writer

LA Daily News

July 29, 2006

The brilliant scarlet tones of a smoggy Los Angeles sunset may look pretty, but air quality experts maintain they actually herald a new Red Menace.

More than 6,000 miles from the City of Angels, Chinese factories produce toys, shoes, household goods, tools and all manner of everyday necessities.

They're also producing pollution, dust, soot, sulfur and metal that hop the Pacific Ocean and end up in the air Angelenos breathe. According to one estimate, up to a quarter of the particulates clogging up the city's already-dirty air come from China.

"Who would have thought that this would be the communist invasion?" laughed Martin Schlageter, campaign director for Coalition for Clean Air.

While his tone was jovial, he didn't find the subject particularly funny. A recent report by the Santa Monica-based Natural Resources Defense Council said China builds one new coal-fired plant each week. The soot belched forth will shortly account for one-third of the smog-forming air pollution in California, the council said.

The Associated Press cited an Environmental Protection Agency study that says 25 percent of the particulates in Los Angeles air originate from China. Within 15 years, the NRDC says that pollution will quadruple.

"NRDC and other environmental groups recognized long ago that unless we help China solve some of its problems, everyone in the world's going to end up suffering from it," said Daniel Hinerfeld, a spokesman for the NRDC.

"The world is a lot smaller than we realize. Our atmosphere is so thin ... industrial activity in China can blow across the ocean and affect our air all the way here in Los Angeles."

According to the EPA, China also accounts for 40 percent of the world's cement production, a major source of dioxin in the air. Additionally, the University of Washington has detected ozone, carbon monoxide, mercury and particulate matter from Asia at multiple sites in the Pacific Northwest.

"We understand that China is an emerging and vibrant member of the global economy," said EPA spokesman Francisco Arcaute. "We are working with China to see they reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases."

While the EPA works with its counterpart organization in China to limit dioxin and coal-plant emissions, it's a delicate balance. The American economy relies so heavily upon Chinese manufacturers, asking too stridently for constraints on its factories could produce a chill on low-cost exports that keep prices low at the mall.

"We're exporting our manufacturing pollution problem to China," said Schlageter, "then importing it right back in."

## **China's growing air pollution reaches American skies**

By TERENCE CHEA, The Associated Press

In the Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, July 29, 2006

On a mountaintop overlooking the Pacific Ocean, Steven Cliff collects evidence of an industrial revolution taking place thousands of miles away.

The tiny, airborne particles Cliff gathers at an air monitoring station just north of San Francisco drifted over the ocean from coal-fired power plants, smelters, dust storms and diesel trucks in China and other Asian countries.

Researchers say the environmental impact of China's breakneck economic growth is being felt well beyond its borders. They worry that as China consumes more fossil fuels to feed its energy-hungry economy, the U.S. could see a sharp increase in trans-Pacific pollution that could affect human health, worsen air quality and alter climate patterns.

"We're going to see increased particulate pollution from the expansion of China for the foreseeable future," said Cliff, a research engineer at the University of California, Davis.

He has monitoring stations on Mount Tamalpais, Donner Summit near Lake Tahoe, and Mount Lassen in far Northern California. Those sites see little pollution from local sources, and the composition of the dust particles matches that of the Gobi Desert and other Asian sites, Cliff said.

About a third of the Asian pollution is dust, which is increasing due to drought and deforestation, Cliff said. The rest is composed of sulfur, soot and trace metals from the burning of coal, diesel and other fossil fuels.

Cliff is studying whether transported particulate matter could affect climate by trapping heat, reflecting light or changing rainfall patterns.

Most air pollution in U.S. cities is generated locally, but that could change if citizens in China, India and other developing nations adopt American-style consumption patterns, researchers say.

"If they started driving cars and using electricity at the rate in the developed world, the amount of pollution they generate will increase many, many times," said Tony Van Curen, a UC Davis researcher who works with Cliff.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that on certain days nearly 25 percent of the particulate matter in the skies above Los Angeles can be traced to China. Some experts predict China could one day account for a third of all California's air pollution.

Dan Jaffe, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Washington, said he has detected ozone, carbon monoxide, mercury and particulate matter from Asia at monitoring sites on Mount Bachelor in Oregon and Cheeka Peak in Washington state.

"There is some amount of the pollution in the air we breathe coming from halfway around the world," Jaffe said. "There ultimately is no 'away.' There is no place where you can put away your pollution anymore."

China's environmental problems are severe and getting worse. Nearly 30 years of relentless industrial expansion has fouled the country's rivers, lakes, forests, farmland and skies.

The World Bank estimates that 16 of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in China, and air pollution is blamed for about 400,000 premature deaths there each year.

Coal-fired power plants supply two-thirds of China's energy and are its biggest source of air pollution. Already the world's largest producer and consumer of coal, China on average builds a new coal-fired power plant every week.

Meanwhile, car ownership is soaring as the country's economy grows about 10 percent a year, contributing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases linked to global warming.

If current trends continue, China will surpass the U.S. as the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the next decade, said Barbara Finamore, who heads the Natural Resources Defense Council's China Clean Energy program, which is helping the country boost its energy efficiency.

"China's staggering economic growth is an environmental time bomb that, unless defused, threatens to convulse the entire planet regardless of progress in all other nations," Finamore said.

Even Chinese environmental officials warn that pollution levels could quadruple over the next 15 years if the country doesn't curb energy use and emissions. Beijing plans to spend \$162 billion on environmental cleanup over the next five years, but the scale of the country's pollution problems is immense.

"When you look at China's population growth and industrial growth, it's hard to imagine how air quality could improve in the near future," said Ruby Leung, a researcher at the Energy Department's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, Wash., which collaborates with Chinese government scientists on atmospheric research.

Earlier this year, Leung and her colleagues published a study that found particulate pollution has darkened China's skies over the past 50 years by absorbing and deflecting the sun's rays.

China's pollution also regularly dirties the air in neighboring South Korea and Japan, but until recently researchers didn't think it had much effect on North America.

U.S. scientists have recently found that Asian pollution is consistently transported across the Pacific on air currents. It can take anywhere from five days to two weeks for particles to cross the ocean.

Some scientists predict that global warming could change those circulation patterns, either speeding or slowing the transport of pollutants from Asia.

China's environmental challenges are daunting, but the country is taking action to reduce its energy use and air pollution, said NRDC's Finamore. Beijing has set ambitious goals for increasing energy efficiency, fuel economy standards and use of renewable power sources such as wind and solar, she said.

"There are tremendous opportunities for China to slow the amount of pollution it pumps in the air," Finamore said.

### **Unwanted import: Chinese smog**

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

in the Modesto Bee, Saturday, July 29, 2006

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that on certain days, nearly 25 percent of the dust and soot in the skies above Los Angeles can be traced to China.

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## **LA vs. SF now truly a battle of Olympic proportions**

The Associated Press

The Fresno Bee, Saturday, July 29, 2006

The rivalry between San Francisco and Los Angeles already runs deep. Add to that the tug-of-war for the 2016 Summer Olympics, and the claws come out. Here's how each city stacks up in 10 key categories.

**Weather:** San Francisco is foggy and rarely warm, jacket weather when the rest of the country is in shorts. In Los Angeles, people are always in shorts. The forecast is sunny and warm today, with more sun and warmth expected tomorrow. Advantage: L.A.

**Scenery:** San Francisco has the hills, the waterfront, breathtakingly beautiful bridges and guaranteed (but often unwelcome) nudity at the annual Bay to Breakers race. [Los Angeles is almost all freeways, desert and flatness, and what scenery there is is often hidden by the smog.](#) Advantage: San Francisco.

**Landmarks:** San Francisco has the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz. Los Angeles has the Hollywood sign and Grauman's Chinese Theatre. Advantage: San Francisco.

**Attitude:** San Francisco is laid-back but highly political; don't come without an opinion. Los Angeles is glamorous but superficial; your opinion is optional. Advantage: Tie.

**Nightlife:** San Francisco has hopping South of Market night clubs and hipster-packed Mission District dive bars, but downtown is dead at night. Los Angeles has Universal CityWalk, a hopping Thai Town nightlife and a slowly emerging downtown scene. Advantage: Tie.

**Price:** San Francisco is expensive. Really, really expensive. Los Angeles is expensive. Really expensive. But out-of-towners who visit San Francisco first will think Los Angeles is not so bad. Advantage: L.A.

**Recreation:** San Francisco has mountain biking opportunities everywhere, some of the country's toughest surf at Ocean Beach and art house movie theaters galore. Los Angeles has movie studio tours, the Universal Studios theme park, the Hollywood Walk of Fame and Disneyland. (All right, technically, Disneyland isn't in L.A., but everyone who goes there visits it.) Advantage: San Francisco.

**Beaches:** The ocean water in San Francisco is frigid and dangerous. Los Angeles has an abundance of sandy, warm-water surfing and swimming beaches, Venice Pier and boardwalk. Advantage: L.A.

**Air Quality:** [San Francisco's air is crisp and clean. Los Angeles has air you can sometimes cut with a knife.](#) Advantage: San Francisco.

**Celebrity-watching:** Robin Williams and Sean Penn live in the San Francisco Bay area. Every other celebrity is in Los Angeles, including several who can be viewed getting into traffic accidents or being mobbed at shopping malls. Advantage: L.A.

## **Many leaders drive guzzlers**

### **Large vehicles are popular with state lawmakers -- but so are hybrids.**

By Jim Sanders -- Bee Capitol Bureau

Sacramento Bee, Saturday, July 29, 2006

While California legislators lament air pollution and the rising cost of gasoline, nearly two dozen drive gas-guzzling vehicles purchased and fueled at taxpayer expense, records show.

Twenty-two legislators drive trucks, large cars or sport-utility vehicles that average about 20 miles per gallon of gasoline, or less, on state highways.

Another 11 Senate and Assembly members drive vehicles that get only slightly better mileage, between 20 and 25 mpg on highways.

Tim Carmichael, president of the Coalition for Clean Air, a nonprofit group formed to fight air pollution, said the driving habits of the state's 120 legislators are telling.

"Many of them are supporting public policies or regulations or incentives for fuel-efficient vehicles, which is great," he said. "But they should also walk the walk and lead by example."

Bill Bird, a spokesman for Sen. Sam Aanestad, R-Grass Valley, said extenuating circumstances can make driving a large vehicle necessary.

Aanestad drives a 2003 Ford Expedition Eddie Bauer -- estimated to get about 19 mpg -- because he needs a car rugged enough for his mountainous, 12-county district, Bird said.

"These are rural roads, they're uneven, some of them aren't even paved," he said. "He needs a vehicle that not only can take him to different parts of the district but can take staff members there as well."

Aanestad's SUV, despite its large size, saves public funds that otherwise would be spent flying the senator to Del Norte County in the uppermost reaches of his district, Bird said.

Senate Republican leader Dick Ackerman, of Irvine, said he drives a 2005 Ford Explorer, in part, because he feels safer in it.

"I'd rather have more metal around me than most of the hybrids have to offer," he said.

Sen. Bob Dutton, R-Rancho Cucamonga, said that size matters, too. He drives a 2005 Chevrolet Tahoe Z71 that gets about 20 mpg on the freeway.

"I'd want a bigger car than the Dodge Stratus, because I'm not a little guy," he said, laughing.

In stark contrast to gas guzzlers, hybrids that run on both gasoline and electricity are gaining in popularity at the Capitol -- particularly among Democrats.

To encourage hybrid use, the Assembly offers \$6,000 off the purchase price in a member's portion of monthly payments.

Among legislators, 25 Democrats and 12 Republicans drive hybrids. The two most popular models are Toyotas -- the Prius, which gets about 51 mpg on the highway, and the Highlander SUV, about 27 mpg.

Mileage estimates used by The Bee in analyzing legislators' fuel efficiency are from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy.

Hybrids made up 15 of the 35 vehicles bought for lawmakers' business and limited personal use in 2005 and 2006.

During the same two-year period, only seven of the nearly three dozen vehicles purchased for legislators were gas guzzlers averaging about 20 mpg or less.

Thirty-one percent of California's legislators drive hybrids, compared to fewer than 1 percent of the state's motorists, records show.

"I'm really encouraged -- that's leadership," said Bob Stern, president of the Center for Governmental Studies in Los Angeles.

"I think you're seeing that (habits) clearly are changing."

Assemblywoman Lois Wolk, D-Davis, said her 2-year-old Toyota Prius has 50,000 miles but requires little maintenance.

"The mileage is excellent, it's comfortable, it's safe," she said. "I think this generation of hybrid vehicles is quite mainstream. I love getting 45 mpg... I think it's very important to be frugal with state funding."

Wolk declined to comment on the Legislature's gas guzzlers.

"There are 80 different Assembly districts, with 80 different members, 80 different tastes, and 80 different points of view," she said.

Assemblyman Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, said he chose a 2005 Honda Accord Hybrid partly because of its environmental benefits.

"I think we have the opportunity to lead and to demonstrate the importance of doing better with regard to our dwindling oil," he said.

Each legislator is entitled to choose a vehicle to use while in office. The state then pays for it and leases it back to the officeholder for four years.

Taxpayers generally pick up a monthly tab of up to \$350 per vehicle. Lawmakers pay at least 10 percent of the monthly bill -- and all costs above \$350.

Gasoline and maintenance costs are paid with public funds.

Nine legislators have declined a state car: Sen. Dave Cox, R-Fair Oaks; Sen. Joe Dunn, D-Santa Ana; Sen. Sheila Kuehl, D-Santa Monica; Assembly Republicans Roger Niello of Fair Oaks, Sam Blakeslee of San Luis Obispo, Mark Wyland of Del Mar, and Chuck Devore of Irvine; and Assembly Democrats Juan Arambula of Fresno and Carol Liu of La Cañada Flintridge.

Among Sacramento-area lawmakers, hybrids are used by Assemblyman Dave Jones, D-Sacramento, who drives a Toyota Prius, and Sen. Mike Machado, D-Linden, who drives a Ford Escape.

Toyota Highlander hybrids, 2006 models, are driven by Assembly Republicans Alan Nakanishi of Lodi, Rick Keene of Chico, and Guy Houston, whose district stretches from Contra Costa County into Elk Grove.

Other local legislators and their vehicles include: Assemblyman Tim Leslie, R-Tahoe City, a 2005 Buick Park Avenue, about 29 mpg; Sen. Deborah Ortiz, D-Sacramento, a 2004 Lincoln LS, about 27 mpg; and Assemblyman Doug La Malfa, R-Richvale, 2003 Ford Mustang V-8, about 24 mpg.

## **LEGISLATORS WHOSE VEHICLES GET 20 MPG OR LESS ON HIGHWAYS**

- Assemblyman Rudy Bermudez, D-Norwalk, 2003 Ford Expedition Eddie Bauer
- Sen. Sam Aanestad, R-Grass Valley, 2003 Ford Expedition Eddie Bauer
- Assemblyman Ed Chavez, D-La Puente, 2004 Ford Expedition Eddie Bauer
- Assemblywoman Bonnie Garcia, R-Cathedral City, 2003 Ford Expedition
- Sen. Dennis Hollingsworth, R-Temecula, 2003 Ford Expedition
- Assemblyman Bob Huff, R-Diamond Bar, 2004 Ford Explorer
- Assemblywoman Wilma Chan, D-Alameda, 2004 Lincoln Aviator
- Sen. Jim Battin, R-Palm Desert, 2005 Lincoln Aviator
- Sen. Roy Ashburn, R-Bakersfield, 2003 Chevrolet Suburban
- Assemblyman Ray Haynes, R-Murrieta, 2003 Chevrolet Tahoe truck
- Assembly Republican leader George Plescia, La Jolla, 2003 Chevrolet Tahoe
- Assemblyman Jerome Horton, D-Inglewood, 2001 Chevrolet Tahoe
- Sen. Bob Dutton, R-Rancho Cucamonga, 2005 Chevrolet Tahoe Z71
- Assemblyman Kevin McCarthy, R-Bakersfield, 2003 Chevrolet Tahoe
- Assemblyman Michael Villines, R-Clovis, 2004 Chevrolet Trailblazer
- Sen. Bill Morrow, R-Oceanside, 2004 Chevrolet Silverado truck
- Assemblyman Todd Spitzer, R-Orange, 2003 GMC Yukon
- Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, 2003 GMC Yukon
- Assemblyman Juan Vargas, D-San Diego, 2004 Dodge Ram Quad 4x4 Truck
- Senate Republican leader Dick Ackerman, Irvine, 2005 Ford Explorer
- Assemblywoman Rebecca Cohn, D-Saratoga, 2004 Jeep Grand Cherokee
- Sen. Gloria Romero, D-Los Angeles, 2005 Jeep Wrangler

## **LEGISLATORS WHOSE VEHICLES GET 20-25 MPG ON HIGHWAYS**

- Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez, D-Los Angeles, 2003 Ford Explorer Eddie Bauer
- Assemblyman Simon Salinas, D-Salinas, 2004 Ford Escape Limited
- Sen. Liz Figueroa, D-Sunol, 2003 Ford Thunderbird
- Assemblyman Jay La Suer, R-La Mesa, 2002 Lincoln LS
- Sen. Edward Vincent, D-Inglewood, 2005 Lincoln Town Car
- Sen. Jackie Speier, D-Hillsborough, 2001 Lincoln Town Car
- Assemblyman Dario Frommer, D-Los Angeles, 2005 Jeep Grand Cherokee Laredo
- Sen. Gil Cedillo, D-Los Angeles, 2004 Jeep Cherokee
- Sen. Tom McClintock, R-Thousand Oaks, 1998 Mercury Grand Marquis
- Sen. Chuck Pochigian, R-Fresno, 2001 Mercury Grand Marquis
- Assemblywoman Sally Lieber, D-Mountain View, 2003 Mercury Marauder

Note: Miles per gallon figures are estimates from statistics by the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Source: Assembly and Senate Rules committees

## **Oil refineries reap big profits in tight market**

By Nicole Gaudiano, Gannett News Service

In the Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Saturday, July 29, 2006

WASHINGTON - The oil refining industry may have helped create a gasoline market that's so tight, some industry experts and critics say any hurricane, pipeline break or other disruption is likely to cause price spikes.

During unprofitable times in the 1990s, some refiners' internal memos show they wanted to reduce refining capacity to boost profits.

The industry dismisses those memos' significance - and the notion it tightly controls supply - but ultimately, its investments in refining capacity haven't kept pace with the growth in demand.

Today, there are fewer refineries but more profitable, refining companies.

Refiners also reduced the amount of gas they keep in reserve to use as a cushion during disruptions, and some companies limited production in the Midwest in 2000 for the sole purpose of maximizing profits.

Those moves are legal and considered to be sound business practices. But they contribute to higher prices at the pump.

Some members of Congress and consumer advocates say the oil industry has taken such practices to anti-competitive extremes that ultimately hurt consumers.

"Gasoline is not Starbucks coffee," said Tyson Slocum, director of Public Citizen's energy program. "It is a critical commodity that should not be subject to the whims of the supplier."

### **Surplus refining capacity**

The price of crude oil is the largest determinant of the price of gasoline, accounting for about half of the cost of a gallon and most of oil-producing companies' profits.

But crude must be refined into gasoline, and disruptions in that process can lead to sharp price increases. That's especially the case today, as the demand for gas grows faster than U.S. refining capacity.

"It will not make a difference if Saudi Arabia ships an extra million or two million barrels of crude oil to the United States," Crown Prince Abdullah's foreign affairs adviser, Adel Al-Jubeir, said this spring. "If you cannot refine it, it will not turn into gasoline, and that will not turn into lower prices."

There were dozens more refineries in the 1990s, but they weren't as profitable. Environmental regulations on the products and facilities required expensive updates and some refining companies "didn't make the economic cut," said Bob Slaughter, president of the National Petrochemical and Refiners Association.

Even as smaller, inefficient refineries closed, some in the industry still worried about having too much refining capacity to turn a profit, according to "highly confidential" internal documents exposed in a 2001 investigation by Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.

An internal 1995 Chevron memo relays the warning an energy analyst made at an American Petroleum Institute convention: "If the U.S. petroleum industry doesn't reduce its refining capacity, it will never see any substantial increase in refining margins [earnings divided by operating revenue]."

Similarly, a Texaco executive in 1996 complained of "surplus refining capacity" and wrote that "significant events need to occur to assist in reducing supplies and/or increasing the demand for gasoline."

API's chief economist John Felmy called the statements "purely musings" and said it's "utter nonsense to argue that we're tightly controlling supply."

"We've expanded capacity over the last 10 years, the equivalent of a new refinery every year," Felmy said. "But these radical groups will come up and say things that are fundamentally untrue."

Further, the industry projects capacity increases of 1.4 million to 2 million barrels per day in the next four years.

The Federal Trade Commission, in its investigation of post-Katrina gas prices, found no evidence suggesting companies refused to sufficiently invest in new refineries to tighten supply and raise prices in the long run. Instead, the agency said the evidence suggested further investment would have been unprofitable.

### **More capacity, fewer companies**

Indeed, refining capacity increased by 12 percent since 1987. But U.S. demand for gasoline increased by 28 percent. Refineries are now using nearly all of their capacity, compared with 83 percent in 1987.

The U.S. refining companies that stayed in the business - 55 in 2006 compared with 188 in 1980 - are seeing the rewards.

ExxonMobil's refining and marketing segment ended last year with a 40 percent profit increase. The top independent refiners and marketers collectively scored a 92 percent increase.

"We have grown and we've been in the right business at the right time," Rich Marcogliese, Valero's executive vice president of refining operations, said in an interview. "It is a great time to be in refining because the supply/demand balance for refined products is tight with good margins."

Valero led the independents earning \$3.6 billion in profits, a 99 percent increase over 2004. The company grew from one refinery in 1996 to 18 today, becoming one of the largest U.S. refining operations after acquiring Premcor Inc. last year.

Valero was just one part of the industry's consolidation. There were more than 2,600 mergers in the U.S. petroleum industry - about 13 percent in the refining and marketing sector - since the 1990s.

The industry's consolidation, mostly in the refining segment, has generally led to wholesale price increases averaging 1 to 2 cents per gallon, a 2004 Government Accountability Office study found. The FTC disputed the study, but the GAO has stood by its results.

"If you are observing higher wholesale prices, you probably can expect higher retail prices, all things being equal," said Godwin M. Agbara, who led the study.

### **Dwindling inventories**

Refiners keep some gasoline on reserve at U.S. refineries or terminals to protect against price spikes in case of a disruption. But inventories have declined from 40 days of average U.S. consumption in the early 1980s to about 23 days in 2004, a GAO report stated.

Their move to a just-in-time delivery system mirrors other industries, and it may reduce gas prices because of lower storage fees. But it also can increase price volatility.

On Aug. 26, just before Hurricane Katrina hit, U.S. inventories for gasoline were 194 million barrels, less than three days' supply before hitting the minimum operating level, a Congressional Research Service study found.

An Arizona attorney general's report on post-Katrina gas prices argues that, while the practice may work under ideal conditions, every disruption caused by natural disaster, refinery outage or broken pipeline affects the tight supply-demand balance.

"Petroleum markets quickly tighten and prices skyrocket," the April 2006 report said. "Thus, consumers pay a high price for the oil companies' profit maximization strategies."

### **Midwest price spike**

Low inventories exacerbated refinery production problems and failures of pipelines serving the Midwest during the spring 2000 switch to reformulated gas. Midwest refiners, along with others across the nation, had allowed their inventories to dwindle as they waited for the price of crude to drop, the Federal Trade Commission found in an investigation.

As the national average reached \$1.67 per gallon, gas in Chicago soared to \$2.13 and in Milwaukee to \$2.02 that spring. On one hand, that price spike helps illustrate a complaint of refiners: boutique fuels. Chicago and Milwaukee relied exclusively on ethanol as a [pollution-reducing additive](#) and refiners couldn't easily import a substitute to ease the shortage, the FTC's investigation found.

"All these different fuels around the country - that's effectively using up refining capacity," Peter Robertson, Chevron Corp. vice chairman, said in an interview. "By having one flavor for Atlanta and one flavor for California and one flavor for Chicago means you can't balance the system."

But the FTC also found three companies, left unidentified in its report, had previously decided independently to maximize their profits by curtailing production.

At least one other company had excess supply but withheld it from the market to keep prices high.

"An executive of this company made clear that he would rather sell less gasoline and earn a higher margin on each gallon sold than sell more gasoline and earn a lower margin," the report said.

Despite such findings, the FTC determined the industry did nothing illegal and issued a warning that seemed targeted more toward consumers than refiners: "Unless gasoline demand abates or refining capacity grows, price spikes are likely to occur in the future in the Midwest and other areas of the country."

[San Francisco Chronicle, Guest Commentary, Monday, July 31, 2006](#)

### **The bottom line on global warming**

Tom King and Steve Howard

When British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger meet with a group of CEOs at the Port of Long Beach today to discuss climate change and energy, there will be no argument that global warming is real. Rather, the subject of the roundtable discussions will center on how business and government can work together to develop cost-effective strategies to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.

California is the perfect place to hold such a meeting. The state is already seeing the economic potential that comes when business and government work together. For almost 30 years, Californians have invested in energy efficiency and in cleaning up energy sources. These energy-saving actions not only reduce the emissions that cause global warming, they are saving California businesses millions of dollars every year.

A 2005 study of California by The Climate Group, a nonprofit, international consortium of government and business, found that California is a low-carbon leader in the United States. Further, a study by experts at Stanford University notes that energy efficiency in California's commercial and industrial sectors helped California's economy grow an additional 3 percent -- a \$31 billion gain -- between 1975 and 1995.

California's energy-efficiency programs have been the most innovative and aggressive in the country. In the last 30 years, per capita energy use in our state has remained basically flat, while in the rest of the country, it has increased about 50 percent. If California's energy use had grown at the U.S. rate, estimates are that about 25,000 megawatts worth of new generating stations would have been needed -- roughly equivalent to about 25 large power plants.

Largely as a result of its investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy, natural gas and other cleaner conventional sources, PG&E, is one of the cleanest energy providers of any large utility in the nation, according to Ceres (a national network of investment funds, environmental organizations and other public interest groups), Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Public Service Enterprise Group. The utility's customers, for example, have taken advantage of state-supported rebates to purchase a full range of energy-efficient appliances. As a result, over the past 30 years, PG&E's customer energy-efficiency programs have kept 61 million tons of global warming gases out of the atmosphere. Last fall, PG&E joined with state regulators to launch an ambitious, \$2 billion initiative to expand energy-efficiency programs -- the largest, most comprehensive such effort in the United States.

California's lawmakers are also setting an example to the rest of the world when it comes to addressing global warming. The governor and leaders in the Legislature, including the Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez and the Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, are working to develop

the steps that California can take to address climate change. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's California's Climate Action Report contains many promising recommendations that are designed to meet the statewide global warming emission-reduction targets he announced last year. These include coordinating California's investments to spur the development of clean-energy technologies, giving "early action credit" to business and local governments who are already investing in reducing greenhouse gases, and requiring large emitters of greenhouse gases to measure their greenhouse-gas emissions annually and to disclose their inventory to the public.

Implementation of a number of these recommendations will extend environmental and economic benefits. For example, the estimated energy savings from expanding energy-efficiency programs similar to PG&E's to all California utilities -- including municipal utilities -- would be the avoided-pollution equivalent of taking more than a million cars off the road by 2020. That would provide an estimated \$3 billion in savings to consumers over the next decade.

Today, the governor and Prime Minister Blair will exchange ideas with business leaders on how to advance clean energy use and clean technologies that will help our planet make the critically important transition to a low-carbon economy as cost-effective as possible. The stakes are high, but so are the potential rewards, including new investments in efficient technology, new jobs, and, most importantly, real progress in reducing greenhouse-gas emissions that will help address climate change.

Tom King is CEO of Pacific Gas and Electric Company. Steve Howard is CEO of The Climate Group, which is hosting the Climate and Energy Roundtable. The Climate Group is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing business and government leadership on climate change. It is based in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia.

[Tracy Press, Editorial, Monday, July 31, 2006](#)

### **Tracy should thank scouts for retiring flags**

**BOUQUET:** To Boy Scout Jake Palmer and his fellow members of Troop 515 for properly retiring more than 1,000 worn and torn U.S. flags during the Fourth of July weekend. Palmer wants to thank the Tracy community for donating the flags for the ceremony by recognizing the long tradition and for honoring America and those who have fought for its freedom. Instead, it should be we who honor the community service of teens, such as those in Troop 515.

**BOUQUET:** To the city of Tracy for extending the hours of Lolly Hansen Senior Center until 10 p.m. on hot days so it can be a local cooling center for families and senior citizens who need to escape the relentless summer heat.

**BARB:** To the city of Tracy not having the emergency cooling plans for a cooling station at Lolly Hansen Senior Center in place before Wednesday, a week after Tracy began experiencing 100-plus degree days.

**BARB:** [To China for sending its air pollution to the California coast, and most likely to Tracy. An air monitoring station just north of San Francisco is picking up air particles drifting over the Pacific Ocean from coal-fired power plants, smelters, dust storms and diesel trucks on the Asian mainland.](#)

**BOUQUET:** To Tracy teenagers Anem Aftab, Charlena Davis, Sarah Koo, David Chen, Taylor Dantanavatanawong, Kaela De Deaux, Sidra Haiy, Sona Makker and Michelle de Supinski for awaiting appointment Tuesday to the city's Youth Advisory Council, which oversees services for local youngsters, especially culture and recreation.

**BARB:** To the city of Tracy for going against its advice to conserve water by using sprinklers to water the grass at the Tracy Sports Park and Plasencia Fields at the hottest time of the afternoon.

**BARB:** To the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for not keeping records of the hours its employees spend working on union activities. The potential cost to the state is millions in salary that should have been paid by the unions, claims the Office of the Inspector

General. A review of the past five years found the accounting system was so bad that it was impossible to find out how much state money had been improperly spent.

**BOUQUET:** To three local youth softball teams for making the national tournaments. The All-American Sports Academy 10-and-under team travels to Moline, Ill., the sports academy's 16-and-under squad heads to Seattle and the NorCal Flyers 18-and-under squad heads to Owensboro, Ky.

[Sacramento Bee, Commentary, Sunday, July 30, 2006](#)

### **Dan Walters: Global warming, whether theory or fact, spawns political heat**

By Dan Walters -- Bee Columnist

Thirty-one years ago, Newsweek magazine published an extensive account of what it described as a growing scientific consensus of global climate change.

"There are ominous signs that the Earth's weather patterns have begun to change dramatically and that these changes may portend a drastic decline in food production," Newsweek said, adding, "The evidence in support of these predictions has now begun to accumulate so massively that meteorologists are hard-pressed to keep up with it" and "to scientists these seemingly disparate incidents represent the advance signs of fundamental changes in the world's weather."

Global warming? Not quite. The Newsweek article about the emerging scientific consensus was about global cooling and the potential onset of a mini-ice age, akin to the one that chilled the Northern Hemisphere between 1600 and 1900.

Now we are told, of course, that there's a growing scientific consensus about global warming, with hydrocarbon emissions from humankind's economic activities the chief culprit, although there's a significant body of contrary opinion.

Whether global warming is a scientific fact or, alternatively, a theory being propagandized for ideological reasons is still an open question. But it clearly is a political fact and in politics, perceptions are always more powerful than reality, whatever it may be.

The potency of global warming as a political issue is underscored in a new poll by the Public Policy Institute of California, which found that most Californians are alarmed and want the state to take steps to deal with it regardless of what happens at the national or international levels.

"Californians now rank global warming as more important than at any time since we first started asking about it in June of 2000," said PPIC's polling director, Mark Baldassare.

The poll was taken even before California was slammed by a record-breaking and deadly heat wave in mid-July, so it would be a safe assumption that the attitudes found in the PPIC poll have hardened since then.

Not to be punny, but it's a hot potato for Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger as he tries to balance the evident voter interest in doing something about global warming against his very close, mutually beneficial political alliance with business executives. The latter are leery about strict regulations on hydrocarbon emissions, as proposed in legislation, Assembly Bill 32, being advanced by Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez.

The California Chamber of Commerce and other business groups have labeled AB 32 a "job killer" that "increases costs for California businesses, makes them less competitive and discourages economic growth with little or no proven environmental benefit by adopting an arbitrary cap on carbon emissions." Schwarzenegger needs business support in his re-election campaign but has said he wants to push global warming actions, has already undertaken some steps by decree, and is at least a semi-sponsor of the Núñez bill.

As currently written, AB 32 labels global warming a "serious threat" and directs the state Air Resources Board, over a period of years, to monitor greenhouse gas emissions and set standards for reducing them. Having the ARB become the greenhouse gas czar is a key element of the legislation, one that environmentalists like because of its history of aggressive action on smog, and one that business leaders dislike for the same reason. They envision every business project becoming a battleground, much as occurs now under the California Environmental Quality Act, forcing corporations to buy up emission credits to operate.

Schwarzenegger is now suggesting that the ARB be taken out of the picture and that the power to set and enforce greenhouse gas emissions be given to a new agency directly under the control of a governor and his appointees -- including the power to nix any regulations deemed to be economically harmful. And that's raising the hackles of environmentalists, who see having a governor directly control enforcement as an invitation for business to wield influence through the Governor's Office.

It will be hot in Sacramento when the Legislature meets for the final, hectic weeks of the 2006 session. And AB 32 will be generating much of the political heat rising from the Capitol.

[Letter to the L.A. Times, Sunday, July 30, 2006:](#)

### **Hot spell puts focus on solar energy alternatives**

Your call for better management of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's electrical system during hot summer afternoons (editorial, July 26) is spot on.

The DWP should also do more to promote energy efficiency and clean, renewable energy, especially solar power. Solar panels, which convert sunlight into electricity with no pollution, are an ideal resource for California, especially Los Angeles.

Southern California Edison and the state's other investor-owned utilities are now part of the California Solar Initiative to build a million solar roofs in 10 years. The DWP also needs to participate in this statewide initiative by building its share, about 100,000 solar roofs. Doing so would ease pressure on the electrical infrastructure and bring clean air and energy independence for all to enjoy.

Bernadette del Chiaro, Clean Energy Advocate, Environment California  
Sacramento

[San Francisco Chronicle, Letters to the Editor Monday, July 31, 2006](#)

### **Make transit affordable**

Editor -- Free transit on "Spare the Air" days is a short-sighted program -- a Band-Aid that will never stop our cities from bleeding pollution. While year-round free ridership is an ideal solution, it's an unrealistic one.

What we need most is a pragmatic approach that rewards Bay Area residents for the frequency with which they ride, instead of for the frequency with which they drive.

Bay Area transit prices are astronomical with East Bay and Peninsula round trips costing more than \$6 and \$7, respectively. Even a monthly Caltrain pass for Peninsula commuters is \$99.50. It's no wonder ridership isn't higher.

"Spare the Air" money should be used to make mass transit affordable to everyone by truly lowering monthly pass costs, making BART bike-friendly and implementing programs that get

new riders on-board for the long haul. Instead of remediation, let's try prevention, and we can spare the air not just today, but for generations to come.

LORI LOW, San Francisco