

State park officials protest dairies

Opponents say environmental report incomplete

By Jed Chernabaeff, Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Thursday, Aug. 10, 2006

A proposal to establish two dairies within miles of Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park met resistance Wednesday at a Tulare County Planning Commission meeting.

California State Park officials asked the commission to hold off on approving a special-use permit to construct the two dairies west of Earlimart and miles from the park because they said the environmental impact report wasn't thorough.

The effects of flies, dust, and odors on the park from the dairies weren't included in the EIR, said Kathryn Tobias, an attorney with the California State Parks Department of Parks and Recreation.

The park preserves Allensworth, the only California town to be founded, financed and governed by African Americans, according to the state park's Web site.

"We don't know what the impacts are on the state park," Tobias said. "We would like a consultant to tell us [what the effects of the dairy will be]".

While a decision to approve the special use permit for the two dairies was tabled until Sept. 13, public comment was allowed.

Sam Etchegaray of Visalia applied for special-use permit to construct the dairies.

Under the proposal, the Earlimart Ranch Dairy would house up to 3,500 Holstein milk cows, while the Phillips Ranch Dairy facility would accommodate a maximum of 4,000 Holstein milk cows, according to a planning commission report. Each of the proposed dairy sites contains 160 acres and is located on the east side of Highway 43, south of Avenue 56, approximately 3.5 miles west of Earlimart and north of Allensworth.

David Albers, who represents Etchegaray, said all impacts from the dairies, including those on the park, were included in the EIR.

"They just haven't read it," Albers said. "Everybody knew it was an issue from day one. We don't understand why they are saying these things."

Scott Wassmund, state parks district superintendent of the Central Valley District, said about \$13 million-\$15 million has been put forward for the renovation of the park - where most of the activities are held outside.

"It doesn't address what we are doing," Wassmund said. "It could impact visitor experience at the park."

Ed Pope of Earlimart, cautioned the planning commission that the 100th anniversary of Allensworth will be celebrated in October 2008.

"It would probably be the time the stench and flies would see over into the park," Pope said. "It might not destroy the park, but it will have a tremendous impact on it."

Pigeon-Scientists? They Just Wing It

As part of a technology-and-art project that was the idea of a UC Irvine assistant professor, tiny backpacks and cellphones will help the birds transmit smog data.

By Roy Rivenburg, Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times, Thursday, August 10, 2006

Pigeons wearing tiny backpacks and cellphones will roam the skies of Northern California this weekend as part of an unusual art project.

Equipped with miniature smog sensors, the birds will transmit air pollution data to a "pigeon blog" website.

Beatriz da Costa, an assistant professor of arts, computation and engineering at UC Irvine, brainstormed the idea as a playful way to get people thinking about the health hazards of smog.

Despite protests from animal-rights activists, the first flock of feathered aviators took off Tuesday evening for a 30-minute smog reconnaissance mission over the Silicon Valley. A second flight is scheduled for Saturday.

The airborne art expedition is part of ZeroOne San Jose, a weeklong showcase of technology and art that includes a robotic willow tree, a karaoke ice cream truck and a laughing bicycle.

Da Costa's entry was inspired by a century-old photo of a homing pigeon wearing a tiny spy camera. The birds have a long history of military service — and some received medals for their World War II heroics.

Now, pigeons have entered the Digital Age. Da Costa and two graduate students spent a year developing bird-sized cellphones, GPS tracking devices and air pollution monitors. (Sorry, still no sign of a pigeon iPod.)

The featherweight gadgetry fits inside a spandex backpack originally designed by a Colorado river-rafting company that employs pigeons to carry rolls of film back to civilization during wilderness tours.

Each smog-sniffing backpack weighs less than a 10th of a pigeon's body weight and costs \$250, Da Costa said. Measurements of carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxide are relayed to Earth via pigeon cellphone and posted at pigeonblog.mapyourcity.net.

A Southern California pigeon launch is set for Aug. 18 in Irvine, Da Costa said.

The use of bird backpacks has drawn fire from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

In a letter to UCI Chancellor Michael V. Drake last week, PETA said the "heavy and cumbersome equipment" strapped to Da Costa's racing pigeons could cause "injury and exhaustion for the birds."

UCI officials defended the project, saying it was reviewed by an animal ethics panel and deemed harmless.

Da Costa said she was bewildered by PETA's rebuke. "PETA is doing important work, but they should focus on people who really are abusing animals," she said. Complaints about pigeon backpacks are why the group "is not taken very seriously anymore," she said.

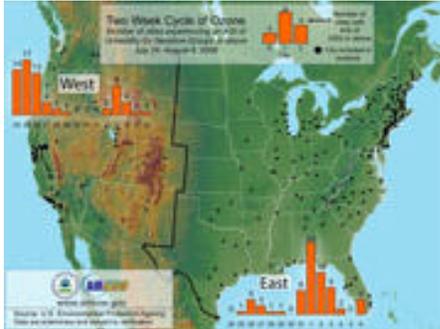
Bird experts at Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology also said the protest seemed overblown. "Racing pigeons are high-performance athletes that can almost certainly sustain this additional load with no harm," lab spokeswoman Patricia Leonard said.

But, she added, "it would probably be best to let each bird rest for a few days between loaded flights."

Air quality takes a beating during heat wave

USA Today. Thursday, August 10, 2006

It's not so much the heat, it's not even the humidity . . . sometimes it is the air quality that can make life miserable during a heat wave.



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

The chart at left shows how the heat wave that swept the nation from west to east in late July and early August compromised air quality, particularly in urban locations.

According to the [EPA](#):

Ozone forms when pollution from cars, trucks, buses, industry and power plants "cook" in the sun, and weather conditions from July 24 through August 6, 2006 were extremely favorable for ozone formation. Hot temperatures, inversions, and sunny skies led to elevated ozone levels in a number of U.S. cities. As the warm, stagnant weather moved across the country, elevated ozone levels followed. Air quality improved as the heat wave abated.

This [USA TODAY interactive graphic](#) shows how persistent hot weather can create pollution-trapping inversions that can reduce air quality.

Renderer receives a cleanup ultimatum

By JEFF JARDINE - BEE LOCAL COLUMNIST
Modesto Bee, Tuesday, August 8, 2006

ODOR CONTROL — My column July 16 focused on complaints by neighbors about the dead-animal smell emanating from Sisk Tallow, a transfer station southwest of Turlock.

The county had issued a permit in 1992 that contained no provisions for reducing or eliminating odors. But officials can hold owner John Sisk accountable for some of the things that cause the stench. And they did.

Last week, Stanislaus County's Environmental Resources Department ordered Sisk to comply with the terms of his permit by bringing his waste-water system up to code, removing debris and lawfully disposing of residue from the business.

The county gave Sisk 45 days (until Sept. 13) to fix the problems. If he fails, he could face a fine, criminal prosecution or a civil lawsuit.

[S.F Chronicle editorial roundup, Thursday, August 10, 2006:](#)

State could lead the clean energy market

California has more to lose than many states with a superheated climate. Scientists expect our snowpack to decrease dramatically, our air quality to suffer, our Delta water supplies to degrade and our coastlines to become increasingly eroded as temperatures spike and sea level rises.

California alone can't reduce the greenhouse gases that cause global warming. But by phasing in emissions reductions and creating incentives for new environmental technologies, it can create a model for the nation to emulate and put California at the forefront of the clean-energy market.

Assembly Bill 32, crafted by Speaker Fabian Nunez and Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, is the vehicle for achieving this goal. It has a strong chance of passing this session. AB 32 would make California the first state to set caps on greenhouse emissions from industry and automobiles. It

effectively would put into law the emissions reduction goals that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger approved last year ...

If AB 32 passes, California would be required to decrease its emissions to 2000 levels in four years. In 14 years, emissions would be brought down to 1990 levels, eliminating about 174 million metric tons of greenhouse gases.

Can California's industries achieve such reductions? A report by the governor's Climate Action Team suggests it is feasible. A transition to cleaner cars and improved energy efficiency could achieve nearly half the cuts. Renewable fuels and energy and changes in forestry practices could get us over the goal line.

The key is to set firm mandates and fairly distribute them, yet give industries flexibility in meeting the requirements. Some might want to invest in pollution controls. Some might find it cheaper to pay other industries to achieve the corresponding reductions.

The current version of AB 32 envisions such trading programs, although some details need to be worked out. (Some advocates for the poor fear they will bear the brunt of any trading programs, since older industries — often surrounded by poor neighborhoods — will choose to purchase reduction credits instead of upgrading their plants.) ...

Schwarzenegger also wants a "safety valve" to extend the pollution-reduction deadlines in case of an earthquake, energy crisis or other emergency. Such a provision is reasonable, but the language must be carefully crafted. If industries foresee loopholes in the law, they won't make the necessary investments to meet the deadlines.

All this work is doable, but there isn't much time. We'll know more in a week or so, when the bill is expected to come off the Senate's suspense file for a vote, with amendments.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Thursday, Aug. 10, 2006:](#)

Get treasure from trash

A trashy-sounding idea could be an air quality and traffic reduction treasure for city and urban county residents.

The city of Bakersfield and the county of Kern are proposing to build a joint trash transfer facility in metropolitan Bakersfield. Its purpose is to reduce air pollution and truck traffic from refuse pick-up and disposal at the Bena landfill, which is 17 miles east of Bakersfield on Highway 58.

Today, 272 diesel refuse trucks haul garbage from homes and businesses to the landfill.

With an urban transfer station, the smaller trucks would drive a short distance to transfer their loads to a few much larger but cleaner-fueled trucks for the long haul to the landfill.

The smaller trucks would then return quickly to their urban routes, making pick-ups more efficient. That better utilization of haulers will reduce the need to purchase more trucks and hire new drivers as the area's population and disposal needs grow.

Total cost for the facility if funded in 2010 as projected is estimated at \$10.9 million. The federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program is the model for funding as much as \$9.6 million of the total. The remaining \$1.3 million would be funded by the city and county.

It is an investment in health and the environment that is well worth the money.

If the proposal and its funding formula is agreed to by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, benefits on average over 20-years from the program fall into several categories:

- Reduction in truck traffic to the landfill will ease traffic congestion on Highway 58. It also reduces by 90 percent the number of trucks kicking up dust and dirt on unpaved landfill roads, a significant health hazard.
- More efficient use of garbage trucks on urban roads, and more flexibility in their schedules, will reduce congestion and pollution.
- Reduction of highway trips by 91 percent reduces emissions of carbon monoxide (55 tons per year) and oxides of nitrogen (31 tons per year). Both are significant components of the valley's smog.

Although not a formal part of the proposal, a large-volume recycling center is envisioned as being associated with the transfer station in the future. That would make the environmental goals of the city's faltering recycling program a reality.

A transfer station/recycling facility are part of the city's and county's long-term plans but have not been implemented due to funding. We urge the City Council and Board of Supervisors to give the green light to forward the application to the air district for funding when it comes before them, probably in the fall.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Thursday, Aug. 10, 2006:](#)

Electricity contracts need renewal now

By KELLY LUCAS, Bakersfield

After experiencing several record-breaking, 100-degree-plus days, as well as living on the edge of Stage 3 rolling blackouts, let's think ahead one year for a moment.

There is no reason to think that next summer will be any cooler. There's every reason to believe that we will need the same amount of, if not more, electricity next year. But California is on track right now to lose enough electricity to power more than 700,000 homes. And in four short years, we could lose electricity that now powers 2 million homes.

That is electricity we depend on right now electricity produced through cogeneration, under contracts that are beginning to expire. And so far, neither the utilities, nor the state Public Utilities Commission are doing much to renew those contracts for that power.

Cogeneration is the production of two types of energy out of one fuel; for example, when a refinery or a cannery burns natural gas to make steam to run machinery, it makes electricity at the same time. When more electricity is produced than is needed, it is sold to the utilities for the rest of us to use.

Cogeneration is efficient. It is reliable. It cuts down on pollution. And it's used in California and around the world. But while the rest of the world recognizes the benefits of cogenerated electricity, and figuring out how to make more of it, California is on the verge of losing what we already have -- about 17 percent of our total electricity today.

Cogeneration in California goes back to the energy crisis of the 1970s, when industry and the government were looking for ways to conserve energy use and diversify energy sources. Today there are 770 cogenerators in California operating in schools, hospitals, universities, oilfields and refineries, canneries and paper mills.

Much of cogenerated electricity is produced under long-term contracts that go back 20 years or more. Now those contracts are expiring and so far, the state's private utilities, which buy that electricity, haven't shown much interest in renewing those contracts.

State regulators, who set the conditions for negotiating those contracts, haven't been quick to act, either.

That's a problem, because industries that rely on cogenerators need stability and predictability in their steam and electric supplies.

The California Public Utilities Commission is in the midst of proceedings to set the terms under which there will, or won't be, predictability and stability for cogenerators. Their decision will be the key to whether there are future contracts for cogeneration, or whether the source of 17 percent of our electricity slowly slips away.

Here in Kern County and across California, Mother Nature is sending us a warning by throwing us the high heat. Stage 1 and Stage 2 alerts are warnings. Now we need to make sure Sacramento gets the same message, and gets moving to preserve the electricity we have, by moving quickly to keep cogeneration online.

Kelly Lucas of Bakersfield is the executive director of Mid-Set Cogeneration Co.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial Page, Thursday, Aug. 10, 2006:](#)

Sound Off for Aug. 10, 2006

BY MIKE JENNER, Californian executive editor

Reader: When Sarah Ruby wrote in her Monday article "Extreme Weather Can Cut Pollution," did she really mean that in addition to solvents and paint that trees are a source of emissions? You know that I hang on your every word.

If this is so, then perhaps the gardener operating the leaf blower in the photos attached to my e-mail is also helping to reverse the inversion layer.

Sorry about the blurred shot but I was riding my bicycle to work on this particular Spare the Air Day, and couldn't focus after he turned the blower on me.

-- Ray Purcell

Jenner: Ray, we love it that you hang on our every word. And Sarah Ruby really did mean to say that trees produce emissions.

According to the California Air Resources Board, "biogenic sources" -- trees, shrubs, crops and other plants -- accounted for 44 percent of the volatile organic compounds released statewide in 2005. Volatile organic compounds react with nitrogen oxides -- emissions from automobiles and other combustion sources -- to form ozone.

Without man-made pollution from combustion, emissions from trees wouldn't be a problem.

At the same time, trees do a number of positive things to help reduce pollution and improve air quality. Trees bring down temperatures, keeping pollutants from evaporating from gas tanks or paint cans and people from running their air conditioning. Trees also clean the air directly. They use carbon dioxide to feed themselves, and are known to strip ozone and other harmful pollutants from the air.

We can't say the same for leaf-blowers.

Look for a story from Sarah in coming weeks explaining the poorly understood relationship of trees and air quality.