

Mountain fire still not contained

By Jason Kotowski and James Burger, staff writers
Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2006

The sky was relatively clear of smoke over Frazier Park Tuesday, but fire officials warned that the massive Day fire was only six miles from Lockwood Valley and they would continue to recommend that area residents evacuate.

Helicopters and their crews got ready for takeoff Tuesday to attack the Day fire from the air again because it was surrounded by wilderness.

The fire was still far enough away, however, that it was not an immediate threat to Frazier Park and Pine Mountain Club, both in Kern County. The fire was about 11 miles from Frazier Park and 13 miles from Pine Mountain Club, U.S. Forest Service Public Information Officer Larry Comerford said late Tuesday morning.

It's now consumed 93,000 acres, according to authorities.

Public information officers set up maps and handed out fire statistics at different areas in Frazier Park. Outside the Frazier Park Market, officer Tammy Shroyer answered residents' questions about the fire and the danger it posed to the town.

Several residents said they had already packed up their most important belongings in case the fire creeps closer and they're forced to evacuate.

Tim Cossairt, 46, said he always keeps a bag packed with special papers and items in case of a house fire. If the Day fire forces him to leave, he would have to stay in a shelter for a while.

A positive for Cossairt and others Tuesday was the reprieve from the heavy smoke that blanketed the area the day before. He said Monday's smoke not only hurt his lungs, but played on his nerves.

"With more smoke, there's more anxiety," Cossairt said.

Even if the fire marches to her property, Laurie Vlach will stand her ground.

Vlach lives in a stucco house with a tile roof on Boy Scout Camp Road, where firefighters are recommending evacuation. The area surrounding her house has been cleared of brush. If the fire comes, she's confident she'll be safe.

"I'll close the windows and wait for it to blow over," Vlach said.

The presence of dozens of firefighters along Lockwood Valley Road is reassuring.

"The fire department's not going to let a house burn down," she said.

Liz Evans, a teacher at El Tejon Middle School, said she checks the fire on the Web several times during the day because students have worried about their homes. Evans said she was a little more relaxed Tuesday because the smoke was gone.

Humans aren't the only ones on edge from the fire. Chris Edrington, a trainer at Steve Martin's Working Wildlife, transported a couple dozen animals about eight miles from Boy Scout Camp Road to land he owns on Lockwood Valley Road. He said he hasn't determined where they'll move if the fire gets closer.

In the meantime, motorists driving along Lockwood Valley Road may catch a glimpse of a fenced-in camel or zebra. The three African lions are in cages and aren't visible from the road.

Edrington said the animals could notice the difference in the air quality with the fire nearby. Most seemed to be dealing fine with the transition to Lockwood Valley Road.

"They kind of enjoy being here," Edrington said.

The animals appear mostly in feature films, television series and commercials.

The fire, started by a person burning a small amount of materials in Los Padres National Forest, has resisted all methods firefighters have used to suppress it, Kern County Fire Chief Dennis Thompson said at a county supervisors' meeting Tuesday morning.

North of the wilderness area, between the fire and Kern County, bulldozers are trying to dig a break. Thompson said the biggest concern is that the fire will reach Lockwood Valley with a strong wind behind it.

"When the winds and the canyons align you can get extreme fire behavior," Thompson said.

About 150 people have been evacuated from Lockwood Valley, and between 40 to 60 of the evacuees are seeking shelter in Kern County, he said.

Firefighters have been battling the fire since Sept. 4, and more than 2,000 firefighting personnel are now in the area.

The fire was 20 percent contained Tuesday night. A rise in humidity was expected to keep fire activity to a minimum overnight.

Winds push smoke away from Valley

But winds might shift again by Sunday or Monday

By Jed Chernabaeff, Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Wednesday, September 20, 2006

A thin layer of smoke from a Southern California wildfire should be gone by today because of a change in wind patterns, officials say.

Smoke, which began making its way north on Monday afternoon, forced San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials to issue health warnings and urge people who work outside to be cautious. Residents with health problems are particularly at risk.

The fire, which was ignited by burning debris on Labor Day in the Los Padres National Forest, was just 15 percent contained late Tuesday and had burned more than 84,000 acres.

Little change in Valley

Kelly Hogan Morphy, spokeswoman for the Valley air district, said air quality monitoring systems have registered little change since the warnings because the smoke hasn't reached the Valley floor.

Still, she urges people to be cautious.

"It depends on what Mother Nature does," Morphy said. "If the weather patterns change, there could be a downward draft that brings [smoke] to ground level."

Meteorologists say the wind that carried the smoke over the San Joaquin Valley, threatening seven counties, has changed direction and now is sending it toward the desert and Nevada.

"[Today] we should be smoke-free," said Jeff Myers, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Hanford.

But the relief may only be temporary. Myers said the wind direction could change again by Sunday or Monday, bringing back the smoke.

Morphy said the fire could last until late October or early November, the traditional start of the rainy season in Southern California.

Dr. A.M. Aminian, medical director of the Allergy Institute in Fresno and Visalia, said smoke is particularly damaging to those with respiratory problems, but urges everyone to follow the air district's warnings.

Minimize exposure

"If the air pollution goes way up, people might have to cancel and minimize activities," Aminian said.

Exposure to smoke and other particulates can aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and increase risk of respiratory infections.

Valley residents, particularly older adults and children, should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion, health officials say.

Republicans Rally Against Democrats

Written by Tracy Press

Tracy Press, Wednesday, September 20, 2006

MANTECA - Citing the case of Manteca native U.S. Marine Cpl. Marshall Magincalda, Frank Aquila of the South San Joaquin County Republicans told members Tuesday night that there are stark differences between liberal Democrats and Republicans.

Republicans want to go the distance in the war in Iraq, but liberals want out too early, he said, and that would abandon a fledgling democracy there. And he said Magincalda's murder charge stems from liberal Democrats' tendency toward political correctness.

"Our soldiers cannot be expected to fight a war of political correctness," Aquila said.

The crowd of about 30 people gathered at Chez Shari restaurant at the Manteca Golf Course nodded in agreement.

Along with Lance Cpl. Tyler Jackson, 22, of Tracy, five other Marines and a Navy corpsman, Magincalda, 23, of Manteca, is charged with the April 28 killing of Hashim Ibrahim Awad, 52, an Iraqi civilian the men contend was planting a roadside bomb in the town of Hamdaniya, Iraq. They've been in the Camp Pendleton brig since May 24.

Leanne Magincalda, Marshall's stepmother, insists her son is innocent and that the Marines are playing "mind games" in order to trip the men up and get them to cloud their stories and snitch on each other.

Leanne Magincalda, who is a member of a Manteca Republican mothers' organization, spoke for a short time, never mentioning her son. She left that up to Aquila, who asked the group to help cover legal costs for Magincalda, who is expected to go to trial soon after military officials early this month heard arguments in his Article 32 preliminary hearing. Jackson is to appear for his Article 32 hearing Oct. 18.

Aquila then launched into a laundry list of differences between Democrats and Republicans.

"They don't have the moral ethics that Republicans do," he said. "They even want to end the celebration of Mother's Day in some counties in California because the day might offend gay fathers."

The two-hour meeting was the third so far this year for the group, which met Tuesday to bring key area Republican candidates together and rally ideas before the looming November elections.

Keynote speaker Gerry Machado, R-Tracy, who is running against Cathleen Galgiani, D-Stockton, for the 17th Assembly District, said he was proud to be a Republican because it was the party of "common sense."

[Take air pollution laws, he said. Eighty percent of the Central Valley's air pollution comes from the Bay Area, he said, but lawmakers continue to put the blame on businesses such as diary farmers.](#)

"They haven't figured out which end of the cow the problem is coming from," Machado said.

Transportation is a major concern of Machado's. He said that he would lobby to have cargo containers shipped via rail or boat from the Bay Area to Stockton.

"Do you know how many trips over the Altamont that could save" he asked.

Tracy councilman and mayoral candidate Brent Ives waved his Republican flag Tuesday, even though the mayor's race is nonpartisan.

"It makes common sense to be a Republican," Ives said.

He said that, if elected, he would work together with Lathrop and Manteca mayors to find regional solutions to traffic and crime problems and to create jobs.

In Brief, LIVINGSTON

Committee to discuss Riverside Motorsports Park

Merced Sun-Star

Tuesday, September 19, 2006

The local effects of the proposed Riverside Motorsports Park will be the focus of a monthly citizens group meeting.

The City Council-appointed Citizens Advisory Committee will hear presentations by proponents and opponents of the 1,200-acre project at its next meeting, 6 p.m. on Sept. 26 at City Hall.

The meeting is so residents can hear about the project from both sides, Chairwoman Trisha Backers said.

The park would be one of the largest motorsports parks in the country and has raised concerns about air pollution and traffic.

Backers said she has heard one of the quickest ways to get to the site will be cutting through Livingston and Winton.

"If (residents) have concerns that they are holding back because they don't know who to talk to, this is their venue," she said.

-- *Scott Jason*

Clean-air caravan visits Merced

By Corinne Reilly

Merced Sun-Star

Friday, Sept. 15, 2006

Local supporters of a November ballot initiative that aims to cut California's petroleum use gathered Thursday at UC Merced, where campus faculty and administrators strongly endorsed Proposition 87 and the research funding it promises.

"Everyone keeps saying they will come up with new energy sources before the oil runs out. But who is they?" UC Merced professor David Kelley said before students and the media. "The answer is researchers here at UC Merced and at other California universities."

Proposition 87 hopes to reduce petroleum consumption in the state by 25 percent over the next decade. It would establish a \$4 billion program to fund research and develop alternative energy technologies; a new tax on oil companies that drill in California would pay for the program.

Backers of the proposition say it will force oil companies to pay their share for cleaner energy, and includes protections that would make it illegal for companies to pass costs to consumers.

Thursday's press conference at the campus library was the latest stop in a tour that began last week in San Diego, during which Yes on 87 campaigners are driving a small fleet of energy efficient and hybrid vehicles -- including a truck and an SUV -- around the state.

"We are showing that Californians can have it both ways," said Yes on 87 staffer Joelle Terry. "We can drive the vehicles we want and have clean air."

Jeff Wright, dean of UC Merced's School of Engineering, said the state can become a leader in renewable and alternative energies. But, he said, more research is needed to make such energy sources practical and affordable.

"We need Prop 87 to support this research so we can move forward," said Wright.

Representatives from the Merced-Mariposa County Asthma Coalition also attended the event and pointed to the San Joaquin Valley's poor air quality as a reason to develop clean energy.

"The San Joaquin Valley has the worst air pollution in the nation," said coalition program manager Mary-Michal Rawling.

According to the American Lung Association, Merced has the fifth worst ozone air pollution of all American cities.

"Anything that's going to clean up the air in the Valley and in California is worthwhile," said Rawling.

Opponents of the proposition say it would create more bureaucracy and waste, and increase California's dependence on foreign oil.

And, they say, the proposition doesn't necessarily guarantee costs won't be passed on to consumers.

"What will happen is that it will force us to import oil from other states and nations," said No on 87 spokesman Bill George, who didn't attend the press conference. "That will mean higher distribution and refining costs, which will go to the consumer.

"We agree that we need alternative energies, but this isn't the way to get there."

UC Merced environmental engineering student Henry Teng, who stopped to listen to proposition backers, said he liked what he heard.

"It sounds like an interesting idea," said Teng. "Arnold Schwarzenegger says we need to reduce the bad emissions, but he doesn't know how to do it.

"So I guess it's up to the scientific community."

California May Enter Emissions Market

New greenhouse gas reduction rules could lead companies to trade pollution credits.

From Reuters

L.A. Times, Wednesday, September 20, 2006

California's new greenhouse gas reduction rules could lead to trading of the right to emit heat-trapping gases in the state, energy experts say.

California passed legislation supported by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger two weeks ago that requires the state to reduce economywide emissions of greenhouse gases 25% by 2020.

"Trading is the only way efficiency will be gained to meet these caps," Jason Patrick, a greenhouse gas broker with White Plains, N.Y.-based Evolution Markets Inc., said at an emissions conference this week.

The legislation largely leaves the details of how to cut emissions up to the California Air Resources Board. The rules suggest that trading of emissions credits — in which companies that have cut emissions under set limits can sell credits to those that haven't — is one way to cut emissions but do not require it.

Greenhouse gas market players are eager to start trade in the U.S., the world's largest polluter. In the European Union's greenhouse gas market that was set up to meet its members' obligations under the Kyoto Protocol, \$8.2 billion worth of emission credits changed hands in 2005, its first year of trade.

California's "legislate first, plan later" move stands in contrast to the other major effort in the U.S. to cap emissions linked to global warming, said the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a group of seven states in the Northeast.

Those states are attempting to regulate the main greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, at power plants. The states held meetings for years to plan how to implement the cuts before agreeing to a model rule this summer. The states' governments are working to pass the rules before the program starts in 2009.

Schwarzenegger's move to cut emissions was as much a political move as an environmental action, some sources at the 2006 Global CO2 Cap-and-Trade Forum in Washington said. Schwarzenegger is running for reelection in November.

Sources say one challenge to the plan could be regulating emissions from cars. California has a higher percentage of vehicles than the group of states does, and cars are harder to regulate than stationary sources of greenhouse gases.

California has issued rules that would force manufacturers to cut carbon dioxide emissions from cars. But the rules have been held up by litigation from automakers.

California, which has long led the nation in environmental initiatives, has occasionally used "command and control" and other creative methods to combat pollution. The state passed a law restricting the imports of electricity on long-term contracts from dirty sources of electricity such as coal plants.

Schwarzenegger is expected to sign the emission legislation this month.

Al Gore Urges Action on 'Climate Crisis'

By Beth Fouhy, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, September 19, 2006

New York (AP) -- Former Vice President Al Gore stepped up his call for immediate action to halt global warming, urging politicians on both sides of the aisle to "have the courage to do better."

"Each passing day brings yet more evidence that we are now facing a planetary emergency, a climate crisis that demands immediate attention," Gore said Monday.

In an hour-long speech at New York University Law School, Gore, who narrowly lost the 2000 presidential race to George W. Bush, framed the pursuit of renewable energy as an economic and national security issue as well as an environmental imperative.

"When we make big mistakes in America, it is usually because the people have not been given an honest accounting of the choices before us," Gore said. "It also is often because too many members of both parties who knew better did not have the courage to do better."

But he implicitly criticized the Bush administration, which has been accused of editing official scientific studies to downplay the impact of global warming and asking scientists at federal agencies to refrain from speaking out on the phenomenon.

Future generations, Gore said, "deserve better than the spectacle of censorship of the best scientific evidence about the truth of our situation and harassment of honest scientists who are trying to warn us about the looming catastrophe."

A White House spokesman declined Monday to comment on Gore's remarks.

While the Bush administration has acknowledged the effects of global warming on the environment, President Bush has rejected mandatory controls on carbon dioxide, the chief gas blamed for the phenomenon. He also has kept the country out of the Kyoto treaty, which called for mandatory reductions of greenhouse gases among the signing nations. He has said the pact would harm the U.S. economy.

In response to Gore's comments, Republican National Committee spokesman Aaron McLearn said: "Under the president's tenure, the air and water have gotten cleaner while we have implemented pro-growth strategies that have created almost 6 million jobs in the past three years."

Gore has brought considerable attention to the global warming phenomenon since last spring, when his documentary film, "An Inconvenient Truth," was released to wide critical praise. The movie has become one of the highest-grossing documentaries, while a companion book on the topic has become a national best-seller.

In his speech, Gore said the challenge of global climate change offered opportunities for innovation and investment.

"We can change this by inventing and manufacturing new solutions to stop global warming right here in America," he said, adding that venture capitalists are eager to put money behind effective technologies to cut greenhouse gases.

Gore, who hasn't ruled out a presidential run in 2008, laid out several policy proposals for reducing global warming. They included:

- _ An immediate freeze on carbon dioxide emissions. He said continued debates on the matter represented "a delusional and reckless approach."
- _ A retooling of U.S. auto giants to manufacture hybrid vehicles instead of gas-guzzling trucks and SUVs. Such a transformation, Gore said, would save thousands of jobs at the car companies.
- _ A shift to a greater reliance on ethanol, wind and solar energy.
- _ An elimination of payroll taxes in favor of pollution taxes. "Instead of discouraging businesses from hiring more employees, it would discourage business from producing more pollution," Gore said.