

[Fresno Bee editorial, Saturday, September 23, 2006:](#)

### **Celebrate air — for now**

#### **Valley reaches clean air milestone, but standards are getting tougher.**

We're getting there — and we're getting there fast. Air quality officials gave us all reason to celebrate this week, as they announced a major milestone for the San Joaquin Valley — the cleanup of tiny, dangerous specks laced with chemicals. Our progress is nine years ahead of schedule.

The Valley's public support and investments in clean-air technology by businesses and industry are making a measurable difference.

Right now, air officials say the Valley no longer violates the federal health standard for the one-day peak measurement of the wintertime pollutant called PM-2.5. This compliance, however, is short-lived. The Environmental Protection Agency just announced a stricter standard. Probably, we won't meet it. But that should not obscure the message that we have momentum.

On Thursday, air officials raised the bar by ordering the Valley to reduce the toxic exhaust from diesel school buses. The cleanup effort will take up to 10 years and cost \$250 million. The region's 185 school districts must retire all 2,000 of their diesel buses by 2016 or update them with better emissions controls.

Some Valley school districts are jumping on this problem, with 700 buses in the Valley's eight counties already meeting the new requirements. The clean-running buses are important for our children because diesel exhaust has been linked to respiratory illnesses and cancer.

Many parents know that, and they think 2016 is too long to wait. Though we all would like to see that goal met ahead of schedule, money is an issue for many districts. We agree that school districts should make every effort to accelerate the schedule and search out sources of funding to make that happen.

There are funding sources that might be able to help poorer districts. The Fresno County Council of Governments already is working to identify those sources and if Measure C is extended by the voters in November, there will be provisions for replacing old school buses with clean-running vehicles equipped with seatbelts. Measure C is a half-cent sales tax for transportation that has been in place for 20 years in Fresno County. Cleaner, safer school buses are just one more reason to vote "yes" on that important measure.

Though sometimes it feels like the job of cleaning up our air basin is too big to handle, the Valley should take heart that by working together, we are on the right track. The steps that agriculture, business and residents are taking are working and the test results prove that.

Now we must take strength from that success and be inspired to confront the next challenges ahead of us. We have proven that we are up to the task.

[Visalia Times-Delta, Editorial, Monday, Sept. 25, 2006:](#)

### **Air district gets some good news**

Thumbs up to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District as the Valley makes significant progress to achieving cleaner air quality standards.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency last Wednesday announced the Valley had achieved its goals for reducing air pollution from PM-2.5, which is particulate matter - dust, soot, smoke, airborne exhaust particles.

The Valley has already achieved PM-10 particles, which are the same thing but larger.

The Valley has achieved that thanks to the efforts of business, agriculture and the public sector in changing ways we all do things.

Those changes have been achieved, however, because of the persistent oversight of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The district has been much derided for insisting on regulations and standards to reduce pollution. It has been criticized for being high-handed and not representative of the public. But the fact is that Valley air quality would be worse without it.

Of course, the work isn't over. Air quality in the Valley is still relatively poor. The EPA will now insist on more stringent standards and tougher goals. And the SJVAPCD will have to insist on new regulations, which will no doubt be met with strenuous objections. The district can't win. But think of where our air quality would be without it.

### **Air district issues a health warning**

The Fresno Bee

Sunday, September 24, 2006

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued a health warning Saturday, saying that particulate levels are unhealthy for sensitive groups.

According to the warning, which runs through the end of today, high winds on Friday and Saturday mixed with dust are creating high particulate levels.

The district said that particulate exposure can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections.

Residents are urged to use caution during the alert period. Those with heart or lung disease should follow their doctor's advice for dealing with periods of unhealthy air quality.

### **Wind blows smoke, fire danger into valley**

From The Modesto Bee Newsroom

Modesto Bee, Friday, September 22, 2006

State air officials are urging residents to be careful today as a result of a large wildfire in Yolo County and high winds that have pushed smoke into the Northern San Joaquin Valley.

The fire near Zamora that started early this morning and 20 mph winds from the north are creating problems in San Joaquin County and, to a lesser extent, Stanislaus and Merced counties, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"If you can smell smoke, then it's probably at a strong enough concentration to cause health effects," said Evan Shipp, a District meteorologist.

The fire has diminished in the last few hours, but the smoke remains. It is expected that once the fire is out, smoke will disperse on strong north winds today.

High winds have whipped up grass fires in Yolo County, and a car crash near Sacramento International Airport sparked another blaze, according to The Sacramento Bee. There was also a report of a fire near Fairfield.

Winds in Modesto have reached nearly 20 mph, according to the Modesto Irrigation District, and the smell of smoke has permeated the area as far south as Turlock. A wind advisory is in effect until 4 p.m. today, according to the National Weather Service.

The dry conditions and low humidity have sparked concerns for wildfires throughout the region. And the California Highway Patrol issued a warning for big rigs and high-profile vehicles along area freeways.

"There will be fire hazards throughout the valley through this afternoon," said George Cline, forecaster for the National Weather Service in Sacramento. Residents in areas affected by smoke are advised to use caution when smoke is present, according to the air district. People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality.

Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion.

## **Winds kick up dust, smoke in north Valley**

By Jed Chernabaeff, Staff writer  
Visalia Times-Delta, Saturday, Sept. 23, 2006

High winds kicked up dust and blew smoke from a northern California wildfire into the San Joaquin Valley on Friday, but the effects were less pronounced in Tulare County, officials said.

The wildfire, which started Friday in Yolo County northwest of Sacramento, burned 12 to 15 square miles and created air pollution problems in the northern part of the San Joaquin Valley - mainly San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties.

Evan Shipp, a meteorologist for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said winds reached speeds of 45 miles per hour.

While strong winds pushed smoke into several counties in the northern part of the San Joaquin Valley, it also picked up dust, causing the Valley air district to issue a health cautionary statement.

Jamie Holt, a spokeswoman for the district, warned that the strong winds in and north of Tulare County could cause dust to hurt air quality.

Exposure to particle pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections. In people with heart disease, short-term exposure to particle pollution has been linked to heart attacks and arrhythmias, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality.

## **Valley air is improving, but still not healthy**

Tri-Valley Herald, Saturday, September 23, 2006

FRESNO — The air in the San Joaquin Valley improved enough to meet a federal standard, but new, tougher regulations soon may change that, air pollution officials said.

The valley, with one of the worst air basins in the country, no longer violates the federal health standard for a one-day peak measurement of tiny particles of pollution that can lodge in the lungs and have been linked with lung disease and heart problems, air officials announced Wednesday.

The microscopic specks — called PM 2.5 — form when vehicle exhaust combines with ammonia from dairies, but also can come from soot from fireplaces, smoke from wildfires and dust from agriculture.

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials credit public support and investments in clean-air technology by businesses for the improved air quality.

Though the valley's air has improved somewhat, it is still not healthy. A second federal standard that looks at PM 2.5 on an annual basis shows the region's average is still about one-third higher than that standard allows.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is scheduled to meet next week to revise its one-day PM 2.5 pollution regulation, which likely will mean the valley will fall back below standard.

## **Top area polluters tracked**

### **Refineries, plants among worst offenders**

BY SARAH RUBY, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Sept. 25, 2006

Who are the valley's biggest polluters?

After checking with the state Air Resources Board, poring over its "High Emitting Facilities" list and working in a few caveats, here's what we came up with.

Who's on the list?

Several refineries, factories and power plants are the biggest single sources of emissions in the San Joaquin Valley, according to the list. But the list does not include cars, trucks, plants, dairies and other less-concentrated sources of emissions. It also leaves out military bases and landfills because of regional differences in how they're reported.

The top-emitters list is based on past data. The lag time is a few years, state air officials said. For example, data published in 2006 is based on info gathered by local air districts in 2003.

You can look up this information in annual editions of the California Almanac of Emissions and Air Quality at [www.arb.ca.gov/aqd/almanac/almanac.htm](http://www.arb.ca.gov/aqd/almanac/almanac.htm).

What's the biggest polluter category?

By far, it's cars, trucks, trains and aerosol cans -- not factories, power plants and other stationary sources.

Collectively, the little emitters, such as residential fireplaces, vehicles, farms and household products, create vast pools of pollution. Power plants and factories are known for their nitrogen oxides emissions, yet they produce less than half the nitrogen oxides that come from cars, trucks, trains, mobile farm equipment and other moving sources in the valley.

Emissions are way down from 1999 among stationary sources. Why?

Because the rules are getting tighter and tighter, said Brenda Turner, spokeswoman for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which regulates stationary sources of pollution. "So many of our large facilities (are) close to the amount of reductions that are even possible," she said.

Big stationary facilities have been through several generations of pollution-cutting technology in an attempt to meet new rules, said Roger Christy, a spokesman and air-quality expert for Chevron USA. The rules continue to touch every kind of oil-field engine, he said.

Cutting pollution "is getting tougher to do," he said. "You're kind of getting into diminishing returns."

Valley air district staffers agree, but factories and power plants are some of the only polluters the district can regulate directly. It's "a huge frustration" that the district can't touch cars, tractors and other moving sources of pollution, which account for more than half of the valley's smog-forming emissions, Turner said.

The district is now trying an indirect route to regulate pollution from cars and trucks.

In March, it began levying fees on builders to help offset pollution created by more car trips to new subdivisions, strip malls and office buildings.

Money collected by the district -- estimated to be \$103 million in the first three years -- would go toward paving unpaved roads, replacing dirty engines and other equipment.

The fees vary depending on a number of factors. For example, someone building a 75-home development would pay about \$780 per house.

But those fees can be reduced if the builder installs bike lanes, includes bus service, builds near existing shopping and jobs and other means.

District staffers agreed that it would be virtually impossible for builders to reduce fees to zero because of the lack of public transportation in the valley.

And fees will increase as it gets more expensive to replace engines and other polluting equipment.

The program is being challenged by builders, who filed suit against the district in June.

What is the district going to do to meet new standards?

This fall the valley air district will unveil its plan to cut smog by the 2013 deadline. To do it, the district will have to cut emissions by as much as 60 percent, staffers say.

Regulators are looking at unconventional strategies, such as putting emission limits on businesses and letting them make pollution cuts however they see fit -- at their own operations or off site, whichever is most cost effective. The district also is looking for as much as \$1 billion from the state and federal government to help businesses and consumers replace polluting engines.

What do the "High Emitting Facilities" have to say?

*The Californian* contacted every company on the 2006 list, and many were eager to explain their air-friendly practices.

See "What companies say" to find out what each facility is doing to cut down on emissions.

How is the valley's air quality overall?

The number of days we violate federal air standards continues to fall, but so do the standards themselves. By most measures the air is getting better, but it's not good enough to meet ever-tightening air rules.

We have met one standard for particulate pollution known as PM 10, but the federal government might eliminate the standard in favor of one that governs tinier particles. We also recently met a standard for those tiny particles, according to the air district.

[\[The following article is a sidebar to the article above.\]](#)

### **What Companies Say**

Sarah Ruby, Staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Sept. 25, 2006

#### Aera Energy

Aera has been replacing or retrofitting burners, turbines and engines since 2000, work the company says will result in a 67-percent reduction in NOx emissions by 2007. To keep down particulate matter, Aera burns natural gas in its engines, paves roads and sprays water on those that are unpaved.

#### Pilkington North America (glass)

Did not return calls and e-mails seeking comment.

#### Guardian Industries (glass)

Guardian Industries plans to repair its furnace and install a new \$9 million air pollution control system, which will make its Kingsburg facility the least polluting float glass factory in the nation, according to a company spokeswoman. The new equipment will at least halve emissions from the

facility, which employs more than 300 people and has been operating in Kingsburg since 1978. It makes coated glass for energy-efficient windows, among other products.

#### Owens-Brockway Glass Container

Did not return calls and e-mails seeking comment.

#### Sycamore and Kern River Cogeneration

These sister facilities are being fitted with engine equipment to cut NOx emissions by 80 percent by 2008. They are co-owned by Chevron USA and Edison Mission Energy.

#### Saint-Gobain Containers

This company's Madera facility is in line for a new oxygen-fired furnace, which will cut NOx emissions by 25 percent. The plant employs 375 people and makes bottles for the U.S. wine industry.

#### Chevron USA

Chevron's western Kern oil field are in the middle of a three-year program to retrofit burner units in some 200 steam generators, cutting each engine's emissions in half. The company also waters and paves roadways to reduce particulate pollution.

#### Occidental of Elk Hills (natural gas)

Occidental of Elk Hills is retrofitting its internal combustion engines so they produce less NOx, VOCs and carbon dioxide. The company conducts 3.6 million inspections a year to make sure its equipment isn't leaking emissions.

#### Covanta Stanislaus (cogeneration)

When it opened in 1989, this facility was equipped with NOx-cutting equipment that was ahead of its time, according to a company spokesman. What it couldn't reduce on site it paid to reduce elsewhere, putting its net emissions at zero.

Each year the facility turns 260,000 tons of solid waste into energy.

#### Crimson Resource

Did not provide pollution-control information.

#### Silgan Containers

Did not return calls and e-mails seeking comment.

#### J.G. Boswell Company

Did not return calls and e-mails seeking comment.

#### Tricor Refining

Tricor's inclusion on the list is a mistake, said Merle Menghini, a company spokesman. The refiner has not been in full operation since 2001, and its total VOC emissions was 4.75 tons in 2003, not the 176 tons reflected in the 2006 Almanac, Menghini said. The 2006 Almanac is compiled with 2003 data.

Tricor is in touch with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District in an attempt to correct the error, Menghini said.

#### AES Delano (electric power)

AES Delano's biomass facility should not be included on the list, said Don Vawter, the facility's general manager. Its VOC emissions are fewer than 10 tons per year, he said, not close to the 107 annual tons listed in the 2006 Almanac. The error is likely due to an outdated method of calculating emissions from this type of facility, he said.

AES Delano produces enough energy to power 50,000 households.

Greif Bros. Corp.

Did not provide pollution-control information.

## **New bus rolls in**

### **Grant helps school district replace 34-year-old bus**

By RYANNE PERSINGER, Staff writer

Tulare Advance-Register and Visalia Times-Delta, Friday, Sept. 22, 2006

A 1972 Gillig school bus used by the Tulare Joint Union High School District is being retired after 34 years and its replacement - which is gentler on the environment - comes with a reimbursement from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The district's oldest school bus will be replaced within the next two months by a 2006 Bluebird diesel bus equipped with technology for reducing particulate matter in the air, along with wheelchair accessibility. And it will be the first bus in the district with seat belts.

A grant from the Valley Air District will reimburse the high school district for the \$126,000 cost of the new bus.

Brenda Turner, a spokeswoman from the Valley Air District, said the state's goal is to replace school buses made before 1977, which is why it has rolled out \$25 million for better buses.

"A high priority is to take these older buses off the road," Turner said.

Turner said buses with diesel engines can last for several decades.

"In the Valley, we do have some buses that were built in the 1950s," said Kelly Hogan Morphy, another spokeswoman for the Valley Air District.

The district has 27 buses, said Luke Smith, district director of maintenance and transportation.

"Currently we only have one bus that is wheelchair accessible," Smith said.

Smith said another recently purchased wheelchair accessible bus is also used for other occasions, like last week when it was used to transport older residents to and from the Tulare County Fair.

As for differences between how the older buses run compared to the newer ones, Larry Stacks, who has been a bus mechanic with the district since 1970, said the main difference is the new buses are automatic and the old buses are standard.

## **Activists, off-road bikers at impasse**

### **Critical environmental report shows negative impact on air quality**

BY JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, Sept. 24, 2006

For the better part of two years, environmental activists and dirt bikers joined together to create an off-highway park near Bakersfield.

A convoy of vehicles makes its way across Poso Creek during a tour of the proposed Bakersfield OHV park in January.

Now the two groups have parted ways.

And a wave of environmental opposition could swamp the proposed 11,000-acre State Vehicular Recreation Area on Wofford cattle ranch north of Round Mountain Road, near Poso Creek.

A critical first environmental study and a conditional-use permit are scheduled to go before the Kern County Planning Commission on Thursday.

But project leader Dick Taylor said the state has asked to delay that review in order to further study environmental issues, a move that could throw the project into even greater disarray.

County supervisors will need to bless the report. Then the California Department of General Services will decide whether to fund the land purchase and launch a design of the park.

This first environmental report showed that the project would have a significant, negative impact on air quality -- and that eastern sections of the project area contained a wide range of sensitive plants, animals and Native American sites.

The report proposes general ways to protect those resources -- and promises that a second, more detailed state environmental study would create more specific protections.

But environmentalists are calling for those protections now. They want motorcycles and quad-runners banned from the southeastern 2,500 acres of the project -- the area around Poso Creek's wet woodlands and Native American sites.

Gordon Nipp of the Kern-Kaweah Chapter of the Sierra Club said groups like his have lost trust in off-highway leaders and government planners.

If the environmentalists don't protect Poso Creek now, he said, the state will never protect it.

Could the Sierra Club support the off-highway project if Poso Creek is cut off from the rest of the park?

"We probably would -- it depends on the details," Nipp said.

### Making peace

Off-roaders and environmentalists have fostered a special hatred for each other practically since engines were invented.

But a handful of local leaders from both groups forged a tentative peace in 2001.

Off-highway leader Taylor supported a plan to create open space for runners, horse groups and mountain bikers on the bluffs above the Kern River near Hart Park.

Dirt bikers and quad-riders had ridden in the area for decades.

But Taylor convinced the off-road community to support the open-space plan, even though it would eject them from the bluffs.

In exchange, land owners, politicians, environmentalists and trails activists pledged to support the construction of an off-highway park near Bakersfield.

Taylor asked Kern River Parkway Foundation leader Rich O'Neil and Sierra Club activist Harry Love to join an advisory group that would help pick a location for the park.

He got flack from his off-road friends who didn't trust the "enviros," he said, but he thought O'Neil and Love could contribute.

"I wanted input for some things that we hadn't thought of," Taylor said. So, "I called them up and invited them."

For two years the advisory group moved forward. City of Bakersfield property officials located a site. An environmental study was launched.

Then things went wrong.

### Broken trust

What triggered the problem was a change in a list of qualifications the advisory committee drafted to help real estate agents for the city find a suitable site for the project.

The original language said the site would have "no impact to riparian areas."

But the wording was changed at a meeting of the advisory committee to say the site selection would create "no significant, unavoidable impact to riparian areas."

The site selection was conducted with the altered wording and the Wofford ranch site was picked.

Love spoke out in favor of the spot in May 2005.

An environmental study of the ranch -- and its riparian habitat along Poso Creek -- was launched.

Then environmentalists noticed the change in wording on the old site selection document.

Taylor said O'Neil and longtime Parkway Foundation partner Bill Cooper showed up at a March environmental document meeting and tore into Taylor, the project, the environmental study and the city in front of city, state and county officials.

"They went into a tirade," Taylor said. "Rich used the word 'betrayed.'"

Taylor said he was hurt and stunned.

"That was such a turnaround at that meeting," he said. "This is like going through a divorce."

Sometime later, Cooper showed up to a private meeting of Taylor's citizens advisory committee, which O'Neil and Love still sat on, and Taylor asked him to leave.

Cooper included the incident in a comment letter on the environmental report, and said the ejection "implies that the input of both Mr. Love and Mr. O'Neil was never really seriously considered."

Neither Love nor Cooper returned phone calls for comment on this story.

O'Neil granted an initial interview, but did not return repeated calls and e-mails seeking a more in-depth discussion.

City planner Marc Gauthier said it is disappointing to watch the environmental groups oppose Taylor and the off-highway community after the preservationists got what they wanted -- an agreement from off-highway leaders to leave the Kern River Bluffs.

Some groups still offer Taylor conditional support. Michelle Beck, who hatched the open-space plan and worked closely on it with both Taylor and O'Neil, has always supported the off-highway park idea.

"I still support the concept of the park," Beck said. "I think some of the environmental issues need to be ironed out."

But the bulk of Kern County's environmental community has heard about the conflict between Taylor and O'Neil and have turned a suspicious eye toward the environmental studies being done on Wofford Ranch.

Environmental issues

Those studies show that Wofford Ranch has special biological and cultural features that may deserve protection.

The whole east side of the property is peppered with previously undiscovered Native American sites. There are hundreds of mortar rocks where acorn flour was ground. There are several identified rock paintings, and archeologists who surveyed the site think there could be a buried Native American village there.

In addition, Poso Creek runs through the property -- creating a habitat for trees and wildlife.

O'Neil said destructive off-highway vehicles need to be kept away from all these resources.

"You go into a stream with a vehicle hundreds of times a day you're going to have an impact," he said. "They can always say that isn't a significant impact -- but that's kind of in the eye of the beholder."

He said his group now opposes Taylor and the off-highway park at Wofford Ranch.

"We're opposed to it because it's a bad location," O'Neil said. "I was willing to help them find a site because of my feeling that they should have a site, somewhere. I hope some day they find a site."

The environmental report outlines a host of mitigation measures for the resources O'Neil is concerned with -- but stops short of saying areas of the property should be off limits to riders. The report suggests letting motorcycles cross Poso Creek on a bridge.

Ted Murphy, emeritus biology professor at Cal State Bakersfield, said he's read the environmental report and agrees that the planners and off-highway leaders need to immediately eliminate all motorized use of the Poso Creek area.

"My major concern is the creek. They could cut off that southeastern square -- if they could take that off now, they would have less of a problem," he said.

Tight timeline

Environmental opposition to the project could kill it outright, said city and state planners.

The city holds an option on Wofford Ranch that ends on Nov. 14, said Jeff Herman, the project manager for the state Off Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division.

If there are no delays, he said, the state could authorize a purchase of the property on Nov. 9. Somewhere between \$8.8 million and \$11 million in off-highway "green sticker" and gas tax money would be used to make the purchase.

A single delay at either the county planning commission or board of supervisors, like the one Taylor said the state has asked for, could kill the state vehicle recreation area project, said Gauthier.

Eugene Gabrych of San Diego, who owns the land, said earlier this year that he has had several offers for the property, but has been unable to entertain them due to the city's purchase option.

Once the option is gone, Gabrych would be free to sell to home developers, Gauthier said.

That would destroy three years of work and the \$1 million in taxpayer cash it took to get this far, he said.

County planners, who have reviewed the city and the state's project for problems, will be recommending approval of the environmental report, said Planning Director Ted James.

Kern County planner Cheryl Casdorff said it's almost certain that the next stage of design for the off-highway park will ban dirt bikes and quads from sections of the Wofford Ranch.

"There will be constraints on the design of this park," she said.

But environmentalists say they no longer trust the project's planners to keep their word.

## **Financial help available for smog-related car repairs**

Friday, September 15, 2006

By Special to the Madera Tribune

SACRAMENTO - Thousands more low-income California consumers are now qualified to receive financial assistance to help their vehicles pass smog check.

For the second time this year, the Department of Consumer Affairs Bureau of Automotive Repair (DCA/BAR) has increased the maximum household income for eligibility in its Consumer Assistance Program. Now, for example, a family of four qualifies if their annual household income is \$45,000 or less.

"We are happy that thousands more Californians now qualify for help with smog-related repairs," Charlene Zettel, director of the Department of Consumer Affairs said. "We estimate this will result in the removal of nearly 88 more tons of pollution from our air each year."

The new income eligibility requirements are the result of AB 383 by Assemblywoman Cindy Monta'ez, which was signed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger last year and took effect in January.

That law raised the maximum household income for eligibility to receive repair assistance. It also authorized the department to further increase the maximum income level if there was sufficient funding.

Motorists who meet the income eligibility requirements must pay the first \$20 toward diagnosis and/or emissions-related repairs, then the state will pay up to \$500 to complete the repairs, according to the Office of Public Affairs.

Repair assistance is also offered to any motorist whose vehicle has been directed to a test-only station for its smog check. Those motorists must pay the first \$100 toward diagnosis and/or emissions-related repairs, unless they meet the income eligibility requirements, the office said.

In addition to repair assistance, the consumer assistance program also offers any motorist \$1,000 to voluntarily retire their high-polluting vehicle rather than have it repaired.

Last year Schwarzenegger launched the "Help California Breathe Easier" campaign to call on Californians to help reduce vehicle-related air pollution and to increase participation in the program. The campaign is also focused on raising awareness about high-polluting vehicles, their contribution to air pollution and the associated negative health effects, particularly on children.

For more information, contact the Department at (800) 952-5210 or visit [www.dca.ca.gov](http://www.dca.ca.gov).

### **New smog program helps more fix cars State raises income mark for \$20 limit on repair cost**

By BEN van der MEER

Modesto Bee, Monday, September 25, 2006

More people can qualify for assistance with smog certification after state officials changed the income requirements for a special program.

Under the new guidelines, a family of four in California that makes \$45,000 or less annually can get help from the Consumer Assistance Program for smog checks.

Previously, \$40,000 would have been the cut-off level. For a single person, the maximum qualification level will go from \$19,600 to \$22,050 annually.

Russ Heimerich, a spokesman for the California Department of Consumer Affairs, said those who qualify will have to pay the first \$20 for repairs, and the state will pay up to \$500 for the rest.

"This could affect close to 10,000 drivers a year," Heimerich said. "It's going to depend on the level of participation from drivers."

A driver of any income level also can receive help if directed to take his or her vehicle to a test-only station for smog checks.

In that case, Heimerich said, the driver must pay the first \$100 of diagnosis and repairs, and the state will pay the rest.

The Consumer Assistance Program also offers \$1,000 to drivers to replace their high-polluting vehicles.

"The first choice is to get high-polluting vehicles off the road completely," Heimerich said. "The next best thing is to repair the vehicles so they are less polluting."

A Modesto smog station owner said the changes will be a boon for working-class residents who need their cars.

"You do see people, like a mother with two or three kids, they're having a very hard time to fix their vehicle," said Dennis Slewoo, owner of USA Auto Service on McHenry Avenue in Modesto. "They really need this kind of assistance."

Slewoo also served for six years on a board that dealt with auto emissions for the California Bureau of Automotive Repair.

The new regulations, the second change in income eligibility this year, were the result of legislation by Assemblywoman Cindy Montañez, D-San Fernando.

The legislation, which first took effect Jan. 1, gave the Bureau of Automotive Repair the authorization to change the income levels a second time if there was sufficient funding.

Bureau officials did so earlier this month.

For more information, go to [www.dca.ca.gov](http://www.dca.ca.gov).

## **Tracy man charged in asbestos crimes**

**Defendant can get up to a 20-year sentence**

by Josh Richman

Tri-Valley Herald, Sunday, September 24, 2006

A Tracy man has been indicted on four felony violations of the federal Clean Air Act for allegedly demolishing a Hayward building containing asbestos without proper permits and protections, putting workers and the public at risk.

The indictment says Wassim Mohammad Azizi, 32, is in the business of buying, demolishing and renovating or rebuilding commercial properties, and did so at 27794 Mission Blvd. between Dec. 1, 2002, and Feb. 1, 2003.

But Azizi didn't notify the Environmental Protection Agency and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District in advance; didn't remove all the asbestos-containing materials from the building before tearing it down; didn't properly contain those materials at demolition; and disposed of the debris by throwing it in a trash bin, all in violation of the Clean Air Act, the indictment claims.

Each count of violating the Clean Air Act is punishable by up to five years in federal prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 plus restitution.

Azizi was arrested two days ago in Tracy and appeared first in federal court in Sacramento, where a judge transferred the case to the San Francisco-based Northern District of California for prosecution. Azizi is scheduled to appear before Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge James Larson on Wednesday.

The EPA's Criminal Investigation Division spent about a year investigating the case, according to a news release from federal prosecutors.

## **Blazes charring acre after acre in Northern California**

Dana M. Nichols

Stockton Record, Saturday, Sep 23, 2006

VALLEY SPRINGS - Storm-force winds made big fires bigger and whipped new fires to fast starts across Northern California on Friday, befouling air in the Central Valley and giving Valley Springs residents an afternoon scare.

A fire at a farm near Lathrop sent up a mighty smoke signal Friday afternoon, with smoke and the glow of flames visible from Interstate 5 into the evening, but there was no one to heed the call. The fire was in an area where residents had voted to opt out of fire protection, San Joaquin County sheriff's Deputy Les Garcia said, so the fire was left to burn itself out.

In the Mother Lode, a fire that started next to Highway 12 about 2:45 p.m. Friday quickly sent flames marching east through dry grass toward Valley Springs' commercial district. Within minutes, two California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection air tankers and a helicopter were attacking the blaze. Emergency radio channels crackled with a warning that the Valley Springs Sport and Fitness Center and the Valley Springs Homer Center might have to be evacuated, although no official evacuation was called.

A little line of orange fire retardant dropped by a tanker slowed the fire's advance, and then, a fire line cut through the grass by a bulldozer halted it.

"These guys responded real fast," 29-year-old Valley Springs resident Bruce Snider said as he watched crews mop up hot spots that remained in the 35-acre charred area. "It hasn't even been a half-hour, max."

Snider said that he saw what he believed was the start of the fire as he was driving home on Highway 12. He said he saw a tow truck with a pickup already hoisted and that the vehicles were burning. He said he saw people with a fire extinguisher make a futile effort to stop the fire when it was only about 20 feet wide.

"Within 10 minutes, that thing was pretty good size," Snider said.

Officials with the Tuolumne-Calaveras unit of the California Department of Forestry were still working on a fire late Friday and had not yet determined what caused it.

But a state-level spokesman for the CDF said the agency had extra crews and equipment on call because of the grim weather situation.

"On windy days like today, we don't want to take any chances," spokesman Daniel Berlant said.

He said the National Weather Service issued a red flag warning because of low humidity and gusty north winds. In some places in Northern California, winds were 45 to 60 mph Friday.

Fortunately for Valley Springs, winds had slacked off by late afternoon, gusting from the northwest at only about 10 mph by sunset.

The humidity was a low 18 percent.

Such fire dangers are familiar to Valley Springs residents. Two years and two weeks ago, the Pattison Complex fire destroyed 17 homes here. This time, the only damage was to grass and two utility lines transmitting telephone and cable television signals.

The Lathrop fire continued to burn unchecked Friday evening, and flames appeared to engulf 20 campers and a half-dozen trailers reportedly belonging to farm workers. Earlier in the afternoon, several acres of farmland, a house, a large barn with heavy equipment and a shed were destroyed in the 1400 block of South Roberts Road, Garcia said. No damage estimate was available Friday.

Sheriff's deputies responded to the area, but only to assure public safety. "What we do is make sure there's no danger to life," he said.

Fires in Yolo County northwest of Sacramento burned 12 to 15 square miles, with the front line of one of the fires moving as fast as 30 mph, according to fire officials' estimates. Three homes were destroyed in an unincorporated area near Zamora. Fire also destroyed 15 barns, 10 other buildings and six cars, said Beth Gador, Yolo County's public information officer.

High winds also complicated the battle against at least 10 other wildfires across the state. More than 100 firefighters, air tankers and inmate crews were battling to save 50 homes near Yountville, in Napa County.

High winds also knocked down power lines and halted morning traffic along Interstate 80 near Sacramento. Some downtown Sacramento businesses were left in the dark, and the state Capitol closed early Friday as crews continued to clear city streets. The wind even forced some garbage dumps to close because of flying debris, officials said.

The wind and the Yolo County fire made it unhealthy to go outside and breathe the air in San Joaquin County on Friday.

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials urged residents to use caution and common sense when conducting outdoor activities.

Smoke is a source of particulate pollution, which can have serious negative health effects. Exposure to smoke can aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase the risk of respiratory infections.

People with heart or lung diseases, as well as older adults and children, should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion outdoors.

For more information, visit [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org).

## **Schwarzenegger vetoes 7 fee bills**

**Governor said voters should make the call on such measures, not government.**

By Judy Lin / The Sacramento Bee

Saturday, September 23, 2006

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Schwarzenegger on Friday vetoed seven bills that could have raised a variety of fees, saying in most cases the decisions should be made by voters, not elected officials.

"Many of these proposals have been well-intentioned, with proposed fees related to the impact motorists have on roads and the environment," Schwarzenegger wrote in his veto message of Assembly Bill 2681, which would have allowed county boards of supervisors to increase the annual registration surcharge from \$1 to \$2 to fund abandoned vehicle abatement programs.

"However, I consistently held that fees such as these should be approved by the voters."

But he vetoed one bill even though it would have left the fee increase decision to voters. Assembly Bill 799 by Assembly Member Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, would have authorized San Francisco to place a measure on the ballot to impose a local vehicle license fee.

In the veto message, the governor objected to what he called the bill's "piecemeal" approach and said the fee increase in San Francisco would be "an unfair burden to place solely on the shoulders of motorists."

As more legislation crosses his desk to allow local governments to add or increase fees, Schwarzenegger stuck to his election-year platform of no new taxes or fees, which drew both applause and criticism.

Besides AB 2681, written by Assembly Member Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, Schwarzenegger vetoed a nearly identical bill, Senate Bill 1225, by Sen. Wes Chesbro, D-Arcata.

"I'm greatly disappointed that the governor failed to see this as an important public safety issue," said Chesbro, who introduced the bill in response to a tragic Humboldt County accident in which several teenagers died after their vehicle came around a curve on a two-lane road and struck a junker whose carcass stuck out into traffic.

"He substituted his personal political judgment for the judgment of local supervisors," Chesbro said.

Larry McCarthy, president of the California Taxpayers Association, applauded Schwarzenegger's move to protect the state's economy.

"This is great news for taxpayers," McCarthy said. "These vetoes remove threats of higher taxes disguised as fees. The Legislature has been foiled in its attempt to increase taxes."

Pavley noted that California's abatement fee has not been raised for more than 15 years. The state Department of Motor Vehicles collects the money, for participating counties, when motorists register their cars each year.

The governor also vetoed Senate Bill 927 by Sen. Alan Lowenthal, D-Long Beach, which would have imposed a \$30 fee per 20-foot container moving through the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to mitigate air pollution around those ports, fund rail improvements and enhance port security. The bill had been championed by the same environmental groups that succeeded in getting a landmark greenhouse gas reduction measure passed. Schwarzenegger is expected to sign that bill Wednesday.

In his veto message regarding SB 927, Schwarzenegger said the container fee would likely hurt California trade.

"It is very important that any measure that increases fees that impact exporters not have the unintended consequence of negatively impacting the sale and delivery of goods grown and manufactured in California," he wrote.

The governor said voters in November will decide on Proposition 1B, which would provide nearly \$20 billion for a variety of transportation-related purposes, including \$1 billion to address port mitigation issues and \$100 million in port security funding.

Even though he vetoed the container fee, Schwarzenegger in his veto message indicated he wants to work with the shipping industry to leverage more dollars. The governor's office is expected to put out a strategic report on goods movement by the end of the year.

"We think the governor made the right decision on a bill that we think was flawed and unconstitutional," said John McLaurin, president of the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, which represents carriers and marine terminal operators.

But Lowenthal said the governor made the wrong choice. "He was willing to sacrifice children's health to protect foreign businesses," he said.

## **Schwarzenegger Vetoes Fee on Cargo Containers**

By Dan Weikel, staff writer  
L.A. Times, Saturday, September 23, 2006

Siding with business and the shipping industry, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed a bill Friday that would have provided \$500 million a year to improve security, expand rail networks and reduce air pollution at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

The legislation by state Sen. Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach) called for a fee on shipping containers that pass through the ports. Had the bill been approved, owners of cargo, such as retailers and manufacturers, would have been assessed \$60 for a typical 40-foot container. Environmentalists, state regulators and local government officials viewed the measure as an effective way to fund much-needed security, transportation and air-quality improvements for the fifth-largest harbor complex in the world. Revenue from the export and import of containerized cargo would have been divided equally among the three areas.

Shipping companies and businesses that rely on marine transportation opposed the bill, contending that it was unconstitutional, difficult to implement and a tax that would discourage companies from sending their cargo through the state's ports. The California Chamber of Commerce included the legislation on its list of "job killer" bills.

Schwarzenegger said he vetoed the container fee because it could have hurt U.S. exports by raising shipping costs and did not provide for public-private partnerships that could boost funding for port and transportation projects.

"It is very important," the governor said, "that any measure to increase fees that impact exporters not have the unintended consequence of negatively impacting the sale and delivery of goods grown and manufactured in California."

Schwarzenegger said he was committed to improving the state's ports and the transportation system through an infrastructure bond issue his office had developed for the November election.

The ballot measure calls for \$100 million for port security; \$1 billion for improving air quality in California, which could benefit local harbors; \$1 billion to solve port environmental problems; and \$2.1 billion for trade infrastructure such as harbors, roads and railways.

Shipping industry groups and trade associations representing some of the nation's largest retailers praised the governor's veto Friday. More than 50 business organizations, shipping companies, marine terminal operators and retailers opposed the container fee.

Opponents said companies already paid billions of dollars in customs duties a year on goods imported through the maritime transportation system.

"Mandating additional cargo fees for the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach could have resulted in cargo being directed to other West Coast ports or even outside the U.S. altogether, damaging local communities surrounding the ports that depend on the jobs and tax revenue that the ports generate," said Sandy Kennedy, president of the Retail Industry Leaders Assn.

Lowenthal and container-fee supporters said the measure was necessary to help raise the billions of dollars needed to protect the ports, reduce air pollution in the harbor and relieve growing railway congestion throughout Southern California.

"The veto does nothing to help us," said Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster. "We still have all the problems we had before: three times the state rate of asthma, more heart disease and more respiratory disease. My constituents are paying with their health. Our kids are getting asthma so someone in Nebraska can get a cheaper TV."

Supporters of the cargo fee had said the charge was so small that it would add only pennies to the price of goods shipped by container through Los Angeles and Long Beach. Officials for the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp. had said the diversion of cargo to other ports would be insignificant.

Lowenthal said other funding sources, such as container fees, would be required because Schwarzenegger's bond measure would not provide enough money. He said it could also fail at the polls.

State studies indicate that California's major ports — Los Angeles, Long Beach and Oakland — will need at least \$20 billion in improvements in the decades ahead.

"The bond money is just a down payment," said Lowenthal, who vowed to reintroduce the container fee next year. "This is not the end of the fight.... The governor is protecting foreign factory owners at the expense of California residents."

However, Barry Sedlik, undersecretary of the state Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, said the governor was addressing long-term funding needs for goods-movement projects, including an action plan that would go before the California Transportation Commission by the end of the year.

"We are trying to come up with an overall funding plan for goods movement statewide," Sedlik said.

"We need a comprehensive solution, not a piecemeal approach that involves only two ports. We don't want to create any competitive disadvantages."

## **Honda Shows New Diesel, Fuel-Cell Cars**

By YURI KAGEYAMA, The Associated Press

Published in the Washington Post

Sunday, September 24, 2006; 7:29 PM

HAGA, Japan -- Diesel engines deliver great mileage but emit polluting gases. Fuel cell vehicles are zero-emission but look bulky. Honda's latest innovations counter the stereotypes. The latest fuel cell vehicle from the Japanese automaker, planned for limited marketing in Japan and the U.S. in 2008, has a slick, streamlined, close-to-the-ground look. Honda Motor Co.'s next-generation diesel engine delivers as clean a drive as a low-emission gas engine of comparable size.

Honda's showcased its latest developments in clean driving to reporters recently at its research facility north of Tokyo.

In a test drive, the FCX Concept fuel cell vehicle zipped quietly and effortlessly on a course at about 100 miles per hour. Honda declined to give a price for the vehicle.

Like other fuel cell vehicles, the new model runs on the power produced when oxygen in the air combines with hydrogen that's stored in the fuel tank \_ producing only harmless water vapor.

Old-style fuel cell stacks, the main part of the fuel cell vehicle, are usually placed under the floor of a car, making for thick floors and a box-like look.

Honda's new fuel cell stack is 20 percent smaller than the one it developed in 2003, and can sit in between the driver and passenger's seats in the front, where the stick shift lies in a regular car.

It weighs 67 kilograms (148 pounds), or about two-thirds of the 96-kilogram (213-pound) 2003 version, and far lighter than the one released in 1999, which weighed 202 kilograms (445 pounds). But it produces more power.

Another innovation in the works at Honda is the next-generation diesel car \_ planned for the U.S. market within three years.

Diesels are growing in popularity in Europe and some other parts of the world because of their fuel efficiency, and automakers have been working on technology to reduce diesel emissions as nations toughen environmental standards. Honda said its new engine meets standards applied in the U.S. state of California, the world's most stringent.

The key to Honda's diesel innovation is the catalytic converter attached to the engine. Honda used an ingenious way to generate ammonia \_ a substance that can turn harmful nitrogen oxide into harmless nitrogen.

Diesel engine systems already use ammonia to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions. But Honda's system is self-sustaining and more efficient than others, company officials said.

Honda President Takeo Fukui said Honda is serious about fighting global warming and reducing pollution.

"Honda believes in the importance of keeping a creative spirit and upholding high ideals," he told reporters.

## **AC Transit foresees hydrogen-cell future**

**\$21 million pilot program tests fossil-fuel free buses**

by Erik N. Nelson

Tri-Valley Herald, Sunday, September 24, 2006

For a bus company, it's a lofty vision:

"Imagine a world without smog. Imagine clean air and clear blue skies. Imagine your neighborhood without the noise of internal combustion engines.

"Then take away global warming. Then take away dependence on foreign oil."

That's AC Transit's vision for its cutting-edge \$21 million pilot program to test hydrogen fuel cell and electric hybrid technology in three of its working buses and five staff cars.

"The laptop computer: Think of where this technology has gone," says the transit agency's marketing and communications director, Jamie Levin, as he leads a breathless tour of the hulking 40-foot buses and the Oakland facilities built to keep them fueled and maintained. "The technology will get smaller, it will get lighter, it will get cheaper."

In a nation desperate not to become an international hostage to fossil fuel, the pitch was enough to capture the imagination of President George Bush.

"Investing in new technologies like hydrogen will enable this economy to be strong, people to be able to afford fuel, this country's national security not dependent on parts of the world that are unstable," Bush said during an April visit to the California Fuel Cell Partnership, where he got to hear Levin's pitch about the threshold of a new transportation age while standing on the doorstep of an AC Transit fuel-cell bus.

But some would argue that even though anyone can log onto

<http://www.actransit.org/environment/busdata.php> and watch the buses move about the East Bay in real time, there are questions about whether the technology will ever live up to its publicity as savior of an energy-starved nation on the move.

"We can build one at a high price but can we build lots at a high price?" asked Randy Rentschler, spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, which helps decide how federal, state and local transportation funding is spent. "The object is to make thousands that are cheap enough for people to buy."

Right now, there is no actual "Hydrogen Highway" as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger dubbed his two-year-old effort to foster hydrogen-fueled transportation through grant programs and other initiatives. The simplest of elements on the Periodic Table is among the most difficult ones to make and store, let alone purchase along a California freeway.

But there is progress, much of which has been witnessed for the first time in AC Transit's fleet of modular test buses as they cart passengers around on actual bus routes, according to Levin.

Starting in 2000, the transit agency has pioneered the use of hybrid fuel cell buses to the point where they not only run on electricity created by stripping electrons from hydrogen stored in roof tanks, but they use energy created by the friction of their brake pads and store it in their batteries.

During a recent demonstration, AC Transit officials treated journalists to a three-hour demonstration of its hydrogen project, including letting the reporters take one of the buses and one of five hydrogen fuel cell staff cars for a spin around the parking lot.

"This vehicle has amazing potential for providing zero emissions in the most densely populated urban areas," Levin said, adding that the fuel cells, which are virtually silent, also make for a far quieter bus than the growling diesels that now patrol the streets of Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

But there are still major problems to be worked out. While hydrogen itself can provide energy in the form of electricity via fuel cells and energy from combustion instead of diesel or gasoline for an emissions-free ride, "it doesn't come from a hole in the ground," Rentschler points out.

Hydrogen has to be made. One technique used by AC Transit at a facility in Richmond, is electrolysis, which uses electricity to separate the H (hydrogen's elemental symbol) from H<sub>2</sub>O. At the bus barn in the shadow of BART tracks north of the Oakland Coliseum, Chevron has constructed, with more than \$3 million of its own money combined with other funds from AC Transit, a hydrogen processing plant that strips the hydrogen from natural gas, whose molecules are made up of four atoms of hydrogen and one of carbon.

Other companies are also heavily invested in the experiment, such as UTC Power of Connecticut, which developed the cells, Belgian bus maker Van Hool NV and Korean carmaker Hyundai, which constructed the Tuscon and Kia Sportage fuel-cell vehicles.

The cinder-block-encased plant is about the size of a convenience store. Inside, natural gas goes through a purifier, then through a compressor. Then it reacts with steam and a catalyst to make hydrogen, which is purified, compressed further to a bone-crunching 900 pounds per square inch for storage.

Using fossil fuel to make hydrogen is not the goal of the program. It's just one way to make hydrogen until some future system can make it cleanly, perhaps with wind power.

"There are multiple feed stocks for hydrogen," Levin explains.

Another problem with hydrogen is that it is highly combustible and kept under high pressure. Inside Chevron's hydrogen plant, there are detectors that sound an alarm whenever any source of sparks or flame threatens the operation. The monitoring devices are so sensitive that they had to be pointed downward so they wouldn't be tripped by sparks dancing off the third rail on the neighboring elevated BART tracks. In the nearby service garage, a special maintenance bay is kept spotless and has special tools and equipment that are spark-free to avoid igniting the hydrogen.

While Levin talks about AC Transit expanding the hydrogen fuel system to its entire fleet someday, hydrogen experts say widespread use of the fuel is a ways off.

"If you look at the history of innovations in automobiles, like hybrids, really the story started about 30 years ago," said Joan Ogden, co-director of the Hydrogen Pathways Program at the University of California, Davis. Development of hydrogen fuel cells really didn't get started until the 1990s, it could be another couple of decades before hydrogen becomes as available as hybrid automobiles, she said.

Transit, however, is another story.

"Buses are kind of a logical place to test alternative fuels because you're garaged in one place and they're fueled in one place," Ogden said.

And while critics believe that hydrogen research money could yield more impact in making internal combustion engine-equipped vehicles more fuel-efficient, Ogden said America's energy needs require both short-term solutions as well as seemingly futuristic solutions such as hydrogen fuel cells.

"We need to be doing things in the near term like fuel economy improvements," she said, "but efficiency alone won't be enough for the long term."

## **Forum seeks climate change input**

### **Public can comment on methods to deal with global warming**

By Edie Lau

Sacramento Bee, Sunday, September 24, 2006

The bumper-sticker motto "Think globally, act locally" will play out Monday evening in Sacramento at a public forum tackling climate change.

What can individuals do to help blunt the effects of global climate change? How can communities cope with the climate shifts already under way? How will California businesses survive coming state limits on carbon dioxide pollution?

These and similar questions will be the focus of a panel discussion, "What can we do about the global climate change and energy challenges? What does it mean for you, the U.S. and the world?" organized by the League of Women Voters of Sacramento County and supported by the United Nations Foundation.

"We just want to pull the community together to speak on it," said league President Barbara Hopkins. "It's going to be a long-term issue."

Climate change has been a top-of-the-agenda item in California, with the Legislature last month passing the nation's first mandatory cap on carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is scheduled to sign the landmark bill, AB 32, in a ceremony in San Francisco on Wednesday.

Monday's panel will not debate whether global warming is a reality -- even the business representative on the seven-person group says that's not in dispute. The questions will center on how best to adapt and thrive in a warming world and forestall disastrous effects.

One emphasis will be on individual actions.

"The focus often when we talk about global climate change is large sources like power plants," said Larry Greene, executive director of the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District, and one of the panelists.

"In reality, it's many little sources (of greenhouse gases) that got us into this problem," Greene said. "All those individual decisions that we make for ourselves: how far we live from work, what kind of car we choose to purchase."

There is much work to be done at the community level, as well, to cope with climate changes already under way, said panelist Amy Lynd Luers, an environmental scientist with the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Since pre-industrial times, the Earth has warmed about 1.2 degrees Fahrenheit, and it stands to rise an additional 1 degree even if emissions were to rise no higher than today's levels, Lynd Luers said.

That means some level of climate change is certain, and communities need to prepare, she said.

"For example, our floodplain maps are (based on) historical precipitation and snowfall, but as these change, we need to rethink our floodplain mapping," she said.

"Similarly with wildfires, there's been a fourfold increase in wildfires in the western United States in the past 30 years, and this has been linked to rising temperatures."

At the same time, the climate for business in California also needs to be taken into consideration, said another panelist, Dorothy Rothrock, vice president of government relations at the California Manufacturers & Technology Association.

"If we want new innovation and we want to have all these great products built in California, we've got to take care of our business climate," Rothrock said.

"Our California citizens are going to continue to buy products built all over the world, and we can't reach out and say, 'Hey, you've got to reduce your emissions before you sell into the state,' " she said.

Other panelists at Monday's forum are Ken Hough, director of community planning and operations at the Sacramento Area Council of Governments; Genevieve Shiroma, board president of the Sacramento Municipal Utility District; and the Rev. David Thompson, pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Sacramento.

Greene, hearkening to the California power crisis of 2000-01 -- when the public cut back on electricity usage for conservation -- said individuals have proved they can make a difference.

"It's the same with climate change," he said. "We have to convince people that it's an important issue for their lives."

#### CLIMATE FORUM

What: Public forum on global climate change and energy challenges

When: 7 p.m. Monday Where: Sacramento Municipal Utility District auditorium, 6201 S St., Sacramento

Admission: Free

Can't go? The forum will be shown on Access Sacramento, cable channel 17.

#### WHO'S ON THE PANEL

- Larry Greene, executive director of the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District
- Amy Lynd Luers, an environmental scientist with the Union of Concerned Scientists
- Dorothy Rothrock, vice president of government relations at the California Manufacturers & Technology Association
- Ken Hough, director of community planning and operations at the Sacramento Area Council of Governments

- Genevieve Shiroma, board president of the Sacramento Municipal Utility District
- Rev. David Thompson, pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Sacramento

## **Evangelicals, environmentalist unite**

By Jeff Barnard, the Associated Press  
in the Modesto Bee, Saturday, September 23, 2006

Tending to your soul at the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Boise, Idaho, involves recycling old cell phones and printer cartridges in the church lobby, pulling noxious weeds in the backcountry and fixing worn-out hiking trails in the mountains.

This is part of the ministry of Tri Robinson, a former biology teacher whose rereading of the Bible led him to the belief that Christians focused on Scripture need to combat global warming and save the Earth.

"All of a sudden Boise Vineyard is one of the most important driving forces in our community for the environment," Robinson said. "People say, 'Why are you doing that?' Because God wants it."

Many evangelicals have dismissed environmentalists as liberals unconcerned about the economic impact of their policies to fight global warming. Long-standing distrust between the two camps over issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage has discouraged evangelicals from joining liberals on the environment.

But shared concerns over global warming and protecting the Earth are bringing together the two groups in ways that could make the Republican Party more eco-friendly and lead some evangelicals to vote Democratic.

In signs of this change, Robinson had a Sierra Club representative at his environmental conference recently, and the Sierra Club invited Calvin DeWitt, a University of Wisconsin biology professor and a founder of the Evangelical Environmental Network, to its summit last year where it declared global warming the top issue in the coming decade.

"More and more evangelicals are coming to believe creation care is an integral part of their calling as Christians. It is becoming part of their faith," said Melanie Griffin, director of partnerships for the Sierra Club and an evangelical.

Dewitt said evangelicals will not call themselves environmentalists.

"They are going to call themselves pro-life," he said. "But pro-life means life in the Arctic, the life of the atmosphere, the life of all the people under the influence of climate change."

The last time the environment was a major political issue was the 1970s, when rivers were catching fire, acid rain was killing lakes and Earth Day was created. President Nixon, a Republican, signed landmark legislation to combat air and water pollution, protect endangered species and create the Environmental Protection Agency.

Since then, League of Conservation Voters scorecards show Democrats getting greener and Republicans browner.

[Hanford Sentinel, Editorial, Sunday, Sept. 24, 2006:](#)

## **From the editor's desk: Don't let smoke get up your nose**

By Jackie Kaczmarek

As I headed out to lunch on Friday - my first official noontime outing in weeks - the smoky air hit my lungs with a punch.

Was Hanford on fire?

No, but other parts of California sure were - and we were feeling their pain in the form of foul air.

So it was with some amusement that, upon my return from a tasty lunch at the Irwin Street Inn, that I picked up Friday's edition of the Sentinel and read the headline "Central Valley's air improves, but still lagging."

Regardless of the smoke, which was out of our control here in Kings County, it seems that the Central Valley has been doing a good job of cutting down on fine-particle pollution.

And that's good news for all of us.

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials already have curtailed agricultural burning, required dust control on roads and fields, and tightened restrictions on diesel engines.

But if that's the case, I wondered to myself recently as I drove out to Coalinga, how come my car is always covered in a thin layer of dust, and I see farmers plowing their fields, sending clouds of dust up into the air?

Regardless of my sometimes-compulsive obsession with pollution and clean air, there was a photo on the front page of Friday's paper that suddenly caught my eye.

Rodney's coming to Hanford!

Yes, Rodney Carrington, the star of his own half-hour TV sitcom, was coming to the Fox Theatre! And Barbara Swarm, the Sentinel's very own features reporter, got to interview him over the phone! (I told her she was my new hero...)

After that, the workday was pretty much over. I vowed to combat the bad air by designing a new line of fashionable painter's masks, and decided that my love affair with beets would have to come to an end.

After all, Rodney doesn't like people who love beets.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Sunday, Sept. 24, 2006:](#)

### **OHV park faces critical political test**

County planning commissioners are urged to approve plans for a state off-highway vehicle park.

It has been a long road to travel to reach this point in creating an off-highway vehicle park north of Bakersfield. The journey must continue until the Bakersfield State Vehicle Recreation Area is a reality.

The most remarkable aspect of the journey, so far, is the group of people who have traveled together.

They included representatives of groups that most often vehemently disagree environmentalists, off-highway vehicle enthusiasts, land owners, and Bakersfield City, Kern County and state officials.

The park plan created by this unique collaboration of public interests faces its first political test Thursday night when Kern County Planning Commissioners consider an initial environmental impact report and conditional-use permit application.

If the plan is approved by commissioners it will then face scrutiny by the Board of Supervisors. The park is a long way from being a "done deal."

A challenge by special interests, behind the scenes maneuvering by developers and a November deadline threaten to unravel plans. That would be a shame.

When considering this project, planning commissioners and supervisors should:

- Give priority to the public benefits that will be derived from creating the Bakersfield State Vehicle Recreation Area.

- Consider the extraordinary five years of give-and-take negotiations between park planning group members.
- Recognize that safeguards have been included in the proposed county permit that will guide the project as it is designed and constructed.

An explosion of residential and commercial development displaced off-highway vehicle enthusiasts, who rode for decades in northeast Bakersfield's hills.

Heated confrontations were feared as developers made the land "off limits." But cooler heads prevailed and a search was launched for a new home for riders.

The focus is now on 11,000 acres of scenic grazing land north of Bakersfield. The state has an option to buy the land for between \$8.8 million and \$11 million. But the option expires in November and developers already are lining up with homebuilding plans.

Permit approval by the Kern County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors is critical. If the state cannot buy the land by November, park plans could collapse.

The county's environmental impact report is an initial step in a phased review and development process. County planners propose to place more than 100 conditions on future studies to protect sensitive cultural and environmental areas as the park is designed and the riding trails are constructed.

Once the county grants the conditional-use permit for the project, state park planners will take over. In an unusual move, the state has agreed to abide by the county's conditions even after it acquires the land and takes over park planning. We hope that will mean state officials will conduct future public hearings in Bakersfield as they develop the park.

For decades, off-highway vehicles have ripped through Kern County's hills with little regard for the environmental damage they caused. Creation of the Bakersfield State Vehicular Recreation Area will end that. The park will give OHV enthusiasts a place to ride and a way to protect the environment.

[Special to the Hanford Sentinel, Sunday, Sept. 24, 2006](#)

### **Lifestyle: Asthma, obesity can be disastrous to a child**

By Gloria Arredondo-Malarchick, Special to The Sentinel

In January of 2005, a conference on childhood obesity was held in San Diego, which really opened my eyes about this increasing epidemic in the United States. Although the relationship between asthma and obesity was not discussed, the reality is that this combination can equal a health disaster. As a professional, I am alarmed at the increasing rates of obesity and asthma in children. As a case manager for pediatric services, I have seen children who are affected not only by asthma but obesity as well.

How can we as a society provide education and support to families in both prevention and treatment?

In the United States, asthma prevalence is increasing across all ages, with the highest incidence in children. At the same time the prevalence of obesity is also rising. According to the website of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, asthma accounts for 14 million missed school days every year and more than 20 million Americans suffer from Asthma. In March of 2006 I attended a symposium in Fresno and had the pleasure of listening to Dr. Francine R. Kaufman from the Center for Diabetes Endocrinology and Metabolism, professor of pediatrics, Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California. She brought me to the realization that 45 million Americans are obese, which constitute 30 percent of the adult population. In the early 1970s, 4 percent of children and 6 percent of adolescents were obese. Over the past three decades, these numbers have climbed to nearly 16 percent and are greatest among certain racial and ethnic groups. In Kings County, one out of five children has asthma and more likely is already overweight or obese.

It is very important that everyone is well informed on the subjects of asthma and obesity and the things that can be done to control both problems. Even though asthma is a chronic and persistent disease, it doesn't have to stop adults from working, exercising, or doing their daily routine. Asthma should not stop children from playing or attending school.

People from lower socioeconomic status are at greater risk for asthma and obesity but it can happen to anyone. It is each person's individual responsibility to make better personal choices regarding diet and healthier lifestyles and, in doing so, they are more likely to control asthma and overcome obesity. It is in the hands of the parents or individual to improve their health and control their asthma. Education is available in our community, but it is a commitment that each individual needs to make. What is certain is that children are influenced by their parents, grandparents, caregivers, school, health care providers, and the community in which they live.

By working with their healthcare provider to develop an asthma plan, make nutritional changes and improve physical activity, they can reach their goal. Another alternative is to be involved in the community. It is important to identify asthma triggers, have safe neighborhoods, increase areas for physical activity, ways to improve air quality, and let our elected officials know what changes we would like to see. As parents we must develop a plan that ultimately will help our children to decrease emergency room visits due to asthma attacks and stop obesity from causing further damage. Asthma and obesity treatment require substantial changes in the personal behavior of the child, individual, parents and family.

The initial symptoms of asthma may be more difficult to identify in children. By the time the symptoms become significant, parents are already scared and unable to think clearly. It is important to recognize your child's triggers. Remember obesity plays a role in the overall negative health outcomes related to asthma. Asthma and obesity can be controlled. Severe obesity can also lead to organ damage. The good news is that with education, asthma can be controlled and obesity can be overcome-the earlier you start the better.

As a member of the local asthma coalition since 2004, I have made a personal commitment to enhance positive health outcomes: providing asthma and obesity education, promoting asthma management and supporting community actions that lead to healthier environmental living. I am a Registered Nurse and have worked for Kings County since 2003.

It is important to seek education and programs that are appropriate for individual needs. At the current time, there seem to be limited resources for families and the medical community to combat the dual problem of asthma and obesity. The Kings County Asthma Coalition is working hard to change this situation. If you want more information or want to become part of the solutions, contact (559) 584-1411 or e-mail us at [kingscountyasthma@yahoo.com](mailto:kingscountyasthma@yahoo.com) or access our upcoming Web site at [www.kingsasthma.com](http://www.kingsasthma.com).

*Gloria Arredondo-Malarchick CHN-II is a member of the Kings County Asthma Coalition.*

[Sacramento Bee Editorial, Thursday, September 21, 2006](#)

### **Editorial: No on Proposition 87**

#### **A flawed vehicle dooms a good idea**

It is hard to imagine a more appealing slogan than that of Proposition 87, the initiative on the November ballot that would place a tax on oil production to generate \$4 billion for alternative energy projects.

"Make big oil pay," the campaign says in its promotions, "for cleaner energy."

Backers of Proposition 87 hope to move us toward a future that is less dependent on fossil fuels, with air that is more breathable and an economy that produces more cutting-edge technologies. It is hard to argue with that. It is also long overdue that California impose a tax on oil and other minerals taken from the ground, similar to "severance" taxes in Alaska, Louisiana and every other major oil-producing state.

Unfortunately, the backers of Proposition 87 have picked a lemon of a vehicle to drive us to this appealing destination. And as many of us know, California needs some kind of lemon law to keep us from enacting poorly drafted ballot initiatives.

So what's so sour about Proposition 87? Where shall we start?

For one thing, Proposition 87 includes governance provisions that look like a sequel of the \$4 billion stem cell program voters approved in 2004. Under this "Son of Stem Cell" oil-tax initiative, all revenues would flow to a board whose individual qualifications are spelled out, in detail, in the initiative. Board members would be exempted from certain aspects of state conflict-of-interest law, which supporters say would allow University of California professors to sit on the funding authority and approve grants for other UC professors.

Proposition 87 doesn't go as far as the stem cell initiative in exempting itself from open meetings and disclosure laws, but it still creates a new state agency that -- like Proposition 71 -- is shielded from legislative review. Both propositions show a deep paranoia about established structures of government oversight.

Interestingly, some of the same bigwigs who bankrolled Proposition 71 -- including movie producer Stephen Bing and venture capitalists John Doerr and Vinod Khosla -- are also underwriting the Proposition 87 campaign. Khosla is investing in a Fresno ethanol venture, so he has special reasons to support this initiative.

Then we get to the murky question of how Proposition 87 would tax oil production. The initiative calls for a tax of up to 6 percent on each barrel of oil produced in California, but is unclear on whether those barrels should be taxed at a "standard rate" -- producing \$4.20 for every \$70 barrel of oil -- or a marginal rate, which would vary based on the price of a barrel and would likely produce less revenue. The state Board of Equalization would have to sort this out, and its regulations would likely prompt court challenges and delays -- problems that have plagued the stem cell initiative.

These drafting flaws are frustrating because, like the stem cell program, Proposition 87 champions a worthy cause. California needs to invest in alternative energy, especially if the state expects to reduce its greenhouse gases by 25 percent by 2020, as mandated by Assembly Bill 32, and rid its cities of some of the worst smog in the nation. But if California wants to enact a severance tax and dedicate all proceeds to alternative energy, the state needs assurance that these funds will be distributed to the most promising technologies, not just a favored few.

Proposition 87 doesn't offer this assurance, which is the main reason it deserves a No vote. But that doesn't mean its supporters are traveling on the wrong road. An oil severance tax, with funds administered through the existing California Energy Commission, could help pave a cleaner future for the Golden State.

We await the sequel. Think of it as Son of Oil Tax, opening a campaign in an election sometime in the near future.

[Tri-Valley Herald, Letter to the Editor, Friday, September 22, 2006](#)

### **Hybrids belong in diamond lanes**

Hybrid privileges in the diamond lane as an incentive to purchase hybrids should be welcomed by all drivers. One driver in a 45-mpg hybrid is getting the same or better mileage per passenger as 2 or 3 passengers in a gas-guzzling car or van, while contributing a fraction of the air pollution.

In addition, the sooner hybrids replace conventional engines the less dependence we will have on Middle East oil and all the political problems that originate from there. I think the real problems of diamond-lane congestion are one-driver SUVs with dark tinted windows and the counter-

productive exception for two-seated vehicles. Rather than resent hybrid drivers, more people should join them.

Doug Harbo, Richmond

[Letter to the L.A. Times, Sunday, September 24, 2006:](#)

**Extending the subway versus adding buses**

Re "Subway Tunnel Ban May Be Lifted," Sept. 19

Cheers to Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa for being the one politician to have the guts to push for the subway extension. This project, though expensive, would cost no more than the proposed tunnel alternative for the 91 Freeway in Orange County.

Buses are cited as a cheaper option, but they cause their own congestion by cutting in and out of traffic and are actually more expensive to operate than rail on a per-passenger basis. Light rail is cited as cheaper, but it doesn't have the capacity or ridership of the subway.

If we are serious about reducing air pollution, foreign oil consumption, traffic and suburban sprawl, we need more of this type of high-speed and highcapacity transit that much of the rest of the world's big cities already enjoy.

*Matt Mason, Los Angeles*