

Fireplace weather bad news for S.J.'s troubled breathers

By Alex Breitler - Record Staff Writer

Stockton Record, Tuesday, November 13, 2007

STOCKTON - When Gloria Faires hurries from her front door to her car on cold winter mornings, it's not because she's late.

She's can't breathe.

Faires, a retired nurse who lives in north Stockton, is one of thousands of San Joaquin Valley residents who are especially sensitive to the tiny droplets of soot and ash that cloud the air every time someone throws another log on their fire.

Sometimes Faires can't leave her house all day. When she has no choice, she races to her car, climbs in and closes all the vents on the dashboard for the duration of her trip.

"I hate to see winter, because I know this is coming," Faires said. "I just can't breathe; I feel like I'm smothered. It's scary."

Admittedly, her problems stem from a smoking habit that she licked a dozen years ago. But officials say wintertime smoke can affect people of many backgrounds: children and the elderly, and those with heart disease, asthma or bronchitis.

For the fifth year, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials are asking the public to check on air quality before lighting a fire this winter. District officials and some outsiders credit the program for helping to reduce particulate matter, the Valley's chief air pollution problem during the winter.

Other areas have started similar programs, and air quality officials in the Bay Area consider doing the same.

Occasionally, banning fires has lowered particulate matter levels by nearly 20 tons on any given day, officials say. Bans are most frequent in the south Valley, where the air is most stagnant.

"We do think this rule has had something to do with the decline in particulate matter," said district spokeswoman Janelle Schnelder.

Wood burning in the home causes more particulate matter pollution across the state on an average day than all cars and trucks combined, according to data from the California Air Resources Board.

The wood-burning rule is praised even by critics of the district, who say it appears to be effective.

"These voluntary programs certainly have the potential of making a big difference," said Paul Cort, an attorney with watchdog Environmental Defense.

But he questions whether the Valley has truly attained a federal particulate matter standard, as the district announced it had last year. Cort says there are additional ways to reduce the pollution, and at least two lawsuits on that subject are pending.

"We're still pushing for tighter controls" of other sources of particulate matter, including agriculture, Cort said.

Faires is certain that her problem is smoke. She jokes that she is a human smoke detector when she steps outside.

She doesn't blame her neighbors for lighting a fire. But she wants the public to think about the consequences for her and many others.

"It limits my life," Faires said. "You don't go shopping. You don't go to the movies. You don't go."

Cold burn

Some things to consider when you light up a fire this winter:

- Fireplaces are inefficient sources of heat. Volumes of warm air go right up the chimney and are replaced by cold air from outside the house. Your heater then makes up the difference, costing you more on your energy bill.
- If you use a wood stove, has it been certified by the Environmental Protection Agency? These newer stoves may be 50 percent more efficient than old ones, as well as less polluting.
- Another option is pellet stoves, which burn small pieces of woody fuel resembling rabbit food. Many of these are more efficient as well.

About the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's program:

- If you want to light a fire, call (800) 766-4463 to learn if burning is outlawed or discouraged that day.
- If a ban has been issued and you burn anyway, you could face a \$50 fine.
- Last year in San Joaquin County, burning was banned on just one day and discouraged on 22 days.

Sources U.S. Department of Energy, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

More locals eyeing clean alternatives to traditional fireplaces, wood fires

By Matt Brown - News-Sentinel Staff Writer

Lodi News Sentinel, Tuesday, November 13, 2007

The cold months of winter are soon upon us. It's almost time to put on a warm pair of socks, grab a good book and cozy up around the ... corn stove?

That wood-burning fireplace you have is nice and toasty, but don't get too attached. Air quality regulations might make this an even colder winter, unless you have a clean-burning heat source.

Wood-burning fires are a major source of air pollution, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Two weeks ago, the district issued the first fireplace ban of the season.

On days with poor air quality, the district can ban the use of fireplaces. Fines for lighting up start at \$50.

The district's "Check Before You Burn" season runs from November through February. That means the air quality regulators can douse your fireplace anytime the air is hazy in the next four months.

There's still time to look at alternatives before the frost sets in.

Gas furnaces are a clean way to heat your home without polluting the air. Many companies in Lodi, such as Henderson Bros. and Chess Air, sell and install furnaces. The price can range between \$5,000 and \$25,000 depending on the model, and tax credits up to \$500 are available for clean energy devices.

For more information

Corn Stoves: <http://www.californiacornstoves.com>

Gas furnaces: <http://www.energy-star.gov>

The corn stove is inexpensive compared to a furnace and burns much cleaner than wood.

"It actually burns kernels of corn," said Rick Snow, owner of California Corn Stove in Hood, just south of Elk Grove. "It's very environmentally friendly."

The corn stove looks like an ordinary wood-burning stove, except it is fueled by the same grain farmers use to feed their cows. When it's burning, it even smells like roasted corn.

You can buy the corn in bulk at \$150 per ton, Snow said, and your total heating bill could run \$250 for the winter.

The stoves run between \$1,700 and \$4,500, Snow said, and they are gaining in popularity.

"When I show them to people, they are just in awe," he said. "People don't know that corn burns."

Fog in forecast after rain

Staff reports

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Monday, Nov. 12, 2007:

A fast-moving weather front moved through the Visalia area early Sunday, leaving behind some measurable rain - and locally dense fog in some locations late Sunday and early this morning, forecasters reported.

"The fog will be patchy and dense in some locations, but not very widespread," said Paul Jones, forecaster for the National Weather Service's office in Hanford. The thin, misty rain lingering through most of Sunday was just a trace, Jones said, compared to the .06 of an inch that fell on the Visalia area early Sunday, most of it before sunrise.

Foggy conditions could well persist, off and on, through the week as temperatures remain cool at 70 degrees and under, Jones said.

Jones said that a wet-weather pattern has yet to establish itself and, though some clouds are expected throughout the week, little precipitation is projected.

"The storm we just had is already through, to the south and east," Jones said. "There's not much else coming in."

The damp weather brings with it cooler temperatures, and a gradual cooldown looks to continue into next week, according to AccuWeather long-range forecasts.

However, the fog stands to trap whatever particulates remain in the air after the weekend storm, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Quality Control District.

Tulare County's moderate 66-parts-per-billion reading for fine particles Sunday is expected to jump to 104 today as the area starts to dry out, the district reported. That means that Tulare County's rating today will climb into the area of being unhealthy for sensitive groups, or level orange, despite the recent wetness.

Council seeks allies in fight against West Park

Written by John Saiz

Patterson Irrigator, Saturday, Nov. 10, 2007

The Patterson City Council is looking for allies in its fight to stop PCCP West Park from developing a 4,800-acre industrial center on and around the Crows Landing Air Facility.

At its Tuesday meeting, the council voted 5-0 to approve a resolution laying out the city's objections to the project and authorized sending the resolution to other jurisdictions for their support.

The council listened to project supporters and detractors alike, but ultimately stood firm in its opposition.

The resolution was jointly drafted with the city of Newman, though that council has yet to approve it.

City staff also has given the resolution to both cities' school districts, the West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District and to the Del Puerto Health Care District, which provides health care services for Patterson, Westley, Grayson, Vernalis and Crows Landing.

The council's goal is to form a West Side coalition to oppose West Park. Patterson is the first jurisdiction to adopt the resolution.

Too big

The size of the project was at the forefront of the council's objections.

"They proposed a 4,800-acre site, which is more than three times (the size of the airbase)," Patterson City Manager Cleve Morris said.

In February, the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors gave exclusive negotiating rights to West Park to develop the 1,527-acre former U.S. Navy airfield. West Park has until April to come up with plans to develop the county-owned base. However, supervisors could extend that deadline.

West Park's plans are to develop not only the air base, but also 3,300 surrounding acres of farmland.

"(West Park's) proposal will create significant impacts to traffic, air pollution and aesthetics beyond those anticipated by the project," the resolution states.

Councilwoman Annette Smith cited a West Park traffic study recently conducted by TJKM Transportation Consultants. The study estimated the facility would generate 141,167 daily vehicle trips to and from the base at full build-out.

Though the council was clear in its objections to West Park's proposal, Morris stressed that the council has never opposed development of the air facility. Rather, its main objection is that West Park's project exceeds the base's footprint.

Project supporters

People who spoke in favor of the project mainly talked about how it would provide local jobs.

"We need the opportunity to work," said West Park representative and Newman resident Laroy McDonald. "And I'm not talking about minimum-wage-type jobs."

West Park estimates there will be about 37,000 jobs at the facility when complete.

Local residents who supported the project told stories about family members not being able to spend time with one another because parents commute several hours each day to work in the Bay Area.

"Families will actually be able to eat dinner with each other," one woman said.

West Park consultant Mike Lynch also talked about the environmental benefits of the project. Because the proposed facility includes a rail connection with the Port of Oakland, proponents say it will lead to fewer trucks on the roads and less pollution. If people worked closer to home, it also should remove commuters from the roads, he said.

"It will reduce air emissions," Lynch said. "It will bring thousands of jobs."

Lynch also talked about West Park's efforts to keep the public informed and involved in the planning process.

"We are doing the project with more transparency than any other project in the county," he said.

Project opponents

Some on the council considered Lynch's statements about transparency to be laughable.

Mayor Becky Campo said West Park had been involved in “dirty politics” long before the supervisors gave it exclusive negotiating rights. On Wednesday, she said she was referring to money West Park donated to a campaign against Supervisor Jeff Grover’s opponent in November 2006 elections.

That campaign funding led to allegations of bias earlier this year. But both Grover and the county’s attorney said there was no conflict when he voted in February that West Park should develop the airfield.

Other Patterson council members also expressed distrust in West Park.

“The project always keeps changing,” Councilman Sam Cuellar said. “With (Kamilos), it’s ‘What is it you want to hear today? Whatever you want to hear, I’ll talk about it.’”

A local group of activists also made sure to get their objections on the record. Ron Swift, president of West Side-Patterson Alliance for Community and Environment, said there are other places that would be better for a rail connection with the Port of Oakland, and he believes there would not be a net decrease in truck traffic.

WS-PACE vice president Claude Delphia said the giant industrial facility would compete with Patterson’s plans for its own industrial expansion.

WS-PACE member Burta Herger said rural Patterson would be lost forever if West Park’s project comes to fruition.

“This is a rural community - a farming community,” she said. “We don’t want Silicon Valley. We don’t want big-city problems.”

Before the council made its ruling, most project supporters had left. The mayor expressed concerns over this.

“It’s interesting the people that spoke in favor of the project are no longer here,” she said. “They could have heard why we’re adamantly opposed to the project.”

She said it’s unlikely the claims Kamilos has made about the project’s benefits will ever become a reality.

“They act (as if) Gerry were god,” she said. “How come you can’t see all the loopholes?”

StanCOG board to discuss West Park bond funding

Written by Patterson Irrigator Staff

Patterson Irrigator, Saturday, Nov. 10, 2007

The Stanislaus Council of Governments’ policy board will decide Wednesday whether to support efforts to seek state bond funding for a 4,800-acre proposed industrial park for Crows Landing’s former naval airfield.

StanCOG aims to solve transportation problems and other regional issues in Stanislaus County and its cities. The policy board consists of elected leaders from each of the county’s cities and from the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors.

PCCP West Park, which is negotiating with the county to develop the Crows Landing Air Facility, wants to create an industrial park at the airfield that would include an inland port, from which goods could be shipped back and forth to the Port of Oakland.

The proposed resolution would support creating a rail link between Crows Landing and the Bay Area, a key component of the West Park plan.

It also would support an application request for state trade corridor bond money for a short-haul and commuter rail link.

That effort would be in conjunction with the San Joaquin Council of Governments, Sacramento Area Council of Governments, Altamont Commuter Express, Metropolitan Transportation

Commission and the ports of Stockton and Sacramento, according to a StanCOG staff report. StanCOG collectively labels those groups as the Northern California Regional Planning Agencies

The StanCOG resolution also supports an application for environmental bond money in conjunction with the California Air Resources Board and/or the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The proposed resolution would also encourage StanCOG staff to be involved in efforts on a joint Northern California Trade Corridor Bond application.

The state has \$2 billion in state infrastructure bond money that eventually will be made available from the California Transportation Commission, and another \$1 billion in environmental money that will be made available through the Air Resources Board. Both sets of funding are for trade corridor-related projects.

West Park plans to offer matching funds as it seeks bond money from both sources. Also, the county plans to contribute the value of 170 acres on the airfield's former north-south runway, which would be used as an inland port.

The policy board initially planned to discuss a similar resolution Sept. 12, but county Chief Executive Officer Rick Robinson pulled the item after Port of Oakland staff had recently announced they did not consider West Park's project as a top priority.

A similar resolution received support from StanCOG's consolidated planning, citizens' advisory and technical advisory committees last week. The citizens' advisory vote was 7-0 in favor of the resolution, while Patterson City Manager Cleve Morris and Newman City Manager Mike Holland dissented on the 8-2 Technical Advisory Committee vote.

Ban on Use of Wood Stoves and Fireplaces Begins

List of Legal Wood Burning Stoves Now Available

Reported by P. Hedlund

Mountain Enterprise, Friday, Nov. 9, 2007

The season's first fireplace and wood stove-use ban was issued Friday, Nov. 1 for portions of Kern and neighboring King and Tulare counties because of poor air quality. Spokesperson Brenda Turner for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) said the ban does not apply to areas above 3,000 feet-yeet. Until last year, few realtors or residents thought of the Mountain Communities as coming under the jurisdiction of the agency at all.

A rude awakening occurred when a client of Jeff Mowry (Jennings Realty) who had sold a home in Cuddy Valley Estates received a 'notice of violation' with a significant possible fine attached to it. The family sold a home that contained a free-standing wood-burning stove. Escrow had closed at least 10 months earlier.

Following strenuous protests from area brokers, and several stories in The Mountain Enterprise, members of the SJVAPCD staff began working in a cooperative spirit with mountain residents and real estate agents. They admitted that their definition of the boundaries for their regulations was confusing--to themselves as well as to the public.

Of greatest concern was the notion that mountain homes could not be sold with functioning wood stoves, unless they were "Type II Certified." The definition of just what that meant was not easily accessible a year ago. Today, a 90-page PDF list with all permitted wood stoves is available from the agency. The Mountain Enterprise has a copy which we will gladly send to real estate agents upon request [contact Gary@Mountain Enterprise.com].

Turner now says, "Every stove manufactured after July 1990 should be compliant. Some of them manufactured before then are compliant. All pellet stoves are compliant."

Turner, based in Bakersfield, said she will help homeowners identify and confirm whether their wood stoves are compliant. "We have more calls on that than anything else," she said. She can be reached at (661) 326-6981.

"We will also have the incentive program again, after the beginning of the year (probably in February)," Turner added. That program provides monetary credits to a limited number of county residents to upgrade their noncompliant wood stoves. That program operates on a "first come, first served" basis. The Mountain Enterprise will announce the start date as soon as it is announced.

"Where wood burning is allowed, it should be done as cleanly as possible by using dry, seasoned wood," an agency flyer says, adding "Remember: Burning trash is never allowed."

To reduce fall and wintertime air pollution, the "Check Before You Burn" season runs from Nov. 1 through Feb. 29. Fines for violators begin at \$50.

It's Coming: Mountain Is Not Exempt From Air Concerns

Reported by Patric Hedlund

Mountain Enterprise, Friday, Nov. 9, 2007

Air pollution visibly rolls up the Grapevine from the San Joaquin Valley in this camera phone photo by Linda MacKay on Monday, Nov. 5 at 2:45 p.m. At the far right is El Tejon School. Scott Nestor of the air pollution control district has confirmed the photo shows pollutants rising into the mountains from the valley.

Lebec residents have recently expressed surprise to learn that air quality in their area has been tumbling below air quality found in sections of the San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles, because of the combined impact of unhealthy San Joaquin Valley air rising upward and emissions from Interstate (including the increasing diesel-powered big rig traffic). One in five San Joaquin Valley children are now diagnosed with asthma or lung problems. Children in Arvin, Tejon Ranch's neighbor at the foot of the Grapevine, have a one in four chance of being diagnosed with such ailments. Arvin has been named the town with the dirtiest air in the entire United States for all three of the past three years.

Linda MacKay (president of the Mountain Communities Boys & Girls Club and a member of the Mountain Communities Town Council) has asked the El Tejon Unified School District board to seek an air monitor to be placed at El Tejon School, which has playing fields within 100 feet of the I-5. Current ETUSD board chairperson Paula Regan strenuously rejected that request in an emotional response. No vote was made on the item. Town Council members have opened a call to all community organizations to join with them in seeking such a monitor.

In a forum hosted by the Town Council on October 23, Jane Williams of the California Communities Against Toxics said that there is a good likelihood that the lovely 1939-era El Tejon school site may be an unhealthy school location. "You'll have to move the school," she said upon hearing the proximity to the interstate, "you can't mitigate a school that is that close to the freeway." Scott Nestor of SJVAPCD said he did not know of any way children on the playground could be protected from pollution effects.

The California Medical Association called for aggressive action to improve air quality in the San Joaquin Valley last week. The CMA's call for urgent action was combined with a call to reduce diesel pollution. Comprised of tiny particulate matter that lodges in the lungs and heart, diesel pollution can do irreparable damage. It is especially harmful to young children and elders.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell issued an alert in 2005 saying that the evidence has become conclusive that schools close to freeways have children with more lung ailments, impeding academic performance. He advised that no further schools be built in such areas.

Could lawsuit derail ethanol plant debut?

By MICHAEL G. MOONEY

Modesto Bee, Monday, November 12, 2007

Construction at Stanislaus County's first ethanol manufacturing plant is well under way, with production slated to begin between March and June.

Legal entanglements, however, could delay that timetable.

Attorney Richard Harriman, representing a group called Valley Advocates, is challenging the county's decision not to require a formal environmental review of the facility in Keyes at Jessup Road and Highway 99.

Harriman said Friday he's expecting an early December hearing to consider pretrial motions before a Stanislaus County Superior Court judge. A trial date has not been set.

Cilion Inc., a partnership including Western Milling, a California grain milling company, and Khosla Ventures, a venture capital firm, will operate the facility.

Spokeswoman Karri Hammerstrom said Friday that Cilion officials wouldn't comment on the pending lawsuit.

Hammerstrom, the Goshen-based company's manager of environmental permitting and legislative development, said construction work on the plant is 50 percent complete.

Members of the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors signed off on the ethanol plant in June, denying an appeal by Harriman seeking an environmental review.

Assistant County Counsel Jack Doering said in August that the environmental report was not needed because the land is zoned for industrial uses, which includes ethanol plants.

But Harriman believes the county still must do a full environmental review for the plant.

Once operational, the Keyes plant is expected to produce 55 million gallons of ethanol a year, extracting the fuel additive from 571,000 tons of corn.

Concern about pollution grows

The facility, which is next to A.L. Gilbert grain mill, also will produce more than 300,000 tons of wet distiller's grain.

The wet distiller's grain will be sold as a livestock feed supplement.

Nationally, there is growing concern about potential air pollution resulting from ethanol manufacturing. The effectiveness of ethanol as a fuel additive also has been criticized.

On the manufacturing side, however, the primary concern associated with ethanol are volatile organic compounds.

Among the VOCs released into the atmosphere during the manufacturing process are carbon monoxide and cancer-causing substances such as formaldehyde and acetic acid.

Methanol, another ethanol manufacturing byproduct, is considered a hazardous but noncarcinogenic pollutant.

Recent tests, according to experts, found VOC emissions ranging from 120 tons a year for some of the smallest ethanol plants to as many as 1,000 tons annually for larger facilities.

Cilion's Hammerstrom couldn't say Friday how much pollution the Keyes plant would add to the Northern San Joaquin Valley's air but insisted the facility wouldn't worsen the area's chronic air woes.

"We're not going to make the air dirtier," she said.

Hammerstrom said the Keyes plant was planned as a state-of-the-art facility, designed to keep pollutants below the levels set by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Air district isn't worried

Hammerstrom added that Cilion recently received an award for its commitment to green or environmentally friendly technologies.

"Yes, California's rules and regulations make it more expensive," Hammerstrom said, "but we want to do business here. We want to do our part (and) be the best at what we do."

Jim Swaney, the air district's permit services manager, said his agency is satisfied the ethanol manufacturing plant won't cause problems.

Swaney said Cilion had purchased a number of air pollution "credits" and agreed to use the most advanced pollution-controlling technologies available. He said the plant would be inspected and carefully monitored.

Hammerstrom said Cilion was working to mitigate any traffic problems from as many as 13 tanker trucks a day that will leave the facility loaded with ethanol.

Hammerstrom said the plant will be equipped with cutting edge fire-suppression equipment that's designed to snuff out flames.

But Cilion also is working with several fire departments, Hammerstrom said, so, that in the event they are needed, firefighters will be able to respond quickly, efficiently and with the appropriate equipment.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

FAST FACTS

- **WHAT:** Ethanol, also known as ethyl alcohol or grain alcohol, is a flammable, colorless and slightly toxic chemical compound.
- **BASIC USES:** Ethanol is perhaps best known as the alcohol found in alcoholic beverages, including beer, wine and whiskey. It also is used as a fuel or fuel additive for internal combustion engines, especially those using gasoline.
- **AS A FUEL ADDITIVE:** Ethanol was used to power specially adapted Ford Model T's in the early 1900s, as well as rockets developed during and after World War II.
- **OTHER USES:** Ethanol is used in other products such as scents, flavorings, colorings and medicines.
- **SOURCES:** Corn, grains and sugar cane are perhaps the most common sources from which ethanol is distilled.
- **HISTORY:** Only the use of fire predates the fermentation of plant-derived sugars into ethanol as the earliest organic reaction pursued by mankind. The intoxicating effects of consuming ethanol have been known since ancient times.
- **FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Visit the Web site of the Renewable Fuels Association at www.ethanolrfa.org.

Source: Renewable Fuels Association

Community Briefing

STIFFER POLLUTION CONTROLS URGED

Modesto Bee, Friday, November 9, 2007

State air quality managers say officials in the San Joaquin Valley need to pass stricter rules to control pollution from trucks, farm equipment and suburban sprawl. In June, the California Air Resources Board approved a local plan asking the federal government for an 11-year extension to bring the valley's smoggy air in line with current, tougher federal ozone standards. Now the board says the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District could meet those goals sooner if it focused on reducing pollution from farms and construction. Both industries release airborne particles that contribute to smog.

Locals express frustration at air meeting

Board members hope some clean-air goals can be met by 2017.

By DHYANA LEVEY

Merced Sun-Star, Friday, November 9, 2007

Reporter Dhyana Levey reports on a meeting about the Valley's air quality.

Tom Schmidt, of Merced, was sad he couldn't view the mountains from an overpass this week -- and he blamed the Valley's pollution.

"I can see the air is filthy," he told about 70 other Merced County residents and representatives from the California Air Resources Board and San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. They were part of a community meeting Wednesday at Tenaya Middle School.

Paramedic Frank Kelly, also of Merced, announced that he was sick of treating so many people for severe asthma symptoms. Others expressed concerns about truck emissions, land use and the politics and expenses of reaching clean-air goals.

"How many people here think air quality in the San Joaquin Valley is a problem?" Melissa Kelly-Ortega of the Merced/Mariposa County Asthma Coalition asked the crowd.

Not surprisingly, everyone raised their hands.

This meeting was one of three led by a California Air Resources Board task force to gather the public's thoughts and concerns about air quality.

The task force was formed after a June air board meeting in which it became clear that the goal of cleaning up the Valley's air by 2024 wasn't well received by the public. "We are offended being told that we can't get clean air until 2024," Kelly-Ortega said.

State air board member Dorene D'Adamo led the task force to study further options. Meetings in Parlier, Arvin and Merced to collect the public's suggestions were an important part of this process, she said.

The task force publicly proclaimed the Merced meeting a success.

There was a solid turnout of residents, businesses and agricultural interests. People introduced a range of concerns and appeared genuinely interested in being part of the process to speed up the cleanup of Valley air.

Sandra West, of Oakdale, cited financial issues that businesses face in meeting air quality regulations when she discussed her trucking business. She recently found out it would cost about \$73,000 to retrofit her trucks.

"The truck value is \$15,000, so you put us at a disadvantage," she said. "I ask you to help us, get us money to upgrade our fleet. ... We are held to high standards, but we can't operate, losing money."

Meeting members appeared sympathetic to West's situation.

How seriously all these comments will be taken by the state air board remains to be seen, task force member Kelly-Ortega and various community members said that evening.

A couple of hours before that meeting, the task force itself met at the County Administration Building to review its findings so far. It also released a report that it will present to the governing members of the state air board in Sacramento next week.

More pollution reductions are possible, and the San Joaquin Valley's ozone cleanup won't be as hard as previously thought. One finding was that rules on state-regulated diesel engines can reduce tons of air pollution.

This and other discoveries led the task force to announce that 90 percent of clean-air goals can be met by 2017. But the remaining 10 percent won't be met until the original completion target of 2024.

The task force -- which includes state air board members, the Asthma Coalition, Air Pollution Control District members, county officials, activists and industry representatives -- conveyed these findings later to the community meeting.

"The message is, 'Yes, we've had improvements, but we aren't where we want to be,'" said task force member Judy Case, a Fresno County supervisor. "More work needs to be done."

This met a mixed reception from the public. "I'm frustrated," said Kelly, the Merced paramedic. "If we have an opportunity to fix things, quit screwing around and get things done."

One future plan announced was the presentation of a spring forum at UC Merced to educate people about new technology to reduce pollution.

UC Merced professor Henry Forman said the air board should do more to support the university's research. He and other scientists, or as he termed them, "lab rats," are studying air pollution issues. "The reason you can't see the mountains is particles, not ozone," he said. "Do we really know how to make the best diesel engine? We don't know. ... Do we know if particles produced by intentional fires are worse or better? We don't know -- we need more research."

The state air board doesn't fund any research on campus, but it should, he added. D'Adamo agreed and encouraged Forman to apply for its research program.

"We are just thrilled the campus is here," she said. "We are looking forward to more collaboration."

Air tops Valley's list of worries

Global warming is far behind in poll on environment.

By E.J. Schultz / Bee Capitol Bureau

Fresno Bee, Saturday, Nov. 10, 1007

SACRAMENTO -- More Central Valley residents say air pollution -- not global warming -- is the biggest environmental problem facing the world, according to a new poll.

In the Valley -- where dirty air contributes to high asthma rates -- 39% of poll respondents said air pollution is their biggest concern, compared with 19% who cited global warming, according to the Field Poll.

Air pollution is "a problem that people are dealing with today," said Carolina Simunovic, an air-quality advocate with Fresno Metro Ministry. "It's something very primal, and we're all getting affected by it."

Los Angeles County was the only other region where air pollution trumped global warming, but the results there were much closer, with 26% citing global warming and 28% choosing air pollution.

In the Central Valley -- which runs from Bakersfield to Redding -- only 19% cited global warming, the lowest percentage by far of any region, according to the poll.

Human contributions to global warming come from greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, that trap heat in the atmosphere. Many scientists say the warming can lead to massive flooding, extended droughts and a declining snowpack that reduces water supplies.

Air pollution, on the other hand, refers to particulate matter and summertime ozone -- the main gas in smog -- that can trigger asthma attacks and other lung problems.

But the two problems often share the same causes, such as automobiles -- which emit chemicals that cause both warming and pollution.

And air pollution problems could get worse as a result of global warming, according to a recent report by Environment California, an environmental advocacy group.

Still, in the Valley, environmental activists have learned to cite air pollution instead of warming when lobbying for regulations, Simunovic said.

"We still have some elected officials here that don't believe in global warming," Simunovic said.

Central Valley residents also appear to be more skeptical about the threat of global warming than those living in other regions.

In the Central Valley, 37% of poll respondents said immediate action should be taken to stop global warming, compared with 50% in the Bay Area and 43% statewide.

Though global warming has gotten a lot of attention lately, Democrats are more likely to embrace it as a cause, said Field Poll director Mark DiCamillo.

In the Republican-dominated Valley, he said, "that population of people is more likely to not tune in as much to global warming."

The poll was commissioned by Next 10, a nonpartisan voter-education group. To view the full results, visit field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/.

Bay Area residents warm to higher gas tax

By Denis Cuff, Staff Writer

Tri-Valley Herald and Contra Costa Times, Monday, November 12, 2007

Bay Area residents feel global warming is such an important problem that they would be willing to consider a gas tax increase to fight it, according to a new poll.

Sixty-nine percent of those polled said they would either definitely or possibly support a 25 cents per gallon increase in the gas tax to reduce global warming gases, said pollsters hired by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, a regional agency.

The 69 percent breaks down to 46 percent who supported the increase, and 23 percent who would "possibly" support it.

While the poll offers no guarantee that a gas tax would win two-thirds approval if placed on the ballot before voters in the nine Bay Area counties, the results suggest that the global warming debate is melting some of the public resistance to a higher gas tax.

"I think the poll shows greenhouse gas emissions are a significant concern with the public, and they are willing to invest funds to help," said Amy Worth, an Orinda City Councilwoman on the nine-county transportation commission.

In a commission poll four years ago, fewer than half of Bay Area residents said they would support or probably support a 5-cent per gallon gas tax increase to improve roads, freeways and public transportation. That poll did not mention global warming.

In the new poll, some 74 percent said curtailing greenhouse gas emissions was very or extremely important to them personally, and 87 percent said protecting air quality was very or extremely important. A Field poll released last week found an overwhelming majority of Californians believe global warming is a threat to their health and quality of life.

The transportation commission has no current plans to go to voters for a gas tax increase, but the agency does have the authority to ask Bay Area voters to raise the tax by as much as 10 cents a gallon.

The state Legislature has the power to raise gas taxes statewide, but has not done so in about 20 years.

The commission hired BW Research of Carlsbad to conduct the poll as the agency works to develop a plan for meeting regional transportation needs through 2035.

Part of that plan will focus on measures to minimize traffic congestion since motor vehicles are a major source of greenhouse gases, attributed to global warming.

When asked if they would support a gas tax increase if they knew the money was to be spent for a specific purpose, 63 percent of those polled said "yes" if the money was for research into cleaner vehicles and fuels. Some 62 percent agreed if the money was for more ferry, bus and rail service, and 57 percent agreed if the money went toward incentives to encourage car pool use.

When asked about their highest priority for transportation improvements, 59 percent said extending rail lines, 19 percent said improving freeway performance, and 10 percent said adding more car pool lanes.

Nine percent said their top priority was letting solo drivers pay a fee to use car pool lanes.

The poll found a sharp increase in those willing to take a smaller home if offered the theoretical choice between a small house to get a shorter commute, or a bigger house if it meant a longer commute.

Some 74 percent said they would take the small house and shorter commute, a big jump from four years ago when 57 percent said they would take the small home.

"We think the fact the number taking the small home went up 17 percent in just four years is remarkable," said Joe Conley, a spokesman for the commission.

Worth said people's willingness to sacrifice home size shows the growing frustration with longer commutes as many people move far from job centers to find housing they can afford.

The telephone poll of 1,800 Bay Area residents was taken between Sept. 27 and Oct. 22. The margin of error was plus or minus 2.3 percent. The poll can be viewed by going to www.mtc.ca.gov and clicking on Transportation 2035 poll results.

Seven of 10 Californians call global warming serious threat

By Steve Geissinger, MEDIANEWS SACRAMENTO BUREAU
in the Tri-Valley Herald, Monday, November 12, 2007

SACRAMENTO — An overwhelming majority of Californians believe global warming is a serious threat to their health and quality of life, according to a new statewide poll released Friday.

The Field Poll also indicates Californians believe the problem is more serious than people elsewhere in the United States.

More than seven in 10 Californians believe fears of air pollution and flooding are extremely or very important, compared with a national poll last year that put that figure at

52 percent.

Statewide, 43 percent say global warming requires immediate action and 32 percent believe at least something should be done.

Large majorities supported additional state government regulation, especially on businesses, or voluntary incentives.

Support slipped to lesser majorities across the board if the programs would increase the cost of goods and services.

Even slimmer majorities favored the idea of imposing emission taxes on businesses.

The least popular idea was taxing individuals based somehow on the amount of greenhouse gas they generate. But even that idea received 52 percent support.

The survey was commissioned by Next 10, a nonpartisan, nonprofit group that provides information to a wide range of groups.

The telephone poll of 1,003 adults was conducted August 10-28. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.

Contact Steve Geissinger at sgeissinger@bayareanewspapers.com or 916-447-9302.

LA district kills plans for 2 schools near freeway

in the Modesto Bee, Monday, November 12, 2007

LOS ANGELES — The nation's second-largest school district has dumped plans to build two new campuses near a freeway after concerns about the impact of air pollution on youngsters.

The Los Angeles Times says the L.A. Unified School District has halted plans to put a high school and middle school within 500 feet of Interstate 10.

More than 60,000 students already attend schools near freeways and five new campuses are being built.

Those buildings will have air filters to strip out road toxins but health experts say filters can't remove ultra-fine particles linked to asthma and bronchitis.

School board member Yolie Flores Aguilar has called for a series of meetings to outline future policies on where to place schools.

L.A. Unified seeks to clear the air

The school board is exploring ways to minimize the health hazards to students near pollution-spewing freeways.

By Evelyn Larrubia, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times, Monday, Nov. 12, 2007

The Los Angeles Board of Education is beginning to explore policies that would preclude schools from being built close to freeways and reduce air pollution at the dozens of campuses that already are located near major roadways.

The push for reform comes in the wake of an article in The Times in September revealing that more than 60,000 L.A. Unified students attended school within 500 feet of a freeway -- where large concentrations of pollutants are found. The district is building five schools within 500 feet of highways and had plans for two more.

Those two -- Central Region High School No. 15 and Central Region Middle School No. 9 -- were taken off the table after The Times began asking questions about them, officials revealed this week.

A 2003 state law prohibits schools from being built within 500 feet of major roadways unless the district can mitigate the pollution or space limitations leave it no option. The law was written in response to emerging science showing that pollution is highly concentrated close to major roadways. More recent studies have shown that children who live near freeways suffer from decreased lung function and development and increased incidents of asthma.

School board member Yolie Flores Aguilar, who joined the board this summer, heads the board's facilities committee, which oversees the district's \$20-billion school construction and modernization effort. She has called for a series of meetings to outline future policies over where the district will build schools. She is also pushing for recommendations from the district's environmental division regarding how to reduce the impact of freeway-caused air pollution on existing schools. Aguilar expects the committee to forward recommendations to the full seven-member board by February.

She said her concern stems from her own experiences as a child in Huntington Park.

"I was in oxygen tents growing up," said Aguilar, who was born with a severely narrow trachea, restricting her ability to breathe. "This is a very important issue for me."

Angelo Bellomo, head of the district's Office of Environmental Health and Safety, has ranked the district's dozens of freeway-adjacent schools based on such factors as size of the student body, number of years students attend the campus, distance to freeways and volume of diesel trucks that travel the freeways.

The list includes West Vernon, Soto and Lorena elementary schools, the recently opened Hesby Oaks School and College Ready Academy High School No. 4.

The problem with reducing air pollution at those schools is that researchers now believe the most noxious contaminants are hitched to dust specks so small that they're hard to capture and cannot be filtered.

Bellomo said the best solutions would involve state or federal regulation to further reduce the contaminants spewed from vehicles.

"Tougher emissions standards -- that's really how we're going to deal with these impacts," Bellomo said at the board's first committee meeting on the subject last week.

He showed the board aerial shots of sections of the 101 and 110 freeways with schools perched

on their edges and dozens more scattered in larger swaths where researchers have linked freeway contaminants to breathing problems in children. He also pointed out that not only schools but homes too are located in those high-pollution zones.

After Bellomo's presentation, facilities chief Guy Mehula said two schools that the district had been leaning toward building within 500 feet of freeways have been killed.

The district abandoned the preferred site for Central Region High School No. 15 -- which had been scheduled for 2100 Marengo St., adjacent to Interstate 10 near the interchange with the 5 Freeway -- and put Central Region Middle School No. 9 -- planned for Euclid Avenue and 7th Street, near the 10 Freeway -- on hold because of budget constraints, officials said.

Aguilar said her desire to closely oversee the actions of the district's school construction operation has created some tension with the facilities staff. Previous board members did not address the location of schools with regard to their proximity to freeways.

"The word was rein her in," Flores said. But she said she was undeterred.

"We can't just let staff make the decisions," she added. "If we're just rubber-stamping them, we're not doing our job."

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In the S.F. Chronicle, Fresno Bee and other papers, Monday, Nov. 11, 2007

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Shipping fuel fumes contribute to deaths

By Cassie Biggs, Associated Press Writer
in the L.A. Times, Friday, Nov. 9, 2007

HONG KONG -- Ships belching toxic fumes from diesel fuel contribute to the deaths of tens of thousands of people in Europe, Asia and the United States each year, claims a U.S. report released this week.

As many as 60,000 people living in coastal communities along major shipping routes died from lung and heart complaints as a result of high sulfate emissions from ships in 2002, according to the study released Wednesday by the American Chemical Society.

With international maritime trade on the rise and little regulation of ship emissions, that death toll could rise to as many as 82,000 by 2012, says the report to be published next month in ACS journal, Environmental Science & Technology.

People living in port cities like Hong Kong, Shanghai and Shenzhen were likely to be hit the hardest as most of the pollution occurred within 250 miles of their coasts, said the American researchers.

"Twenty-eight percent of the world's shipping container output passes through Hong Kong and Shenzhen," said Michele Weldon, environmental program manager at Civil Exchange, a public policy think tank in Hong Kong. "The significance of this study -- that marine pollution has health impacts -- cannot be ignored."

The study's U.S. authors said diesel-powered ships burn some of the dirtiest fuel on the planet today -- on average, having almost 2,000 times the sulfur content of highway diesel fuel in the United States and Europe.

While air pollution from diesel trucks and buses has been reduced by more than 90 percent over the last few decades, emissions from ocean-faring ships -- using the same diesel engine technology -- have risen virtually unchecked, it said.

"Ship pollution affects the health of communities in coastal and inland regions around the world, yet pollution from ships remain one of the least regulated parts of our global transportation system," said Dr. James Corbett, co-author of the report and associate professor of marine policy at the University of Delaware.

"With more than half the world's population living in coastal regions and freight growth outpacing other sectors, shipping emissions will need to meet stricter control targets," he said.

The study was commissioned in part by Clean Air Task Force and Friends of the Earth International, which are negotiating with the U.N. International Maritime Organization for new regulations to reduce shipping emissions.

Weldon said ships could reduce pollution by cutting speeds near shores and switching to cleaner fuels as they approached ports. Already, port cities such as Rotterdam and Los Angeles have imposed their own strict emission standards on ships entering their waters.

Arthur Bowring, of the Hong Kong Ship Owners Association, said voluntary regulation was not the answer as cleaner fuels, such as distillate, were nearly double the cost of the fuel most ships currently use.

"International regulation is the only way to bring in the use of cleaner fuels and ensure there is no competitive disadvantage when using it," he said.

The researchers took estimated seafaring-ship emissions of particulate and other pollutants, including sulfate and nitrous oxide. Using global circulation models, they mapped out how emissions would drift over land. After folding in regional demographic data, such as population density, they pinpointed areas with a higher likelihood of deaths from cardiopulmonary and lung cancer that are attributable to exposure to emissions.

Alexis Lau, a mathematics professor at the Institute for Environment at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, said the researchers used a standard method to estimate the health impact of pollutants. He said the ACS journal was respected and the estimated deaths the peer-reviewed study attributed to marine pollution were plausible.

The report said East Asia and South Asia were the most heavily impacted, each representing about one-fourth of the global impact.

One-third of all shipping deaths occurred in Europe; about one-tenth of global shipping deaths

occurred in North America, the study said.

"There are a lot of observations made from data to suggest a very strong association between sulfur, air pollution, including marine pollution, and premature deaths from respiratory problems like chronic lung failure," T.W. Wong, professor of medicine at the Chinese University of Hong Kong told the AP.

"If ships switched to cleaner fuels, it would help save lives," he said.

California sues feds over emissions

State wants ruling on tougher vehicle standard.

By E.J. Schultz / Bee Capitol Bureau

Fresno Bee, Friday, Nov. 9, 2007

SACRAMENTO -- California sued the federal government Thursday to force a decision on the state's request to enforce tough new rules aimed at curbing greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles.

The long-expected lawsuit ups the ante in the showdown between Gov. Schwarzenegger and the Bush administration over a state law that forces automakers to adopt new technology beginning with the 2009 model year.

"Our health and our environment are too important to delay any longer," said Schwarzenegger, announcing the lawsuit on the Capitol steps with Attorney General Jerry Brown. "It has been nearly two years since we have asked the federal government for this waiver, and we have not gotten it yet. So I think it is time now to step it up."

Automakers say the new standards would drive up the price of cars.

"Enhancing energy security and improving fuel economy are priorities to all Americans, but a patchwork quilt of regulations at the state level is not the answer," the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers said in a statement.

The alliance, arguing that there should be one federal standard for tailpipe emissions, has filed a lawsuit in a federal court in Fresno to block the new rules.

California's lawsuit accuses the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency of unreasonably delaying action on the state's request for a waiver that would allow it to adopt the rules. The request was filed in December 2005.

But the lawsuit, filed in a federal court in Washington, D.C., would become irrelevant if EPA chief Stephen Johnson makes a decision soon, which he has said he would do.

"Administrator Johnson has repeatedly stated that he will make a decision on the waiver request by the end of the year and he still plans to do so," said EPA spokeswoman Jennifer Wood.

The agency has typically approved such waivers for California. But if they don't approve this one, Schwarzenegger, a moderate Republican, and Brown, a Democrat, promised to go to court again.

The state will "sue again and sue again and sue again until we get it," the governor said. "We're going to win in the end."

The federal government holds the power to set national air pollution regulations. But the Clean Air Act gives California the right to adopt its own rules -- as long as the EPA gives its stamp of approval through a waiver. State regulators have long used the special status to force carmakers to reduce emissions of smog-making gases.

The state has been asking for waivers since 1969 and has had more than 40 partially or fully approved, according to the state Air Resources Board.

But this is the first time the state has tried to adopt regulations to control greenhouse gases. The gases don't directly produce smog, but contribute to global warming, which can wreak havoc with the Earth's atmosphere, according to scientists.

Automakers say the only way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is to improve fuel economy and that only the federal government has the power to set fuel standards. But California's case was strengthened in September when a federal judge in Vermont ruled that states can regulate greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles.

If California succeeds, other states also may act. At least 14 states are poised to follow, according to California's lawsuit. If the new rules are adopted in all 14 states, it would be the equivalent of taking 22 million cars off the road by 2020, Schwarzenegger said.

The state's Air Resources Board estimates the upgrades would boost the price of a car by about \$300. But automakers peg the cost at around \$3,000 per car and say that not all cars could be upgraded, especially larger ones.

That could mean some types of cars would become unavailable in California, said Charles Territo, spokesman for the automakers alliance.

The new regulations, called for in a law passed in 2002, would be phased in over several years, beginning with model year 2009. By 2016, an automaker's fleet on average must produce 30% fewer greenhouse gases than it does today.

The lawsuit asks the EPA to act on the waiver now because manufacturers will begin marketing 2009 cars as early as January 2008.

Mary Nichols, chairwoman of the state air board, said the standards could be reached with "completely known technology," such as more efficient drive trains and steering devices.

The vehicle regulations are considered a key pathway to attain aggressive greenhouse gas targets set by another law passed last year that calls for a cut in the state's overall greenhouse gases by 25% by 2020.

"If we don't get these cars that we know are out there ... we will experience greater global warming and we will have to find emissions reductions elsewhere -- from our industries and from our cities," Nichols said.

For the Valley's agriculture industry, that could translate into costly new rules, said Manuel Cunha Jr., who heads the Nisei Farmers League in Fresno. For instance, regulators might force growers to replace older farm vehicles, said Cunha, who supports the state's EPA waiver request.

"If they don't get [the waiver]," he said, "then they're going to go after everything."

State sues feds over EPA delays on limiting vehicle emissions

Bob Egelko, Matthew Yi, Chronicle Staff Writers

Friday, November 9, 2007

Sacramento - -- California took its global-warming dispute with the Bush administration to court Thursday, demanding that the federal government act on a request filed nearly two years ago to let the state limit motor vehicle emissions of greenhouse gases.

"California is ready to implement the nation's cleanest standards for vehicle emissions, but we cannot do that until the federal government grants us a waiver allowing us to enforce those standards," Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said at a Sacramento news conference.

Attorney General Jerry Brown, who filed the suit on behalf of Schwarzenegger and the state Air Resources Board, said the Environmental Protection Agency, "despite the mounting dangers of global warming ... has delayed and ignored California's right to impose stricter environmental standards."

The federal Clean Air Act allows California to regulate air pollution more strictly than the federal government, but only if the EPA grants a waiver, based on evidence that the state has shown "extraordinary and compelling conditions." The agency, which has issued such waivers every time California has sought one over the past 30 years, has not acted on the greenhouse gas emissions law since the state submitted its application in December 2005.

The suit, filed in federal court in Washington, D.C., asks a judge to order the EPA to rule on the request immediately. The state could appeal a denial to the federal appeals court in Washington.

California passed its greenhouse gas law, the first of its kind in the nation, in 2002. It requires new motor vehicles sold in the state to limit emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases that scientists believe contribute to global warming.

Automakers must do that by either improving gas mileage, using alternate fuels or adopting new technology that cuts emissions. The restrictions take effect with the 2009 models and increase to a 30 percent reduction from current levels by 2016.

Eleven states that have adopted laws modeled on California's statute, three states that are considering such laws, and eight conservation groups sought court permission to join the case. The states will be allowed to enforce their laws only if the EPA approves California's waiver.

"The Bush administration, apparently not content to block progress (on global warming) at the federal level, is trying to hold back states' progress, too," said Danielle Fugere of Friends of the Earth, one of the organizations seeking to intervene. "If the federal government isn't going to take the lead, the least it can do is get out of the states' way."

EPA spokeswoman Jennifer Wood noted that the agency said in June that it would make a decision by the end of this year.

"Clearly, California's more interested in getting a good headline than in getting us to make a good decision," Wood said.

She said the EPA has "moved expeditiously" on the state's application since April, when the Supreme Court, in a suit by California and other states, ruled that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases were air pollutants that the federal government could regulate under the Clean Air Act.

The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers also criticized the lawsuit, saying the state had failed to show that standards for greenhouse gases "address a problem unique to California." States should back off and allow the federal government to reduce emissions by increasing fuel

economy standards, the organization said, rather than subjecting automakers to "a patchwork quilt of regulations at the state level."

Automakers are challenging the California law in federal court in Fresno, arguing that the only way to cut greenhouse gas emissions is to increase vehicle miles per gallon, a subject regulated exclusively by the federal government. A federal judge in Vermont rejected that argument in September and upheld a law identical to California's. The Supreme Court rejected similar arguments by the EPA in April's ruling.

Since the high court's decision, the EPA has taken no steps to impose nationwide limits on greenhouse gases, and President Bush has restated his opposition to mandatory restrictions.

Ann Carlson, a professor of environmental law at UCLA, said the federal agency might reject California's law on the grounds that greenhouse gas emissions - unlike the smog-causing emissions that were the target of earlier waivers for the state - are a national problem.

"If EPA denies a waiver, I think it will say that climate change is not unique to California," Carlson said. But she said the Supreme Court had strengthened the state's position on that issue by ruling that states have legitimate interests to protect from global warming, such as coastlines and forests.

In Thursday's suit, state lawyers stressed the expected effects of climate change on California - more heat waves, fiercer storms, earlier snowpack melts, rising sea levels, worse fires and heavier smog.

"The longer the delay in reducing these emissions, the more costly and harmful will be the impact on California," the suit said.

The EPA has said it is still evaluating more than 100,000 written responses and thousands of pages of documents it received during a public comment period this spring and a hearing in May.

But state lawyers said nearly all those comments were favorable. Automakers will begin marketing 2009 models as early as next January and need to know the standards they must meet, the suit said.

The case was assigned to U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth, a 1987 appointee of President Ronald Reagan. Although generally conservative, he showed a willingness to rule against the government in a suit over the Interior Department's management of trust funds for Indian tribes.

Lamberth's stance in that case, in which he held two interior secretaries in contempt of court and accused the department of "deception, dirty tricks and outright villainy," prompted an appeals court to remove him from the suit last year, saying reasonable observers would conclude he was biased.

A green policy takes flight

Schwarzenegger's air travel, and its emissions impact, questioned.

By Kevin Yamamura

Sacramento Bee, Monday, November 12, 2007

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger crisscrosses the globe in a private Gulfstream 400 jet, advocating environmental virtues after signing a significant global warming reduction bill last year. He says he offsets his plane's greenhouse gas damage by financing projects that reduce carbon emissions elsewhere.

But the governor refuses to reveal how much money he has spent on emissions credits, making it impossible to determine how much he has reduced his carbon footprint. The governor also refuses to say how many hours he has flown.

"As is the case with most public officials, personal and financial details of their life are often kept private," said Schwarzenegger press secretary Aaron McLear. "It's important that a public official is able to have some kind of a private life, and that's why we have a policy not to discuss his private financial life."

Schwarzenegger's Gulfstream 400 plane emits as much as 4.9 metric tons of carbon dioxide per hour, according to the online luxury journal Helium Report, roughly the equivalent of what a small passenger car produces in one year over the course of 8,000 miles.

Since July, the governor has used a new carbon offsets program run by NetJets, the private jet company through which he flies, McLear said. NetJets charges Gulfstream 400 customers \$47.13 per hour flown to offset their emissions. The money goes toward a New Zealand wind farm, as well as projects to prevent harmful methane from spewing from an abandoned coal mine in Illinois and three dairy farms in Wisconsin.

By that measurement, Schwarzenegger pays \$94.26 in offsets for each round-trip commute between his Los Angeles home and the Capitol in Sacramento, assuming each one-way flight takes an hour in flying time. That expenditure is minuscule – less than 0.4 percent – compared with the estimated \$12,800 per hour it costs to fly a Gulfstream 400, according to Helium Report.

In one recent 11-day span this fall when Schwarzenegger flew to New York City, Puerto Peñasco, Mexico, and Shanghai, China, he racked up more than 42 hours in flying time, based on estimates from commercial flight times. To offset his emissions through NetJets, he would have paid \$2,012, a small fraction of the estimated \$547,000 he paid to fly.

Those figures do not account for commute trips between Sacramento and Los Angeles during those 11 days because Schwarzenegger would not disclose how often he returned home due to security concerns, McLear said.

Environmentalists have mixed feelings about the governor's offsets policy. They applaud Schwarzenegger for trying to counteract the carbon emissions from his private jet, but they suggest offsets give him and other private fliers an easy excuse to maintain their lifestyles.

"I think we all recognize the governor's need to travel, but when it's possible from a scheduling standpoint and a security standpoint, we would want them to travel in a lower-polluting method," said Bill Magavern, a Sierra Club California lobbyist. "Offsets should not be used as an argument for excessive consumption ... but after one has reduced emissions wherever possible, I think investing in legitimate offsets (is) the next step to take. I give the governor credit for bothering to do that."

For the first half of the year, Schwarzenegger used a Humboldt County forest preservation program run by the Pacific Forest Trust before switching to NetJets' program in July, McLear said. The governor has prepaid for emissions credits that will last through the end of 2008.

Neither NetJets nor the Pacific Forest Trust would disclose how much money the governor has paid to offset his emissions this year, though both confirmed that he has used their programs.

By comparison, the governor's predecessor, Gov. Gray Davis, used Southwest Airlines to commute between Sacramento and his own Los Angeles-area home.

Even though large passenger jets burn more fuel and emit more carbon than private planes, their impact per passenger is far less. According to TerraPass, a carbon offsets service, a one-way flight from Sacramento to Los Angeles on a commercial plane emits 477 pounds of carbon dioxide per passenger, less than 5 percent of what Schwarzenegger's private jet does.

Environmentalists call for ban on bunker fuel, described as toxic

By Juliana Barbassa

In the S.F. Chronicle, Fresno Bee and other papers, Monday, Nov. 11, 2007

Sticky, packed with pollutants and slow to break down, the type of oil spilled into the San Francisco Bay by a cargo ship is an environmental nightmare loose on the waves, said environmentalists calling for a ban on it.

"Bunker fuel is the dirtiest fuel on the planet," said Teri Shore, campaign director for the marine program at Friends of the Earth. "Ships are being used as waste incinerators for the oil industry."

On Sunday, the group launched a petition asking Congress to ban bunker fuel use. About 5,000 people had signed onto it by Monday.

About 58,000 gallons of the fuel poured into the San Francisco Bay last Wednesday, when the ship sideswiped a support on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, opening a 90-foot gash on the side of the 926-foot vessel and tearing open two of its fuel tanks. The spreading oil has fouled nearly two dozen beaches and killed dozens of sea birds.

The problems posed by bunker fuel to the environment stem from its physical properties - it's gooey and thick, particularly in cold water - and from the toxins it carries, scientists said.

A byproduct of oil refining, a process that separates lighter, cleaner, more commercially valuable liquids like gasoline and kerosene, bunker fuel is a black, viscous substance laden with heavy metals, sulfur and other polluting chemicals.

"If it's too thick and too complex to combust in an engine, we make tar out of it, but if it's still able to be heated and to flow through a pipe, we call it bunker fuel," said James Corbett, a professor at the University of Delaware's College of Marine and Earth Studies.

Its main advantage to the shipping industry is that it's cheap - a cost-effective option for massive ship engines can burn fuels other engines can't use, industry representatives said.

But if bunker fuel spills, it gums up beaches, marshes and other ecosystems. Animals take it for food or ingest it as they try to clean their coats, and the oil breaks through the waterproof fur or feathers that keep them dry, exposing them to hypothermia, said Gary Shigenaka, with the emergency response division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The fuel also can break up into tar balls, which create a weathered coating on the outside and keep the oil fresh on the inside. Those can travel far and plague wildlife and ecosystems for years, Shigenaka said.

Bunker fuel also creates problems in the air when burned.

Tiny particles of pollution and chemicals released through ship exhaust were linked to the premature death of about 60,000 people with heart and lung ailments in 2002, according to an article published this month in *Environmental Science & Technology*, the journal of the American Chemical Society.

"If the fuel burned by ships were cleaner, we would prevent a significant number of deaths annually," said James Winebrake, professor at the Rochester Institute of Technology who co-authored the study with Corbett.

Winebrake noted that diesel sold for road use in the United States has about 15 parts of sulfur per million, while the average sulfur content of bunker fuel globally is about 27,000 parts per million.

Some steps have been taken to cut down on ship pollution in California, in part because of pressure from environmental groups.

Air regulators required ships coming within 24 miles of the state's coastline to burn low-sulfur fuel, but that provision has been challenged in court by industry groups.

The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, two of the country's largest, have encouraged approaching ships to slow down to reduce emissions. They're also putting in equipment to let ships plug into land-based electrical outlets and turn off their engines while docked.

But environmental groups argue that it's time to make significant changes, such as phasing out bunker fuel altogether, not just small steps that would allow its continued use. With the growth of global trade, traffic of huge cargo ships around the world is on the rise, and with it, the impact of their emissions, they said.

"There are more ships on high seas, more ships coming into the bay," Shore said. "That means more potential for accidents and more exposure to pollution."

Diet could combat global warming

Diet is one of the lesser-known tools that individuals can use to combat global warming, some studies suggest

By Alex Breitler - Record Staff Writer

Stockton Record, Tuesday, November 13, 2007

Two green smoothies a day and her asthma goes away. But as she transitions to a vegetarian diet, Stockton's Patricia Wilson may be improving Earth's health as well as her own.

Choosing judiciously your Thanksgiving menu could make future generations thankful indeed.

All this diet talk got started earlier this year when the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization reported that raising livestock contributes

18 percent of the world's human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, more than all sources of transportation combined.

By breathing, belching and defecating, cows release gases into the atmosphere. The situation is worsened when land is cleared of vegetation to grow cattle feed.

"The overall impact of livestock activities on the environment is enormous," according to the U.N. report.

As people earn wealth, they buy more and more meat, milk and eggs. People also eat more animal protein as they get older, and the world's population is aging. Finally, an increasing number of people live in cities where they are more likely to rely on precooked meals or fast food.

Fighting fat and climate change

By SETH BORENSTEIN , AP Science Writer

in the Modesto Bee, Sunday, November 11, 2007

WASHINGTON — America's obesity epidemic and global warming might not seem to have much in common. But public health experts suggest people can attack them both by cutting calories and carbon dioxide at the same time.

How? Get out of your car and walk or bike half an hour a day instead of driving. And while you're at it, eat less red meat. That's how Americans can simultaneously save the planet and their health, say doctors and climate scientists.

The payoffs are huge, although unlikely to happen. One numbers-crunching scientist calculates that if all Americans between 10 and 74 walked just half an hour a day instead of driving, they would cut the annual U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide, the chief greenhouse gas, by 64 million tons.

About 6.5 billion gallons of gasoline would be saved. And Americans would also shed more than 3 billion pounds overall, according to these calculations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is considering public promotion of the "co-benefits" of fighting global warming and obesity-related illnesses through everyday exercise, like walking to school or work, said Dr. Howard Frumkin, director of the CDC's National Center for Environmental Health.

"A simple intervention like walking to school is a climate change intervention, an obesity intervention, a diabetes intervention, a safety intervention," Frumkin told The Associated Press. "That's the sweet spot."

Climate change is a deadly and worsening public health issue, said Frumkin and other experts. The World Health Organization estimated that 160,000 people died in 2000 from malaria, diarrhea, malnutrition and drownings from floods - problems that public health and climate scientists contend were worsened by global warming. Officials predict that in the future those numbers will be higher.

The American Public Health Association, which will highlight the health problems of global warming in April, is seeking to connect obesity and climate change solutions, said executive director Dr. Georges Benjamin.

"This may present the greatest public health opportunity that we've had in a century," said University of Wisconsin health sciences professor Dr. Jonathan Patz, president of the International Association for Ecology and Health.

The key is getting people out of the car, Patz and Frumkin told the public health association at its annual convention. Reducing car travel in favor of biking or walking would not only cut obesity and greenhouse gases, they said, it would also mean less smog, fewer deaths from car crashes, less osteoporosis, and even less depression since exercise helps beat the blues.

In a little-noticed scientific paper in 2005, Paul Higgins, a scientist and policy fellow with the American Meteorological Society, calculated specific savings from adopting federal government recommendations for half an hour a day of exercise instead of driving.

The average person walking half an hour a day would lose about 13 pounds a year. And if everyone did that instead of driving the same distance, the nation would burn a total of 10.5 trillion calories, according to the scientist, formerly with the University of California at Berkeley. At the same time, that would cut carbon dioxide emissions by about the same amount New Mexico produces, he said.

"The real bang for the buck in reducing greenhouse gas emissions was from the avoided health expenses of a sedentary lifestyle," said Higgins.

But it's not just getting out of the car that's needed, said Dr. Robert Lawrence of the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. A diet shift away from heavy meat consumption would also go

far, he said, because it takes much more energy and land to produce meat than fruits, vegetables and grains.

Recent studies support that argument. Last year the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization reported that the meat sector of the global economy is responsible for 18 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Much of that is indirect, including the fertilizer needed to grow massive amounts of feed for livestock, energy use in the whole growing process, methane released from fertilizer and animal manure, and transportation of the cattle and meat products.

Similar calculations were made in a study in September in the medical journal Lancet.

The average American man eats 1.6 times as much meat as the government recommends, Lawrence said. Some studies have shown eating a lot of red meat is linked to a higher risk for colon cancer.

As for fighting obesity and global warming by walking and cycling, don't expect people to do it easily, said Kristie Ebi. She's a Virginia public health consultant and one of the lead authors of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report.

Citing the decades-long effort to curb smoking, she said, "It turns out changing people's habits is very hard."

[Merced Sun-Star Editorial, Tuesday, November 13, 2007](#)

Our View: Clean air worth fighting for

Mercedians turn out to voice concerns, share solutions with Air Resources Board

It's clearly a mixed bag of good news and bad news. Some progress is being made in cleaning up the San Joaquin Valley's seriously polluted air but not as much as many people would like to see and the effort is taking way too long.

But there are encouraging signs.

Getting people to attend public hearings is darned near impossible but 70 people showed up in Merced at a community meeting staged by a California Air Resources Board task force on air pollution. Those sizable numbers tell us that air pollution is becoming an issue near and dear to many local residents. The Merced session was termed a success, with ideas presented that could make meaningful differences in cleaning up Valley air.

Folks are impatient with the time it's taking to impose more stringent air quality goals; setting a 2024 attainment goal is simply too long to wait for clean air. It's not realistic; that's 17 years from now. People can draw a little encouragement from task force indications that 90 percent of the clean-air goals can be met in 10 years' time. Still, the public's patience with dragging this out for years may be waning.

It's becoming increasingly apparent that reducing diesel emissions will go a long way in reducing overall air pollution. Some of the particulates or airborne solids we are seeing, smelling and breathing every day come from diesel engines -- either trucks, trains, farm or industrial equipment. Stricter diesel engine requirements are needed but there must be financial incentives and help from the state and federal government to make these upgrades feasible and achievable.

Another encouraging sign to come from the Merced session was announcement of plans to hold a spring forum at UC Merced, where more people can become aware of ways to reduce air pollution. Merced's new research university should be involved in this quest to make our air cleaner and the state should fund some of these groundbreaking studies.

We're also heartened to see cooperation among county officials, air pollution control district leaders, industry representatives, health advocates and the general public to address our air

quality situation. This kind of sustained teamwork is what is needed for meaningful progress in reversing one of the Valley's most serious problems -- its air quality.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Tuesday, Nov. 13, 2007:](#)

Now for the hard part

Valley's air won't be clean until we confront pollution from vehicles.

Valley residents -- by a wide margin -- say that air pollution is the most serious environmental problem we face. That's the gratifying conclusion of a new statewide Field Poll, but it also raises a crucial question: What are we willing to do about the problem?

There has been some progress against air pollution in the Valley -- haltingly at times, contentiously always. Ag operations are cleaner than they used to be, and regulations have been tightened against many industrial sources of pollution. The state's Air Resources Board recently reported that the Valley air district has regulated "all stationary sources of pollution that fall under its purview." We don't entirely agree, but some improvement has been made.

That's good news -- as far as it goes. What comes next will be much harder. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is largely limited to regulating stationary sources, and can't do much about mobile sources -- cars, trucks, trains, tractors -- that do most of the damage to the Valley's air.

In effect, we've plucked the low hanging fruit when it comes to reducing air pollution. The steps we have to take now will be much harder, and involve making dramatic changes in the way we live our lives.

Principally, it's this: Are we willing to drastically reduce our dependence on vehicles? Will large numbers of Valley residents start carpooling, walking, riding bicycles, taking the bus? Will we insist on land-use planning and development patterns that reduce our dependence on private vehicles?

Will we exchange our gas-guzzling cars and trucks for hybrids and other alternative-fuel vehicles that reduce pollution? Will we demand high-speed rail and other transit alternatives?

If we don't make those changes, we can kiss the prospects for clean air goodbye.

We'll have to live with filthy brown skies. We'll have to accept that one child in five will have asthma. We'll have to watch as ag production decreases and Sierra Nevada forests die off because of dirty air. We'll just have to bear the added \$3 billion-plus in annual health care costs attributed to air pollution. We'll have to sit and watch as hundreds of Valley residents -- including loved ones -- die prematurely because of air pollution.

It's been said that Americans, and particularly Californians, will never give up their cars. If that's true, then the clean air battle has already been lost in the Valley. And it's no comfort to notice that we're still driving as much -- or more -- as we used to even as gas prices edge toward \$3.50 a gallon.

But we may not have to give up those private vehicles altogether. If we switch to smarter, cleaner cars and drive them less -- choosing alternatives whenever possible -- it may be possible to clean the Valley's air after all.

It won't be easy. Comfortable habits are awfully hard to change. But we know the cost of the status quo, and it's mighty high. Can we afford to keep paying it? We don't think so. We have to change.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Saturday, Nov. 10, 2007:](#)

Fresno State's bright news on energy front

We continue to see more examples of solar energy being harnessed here in the San Joaquin Valley. We like that.

This week Fresno State marked the completion of one of the largest solar panel projects of its kind on a U.S. college campus.

The \$11.9 million project on the southeast side of the campus uses 3,872 photovoltaic panels on top of 10 metal structures. The system's capacity is 1,181 kilowatts, which can produce up to 24,000 kilowatt-hours of energy -- about 20% of the university's base electricity demand and equivalent to power for 1,000 homes.

Chevron Energy Solutions of San Francisco, a subsidiary of Chevron, built the system. The project was financed through a power-purchase agreement with MMA Renewable Ventures, a subsidiary of Municipal Mortgage & Equity, which owns and operates the installation.

Along with producing electricity, the metal structures also will provide more than 700 shaded parking spaces on campus.

Earlier this year, as the project was getting under way, Fresno State President John D. Welty called it a great example of the university's effort to meet its "green campus" initiatives.

We all need to look at more ways to be green in everything we do -- in conserving water, recycling, reducing air pollution. Increasing the amount of energy we get in the Valley through renewable sources like solar is another big step toward living green.

And in doing so, we're also moving toward establishing energy independence and reducing our need for oil supplies from volatile regions such as the Middle East.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Saturday, Nov. 10, 2007:](#)

'A bad location'

Visalia City Council Member Greg Collins got it just right in filing an appeal to the Visalia Planning Commission's approval of a land use permit. The permit in question is for Fresno Pacific University to expand -- something it needs to do -- in a proposed business park in west Visalia near Highway 99.

The location is not appropriate in light of the past two year's work upgrading the area east of downtown. As Mr. Collins has said, "It's a good idea in a bad location."

As with other plans for the area, zoned as a business research park, it is contrary to the zoning. Visalia's goal is good planning that promotes infilling, walkability and reduced air pollution. It is reasonable to expect Fresno Pacific, which happens to be a great school where I earned a graduate degree, to respect Visalia's efforts to improve the community.

I personally ask John Ward, Fresno Pacific's vice president for finance and business affairs, to reconsider the location. It would be a good public relations move for Fresno Pacific and a good planning move for Visalia.

Steve Surowiec, Visalia

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Monday, Nov. 12, 2007:](#)

Put blame for Valley's bad air pollution on us

Regarding Valerie McClure's letter Nov. 9 on particulate air pollution: The Bee "told it like it is," in part, in the editorial on the same page as her letter.

Wildland fires, while not exclusively in forests, are so voracious these days because of a history of fire suppression, rather than letting some fires burn, which is a much more common strategy today. In years past, the policy was to put every fire out. Now, as The Bee opinion states, citing facts from the Blue Ribbon Fire Commission, poor land use planning in the past is fueling these fires even more -- not because of limits by the so-called "environmental crowd."

As far as air quality is concerned, except for short-term events, like wildland fires, most of our particulate pollution in the Valley is "home grown" -- from our local sources, or from sources that our local air pollution control district has no control over, like motor vehicles.

It is irresponsible to blame the fires in Southern California two weeks ago on environmentalists. If people continue to want their little piece of the wilderness, and cities and counties continue to plan poorly, we all pay the price.

Sean Boyd, Fresno

[Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Letter to the Editor, Friday, Nov. 9, 2007:](#)

Collins is correct on Fresno Pacific plans

Visalia City Council member Greg Collins got it right in filing an appeal to the Visalia Planning Commission's approval of a land-use permit. The permit in question is for Fresno Pacific University to expand - something it needs to do - in a proposed business park in west Visalia near Highway 99. The location is not appropriate in light of the past two years' work upgrading east downtown. As Collins has said, "...it's a good idea in a bad location."

As with other plans for the area, zoned as a business research park, it is contrary to the zoning. Visalia's goal is good planning that promotes infilling, walkability and reduced [air pollution](#). It is reasonable to expect Fresno Pacific, which happens to be a great school where I myself earned a graduate degree, to respect Visalia's efforts to improve the community.

I personally ask John Ward, Fresno Pacific's vice president for finance and business affairs, to reconsider the location. It would be a good public relations move for Fresno Pacific and a good planning move for Visalia.

STEVE SUROWIEC, Visalia

[Tracy Press Editorial, Friday, November 9, 2007](#)

'Green' crusaders challenge the EPA

With pomp and plenty of press coverage, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger sued the Bush administration Thursday because the Environmental Protection Agency hasn't acted on a waiver submitted by the state to impose a global-warming regulation on auto tailpipe emissions.

Alongside the Republican governor was former Democratic governor Jerry Brown, now the state's attorney general with his eyes on the governorship when Schwarzenegger leaves.

Oh, my! The caped crusaders, the Terminator and Moonbeam, battling the evil greenhouse gases spewed by America's automakers with the acquiescence of anti-environmentalists President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney — the Darth Vader twins.

Schwarzenegger and Brown appeared dynamic before the adoring media, with Brown upstaging a state Capitol news conference by proclaiming with confidence, "With this combined power of Schwarzenegger and Brown, EPA, get out of the way!"

Maybe Brown was a bit overconfident because the EPA remains immovable, although EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson has promised to act on California's request by year's end. Since the EPA has delayed acting for the past two years (including losing a case in the Supreme Court), we get the feeling that promise will be broken. Chances are the EPA might decide California's case after Bush's second term ends in January 2009.

California wants the legal authority to cut California's carbon emissions by one-fourth during the next 12 years, or the equivalent of removing 6.5 million vehicles from California roads. Schwarzenegger wants it to start with the 2009 model year. Fourteen other states are prepared to follow California's lead if the waiver is approved. Because of California's air pollution problem, the state can seek waivers to adopt environmental regulations that are stronger than the rest of the nation. Since the early 1970s, the EPA has granted 50 waivers from California. Why not No. 51?

If the EPA doesn't this time, be rest assured the Schwarzenegger and Brown duo will encourage the next president to have a "green" administration.