

Regionalism is key to economic success

By Eiji Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel, Friday (afternoon), Oct. 5, 2007

VISALIA -- Regionalism may go against the notion of self-contained community often romanticized in rural America, but it is the key to economic growth and becoming a "winner" in today's global economy.

So said a national expert in regional development and policy to a room full of Valley movers and shakers Thursday in a summit held at the Visalia Convention Center.

Mark Drabenstott, director of the Rural Policy Research Institute's Center for Regional Competitiveness at the University of Missouri-Columbia, said rural regions -- often reliant on manufacturing and commodity agriculture rather than innovation -- are losing ground in the global race for jobs and income.

"If Visalia and Western China were in a competition, Visalia would lose," Drabenstott said.

If it is to survive "the global economy Olympics," he said, a rural region must reinvent its economy through a regional strategy, that is figure out unique competitive advantage and foster innovation.

"The problem with most regions is they never do their homework," Drabenstott said. "Regions never really ask what they are best at. That's the question that really needs to be answered."

To many, Drabenstott's speech was reaffirming.

Heads were nodded and grunts of agreement sounded across the event hall, where tables were filled with key individuals -- from academics to lawmakers -- working toward improving the San Joaquin Valley.

Nearly 350 people turned out for the inaugural summit of California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley Partnership

Created in 2005 by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's executive order, the eight-county partnership is where the public and private sectors meet under the common goal of giving the Valley -- a region historically passed over -- a voice.

Today, the 26-member board made up of cabinet secretaries, local government and business leaders drives the emerging regional blueprint on the Valley's most pressing issues, ranging from education to workforce to the environment.

The Valley partnership is part of the larger regionalism movement sprouting across the country.

In the Midwest, metro chambers in Northeast Ohio -- including Cleveland and Akron -- united in 2003 as Team NEO to attract business investments to the region. On the East Coast, it's Charlotte Regional Partnership, a cross-state partnership that binds together 16 counties in both Carolinas to spur quality of life improvements.

Drabenstott's keynote speech put such regional efforts in a more global context.

"Even China is saying, 'We cannot continue to be the world's factory. We cannot supply cheap labor forever,'" Drabenstott said, implying the need for the Valley -- the bread basket of the world -- to rethink its way of existence.

"There's a lot of wealth in the Valley," he said. "But much of it is buried in the dirt."

Innovation and entrepreneurship based on the region's unique characteristics are the driving force of success, Drabenstott said.

Kings County Supervisor Tony Barba called the speech inspiring, and said he walked away convinced Kings County needs to diversify its economy.

"If you look at our workforce, a majority is in the government sector," Barba said. "It tells us that we'd better get together and start bringing something else."

Barba, who sits on the Valley's air board, said he's reminded of the increasing importance of regional collaboration in tackling common issues.

"If we want to clean the air, for example, we can't do it individually," Barba said. "We can no longer exist on our own."

John Lehn, president-CEO of the Kings Economic Development Corp., a private nonprofit tasked to stimulate industrial growth in the area, said the regional approach is also important for workforce preparation.

"Major population centers and economic centers will determine the destiny of the Valley," Lehn said. "We have to be at the table because anticipating where the job growth will be is key to preparing our workforce."

Thursday's summit coincided with the release of the partnership's annual progress report, which lays out plans for the region's economic growth, better environment and social equity.

The partnership has already dispersed \$2.5 million in grants to 14 pilot projects designed to "seed the work" for the 10-year implementation plan.

Although much of its work still has to be seen, the partnership has so far brought about some tangible results such as:

- the \$1 billion funding to upgrade Highway 99
- a newly commissioned clean energy group
- a work group to close the academic gap for English learners and immigrants in K-12 schools
- a digital link between UC Merced medical school and rural health centers across the Valley.

Automakers to appeal emissions ruling

By KEN THOMAS - Associated Press Writer

in the Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Saturday, October 6, 2007

WASHINGTON Automakers on Friday said they would appeal a ruling by a federal judge in Vermont that said states could regulate greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles.

The industry, represented by the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, has argued that federal law pre-empts state rules in the regulation of fuel economy standards and the technology cannot be developed to meet the tough standards pushed by California and others.

"Evidence provided during the trial demonstrates that the federal law is very explicit: states are pre-empted from adopting fuel economy laws and complex issues such as greenhouse gas emissions must be dealt with comprehensively on the national level," said Dave McCurdy, president and chief executive of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers.

The notice of appeal was filed by attorneys for the Alliance, a trade group representing nine automakers, including General Motors Corp., Ford Motor Co., Chrysler LLC and Toyota Motor Corp.

A similar notice was also filed by the Association of International Automobile Manufacturers, which represents Toyota, Nissan Motor Co., Honda Motor Co. and others. Automakers are expected to outline the grounds of the appeal later this month.

McCurdy said the appeal was "urgent" because the regulations applied to 2009 model year vehicles, which will begin to appear in showrooms early next year.

In his 240-page ruling in September, Judge William Sessions III noted that greenhouse gas regulations presented great challenges to auto companies but said "history suggests that the ingenuity of the industry, once put in gear, responds admirably to most technological challenges."

He wrote that he was "unconvinced" that the industry could not meet the regulations imposed by Vermont and California. Automakers said the regulations, which have been adopted by California and 11 other states and are pending in three others, would not stop global warming but cause new financial burdens.

Vermont Attorney General William Sorrell said Friday the industry's appeal was expected but noted that Sessions thoroughly examined the facts and arguments in his lengthy decision.

"We won on all points, so it's an uphill sled for the industry on the appeal, but nothing's certain until the Supreme Court rules," Sorrell said.

The limits, scheduled to start phasing in as of 2009, would require a 30 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from cars and trucks by 2016, a standard the car makers have said would require average fuel economy standards for cars and the lightest category of trucks of 43.7 miles per gallon.

For the rules to be implemented, the Environmental Protection Agency still must grant a waiver applied for by California under the federal Clean Air Act and has said a decision is expected by the end of the year.

California has received similar waivers in the past, allowing it to set up tougher anti-pollution standards than those outlined by the federal government. States can choose to follow California's standards.

Smog levels nearly hit record low

Cooler Mother Nature gave Bay Area better air

By Denis Cuff, STAFF WRITER

Tri-Valley Herald, Monday, October 8, 2007

A mild summer gave the Bay Area one of its least smoggy years on record, sparing residents a repeat of the dirty air that gripped the region during severe heat waves last year.

Ozone, the lung-burning ingredient in smog, violated the federal health limit on one day this year, and no further excesses are expected before the Oct. 12 end of the smog season, air pollution officials said.

The total ties 2005 as the second-cleanest year on record in the nine-county region around the Bay.

"We're very pleased with the good numbers," said Karen Schkolnick, a spokeswoman for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. "But it shows that meteorology plays a role in air quality. You never know what the weather will bring."

Ozone can irritate lungs and eyes, stunt lung development in children and aggravate a variety of ailments such as asthma.

Last year, Bay Area ozone exceeded the limit on 12 days, the highest total since 1998.

The waves of hot stagnant air that killed 138 people statewide last summer also created ideal conditions for brewing smog.

Afternoon breezes off the Bay that usually act as a natural air conditioner were switched off many days, trapping auto and factory exhaust in place.

Livermore, in the heart of the East Bay's hot zone, reached 113 degrees one day in July in the worst heat wave.

This year, the mercury reached 100 degrees on nine days during those four months, and those days were more evenly spaced out, according to the National Weather Service Livermore's high temperatures in July this year averaged 86 degrees, 3 degrees less than the historical average.

"It was a little cooler this year," said Steve Anderson, a weather service forecaster.

The cool temperatures left another legacy: nearly \$4 million in leftover money for two days of free public transit rides that were never called.

Transportation and pollution officials set aside some \$8 million for up to four days of free rides on Spare the Air days, but only two days were declared.

Officials are considering whether to hold the money for free rides in 2008 or do something else with it, said John Goodwin, spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. While the Bay Area has some of the cleanest air among urban areas in California, other areas also enjoyed cleaner air this year.

The Sacramento Metropolitan Area had 18 unhealthy smog days this year, compared to 42 last year, according to preliminary figures from the California Air Resources Board.

The number of air violations days dropped from 86 to 78 in the South Coast air district in the Los Angeles air basin, and from 86 to 64 days in the San Joaquin Valley air basin, according to state figures.

In the Bay Area, air quality regulators say they must continue to reduce pollution because it will become harder to attain smog standards.

Long-term global warming is expected to bring more hot days when smog forms more readily, officials say.

"We can easily have other summers like last year," said Jack Broadbent, the air district's chief executive officer.

Also, the federal Environmental Protection Agency has proposed lowering the allowable level of smog in ground level air before it's considered unhealthy.

New research suggests ozone is harmful to people at lower doses than previously believed, EPA officials say.

Persistent failure to meet those standards can risk loss of federal road and highway funds.

As the smog season comes to an end, Bay Area officials are gearing up for a different pollution problem in winter: smoke and other tiny particles trapped near the ground during chilly weather.

The air pollution district asks the public not to burn wood fires on dirty-air nights in winter to reduce soot particles that can cause a variety of circulatory and breathing ailments.

Starting next month, the air district plans to hold public meetings on a proposed rule that would ban smoke fires on dirty-air nights.

Eco-friendly bills await Arnold's pen

Governor keeps environmental advocates, industry officials guessing

By Paul Rogers, MEDIANEWS STAFF

Tri-Valley Herald, Monday, October 8, 2007

Environmentalists and industry officials alike are holding their breath, waiting for Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to act on a stack of environmental bills in the next few days that would do everything from require green building standards on new homes and commercial buildings to banning a controversial type of chemicals in children's toys.

Schwarzenegger has until Sunday to sign or veto all the bills that the state Legislature sent him this year.

As in years past, Schwarzenegger is keeping both supporters and opponents of many of the top environmental issues guessing right until the end. His actions are harder to predict than previous governors, they say.

"Arnold is a celebrity. He loves some of these environmental issues," said John White, executive director of the Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technologies, an environmental group in Sacramento.

"He has great command of the subjects in a speech-making kind of way. Environmentalists see him, unlike with (former Gov.) Pete Wilson, as 'there's always a chance with Arnold that you might get a bill signed.' He is a centrist."

Last year Schwarzenegger won worldwide attention for signing Assembly Bill 32, a law requiring California to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

25 percent by 2020. An end run around the Bush administration, that measure was opposed by the state's oil industry, utilities and other business groups.

Yet he also disappointed environmentalists by vetoing a bill that would have set a \$30 fee on shipping containers coming into Los Angeles and Long Beach to fund programs to clean up diesel smog. The trucks and ships in the ports make them the largest stationary source of diesel pollution in California, linked to severe respiratory problems in thousands of people.

This year, there are roughly 15 bills on environmental issues that have reached the governor's desk.

"We hope that the governor is going to want to reinforce his environmental reputation by signing some of these key bills," said Bill Magavern, a lobbyist for the Sierra Club.

The bills include the following:

-AB1108, by Assemblywoman Fiona Ma, D-San Francisco, which would ban chemicals called phthalates in toys and child care products designed for children under 3. The chemicals, which are used to soften plastic, have been linked in some studies to early onset of puberty, testicular cancer and liver problems. Opponents of the bill, including the American Chemistry Council, say that without phthalates, toys would become brittle and could pose a choking hazard. They also argue the studies showing health risks were done by giving rats massive doses — far more than children would receive through pacifiers, baby bottles and other products.

-AB821, by Assemblyman Pedro Nava, D-Santa Barbara, would ban lead bullets for hunters in the range of the California condor, which extends roughly from the Bay Area to Los Angeles. Recent studies by toxicologists at the University of California, Santa Cruz, have shown that condors, a highly endangered species, have suffered lead poisoning after eating bullet fragments left in deer and wild pigs killed by hunters. Many hunting groups oppose the bill, saying that copper bullets cost more and don't fly as true.

-AB1470, by Assemblyman Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael, would create a \$250 million annual subsidy for solar hot water heaters with the goal of installing 200,000 by 2017. The money would come from a surcharge on monthly utility bills that would be set by the California Public Utilities Commission. The bill is modeled after Schwarzenegger's Million Solar Roofs program and is designed to cut natural gas use by encouraging people to install solar devices that heat water for their homes.

One area of controversy is green buildings. There are three bills that would require green building standards:

-AB888, by Assemblyman Ted Lieu, D-El Segundo, would require that starting in 2013, new commercial buildings over 50,000 square feet would have to meet the "gold" standard of the United States Green Building Council. The rule would affect everything from office buildings to supermarkets.

-AB1058, by Assemblyman John Laird, D-Santa Cruz, would require the state Building Standards Commission to set green building standards for new homes by 2010.

-AB35, by Assemblyman Ira Ruskin, D-Los Altos, would require the state EPA to set sustainable building standards by 2009 for the construction and renovation of state buildings so that they meet the 'silver' standard of the U.S. Green Building Council.

Supporters include most of the major environmental groups in California, who argue that better insulation, more efficient lighting and other measures reduces energy use. Opponents include the California Chamber of Commerce and other business groups.

"We're very supportive of green building," said Bob Raymer, of the California Building Industry Association. "The problem here is that all three of these bills reference national guidelines, and each of them are put together by private sector groups. They don't go through any public scrutiny or comment process."

Raymer said that California is unique, with lots of earthquakes, landslides and fires, and should design its own standards.

This year many of the top environmental measures stalled or died in the Legislature, particularly in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

They include measures to require 33 percent of California's electricity to come from renewable sources, the \$30 fee on shipping containers to reduce ports smog, and AB493, by Ruskin, which would set fees of up to \$2,500 on the sale of new vehicles that guzzle gas and emit high levels of carbon dioxide. The money would have funded rebates of up to \$2,500 for people who purchase low-emission, fuel-efficient cars. The bill was defeated in the Legislature after intense lobbying from car dealers.

"Last year was clearly a better year," said Magavern of the Sierra Club. "It helps us when it's an election year."

Smog Traps Calif. Community

Arvin's Bad Air Blamed on Geography, Weather Patterns

By Sonya Geis, Washington Post Staff Writer

Washington Post, Monday, October 8, 2007

ARVIN, Calif. -- This small farming community at the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley has a distinction that often brings tears to the eyes of its residents. It is the smoggiest place in the United States.

Arvin averages 73 "bad air days" per year -- more than any other city in the country. On those days, to drive over a mountain pass and into the city is to cross a brown line into a smelly, stinging haze. Schools hold recess in the gym. Wheezing children crowd the waiting room at the health clinic.

It is worse here than in Los Angeles, which averages only one dangerously smoggy day per year. That occurs when the amount of ozone in the air surpasses federal standards of 0.08 parts per million. Those with means in Arvin sometimes drive the 100 miles into Los Angeles to breathe good air.

Most of the smog in Arvin is not home-grown. The city has one shabby main street and no major industry besides farming. Most of its 13,000 residents are Mexican farmworkers who pick cotton, grapes and oranges. One in three lives below the poverty line.

Arvin's air pollution comes from a stream of tractor-trailers using Interstate 5 to the west. Smog also blows in from the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles. The bad air gets trapped in the San Joaquin Valley and drifts into Arvin.

"We basically have a bowl here that is made up of the mountains," said Seyed Sadredein, executive director of the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District. "With the way the meteorology behaves, it's like we have a lid on that bowl all the time."

Scientists have linked ozone pollution to respiratory ailments. In Kern County, which includes Arvin, nearly one in six children has asthma, an incidence 44 percent higher than the national rate.

Ana Maria Corona feels the smog as a sickening pain. Before she moved from Los Angeles to Arvin in 2003, Corona had been hospitalized for asthma once. Since then, she has been in the hospital seven times and had emergency treatment for asthma at a clinic more times than she can count. She has been on antibiotics for airway infections five times since January.

"My job is inside," Corona said, referring to the day-care service she runs in her home. "I would try to get something different, but I can't go outside." Corona said she would like to move but cannot afford to do it.

The area's geography and weather patterns make a quick cleanup impossible, Sadredein said.

The pollution control district came under fire from environmentalists after it voted in April to request an extension from the federal government on its deadline for cleaner air. The Environmental Protection Agency had told the district to clean up by 2013, but it will take until 2024, Sadredein said.

The EPA did not consider meteorology when it set a target date, Sadredein said. Because pollutants can't blow away, "to meet this new standard we have to be the cleanest place on Earth."

Moreover, he said, "we looked at every possibility and found out even if money were no object, the technology does not exist today to meet the standard in the valley."

Raji Brar got herself elected to the district this year because she was outraged by that attitude. "It's so political, more than it's the technology," she said. "If you're told that your engine is okay for another 20 years, you're not going to change the technology. Necessity is the mother of invention."

At the Arvin Community Health Center, physician Ronnie Pasilliao judges air quality by looking at the waiting room. "Usually we know when we get slammed with lots of patients in the morning -- okay, we're having a bad air day," he said. Most of the patients have coughs, wheezing, itchy skin or lung infections.

On a recent weekday, one of those patients was 21-month-old Diana Parra. She has had trouble breathing since she was born, her mother, Ana Parra, said in Spanish. The girl's pediatrician blames air pollution.

"We have thought about moving, but it's very difficult," Ana Parra said. "You would have to start from zero and build your life again. We just can't."

Cycling gains ground in NYC amid harried commuters, belching cabs

By Karen Matthews, ASSOCIATED PRESS

In the San Diego Union-Tribune, Sunday, Oct. 7, 2007

NEW YORK - New York City, with its convoys of cabs, miles of subway track, fleets of fume-belching trucks and hordes of harried commuters, is a long way from Davis, Calif., with a University of California campus and not much else.

But the concrete jungle and the college town were both honored recently by the League of American Bicyclists for bike friendliness.

New York City's bronze medal from the Washington-based bike group represents an endorsement for the city's efforts under Mayor Michael Bloomberg to promote cycling for a cleaner environment and a healthier populace.

"The way we think about transportation and how we use our limited street space is changing," said Janette Sadik-Khan, the city's transportation commissioner.

The city is installing 400 to 500 bike racks a year and plans to have more than 400 miles of bike lanes and paths by 2009. There will then be 1 mile of bike lane for every 10 miles of road; the ratio is now 1 to 15. In San Francisco, it's 1 to 7.

In Brooklyn's hipster-heavy Williamsburg section, the city reduced the space for car parking in favor of bike parking - a first - when it widened the sidewalk to fit nine new bike racks over the summer.

"It's better because people used to chain their bikes to trees and house gates," said Pedro Pulido, an architect who parked his bike at one of the new racks last week.

A seven-block length of Manhattan's Ninth Avenue is now being remade into the city's most bicycle-oriented stretch of roadway ever, with a bike lane separated from car traffic by a paved buffer zone and a lane of parked cars.

Bloomberg also has proposed legislation to make it easier to bike to work by requiring commercial buildings to provide bicycle parking.

"According to surveys the number one reason why people who want to bike don't is that they can't park their bikes indoors," said Noah Budnick, deputy director of the advocacy group Transportation Alternatives. "You just can't park your bike on the street all day in New York."

If theft is the No. 1 challenge facing New York cyclists, safety is No. 2.

According to the city health department and the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are 2.8 bike deaths per million people annually in New York City, compared with 2.7 deaths nationally - a not particularly bad ranking.

But potholes and aggressive drivers can make it feel more dangerous.

"You have to always be alert," said Barbara Ross, who bikes to work and volunteers with Time's Up!, an environmental group that promotes a group bike ride called Critical Mass. Ross said she was once "doored" by a parked car - a term used to describe when the passenger door flying open without a thought for bikes.

"You can't just ride," she said. "Because no one's going to be looking for you."

A study conducted last year by the city health and transportation departments found that 3,500 cyclists were injured by cars between 1996 and 2003 and 225 were killed.

Following up on its analysis, the city announced a \$1 million public service ad campaign last month to remind drivers and bike riders to watch out for each other. The city also is promoting safety by giving out thousands of free bike helmets, which are required for children and for bike messengers and delivery workers.

It was the city's commitment to study bike crashes and prevent them that persuaded the League of American Bicyclists to bestow its bronze medal. (Davis, which has an old-fashioned bike on its city seal, is the only platinum-level community. Another college town, Palo Alto, Calif., is gold.)

Andy Clarke, executive director of the league, called New York's 2006 survey "the most extensive study that we know of" into bike accidents.

Transportation Alternatives says there are 130,000 bicyclists on the road in New York City's five boroughs daily. Because New York is the nation's largest city at 8 million, that's more total cyclists than any other U.S. city can claim.

But according to Census figures, just 0.5 percent of New Yorkers ride bikes to work. That compares to 2 percent in Seattle and San Francisco and a whopping 34 percent in Copenhagen. How much higher could New York push its number of bike commuters?

"We can certainly do better," said Sadik-Khan, who visited Copenhagen a few months ago to study the Danish city's bike-promoting policies.

If there are obstacles, there are also advantages to New York for cyclists. It's flat, it's relatively temperate and you can bring your bike on the subway. Thousands of bike messengers and Chinese food deliverymen weave through gridlock Manhattan traffic daily.

"It's the fastest mode of transportation," said Sarinya Srisakul, vice president of the New York Bike Messenger Association, noting that it can take half an hour to traverse 10 midtown blocks by car but just five minutes on a bike.

Sadik-Khan, who often bikes to work, said cycling not only [reduces air pollution](#) but also is "a great competitive sport" that is gaining ground with "the hedge fund crowd."

"The line I've been using," she said, "is, 'Bike is the new golf.'"

[Fresno Bee commentary, Thursday, Oct. 4, 2007:](#)

HENRY PEREA: Dairy ordinance doesn't do enough

There is a big stink brewing around dairies in Fresno County and rightly so. The number of milk cows in California has doubled over the past 30 years, while the number of dairies has dropped by half. More cows are occupying less space, and they're popping up here in Fresno County.

The concentration of cows is creating a concentration of animal waste, which increasingly pollutes our water and air. Dairies emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which are precursors to fine particulate matter and ozone; ammonia, a precursor to fine particulates; methane, a global-warming gas; and unpleasant odors.

True, dairies aren't the only polluters in Fresno County. Automobiles emit 60% of the Valley's air pollution. Some use this number as an argument to do nothing. They'll say, "Leave dairies alone. They're just a minor contributor to air pollution." That would be like letting your kid smoke because other parents can't keep their own kids from smoking.

Three-quarters of the state's 1.78 million dairy cows live in the Valley, and 125,902 of those cows live on dairies in Fresno County. With little to no county oversight or regulation, an additional 35,428 cows are headed to Fresno County.

Mega-dairies from Southern California are moving north to our Valley creating a higher concentration of cows, which means a higher concentration of pollution.

Air quality levels in the San Joaquin Valley for ozone and PM 2.5 are dangerous to our health and are classified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as serious nonattainment. Harmful emissions from dairies contribute to this nonattainment.

According to a study by California State University, Fullerton, "Valleywide, the economic benefits of meeting the federal PM 2.5 and ozone standards average nearly \$1,000 per person per year, or a total of more than \$3 billion." This gain translates to: 460 fewer premature deaths among those age 30 and older; 325 fewer new cases of chronic bronchitis; 188,400 fewer days of reduced activity in adults; 260 fewer hospital admissions; 23,300 fewer asthma attacks; 188,000 fewer days of school absence; 3,230 fewer cases of acute bronchitis in children; 3,000 fewer

work loss days; and more than 17,000 fewer days of respiratory symptoms in children. These aren't numbers. These are lives.

Fresno County is morally obligated to properly regulate dairies. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the Water Resources Control Board need our help. Pressure from special interests waters down their regulations and minimize their opportunity to protect air and water.

The boards don't demand that dairies use proven technologies that best mitigate air pollution. As we develop this new ordinance, Fresno County is feeling that same pressure.

The people of Fresno County have a right to demand the best. Too many of our children live with painful respiratory illnesses. These cases will never decline until we do more to protect our environment. The time to do something is now.

A dairy ordinance provides the opportunity to take action. Here's the Reader's Digest version of the ordinance proposed by county staff: Dairies moving into Fresno County or expanding within Fresno County by 500 or more cows after the adoption of the dairy ordinance will face stricter environmental regulations than dairies currently in existence.

The draft ordinance as it stands today is too lenient on new and expanding dairies, commonly known as mega-dairies. These dairies operate with thousands of cows and will dramatically contribute to pollution concentration.

Mega-dairies make millions of dollars a year. They can afford the best pollution mitigation technology in existence, even if the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District doesn't require it.

Mega-dairies have the right to make money. They also have a responsibility to do everything in their power to mitigate air pollution and protect the communities in which they operate. The issue of regulating dairies is a matter of public health, not politics.

Implementing the most effective air pollution mitigation measures is pennies for mega-dairies. The family-owned dairies currently in existence and those modestly expanding will not feel the effects of a stricter ordinance. The county will create a standard that makes economic sense for them. Dairies that expand beyond 500 cows are obligated to implement the best pollution mitigation technologies available. That's the bottom line.

The Board of Supervisors will vote on a dairy ordinance Oct. 23. The ordinance that will be presented to the board does not do enough to mitigate pollution. The board recently received the signatures of 3,000 concerned citizens demanding more stringent dairy regulations. Please call the board at (559) 488-3529 to join these 3,000 and voice your concerns. Become a part of demanding a cleaner, healthier future for your children.

Henry Perea is a Fresno County supervisor representing District 3

[Fresno Bee editorial, Monday, Oct. 8, 2007:](#)

Why don't we try doing it like this?

Valley partnership offers an alternative model of state governance.

A regional partnership formed to address the historic neglect of Valley needs and interests continues its work, and in the process may offer us an alternative model of governance that might work a great deal better than the dysfunctional system in place in Sacramento.

The California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, which just held its annual meeting, has already achieved some impressive results, pulling in millions in funding for job training efforts and helping to secure a \$1 billion chunk of state bond money as a down payment on improvements to the crumbling Highway 99, the main transportation artery of the Valley.

The 30 members of the partnership -- state and local officials, business leaders, civic group representatives and activists of various stripes -- are broken into committees to address broad issues such as job creation, transportation, air quality, water problems and others.

The upshot of their work to this point is a 10-year plan to improve the economy of the Valley, its environment and to address the many quality of life issues that face us.

By contrast, the so-called "leaders" elected to address those very issues in Sacramento continue to dither and posture, spending their time on re-election efforts, campaign fundraising, rewarding their special interest backers with lucrative legislation and wallowing in petty squabbles.

Perhaps it's time to devolve most of the power vested in the governor's office and the Legislature onto a series of regional agencies -- covering multiple counties with shared interests and needs -- and leave Sacramento with a stripped-down agenda. Then it won't hurt so much when the people up in the capital abdicate their duties to their constituents in favor of satisfying their special-interest masters.

We have long argued for more regional efforts to address our problems. Many -- if not most -- of the issues we face cut across the artificial lines of cities and counties. Water and air, transportation, economic development -- all these have impacts without regard to local boundaries, and ought to be addressed accordingly.

There are a number of gratifying examples of regional cooperation already under way, beyond the work of the partnership. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District spans eight counties. The San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Planning Process covers the same turf, and is affiliated with the Great Valley Center in Modesto, another leader in regionalism's rise.

Locally, planning officials in Fresno County and its cities are talking about a regional approach to planning under the sobriquet of the Metro-Rural Loop. Water officials regularly meet across jurisdictional lines.

In the process, we see better chances for successful outcomes for the Valley than we are likely to get from Sacramento. We ought to go with what works.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Sunday, Oct. 7, 2007:](#)

Biggest air quality hurdles yet to come Pollutions adds \$3 billion to annual Valley health costs.

The Valley's air was as clean this summer as it's been in three decades. That's cause for celebration — and also for sounding a cautionary note.

Violations of the federal standards for ozone, a precursor to smog, have fallen by about 50% since 2002. That's very good news for all of us.

But we're still the second most polluted air basin in the country. That's a reminder that we aren't anywhere near the point at which we can declare victory. The Valley's air is better than it used to be. That's not the same thing as saying that it's good.

The worst air quality in the eight-county San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District this summer was found in Sequoia National Park. The park edged out Arvin, in Kern County. That's a

sad irony: The beautiful Sierra Nevada, where so many Valley residents seek respite from the turmoil and congestion of urban life, is now terribly polluted.

We have seen many new regulations imposed on every sort of activity in the Valley in the effort to clean the air. The ag industry has watched as its historic exemption from air quality rules was lifted and a whole host of new restrictions placed on farming activities. Businesses, manufacturers and development face tighter controls. Valley residents may no longer burn wood in their fireplaces anytime they want.

And there is more to come. We haven't even begun to get serious about the biggest part of our air quality problems — the vehicles we drive. There are several reasons we will have a hard time making dents in emissions from cars, trucks, locomotives and other vehicles.

One is the fact that the Valley air district has very little power to regulate such emissions. Such authority lies at the state and federal levels. The state has been fairly aggressive in this area, notably with the initiative to reduce greenhouse gases. But the federal Environmental Protection Agency, under the Bush administration, has actively worked to delay or weaken clean air efforts.

It is currently, for instance, dragging its heels in granting California a waiver the state needs to implement Assembly Bill 32, the historic greenhouse gas legislation.

Another obstacle to reducing emissions from vehicles is cost. It will take money to get older, dirty cars — the so-called “gross polluters” — off our roads. Diesel trucks are the single largest source of polluting emissions, but addressing that problem will be particularly expensive.

We also need alternative forms of transportation if we're to get people out of their cars. But our current transit systems are woefully inadequate. Given the love affair Americans have with their vehicles, it's going to take a great deal more to make alternatives attractive. Transit systems must be cheap, efficient, clean and safe, or people will never use them in large numbers. And the price of gasoline will have to rise before people feel the need to curtail driving. That's something we can probably count on.

Some of these concerns emerged at a two-day symposium held in Visalia last week by the Valley air district. High on the list of topics was diesel emissions and what to do about them. The problem with diesel is a microcosm of many of the larger issues we face.

Diesel engines produce an enormous amount of pollution. They are also marvels of durability. That's good news for those who own them, bad news for those of us who must breathe their emissions. But diesel engines are also essential to the transportation and commerce we depend upon. Truckers typically can't afford the high cost of retrofitting or replacement of older equipment. They're going to need a great deal of help with those costs.

Gloria Arredondo-Malarchick, a registered nurse and member of the Kings County Asthma Coalition, told last week's symposium that policymakers and the public must consider the cost of polluted air.

“Hopefully, they realize the health costs and look at it as an investment rather than a burden.” That's the key to public acceptance of all the steps we need to take to get cleaner air. The status quo is costly, and for some Valley residents, it's deadly. More than 1,000 deaths are attributed to bad air in California each year, many of them right here. The Valley endures increased health costs in excess of \$3 billion annually because of our dirty air.

It won't be easy and it won't be cheap to clean up the Valley's air. But the cost of failure will be even higher. So celebrate the good news about progress in the clean air effort. And gear up for even more work ahead. We must keep the pressure on our elected leaders, regulatory agencies and ourselves. Otherwise, we all lose.

[L.A. Times commentary, Sunday, Oct. 7, 2007:](#)

Cutting through China's smoke

Beijing will order cutbacks in industry and auto emissions for the Olympic Games, and the effects may be measurable worldwide.

By Laurie Garrett and Jane C.S. Long

By now, most of us are keenly aware that emissions resulting from the burning of fossil fuels are causing our planet to heat up, altering our climate and putting the survival of plants, animals and even humans in peril. But what we don't really know is whether it is still possible to stop those emissions and reverse the problem.

Now, it turns out, a great experiment is about to be performed, at enormous financial cost, providing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for science. Several weeks before the 2008 Summer Olympics, in an effort to make Beijing more palatable to foreign visitors, the government of China will begin shutting down industries that emit vast quantities of soot and carbon into the atmosphere surrounding the city.

Though the government has yet to release a list of the industries and factories it will close, various news accounts and official statements indicate that virtually every factory in the greater Beijing area will greatly reduce operations or be completely shuttered for a period of several weeks, and that coal mining operations in nearby Shanxi province may be shut down as well, or at least slowed, before and throughout the Olympics. In addition, auto traffic will be severely curtailed within Beijing, and clouds may be seeded to the north of the city in order to minimize the hideous Mongolian dust storms that commonly plague China's capital.

The effect could be enormous. As much as 25% of the air pollution in Los Angeles comes from China; at certain sites in California, as much as 40% of the air pollution comes from Asia. When the Chinese undertake this enormous, if short-term, change in their emissions, it will send a signal across the ocean to the U.S. that the control of air pollution in one part of the world can in fact affect the atmosphere on the other side of the globe. If we can detect a change in China's emissions as far away as the United States, the great experiment will dramatically illustrate that our choices about emissions can transform the health of the planet.

The last time a highly polluted city offered the world such a dramatic opportunity to witness the daily effect of its industrial and auto emissions was in 1984, on the occasion of the Los Angeles Olympics, during which similarly radical measures were taken to offset Southern California's smog. One of us (Garrett) was a reporter for National Public Radio in those days, covering the Olympics, and well recalls the moment when a clear view of the entire Los Angeles Basin, San Gabriel Mountain range and even hints of the deserts beyond miraculously appeared through a Venice Beach window.

For Angelenos, the radical measures taken to reduce auto traffic and industrial smog during the 1984 Olympics provided dramatic evidence that pollution could, in fact, be curbed through force of will. To a striking degree, the clean air experienced during the Olympics pushed political leaders throughout California to acknowledge the dangerous trajectory of the state's continued reliance on carbon-emitting automobiles -- and to take steps to reverse it.

Beijing -- the modern city that viewers will, to their amazement, see on TV during the Olympics -- is largely modeled on Los Angeles. It is a city of freeways, auto-dependency and gated suburbs, some of which are named after communities in the San Fernando Valley. And though this transformation from bicycle-commuting city to car-dependent metropolis has occurred in a single generation, Beijing already suffers traffic congestion so severe that cars sometimes idle on the new freeways for hours, emitting tons of carbon-based pollutants and producing classic smog. Surrounding Beijing are industrial parks that combine the high-tech, trichloroethylene-emitting factories of Silicon Valley with the heavy manufacturing, soot-saturated steel foundries of early

20th century Pittsburgh.

For a few precious weeks in July and August, this will all be shut down or severely reduced. Because China hopes to impress the more than 2 billion television viewers gazing, awe-struck, at the New China, other major cities in the country will be encouraged to lower their pollution output as well.

It would be impossible to overstate the significance the Chinese leadership has placed on the Olympics, and it is clear that the Communist Party simply will not allow carbon monoxide, soot or smog to mar what it views as the most historic event of recent decades.

The scientific community should plan immediately to take advantage of this monumental experiment, mobilizing to measure the effect by studying pollution levels before, during and after the great shutdown. Congress and the European Union should allot emergency funding to support NASA, the National Center for Atmospheric Research and European Union satellite observations and air sampling from aircraft, documenting the effects not only on China but on places as far away as Hawaii and Los Angeles.

Ground-level and high-elevation measurements of pollutants, including aerosolized soot, should be taken all summer throughout Asia, particularly downwind from Beijing. Ozone, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide should be measured daily, perhaps even hourly, in the U.S. and other locations deeply affected by Chinese pollution, such as Hong Kong, the Maldives, Singapore, South Korea and Japan.

Public health experts should set up emergency-room monitoring inside Beijing and regionally throughout the summer, watching for any declines in admissions for respiratory ailments. Anthropologists and sociologists should set up cohorts of Beijing residents, representing a broad social spectrum, analyzing their reactions to the shutdown. The data should be archived and made public so researchers around the world can draw every possible inference. The Google Foundation, Sir Richard Branson and other donors who have made climate change a priority should step up to the plate, helping provide the millions of dollars it will require to document this event.

It is probable that the Beijing shutdown will prove even more dramatic than the 1984 anti-smog effort in L.A. Certainly the air pollution in Beijing is far worse than it was in Los Angeles. But the effect of the shutdown on the political and economic policies of world leaders cannot be measured without data.

If, as many scientists believe will be the case, the shutdown markedly reduces air pollution levels across Asia and the Pacific, demonstrably reduces aerosol emissions that imperil the survival of the Himalayan glaciers (and are breathed by billions of people across the globe) and decreases hospital admissions for acute asthma in China and its neighbors, it may also prove a turning point in world history.

This opportunity will go undocumented, however, unless the world community mobilizes its scientific and funding resources immediately.

Laurie Garrett, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1996 for her reporting on the Ebola virus, is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. Jane C.S. Long is associate director of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

[L.A. Times editorial, Sat., Oct. 6, 2007:](#)

Act now to clean ports

Plans for dealing with the L.A. and Long Beach facilities' pollution are on the table; it's time to implement.

Warning: The delay of the much-touted clean-air plan for the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach is hazardous to your health.

About 5,000 premature deaths a year in Southern California are attributed to air pollution, and the ports are a major source of it. They announced a dramatic solution in June 2006 -- a proposed five-year plan to reduce pollution by at least 45%. Its centerpiece was a crackdown on the 16,000 diesel trucks that carry cargo from the ports to nearby rail yards and warehouses. A fee would be assessed on old, highly polluting trucks entering the ports, and money from fees and state bonds would be put into a program to help replace the smog-producing monsters with cleaner models.

As might be expected, the plan met fierce resistance from the shippers, retailers and trucking companies that would end up footing much of the bill. Last week, two trade associations sent a letter to the Federal Maritime Commission, which regulates oceangoing transport, saying the plan would disrupt trade and violate U.S. shipping codes. Their legal claims may be dubious, but their economic claims are not. A study commissioned by the ports found that implementing the plan could cause serious disruption, putting about a third of the ports' licensed motor carriers out of business and leading to a shortage of drivers, which could slow deliveries to stores nationwide.

The findings have thrown port officials into disarray. Harbor commissioners from the two ports will meet for a hearing on the issues Friday, but it's unknown when they'll vote on the plan or whether it will be modified. A vote had been expected as early as last month.

The shipping industry may have won a round, but it has no reason to celebrate. The California Air Resources Board is working on sweeping rules targeting pollution and greenhouse gases, and having already cracked down on diesel construction equipment, it's about to turn its attention to the port trucking industry. Last week, it released a draft plan for phasing out older trucks that is similar to the ports' plan, with one important difference.

Perhaps the most controversial element of the ports' proposal is its effort to overturn current labor practices. Many port truckers are independent owner-operators who contract with small companies that assign them jobs to move cargo containers. The ports aim to force these licensed motor carriers to hire their drivers as employees. That would greatly simplify matters for the ports and improve standards of living for the drivers, but it also would be an invitation to the Teamsters to organize local truckers, a notion that justifiably worries shippers and retailers. The air board's plan leaves labor out of the equation.

The employee-trucker model has many advantages, though it may be wiser to just set engine standards and let the labor market work itself out. What's beyond dispute is that action must be taken as soon as possible to clean up port trucks, whether it comes from the air board or the ports themselves. Lives depend on it.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Sunday, Oct. 7, 2007:](#)

A higher cost

California has already enacted legislation that requires all diesel-powered commercial vehicles manufactured prior to 2001 to have an exhaust particulate filter installed to lower emissions. As a member of the trucking industry, I applaud these efforts, and look forward to the further emission regulations that will be put into effect in 2010.

But we need to go further than this; we need to extend this same legislation to all gasoline-powered passenger cars, freight and commuter trains, factories, ships. If it puts out exhaust, we need to take serious steps to reduce the amount of pollution that is put into the air.

We need to set the stage and get the rest of the country to follow our example. There will be costs involved -- for some people there will be a lot of cost involved. But can we really put a cost on ensuring that future generations, our children, don't have to live with a severe climate crisis?

Wesley Say, Fresno

[Letter to the S.F. Chronicle, Sunday, Oct. 7, 2007:](#)

EPA's actions

Editor - Your Sept. 30 article on the Environmental Protection Agency's enforcement efforts ("Bush's EPA pursues fewer criminal cases") mischaracterizes the strength of the program by cherry-picking a few misleading statistics. EPA's enforcement efforts are generating environmental and public health benefits at an unprecedented pace. Over the past three years, EPA's enforcement program has reduced pollutants by a record 3 billion pounds and secured settlements requiring that defendants spend \$20 billion for pollution controls, also a record. In 2006, EPA concluded nearly 5,000 civil administrative and judicial cases, a 100 percent increase over 2005. Last year, the criminal program collected \$43 million in fines and restitution, and judges sentenced defendants to a total of 154 years in jail time.

Sunday's article focused on the numbers of enforcement actions - "bean counting" - and not on actual environmental results. What's important is the fact that billions of pounds of pollution have been prevented from entering the environment, and that those results will have a lasting benefit for all Americans.

Granta Y. Nakayama, Assistant Administrator Enforcement and Compliance U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Washington, D.C.

[Modesto Bee, Letters to the Editor, Monday, October 8, 2007](#)

Get out of the car and walk

California has set October as the Walk to School Month, and is encouraging children to walk to school rather than being driven by their parents (where possible). The program encourages parents to walk students to school as a means of providing family time, exercise, less air pollution, a way of getting to know your neighbors and providing additional safety for children.

Those not having students in school may participate by clearing sidewalks and walkways of debris and overhanging branches, to make a clear path for walkers. Drivers can take this time to be more watchful for walkers.

At a time childhood obesity is on the rise, walking to school provides a natural means of getting physical activity on a regular basis.

TERRI NEHER - Tuolumne

We can drive our gas-guzzlers again

The Associated Press article ("Scientists: Sea-level rise is real, on the way," Sept. 30, Page A-1) on a sea level rise of 39 inches was enlightening. The University of Victoria climatologist Andrew Weaver, a lead author of the February report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in Paris said, "It's going to happen, no matter what -- the question is when."

His "no matter what" interpretation of global warming can only mean that cutting back on carbon emissions will be meaningless. His "no matter what" says unequivocally that all our efforts to prevent this rise in sea level will not work. He says, "The question is when."

I assume that means we can drive our gas-guzzling cars, trucks and SUVs with a clear conscience. The scientific Andrew Weaver, the "expert" on climate change, apparently agrees with Rush Limbaugh's assessment that climate change "is" occurring, but "not" from human carbon emissions. Was the media wrong when they were convinced there was a "scientific consensus" that global warming was caused by carbon emissions sent into the atmosphere by too many cars, trucks and SUVs on the road? If they were, will they apologize to the public? I doubt it. However, due to the lull in terrorist activity in the Middle East, the media has come up with a new way to scare the American people. They are deliberately ignoring the fact that the surge is working.

HARRY G. JONES - Modesto

[San Diego Union-Tribune, Letters to the Editor, Saturday, Oct. 6, 2007:](#)

Making a case for LNG . . .

As executive director of the Center for Liquefied Natural Gas, I wish to state that the Union-Tribune misses the bigger picture in "Cross-border gas project fuels pollution fear" (A1, Sept. 23). The article claims that natural gas coming into California from Sempra Energy's new liquefied natural gas terminal in Baja California will create more pollution in San Diego. But it fails to mention that natural gas is an essential part of California's current and future energy mix and ensures a clean and reliable supply of energy. Natural gas is the cleanest burning fossil fuel, and it is being used throughout the country to reduce air pollution caused by other fuels such as coal, which produces nearly five times more nitrogen oxide emissions than natural gas.

LNG, which will be imported from various regions throughout the world, is the ordinary, everyday natural gas we use domestically but super-cooled to reduce its size so that it can be transported to our shores and then warmed to convert it back to natural gas. We need LNG because federal restrictions on natural gas exploration in the United States have limited access to domestic supplies. As a result, the U.S. Department of Energy predicts the gap between natural gas production and consumption will reach 21 percent by 2030. Importing natural gas in the form of LNG is critical to filling that supply gap.

Currently, 85 percent of California's natural gas comes from other states and with demand expected to rise, LNG is the most viable solution for ensuring more clean and reliable energy supplies for the people of San Diego.

BILL COOPER, *Washington, D.C.*

. . . and finding fault with its use

While hot gas has proven a significant detriment to health and air quality, it's now a smoke screen for dirty electric power. Sempra's LNG gas terminal is step one in securing hot gas for electrical generation plants south of the border. The dirty gas fouling our appliances will be producing massive quantities of electricity - and industrial volumes of air pollutants. Sempra's Mexican hot gas pollution could blanket Southern California, despite rigid air pollution laws.

Sempra devised a simple strategy to dodge California's tough environmental protections: Outsource the electric plants to Mexico.

Once Sempra's LNG terminal begins operations, it clears the way for Mexican "power farms" to export even more electricity out of San Diego County. In exchange, San Diego receives Mexican pollution. Many observers now see Sunrise Powerlink as the primary transmission line for Sempra's LNG exports. Readers can join the fight against pollution by contacting the California Public Utilities Commission.

GEORGE COURSER, *San Diego*

I could not let Sempra President Neal E. Schmale's letter ("Sempra head cites benefits of project," Oct. 2) stand unchallenged. The critics of Sempra Energy's power plants are correct in identifying nitrogen pollution as a problem. Although natural gas is a relatively clean fuel, burning it produces a range of nitrogen oxides and these can have devastating effects on natural ecosystems (non-scientists sometimes call these nitrous oxides). In Southern California, combustion of fossil fuels in cars is a major source, but use of natural gas for home heating, water heating and power plants also contribute to the problem.

The best long-term study is the Rothamstead Plots in England, showing dramatic declines in biodiversity with increasing levels of nitrogen pollution. Similar effects have since been identified around the world. Deserts are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of nitrogen pollution.

DAVID A. BAINBRIDGE, *San Diego*