

## **Air district seeks help from businesses with launch**

Written by Staff

The Business Journal, Tuesday, Jan. 15, 2008

The Valley's air pollution board is seeking partnerships with the business community to implement its new public relations campaign for cleaner air.

On Thursday the governing board of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will vote to approve its "Healthy Air Living" initiative - a multi-pronged effort to provide the public with information and tools on reducing pollution emissions.

The initiative will mark the end of the district's "Spare the Air" campaign, which sought to alert the public the day before a bad air day.

Sayed Sadredin, district executive director, told a Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce environmental committee last week that "Spare the Air" didn't really give the public enough time or tools to make significant changes.

"It limits the possibilities to take meaningful action," Sadredin said.

With advertising and marketing handled by Fresno's Jeffrey/Scott Advertising, the district will target a variety of business sectors - including farmers, auto dealers, big box stores, and manufacturers - to achieve goals like reducing vehicle miles traveled, reducing emissions from industry equipment and processes, shifting emission from peak smog periods and adopting cleaner fuels and clean technology.

Overall, the goal is to seek answers that also fit with the business agenda, he said.

"We want to come up with win-win solutions," Sadredin said.

Sadredin said that high-emitting businesses could find ways to reduce emissions on high ozone days. One suggestion was scheduling non-operation routine maintenance during periods when ozone levels are high. He also mentioned working with Ruiz Foods in Dinuba to reduce the amount of time its refrigerated trucks sit idling before being loaded.

"We are hoping there are many more examples like that," Sadredin said.

Sadredin said a week in July would be devoted to healthy air living, where the public will be "saturated" with messages, including highlights of business activities taken to reduce harmful emissions.

Marisela Velazquez, the district's senior public information representative, said the initiative would include "green awards" for businesses and tools for human resources departments to promote carpooling and telecommuting.

The plan will kickoff with strategy building next month. Summits to educate the public in the district's eight counties are scheduled for March 25 in Bakersfield, March 26 in Fresno and March 27 in Modesto.

Tools like emissions calculators, air quality data and other content will be available at [www.healthyairliving.com](http://www.healthyairliving.com), which will launch soon, Velazquez said.

## **Stockton vows future buildings will be greener**

By David Siders - Record Staff Writer

Stockton Record, Wednesday, January 16, 2008

STOCKTON - Stockton will measure its carbon footprint for the first time - and reduce it - the City Council promised Tuesday, and future municipal buildings will meet strict standards for green building and design, officials said.

Stockton is the first Central Valley city to adopt such measures, though greenhouse gas reduction programs and green building requirements are not uncommon elsewhere, officials said.

"We may be the first Valley city to come at it (environmental design and construction) this aggressively," Mayor Ed Chavez said.

The measures will improve air quality and reduce energy use and the city's impact on the environment, Deputy City Manager Christine Tien told the council.

The council's action comes less than a week after the Sierra Club brought a lawsuit against the city in a bid to undo its landmark General Plan, claiming Stockton's plan to about double its population by 2035 and to expand onto nearby farmland is an environmental disaster. The measures adopted Tuesday failed to cheer club members, who said the city's initiative does too little to protect the environment.

"It's window dressing," Eric Parfrey of the Sierra Club said. "It looks like the council is rushing to get on the green bandwagon, to then try to impress a judge that they're doing something to reduce greenhouse gases, when in fact they really haven't done much in the past."

Chavez and City Manager Gordon Palmer have said the General Plan thoughtfully addresses inevitable growth, and they said it is legally sound. They also said the measures adopted Tuesday were not in reaction to the Sierra Club's lawsuit.

"I can't help the Sierra Club feeling paranoid about everything we do," Chavez said. "We're moving in the right direction, and I think the council is doing the right thing."

The council voted without dissent Tuesday to measure and reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions and to require that future libraries, civic centers and fire stations, among other municipal buildings, meet certain Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, standards, a rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. The standards to be met are based on a building's size.

The standards, recognized worldwide, are employed in numerous projects in urban centers such as Los Angeles and San Francisco, but they have not yet been so warmly embraced in the Central Valley, said Jeremy Hofer, director of the Green Building Council's Central California branch.

"I do not believe that any other Central Valley town has gone this far, as far as requiring LEED," he said. "It's a really good start."

Tien said the cost of building a structure to LEED standards typically exceeds the cost of traditional construction by 2 percent to 5 percent. The city will recover the difference in reduced energy costs over time, she said.

Stockton's first attempt to build a green structure will be in the demolition and reconstruction of the Victory Park fire station, likely in 2009.

The building standards adopted Tuesday apply only to city buildings, not private development. Environmentalists said that is a shortcoming; city officials said the city must set an example before requiring private development to follow suit.

The imposition of a green building standard on private development is likely years off, if it ever occurs, Chavez said.

In Brief

### **Cargo fee to raise funds for harbors**

L.A. Times, Wed., Jan. 16, 2008

Los Angeles and Long Beach harbor commissioners Monday approved a cargo fee to help raise \$1.4 billion over seven years for highway, bridge and rail projects intended to ease traffic and improve air quality.

The fee of about \$15 will be assessed on every 20-foot container entering and leaving the ports beginning Jan. 1, 2009. Funds generated will be used to match Proposition 1B funds, which

California voters approved in 2006 to help pay for major transportation and air-quality improvement projects.

"The fee is essential to the ports' progress in cutting the amount of traffic congestion and diesel pollution at the ports," said Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa in a statement.

In December, the ports approved a separate cargo fee of \$35 per loaded container to generate about \$1.6 billion to help replace and retrofit old, polluting trucks.

## **Pacifica OKs next step for fuel facility**

### **Locals against biodiesel plant say chemicals will invite lawsuits**

By Julia Scott, Staff Writer

Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, January 16, 2008

PACIFICA - Recycled restaurant oil may become Pacifica's new claim to fame under a plan to build a biodiesel production plant that could someday power most of the Bay Area's converted cars.

On Monday, the Pacifica City Council voted 4-1 to approve an addition to the environmental impact report for a new biodiesel production facility to be added to the grounds of the city's wastewater treatment plant, taking it one step closer to final approval.

If the final design passes muster with the city, the California Coastal Commission and other agencies, by early 2009 the plant will begin producing

3 million gallons per year of locally refined, recycled biodiesel for public use that is expected to jump-start Pacifica's economy as well as cut down on greenhouse gas emissions in each car that uses it.

The plant, to be built and run by Whole Energy Fuels, would become one of the Bay Area's largest biodiesel production plants. It also aims to reach out to oil distributors, such as Olympian, who might be interested in adding a biodiesel pump at their filling stations. It would also generate a small portion of the Calera Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant's own electricity needs.

Where many locals see promise, others see the plant as a potential liability because of the combustible cocktail of chemicals used in the refining process. Both sides made passionate arguments on Monday, including representatives of the owner of an adjacent rockquarry, concerned about the effect the plant could have on property values.

Timothy Tosta, a lawyer for quarry developer Don Peebles, said he would meet with Whole Energy Fuels next week to discuss his concerns.

"It could be that all of these things are either fixable or misunderstood. But the record suggests the need for further information," said Tosta.

Pacifica resident Cynthia Montanez was more blunt.

"Let's face it - people are human and accidents can and will happen. How will we notify students and parents if a spill occurs? What happens in case of a fire?" asked Montanez, president of Pacificans for Progress, a local interest group.

Martin Wahl, director of business development in California for Whole Energy Fuels, acknowledged the chemicals used as catalysts to accomplish the process that produces biodiesel from vegetable oil are dangerous. Chief among these is methanol.

"If you inhale or drink it, it can cause blindness and nerve damage. That's why it needs to be double-contained and metered into your processes very carefully," said Wahl. "You will hear stories about plants where there were explosions, where methanol was not handled properly."

To ensure safety, the chemicals will be handled through special hoses and contained in double-walled tanks. The computer-controlled process will be monitored by a staff member, and any leakage will trigger an alarm. Any obnoxious French-fry-like odors the plant might emit will be contained in the tanks as well, according to Wahl.

Whole Energy Fuels already maintains at least one biodiesel production plant and retails to 25 fueling stations across Washington state. Another one, based in Richmond, sells B99 fuel to truckers near the Chevron oil refinery. B99 indicates the product is mostly biodiesel instead of diesel blend, like the more common B20.

Pacifica's plant will produce B99, and Wahl thinks the climbing cost of regular diesel as well as state pressure to reduce emissions will persuade growing numbers of motorists to switch to biodiesel in the coming years.

"There will be an overwhelming demand for biodiesel. We're certain of that in the Bay Area," said Wahl.

And there is plenty of supply. Wahl estimates that the Bay Area produces 11 million gallons of used cooking oil per year, and Peninsula restaurants alone could provide much of the grease the biodiesel plant will require on a weekly basis.

Pacifica's first official biodiesel plant will add to a small underground community of co-operatives founded by environmentally-minded county residents. Pacifica's biodiesel co-op was one of the first established, but it now uses a filling station in Half Moon Bay.

The MB Garage in San Mateo serves a growing community of biodiesel-powered vehicles throughout the county. A straight veggie-oil-only co-op (for cars converted to run on pure recycled restaurant grease) also exists in Half Moon Bay.

In spite of a seeming limitless amount of source material, the rest of the biodiesel landscape shares a dearth of public access stations. San Francisco's Biodiesel Access Task Force was established to increase the use of biodiesel fuel by the city and the general public.

Local companies have established fueling stations in San Anselmo and Berkeley, but their capacity and geographical outreach are limited.

"Being a biodiesel user myself, one of the biggest challenges is a steady supply of high-quality recycled biodiesel. There's a very big demand for this, and very few people have stepped up to fill that role," said Nancy Hall, a Pacifica resident who came up with the idea to bring a biodiesel production plant to Pacifica and locate it next to the wastewater treatment plant.

Hall sat down with a chemist, an engineer and a business planner to look at how to execute the design. They realized that in addition to producing electricity for the wastewater plant, the biodiesel facility could use reclaimed water from the plant in its production process. The biodiesel plant will eliminate all its emissions, such as carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide, by passing them through the wastewater plant's own system.

## **Anger burns against outdoor boilers**

By Andrea Stone

USA TODAY, Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2008

In the winter of 2006, Joel Laws and his new wife, Melissa, were living in the Albers, Ill., house where his mother was born. They hoped to start a family there. Then a neighbor began heating his home with an outdoor wood boiler.

Smoke seeping into the house, Laws says, gave them headaches and sore throats. Melissa's mother, who has asthma, refused to visit. Their clothes smelled of soot.

The couple sued but, impatient for their lawsuit to come to court and convinced that a smoky house was no place to conceive a child, they moved out last week. "We're sick of being sick," says Joel Laws, 27, a graduate student. "We would rather pay rent than have to live with this."

The Laws are among a growing number who say they have been smoked out of their homes and watched their health and property values decline because of neighbors who use wood-burning boilers. They are using local ordinances, lawsuits and the Internet - the Laws have posted video of smoke plumes on MySpace - to restrict or ban the devices.

### **'Very different smell'**

David Cole, 60, a Hanover, N.H., lawyer who says his farmhouse is enveloped by smoke from a neighbor's boiler, won a temporary injunction to shut it down. Last week, he testified to the Legislature in favor of a bill that would crack down on the devices, also known as outdoor wood furnaces or wood-fired hydronic heaters.

"It's a very different smell than the lovely wood smoke you might get a whiff of in the countryside in the winter," says Cole. "It's a thick, oily, acrid smell."

More rural and suburban homeowners across the country's northern tier are turning to boilers as a cheap way to heat homes, bath water, swimming pools and hot tubs.

"I put it in to lower my heating costs," says Brian Wuebbels, the Laws' neighbor. He used to pay \$500 to \$800 a month for gas heat. Now, using wood he says he cuts himself, his bill is \$36.

Wuebbels denies that smoke from his boiler poses a health hazard. "It's not any more than leaves burning," he says.

Neighborhood air pollution is, "not just wood smoke," says Deidre Darsa of the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association, an industry group. "There's car exhaust, indoor home cleaners. ... It's not just one particular source."

Government studies say wood smoke is a growing problem. A report issued in Connecticut in 2002, when there were fewer than half the boilers in use than in 2006, estimated that 38% of airborne particle emissions there came from wood burning, including stoves.

A 2006 report by state air quality agencies in the Northeast said one boiler can emit as much fine particulate matter as four diesel trucks. It also said it would take 205 oil furnaces or up to 8,000 gas furnaces to produce as much pollution as one wood boiler.

The agencies' group, the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM), said there could be 500,000 outdoor wood boilers emitting nearly 900,000 tons of fine particulate matter nationwide by 2010.

The NESCAUM report said the increased use of boilers "represents a potential public health problem" linked to wood smoke, including asthma, heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Boiler manufacturers recommend using only dry, seasoned wood. A 2005 report by the New York attorney general said, though, that even properly used boilers produce significant pollution because they "burn incompletely, or smolder, resulting in thick smoke and high particulate emissions."

Fireboxes are large enough that some owners burn tires, palettes, railroad ties, construction debris, plastic, trash and even telephone poles, releasing harmful chemicals.

Those living nearby say it can be difficult to directly link health problems to boiler smoke.

When Brad Graham's asthmatic son Hunter, 8, had trouble breathing at school in Houlton, Maine, air ducts were cleaned, carpet removed and air intakes moved. Still, Hunter missed more than 60 days of school.

"He would lose his ability to breathe," Graham says.

One day, he and his wife, Lynn, noticed smoke wafting over the school playground. It came from a boiler near a private home 1,000 feet from the school. The owner of the boiler did not return USA TODAY's calls for comment.

### **Lobbying for change**

The Grahams lobbied for a year for a town ordinance to force owners to modify existing boilers to reduce emissions. It passed in June 2006. This year, Hunter has been sick just one school day.

"It doesn't do any good to confront your neighbors," Graham says. "You have to go through legal channels. It's a long, hard battle."

Beth Thomas, whose daughter was teased on the school bus because she smelled of smoke from a nearby boiler, moved after a Bowdoinham, Maine, town hall meeting voted against regulations.

"People were confusing it with wood burning rights when it was an emissions control issue," she says.

Some boiler owners say they are trying to be good neighbors. Anita French, whose switch from propane has saved her and husband Donald \$3,000 a year in heating costs, admits that when they installed a boiler in their Stratham, N.H., house in 2006, "there was a little more smoke than we anticipated."

Town building inspector Terry Barnes says the Frenches raised the device's chimney and switched to drier wood to reduce smoke. French, 48, says she doesn't use the boiler in summer and called complaints "unfair and unfounded."

Still, 15 neighbors complained to the town complaining that the smoke is so bad that it set off one resident's indoor smoke alarm.

"The stench and odor are disgusting," says neighbor Lewis Ruffner, whose children often come in coughing from the backyard. "They say it's too smoky."

## **Wood boilers fuel air quality debate**

By Andrea Stone

USA TODAY, Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2008

A surge in sales of outdoor wood boilers, cheaper alternatives to oil and gas home heating, has neighbors fuming over the smoke they produce and states and towns rushing to regulate them.

At least seven states and dozens of towns in the Northeast and Midwest have passed or are considering measures to ban, restrict or monitor the wood-burning devices known as OWBs.

Unlike indoor wood stoves, outdoor furnaces are not required to meet federal pollution standards. Last year, the Environmental Protection Agency issued voluntary emissions guidelines to boiler manufacturers, but they don't apply to 200,000 older devices in use.

Lisa Rector of the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management says states are putting pressure on manufacturers to reduce emissions by barring sales of devices that don't meet their standards. NESCAUM, a group of eight air quality agencies, says the smallest OWB emits 20 times more fine particles than a wood stove.

Deidre Darsa of the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association, an industry group, says wood may never burn as cleanly as natural gas or oil, but it is an important renewable fuel that can help decrease dependence on foreign oil.

Anita French, who built a boiler at her Stratham, N.H., home a year ago, says "it's a mystery" why neighbors have complained. "I look out my window and can't see anything," she says.

"I had no control over the air quality in my yard," says Beth Thomas, 45, whose family sold their house in Bowdoinham, Maine, to escape a neighbor's boiler. They moved to a town that bans boilers.

Washington state has long had strict standards. Now the Northeast is acting:

- New York. A 2005 report by Eliot Spitzer, then attorney general and now governor, sparked action on regulations that are expected this summer.
- New Hampshire. Legislators held a hearing last week on proposed boiler emission standards.
- Maine. Lawmakers halted sales of high-emissions boilers until new regulations are set.

•Vermont. A pending bill would apply wood-stove standards to boilers.

Towns also are acting. Wellsboro, Pa., meets this month on a proposed ban. Hampden, Mass., recently required permits for OWBs.

## **Sinclair pays \$2.45M for air violations**

The Associated Press

In the Contra Costa Times, San Diego Union-Tribune and other papers, Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2008

WASHINGTON-Sinclair Oil Corp., has agreed to pay \$2.45 million in civil penalties and reduce emissions from three of its refineries in Wyoming and Oklahoma as part of a clean air settlement with the government, the Justice Department announced Tuesday.

Under the agreement, filed in U.S. District Court in Wyoming, the company also promises to spent \$72 million for new and upgraded air pollution controls at the refineries near Casper and Sinclair, Wyo., and in Tulsa, Okla. It also promises \$150 million for other environmental improvements including reducing air pollution from trash trucks in Tulsa.

"The emission reductions required by this settlement will lead to cleaner air and significant environmental and public health benefits for the communities in Wyoming and Oklahoma," Ronald Tenpas, assistant attorney general for environment and natural resources, said in a statement.

The settlement concluded an enforcement action brought by the Environmental Protection Agency which alleged that Sinclair had violated the federal Clean Air Act at the refineries.

This "shows polluters that they need to act responsibly," said Granta Nakayama, assistant EPA administrator for enforcement.

The agreement requires new pollution controls at the three refineries that will cut annual emissions of 1,100 tons of smog-causing nitrogen oxide and 4,600 tons of sulfur dioxide as well as reductions in soot and volatile organic compounds. All of these pollutants contribute to respiratory problems as well as dirty air that impacts ecosystems and reduces visibility.

The states of Oklahoma and Wyoming joined in the settlement.

The agreement is the latest in a number of enforcement actions taken against major refinery operators. Other agreements have been reached with Valero Energy, Total Petrochemicals and Hunt Refining Co., for installation of a total of \$300 million in pollution controls at refineries in Texas, Tennessee, Ohio, Alabama and Mississippi, the EPA said.

## **Transit panel urges gas tax increase**

By Hope Yen , Associated Press Writer

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, January 15, 2008

WASHINGTON - Federal gasoline taxes should be raised up to 40 cents per gallon over five years, a special commission urged Tuesday in calling for drastic changes to fix aging bridges and roads and reduce traffic deaths.

The two-year study by the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission is the first to recommend broad changes after the devastating bridge collapse in Minneapolis last August. It warns that urgent action is needed to avoid future disasters.

Among the other recommendations by the 12-member commission:

-Work to cut traffic fatalities in half over the next 17 years by urging states to embrace new strategies to improve safety.

-Ease traffic congestion by expanding state and local public transit systems and highway capacity.

-Protect the environment by smoothing traffic flow, encouraging alternative commute options such as carpooling and public transit and promoting energy-efficient construction and lighting in transit systems to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

-Seek to develop new energy sources with new research programs costing \$200 million annually over the next decade.

Under the proposal to raise gas taxes, the current tax of 18.4 cents per gallon would be increased by 5 cents to 8 cents annually for five years and then indexed to inflation afterward to help fix the infrastructure, expand public transit and highways as well as broaden railway and rural access.

Other sources of revenue could come from tolls, peak-hour "congestion pricing" on highways, freight fees and ticket taxes for passenger rail improvements, according to the report.

But the proposals for improving the nation's transportation system, which are expected to cost \$225 billion each year for the next 50 years, is at risk of stalling because of internal division. The commission's chairwoman, Transportation Secretary Mary Peters, and two other members oppose gas tax increases and were issuing a dissenting opinion to the report that said private-sector investment and tolls would be sufficient.

The gas tax has not been increased since 1993, and recent efforts by Congress to raise it have faltered over the objections of the Bush administration. The tax increase is designed to take effect in 2009, after President Bush leaves office.

It is time for a "new beginning," the report said, calling the current strategy of patchwork repair "no longer acceptable."

The report also calls for the country to rebuild and expand its rail network to meet a growing demand for alternatives to congested highways and to promote partnerships between the public and private sectors at U.S. ports.

The commission was formed by Congress in 2005 to study the future needs of the nation's surface transportation system, which includes roads, mass-transit systems, ports and rail lines - as well as to recommend funding options.

The report comes as state governments and several business groups, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers, are calling on the federal government to raise gas taxes to pay for substantial transportation improvements. The Minneapolis bridge collapse, which killed 13 people and injured about 100, also shone a national spotlight on the unsteady condition of the nation's roads and bridges and drew new calls for additional spending.

The Bush administration has said that raising taxes won't cut congestion and creates additional risks for congressional pork, such as Alaska's infamous multimillion dollar "Bridge to Nowhere," which has been scuttled.

In its report, the commission unanimously agreed that measures of accountability were needed to keep watch over state and federal spending.

Besides Peters, the two commissioners opposing a tax increase are Maria Cino, Peters' former deputy who is organizing the 2008 Republican National Convention, and Rick Geddes, a Cornell University professor who has served as a senior staff economist in the Bush administration on the President's Council of Economic Advisers.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Wed., Jan 16, 2008:](#)

### **'Plant more trees'**

I have just made a donation to what I feel is a very worthy cause, making Fresno a much more beautiful, livable place. That organization is Tree Fresno. Its members have planted more than 34,000 trees.

Picture our city with just buildings, roads and parking lots, but no shade trees. Take a walk along the Huntington Boulevard area and their massive trees. They help to filter our polluted air on those 108-degree days.

This is a wonderful organization that can use our help. Let's do our part and plant more trees.

Thanks, Tree Fresno.

*Patricia Berg, Fresno*

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses a new tax in the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports-\\$15 fee per container to help develop new projects in the zone. For more information, contact Claudia at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

### **Un nuevo impuesto en puertos-Cuota de 15 dólares por contenedor será para desarrollar proyectos en la zona**

La Opinión, Monday, January 15, 2008

Una cuota extra de 15 dólares será cobrada en los puertos de Los Ángeles y Long Beach a partir del próximo año por cada contenedor que entre y salga de ambos sitios, de acuerdo con una decisión adoptada ayer por dos comisiones que supervisan las actividades en ambos centros portuarios.

Se espera que la cuota denominada Infraestructure Cargo genere unos 1,400 millones de dólares que serían utilizados en diversos proyectos de infraestructura hasta el año 2016.

"El cobro de esta cuota es esencial para el avance de los puertos en reducir la congestión de tránsito y la contaminación generada por el diesel en la zona", explicó ayer el alcalde de Los Ángeles, Antonio Villaraigosa. "Es esencial que podamos cumplir con la esperada explosión comercial en los puertos con un planeamiento inteligente y efectivo y con un crecimiento acorde con la protección del medio ambiente", destacó Villaraigosa.

La cuota se aplicará a cada contenedor cargado que entre o salga de una de las terminales de los puertos por camión o por tren. La cuota subirá a 18 dólares en el año 2010.

Además de los fondos aprobados por los votantes de California a través de la Proposición 1B, el dinero que generará esta nueva cuota será utilizado para pagar la construcción del puente de seis carriles Gerald Desmond, un paso elevado entre el bulevar Ocean y la calle Alameda y para el realineamiento de las líneas del tren en los puertos.

La nueva cuota es parte del proyecto denominado Clean Air Action Plan, un esfuerzo conjunto de las ciudades de Los Ángeles y Long Beach para reducir la contaminación en aproximadamente un 45% en los próximos cinco años.

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