

## **A clean, green yard comes with coupon Incentive offered to get rid of gas mowers**

By BEE STAFF REPORTS

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, April 23, 2008

Air officials are offering environmentally friendly lawn mowers on the cheap in a campaign to replace 1,100 polluting gas mowers with those that run on electricity.

The Clean Green Yard Machines 2008 program lets anyone living in the San Joaquin Valley trade in their old lawn mower for a voucher allowing them to buy a Neuton mower for \$150. That equates to a 62 percent discount on the clean, cordless, battery-powered mowers, which usually retail for \$399, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The deal is a bargain for the environment as well. A gas mower can generate as much pollution as 40 cars, according to the air district.

While the electricity for the Neuton mowers still requires running power plants, that "is a much cleaner option than the emissions directly from a gas-burning lawn mower operating for the same period," air district spokesman Anthony Presto said.

The offer ends either May 31 or when 1,100 lawn mowers have been replaced.

The campaign is part of the air district's new Healthy Air Living Program, which seeks to make air quality a priority in the San Joaquin Valley.

To participate, lawn mower owners first get vouchers by contacting the air district at 557-6400 or [public.education@valleyair.org](mailto:public.education@valleyair.org). They must then drain all oil and gas from their mowers and take them to the recycling center in their county.

Some recyclers will accept mowers from other counties, but people should check first, Presto said.

Designated recycling sites are:

Stanislaus County: Modesto Junk Co., 1425 Ninth St.

San Joaquin County: Stockton Recycling Center, 1533 Waterloo Road

Merced County: Atwater Iron and Metal, 888 N. Applegate Road.

The recycling company gives participants validation stickers, which then allow them to order the mower from Neuton Lawn Mower Co. using the voucher information.

### **Local briefs**

#### **Cordless electric mowers offered at 62% discount**

Fresno Bee, Wed., April 23, 2008

A 62% discount on cordless electric mowers is available in a cleanup campaign by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The program, called Clean Green Yard Machines 2008, offers vouchers to buy a \$399 Neuton electric mower for \$150. Those who participate must turn in their old gasoline-powered machines to qualify for the program. One gasoline-powered mower can pollute as much as 40 cars.

The program will continue until May 31 or until 1,100 mowers have been replaced. More information is available by e-mail at [public.education@valleyair.org](mailto:public.education@valleyair.org).

### **Mow down air pollution**

**Pollution district offers \$150 vouchers for electric mowers**

BY GERALD CARROLL

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, April 23, 2008

Thinking about buying an electric mower? The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will help make it happen - if you act fast.

The district is offering \$150 vouchers good toward the purchase of a Neuton electric mower. The cordless mower normally retails for \$399 and can be purchased only by mail.

"The Green Machine program means cleaner air," said Shawn Ogletree, director of Visalia's newly formed natural resources conservation division. "It's one more way to reduce air pollution."

The details:

- The 1,100 available vouchers will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. Purchases must be made before May 31.
- The voucher can be redeemed only if an old, gasoline-powered mower is turned in at a sponsoring recycling center.

Locally, that would be Tulare County Recycling in Visalia.

"We did it last year and it worked out great," the recycling center's Jessie Garcia said.

Last year - the third year of the program - 1,000 vouchers were delivered. Of those, 927 were redeemed for new electric mowers, said Anthony Presto, spokesman for the air pollution control district.

Customers redeemed 787 and 595 vouchers in 2006 and 2005, respectively.

Replacing gas-powered mowers with electric varieties reduces fossil-fuel emissions a little at a time, Presto said.

"Collectively," he said, "this is making a big difference."

The air district faces pressure to reduce air pollution in the Central Valley, which serves as a large collection bowl for pollutants generated here and elsewhere in the state.

The state has been trying to redraw boundaries of the various districts to make it easier to comply with increasingly tough federal Environmental Protection Agency standards.

But federal authorities won't budge.

"The EPA will not relax emission controls, enforcement or monitoring requirements in the San Joaquin Valley," Deborah Jordan, director of the EPA's Pacific Southwest division, said Monday.

(NOTE: The following sidebar contains the wrong phone number. It should be 230-6000. The paper will print the correct number tomorrow and change it today on their website.)

### **1,100 VOUCHERS FOR NEUTON CORDLESS ELECTRIC MOWERS**

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is offering 1,100 vouchers - on a first-come, first-served basis - worth \$150 toward the purchase of a Neuton cordless electric mower, provided the old, polluting gasoline mower is scrapped in exchange.

How to apply:

- Call 280-6000 during regular business hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday) or send an e-mail to [public.education@valleyair.org](mailto:public.education@valleyair.org) to have a voucher mailed.
- The voucher and instructions on how to turn in an old, gasoline-powered mower should arrive within a week. (Mowers are accepted at the Tulare Recycling Center, 26951 Road 140, Visalia. Phone: 741-1766.)
- After the old mower is turned in at a local recycling center, a recycler verification code will allow the customer to order a new mower directly from Neuton. Use of a credit card is

recommended. Payment can be by check, but the mower will not be shipped until the check clears.

- All purchases must be made before May 31.

Source: San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

## **West Park rail plan gets OK from Stanislaus County supervisors Air base plan on to next step by 4-1 vote; critics say fight not over**

By TIM MORAN

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, April 23, 2008

After more than four hours of public debate, Sacramento developer Gerry Kamilos won the right Tuesday to continue work on his 4,800-acre business and industrial park on Stanislaus County's West Side.

The Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 in favor of the PCCP West Park LLC project, with District 5 Supervisor Jim DeMartini casting the lone dissenting vote. Supervisor Bill O'Brien, who voted against West Park in February 2007, sided with Supervisors Dick Monteith, Jeff Grover and Tom Mayfield this time.

The vote came after impassioned pleas for and against West Park. The project was referred to as a "golden egg" for the county and a "rotten egg" for the West Side.

More than 200 people filled most of the seats in the supervisors' chambers.

The vote was to approve a memorandum of understanding that spells out terms and conditions West Park will have to meet in working out a more formal and detailed agreement with the county and its redevelopment agency.

West Park also will begin work on an environmental review that is expected to take up to two years, addressing issues such as air pollution, water source and traffic issues. Kamilos' team must negotiate an agreement with the California Transportation Commission about how to build a short-haul rail system and inland port.

The rail and inland port are the anchor to the West Park project, in and around the county's 1,527-acre Crows Landing Air Facility. The state transportation commission has earmarked \$22.4 million for the rail project, connecting West Park to the Port of Oakland. Kamilos contends that the development will generate 37,000 jobs over 30 years.

Proponents included the Modesto and Turlock chambers of commerce, the Stanislaus Workforce and Economic Development Alliance, the county Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and representatives of local carpenters and electrical workers unions.

Opponents included the cities of Patterson and Newman, the West Side Resource Conservation District, and representatives of WS-PACE.org, a group of residents organized to oppose the project.

The most compelling arguments on both sides came from residents. West Side residents opposed to the project talked of the destruction of the quality of life in the rural area, while proponents described watching their children and grandchildren leave the county because they couldn't find jobs.

Goal: Good jobs here

Diane Kaminski said her children had to move out of the area to find jobs with decent pay. Her husband commutes 75 miles a day, she said, to earn enough to pay their mortgage.

"I have 11 grandchildren. I won't be around (when West Park is finished), but they will," she said.

Sandra McDowell of Patterson said the project will take pollution off the Altamont Pass, but increase it in Patterson, Newman and Crows Landing.

"I am an asthmatic. You can't work if you can't breathe," she said. "It's a frightening thing."

Martin Duckworth, a retired Lockheed employee who worked in Sunnyvale, said he has seven children, 22 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. "I want an environment where they have the opportunity to work," he said.

Duckworth said he had co-workers who lived in Modesto and commuted to Sunnyvale for 25 years. "That's 975,000 miles over a lifetime," he said. "There are not good jobs here in Modesto. I ask you to do everything you can to support West Park and projects like it."

Veronica Woodruff of Newman asked where the water would come from, and whether the West Park jobs would be filled with residents or more commuters. Crowding in schools and traffic also are concerns, she said.

"If you guys are for the project," she told the supervisors, "you should put it in Modesto and not on the West Side."

Steve Herum, a land use attorney working for Patterson, contended that the supervisors couldn't vote on the project without doing a formal environmental review first. The county would be in violation of the California Environmental Quality Act if the board voted before the review was complete, Herum said.

County counsel John Doering disagreed, saying the county was approving a nonbinding memorandum of agreement. "The project has a long way to go," he said, adding that military base redevelopment can proceed before an environmental review, according to laws governing base redevelopment.

DeMartini called West Park "the largest industrial park in California," in an agricultural area between two small towns. He questioned the economic viability of the project, the traffic impact, water use, air pollution problems and the loss of farmland.

'Rail line to nowhere'

"This is a rail line to nowhere that connects to nothing," he said. "Who would agree to rent space and pay tax for a money-losing railroad run by people with no experience?"

O'Brien said his biggest concern a year ago was doubt that the project could get the \$22.4 million grant from the state. The memorandum of agreement protects the county, he said.

"We've got this project pretty well tied up, we have Mr. Kamilos pretty well tied up," O'Brien said. "The burden is on the developer. ... I'm willing to take the project to the next step."

Monteith and Grover talked about the need to generate jobs to meet the demand as the county's population doubles in the next 30 years.

"People don't like to make changes," Monteith said. "When this is accomplished, you will benefit much more than you realize," he told West Side opponents.

Grover said the county needs "four or five business parks this size to get the jobs we need."

Mayfield commented that land various cities in the county are contemplating developing is larger than the 4,800 acres of West Park. There are a lot of questions yet to be answered, he said, and the project could fall apart if the answers aren't satisfactory.

The cost of the roads, water and sewer, and other improvements needed, and estimated at \$241 million to \$252 million, would be paid through assessments on tenants and additional property taxes generated by a redevelopment area designation, according to Keith Boggs, county deputy executive officer.

Some of the redevelopment revenue will be earmarked for improvements to the airfield, Boggs said.

The project is to be in four phases, with the requirement that West Park build industrial buildings on the county-owned land in each phase before developing private land.

Kamilos said after the meeting that he was "very pleased with the privilege to move forward to the next step." The environmental review process will give people more opportunities to question and challenge the project, he added.

Opponents said they were disappointed by the board's action and would continue to oppose it.

"It's too big a battle and means too much to us who live so close to just give up and walk away," said Ron Swift, president of WS-PACE.org, in a statement.

## **Breaking News: Supes give go-ahead to West Park**

By Jonathan Partridge

Patterson Irrigator, Tuesday, April 22, 2008

PCCP West Park took a huge step closer to developing the Crows Landing Air Facility following a 4-1 vote by Stanislaus County supervisors today.

Following several hours of presentations from advocates and proponents in the crowded county supervisors chambers, the board voted to accept a quarterly progress report on the development and to sign a memorandum of understanding to continue negotiations with developer Gerry Kamilos.

Supervisor Bill O'Brien, who voted against negotiating with West Park during a 3-2 vote in February 2007, changed his mind about negotiations, saying he wanted to learn more about the environmental impacts of the project.

"I didn't think I'd get to this point, but I want to see what those environmental concerns truly are," he said.

Supervisors Jeff Grover, Dick Monteith, and Tom Mayfield joined O'Brien in deciding to move forward, while Supervisor Jim DeMartini, whose district includes the West Side, remained alone in his opposition to the project.

PCCP West Park is a proposed 4,800-acre industrial development at the 1,527-acre former Crows Landing naval airfield, most of which is owned by Stanislaus County.

The project would be linked to the Port of Oakland via a short-haul rail line, and container loads would be shipped back and forth between the two places. A recent study commissioned by West Park predicts the project will generate about 34,000 on-site jobs at build-out in 35 years and about 3,000 construction jobs.

County staff initially had pondered whether to move the meeting into the Gallo Center for the Arts because of fears that there would not be enough room in the board of supervisors chambers, but many seats remained unused.

Still, several advocates and the proponents of the project spoke up, leading to the break for lunch and later reconvened. Advocates included business leaders, union representatives and several West Side residents, who said jobs were sorely needed in the county and on the West Side. A couple of people also mentioned West Park's statements that the project would include a hospital and would benefit overall air quality in the San Joaquin Valley.

Several opponents who spoke wore pins signifying they belonged to WS-PACE.org, a group that opposes any project at the Crows Landing Air Facility that is larger than the 1,527-acre footprint. They complained of potential problems with local air quality impacts, trains and traffic.

Ron Swift, president of WS-PACE, noted that West Park plans have drawn opposition from government agencies on the West Side, with Patterson City Council leading the charge.

WS-PACE Vice President Claude Delphia also wanted to clarify what would happen at Highway 33 and Las Palmas Avenue, where trains are expected to cross. City leaders and activists have expressed concern that an overpass or some other grade crossing there could interfere with the city's downtown circle.

Kamilos has said in the past that West Park plans to spend \$40 million and that preliminary engineering studies have shown Plaza Circle will not be impacted.

DeMartini, who advocated restarting the process to search for a developer, reiterated his belief that the project has virtually no support on the West Side, and said the project would create problems on the West Side.

"There are negative impacts to this that just can't be overlooked," he said.

Mayfield stressed that the memorandum of understanding is nonbinding.

"Everyone seems to think that today is the end of it all, that this is a done deal," Mayfield said. "This is not a done deal. There are a lot of questions that Mr. Kamilos is still going to have to answer."

The memorandum approved Tuesday will remain effective for 180 days and could be canceled if either party is given 30 days notice, though both the county and the developer would be expected to act in good faith.

A binding Disposition and Development Agreement with the developer would be ready for supervisors when the airbase is ready to be designated as a redevelopment area. That likely would happen by late summer or early fall, county officials have said.

The DDA is expected to be complete before the two-year state-mandated environmental review process is finished. However, West Park is subject to any mitigation measures outlined in the final environmental impact report.

Swift of WS-PACE said he was disappointed in the split vote, saying issues such as water availability, loss of prime farmland and infrastructural issues had not been addressed.

He said he and many others felt West Side voices had been ignored, including those of area City Council members and representatives of other jurisdictions who were opposed to the project.

Still, he said WS-PACE's battle is far from over, adding that possibly the only way to convince supervisors to change their minds was for the group to gain thousands of members.

"Our organization will continue to gain in strength and numbers and continue our fight against this illogically located project," Swift said in a prepared statement. "You may not hear from us for awhile, but we assure you there are other methods of opposing this humongous project. County government hasn't heard the last of WS-PACE.org."

## **How green can you get?**

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, April 23, 2008

"Being green" have become the new buzz words of the environmental movement, and it's not limited to the tie-dyed, granola-munching, back-to-nature crowd. It's everywhere.

But in looking at just a few examples of how people can become a little greener in their own homes and neighborhoods, individual citizens have a long way to go to become greener.

Respect for the environment has become so ubiquitous and desirable that traditional despoilers such as Waste Management Inc. and Chevron are expanding their advertising budgets to make people familiar with their love for the Earth.

Industries such as construction are developing principles and practices that give them that precious green tint: Energy-saving methods, eco-friendly materials and innovations in design. Several new and renovated buildings in Visalia have been employing those innovations.

California Resources Director Mike Chrisman was in Visalia a couple weeks ago to brief folks on the policies taking place in Sacramento to conserve and protect resources as well as give an update on green practices in various industries.

Governments themselves are trying to get as green as they can. The city of Visalia, for instance, has adopted a number of policies and procedures to improve its environmental track record. The city is doing everything from buying more alternative-energy vehicles to auditing all its buildings for energy savings to using environmentally friendly techniques in its own new construction.

In one of the more extreme expressions of environmental activism, the city/county of San Francisco banned plastic bags from chain grocery and retail stores.

So there is plenty of evidence as various communities celebrate Earth Day that the environmental movement is healthier than ever.

But how are we doing as individuals? There is some evidence to suggest that the majority of people rank their comfort and self-interest above their attention to the Earth.

Take the choice of shopping bags for one example: Among the most environmentally damaging items in our society today are plastic shopping bags. They clog landfills and don't decompose. Even when shredded they are difficult to recycle. They threaten wildlife, especially marine life, with suffocation. They have been responsible for polluting large areas of ocean.

But grocers report that 70 percent of shoppers use them over less environmentally hazardous alternatives such as paper or biodegradable sacks. And only about 2 percent of shoppers use reusable bags of their own.

In regard to recycling in general, the city of Visalia provides split containers for residents to separate their refuse. There are also separate dealers that pay cash for recyclable aluminum, plastic, glass and paper.

Visalia has improved its recycling record tremendously over the past decade or so, mostly thanks to a strong public-relations campaign by the city of Visalia. But there are still many individuals, and more than 50 percent of the population, that make no overt attempts to recycle, and some individuals that actually undermine the effort by misusing the split container.

Ultimately, the environmental movement's success will depend on the personal choices of individuals: How we consume and discard, how we travel, maintain our yards and heat or cool our dwellings and the kinds of machines we use.

Protecting the Earth might seem like an overwhelming task for an individual, but on fact we all contribute to that task every day, sometimes one shopping bag at a time.

As individuals we all ought to be concerned about the macro environmental issues such as how we improve our air quality and protect our water. But we also ought to be thinking about the little things we do every day that will determine how green we can be.

## **LA train agency rolls out cleaner locomotive for Earth Day**

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, April 23, 2008

LOS ANGELES — A Los Angeles County commuter train service used Earth Day to roll out its cleanest locomotive.

Metrolink says the diesel-electric hauler introduced Tuesday in Los Angeles is the first of 15 that will go into service over the next year.

The locomotives, which cost nearly \$2 million each, use computer technology and electronic fuel injection to keep emissions low and a shut-down feature to reduce idling.

Each is 10 feet longer than a current Metrolink locomotive and can haul 10 coaches instead of six - an extra 1,200 passengers.

Agency spokeswoman Denise Tyrrell said the locomotives won't produce less smog than the current ones because they're larger. But they do produce 70 percent less smog than freight-hauling locomotives, and may reduce car pollution by expanding public transit.

## **Meeting to focus on city's air pollution**

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, April 23, 2008

The California Air Resources Board will meet in Oakland at 9 a.m. Thursday to discuss a study that found West Oakland residents face a higher risk of getting cancer because of diesel air pollution from trucks, cars, ships and rail lines.

The meeting will be in the first-floor auditorium of the Caltrans building, at 111 Grand Ave. The public will be invited to comment.

The CARB study, released last month, found that trucks on freeways — not trucks going to and from the Port of Oakland — accounted for the largest share of the added cancer risk from diesel pollution.

## **The air up there**

By Kyle Lazarus

CSUF The Collegian, April 23, 2008

Unlike many people in the Valley, some Fresno State student-athletes and coaches do not have the luxury of stepping inside air-conditioned rooms when they go to work.

Air quality is notoriously bad in the Valley, and brutal for the athletes, something the coaches are aware of during practices, meets and games.

### **Softball**

Fresno State softball coach Margie Wright backs off cardio-heavy workouts, especially during the fall.

"We absolutely break more often because we don't want someone going down," Wright said. "We have several kids who have asthma and it makes it tough on them."

However, during the season Wright said that even though she pays attention to air quality, her athletes have to train, even when the air is poor.

During the season Wright does not see the air quality affecting the players, unlike the fall.

"In the fall I see [the air] affecting them," Wright said. "They get lethargic and it's hard for them to breathe and do what they do."

It helps the team that some games are played in the evening when the air quality is less harmful.

Wright said that when her team travels to Southern California, the humidity also affects the players.

"I know when we go down to Los Angeles, sometimes the air quality is pretty bad down there," Wright said. "It does affect a lot of people on the team, mostly because they're not used to it."

### **Track**

Track coach Bob Fraley definitely pays attention to air quality, especially since all of his athletes train outside.

"We don't make an issue out of it because most of these athletes train all year round," Fraley said. "It's a matter of adapting to the conditions."

Fraley notices a difference when he recruits an athlete from a healthier climate.

Fraley said that people from the Valley and other parts of California are better at dealing with the poor quality because they are "immune or adapted to it."

Fraley doesn't make changes to his practice schedules for the runners.

"Unless it was so bad and it was an emergency and they said don't do anything, then I'd have to do something," Fraley said. "I really haven't changed a practice for air quality, unless it was a really hot day."

Fraley compared his athletes to Kenyans, who he said have no problems with their feet because they run around barefoot when they are kids.

Fraley doesn't want to plant a seed in his runners' minds that their performance might be linked to the air quality.

"If performance is bad, they'll blame it on something that really didn't have anything to do with their performance," Fraley said. "No excuses."

Fraley tries to set practice later in the day when he thinks the air quality improves.

"What we've found in the Central Valley is that somewhere around 1 or 2 p.m. you're going to get a breeze coming in, and you're going to get a layer that's a lot less polluted."

Fraley worries mostly how the heat affects his athletes.

"If the heat is really bad, then the air is really bad, so you have to take a look at it," Fraley said.

### **Runners**

Sophomore distance runner Frank Sanders uses the bad air to his advantage, as something that runners from other schools can't use.

"It's definitely harder to run [in the Valley]," Sanders said. "In a sense it's good to train here because there's no other place that has it. When we get to other schools, it's clean air. We feel stronger."

Still, Sanders doesn't enjoy the bad air all the time.

"We might tell each other that it's a bad day, or that hey, 'the air sucks today,' Sanders said. "But we have to go do 12 miles, let's go."

Sanders never changes his practice schedule to adjust to poor air quality.

He said that what he has written down on his schedule is what he does, regardless of the conditions.

"I have to come out here anyway and run in it," Sanders said. "It's harder to run sometimes."

Sanders does notice differences in his times when the Valley air is bad.

"When we get back from a long, hard run our times might be slower," Sanders said. "We sometimes might feel a little dizzy."

## **Muzzling the Guzzle**

### **Government Unveils Timetable for Fuel Economy Standards**

By Ylan Q. Mui, Washington Post Staff Writer

Washington Post Wednesday, April 23, 2008

The [Department of Transportation](#) yesterday proposed a timetable for auto manufacturers to meet landmark new fuel economy standards, calling the schedule "historically ambitious yet achievable."

Under the regulations, the overall fleet of new vehicles, including cars and light trucks, would be required to average 25.3 miles per gallon in 2010 and reach 31.6 miles per gallon by 2015, an increase of 4.5 percent each year. Such standards would save about 55 billion gallons of fuel

over the life of the vehicles affected and slash \$100 billion in gas costs for consumers, according to figures from the department.

"What we were looking for was a balance between affordability and achieving the right levels of fuel economy," [Transportation Secretary Mary Peters](#) said yesterday at a news conference. "I think we got an aggressive but achievable standard."

Yesterday's proposal set increasing annual targets for the first five years. The standards reflect the average fuel efficiency of an automaker's fleet, rather than for individual models. Light trucks would have to average 23.5 miles per gallon by 2010 and 28.6 by 2015, and cars would have to average 27.5 by 2010 and 35.7 by 2015. Manufacturers will be able to receive credits for exceeding the efficiency targets and trade them between companies.

The timetable is a first step toward complying with the wide-ranging federal energy bill passed in December and aimed at reducing the United States' reliance on foreign oil and slowing global warming.

The legislation's centerpiece was a boost in the minimum fuel-efficiency standard to 35 miles per gallon by 2020 for new auto fleets.

The Transportation Department also said the regulation preempts efforts under way in California and 17 other states, including Maryland, to implement their own legislation limiting tailpipe emissions. California has been battling the Transportation Department over a state law requiring a 30 percent reduction in emissions standards from motor vehicles by 2016, which translates into 36 miles per gallon.

House Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) (D-Calif.) criticized the proposal's preemption of state law. However, she praised the standards as an important move in fighting climate change. [Rep. Edward J. Markey \(D-Mass.\)](#), chairman of the House Select Committee on Energy and Global Warming, called the timetable "aggressive" and said it showed faith in the auto industry's willingness to respond to climate change.

"American consumers want and deserve more efficient vehicles, and American ingenuity and technology can clearly get us there," he said.

Several activist groups credited the administration for requiring that most of the progress be made in the first five years, rather than back-loading the schedule. But the [Union of Concerned Scientists](#), an environmental nonprofit group, raised concerns that the increase in annual targets tapers off to less than 1 mile per gallon in the final years.

"What we have today is a horse charging out of the gate that pulls up lame a third of the way around the track," said Jim Kliesch, senior engineer in the group's clean vehicles program. "We could be a couple of miles per gallon higher than we are right now."

According to an analysis by the group, new cars and trucks could meet a standard of 32.5 miles per gallon by 2015 and 39 miles per gallon by 2020 using conventional technology. When hybrid vehicles are included, the group found that the auto fleet could hit 42 miles per gallon.

The nonprofit [Environmental Defense Fund](#) called the fuel efficiency standards a positive step but only one part of the fight against global warming, which it said should include reducing emissions.

"If Americans really expect to do something about the joint problems of global warming and energy security . . . then we need to do a lot more than promulgate higher [fuel efficiency]

standards, as important as that has been," said John DeCicco, senior fellow for automotive policy at the fund.

An auto industry trade group said yesterday that meeting the timetable will present an enormous challenge, and the Transportation Department estimated it will cost manufacturers \$47 billion to comply.

"We acknowledge that we have a responsibility to our customers to improve fuel efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emission from new automobiles," said Charles Territo, spokesman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers. "We're committed to being part of the solution."

Privately, one auto official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak about the standards, said the industry was surprised by the pace of the increases in fuel efficiency.

He said automakers had planned for more steady increases and begun to develop products for coming years around that assumption.

"It's definitely more aggressive and a quicker climb than we had expected," he said.

The proposed regulations must undergo a 60-day comment period. Transportation officials said they expect to finalize the rules by the end of the year.

Still, some experts said federal fuel efficiency standards will have less impact on the industry than consumer demand.

As the price of gas continues to rise, car buyers are looking for ways to stretch their dollars further. The [Toyota Prius](#) hybrid, for example, captured 1.5 percent of the auto market last month, compared with about 0.1 percent in March 2002, according to [Edmunds.com](#). Meanwhile, market share of the [Toyota Camry](#) has remained stable: up to 2.3 percent last month, from 2.2 percent in March 2002.

"These changes [in fuel efficiency standards], let's face it, they're very slight. They're going to take a very long time to come in," said Phil Reed, consumer advice editor at Edmunds.com. "The consumers are way ahead. They want fuel efficient vehicles now."

## **Bush fuel economy rules swipe at California**

By Zachary Coile, Chronicle Washington bureau  
S.F. Chronicle, Wednesday, April 23, 2008

Washington -- When the Bush administration announced proposed regulations Tuesday to raise fuel economy standards for cars and trucks to 31.6 miles per gallon by 2015, even some environmentalists applauded. But then they read the fine print.

Tucked deep into a 417-page "Notice of Proposed Rulemaking" was language by the Transportation Department stating that more stringent limits on tailpipe emissions embraced by California and 17 other states are "an obstacle to the accomplishment" of the new federal standards and are "expressly and impliedly preempted" by federal law.

California Attorney General Jerry Brown called it a covert assault on California's rules. Environmentalists said the language will be used by automakers in their legal challenges to two recent federal court rulings that sided with the states.

The language showed that beneath the bipartisan veneer of support for new fuel economy standards - approved by Congress and signed by President Bush in December - the conflict is still raging between the White House and the states over who will set the nation's first limits on greenhouse gases.

Transportation Secretary Mary Peters, who announced the proposed rules Tuesday, acknowledged that the preemption language was included in the document.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has fiercely defended its role as the only government entity with the authority to set fuel economy standards for cars and trucks. Agency officials believe the law passed last year - which mandated an increase in fuel economy to 35 miles per gallon by 2020 - reinforced the department's power.

### **National standards**

"It's the belief of the department that by legislating national fuel economy standards that Congress wants national fuel economy standards," said Brian Turmail, a Transportation Department spokesman.

But that view rankles California officials, who noted that during the debate last fall, California Sen. Dianne Feinstein and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco, won assurances that the bill would be neutral on whether California and other states could proceed with their own rules.

The Supreme Court ruled in the Massachusetts vs. EPA case last year that the Transportation Department's authority to set fuel economy standards should not impede other efforts under the Clean Air Act to reduce greenhouse gases. California traditionally has had special authority under the Clean Air Act to set limits on air pollutants that are tougher than federal standards.

A federal judge in Vermont ruled in September that the state rules do not conflict with federal mileage standards, and a Fresno court in December found that both California and the EPA are empowered to set limits on vehicle emissions.

### **'Respectfully disagree'**

In its new document, the Transportation Department said, "We respectfully disagree with the two district court rulings" and noted that an appeal has been filed by automakers.

Agency officials wrote that the new fuel economy standards had increased the conflict between state regulations and federal law. They added: "A conflict between state and federal law arises when compliance with both federal and state regulations is a physical impossibility or when state law stands as an obstacle to the accomplishment and execution of the full purposes and objectives of Congress."

The agency said it is considering adding language to its final rule stating that "any state regulation regulating tailpipe carbon dioxide emissions from automobiles is expressly preempted" under federal law.

Roland Hwang, the vehicles policy director for the Natural Resources Defense Council, said the document appeared to be an effort to bolster the legal case of the auto industry.

"We fully expect to see this rule being quoted by the automakers in their court cases in trying to overturn the Fresno and Vermont decisions," Hwang said. "It's the same argument we're hearing from the automakers."

Charles Territo, a spokesman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, rejected the idea that the administration is coordinating with the industry.

"It's consistent with the federal government's position all along," Territo said, pointing to the EPA's decision in December to deny California's request for a waiver to implement its rules.

California officials said there's a reason the industry opposes its efforts: While the new federal standards would raise fuel economy to 31.6 miles per gallon by 2015, California's rules would require the U.S. vehicle fleet to get 36 miles per gallon by 2015.

### **'Shameful and unlawful'**

"This fuel economy plan, while attractive on the surface, is a shameful and unlawful assault on California's landmark vehicle emissions standard," Brown said Tuesday.

Pelosi, who pushed the fuel economy bill through the House, praised the Transportation Department for taking the first step of implementing the new federal rules. But she chastised the agency for trying to undermine tougher state regulations.

"Despite two federal court rulings and Congress' decision to reject the administration's position that enacted energy legislation should preempt the authority of states to regulate greenhouse gas vehicle emissions, the administration has chosen to trot out the same tired old arguments," she said.

### **Excerpts from proposed rules**

The Transportation Department issued new proposed rules to raise fuel economy standards. But the draft regulations also contained several swipes at California's tougher rules to cut tailpipe emissions of greenhouse gases. Here are excerpts:

"(The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) has consistently taken the position that state regulations regulating CO<sub>2</sub> tailpipe emissions from automobiles are expressly and impliedly preempted."

"A conflict between state and federal law arises when compliance with both federal and state regulations is a physical impossibility or when state law stands as an obstacle to the accomplishment and execution of the full purposes and objectives of Congress."

"We respectfully disagree with the two district court rulings" in Fresno and Vermont in which federal judges sided with California and other states.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco, responded: "The administration is continuing to block climate change progress by asserting that California doesn't have the right to move forward with its own global warming regulations. That is completely unjustified."

### **Administration Seeks a Quicker Increase in Fuel Standards**

By Matthew L. Wald

N.Y. Times, Wed., April 23, 2008

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration, acting as gasoline prices are setting records, proposed on Tuesday to raise car and truck fuel economy standards substantially faster than required by the energy law passed by Congress last December.

But in calculating how long it would take drivers to recoup the added cost of more-efficient vehicles, the Transportation Department used a price projection made by the government several months ago that looks cheap today: \$2.26 to \$2.51 a gallon in 2030.

The Transportation Department backed an increase of 4.5 percent a year beginning in 2011 and continuing through 2015. That change would add nearly \$1,580 to the cost of a car in 2015, and nearly \$3,100 to the cost of a light truck. Assuming that the price of gas was about \$2.50, the department said it would take vehicle owners a little more than four years to break even with savings from reduced fuel use. At a higher price, officials said, the payback would be faster.

Mary E. Peters, the secretary of transportation, said in her announcement that the standards were "historically ambitious, yet achievable." They would produce a 25 percent improvement by 2015; Congress required 40 percent by 2020. The pace she laid out is nearly 50 percent faster than what would be required to meet the law passed last December.

In fact, the vehicle manufacturers have a head start, because their averages are already higher than the legal minimum, with consumers choosing more fuel-efficient vehicles. The car standard today is 27.5 miles a gallon, but the actual average of what is driven home from the showroom is about 31.3 miles; for light trucks, the standard is now 22.2 miles a gallon but the actual average is 23.1, according to the Transportation Department.

In an unusual step, the Transportation Department included in its analysis of costs and benefits a price of \$7 a ton for carbon dioxide, the main global warming gas. That comes to about 2 cents a gallon. It also ascribed benefits of \$1.99 a gallon for reduced gasoline production cost, and 28 cents a gallon for reduction of oil imports.

The car manufacturers' main trade association praised the proposal as "good for both consumers and energy security." The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers said "these increases will present a challenge," but were preferable to the possibility of giving the states a choice between the federal standard and a standard proposed by California, which is even stricter.

The Bush administration recently rejected California's application to regulate carbon dioxide emissions, in effect regulating fuel economy, and the case is now in court.

Other reactions were mixed. Joan Claybrook, a former head of the National Highway Safety Administration, said the part of the Transportation Department that actually sets the standard, said Congress itself had "caved in to automaker pressure" when it set the standard of 35 miles a gallon by 2020 and that other countries had set more aggressive targets.

The Environmental Defense Fund said that the proposal was not a substitute for a broad policy on climate change. "Today's proposal, though progress against the past, would not even return global warming pollution to current levels," said John DeCicco, senior fellow for automotive strategies.

### **On Earth Day, L.A. passes a 'green' building law to clean the air 'Green' building rules for large commercial and residential projects will reduce carbon dioxide emissions.**

By Margot Roosevelt, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer  
L.A. Times, Wed., April 23, 2008

Los Angeles embarked on one of its most ambitious projects to combat global warming on Monday, becoming the biggest city in the nation to impose "green" building rules that would potentially cut millions of tons of pollution over the next decade.

In a unanimous vote, the City Council passed an ordinance requiring builders of large commercial and residential developments to adopt such measures as planting drought-resistant landscaping and using recycled materials and energy-efficient heating, cooling and lighting. Noting "the Los Angeles tradition of smog and sprawl," Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, wearing a green necktie in honor of Earth Day, signed the new law on a sunny terrace flanked by two model condominium high-rises, the Luma and the Elleven, off Hope Street in downtown, which were

built to strict conservation standards.

The mayor has pledged to reduce the city's carbon emissions 35% below 1990 levels by 2030, an effort that will also require a crackdown on the city's coal-dependent municipal utility and a move toward electricity from renewable sources.

"We look toward the future through a greener lens," Villaraigosa said, "after decades of poor policies that neglected environmental concerns."

The law requires new commercial buildings and high-rise residential structures with more than 50,000 square feet of floor space to meet a nationally recognized "Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design" standard, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, a Washington-based nonprofit. It also would cover major renovations and low-rise developments of 50 units or more.

City officials said about 150 new and renovated buildings, or about 7.5 million square feet, would be covered by the ordinance each year.

The rules would amount to preventing about 85,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions over the next five years, the equivalent of removing 15,000 cars from the roads.

Critics have compared the Los Angeles law unfavorably with an ordinance now before the San Francisco Board of Supervisors that would apply to all commercial and residential structures over 25,000 square feet and hold them to a stricter version of the building council's standard than Los Angeles.

"We need lower thresholds to make a real, measurable change," Richard Ludt, administrator of Interior Removal Specialist, a contractor, told the council Monday.

His company handled 1,120 demolition projects in the city last year. Only eight of those projects would have fallen under the new ordinance's recycling provisions, he said.

Philip A. Williams, a vice president at Webcor, which is building a massive development at Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street, said the L.A. standards are weaker than San Francisco's because they do not require an outside audit to verify promised greenhouse gas reductions.

City officials say they will scrutinize every seventh application and intervene if violations are found, but Williams said, "Without third-party verification, it just means you tried your best."

Villaraigosa sought to downplay divisions among city developers by inviting Mary Leslie, president of the Los Angeles Business Council, to endorse the new law at his news conference. She praised the law's "sensible timeline and reasonable goals," saying it "represents a tidal change in the way we perceive green building in L.A."

Experts say that costs for building to the basic Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standard are no higher than regular building costs. James Atkins, developer of the Luma, said that it cost his company, the South Group, about 1% more to build to an even higher "gold" standard, but that such costs are recouped through lower operating expenses.

On the other side of the spectrum, Holly Schroeder, chief executive of the Los Angeles/Ventura Chapter of the Building Industry Assn., told the council that it was illegal for the city to rely on Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards, and that cities can change building codes only "for climatic, geologic or topographic conditions."

The final ordinance, Councilwoman Jan Perry said, "was a nod to the sensitivity of the real estate market" in Los Angeles. "We had opposition down here that maybe San Francisco didn't

experience."

However, the council ordered staff to report back within six months as to whether a stricter standard should be adopted. "We will continue to push the envelope," said Council President Eric Garcetti. He said he expects that "in a couple of years, every single building over 25,000 square feet will be covered" by the new law. By this summer, he said, the city expects to raise the bar for its municipal construction to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design "silver" -- a higher standard that would match San Francisco's threshold.

So far, one state, Connecticut, and 14 cities are requiring private developers to meet green building standards.

"The world," Villaraigosa said, "is following in our footsteps."

### **Electricity industry wrangles over California's greenhouse gas law Customer bills could soar under a plan to require public energy suppliers that rely heavily on coal to buy the right to pollute from private suppliers with cleaner nuclear and hydroelectric power.**

By Margot Roosevelt, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer  
L.A. Times, Wed., April 23, 2008

Fighting global warming is the feel-good cause of the moment.

But in California, the self-congratulation that followed the 2006 passage of the nation's first comprehensive law to curb emissions of planet-warming greenhouse gases is fast turning to acrimony.

A ferocious behind-the-scenes brawl over how to regulate electricity plants, the biggest source of carbon dioxide after motor vehicles, has pitted Southern California's public power generators against its for-profit utilities.

Why? Because some taxpayer-owned utilities, such as Los Angeles' Department of Water and Power, get close to half their electricity from the nation's dirtiest energy source: coal.

And under the system envisioned by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to implement the greenhouse gas law, utilities would probably be required to buy the right to pollute from the state.

Today, the state's utilities and energy commissions are holding public workshops in San Francisco on proposals that could make high-carbon polluters such as the DWP, the nation's biggest municipal utility, pay dearly. Investor-owned companies with cleaner nuclear and hydroelectric power could reap windfalls since they might pay proportionately less. And, overall, the money the state collects could be redistributed based on which utility sells the most electricity -- and investor-owned ones such as Southern California Edison are atop that list.

A decision on how to control greenhouse gases from utilities will be made by the California Air Resources Board at the end of the year. But scenarios under consideration have Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and DWP chief H. David Nahai on a lobbying streak in Sacramento. Nahai recently accused the state commissions of promoting "a scheme to line the pockets of large corporations" and "shift billions of dollars away from our communities and our customers and into the pockets of for-profit utilities."

Los Angeles' customers, who thus far have benefited from some of the lowest rates in the state, could shell out \$450 million to \$700 million a year -- money that the utility was planning to spend building wind and solar plants. Smaller coal-reliant cities, such as Anaheim, Burbank and Pasadena, also could pay high fees. Customers' bills could soar under such a plan, municipal utility directors, including Nahai, warn.

California's battle over the design of this "cap-and-trade" system, which would also allow industries to buy and sell pollution permits among themselves, has erupted as Congress appears likely to adopt a similar market-based system nationwide. Utilities around the country are jockeying for position on the penalty-versus-windfall balance sheet.

Michael Peevey, president of the California Public Utilities Commission, which is charged with recommending global-warming rules for the electricity industry to the air board, dismisses Los Angeles' complaints, saying its officials "are fighting with phantoms. . . . They're doing a preemptive strike to carve themselves out" of a statewide program.

"There's no free lunch," Peevey warns. "We have to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> by 174 million tons by 2020. But no one wants to face up to the cost. Everyone wants everyone else to pay."

California's law requires cutting greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2020, about 25% below expected levels in that year, and aims to reduce them by 80% by midcentury. A draft plan on how to meet those goals will be released in June by the air board.

Under a cap-and-trade program, the state would impose a ceiling on emissions. Emissions permits would either be given away, auctioned or some combination of the two. Companies whose emissions are below the ceiling, or cap, could sell their pollution permits to industries that pollute above the cap. The system has been launched with mixed success in Europe, where it has been undermined by dubious emissions accounting.

Monitoring smokestacks inside California is the easy part of the regulation. But the power that California imports from states such as Utah and Arizona presents a problem.

Because California has no authority to clamp down on coal plants in other states, the utility and energy commissions are recommending that the air board regulate "first deliverers" who bring the power to the border of the state -- be they utilities or middlemen, such as the former Enron, who market imported electricity.

But Nahai calls that "bad policy, ripe for gaming and manipulation." He adds, "First deliverers can be faceless foreign companies beyond our control, with no assets and no interest in keeping the lights on."

Gary Stern, an economist for Southern California Edison, which supports the first-deliverer rule, acknowledged that out-of-state generators could obscure the source of their emissions from California regulators.

"If I want to buy power from Utah, then the Utah company can arrange a deal to sell coal to the Northwest, and buy hydro from the Northwest and sell it to us. It will look clean, and we won't know that it sold coal."

But he said that the rule would at least prevent California-based generators from gaming the system.

To critics, the complexities of cap and trade recall the sort of wheeling and dealing that cheated California out of millions of dollars when it deregulated the power system in the late 1990s.

Legislative leaders want Schwarzenegger to withdraw the utility and energy commissions' preliminary design. It's "a scheme that gambles with California's energy supply in a way reminiscent of the events leading to the energy crisis," Assembly Speaker-elect Karen Bass (D-Los Angeles) and several other legislators representing the city wrote the governor.

Under scenarios to be considered, the state might auction 50% to 100% of emissions credits that

utilities will need.

If that happens, the state could collect billions of dollars a year from polluters, and as Air Resources Board Chairwoman Mary Nichols notes, "A big pot of money means someone has to figure out what to do with it, and that involves politics."

Pacific Gas & Electric wants the money to be redistributed to utilities according to their size. And that would enable the utility to cut rates.

"We're looking out for our customers who have invested in clean energy for decades," said PG&E spokesman Keely Wachs.

But if utilities first have to pay for pollution credits and then to build renewable energy plants, Nahai says that would "cripple" the city's effort to green itself. In the last two years, the DWP has boosted its renewable energy mix to 8% from 3% and is on target to get 20% of its power from renewables by 2010, an expensive undertaking.

Nichols, of the Air Resources Board, sees an auction system as the most efficient way to achieve greenhouse gas reductions and says she would be reluctant to exempt the Los Angeles utility from a cap-and-trade program, as Nahai has asked. Of the state's major utilities, "DWP is the biggest CO2 polluter," Nichols said. "Having this forced on them could be the best thing that ever happened to them."

Compromises are being discussed. Nonetheless, she acknowledges, "I don't see us coming up with a system that involves PG&E making a profit on DWP's misfortune. You could have an auction where the state keeps 5% of the revenue and 95% stays at DWP, as long as they show they will use it to reduce carbon."

In the end, given the fact that half of California utilities' carbon emissions come from imported power, many experts see a broader system as the only way to make cap-and-trade work. A bigger tent would make it more difficult for coal plants to escape regulation.

"We need national legislation for the electricity markets," Nichols says. "Electrons don't carry little flags as they move around."

Regional compacts in the West, Midwest and Northeast have already been formed to design multistate trading programs.

And the cap-and-trade climate bill, sponsored by Sens. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) and John Warner (R-Va.), is expected to come to a vote in June, although final legislation may have to await the election of a new president.

Meanwhile, California is moving full speed ahead, trying to bob and weave around the regulatory complexities.

## **Europe Turns to Coal Again, Raising Alarms on Climate**

By ELISABETH ROSENTHAL

N.Y. Times, Wed., April 23, 2008

CIVITAVECCHIA, Italy — At a time when the world's top climate experts agree that carbon emissions must be rapidly reduced to hold down global warming, Italy's major electricity producer, Enel, is converting its massive power plant here from oil to coal, generally the dirtiest fuel on earth.

Over the next five years, Italy will increase its reliance on coal to 33 percent from 14 percent. Power generated by Enel from coal will rise to 50 percent.

And Italy is not alone in its return to coal. Driven by rising demand, record high oil and natural gas prices, concerns over energy security and an aversion to nuclear energy, European countries are expected to put into operation about 50 coal-fired plants over the next five years, plants that will be in use for the next five decades.

In the United States, fewer new coal plants are likely to begin operations, in part because it is becoming harder to get regulatory permits and in part because nuclear power remains an alternative. Of 151 proposals in early 2007, more than 60 had been dropped by the year's end, many blocked by state governments. Dozens of other are stuck in court challenges.

The fast-expanding developing economies of India and China, where coal remains a major fuel source for more than two billion people, have long been regarded as among the biggest challenges to reducing carbon emissions. But the return now to coal even in eco-conscious Europe is sowing real alarm among environmentalists who warn that it is setting the world on a disastrous trajectory that will make controlling global warming impossible.

They are aghast at the renaissance of coal, a fuel more commonly associated with the sooty factories of Dickens novels, and one that was on its way out just a decade ago.

There have been protests here in Civitavecchia, at a new coal plant in Germany, and at one in the Czech Republic, as well as at the Kingsnorth power station in Kent, which is slated to become Britain's first new coal-fired plant in more than a decade.

Europe's power station owners emphasize that they are making the new coal plants as clean as possible. But critics say that "clean coal" is a pipe dream, an oxymoron in terms of the carbon emissions that count most toward climate change. They call the building spurt shortsighted.

"Building new coal-fired power plants is ill conceived," said James E. Hansen, a leading climatologist at the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies. "Given our knowledge about what needs to be done to stabilize climate, this plan is like barging into a war without having a plan for how it should be conducted, even though information is available.

"We need a moratorium on coal now," he added, "with phase-out of existing plants over the next two decades."

Coal's Advantages

Enel and many other electricity companies say they have little choice but to build coal plants to replace aging infrastructure, particularly in countries like Italy and Germany that have banned the building of nuclear power plants. Fuel costs have risen 151 percent since 1996, and Italians pay the highest electricity costs in Europe.

In terms of cost and energy security, coal has all the advantages, its proponents argue. Coal reserves will last for 200 years, rather than 50 years for gas and oil. Coal is relatively cheap compared with oil and natural gas, although coal prices have tripled in the past few years. More important, hundreds of countries export coal — there is not a coal cartel — so there is more room to negotiate prices.

"In order to get over oil, which is getting more and more expensive, our plan is to convert all oil plants to coal using clean-coal technologies," said Gianfilippo Mancini, Enel's chief of generation and energy management. "This will be the cleanest coal plant in Europe. We are hoping to prove that it will be possible to make sustainable and environmentally friendly use of coal."

"Clean coal" is a term coined by the industry decades ago, referring to its efforts to reduce local pollution. Using new technology, clean coal plants sharply reduced the number of sooty particles

spewed into the air, as well as gases like sulfur dioxide and nitrous oxide. The technology has minimal effect on carbon emissions.

In fact, the technology that the industry is counting on to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions that add to global warming — carbon capture and storage — is not now commercially available. No one knows if it is feasible on a large, cost-effective scale.

### **The Struggle to Be Green**

The task — in which carbon emissions are pumped into underground reservoirs rather than released — is challenging for any fuel source, but particularly so for coal, which produces more carbon dioxide than oil or natural gas.

Under optimal current conditions, coal produces more than twice as much carbon dioxide per unit of electricity as natural gas, the second most common fuel used for electricity generation, according to the Electric Power Research Institute. In the developing world, where even new coal plants use lower grade coal and less efficient machinery, the equation is even worse.

Without carbon capture and storage, coal cannot be green. But solving that problem will take global coordination and billions of dollars in investment, which no one country or company seems inclined to spend, said Jeffrey D. Sachs, director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

“Figuring out carbon capture is really critical — it may not work in the end — and if it is not viable, the situation, with respect to climate change, is far more dire,” Mr. Sachs said.

There are a few dozen small demonstration projects in Europe and in the United States, most in the early stages. But progress has not been promising.

At the end of January, the Bush administration canceled what was previously by far the United States’ biggest carbon-capture demonstration project, at a coal-fired plant in Illinois, because of huge cost overruns. The costs of the project, undertaken in 2003 with a budget of \$950 million, had spiraled to \$1.5 billion this year, and it was far from complete.

The European Union had pledged to develop 12 pilot carbon-capture projects for Europe, but says that is not enough.

Many have likened carbon capture’s road from the demonstration lab to a safe, cheap, available reality as a challenge equivalent to putting a man on the moon. Norway, which is investing heavily to test the technology, calls carbon capture its “moon landing.”

It may be even harder than that. It is a moon landing that must be replicated daily at thousands of coal plants in hundreds of countries — many of them poor. There is a new coal-fired plant going up in India or China almost every week, and most of those are not constructed in a way that is amenable to carbon capture, even if it were developed.

Plants that could someday be adapted to carbon capture cost 10 to 20 percent more to build, and only a handful exist today. For most coal power plants the costs of converting would be “phenomenal,” concluded a report by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Then there is the problem of storing the carbon dioxide, which is at some level an inherently local issue. Geologists have to determine if there is a suitable underground site, calculate how much carbon dioxide it can hold and then equip it in a way that prevents leaks and ensures safety. A large leak of underground carbon dioxide could be as dangerous as a leak of nuclear fuel, critics say.

As for its plant here, Enel says it will start experimenting with carbon-capture technology in 2015, in the hopes of “a solution” by 2020.

“That’s too late,” Mr. Sachs said.

In the meantime, it and other new coal plants will be spewing more greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere than ever before, meaning that current climate predictions — dire as they are — may still be “too optimistic,” Mr. Sachs said. “They assume the old energy mix, even though coal will be a larger and larger part.”

### **An Efficient Plant**

On many other fronts, the new Enel plant is a model of efficiency and recycling. The nitrous oxide is chemically altered to generate ammonia, which is then sold. The resulting coal ash and gypsum are sold to the cement industry.

An on-site desalination plant means that the operation generates its own water for cooling. Even the heated water that comes out of the plant is not wasted: it heats a fish farm, one of Italy’s largest.

But Enel’s plan to deal with the new plant’s carbon emissions consists mostly of a map of Italy with several huge white ovals superimposed — subterranean cavities where carbon dioxide potentially could be stored.

The sites have not been fully studied by geologists as yet to make sure they are safe storage sites and well sealed. There is no infrastructure or equipment that could move carbon into them.

The new Enel plant here opens its first boiler in two months. It will immediately produce fewer carbon emissions than the ancient oil boiler it replaces, but only because it will produce less electricity, officials here admit.

### **Unhappy Neighbors**

In the towns surrounding Civitavecchia, the impending arrival of a huge coal plant, with its three silvery domes, is being greeted with a hefty dose of dread.

“They call it clean coal because they use some filters, but it is really nonsense,” said Marza Marzioli of the No Coal citizens group in the nearby ancient Etruscan town of Tarquinia. “If you compare it to old plants, yes it’s better, but it’s not ‘clean’ in any way.”

The group says that Enel has won approval for a dangerous new coal plant by buying machines for a local hospital and by carrying out a public relations campaign. Enel advertisements for the project show a young girl erasing a plant’s smokestack.

Most people who took part in a 2007 local referendum voted no, but the plant went ahead anyway, the group said.

The European Union, through its emissions trading scheme, has tried to make power plants consider the costs of carbon, forcing them to buy “permits” for emissions. But with the price of oil so high, coal is far cheaper, even with the cost of permits to pollute factored in, Enel has calculated.

Stephan Singer, who runs the European energy and climate office of WWF, formerly the World Wildlife Fund, in Brussels, said that math was shortsighted: the cost of coal and permits will almost certainly rise over the next decade.

"If they want coal to be part of the energy solution, they have to show us that carbon capture can be done now, that they can really reduce emissions" to an acceptable level, Mr. Singer said.

## **Arctic haze - pollution from all over Scientists wonder if it contributes to global warming**

By Dan Joling, Associated Press

In the S.F. Chronicle, N.Y. Times and other papers, Wednesday, April 23, 2008

Fairbanks, Alaska -- Visitors to Alaska often marvel at the crisp, clear air. But the truth is, the skies above the Arctic Circle work like a giant lint trap during late winter and early spring, catching all sorts of pollutants swirling around the globe.

In recent weeks, scientists have been going up in government research planes and taking samples of the Arctic haze in hope of solving a mystery: Are the floating particles accelerating the unprecedented warming going on in the far north?

While carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that trap the Earth's heat are believed to be the chief cause of global warming, scientists suspect that airborne particles known as aerosols are also contributing to the Arctic meltdown.

To prove their suspicions, they are analyzing the haze, using mass spectroscopy and other technology to identify what is in it, where it came from and how it interacts with the clouds, the sunlight and the snow cover.

Their air samples have been found to contain dust from Asian deserts, salts that swell up moisture, particles from incomplete burning of organic material from forest and cooking fires, and all manner of nasties emitted by automobile tailpipes, factory smokestacks and power plants.

Collectively, they are a United Nations of pollution. Through chemical analysis, the particles can be traced to their sources throughout Asia, Europe and North America.

"The Arctic is a melting pot for mid-latitude pollution," said Daniel Jacob, a Harvard scientist taking part in the research. "We have signatures of just about everything you can imagine flying around in the Arctic."

The research is being conducted separately by NASA, the Department of Energy and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, and involves about 275 scientists and support staff and five aircraft.

The researchers are building on the work of a University of Alaska Fairbanks atmospheric scientist who arrived 35 years ago. Glenn Shaw took a light meter to Barrow, America's northernmost community, figuring he could document the clearest skies on the globe and perhaps get a mention in a scientific journal.

"I was expecting to set a record," he said, "because at the northern tip of Alaska, there's no industry, and the idea was that this must be the cleanest place, essentially, almost, on planet Earth."

He was wrong. Shaw detected a phenomenon later dubbed Arctic haze that indicated the skies above Barrow and all the way to the North Pole collect pollutants.

"The important thing was, and is, this is aerosol material that is traveling over three or four thousand miles, which was unprecedented at the time," he said.

The focus on greenhouse gases has made it difficult to bring other possible agents of climate change into the discussion, Jacob said. But last summer's startling melt-off of Arctic sea ice has lent new urgency to the research blitz now under way.

It is well-established that soot that has fallen on snow can absorb heat from the sun and cause melting. But the researchers are also interested in what the soot does while it is still airborne.

Among other things, they want to know how the size and density of the particles alter the type and longevity of clouds, said Greg McFarquhar of the University of Illinois. Also, they want to find out whether the airborne particles reflect heat back into space or absorb it.

In most of the world, particles lead to cooling by reflecting light before it reaches the Earth's surface, partially offsetting the warming effect of greenhouse gases.

But A.R. Ravishankara of NOAA's Earth System Research Laboratory said he suspects that's not the case in the Arctic, where ice and snow already reflect much of the light. Some particles may absorb the sun's energy and give off their own radiant heat, like blacktop on a summer day, he said.

"How much of this aerosol is there?" Ravishankara asked, summarizing some of things scientists hope to find out. "Do they absorb light? Do they scatter light? Do they make clouds brighter or dimmer? Are they getting to the ice surface? Because if you add these absorbing particles to the ice surface, it could actually enhance the melting."

If aerosols prove to be a major factor in warming, Ravishankara said, removing them could yield relatively fast benefits for the environment.

"It lasts only for a few days, and then it's removed from the atmosphere, unlike carbon dioxide, which stays with us for hundreds of years," he said. "Aerosols can be a way to do something very quickly."

## **Aviation heads to act on climate change, but set no targets**

By FRANK JORDANS, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, N.Y. Times and other papers, Tuesday, April 22, 2008

GENEVA, Switzerland (AP) --Aviation chiefs pledged Tuesday to address the industry's impact on climate change but shied away from setting concrete targets for reducing emissions of global-warming gases.

A declaration signed by trade bodies and aircraft makers commits the industry to develop new technologies with the eventual aim of achieving carbon-free travel.

The signatories included trans-Atlantic rivals Boeing Co. and Airbus, engine makers Rolls-Royce and General Electric, and industry groups such as the International Air Transport Association, which represents more than 240 airlines worldwide.

Environmentalists said the declaration was a modest first step.

"What we urgently need is a commitment to real, aggressive targets to increase efficiency and ultimately to stabilize and reduce emissions," said James Leape, director-general of pressure group WWF International, which is also known as the World Wildlife Fund.

"I don't yet see the urgency among industry leaders that we're going to need," Leape said, adding that public pressure was the main reason why companies have begun to act.

The industry declaration promises to work toward alleviating global warming by helping set up an international emissions trading program under the auspices of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

By putting their weight behind that program, the industry again signaled its opposition to the European Union's plan for a regional emissions trading system. The 27-nation bloc's attempt to include airlines in its cap-and-trade program is opposed by the airline industry as well as the U.S., China and other nations.

"Europe's unilateral approach will only lead to legal battles and trade wars," Giovanni Bisignani, chief executive of the airline trade group, told delegates at the industry meeting in Geneva.

He said other countries would not accept a trading system imposed by the EU.

Europe wants all airlines that fly within the EU to trade pollution allowances beginning in 2011, forcing them to buy more if they want to increase their flights. Such programs are designed to provide industries with financial incentives to lower emissions of greenhouse gases.

Airlines flying to the EU would join the program a year later — a move that would hit U.S. airlines on the lucrative trans-Atlantic routes.

U.S. officials have warned that including non-European airlines in the EU cap-and-trade program may break international aviation and trade law.

Scientists have raised questions about the European program, but for other reasons.

Most experts agree airlines are to blame for about 2 percent of man-made emissions of carbon dioxide, a gas believed to contribute to global warming. Other gases emitted by aircraft are also thought to be a problem, but opinions differ on their impact.

Converting the effects of gases such as water vapor and nitrogen oxide into a carbon dioxide equivalent as part of an emissions trading system is a matter of scientific dispute.

"It's like comparing apples and oranges," said Helen Rogers, a senior research associate at Cambridge University in England who works in the field of climate modeling.

The danger is that a hastily imposed program could end up worsening the contribution that aviation makes to climate change by encouraging the development of more fuel-efficient aircraft that emit other, more harmful gases, she told The Associated Press by telephone.

David Fahey, a research physicist at the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, also urged against moving too quickly.

"We need the industry, the scientific and policy community to come together and frame this problem. Then we can put this into a carbon market," he said.

Bisignani said that with fuel costing airlines a total of \$156 billion last year, both the airlines and aircraft makers have reason enough to want to lower fuel consumption.

"No other industry has such an enormous incentive to be fuel-efficient," he said.

Marion Blakey, chief executive of the Aerospace Industries Association, a trade group, said the business has already made great strides on its own. "There is no other industry that in only a couple of decades dropped its fuel usage by 70 percent," she told AP.

She said the EU could help the emission problem most by meeting airlines' demand for a unified air traffic control system in Europe. "With political will you can see a single sky in Europe, which gives tremendous efficiency," she said.

Environmentalists say that whatever is done to reduce emissions, it needs to be done soon.

The growth in air travel — 5 percent to 6 percent a year — threatens to undo improvements made in other industries, ultimately undermining international targets to halve emissions by 2050 compared with 1990.

[Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Wednesday, April 23, 2008:](#)

## **Lois Henry: Enough 'green' talk, let's see some vision**

BY LOIS HENRY, CALIFORNIAN STAFF WRITER

Here it is only 24 hours after Earth Day and I'm about to crab on "green."

I'm not opposed to conserving resources or finding more environmentally friendly ways to live.

What I'm annoyed with is "green lip" and no real "green action." (Plus I'm flat out sick of the word "green" at this point.)

My crabbiness first found focus in those "Flex Your Power" television commercials that started last summer.

You know the ones - where some yahoos are apologizing to doe-eyed kids for trashing the planet. Then the music picks up and it ends with the highly questionable factoid that installing a more efficient cooling system on your house would equate taking 275,000 cars off the road.

Aside from sounding like a load of hoey intended to lull us into thinking "someone" is doing "something" about the problem, it just begs more questions.

What kind of cooling system? What kinds of cars? Hummers? Priuses? Take them off the road for how long? An hour? Forever?

And it completely dodges the real question: Why not take actual cars off the road?

That involves two words that no one seems capable of uttering, no matter how truly green they are - public transit.

Yes, I know this goofy ad campaign is put on by the California Energy Commission in cahoots with power companies and they have no pull when it comes to transportation. But it's indicative of California's and Bakersfield's fairy-tale approach to real life problems.

Public transit is the single best way to get cars off the road, cut emissions and move people more efficiently. Study after study has shown that to be the case and one just came out in February that confirmed those findings and found that in cities where public transit was part of the planning process, even motorists drove fewer miles.

Back in 2006, real legislators spent actual time and effort and got a law passed to great fanfare that put California on the warpath against climate change - the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (imagine a booming voice and swelling background music).

I have zero hope this will result in a boost for public transit from what I've read so far about how the California Air Resources Board is implementing the act.

I'm not saying what the board has focused on is useless. Hey, having a reminder about proper tire pressure is important, you bet. (This is one of the "early action" items listed by the board. I swear.)

However, when you consider that the paltry public transit systems this country does have save 4.2 billion gallons of gas each year and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 37 million metric tons, according to a study released by the American Public Transportation Association in

February, it might be a bit more meaningful to focus on that rather than finding ways to increase methane capture from landfills (another “early action” item California regulators are hard after).

I’ve talked to planners here and elsewhere about public transit for many years and I know the obstacles. Mass transit needs a certain density, about 17 dwelling units per acre, to make it feasible. Bakersfield has an average four dwelling units per acre. And as long as cars are more convenient, people won’t take the bus.

Well, whaddaya know? Our years of inattentive road planning might be beneficial after all if it gets people on the bus because they can’t motor across town in under an hour. And, of course, gas prices might catapult more of us out of the driver’s seat even sooner.

But here’s the real issue, cities with great public transportation didn’t spring up overnight. They had leaders who looked into the future and thought about these things. They maintained public rights of way for trains, buses and trolleys, they required developers to provide access to public transit, they developed retail/commercial centers as hubs for transit, they had bus lanes and a host of other things. Above all, they had vision.

The Golden Empire Transit district can do a few creative things to accommodate more riders. But as long as Bakersfield leapfrogs in all directions, it’s almost impossible for GET to efficiently serve more than a few core neighborhoods efficiently.

So what have our leaders done lately to help?

The Super Wal-Marts have to make bus turnouts and put up shelters.

Otherwise, it’s bupkiss as usual.

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Wednesday, April 2008](#)

### **How can trees cause smog?**

I was flabbergasted to read "Valley's greenery gives off pollutant," (April 17, Page B-3), in which scientists blamed plants and trees for causing air pollution. The researchers said plants produce four times more hydrocarbons than motor vehicles. Moreover, it is these hydrocarbons -- combined with oxides of nitrogen from vehicle emissions in the presence of sunlight, heat, high pressure and a bowl-shaped valley -- that create ozone. Ozone is a major pollutant and cause of smog.

I am neither a botanist nor an environmental scientist, but I find this argument inane. Regions with vast forest and few vehicles have little smog (Alaska). Regions with large number of vehicles, and little vegetation, in combination with the correct climactic conditions, are often very smoggy (Los Angeles).

It may be true that hydrocarbons are necessary for smog formation, but this process is clearly catalyzed by the presence of vast amounts of nitrogen oxides. Remove vehicle emissions and the smog disappears. The generalization that plants cause air pollution typifies the lack of common sense in research.

ROBERT B. CHERENSON, Turlock

[Letters to the Fresno Bee, Wed., April 23, 2008:](#)

### **Letting it happen**

As I read Michael Rose's letter April 17, I was in total agreement, but I feel the need to add something.

He is correct that fuel prices are artificially inflated, not, as one writer last week very incorrectly insisted, by OPEC, but by Big Oil, allowed by Congress. We -- yes, I said we, the American public -- would rather whine and continue to let it happen. If enough people show how angry they are, maybe it will wake these people up that we will not take it anymore.

As for the part of the public who continue to hope for an alternate fuel source -- sorry, not yet. Ethanol has already been shown not only to be more expensive to produce, but now it's been proven to be a worse polluter -- ask Stanford University and the American Lung Association -- and directly increases prices of food products.

So as we rapidly approach recession and more truckers are losing their businesses, we sit on our hands and -- here's the magic word -- allow it to happen. What a shame.

*Jim Godwin, Fresno*

### **'Threatens the future'**

With unknown consequences looming overhead from pollution, global warming remains an issue that Fresno addresses with a lackluster attitude. In an area that has potential to improve current conditions, Fresno often fails to extend its boundaries of thought to generate possible solutions.

While city officials or Fresno's citizens refuse to accept the reality that change must happen, numerous issues remain untouched, and the amount of damage from pollution that blankets the Valley constantly increases.

Why has Fresno lagged in environmental advancements? Fresno could install street lights that rely on solar panels like those on stop signs in other counties. Generating their own electricity, solar street lights would reduce the amount of electricity required to operate, which would have financial benefits, as taxpayers' money could be redirected to other important issues.

Although solar panel street lights are only a suggestion, this type of thinking that utilizes eco-friendly innovations needs to be encouraged in order to begin addressing the issue of global warming and pollution that threatens the future of Fresno and the rest of the world.

*Aaron Avila, Riverdale*

### **'A dirty liberal?'**

Would someone at The Bee please explain to me why the neo-con columnist Dan Walters is allowed to continually spew his conservative hate of all things related to improving the human condition?

If he sees any state bill or legislation that is aimed at improving air quality, providing social services to those that need it most, or protecting the environment no matter how it is paid for, he consistently refers to it as a "liberal" assault on his conservative self and his corporate pals. His attitude, as well as the rest of the neo-cons, reflects only a bias to keep the poor, poor, and the rich, rich.

God forbid he should have to pay taxes to support the services he receives every day, or that food that would be thrown away rather than given to a hungry person. If that happened, someone might think he was a dirty liberal.

*Jim Cousland, Mariposa*

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses waste management company proposes a dangerous expansion. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

### **Compañía de basura peligrosa propone expansión**

Zaidee Stavely, Noticiero Latino  
Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, April 22, 2008

La compañía más grande de desechos peligrosos en todo el país está proponiendo expandir su vertedero en el Valle Central de California. El vertedero ha sido foco de una larga controversia en

este pueblo. Hace unos días la compañía organizó un día de campo o picnic en el pueblo para explicar la propuesta de expansión. La compañía argumenta que el vertedero actual ya va a llegar a su capacidad.

“Tenemos como dos años más, y en dos años, a la mejor se llenará”, dijo Helen Luibel, gerente de relaciones comunitarias de Chemical Waste Management, “pero vamos a necesitar construir otro vertedero para continuar nuestras operaciones de poner nuestros desechos correctamente.”

En el picnic, varios residentes de Kettleman City se cubrían la boca con mascarilla. Anna Martinez, de la organización Greenaction estaba con ellos.

“Toda esta gente, la mayoría de ellos tienen cáncer, los niños tienen cáncer”, dijo Martínez. “Y estamos aquí para demostrarle y para que vea la mayoría de estos trabajadores de Chem Waste que esta gente está siendo afectada y esta es su manera de ellos de demostrar lo importante que es la salud para ellos.

Los residentes tienen hasta el 7 de mayo para opinar a favor o en contra del plan, ante el condado de Kings.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Riverside residents testify that dust from a cement company can be found and affects their homes, vehicles and personal belongings.](#)

### **Testifican que polvo de fábrica de cemento cubre todo el ambiente en Riverside**

Manuel Ocaño  
Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, April 22, 2008

Cientos de residentes del condado de Riverside testificaron anoche que los residuos de una fábrica de cemento instalada en una zona urbana del vecino condado de San Bernardino suben completamente sus casas, vehículos y pertenencias.

Los vecinos hablaron en audiencia pública luego de que autoridades ambientales en la región alertaran de que esos residuos contienen elementos que podrían ocasionar cáncer pulmonar.

Entre otras quejas, los residentes dijeron que el polvo de cemento penetra paredes de sus casas, cubre sus patios y jardines e incluso se penetra en la pintura de sus autos.

Las autoridades instalarán sistemas que registren la cantidad de contaminación antes de tomar decisiones.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses thousands of organizations and companies celebrate Earth Day.](#)

### **Miles de organizaciones y empresas de EE.UU. secundan el Día de la Tierra**

Mar Gonzalo

Impacto USA, Tuesday, April 22, 2008

Nueva York, 22 abr (EFE).- Miles de organizaciones y empresas secundan hoy en Estados Unidos el Día de la Tierra, un invento nacional de hace casi cuatro décadas que ya se ha extendido a gran parte del planeta y en el que se calcula que participan unos mil millones de personas.

Entre las iniciativas más curiosas de movilización ciudadana previstas para hoy en EE.UU. se encuentra la convocatoria de la Red del Día de la Tierra, fundada por los promotores originales de esta celebración, para que al menos un millón de personas llamen este mismo martes al Congreso y al Senado estadounidenses.

La idea es que cada persona pida personalmente a congresistas y senadores que tomen medidas concretas y justas para combatir el cambio climático.

Promovido por el senador estadounidense Gaylord Nelson, el "Día de la Tierra" se celebró por primera vez en este país el 22 de abril de 1970 y, gracias a la presión social, se consiguió la creación de la Agencia nacional de Protección Ambiental.

Treinta y ocho años más tarde, las celebraciones, protestas, reflexiones y manifestaciones culturales se extienden por todo el país durante toda la semana e incluyen iniciativas con tan buena acogida como el ya clásico Green Apple Festival.

Ese festival se celebró el pasado fin de semana simultáneamente en las mayores ciudades del país y atrajo a renombrados músicos y cientos de patrocinadores, que permitieron la organización de marchas verdes, ferias y actividades culturales diversas.

En Washington se ha organizado hoy un concierto multitudinario que contará con la presencia de The Roots, Chevy Chase, The Commons, Tom Friedman, Government Mule, Erykah Badu, James Hansen y Ed Begley, entre otros, y al que, por supuesto, se insta a ir andando o en algún medio de transporte público o no contaminante.

También se han sumado a convocatorias personalidades como Kevin Bacon, Andre Agassi y Zach Brach, que han participado en los anuncios con los que los organizadores instan a involucrarse con la causa, e incluso el Gobierno estadounidense tiene una página web que aglutina recomendaciones y actividades relacionadas con el Día Mundial de la Tierra.

Junto al tirón de los famosos, las autoridades estadounidenses también están organizando todo tipo de ferias y actividades atractivas para la población, que incluyen desde marchas de ciclistas por el neoyorquino Central Park, hasta programaciones especiales en las cadenas de televisión.

También son muchas las actividades organizadas para aprender cómo ser más ecológico, presionar a las autoridades locales para que adopten medidas "verdes", invertir en iniciativas ambientales o incluso plantar árboles, algo que está previsto que hagan el presidente George W. Bush en Nueva Orleans (Luisiana) y la cantante y actriz Bette Midler en Manhattan, entre otros.

La gran mayoría de los diarios estadounidenses incluyen hoy separatas o extensos artículos en los que recopilan desde actividades en las que se pueden participar estos días, hasta glosarios "ecológicos" y recomendaciones para llevar una vida más respetuosa con el medioambiente.

Desde el mundo empresarial estadounidense, que también se implica en la causa, destacan iniciativas como la de Whole Foods, la mayor cadena de supermercados del mundo especializada en comida orgánica, que desde hoy dejará de dar bolsas de plástico a sus clientes.

La elitista cadena de tiendas Barney's organizó una sesión de reciclaje de camisetas, mientras que Macy's anunció compromisos ecológicos para mejorar su gestión y una iniciativa para apoyar económicamente a la Fundación de Parques Naturales. La conocida marca de guías turísticas Zagat presentó la "Greenopia" de Nueva York, un directorio (de papel reciclado) de empresas y servicios respetuosos con el medio ambiente.

Por su parte, la Red del Día de la Tierra también anunció la creación de una web interactiva, Global Water Network, con la que se pretende fomentar el desarrollo de proyectos encaminados a paliar las necesidades de agua potable y servicios sanitarios básicos que tienen cerca de 2.400 millones de personas en el mundo. EFE

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses a trial run: How to celebrate Earth Day throughout the year?](#)

## **ENSAYO: ¿Cómo celebrar el Día de la Tierra todo el año?**

José Fuentes-Salinas

Impacto USA, Tuesday, April 22, 2008

El Día de la Tierra significa que nos hemos olvidado tanto de la Tierra, que ya hasta necesitamos un día para recordarla.

"La" Tierra, en español es algo femenino, acaso por esa tradición de llamarla "madre".

Los Aztecas tenían a su diosa Mitlacantecutli como la expresión de La Tierra, la "devoradora de inmundicias" que transformaba los desechos que ole depositaban por minerales valiosos como el oro, la plata, el jade y otras piedras semipreciosas.

Ellos no se referían a desechos industriales contaminantes, sino, simplemente desechos orgánicos reciclables: cadáveres, aves muertas, frutos, sangre...

Es evidente que Mitlacantecutli no podría operar en nuestra época industrial, en la que los desechos no son productores de humus y hojarasca, sino de otros venenos que contaminan el planeta.

Mitlacantecutli: Descansa en paz.

### **LLENARSE LAS MANOS**

Llenarse las manos de tierra todos los días es algo necesario, cuando los demasiados teclados a una computadora, o los demasiados trabajos rutinarios fatigan la paciencia de los trabajadores.

Quédate frente a una computadora 8 horas y regresarás a tu casa con ganas de cambiarle la tierra a una maceta o cortar el pasto. Claro que un jardinero haría lo opuesto.

Llenarse las manos de tierra es un juego infantil que luego se transforma en arena y otros materiales más higiénicos.

Pero la tierra es tierra, y es un símbolo arcaico de vida, por eso esa costumbre de ser enterrado para regresar al ciclo permanente del planeta: "ya muerto, voy a llevarme, nomás un puuuño de tiiierra", dice la canción mexicana de Ramón Ayala y sus Bravos del Norte.

### **LOS LUGARES DE TIERRA**

En el centro de Long Beach, California, varias máquinas remueven a toda prisa la tierra de lo que será otro estacionamiento de un edificio. Es una tierra arcillosa, buena para cultivar cítricos. Pienso entonces en la Lima (Mexican Sweet Lime -dicen aquí) que no puede crecer adecuadamente en mi jardín debido a una tierra demasiado arenosa.

Quisiera llevarme aunque fuera unas cuantas cubetadas de tierra arcillosa para la Lima, pero la rapidez con que trabajan para llenar con más cemento la tierra, pronto convertirá ese espacio en otro de los miles de estacionamientos en el condado con más autos en el planeta Tierra.

### **¡MIERCOLES!... EL ESTIERCOL**

La tierra arenosa sirve para que el curry, la Salvia Mexicana y el Níspero crezcan mejor. La tierra negra, llena de humus y hojarasca, como la que compraba mi madre al "Señor de los burros" en Zacapu, es buena para que crezca casi todo. Pero qué hacer de la tierra que tiene que ser fertilizada, sin que haya muchos desperdicios vegetal.

Leo en los periódicos que en las huertas de Cítricos del Valle Central de California, la región más productiva en el mundo por hectarea, se usan fertilizantes que contaminan el agua del subsuelo.

Siempre que puedo, trato de evitar esos fertilizantes, compro tierra negra en costales, y he estado tentado a comprar estiercol de un dolar la bolsa, pero me parece un exceso comprar mierda empaquetada, teniendo tan cerca un corral donde la gente deja sus caballos en Lakewood.

### **SUR DE CALIFORNIA**

En el Sur de California, uno tiene varios lugares para celebrar el Día de la Tierra cualquier día del año. En los Jardines Botánicos de Palos Verdes, un enorme basurero fue convertido en un espacio para cientos de plantas. Incluso, de la descomposición de la basura extraen gas metano para uso doméstico. Visitar esos jardines da mucha tranquilidad, pues uno se da cuenta que Mitlacantecutli no ha muerto, está ahí, esperándonos.

Otros lugares son el Arboretum de Los Angeles, donde muchos se toman las fotos de bodas y quinceañeras; o El Dorado Nature Center de Long Beach.

Al Dorado me gusta ir con cierta frecuencia los fines de semana, y hasta he comprado una calcomanía anual para ahorrar en el estacionamiento. Sin embargo, debido a esas cosas burocráticas que sigo sin entender, los horarios no se ajustan a la gente que trabajamos.

Los abren a la hora en que uno se va a trabajar, y los cierran cuando apenas uno va saliendo.

Con eso, dejan muy pocas posibilidades para celebrar la tierra todos los días, principalmente a quienes no tienen jardines.

De cualquier forma, uno siempre tiene una tierra en qué celebrar a La Tierra, aunque sea tierra de las macetas... O de las uñas.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the halt of contamination in schools.](#)

### **Piden frenar la contaminación en escuelas**

JOSE ACOSTA/EDLP

El Diario NY, Tuesday, April 22, 2008

NUEVA YORK— Luego de que una investigación descubriera que más de 260 escuelas de Nueva York podrían tener niveles peligrosos de un tóxico cancerígeno, varios concejales urgieron ayer a la legislatura estatal a aprobar legislación que requiera una revisión medioambiental en todas las escuelas nuevas de la ciudad, incluyendo aquellas ubicadas en antiguas factorías.

Los concejales se mostraron alarmados por la presencia del contaminante bifenil policlorinado (PCB, en inglés) en marcos de puertas y ventanas en decenas de escuelas públicas.

El PCB es un material tóxico que puede afectar la capacidad de aprendizaje de los estudiantes, causar asma y cáncer. El lunes, el periódico Daily News publicó una investigación sobre la contaminación en las escuelas

El Departamento de Educación (DOE) dijo ayer a través de un comunicado que creen que las escuelas son seguras o, de lo contrario, no permitirían su uso.

El concejal James F. Gennaro (D-Fresh Meadows), presidente del Comité de Protección Ambiental, afirmó que el reporte "nos recuerda el porqué nosotros necesitamos examinar todas las escuelas nuevas bajo contrato, sobre la presencia de contaminantes".

Las escuelas abiertas en antiguas factorías incluyen el Soundview Educational Campus en El Bronx, la escuela pública P.S. 65 en Ozone Park y la Information Technology High School en Long Island City, ambas en Queens.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses United Arab Emirates finally pay attention to the ecology, and have begun to construct the first city in the world free of carbon.](#)

### **Los Emiratos por fin prestan atención a la ecología**

Por BARBARA SURK

La Opinión , Tuesday, April 22, 2008

DUBAI, Emiratos Arabes Unidos (AP) \_ Esta nación desértica en el Golfo Pérsico, que poco se preocupaba por cuidar del ambiente y está inundada de acondicionadores de aire, piscinas y vehículos utilitarios, parece apuntar a la redención: ha empezado a construir lo que califica como la primera ciudad del mundo libre de carbono.

Los ambientalistas dicen que la nueva ciudad \_movida principalmente por energía solar y desperdicios y agua reciclados\_ es una buena idea, pero que los Emiratos no deberían contentarse con ella.

"Todo ayuda", dijo Jonathan Loh, biólogo británico, coautor de un informe en el 2006 del World Wildlife Fund que midió el consumo de las naciones en el mundo. "Pero sería mejor que redujeran el consumo de energía en todo el país y no solamente en un solo sitio".

El Fund administra varios programas basados en sus diez principios de sustentabilidad en Europa, América del Norte, China, África y el Oriente medio.

Un proyecto de 1.600 millones de dólares en desarrollo en Portugal construirá 5.000 viviendas, hoteles y tiendas sin carbono ni desperdicio. El proyecto incluye el más grande plan de restauración natural para reforestar más de 4.850 hectáreas (12.000 acres) de terrenos ahora ocupados por aserraderos y canteras degradados.

Los Emiratos tienen la mayor repercusión ecológica por persona en el mundo, según el informe del Fund. Eso significa que cada uno de sus residentes usa más de los recursos del mundo que cualquier otra persona en cualquier otro país.

Un vistazo a Dubai explica por qué. Casi todo interior \_incluyendo enormes centros comerciales y residencias enormes\_ consume aire acondicionado, considerado una necesidad en un país donde hace calor en invierno y el sol es implacable en verano.

Extravagancias como piscinas con agua helada, una pista de esquí en interiores que produce nieve cuando afuera hacen 49 grados centígrados (120 Fahrenheit), y un restaurante de hielo consumen mucho. El modo inusual de transporte son los todoterreno compactos; no hay transporte público ni siquiera aceras en la mayor parte de la ciudad.

Según el Fund, la repercusión ecológica de los Emiratos equivalía a 11,9 hectáreas globales por persona. Una hectárea global es una unidad de la superficie de tierra productiva y agua que requiere una persona para producir todos los recursos que consume y para absorber todos los desperdicios que genera en un año. Por comparación, la repercusión per cápita en Estados Unidos es de 9,6 hectáreas por persona, y el promedio mundial es de 2,2.

Los Emiratos \_que tienen 5 millones de habitantes, una gran mayoría expatriados extranjeros\_ dejan también otra huella bien visible: necesitan 9,06 hectáreas globales de terreno para absorber las emisiones de anhídrido carbónico de cada persona en un año. Ese índice es de 5,66 en Estados Unidos y 1,7 para el promedio mundial.

Pero el plan es que la Ciudad Masdar estará libre de carbono.

En ella no podrán circular los automóviles y un tren ligero servirá a los residentes en el interior de la ciudad de 600 hectáreas (1.482 acres) y los comunicará con la ciudad cercana de Abu Dhabi. En la zona se cultivarán alimentos orgánicos, y se reciclarán la basura y el agua. Masdar significa "Fuente, origen".

La mayor parte de la energía en la ciudad será de origen solar \_aunque los promotores no han dado un porcentaje exacto\_ y el agua será suministrada por medio de una planta desalinizadora a energía solar.

La Ciudad Masdar, que es construida por una compañía estatal de Abu Dhabi, debe estar completada para el 2015 a un costo calculado en 22.000 millones de dólares. El objetivo es que albergue a 50.000 personas y 1.500 compañías, dijeron los promotores.

Khaled Awad, director de desarrollo de Masdar, insistió en que la ciudad es un intento honesto "por controlar la tendencia de ser ecológicamente irresponsable". Dijo que las compañías participantes la convertirán en una meca "del sector de energía renovable" con la investigación de la tecnología energética limpia.

Según un acuerdo con el gobierno de los Emiratos, el Fund está observando la ciudad para garantizar que cumpla con sus promesas.

"Es un proceso riguroso... que al fin demostrará si Masdar es sustentable o si sólo dice serlo", afirmó Eduardo González, vocero del programa One Planet Living, del Fund.

Habib al-Shuwaikhat, profesor de planificación urbana y desarrollo sustentable en la Universidad de Petróleo y Minerales Rey Fahd, de Arabia Saudí, dijo que la ciudad ecológica de Abu Dhabi "parece una buena iniciativa", pero que no puede quedar "aislada" del resto de la nación.

"Se oye hablar mucho de desarrollo sustentable pero, a decir verdad, no lo veo en la práctica", comentó Shuwaikhat. Los esfuerzos serios por salvaguardar el ambiente en momentos de un auge sin precedente de la construcción en el Golfo Pérsico "todavía tienen que penetrar en la mente de quienes toman las decisiones" allí, agregó.

El año pasado, los Emiratos fueron el primer gobierno en firmar un acuerdo con el World Wildlife Fund para estudiar las consecuencias ecológicas y reducirlas a un nivel sustentable por medio de la evaluación experta de la economía a lo largo de los próximos tres años, dijo Gonçães.

"Masdar es crítica para nuestra estrategia", agregó. La gente de los Emiratos tiene vidas "absolutamente insostenibles", dijo. "No hay mejor sitio para sentar el ejemplo y demostrar que un estilo de vida ecológicamente saludable no sólo es mejor sino también comercialmente exitoso".

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses protecting nature.

### **Protejamos la naturaleza**

Adriana Quintero

La Opinión, Tuesday, April 22, 2008

Los Angeles-Hoy se conmemora el Día de la Tierra con un significado muy especial.

Nos estamos dando cuenta que el calentamiento global no era puro cuento, sino una crisis. Sentimos en nuestros hogares y en nuestros bolsillos el verdadero costo de la escasez del agua y del petróleo y hasta las empresas entendieron que respetar medio ahorra dinero.

Todos nos hemos dado cuenta, menos el gobierno de los Estados Unidos. A pesar de que científicos del mundo han hecho un llamado a los gobiernos para que implementen soluciones dentro de los próximos 10 años y así evitar que se haga muy tarde para prevenir peligrosos impactos.

Cada año que pasa sin tomar medidas para combatir el calentamiento global hace más serio el problema y más costosas las soluciones. En las próximas dos décadas, invertiremos miles de millones de dólares en desarrollar energía. ¿Vamos a malgastar ese dinero en tecnología sucia y obsoleta que calentará más la tierra? ¿O vamos a desarrollar tecnología que disminuya la contaminación y sea rentable para todos? La decisión es nuestra.

El congreso de los EE.UU. está considerando la propuesta de ley Lieberman-Warner, que si es adoptada nos ayudaría a frenar el calentamiento global. Esa ley es un paso hacia un mejor futuro. Además, si cada uno de nosotros adoptamos una mayor conciencia en cada pequeño paso que tomamos en nuestras vidas podemos estar en la onda verde, ahorrar dinero y contribuir nuestro granito de arena hacia la protección de nuestro planeta y nuestro futuro. Este año, este Día de la Tierra, entra en la onda verde. [www.laondaverde.org](http://www.laondaverde.org).

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the Arctic is freed of 17 thousand radioactive light bulbs.

### **Ártico aloja 17 mil focos radiactivos**

**Analistas llamaron a inspeccionarlos**

Univision, Thursday, April 17, 2008

MOSCÚ - Las aguas del Océano Glacial Ártico acogen más de 17 mil focos radiactivos, aseguró Valentín Visotski, un reconocido especialista en energía nuclear de la Academia de Ciencias de Rusia.

Buques abandonados "En su mayoría son buques abandonados que pertenecían a la flota de la Unión Soviética", señaló Visotski durante una conferencia internacional sobre la liquidación de las secuelas de la Armada nuclear soviética, citado por la agencia oficial *Itar-Tass*.

El científico aseguró que los focos que representan un mayor peligro son los submarinos soviéticos que naufragaron o fueron hundidos a profundidades de entre 100 y 350 pies con combustible nuclear a bordo.

Algunos de esos submarinos llevan hasta 40 años hundidos en el fondo del mar y su retirada exigirá una inversión de alrededor de \$700 millones, pronosticó.

En particular, Visotski aludió al "Komsomolets", submarino que se hundió en abril de 1989 a pocas millas de la isla noruega del Oso en el Océano Glacial Ártico, naufragio que costó la vida a 42 de sus 67 tripulantes.

Desde entonces, el submarino permanece a 5,500 pies de profundidad y, según los ecologistas, se han producido escapes de radiactividad de sus reactores, que se calcula contienen poco más de 20 libras de plutonio.

El científico advirtió de que, aunque el ecosistema del Ártico no se verá amenazado durante los próximos cien años por esas fuentes de radiactividad, es necesario realizar inspecciones periódicas.

La organización ecologista Greenpeace ha descrito el Ártico, en especial las aguas del archipiélago de Nueva Zembla, como el mayor vertedero nuclear del planeta.