

Kings County supervisors gets look at plan for Valley's future

By Eiji Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel, Wednesday, April 23, 2008

Tony Barba knows you can't stop growth. He understands population influx and gravitation toward urbanization are an economic reality here. The Hanford native, who grew up surrounded by acres of rural land, hates for his four grandchildren to grow up in another big city plagued by sprawl. Growth is inevitable, and so is a long-term, wide-spectrum approach to plan for tomorrow, says Barba, a Kings County supervisor.

"It's not like what it used to be, but you're going to have to adjust to the way things are," Barba said. "That's why we need to regionalize our approach. We can't go back, but we can do the best we can as we move forward."

In an effort to alleviate problems the Central Valley's booming population will cause, regional leaders are working across city and county lines to address issues such as air pollution, water supply, traffic congestion, affordable housing, resource conservation and protection of environmentally sensitive land.

Once leaders agree on a single blueprint for how they want the region to look in 40 years, the eight county region will be expected to grow accordingly.

In Kings County, government leaders are trying to come up with their own 2050 vision, which will be ultimately quilted together with visions from other counties by UC Davis experts to make up a single seamless blueprint for the Valley.

"The bottom line is, right now the Valley is being developed and if we don't have some sense of where we want to grow and how we want to grow," said Chris Lehn, regional planner with the Kings County Association of Governments (KCAG), a planning partnership made up of four cities and the county.

The consequence of not being proactive could lead to urban sprawl seen in Northern and Southern California, Lehn said.

"Do we want another Northern California or Southern California for our kids in the Valley?" Lehn said. "If we don't act now, we could potentially look like them."

KCAG says the blueprint will not take away local land use authority, although there is legislation proposed in Sacramento that would provide incentives and disincentives to communities based on their compliance with the blueprint.

But getting community leaders to set aside their own interests to agree upon a unified growth plan could be a challenge. And if the region continues to grow without regional planning, residents can expect more air pollution, water supply shortage, increased bumper-to-bumper traffic and decreased prime farmland, proponents of the blueprint say.

The Valley population, presently at 3.9 million, is expected to more than double to 9.5 million by 2050.

On Tuesday, the Kings County Board of Supervisors got an overview of the blueprint process.

But issues were raised by County Counsel Peter Mook about the ultimate decision-making process for the Valley-wide blueprint.

Mook was concerned that the Legislature has not set any guidelines as to how the Valley region adopts the blueprint. There is no established rules for the composition of the decision-making body.

"Someone's going to vote to approve those plans, but no one has an idea as to who votes," Mook said. "That doesn't make sense to me."

Moock believes the state will likely make regional blueprint the standard that each county and city must comply with in drafting a general plan. If that's the case, the kind of rigorous process required of every local land-use decision-making should be required of the blueprint process, Moock said.

"Eventually, if you don't comply with it, the state may withhold money from you. If we're adopting something based on the blueprint, it should be done in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act, which required an environmental impact report. But that is not occurring in this blueprint process."

Supervisors acknowledge Moock's concern, but expressed a general support for the blueprint concept.

"My concern is where this is going to end up, but as long as it's an advisory document, that's fine," said Supervisor Alene Taylor.

Barba was openly enthusiastic about the possibility of the blueprint.

"I view it as a win-win for the whole Valley," Barba said. "That way we can all work together to solve the problems that affect us cross county."

In Kings County, five different scenarios are being proposed based on:

Status quo (based on current general plans)

Agriculture and critical resource protection (farmland and riparian habitat and Naval base buffer)

A new city and expanded communities (Quay Valley and Kettleman/Stratford expansion)

Compact community development

Transportation corridor (198 expressway, 43 expansion, light rail from the base to Tulare County)

To inform and solicit input from concerned residents, KCAG plans to hold five public workshops in May in Hanford, Lemoore, Corcoran and Avenal.

A Kings County workshop is set for May 22.

Visit www.countyofkings.com/kcag for more information.

Ships win air quality case

By Kristopher Hanson, Staff Writer
LA Daily News Thurs., April 24, 3008

A federal court has denied an appeal by California air quality regulators seeking to force strict environmental fuel regulations on thousands of ships visiting the state's seaports.

The fuel regulation request would have required ocean carriers to use low-sulfur fuels in their auxiliary engines within 24 miles of the state's coastline.

Auxiliary engines are used to power a vessel's lighting and on-board equipment, but not propulsion.

The ruling by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals effectively ends a 16-month legal battle between international shippers and a coalition of air quality regulators and environmentalists.

The lawsuit was brought by the Pacific Maritime Shipping Association, which represents about 90 percent of ocean carriers operating along the West Coast.

The organization has advocated for international fuel standards rather than standards set by individual states. The organization also argued that a patchwork of local and state regulations on freight ships is illegal under the federal Clean Air Act - a decision supported by the 9th Circuit.

The court said California needs to obtain a waiver from the federal government to set emission standards that are more strict than federal standards, as the state has in the past when seeking to reduce automobile tailpipe emissions.

The coalition of air regulators and environmentalists, which includes the Natural Resources Defense Council, South Coast Air Quality Management District and California Air Resources Board, is considering its next step.

"We're still discussing our legal strategy with the other interveners, but the plan is to continue to fight for low-sulfur fuel use both at the state level and here in the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles," said NRDC Attorney David Pettit.

The coalition is actively supporting a bill by Sen. Barbara Boxer to set cleaner fuel standards on ships visiting all U.S. seaports. That bill is pending before Congress.

The low-sulfur law challenged in the PMSA lawsuit was enacted by the California Air Resources Board in January 2007. It sought to cut the level of toxic sulfur oxide emissions spewed into the air by cargo ships bringing goods to and from California.

Barbara Baird, an attorney with the South Coast Air Quality Management District, said the court's decision hampers efforts to clean up air in the Los Angeles basin, which suffers from the worst air quality in America.

"Of course, we're very disappointed in the decision because the sulfur reductions in this rule were critical to us meeting federal air quality standards," Baird said. "This underscores the need for the (U.S.) EPA to set fuel-sulfur rules now."

Meanwhile, the PMSA has urged its members to use low-sulfur fuels in their auxiliary engines until federal or international standards are set.

An internal survey showed a majority of carriers have complied with the request since early 2007, said PMSA spokesman T.L. Garrett.

Correction

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Thursday, April 24, 2008

Because of a reporter's error, a story in today's Times-Delta carried the wrong phone number to obtain vouchers for pollution-free electric lawn mowers. The correct number is 230-6000.

SSJID concrete pipe recycling reducing dust

Dennis Wyatt, Managing Editor

Manteca Bulletin Mon., April 21, 2008

South San Joaquin Irrigation District, with a 100 percent green electricity generation portfolio, is now tackling another major Northern San Joaquin Valley air quality problem - dust.

The SSJID is taking old concrete pipe it is replacing - some of it nearly a century-old - and having it torn apart. The steel rebar is being recycled while the concrete is being crushed and used to spread along canal access roads to reduce the PM-10 - one of the largest grades of particle pollution - problem created when dust is kicked up when trucks use the roads.

Cal Crush of Ripon has been crushing the broken pipe and concrete liners taken from canals for the past two weeks at SSJID property alongside River Road just east of North Ripon Road.

The result is a pile consisting of 4,100 tons of crushed pipe that will be used as road gravel.

Not only does it reduce air pollution, but adding gravel to the dirt roads helps reduce long-term canal maintenance costs by helping slow down erosion.

The SSJID generates clean hydroelectric power with the Oakdale Irrigation District through the Tri-Dam Project on the Stanislaus River. The SSJID also has its own small hydro generating plan at Woodward Reservoir.

The district is also getting ready to charge the solar farm at the South County Surface Water Treatment Plant on Dodds Road near the base of Woodward Reservoir. The solar farm - the largest of its type on the West Coast - will virtually eliminate having to buy power from PG&E to operate the treatment plant that serves the cities of Manteca, Lathrop, and Tracy.

Air quality chief decries fuel efficiency 'time bomb' Feds quietly attempt to block states from enacting more stringent emissions rules

By Edwin Garcia, MEDIANEWS SACRAMENTO BUREAU
Tri-Valley Herald Thurs., April 24, 2008

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's top air pollution regulator Wednesday denounced the federal government's proposal to demand higher fuel efficiency in new cars because a 24-word passage written into the Bush administration's 417-page plan would block California's aggressive efforts to enact its own emissions standards.

"Unfortunately, buried within that decision was a small paragraph, which is like a buried time bomb ticking away, and aimed directly at the heart of the nation's efforts to control our contributions to global warming," said Mary Nichols, chair of the California Air Resources Board.

"The reality of what is now being proposed by the federal government," Nichols said, "is that there is an effort under way once again to prevent any state, and particularly California, from exercising our sovereign right to control emissions of air pollutants into the environment."

The latest attempt by the federal government to pre-empt California from enforcing its own laws to combat global warming was seen as another slap at the Schwarzenegger administration, which is dueling with the Bush administration over the state's authority to regulate tailpipe emissions.

Nichols, speaking at a Capitol news conference flanked by environmental advocates, was responding to Tuesday's announcement by the federal Department of Transportation, which proposed that all new cars and trucks meet a collective average of 35 miles per gallon by 2020.

The DOT announcement came four months after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency turned down a bid by California to set more stringent standards.

The proposed regulation, which resulted from a federal energy bill signed by President Bush in December, promises to curtail carbon dioxide emissions from cars and light trucks and reduce America's reliance on foreign oil.

Nichols and the advocates at first cheered the proposal — until they came across page 378, which says that states cannot set their own standards.

"Unfortunately, the proposal from the president takes an arrow out of the quiver of our attempt to fight and to reduce the worse impacts of global warming," said Dan Jacobson of Environment California.

"We'll make real progress if the Bush administration would just move out of the way," said Ann Notthoff, California advocacy director for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

California sued the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in January after it rejected the state's 2005 request for a rule waiver to enact its own tailpipe emissions standards. Nineteen other states had agreed to adopt California's standards if the EPA had approved the waiver. Many of those states joined California in its lawsuit.

If the proposed rule announced this week goes into effect, Nichols said, the state would file another lawsuit.

Analysis: California's patience running on empty over proposed U.S. fuel rules

By Kevin Yamamura

Sacramento Bee and Modesto Bee, Thursday, April 24, 2008

President Bush's popularity may have sunk to a new low this week in Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's office as it discovered the language deep within new federal fuel economy standards released on Earth Day.

The Bush administration proposed blocking California from imposing its stricter vehicle regulations, which the state believes are necessary to reach its environmental goals.

Mary Nichols, one of Schwarzenegger's top environmental appointees, convened a Capitol press conference Wednesday to call the federal proposal "insidious," adding that it was "frankly beyond even what we had thought possible from this administration."

Though Schwarzenegger was in meetings down the hall, aides said Nichols spoke for him.

The Republican governor endorsed President Bush and campaigned for his re-election in Ohio. But in comments last week at Yale University – Bush's alma mater, no less – Schwarzenegger gave his harshest indictment yet of the Republican president.

"President McCain, President Obama, President Clinton – I think will all shift this country into a much higher gear when it comes to climate change," he said.

The governor has endorsed GOP Sen. John McCain, who along with Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sen. Barack Obama has pledged to allow California to regulate its own vehicle greenhouse gas emissions.

Schwarzenegger has made global warming his signature concern since 2006 and used it to create political separation from an unpopular President Bush.

He signed Assembly Bill 32 requiring California to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions 25 percent by 2020, a goal the federal government has not agreed to. The governor has signed agreements with other states and countries on reducing emissions, implicitly skewering Washington for not doing so.

California still needs permission from the federal government to carry out a 2002 state law establishing strict standards on vehicles sold here, and the Bush administration has declined to give it, prompting legal disputes that are ongoing. Every time the Bush administration has refused

to grant California permission, Schwarzenegger has responded by attacking the federal government.

"First, if you're a Republican anywhere, you're looking for opportunities to put distance between yourself and a very unpopular president," said John J. Pitney, professor of government at Claremont McKenna College. "Second, the environment has long been a very big issue in California. For geographic reasons we have a greater sensitivity to it. And third, I do think he believes in it."

The latest battle erupted Tuesday over a proposed regulation in the U.S. Department of Transportation's proposed fuel economy standards. On Page 378 of a 417-page report, the department proposes blocking states from regulating vehicle greenhouse gas emissions.

Brian Turmail, a Transportation Department spokesman, said the administration believes it is better to establish a national standard rather than allowing states to decide on their own.

"It's our feeling that when Congress declined to include language allowing state-specific fuel economy standards in its current bill, that it indeed wanted to have national fuel economy standards," Turmail said. "From our point of view, these efforts by states would undermine and render moot a national fuel economy standard."

Turmail said DOT intends to adopt its regulations by the end of the year, setting standards that would raise the combined fuel economy standard for automobiles and light trucks to 31.6 miles per gallon by 2015.

Nichols said California's standards are 13 percent more stringent than the federal guidelines by 2015. She suggested Wednesday that the Bush administration was being influenced by Detroit lobbyists, referring to "little giveaways to the auto industry" in the latest guidelines.

Schwarzenegger himself began using automakers as a foil last year, declaring that his message was "Arnold to Michigan: Get off your butt." The governor, however, has not totally broken with Detroit – he took a \$25,000 donation from General Motors in March.

Even if Schwarzenegger believes he can count on McCain, Obama or Clinton to reverse course from the current White House next year, Nichols said it remains necessary to fight the Bush administration to avoid legal precedents against California from being set.

Bill Magavern, executive director of Sierra Club California, noted that the 2002 California law in limbo was set to affect 2009 vehicles, which will start being built later this year.

"It would be a mistake to be complacent and say, 'Well, this wrong-headed president is in his last year and therefore we're not going to worry too much,' " Magavern said. "It's no small matter to reverse the direction of a federal agency, even when there's a change of administration."

EPA scientists complain about political pressure

By H. Josef Hebert, Associated Press Writer
In the S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, April 24, 2008

WASHINGTON, (AP) --Hundreds of Environmental Protection Agency scientists say they have been pressured by superiors to skew their findings, according to a survey released Wednesday by an advocacy group.

The Union of Concerned Scientists said more than half of the nearly 1,600 EPA staff scientists who responded online to a detailed questionnaire reported they had experienced incidents of political interference in their work.

EPA spokesman Jonathan Shradar attributed some of the discontent to the "passion" scientists have toward their work. He said EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson, as a longtime career scientist at the EPA himself, "weighs heavily the science given to him by the staff in making policy decisions."

But Francesca Grifo, director of the Union of Concerned Scientists' Scientific Integrity Program, said the survey results revealed "an agency in crisis" and "under siege from political pressures" especially among scientists involved in risk assessment and crafting regulations.

"The investigation shows researchers are generally continuing to do their work, but their scientific findings are tossed aside when it comes time to write regulations," said Grifo.

Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., in a letter sent Wednesday to Johnson, called the survey results disturbing and said they "suggest a pattern of ignoring and manipulating science." He said he planned to pursue the issue at an upcoming hearing by his Oversight and Government Reform Committee where Johnson is scheduled to testify.

The group sent an online questionnaire to 5,500 EPA scientists and received 1,586 responses, a majority of them senior scientists who have worked for the agency for 10 years or more. The survey included chemists, toxicologists, engineers, geologists and experts in the life and environmental sciences.

The report said 60 percent of those responding, or 889 scientists, reported personally experiencing what they viewed as political interference in their work over the last five years. Four in 10 scientists who have worked at the agency for more than a decade said they believe such interference has been more prevalent in the last five years than in the previous five years.

Timothy Donaghy, one of the report's co-authors, acknowledged that a large number of scientists did not respond to the survey and said the findings should not be viewed as a random sample of EPA scientists.

Nevertheless, said Donaghy, "we have hundreds of scientists saying there is a problem" with assuring scientific integrity within the federal government's principal environmental regulatory agency.

Asked to respond to the survey, EPA spokesman Shradar said, "We have the best scientists in the world at EPA."

The EPA has been under fire from members of Congress on a number of fronts including its delay in determining whether carbon dioxide should be regulated to combat global warming. Johnson also has been criticized for rejecting recommendations from science advisory boards on a number of air pollution issues including control of mercury from power plants and how much to reduce smog pollution.

In the survey, the EPA scientists described an agency suffering from low morale as senior managers and the White House Office of Management and Budget frequently second-guess scientific findings and change work conducted by EPA's scientists, the report said.

The survey covered employees at EPA headquarters, in each of the agency's 10 regions around the country and at more than a dozen research laboratories. The highest number of complaints about political interference came from scientists who are directly involved in writing regulations and those who conduct risk assessments such as determining a chemical cancer risk for humans.

Nearly 400 scientists said they had witnessed EPA officials misrepresenting scientific findings, 284 said they had seen the "selective or incomplete use of data to justify a specific regulatory

outcome" and 224 scientists said they had been directed to "inappropriately exclude or alter technical information" in an EPA document.

Nearly 200 of the respondents said they had been in situations where they or their colleagues actively objected to or resigned from projects "because of pressure to change scientific findings."

Donaghy said EPA management was aware of the survey, conducted by the Center for Survey Statistics & Methodology at Iowa State University. He said while some EPA managers initially instructed employees not to participate, the EPA's general counsel's office later sent an e-mail to employees saying they could participate on their private time.

Greenhouse gases growing faster than ever, report says **Increases in methane and carbon dioxide of particular concern**

Randolph E. Schmid, Associated Press
In the S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, April 24, 2008

Washington - -- Major greenhouse gases in the air are accumulating faster than in the past despite efforts to curtail their growth.

Carbon dioxide concentration in the air increased by 2.4 parts per million last year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported Wednesday, and methane concentrations also rose rapidly.

Concern has grown in recent years about these gases, with most atmospheric scientists concerned that the increasing accumulation is causing the Earth's temperature to rise, potentially disrupting climate and changing patterns of rainfall, drought and other storms.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has worked to detail the scientific bases of this problem and the Kyoto agreement sought to encourage countries to take steps to reduce their greenhouse emissions. Some countries, particularly in Europe, have taken steps to reduce emissions.

But carbon dioxide emissions, primarily from burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas have continued to increase.

Since 2000, annual increases of 2 parts per million or more have been common, compared with 1.5 ppm per year in the 1980s and less than 1 ppm per year during the 1960s, NOAA's Earth System Research Laboratory said.

Global concentration of carbon dioxide is now nearly 385 parts per million. Preindustrial carbon dioxide levels hovered around 280 ppm until 1850. Human activities pushed those levels up to 380 ppm by early 2006.

Rapidly growing industrialization in Asia and rising wetland emissions in the Arctic and tropics are the most likely causes of the recent methane increase, said Ed Dlugokencky from NOAA's Earth System Research Laboratory.

Methane in the atmosphere rose by 27 million tons last year after nearly a decade with little or no increase, he said.

Methane is 25 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, but there's far less of it in the atmosphere. When related climate affects are taken into account, methane's overall climate impact is nearly half that of carbon dioxide.

[S.F. Chronicle commentary, Thursday, April 24, 2008:](#)

A new environmentalism

By Victor Davis Hanson, Tribune Media Services Inc.

Tuesday was Earth Day, and it reminded us how environmentalism has helped to preserve the natural habitat of the United States - reducing the manmade pollution of our soils, air and water that is a byproduct of comfortable modern industrial life.

But now we are in a new phase of global environmental challenges, as billions of people across an interconnected and resource-scarce world seek an affluent lifestyle once confined to Europe and the U.S.

No longer are the old environmental questions of pollution versus conservation so simply framed. Instead, the choices facing us, at least for the next few decades, are not between bad and good, but between bad and far worse - and involve wider questions of global security, fairness and growing scarcity.

One example of where these diverse and often complex concerns meet is the debate over transportation. Until hydrogen fuel cells or electric batteries can power cars economically and safely, we will still be reliant on gasoline or similar combustible fuels. But none of our current ways in which we address the problem of transportation fuel are without some sort of danger.

We can, for example, keep importing a growing share of our petroleum needs. That will ensure the global oil supply remains tight and expensive. Less-developed, authoritarian countries like Russia, Sudan and Venezuela will welcome the financial windfall, and keep polluting their tundra, coasts, deserts and lakes to pump as much as they can.

Rising world oil prices ensure that Vladimir Putin, or his handpicked successor, can continue to bully Europe; that Hugo Chavez can intimidate his neighbors; that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad can promise Israel's destruction; and that al Qaeda and its affiliates can be funded by sympathetic Middle East sheiks. Such regional strongmen and terrorists cease being mere thugs and evolve into strategic threats once they have billions of petrodollars.

The United States, in taking advantage of a cheap dollar, may set records in exporting American goods and services this year. But we will still end up with massive trade deficits, given that we are importing every day over 12 million barrels of oil, now at over \$100 each on the world market. It takes a lot of American wheat, machinery and computer software to pay a nearly half-trillion-dollar annual tab for imported oil.

An alternative is to concentrate more on biofuels. Currently, American farmers are planting the largest acreage of corn in over 60 years. But the result is that fuel now competes with food production - and not just here, as Europe and South America likewise turn to ethanols.

One result is higher corn prices, which means climbing food bills for cattle, pigs and poultry, and thus skyrocketing meat, pork, chicken and turkey prices. Plus, with more acreage devoted to corn, there is less for other crops like cotton, wheat, rice and soy - and the prices of those commodities are soaring as well.

Americans' increasing use of homegrown ethanol seems to be raising the price of food for the world's poor, just as our importation of oil enriches the world's already wealthy and dangerous.

What, then, is the least pernicious alternative - and the most environmentally, financially and ethically sound?

Unfortunately, for a while longer it is not just to trust in promising new technologies like wind and solar power; for decades to come, these will only provide a fraction of our energy needs.

Instead, aside from greater conservation, we must develop more traditional energy resources at home. That would mean building more nuclear power plants, intensifying efforts at mining and burning coal more cleanly - and developing more domestic oil, while retooling our vehicles to be even lighter and more fuel-efficient.

Nuclear power poses risks of proper disposal of radioactive wastes. Coal heats up the atmosphere. But both can also reduce our need to import fossil fuels to run our generators, while offering electrical energy to charge efficient and clean cars of the not-too-distant future.

No one wants a nuclear plant in his county. But, then, no one wants to leave the country bankrupt paying for imported fuel, or vulnerable by empowering hostile foreign oil producers, or insensitive to the price of food for the poor.

It is also time to re-evaluate domestic oil production in environmental - and moral - terms. The question is no longer simply whether we want to drill in the Alaskan wilderness or off the Florida or California coasts.

Rather, the dilemma is whether by doing so, we can mitigate the world's ecological risks beyond our shores, deny dictators financial clout, get America out of debt, and help the poor afford food.

We may not like oil platforms off the beach or mega-tankers in Arctic waters, but the alternatives for now are far worse - in both environmental and ethical terms.

Victor Davis Hanson is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution.

[Commentary in the Modesto Bee Thurs., April 24, 2008](#)

West Park decision no surprise

By JEFF JARDINE

One by one, they paraded to the podium. They spoke passionately and, in some cases, very eloquently.

Some folks supported Gerry Kamilos' proposal for West Park, a 4,800-acre industrial and rail complex centered on the former Crows Landing Naval Air Station. They pleaded with the Stanislaus County supervisors to approve the so-called "inland port" project, which promises 37,000 jobs and \$5.4 million a year in tax revenues to the county over a 30-year buildout.

Each time, West Park supporters clapped.

Others opposed Kamilos' humongous development plan. They cited traffic congestion, train traffic, air quality and numbers they said just do not add up. They pleaded with the supervisors to prevent Kamilos from destroying life as they know it on the county's West Side.

Each time, West Park opponents clapped.

Board Chairman Tom Mayfield seemed amused by this political serve-and-volley folly after listening to four hours' worth Tuesday.

I say amused because, while I certainly don't believe Mayfield intended to mock either side, he knew all along those opposing the project wasted their words. The hearing -- as is the case at so many board or council meetings -- simply represented their legal right to be heard and the supervisors' obligation to uphold that right before the elected proceeded to formalize a foregone conclusion. There was absolutely nothing spontaneous or surprising about the 4-1 vote to allow Kamilos to proceed to the next stage of the project.

Only Supervisor Jim DeMartini, whose district includes the West Side and who has opposed the project all along, voted against it.

It wasn't even surprising that Supervisor Bill O'Brien, who joined DeMartini in voting against Kamilos' plan 14 months ago, changed his mind and voted for Kamilos this time around.

The West Park project is too big and too important to think the supervisors' individual decisions would be made at the last minute -- you know, like a coin-flip -- and based on the comments of citizens.

If Kamilos ultimately is right, West Park could become the greatest economic engine the valley has ever known.

If DeMartini is right, it could become the biggest migraine imaginable.

Or it could fail to survive the environmental review, and the county will have to start all over again.

So to think O'Brien reversed his position on West Park solely on what he heard said Tuesday from the proponents and opponents is naive.

I suspect he based it on months of discussions with Kamilos, county staff members and others as information became available. Friday, the supervisors all received copies of the staff report carrying a recommendation from county Chief Executive Officer Rick Robinson to proceed to the next stage of the project.

As generally happens, the supervisors had three days -- Saturday, Sunday and Monday -- to review the staff report before Tuesday's meeting. But they've been kept abreast of Kamilos' progress throughout the year.

Shortly before voting to follow Robinson's recommendation, O'Brien said Kamilos eased his greatest concern by getting a \$22.4 million grant from the state -- something O'Brien said a year ago he doubted could happen. West Park received the grant April 10 -- nearly two weeks before Tuesday's meeting.

Because Kamilos succeeded in addressing that and other concerns, O'Brien decided the developer deserves the opportunity to continue. He joined Supervisors Jeff Grover, Mayfield and Dick Monteith in voting for the nonbinding memorandum of understanding -- which isn't the final approval but still represents a major step. Grover, Mayfield and Monteith all supported the project a year ago, Monteith and Grover most strongly.

Tuesday's vote gives Kamilos the go-ahead to get an environmental review, which promises to be a daunting document considering the size and scope of the West Park project.

"I'm interested to see what the environmental concerns are and if they can be mitigated," O'Brien said. "If we can mitigate the traffic and the train crossings (in Patterson), I'm willing to go to the next level."

So that's where it goes -- despite DeMartini's opposition.

"The (original request for proposals) was for 1,527 acres," DeMartini said, referring to the acreage of the actual air base, "and to maintain sensitivity to the West Side. This (Kamilos' project) does not do that. ... What I would do is reject this project as the bad project it is. We should reissue the proposal. That's the right thing to do."

Likewise, the board ignored the wishes of every city council and special district board on the West Side, and the West Side residents who opposed it during the supervisors' meeting Tuesday and other public meetings over the past year.

Yes, the supervisors can nix Kamilos' plan in a final vote a couple of years from now. The EIR, which will take up to two years to complete, could reveal problems that not even money can fix -- too much traffic, displacement of some exotic burrowing animal, water issues, pollution issues and a severe negative impact on the West Side's way of life.

It promises to be a smorgasbord for lawyers.

Who knows? Kamilos himself might determine the project's ultimate returns won't outweigh the mitigation costs and pull out, since the financial onus supposedly falls on him from this point forward.

"The burden is on the developer," O'Brien said.

There's too much at stake -- money, power and egos, not to mention future economic impacts -- to stop the project at this point. With three votes in the bank -- four, actually -- it was a done deal well before Tuesday's public comment period began. Nothing anyone said could possibly have changed that.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Thursday, April 24, 2008:](#)

Don't wait for government to clean up our air

It was quite interesting to read the Fresno Bee's "Fighting for Air" special report, as well as the "Last Gasp" report. According to those reports, many are now saying that the Valley may be the most dangerous place in the United States to breathe. Valley residents, many of them children, are afflicted with chronic breathing disorders. Smog also reduces crop yields and damages mature pine trees in the Sierra Nevada.

Local air authorities and other government officials work on the issue, but are unable to improve things fast enough. Local officials tend to point fingers at federal regulators, who seem to drop the ball and push back deadlines.

The air quality of our Valley is a problem that cannot be fought by the government alone. I feel more people would be willing to help if they knew the seriousness of the issue. More effort should be put by the government and local media toward public awareness so the people can become a part of the solution. A first step could be as simple as riding a bike to work once a week.

Waiting for government officials to handle our problem is certainly not the answer.

Jordan Beshore, Clovis

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, April 24, 2008:](#)

Bikes make Bakersfield better

I would like to commend the recent letter writer who wrote about bicycle safety in Bakersfield. She is, in fact, doing the most important thing that can be done to increase bicycle safety in Bakersfield. She is riding her bike.

Studies have shown that the more bicycles that are on the streets, the fewer accidents occur between bicyclists and automobiles. The obvious reason for this is that the more familiar the car-driving public becomes with bicyclists, the more aware of them they become and thus fewer accidents.

Bike Bakersfield is a nonprofit entity which is bringing that familiarity and awareness to the streets of Bakersfield. This month starts the third full year of our awareness campaign, which includes billboard advertisements, radio and television advertisements and community events, including our third annual criterium bicycle race, national bike to work week and day, complementary commuter stands with refreshments, and community rides. We are also closely working with our local government agencies to update and improve bikeways.

Additionally, Bike Bakersfield has been actively providing safety presentations to Kern County schoolchildren throughout the school district. All of the above work is accomplished by funding donated by the bicycle community. Bakersfield has many problems that bicycle riding addresses, including, but not limited to, air quality, obesity and traffic congestion.

So I say "Ride On" to the brunette on the pink beach cruiser -- she is making bicycling safer in Bakersfield because she is doing it. Bakersfield is better because we bike.

ROBERT E. SMITH, Bakersfield

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the Arctic will melt; particulates found in the air are accelerating warming. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Bruma ártica derretiría los polos Sus partículas acelerarían calentamiento

The Associated Press

Univision, Wednesday, April 23, 2008

ALASKA - Científicos estadounidenses analizan las partículas presentes en la bruma del ártico en un laboratorio aéreo de la NASA para comprobar su relación con el derretimiento polar.

Una gran telaraña

Los visitantes en Alaska generalmente se sorprenden por su aire limpio. La realidad es que el cielo del círculo ártico es una gran telaraña que atrapa todo tipo de contaminantes flotando alrededor del mundo.

En las últimas semanas, un grupo de científicos ha volado sobre la zona y obtenido muestras de la bruma ártica tratando de resolver un misterio: ¿Existen partículas flotantes que aceleran el calentamiento sin precedentes en el Polo Norte?

Todo tipo de impurezas

Aunque que el dióxido de carbono y otros gases del efecto invernadero que acumulan en calor de la tierra son considerados como la principal causa del calentamiento global, los científicos sospechan que las partículas transportadas por el aire, conocidas como aerosoles, también contribuyen al derretimiento del ártico.

Para comprobar las suposiciones, los científicos analizan la bruma, utilizando espectroscopia masiva y otras tecnologías para identificar lo que hay en ella, de dónde viene y cómo actúa con las nubes, la luz solar y la cubierta de nieve.

Hasta ahora las muestras atmosféricas han incluido polvo de los desiertos de Asia, sales que inflaman la humedad, partículas de materiales orgánicos quemados parcialmente provenientes de bosques y cocinas, una gran variedad de impurezas emitidas por los escapes de los automóviles, chimeneas industriales y plantas generadoras de electricidad.

Asia, Europa y Norteamérica

En conjunto se trata de las Naciones Unidas de la contaminación. Por medio del análisis químico, las partículas pueden ser rastreadas hasta sus orígenes en Asia, Europa y Norteamérica.

"El Ártico es una caldera de contaminantes de latitudes medias", señaló Daniel Jacob, científico de Harvard que forma parte de la investigación. "Tenemos registros de casi todo lo que se puede imaginar volando por el ártico", dijo.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the airplane that carries the Olympic torch contaminates with CO2.

Y encima contamina...

Avión de la antorcha olímpica expide CO2

Ramón Muñoz, Diario EL PAIS

Univision, Wednesday, April 23, 2008

La antorcha olímpica es más controvertida que nunca. Allí por donde pasa últimamente -Londres, París, San Francisco y Buenos Aires- decenas de manifestantes intentan apagarla en protesta por la política de represión de las autoridades chinas hacia el Tíbet y la falta de derechos humanos.

Pero por si fuera poco, el viaje de la antorcha por el mundo tiene otro motivo de polémica: el medioambiental.

El recorrido de la antorcha, desde que se encendió el pasado 24 de marzo en el templo de Hera en Olimpia, en Grecia, hasta que llegue al estadio Nacional de Pekín, el próximo 8 de agosto, supondrá una emisión a la atmósfera de 5,500 toneladas de dióxido de carbono.

Viajando por el mundo

La responsable no es la antorcha en sí, que utiliza propano como combustible, al igual que los mecheros, y emitirá poco menos de 100 kilos (220 libras) de CO2.

Las emisiones provienen de la combustión que genera el avión -un Airbus 330 de Air China- especialmente acondicionado para transportarla en los 137 mil kilómetros (85 millas) que recorrerá para visitar las 136 ciudades de 20 países en los cinco continentes.

Un cálculo alarmante

Ése al menos el cálculo que ha hecho la revista Wired en su último número.

Según esa información el Airbus 330 emplea 12.7 litros (430 onzas) de combustible por un kilómetro (0.62 millas), lo que significa un gasto total de 1.75 millones de litros (60 billones de onzas) de combustible.

Como quiera que por cada litro (33 onzas) que se quema van 3.1 kilogramos (7 libras) de CO2 a la atmósfera, las emisiones ascienden a 5,500 toneladas.

El cálculo se ha realizado con los datos del Comité Organizador de los Juegos Olímpicos y con la herramienta de la página medioambiental.

Los más limpios de la historia

Las protestas que tuvieron lugar en París, en las que un grupo de manifestantes logró apagar la antorcha, rompieron una tradición, ya que la llama olímpica que transporta debe permanecer encendida durante todo el recorrido, de 130 días, hasta la ceremonia de apertura de los Juegos Olímpicos Beijing 2008.

Sólo en los Juegos de Montreal de 1976 y en los de Atenas 2004 se apagó accidentalmente.

La antorcha se apaga durante los vuelos y por la noche, cuando duerme en los hoteles, pero la llama se traslada a una linterna especial, muy similar a la que llevan los mineros.

Esta diseñada para permanecer encendida con vientos de hasta 65 kilómetros por hora (40 mph), lluvia e incluso nieve.

El comité organizador de Londres 2012 quiere que sus juegos sean los más limpios de la historia, y ya ha encargado a la empresa francesa EDF que busque un combustible alternativo al propano que contamine menos.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses new method of recycling used tires, created by Mexican scientist of UNAM.

TECNOLOGIA: Crean científicos mexicanos de la UNAM método para reciclar llantas

Impacto USA, Wednesday, April 23, 2008

México, 23 Abr (Notimex).- Investigadores de la UNAM crearon un método barato que no daña el ambiente para reciclar llantas, con el que se puede obtener materia prima y, con ello, fabricar neumáticos nuevos y otros productos comerciales.

Según un comunicado, Mikhail A. Tlenkopatchev y Selena Gutiérrez Flores, integrantes del Instituto de Investigaciones en Materiales, dijeron que se calcula que en México son desechadas casi 50 llantas de automotores por minuto.

Ello significa unas 25 millones al año; de esta cantidad, 23 por ciento procede del Distrito Federal y del área metropolitana.

Un reporte de la Asociación Nacional de Distribuidores de Llantas establece que si esta tendencia se mantiene dentro de una década habrá otros 250 millones de neumáticos de desecho, adicionales a los 200 millones que ya se han acumulado en los últimos diez años.

El problema, indicaron, es más que numérico: a la saturación del paisaje por cerros de llantas se agrega el daño ecológico por su quema a la intemperie y el latente riesgo a la salud por la fauna transmisora de enfermedades que se reproduce en esos depósitos.

Los expertos de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) desarrollaron en su laboratorio un método químico -único en el mundo- para degradar el hule de llantas usadas que, de aplicarse a nivel industrial, en el futuro permitiría erradicar los cementerios de neumáticos.

Con este modelo se puede obtener materia prima para fabricar llantas nuevas y otros productos comerciales.

"La degradación catalítica es un método eficaz, precisamente porque brinda la posibilidad de controlar el peso molecular y la estructura de los productos finales, y de llevar a cabo la reacción química con un alto rendimiento y sin reacciones secundarias", dijeron.

Además, este proceso implica dos ventajas más: no se produce contaminación porque no se emplean disolventes, y se requiere el mismo equipo (reactores) usado en la industria hulera, agregaron.