

Trade gas mowers for electric models

Stockton Record, Wednesday, April 22, 2009

The San Joaquin Valley Air District is beginning its popular mower trade-in program today. One gas mower can pollute as much as 40 newer model cars and is one of the biggest polluters used at home.

People can trade them in for a 14- or 19-inch Neuton electric mower. Mowers will be made available at a discount for people retiring gas-burning lawn care equipment.

Vouchers for discounts on the electric lawn mowers are available while supplies last through May 31. After receiving a voucher, participants have until May 31 to turn in their old gas-powered equipment (drained of all fluids) at a participating recycler and order a Neuton mower by phone. People will receive up to 62 percent off the cost of the electric mowers.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org (click "programs" on the left and look for "clean green yard machine") or call the district office in Modesto at (209) 557-6400.

Valley air district starts lawn mower-swap program

Regulators will replace gas-powered machines with electric ones

By Brett Wilkison, Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, April 22, 2009

The sound of a gas lawn mower humming along may be associated with spring and summer, but it has dirty consequences for Valley air.

Starting today — Earth Day — regulators are looking to reduce that effect by firing up a program to replace more than 1,000 gas-powered mowers in the region with cleaner electric mowers.

The program offers Valley residents discounts of 50 percent to 62 percent on a purchase of one of two kinds of cordless electric mowers.

In exchange, residents will turn in their old gas mowers at a local recycling center.

The result will be dollars saved at the cash register and pollutants removed from the air, said

Anthony Presto, spokesman for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which started the program in 2001. The program is sponsored by more than a dozen local governments and companies, including Tulare County.

One older-model gas mower can produce the same amount of harmful emissions, including nitrogen oxide, as 40 new-model cars over the same run-time, Presto said. Replacing 1,000 mowers — the district's target this year — with electric-powered machines will remove almost 6,000 pounds of those pollutants from the air annually, he said.

This year, those making the switch will have a choice of two Neuton cordless electric mowers:

- The 14-inch CE5, offered at \$150 (down from \$299).
- The 19-inch CE6, priced half-off at \$250.

Supply is limited, Presto said. Starting today, those interested are encouraged to call the air district to request their voucher.

Until the end of May, Tulare County customers may take that voucher with their old mower to Tulare County Recycling, the only center participating in the program in the county.

Staff there will provide information, including a phone number to be used in purchasing the new mower, which Neuton will deliver to buyers' homes.

How they went green -- and you can, too

By Stacey Shepard, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, April 22, 2009

To commemorate Earth Day, The Californian asked local businesses and organizations to tell us what they've done to go green. We received roughly 30 responses describing efforts that ranged from solar

panel installations to the sale of products made from recycled materials and projects to boost recycling at the office.

While all these companies deserve recognition, we're highlighting these for their dedication and unique approach to protecting the environment, and the ability for their ideas to be adapted by others.

'RECYCLED IT'

Jennifer Cecero jokes she's so devoted to recycling, her kids never told the teacher the dog ate their homework.

"They said, 'My mom recycled it,'" she said.

The owner of Hair Fusion, a hair salon with three Bakersfield locations, Cecero has always been environmentally minded at home and now is at work, too.

One day a week she totes hundreds of plastic bottles discarded at each salon to a recycling drop-off center.

"We're a high-volume salon and I was embarrassed by how much plastic we were throwing away," she said.

Cecero also had high-efficiency lighting installed in each salon. The first change-out she paid for herself; the other two were free through a Pacific Gas and Electric efficiency program.

Cecero, who's been in the salon business since 1981, said urban sprawl in Bakersfield has forced her to relocate her salons twice to "chase customers" migrating to the outer edges of town. So to mitigate the impact of her driving, she invested in a compact Volkswagen Golf.

"Between these things," she said, "we hope we make a little dent."

A GEEKY SHADE OF GREEN

Recycling and replacing light bulbs may be the hallmarks of eco-friendly efforts but Kern County's information technology department found major energy savings with a recent upgrade to its computer servers.

By moving to newer virtual server technology, it was able to replace 58 older servers -- which hosted everything from the countywide e-mail system to programs used only by specific departments -- with just six new servers, said county technology services manager John Devlin.

The upgrade saved on power to run the servers and to cool the room containing the machines.

The project amounted to an annual savings of 190,000 kilowatt hours, according to utility company estimates. That's enough to power 17 homes for a year.

The county also got back \$36,000 of \$90,000 spent on new hardware through a promotional state rebate for high-tech efficiency upgrades.

"We're green and we're saving green as well," Devlin said.

LOTS OF SMALL STEPS

Local architectural firm Renfro & Cuningham promotes sustainable construction to its clients but that's just one part of a companywide philosophy of protecting the environment. Within its office -- a reconditioned 80-year-old home on Truxtun Avenue -- employees have taken numerous small steps to preserve resources.

"The company is 40 years old and it's always been about designing to be green," said project manager Renee Goodwin. "Now, it's what can we do to incorporate that not only into our design, but throughout our company and our personal lives?"

When a few employees began riding bikes to work, the firm not only put up bike racks but reinstalled a shower in an upstairs bathroom. There is an office ban on styrofoam cups, plastic eating utensils and paper plates.

The company invested in a full set of dishes and installed an energy-efficient dishwasher. Bottled water is discouraged; employees use a filtered pitcher instead.

The office's windows were recently unsealed so they could be opened for natural ventilation when weather permits, and a tinting was applied to reduce indoor heat created by sunlight. Company gift baskets contain gift certificates to Greenshops, (formerly Fresh and Green), a locally owned boutique that specializes in green products.

Employees also attend mandatory training in Natural Step, a scientifically based framework to help organizations and communities move toward sustainability. The process has been adopted by hundreds of businesses and organizations, including Nike, Home Depot, Starbucks and the U.S. Marine Corps.

Next on the company's to-do list?

"We're thinking of putting in a garden," Goodwin said. "The idea is people can either take the vegetables home or we can donate them to people in need."

AN ALL-NATURAL ODYSSEY

In 2007, Mama HillyBean's opened in Tehachapi serving organic and fair trade coffee. Since then, the business has expanded its edible offerings and its commitment to sustainability.

"Basically, everything that can be organic or natural is, from the food to the cleaning products and to-go containers," said manager Anthony McDemas.

Products like organic olive oil and orange juice, for example, are just too expensive. But otherwise, McDemas said, more than 90 percent of the food is organic.

When people order take out, the food goes into biodegradable containers made from corn starch. Even the plastic bags are biodegradable.

The products do cost 50 to 100 percent more than regular containers. So customers are charged 25 cents per container; employees explain the charge up-front and people rarely complain.

When the doors close each night, employees use cleaning products labeled earth-friendly.

McDemas said the philosophy fits in with the cafe's mission to bring the community together to make the world a better place. The coffee house also hosts musical acts, community theater productions, educational programs for children and serves as a venue for a mom's group, book club, gardening group and other community organizations.

"Our cafe slogan is 'coffee and community,' " he said. "That's been the goal from the beginning and we're doing the best we can."

CLEAN AND GREEN

Today Cleaners, a locally owned dry cleaner, has found that going green can alleviate regulatory burdens.

In 2001, after hearing reports of heavy contamination caused by the standard dry cleaning solvent perchloroethylene, the company invested in a new system. It chose GreenEarth Cleaning, a process that uses liquid silicone, and is non-toxic and non-hazardous, according to its manufacturer.

By contrast, perchloroethylene is a suspected carcinogen, a regulated air pollutant and one of the most common contaminants found in groundwater. Dry cleaners who use it must obtain air pollution permits and send waste to a special hazardous waste facility.

In fact, in 2007, California enacted laws to phase out the use of the chemical. At the time, the Associated Press reported that 70 percent of the state's dry cleaners still used it.

It cost Today Cleaners about \$1 million to buy new machines and pay licensing fees for the technology.

"It did have a price tag attached but we thought the cost of not doing something may be greater," said Mike Daniels, company general manager.

In addition, the company no longer has to worry about air regulations, permits or hazardous waste disposal, which had cost about \$1,500 to \$2,000 each month.

Today Cleaners and its sister company Sparkle Textile Rental, a linen and uniform supply business, have taken other steps to reduce their environmental impact.

The companies replaced a natural gas water heating system with one that uses waste heat captured from the boiler exhaust stacks, cutting costs 25 to 30 percent, Daniels said. The companies have reduced waste, too, through paperless billing and a wire hanger recycling program.

"These things didn't come to us all at once," Daniels said. "They're ideas that we learned about and thought about how they could work for us."

LOCAL EARTH DAY EVENTS

Tehachapi Earth Day Celebration, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday on East Tehachapi Boulevard near South Mojave Street.

Features a spring growers expo, exhibits by local wind energy companies, advice on organic produce, a recycling fair and educational activities for the kids, along with live music, games, prizes, a petting zoo and bounce house.

Festivities to be between the Apple Shed, Village Grille and Mama HillyBean's Cafe.

More information: 822-6519.

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Greenshops, the local eco-friendly boutique formerly known as Fresh and Green, will host in-store festivities and launch an essay contest Wednesday to coincide with the renaming of the store.

A new store Web site is also launching at www.greenshops.com.

Customers at the boutique Wednesday will be eligible for free giveaways and drawings for T-shirts and a \$100 gift card to the store, 7737 Meany Ave. in Chloe's Plaza.

The essay contest theme is "If I Could Change the World" and submissions will be accepted until Nov. 1.

The winner, to be announced in December, will receive a \$5,000 scholarship. Full details are available on the store's Web site.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District begins its Clean Green Yard Machines program Wednesday to encourage the replacement of gasoline-powered lawnmowers with a cordless electric mower.

The district offers vouchers good for up to 62 percent of the purchase of an electric mower. This year, participants have a choice between the Neuton CE5, 14-inch mower for \$150 with the voucher, or the CE6, 19-inch mower for \$250 with the voucher.

Vouchers will be distributed until May 31.

More information on the program: www.valleyair.org or call 392-5500. More information on Neuton mowers: www.NeutonPower.com/SJV.

The Bakersfield Recreation and Parks Department will plant trees 8 a.m. Saturday in the Park at Riverwalk to replace those chewed down by a beaver. Volunteers are welcome to attend. Free refreshments and snacks will be available. More information: 326-3701.

Broken turbines mean higher power costs for Fresno

By Russell Clemings / The Fresno Bee

Tuesday, April 21, 2009

Past due for maintenance, two turbines that burn waste gas to produce electricity and steam at Fresno's sewage treatment plant have stopped working, resulting in a \$1.3 million repair bill that the City Council will review for a second time Thursday.

One of the turbines broke down more than a year ago, and the other failed about three weeks ago, said Stephen Hogg, assistant public utilities director and manager of the plant on Jensen Avenue southwest of the city.

Since the second failure, the plant has been burning waste gas in a flare and buying electricity to replace what the turbines would have generated, Hogg said.

By the time they failed, both units had run longer without an overhaul than their manufacturer recommends — about twice as long in the case of the second unit. Hogg said the reason maintenance was delayed comes down to the cost of an overhaul.

"We don't want to spend money we don't have to," he said. "Having said that, we probably should have taken them down a little sooner."

Having both turbines offline is costing the city thousands of dollars in electricity.

When running, the turbines and related equipment save the city \$80,000 to \$100,000 per month in electricity and provide about 90% of the power needed by the plant, which also serves much of Clovis.

When one turbine is down, the other can produce 60-70% of the need. With both of them out, none of the need is covered, Hogg said.

The turbine failures and burning of waste gas don't violate any air pollution regulations or permit conditions, partly because the increase in emissions is "not particularly significant," said John Copp, an inspector for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Still, he said, "It's always a crying shame to see people not using their fuel."

The gas burned in the turbines is produced in sewage treatment and is slightly more than half methane, with carbon dioxide making up most of the remainder, Hogg said. Before burning, it is mixed with commercial natural gas, which has a higher methane content and burns hotter to help keep pollution levels down.

Each of the treatment plant's turbines can produce 3.37 megawatts of electricity, enough to meet the needs of 2,500 to 3,400 area homes.

The City Council had approved repairs in February, before the second turbine failed. It took almost a year to get to that point, Hogg said, because of the time required to investigate the first turbine's failure as well as to prepare specifications for the repairs and take bids from repair contractors.

After February, moreover, a subsequent review by the city attorney's office raised several concerns about late changes in the bid documents, according to a staff report prepared for the council. As a result, the council will be asked to reaffirm its approval.

If the council says no, the city could face an estimated \$600,000 in additional costs because the time needed for a new round of bidding would trigger new pollution controls, Hogg said. Tighter air pollution regulations go into effect in 2011 for existing turbines, but immediately for any major overhaul completed after July 1.

As a result, if the repairs are not done in time, the city could be forced to spend that money on new pollution controls this year instead of 2011.

Riverbank to pick general plan

By Leslie Albrecht

Merced Sun-Star and Modesto Bee, Wednesday, April 22, 2009

RIVERBANK -- The City Council will tackle future growth -- and make a key decision on how to protect farmland -- tonight.

Tonight's meeting marks the fourth time this year the council will consider the city's new general plan.

If the council approves it, Riverbank will have its first new general plan since the late 1980s. The general plan is the document that city planners use to guide the city's growth over the next two decades.

Riverbank's new general plan has drawn controversy. An early draft included an acre-for-acre mitigation measure, meaning developers wanting to build on agricultural land had to preserve an equal amount of farmland elsewhere. That measure was deleted after the Building Industry Association of Central California objected.

In March, the council was scheduled to vote on the plan without the acre-for-acre ag preservation. But Councilman Jesse James White objected and said he wouldn't approve the plan without that language.

Tonight the council will choose among four options for the general plan's ag policies. One requires strict acre-for-acre preservation. Another uses a flexible point system that rates the value and productivity of ag land; the more valuable the land that developers want to build on, the more land they must preserve elsewhere.

Another uses the point system and calls on the city to develop a "sustainable agricultural strategy" to minimize the loss of ag production to development.

The fourth option allows planners to choose from two methods to lessen the impact of development on farmland: acre-for-acre mitigation, or requiring developers to practice sustainable development, such as building high-density housing that conserves water.

1,220 farm acres set aside

The new general plan covers 6,010 acres; it sets aside 1,220 acres for farmland. The plan assumes Riverbank will grow to 55,200 residents by 2025 from its current population of about 21,700. It envisions adding 10,700 houses or apartments to the city.

Resident Evelyn Halbert said she worries that the new general plan will change the character of Riverbank's downtown. The plan calls for mixed use and higher-density residential development downtown. Halbert said residents aren't aware of how that could change their neighborhood.

"They're putting commercial in with residential, and that impacts parking, traffic, noise and [air pollution](#)," she said.

California plans to cut fuels' carbon footprint

By Jim Downing

Sacramento Bee, Wednesday, April 22, 2009

If a tree falls in the Amazon, does it have anything to do with California's alternative-fuels policy?

This week, the California Air Resources Board is set to adopt a plan that says it does.

The low-carbon fuel standard aims to cut the carbon footprint of the state's motor fuels 10 percent by 2020. It will influence what powers your car – from hydrogen to electricity to biofuels – for decades to come. It's likely to drive federal policies. And it will guide billions of dollars of investment in alternatives to petroleum.

But the plan doesn't encourage much of a long-term role for corn-based ethanol, currently the most widely used alternative fuel.

A key provision makes ethanol accountable for a ripple of potential impacts around the world, such as deforestation in the Amazon. That makes ethanol's carbon footprint larger, and its attractiveness to investors lower.

The nation's corn-ethanol leaders say it's a penalty that will hamstring their industry, which despite federal supports has lately struggled with debt, low prices and too much production capacity.

"Instituting a regulatory bias against biofuels ... will hurt every facet of the industry," said Tom Koehler, policy adviser at Sacramento's Pacific Ethanol Inc.

Air board staff members have concluded that using farmland to grow fuel crops constricts world grain supplies, driving up prices. Higher commodity prices prompt farmers in other countries to cultivate more land, the argument goes, increasing pressure to plow up grasslands and cut down (or burn) forestland, sending more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

According to a staff report, the footprint of a gallon of Pacific Ethanol's product rises by about 60 percent when such side effects are factored in. The company's fuel still beats gasoline, even after accounting for the poorer mileage ethanol delivers. But the penalty would work against it and other crop-based brews in a future market for low- carbon fuels likely to emerge under the plan.

Which is only fair, said Dan Sperling, an air board member and University of California, Davis, fuels expert.

"The argument that we're picking on poor corn ethanol is really disingenuous," he said at a recent board meeting. "Nobody's been able to find a large ... effect" on land use from other alternative fuels.

Whether the air board has accurately estimated the magnitude of the side effects is a subject of disagreement among scientists. Steve Kaffka, a UC Davis agronomist who directs the California Biomass Collaborative, said the factors driving deforestation and other land-use changes in foreign countries are complex. The uncertainties are so great, he said, that today's science can't deliver a good estimate of the secondary climate impacts of biofuels. "It could be anything," he said.

Other researchers agree with the air board that using farmland to produce fuel has at least some spinoff effects and argue that the impacts could be even larger than estimated. Major environmental groups are backing the air board.

Roland Hwang, Transportation Program Director at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said the air board's proposal will put the state on a trajectory to move beyond corn ethanol to other fuels that should be more sustainable – politically and environmentally. The policy, he said, lays out a framework that will help to foster investment in so-called "next-generation" biofuels like cellulosic ethanol, made from grasses or crop waste, as well as hydrogen, electricity and other alternatives.

"Everybody can understand where they should put their money," he said.

Cellulosic ethanol isn't yet produced on a large scale. It also stands to generate land-use side effects, depending on how it's produced, but the air board has indicated the fuel probably won't be penalized as heavily as corn ethanol.

Companies and investors in the nascent cellulosic ethanol industry have expressed concern that the side effects provision might end up hurting their industry, too.

The fuels plan grew out of a 2007 executive order from Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. It is meant to deliver about a tenth of the emissions cuts mandated under Assembly Bill 32, the 2006 law requiring the state to trim releases of climate-warming gases to 1990 levels by 2020. It would be the first policy of its kind in the nation. The plan would take effect next year and phase in gradually. By 2020, the state's fuel supply would deliver automotive energy with 10 percent lower greenhouse-gas emissions than in 2010.

There's no formula for how refiners and fuel blenders would achieve the reduction. The idea is that the fuels delivering the carbon reduction for the lowest cost will win out.

Calif. considers low-carbon fuel standard

By Samantha Young - Associated Press Writer

In the Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, April 21, 2009

SACRAMENTO -- California air regulators are taking another step to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, considering first-in-the nation standards to require the use of so-called low-carbon fuels.

The California Air Resources Board, which will debate the standards Thursday, considers the regulation a framework for a potential national policy advocated by President Barack Obama on the campaign trail last year. Democrats have included a goal for low-carbon fuels in the latest climate bill they have introduced in Congress.

"We see this as a model for the rest of the country and the world to follow," said Air Resources Board member Dan Sperling, a transportation expert and professor at the University of California, Davis.

The proposed regulation calls for reducing the carbon content in California's transportation fuels 10 percent by 2020, but representatives of the petroleum and ethanol industries are objecting to how the state proposes to achieve that.

California oil producers and refiners are skeptical that cleaner fuels and vehicles powered by hydrogen and natural gas will be available in time to meet the new standards. They are asking the Air Resources Board to delay a decision until next year.

"This is the most transforming fuel regulation we've ever done," said Kathy Rehis-Boyd, executive vice president of the Western States Petroleum Association. "We think there's still more homework to do on this. There's a lot of uncertainty."

The low-carbon fuel standard is part of California's drive to reduce its emissions of heat-trapping gasses by roughly a third by 2020. Transportation accounts for 40 percent of the state's emissions.

Two years ago, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger directed air regulators to develop a rule that would help boost the amount of renewable fuels available to California motorists, truck drivers, recreational boaters and in-state train operators.

Ocean-going ships, interstate locomotives, aircraft and military tactical vehicles are exempt from the rule.

The goal is to allow petroleum refiners, fuel blenders and distributors to decide how to gradually reduce the carbon emissions of their fuels beginning in 2011, rather than having the state tell them which fuel to use.

"We have a long history of what I call 'fuel du jour' approaches," Sperling said. "What we need is a broad policy framework that doesn't pick winners."

The Air Resources Board is not just targeting the emissions of the fuel once it is burned in a vehicle. It also wants to account for all carbon emissions related to the production of the fuel.

For example, refineries could choose to stop buying a heavy crude oil extracted from Canadian oil sands, which takes more energy to convert into gasoline. But accounting for emissions during the entire production cycle of a fuel also would discourage certain fuels from being used in California.

Corn-based ethanol, for example, burns cleanly in a car engine. But making it can take a heavy toll on the environment: Massive tracts of land must be cleared, which requires fuel-powered tractors, then coal- or natural gas-fired plants convert the corn into fuel and petroleum is used to transport the end product to distant markets.

The air board also wants to hold ethanol producers accountable for actions taken in other countries.

Board scientists say that U.S. policies subsidizing corn-based ethanol have caused deforestation in the Amazon. According to the environmental group Rainforest Action Network, Brazil has expanded its soybean production to make up for a drop in soybeans from American farmers, who have been planting corn for biofuels instead.

The deforestation to create soybean fields results in a massive release of greenhouse gases, typically when the trees are burned and soil is tilled for crops. The California air board wants to consider those effects - anywhere in the world - if they are related to the production of biofuels in the U.S., even indirectly.

When all that is factored into the air board's economic models, ethanol produced from Midwest corn in a coal-fired plant actually rates as a dirtier fuel than gasoline.

Under that scenario, California's proposed low-carbon fuel standard threatens to shut off one of the ethanol industry's largest markets.

"It's a total shell game. There's no way you can prove that growing corn in Iowa has anything to do with destroying the Amazon forest in Brazil," said Tom Koehler, a policy adviser at Pacific Ethanol. "You cannot connect the dots with a straight face."

Roger Salazar, a Sacramento political consultant representing the ethanol industry, said the industry has become much more efficient in its crop production. U.S. corn yields have doubled, in part to accommodate the ethanol market, over the past 10 years while farm acreage has remained constant, he said.

The board's attempt to estimate emissions from such indirect land use has sparked debate in California and elsewhere.

More than 100 scientists - including those from the National Academy of Engineering, Sandia National Laboratories and a host of universities - petitioned the California Air Resources Board to rethink its position.

They said regulators are acting prematurely because scientists remain divided over how best to calculate carbon emissions tied to biofuels. They also criticized the board for penalizing biofuels by not applying the same standard to oil and natural gas production, although the air board does factor in the emissions tied to drilling, transporting and refining oil and gas.

"That creates a bias in the system that should not be there in something as impactful and important," said Blake Simmons, a chemical engineer at Sandia National Laboratories who signed the letter.

Cellulosic ethanol, which is produced from wood, grasses and plants, and next-generation biofuels, including those made from municipal waste, would fare better under the California standard. Their carbon emissions are projected to be much lower than corn-based ethanol.

Biofuel firms and oil and gas producers differ over whether such alternatives will be ready for a mass market in time to meet California's low-carbon fuel standard. A California startup, Fulcrum BioEnergy Inc., is scheduled to begin construction next year on a plant in Reno, Nev., that makes ethanol from garbage.

State readies stringent fuel standards

By David R. Baker, staff writer

S.F. Chronicle, Wednesday, April 22, 2009

In a move that could spur nationwide action, California regulators are poised to order sweeping changes in the fuel sold within the state, discouraging oil use and boosting alternatives such as ethanol, biodiesel and natural gas as a way to fight global warming.

The California Air Resources Board is expected to approve on Thursday a far-reaching rule called the Low Carbon Fuel Standard, the biggest step yet in the state's campaign to slash greenhouse gas emissions.

Starting in 2011, the standard would steadily lower the allowable "carbon intensity" of fuels, the amount of greenhouse gases released for every unit of energy produced. By 2020, fuel refiners and distributors within the state would have to cut the carbon intensity of their fuels by 10 percent.

Although crafted for California, the standard is being studied by officials from other states, the federal government and even the European Union.

"We really think this is the future of fuels policy, globally, and California is at the forefront of establishing the rules and the structure," said Anthony Eggert, science policy adviser for the air board.

But the proposal has touched off a fierce lobbying battle among environmentalists, ethanol producers, scientists, economists and oil companies.

Ethanol producers who make their fuel from corn say the standard unfairly blames them for deforestation in the developing world. Scientists have issued dueling studies panning or praising the standard's methodology.

The Canadian government, meanwhile, fears it could hurt sales of oil squeezed from the country's vast tar sands, while oil companies want a delay, saying the plan still lacks many key details.

"You're taking an entire transportation system and turning it into something very different," said Catherine Reheis-Boyd, chief operating officer of the Western States Petroleum Association lobbying group. "That is not something you want to get wrong."

Environmentalists want it approved immediately.

"Every day we delay is a day we fall behind in fighting global warming," said Roland Hwang, vehicles policy director for the Natural Resources Defense Council. "What we really need now is some certainty about how we're going to proceed, or we're going to be in this debate forever."

Then there's the question of cost. The air board says the standard will save Californians money - up to \$11 billion by 2020 - by diversifying the state's fuel supply. Critics call that estimate wildly optimistic and say it could cost Californians \$3.7 billion a year.

This wouldn't be the first time that the air board, which sets regulations governing air pollution, has made dramatic changes in California's fuel.

In 1996, the board ordered California oil refineries to adopt a new, cleaner-burning gasoline formula. The switch helped clear the state's air - but it also raised gas prices because the special fuel blend costs more to make than regular gas and only a few refineries produce it.

That won't happen this time, Eggert said, because the standard should protect against future price spikes by increasing the use of multiple alternative fuels.

"We expect a diversification of fuel options in the state," he said. "Currently, we're dependent almost wholly on petroleum."

Diversification should provide a big boost to ethanol. But the ethanol industry has been the low-carbon fuel standard's most vocal critic, saying the air board's system for ranking which fuels are more carbon-intensive than others is not fair.

The board's staff studied the amount of greenhouse gases released during the production and use of each fuel. But with biofuels, the staff also examined changes in land use triggered by biofuel production.

Many environmentalists say developing countries are turning forests into farmland to feed the growing biofuels market. They also blame biofuels for pushing up food prices worldwide.

Add in the land-use changes and some kinds of ethanol score worse than gasoline in the air board's rankings - in particular, corn-based ethanol made in the Midwest.

Using corn as the raw material requires large amounts of land that must be tilled, tended and harvested - all of which involve burning diesel in farm machinery. The finished fuel must be shipped to California, consuming more diesel, and as the demand for corn grows, farmers in other countries might start planting more acres.

Corn ethanol producers want the land-use element stripped out of the new rule. The science of calculating greenhouse gas emissions from potential land-use changes overseas is too new and untested, they say, and it is not fair for the board to hold corn ethanol companies, but not oil companies, accountable for problems abroad.

"Why should American ethanol makers be made responsible for Brazil's policies on deforestation?" said retired Gen. Wesley Clark, who is co-chairman of Growth Energy, an ethanol lobbying group.

Environmentalists remain equally adamant that land-use effects be included and air board staff members say ethanol companies won't be hurt as badly as they claim. Under the air board's rankings, most ethanol made in California scores better than gasoline.

At the same time, they acknowledge that the standard remains something of a work in progress, even as it faces a vote Thursday. The board does not yet have precise carbon intensity rankings for biodiesel, for example.

"We have the information, but it's going to take us several months to complete it," said Michael Scheible, the board's deputy executive officer. "By the end of the year, when the regulation actually takes effect, all the numbers will be in."

Bob Walsh, chief executive officer of Aurora Biofuels, would prefer to see the final numbers before the standard is approved. His Alameda company is developing fuel from algae, a process that doesn't require large amounts of land. But the air board hasn't ranked algae fuel's carbon intensity yet.

"I fully believe you've got to include indirect land use," Walsh said. "Definitely implement it, but let's take a little more time to get the science right."

Indirect effects

The proposed Low Carbon Fuel Standard rates different fuels based on their carbon intensity, measured as the number of grams of carbon dioxide released for every megajoule of energy produced. When the indirect land-use effects of biofuels are included, some types of ethanol rate worse than gasoline.

Fuel type	Carbon intensity	Carbon intensity (including land-use changes)
California gasoline{+1}	95.85	95.85
Midwest ethanol{+2}	75.10	105.10
California ethanol{+3}	50.70	80.70
Brazilian ethanol{+4}	27.40	73.40
Landfill gas (bio-methane){+5}	11.26	11.26

{+1} with 10% ethanol

{+2} with some of the plant's power coming from coal

{+3} with the plant's power coming from natural gas

{+4} made from sugarcane and shipped here

{+5} derived from landfills in California

Source: California Air Resources Board

A \$100-million bet on making fuel from trash

As the state moves to reduce the carbon footprint of fuel, an engineer hopes to build a plant in Lancaster that will convert garbage into an alcohol-based mixture.

By Margot Roosevelt, staff writer

L.A. Times, Wed., April 22, 2009

Arnold Klann has a green dream.

It began 16 years ago in a sprawling laboratory in Anaheim. This year, he hopes, it will culminate at a Lancaster garbage dump.

There, in the high desert of the Antelope Valley, Klann's company, BlueFire Ethanol Fuels, plans to build a \$100-million plant to convert raw trash into an alcohol-based fuel that will help power the cars and trucks of the future.

It's just the sort of improbable concoction that California is now demanding. On Thursday, the state is expected to adopt the world's first regulation to reduce the carbon footprint of fuel. And, just as California created the first market for catalytic converters decades ago, this rule, a likely model for national and even global calculations, could jump-start a huge demand for new technologies.

Fuel is a critical front in the battle against global warming. Nearly a quarter of the man-made greenhouse gases that the United States spews into the atmosphere comes from transportation. And although cars

have reduced unhealthy pollutants such as nitrogen oxides by 99% in recent decades, the gasoline they burn emits as much carbon dioxide as it did a century ago.

California's proposal "is the first time anyone has attempted, for environmental purposes, to change the content of what goes into cars and trucks," says Mary D. Nichols, state Air Resources Board chairwoman. "It would revolutionize transportation fuel."

President Obama has also called for a low-carbon standard for the nation's \$400-billion transportation fuel market. A version similar to California's is incorporated in climate legislation pending before Congress.

Under California's proposal, producers, refineries and importers would be forced to reduce the "carbon intensity" of their fuel by 10% by 2020, and by increasing percentages after that. Currently, California gasoline contains 10% corn-based ethanol, most of it from coal-powered Midwestern plants. Its carbon footprint is as high as gasoline's.

But by measuring the "cradle-to-grave" effect of various fuels, the new rule would favor ethanol such as Klann's, made from non-food sources. Even "low-carbon" corn ethanol -- such as the kind produced in California using gas-fired electricity and efficient machinery -- has a far higher carbon footprint than so-called cellulosic fuel from landfill waste, trees, switchgrass or sugar cane.

This is fantastic for us," said Klann, who uses recycled sulfuric acid to transform paper, construction debris and grass clippings into ethanol. "The paradigm is changing from oil to sustainable fuels. The ones with the lowest carbon footprint will be the winners."

By 2020, the air board estimates, new-technology fuels along with electricity to power hybrid and electric cars would replace a quarter of the gasoline supply. And that is a critical element of the state's sweeping plan to reduce its global warming emissions.

Across the nation, a rush is on to produce green fuels. Since 2007, the federal Department of Energy has invested more than \$1 billion in advanced fuels research and development. Last year, venture capitalists pumped \$680 million into biofuels, including \$100 million into San Diego-based Sapphire Energy, which would use algae, sunlight, carbon dioxide and non-potable water to make high-octane gasoline.

As yet, no commercial-sized plants exist in the U.S. to make such futuristic substitutes. It was easier to use corn, which was plentiful, cheap and easy to ferment into ethanol. But the new standard is bad news for the powerful farm lobby and its corn-ethanol industry. In recent months, many plants across the country, including all five of California's, shut down as the price of ethanol fell along with gasoline.

Battered corn ethanol investors have mounted an intense lobbying effort against California's proposal. Several, including Pacific Ethanol, California's biggest, had planned to diversify from corn into cellulosic ethanol. They argue that by diminishing the value of their existing plants, the new rule also would cripple their advanced biofuel efforts.

"We will throw the non-food-based advanced fuels out with the corn-ethanol bathwater if we are not careful," said Vinod Khosla, a founder of Sun Microsystems, who invested in a now-closed corn ethanol plant in Goshen, Calif. Khosla has also invested in Gevo, a Denver-based start-up that uses agricultural residues and switchgrass, a crop easily grown on marginal land, to make isobutanol, a higher-energy version of ethanol.

At issue is the Air Resources Board's complex modeling, which would calculate each fuel's carbon footprint not only by its "direct" emissions from drilling or planting to refining to burning, but also "indirect" emissions caused by clearing forests or fields to compensate for food crops such as corn or soy that are diverted to fuel. Opponents say the science behind the indirect modeling is inaccurate.

Nichols calls the complaints "just noise," adding, "It's very clear: The best fuels will win out." Likewise, the food-based biofuels industry is battling a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposal to count indirect land-use effects in defining fuels under a 2007 federal mandate to produce 36 billion gallons of ethanol by 2022.

But among entrepreneurs like Klann, the mood has never been more hopeful. In an Anaheim lab, the 57-year-old electrical engineer guides a visitor through a maze of pipes, filters, heat exchangers, fermentation tanks and vats of acid like a small boy showing off a chemistry set. "We're in the forefront of

this industry," he said of his patented "concentrated acid hydrolysis" process. "We expect to have the first plant to produce cellulosic ethanol on a commercial scale."

Financing for his Lancaster plant, which recently obtained its final permits, has been delayed by the credit crunch. But if it comes through, the facility will process 170 tons of garbage a day to produce 3.7 million gallons of ethanol a year. Estimated cost per gallon: about \$2, Klann says.

He already has plans for 20 more facilities across the country. Next on the block: a plant outside Palm Springs, partly funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, that would produce 19 million gallons annually.

Across California, scores of advanced fuel companies are feverish with activity. Down the road from Klann's Irvine-based company, Prometheus Energy is capturing methane gas from rotting garbage in the Frank R. Bowerman Landfill, converting it to liquid natural gas and selling it to fleets of Orange County trucks.

In Thousand Oaks, Ceres, a plant genetics company, has begun to market specialized switchgrass and high-biomass sorghum seeds designed for "energy crops." In Emeryville, Amyris Biotechnologies attracted \$90 million in venture capital last year to convert sugar cane to renewable diesel for vehicles and fuel for military jets.

Meanwhile, oil companies are beginning to acknowledge that, thanks in part to government intervention, biofuels are likely to cut into -- or at least complement -- their core petroleum-based business. Shell Oil bought a 50% interest in Iogen Corp., a Canadian company, and invested in Codexis, a Redwood City company, to make cellulose ethanol from wheat straw.

"California's low-carbon fuel standard is going to set the standard for the U.S. and, I expect, the standard globally," said Graeme S.S. Sweeney, a Shell executive vice president. "There will be a series of commercial-sized plants in the next five years. There will be different technologies. It will be good to see competition."

Obama advisers express support for Dem energy bill

By Dina Cappiello and H. Josef Hebert, Associated Press Writers

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Wednesday, April 2, 2009

WASHINGTON—Top environmental advisers to President Barack Obama expressed general support Wednesday for a House Democratic bill to tackle climate change as the measure's chief sponsor rejected claims that limiting greenhouse gases will be a drag on the economy.

"They argue that there is a fundamental conflict between economic growth and clean energy. That is a false choice," said Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., as he opened a hearing on his legislation that would cap greenhouse gases and reduce the nation's reliance on fossil fuels.

Waxman said dealing with global warming and the nation's economic future are "inextricably intertwined" and that addressing climate change will produce new green jobs and foster economic growth.

Top administration officials broadly endorsed Waxman's legislation, although they cautioned that the White House will work with House Democrats to fine tune the bill in the coming weeks. Republicans have sharply criticized the climate measure, calling it a massive energy tax because it will put a price on carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels.

But EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said the bill would "create good American jobs that cannot be shipped overseas" and, like Waxman, rejected any conflict between dealing with climate change and economic growth.

"The 'no we can't' crowd will spin out doomsday scenarios about runaway costs," said Jackson. But she said a preliminary EPA analysis of the House bill, including its "cap-and-trade" program to wind down greenhouse gas emissions, "would be modest compared to the benefits that science and plain common sense tell us a comprehensive energy and climate policy will deliver."

Jackson was joined at the House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing by Energy Secretary Steven Chu and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, a Republican member of the Obama Cabinet and former congressman who may help sway some GOP votes toward supporting the Waxman legislation. All three

said the House bill would reduce dependence on foreign oil, spur green jobs and reduce catastrophic global warming.

But House Republicans have been sharply critical of the bill saying it will cause energy prices to soar.

"It is interesting that so many people are determined to raise energy prices in this country," said Rep. Joe Barton of Texas, the committee's top Republican. Barton has been a critic of the cap-and-trade provisions of the bill.

The draft bill calls for a reduction of greenhouse gases by 20 percent from 2005 levels by 2020, and 83 percent by mid-century. It also includes measures aimed at reducing the use of fossil energy such as requiring utilities to produce a quarter of their electricity from renewable sources, and calling for tougher standards to promote conservation.

Waxman said he is determined to pass a bill through his committee by the end of May. Pelosi has said she wants climate legislation passed before the August congressional recess. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said he would like to take up a global warming bill in the fall, preferring to wait for House action.

Supporters of the House bill said increased pressure is on Congress to act since the Environmental Protection Agency last Friday declared that greenhouse emissions endanger public health and safety—the first step in regulating climate-changing pollution under the federal Clean Air Act.

"We're going to have to regulate it under the Clean Air Act unless this committee does something," said Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich. And he said he believes that would require more than 100 separate regulations covering various parts of the economy.

"I believe new legislation is the best way," said Jackson. She said the endangerment finding was compelled by an order from the Supreme Court. "If your point, sir, is it's more efficient to do it (through legislation) ... then I couldn't agree more," Jackson told Dingell.

Wednesday's hearing was the second of four days of hearings scheduled this week by the House committee. Business, environmental and academic groups are scheduled to testify as will former Vice President Al Gore on Friday.

EPA proposes mercury cutbacks at cement plants

By John Flesher, AP Environmental Writer

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Wednesday, April 22, 2009

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich.—The Obama administration proposed sharp reductions Tuesday in airborne pollution from America's 99 cement plants, including first-ever limits on mercury from older kilns.

The rules also would lead to steep cuts in emissions of other toxins, including hydrochloric acid, hydrocarbons, soot and sulfur dioxide, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

EPA proposed the regulations under court order after environmental groups and nine states sued, accusing the agency of shirking its duty under the Clean Air Act to regulate the cement industry's emissions.

"Mercury and other chemicals flowing into these communities are health hazards for children, pregnant mothers, local residents and workers—people who deserve protection," EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said.

Cement plants are America's fourth-largest source of airborne mercury, generating about 23,000 pounds (10,400 kilograms) a year, EPA says.

The rules would cover 163 kilns in 35 states. A couple dozen others, which burn hazardous waste, would be regulated separately.

Mercury is generated from raw materials such as limestone and some fuels used to heat the kilns that bake cement, a key ingredient in concrete.

For Americans, the primary exposure to mercury comes from eating contaminated fish. Airborne mercury can change into a highly toxic form after falling into waterways. The toxic metal can damage human brains and nervous systems, and is particularly dangerous for young children.

Many states warn women of childbearing age to limit fish consumption because of mercury dangers.

EPA estimated the rules would slash mercury emissions from the kilns by 81 percent to 93 percent. The agency also predicted drop-offs of greater than 90 percent in hydrochloric acid, which would be regulated for the first time, and soot.

Hydrocarbon emissions would fall by about three-quarters, the agency said. Although not covered by the rules, sulfur dioxide also could drop up to 90 percent because it would be filtered out by the same technology that controls hydrochloric acid.

The regulation also seeks stepped-up monitoring for mercury and a more accurate means of demonstrating compliance with soot limits.

The proposed rule will be published shortly and will become final a year from then unless revised. EPA will have a 60-day public comment period and a hearing if requested. Once the regulations are final, the industry would have three years to comply by taking steps such as installing pollution control devices or changing ingredients or fuels.

The Portland Cement Association, an industry group, said it would review the proposal.

The association "continues to support regulatory approaches that allow the industry to produce the cement necessary for constructing and rebuilding the nation's infrastructure in an environmentally responsible manner," said Andy O'Hare, vice president of regulatory affairs.

Earthjustice, an environmental law firm in Washington, D.C., filed lawsuits over more than a decade on behalf of local activist groups to get EPA to regulate mercury from cement kilns.

The agency issued standards for mercury and hydrocarbons in 2006. But they applied only to kilns built after Dec. 2, 2005, so most kilns then operating were exempt.

Earthjustice went to court again in 2007, this time joined by nine states: Michigan, New York, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Jim Pew, attorney for Earthjustice, praised the Obama administration for changing course.

"This is great news and is a promising sign that the new leadership at EPA and in the White House is serious about protecting public health and the environment," Pew said. "We wanted to get the maximum reduction that could be had. This might not be the maximum, but it's a big step toward it."

EPA restores stricter reporting of toxic pollution

By Dina Cappiello, Associated Press Writer

In the Washington Post, Contra Costa Times, and other papers, Wednesday, April 22, 2009

WASHINGTON—The federal government will once again require companies to fully disclose the toxic chemicals they release into the air, onto land and into water.

The Environmental Protection Agency announced Tuesday that it was reversing a decision by the Bush administration in 2006 that reduced reporting of toxic pollution for more than 3,500 facilities nationwide.

The Bush rules allowed facilities storing or releasing smaller amounts of toxic chemicals to submit less-detailed information to the government.

More than a dozen states had sued the agency over the change saying it reduced the information available to the public about chemical hazards in communities.

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said Tuesday that the annual database—known as the Toxics Release Inventory—was a crucial tool for safeguarding public health and the environment.

For more than two decades, the inventory has collected information on the release of hundreds of hazardous chemicals from thousands of facilities nationwide.

"People have a right to the information that might affect their health and the health of their children—and EPA has a responsibility to provide it," Jackson said in a statement.

In December 2006, to reduce the burden on industry, the Bush administration allowed companies using less than 5,000 pounds of toxic chemicals, or releasing less than 2,000 pounds, to submit shorter, less-detailed reports.

Previously, more detailed information had to be provided in longer forms if there was as little as 500 pounds, a threshold that the Bush rule maintained only for some of the most dangerous chemicals.

Congressional auditors said the change would have cut by a quarter the number of emissions reports the government receives each year.

The EPA was required to reverse the rule by a spending bill signed into law in March. It will apply to reports due July 1 covering emissions during 2008.

EPA wants crackdown on cement plants' mercury

Jane Kay, Chronicle Environment Writer
S.F. Chronicle, Wednesday, April 22, 2009

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposed a rule Tuesday that will require cement plants in the United States - including plants in Cupertino and Santa Cruz County - to reduce stack emissions of mercury, dust and other pollutants.

For a decade, environmental groups have been urging the EPA to set standards for the potent neurotoxin that comes out of the stacks and falls into oceans and rivers, eventually contaminating fish and raising mercury levels in the humans who eat the seafood.

Mercury can harm the nervous system, affecting normal growth, cognition and behavior. It's particularly dangerous to children.

The new standards, which apply to 99 cement plants in 35 states, are expected to reduce pollutants by 90 percent, said representatives of environmental groups who held a press conference to praise the federal action.

"The Obama EPA is waking up to community voices," said Marti Sinclair, chairwoman of the Sierra Club's national air toxics committee.

The plants in Cupertino and Davenport, near Moss Landing in Santa Cruz County, are among the largest in the nation. Their mercury emissions equal those of coal-fired power plants, and give the Bay Area and Monterey Bay Area the highest mercury levels in the state, officials say. The mercury comes, in part, from limestone feedstock, an ingredient used in making cement, and petroleum coke fuel, used in plant furnaces.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District regulate the plants, and haven't complained about unsafe emissions levels at either one.

Under required reporting laws, the Lehigh Southwest Cement Plant, formerly Hanson Permanente Cement in Cupertino, declared discharging 500 pounds of mercury in 2006. The plant is located south of Los Altos and Los Altos Hills.

Last month, the EPA put Cupertino's Stevens Creek Elementary School on a list of 62 schools nationwide that need nearby air-quality testing because it is located within 2 miles of the cement plant, officials said.

Cemex's RMC Pacific Materials plant in Davenport, reported 175 pounds of mercury compounds in 2006. The plant has been operating for 100 years.

Only one-seventieth of a teaspoon of mercury dumped into a 20-acre lake can make fish unsafe to eat, according to California health officials.

The Portland Cement Association, a trade group for the 99 plants with 163 active kilns, issued a statement Tuesday saying it is reviewing the proposed rule and would make comments.

For the past year, it has "worked with the EPA to collect data for this anticipated proposal and continues to support regulatory approaches that allow the industry to produce the cement necessary for constructing and rebuilding the nation's infrastructure in an environmentally responsible manner."

[Stockton Record, Letter to the Editor, Wednesday, April 22, 2009](#)

Cap and trade is an additional economic disaster

Another economic disaster in the making is in President Barack Obama's desire for a cap and trade market. This is the buying and selling of the right to put carbon emissions into the atmosphere by businesses. Obama is wise to wait until 2012 to have this policy start, so he can win the next election before the consequences hit.

This is essentially an energy tax on business and consumers to the tune of \$645 billion over eight years.

Taxing energy will cause fuel to rise and everything else, because the cost of fuel affects the cost of transporting all goods and services.

International companies in the U.S. will move their capital and jobs to nations such as China and India, where they won't tax carbon emissions. We won't be reducing carbon emissions but just moving it overseas while costing us jobs.

Finally, the U.S. will slap on tariffs on imported foreign goods, because they don't have the tax. Then foreign nations will retaliate by doing the same thing.

This is another economic disaster in the making.

Scott Hurban, Tracy

[Washington Post Commentary Wednesday, April 22, 2009](#)

Wine

If It's Eco-Friendly, It Just Tastes Better

By Dave McIntyre

Washington Post Climate change has the global wine industry terrified. The rise in average temperatures threatens to make it difficult, if not impossible, to produce balanced wines in regions that have defined quality for centuries. That delights British winemakers, who dream of supplanting Bordeaux or champagne.

And Virginia winemakers wouldn't mind a few more vintages like the 2007. But it does not bode well for hotter climes, such as Napa Valley.

So wineries are trying to save the planet. A group called the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance announced last week that 359 energy-saving projects at the state's wineries had eliminated more than 30,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions over the past four years, the equivalent of removing more than 4,200 cars from rush-hour traffic. We can all applaud that. But "sustainable winegrowing" means more than saving electricity; it means protecting the land, and here's where an "Earth-friendly" winery can influence us as consumers: by making better wine.

Are wines better if they are produced in an Earth-friendly manner? I think so, but I cannot prove it. I believe wines taste more vibrant when they are grown without pesticides and herbicides; they express a sense of place, an individuality that cannot be conveyed by a simple label of "cabernet" or "merlot." I'll admit I want to believe that, but it makes sense. Earth-friendly farming should produce a better crop, whether it's local lettuce or Carneros chardonnay.

There are three shades of green winegrowing: sustainable, organic and biodynamic, or what I like to call S/O/B wines. Unfortunately, there is no clear definition for any category, so there's a "buyer beware" aspect to this discussion.

Sustainable, simply put, means the grapes were grown with few or no chemical fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides, so the soil is nurtured and not depleted of nutrients. Sustainable viticulture differs from organic mainly in its lack of a formal definition or certification and oversight by an outside body. Sustainable

growers maintain the freedom to use non-organic chemicals in dire situations when their crop is in jeopardy.

Organic is the most problematic category because of confusing legal definitions. When the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued regulations a few years ago defining "organic" agriculture, it characterized organic wine as that grown in organically certified vineyards and made without added sulfites. Sulfites keep wine from spoiling, and the wine industry typically refuses to sell you a product that is likely to go bad before you have a chance to enjoy it. So you are more likely to see a U.S. wine labeled "made from organically grown grapes" than one labeled simply "organic." Or there will be no mention of the "O" word at all on the label. European agencies such as Ecocert will certify a wine as organic even if sulfites were added. And many Mediterranean wineries have been farming organically for generations because they don't need chemicals, and don't trumpet that on labels.

Biodynamic winemaking goes way beyond organics: It views the vineyard as a holistic ecosystem and prescribes vineyard practices according to phases of the moon. I'll discuss biodynamic winemaking in greater detail next week.

S/O/B wines are getting noticed in stores such as Whole Foods Market and My Organic Market, and on wine lists at eco-restaurants such as Founding Farmers. Some distributors are specializing in Earth-friendly wines.

D.C.-based Calypso Organic Selections even distinguishes some of its wines as vegan or vegetarian. A vegan wine uses no animal products (such as egg whites or gelatin) to fine, or clarify the wine before bottling, while a vegetarian wine might use egg whites for fining. Of course, such ingredients don't end up in the final product, so the distinction might seem odd. On the other hand, being "unfined" has long been considered a plus, as it supposedly means more flavor is retained.

It might feel good to buy an Earth-friendly selection, but what ultimately matters is how the wine tastes. Try one with an open mind, and be prepared to have your conceptions of how the wine should taste challenged: That's terroir, a sense of place, the flavor of a healthy vineyard.

[Fresno Bee Smog Blog, Wed., April 22, 2009:](#)

Green yard machine time again

By Mark Grossi

It's Clean Green Yard Machines time again. You can trade your old gasoline lawnmower for a voucher to reduce the cost of a new, cordless electric lawnmower.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District program is scheduled to continue through May 31 or until supplies run out. Usually, these vouchers go very quickly, so make your move today.

The vouchers trim up to 60% off the cost. There are two types of mower, a smaller one costing \$399 and a larger one for \$499. The smaller, 14-inch can be purchased for \$150, and the larger, 19-inch for \$250.

For more information, visit the district's website or call the nearest district office: in Modesto (209-557-6400); in Fresno, (559-230-6000); or in Bakersfield, (661-392-5500).

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Wednesday, April 22, 2009:](#)

What color is your car?

Thank heavens the "powers that be" backed off and didn't go through with provisions of a bill that would have resulted in more control, overregulation and macro-managing of our lives.

AB 32, passed in 2006, originally had the potential to regulate the color of cars and reflectivity of paint, to "reduce energy requirements to cool them." In other words, ban black cars and trucks by the year 2012.

The idea was put forth by the California Air Resources Board and its "cool car" standards. The thinking was that if we are forced to drive lighter colored cars, we won't use our air conditioners as much. They didn't consider that drivers in black cars, or any other color, may actually have the brains to roll their windows down to cool the car's interior before turning on the air conditioner.

What about banning the millions of miles of black asphalt that every car drives on, regardless of car color? What about black tires? How about black leather jackets? Or black baseball hats and all black clothing?

Maybe we should ban white cars that reflect heat back into the atmosphere; red cars because it is an angry color and will cause more road rage; blue because it makes us sad and will cause more depression; gray because it makes us blue; and yellow to represent the strip down anyone's back who sits around and mutely allows bills to be passed that further erode our freedoms.

NANCY A. SEWELL, Bakersfield

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses EPA recognizes three Native American tribes—Ramona, Pala and Chumash for making changes to help reduce pollution. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

De tres naciones indias, entre los ocho héroes ambientales que reconoce EPA

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Wednesday, April 22, 2009

La Agencia federal de Protección Ambiental (EPA) reconoció a ocho organizaciones como heroínas en el sur de California, y tres de esas agrupaciones son naciones indias nativas. La EPA reconoció a las tribus Ramona, Pala y Chumash. El asentamiento de la nación Ramona es la primera comunidad de California que vive totalmente con energía alternativa. La nación Pala se convirtió en consultora en manejo de residuos sólidos y peligrosos, Chumash, por su parte, acondicionó y opera su casino, la principal fuente de ingresos, con energía limpia. Es la primera vez que tres grupos nativos americanos son premiados conjuntamente en la región.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses according to Schwarzenegger the automotive industry needs legislation and rules for domestic production.](#)

Automotrices necesitan legislación y reglas para la producción doméstica:

Schwarzenegger

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Wednesday, April 22, 2009

El gobernador de California, Arnold Schwarzenegger dijo que la industria automotriz ya fabrica los modelos de vehículos anticontaminantes que necesita Estados Unidos, pero los produce para los países europeos.

"Detroit está construyendo carros muy eficientes para Europa. ¿Y por qué es eso? Porque en Estados Unidos no tenemos una ley que les demande construir vehículos eléctricos y carros de hidrógeno y autos híbridos", dijo el gobernador.

Schwarzenegger opinó en entrevista en cadena estatal que el país necesita imponer leyes que establezcan cantidades de vehículos de energía limpia y metas contra la contaminación.

Dijo también que las reglas deben ser claras: "Es importante que reduzcan las cantidades de gases que producen el efecto invernadero una buena vez".

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Happy Birthday Mother Earth. Residents can make small changes daily to help take care of our environment.](#)

Feliz cumpleaños, Madre Tierra

Los residentes pueden hacer pequeñas acciones a diario para cuidar nuestro medio ambiente

Eileen Truax

La Opinión, Wednesday, April 22, 2009

Es la madre de todos, y como tal, hay que celebrarla. Aunque hoy es oficialmente el Día de la Tierra, las organizaciones involucradas en el cuidado del medio ambiente trabajan todos los días para hacer del

planeta un lugar mejor. No sólo de manera retórica: en las acciones diarias, que nos competen a cada uno de nosotros.

Por ejemplo: ¿usted cierra la llave del agua mientras se lava los dientes? ¿Evita usar la manguera para barrer o lavar el auto? ¿Lleva sus propias bolsas al supermercado? Estas son las pequeñas acciones que pueden ayudar a hacer la diferencia en la conservación del planeta.

"Esta semana vamos a realizar muchas actividades educativas para difundir información; eventos en la comunidad, con voluntarios, con activistas, dando consejos a la gente sobre qué hacer", comentó Ron Silverman, director del Sierra Club en Los Ángeles. "Para nosotros este año hay tres asuntos de vital importancia: la conservación del agua, el uso de energía solar y energías alternativas, y el calentamiento global".

¿Que cómo ayudar? "La fórmula es sencilla y mucha gente ya la conoce: reducir, reciclar y reutilizar", señala Silverman. "Todos podemos cerrar la llave del agua, reciclar en lugar de tirar a la basura, reutilizar la ropa. Hay acciones que no parecen de mal gusto, como guardar la ropa de los niños grandes para que la usen sus hermanos, o regalar algo que nos hayan regalado y que no nos guste. Nos ayudan a ahorrar y con eso ayudamos al medio ambiente".

Frank Tamborello, director de Hunger Action Los Angeles, asegura que una manera eficiente de ayudar al planeta es hablar con los concejos locales para que los funcionarios implementen más programas de conservación, como los de creación de composta o la prohibición de bolsas plásticas.

"Usar la bicicleta en vez del auto, el transporte público una vez a la semana, llevar tus propias bolsas al supermercado, pueden parecer cosas complicadas al principio, pero con el tiempo se vuelven una segunda naturaleza".

Hoy la ciudad de Los Ángeles distribuirá gratuitamente bolsas reutilizables en centros comerciales como Vallarta de Van Nuys, Super A Food de la calle Soto o Ralphs de Crenshaw y Western . Diversos festivales y actividades públicas también se celebrarán durante el fin de semana en escuelas, universidades y parques públicos del condado.

"Pero en este día la mejor recomendación es salir, ver lo que nos rodea y tomar un momento para valorarlo", dijo Silverman.

- Cierre el grifo del agua mientras se enjabona o se lava los dientes
- Separe los productos reciclables de la basura como latas, envases de plástico y botellas de vidrio.
- Pregunte a su gobierno local sobre los programas de reciclaje de basura.
- Revise el nivel de aire en las llantas de su auto. No lleve en la cajuela o en el asiento trasero objetos que no sean necesarios; mientras más ligero es un auto, más eficiente.
- Investigue las rutas de transporte público por su casas; algunas se han renovado y podrían resultar convenientes.
- Utilice focos ahorradores de energía. Investigue sobre las facilidades que ofrece el condado de Los Ángeles para instalar celdas de energía solar para consumo doméstico.

¿Cómo ayudar?

Cierre el grifo del agua mientras se enjabona o se lava los dientes.

Separe los productos reciclables de la basura tales como latas, envases de plástico y botellas de vidrio.

Pregunte a su gobierno local sobre los programas de reciclaje de basura.

Revise el nivel de aire en las llantas de su auto. No lleve en la cajuela o en el asiento trasero objetos que no sean necesarios; mientras más ligero es un auto, más eficiente.

Investigue las rutas de transporte público por su casa. Algunas se han renovado y podrían resultar convenientes.

Utilice focos ahorradores de energía. Investigue sobre las facilidades que ofrece el condado de Los Angeles para instalar celdas de energía solar para consumo doméstico.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Earth Day 2009. As part of a governmental move to help out the environment, EPA has a most wanted list of delinquents that have caused severe pollution to the environment.](#)

Día del Planeta Tierra 2009

Miguel Rosario
Terra, April 22, 2009

Cada 22 de abril, tanto en la sede de la ONU como en diferentes ciudades del planeta se celebra el Día Mundial de la Tierra, una iniciativa del senador ecologista estadounidense Gaylord Nelson instaurada en 1970 y en la que se calcula participan unos mil millones de personas.

Como parte de una medida gubernamental para castigar a aquellas personas que participen en actividades delictivas que pueden afectar al medio ambiente, la Agencia para la Protección Ambiental en Estados Unidos (EPA) publicó una lista de los criminales ambientales más buscados por las autoridades del país.

Estos individuos han cometido infracciones a las leyes de protección ambiental de Estados Unidos y son buscados para ser procesados y castigados.

Entre las infracciones más comunes se encuentran el trasiego ilegal de sustancias y químicos capaces de dañar la capa de ozono y que su uso no es legal en el país.

Muchos de estos criminales han transportado estos químicos a través de las fronteras del país a cambio de fuertes sumas de dinero, convirtiendo esta peligrosa modalidad en un grave problema de la EPA.

Si tienes alguna información que pueda ayudar en el arresto de alguno de estos sospechosos, la EPA recomienda que te comuniques con la policía lo antes posible.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Japan creates the first solar energy cell phone. This type of phone will reduce the carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere.](#)

Crean primer celular japonés por energía solar

Frontera Info, Wednesday, April 22, 2009

TOKIO, Japón(Agencias) El fabricante japonés de electrónica Sharp ha creado el primer teléfono móvil nipón que permite cargar su batería con energía solar, un dispositivo que será comercializado en Japón a partir de junio por el operador de telefonía KDDI.

El nuevo teléfono móvil cuenta con un panel solar que le permite cargar hasta el 80% de su batería, lo que supone una reducción de las emisiones de dióxido de carbono a la atmósfera, informó hoy la agencia local de noticias Kyodo.

Por cada diez minutos que el móvil sea expuesto a la luz solar, el usuario podrá mantener una conversación telefónica de un minuto y mantenerlo encendido durante dos horas en modo ahorro.

Además, este nuevo teléfono es más resistente al agua que otros modelos, según el fabricante.

En cuanto al costo del producto, todavía no está establecido, ya que deberá ser fijado por el operador KDDI, tercera mayor empresa de telefonía móvil de Japón.

Este móvil equipado con un panel solar para recargar su batería sale al mercado después de que el pasado mes de febrero la compañía surcoreana Samsung presentara el primer teléfono con estas cualidades, el "Blue Earth" (Tierra Azul) .

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses President Obama supports and moves forward with his energy plan on Earth Day.](#)

Barack Obama promueve su plan energético en Día de la Tierra

AP
Wednesday, April 22, 2009

En ocasión de celebrarse el Día de la Tierra, el presidente Barack Obama promoverá el miércoles su plan energético (como también la producción de empleos favorables al ambiente) en una pequeña ciudad de Iowa fuertemente afectada por la depresión económica, mientras otros funcionarios de su gobierno lo harán en Washington.

El mensaje de la Casa Blanca tiene lugar en momentos en que Obama ha visto demorarse su plan en el Congreso.

El titular de la Agencia de Protección Ambiental y los secretarios de Energía y Transporte tenían previsto rendir testimonio el miércoles ante una subcomisión de Energía y Comercio de la Cámara de Representantes con temas similares al promovido por Obama, que planeaba visitar la ciudad de Newton en Iowa, fuertemente afectada por la declinación económica.

Asistentes de la Casa Blanca dijeron que el presidente destacará sus planes de crear empleos y proteger el ambiente.

Planeaba visitar la planta de energía eólica de Newton como un modelo para la creación de empleos y energía en una ciudad cuyo mayor empleador dejó de funcionar.

La planta de electrodomésticos Maytag Corp., de Newton, cerró en 2007, lo que costó centenares de empleos en la ciudad, pero un año después, el estado anunció que Trinity Structural Towers construiría una fábrica de 21 millones de dólares en el lugar que ocupaba Maytag y que emplearía a 140 trabajadores a cambio de incentivos comerciales e impositivos.

El plan energético de Obama daría más incentivos a empresas como Trinity, que construye las torres para las turbinas eólicas. Funcionarios de la Casa Blanca dijeron que, además de los beneficios para la economía, las familias también se beneficiarían con menores costos del suministro energético.

Con ese objetivo, el plan de estímulo económico del gobierno incluye 5.000 millones de dólares para programas de climatización para sectores de bajos ingresos y 2.000 millones de dólares para investigación sobre automóviles eléctricos.

Otros 500 millones de dólares son para entrenar a los trabajadores en empleos favorables a la ecología como los de Trinity Structural Towers.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses fire in factory increased air pollution in the region.](#)

Rebasó incendio de maquilas los índices de contaminación

Araly Castañón

El Diario, Tuesday, April 21, 2009

El incendio de la planta MCS que tardó dos días en extinguirse lanzó mil 125 toneladas de contaminantes al medio ambiente, principalmente monóxido de carbono, dio a conocer ayer el director general de Ecología y Protección Civil, Bernardo Escudero Ortega.

Dijo que en esos días los índices de contaminación se rebasaron; el 7 de abril se registraron 114 IMECAS y el 8 de abril, 250 IMECAS.

“Hagan de cuenta que tuvimos un D.F. por un día y medio muy concentrado”, mencionó el funcionario municipal, en relación a las consecuencias ambientales por el incendio.

Explicó que afortunadamente, las mil 125 toneladas de partículas de polvo que se emitieron a la atmósfera durante el tiempo que duró el fuego, se pudieron disipar porque en esos días se registraron vientos de moderados a fuertes, que se llevaron las emisiones rumbo a Nuevo México.

Recordó que el material que se consumió en la planta además de ser altamente inflamable era también sumamente contaminante, por tratarse de resinas, tarimas de madera, poliéster, poliestireno, espuma, pinturas. Además hubo cuatro explosiones de tanques que contenían pintura.

“De manera que eso ayudó mucho a que se extendiera el incendio”, explicó el funcionario ayer en rueda de prensa.

Agregó que los cobros a la empresa por faltas en las medidas de seguridad que debe guardar y por la contaminación que generó el incendio todavía no se aplican, pues están a la espera del dictamen oficial

que extenderá la Subprocuraduría de Justicia del Estado, de acuerdo con los estudios realizados por peritos expertos en la materia.

“Yo no le puedo cobrar a usted, si no me dicen que es culpable”, anotó Escudero Ortega.

Por lo pronto se les requerirán 419 mil pesos por el agua que se empleó para apagar el fuego.

“En este caso lo que se maneja no es una multa propiamente; se trata de reembolsar a la Junta Municipal de Agua y Saneamiento, porque el sistema no está conectado a la red, y tuvimos que utilizar pipas”, explicó.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Earth Day is celebrated with a deteriorating environment; in the past three months high levels of CO have registered on the Imeca scale of which one day it passed 200 points.](#)

Celebran Día de la Tierra con deterioro ambiental

Pedro Sánchez Briones

El Diario, Tuesday, April 21, 2009

Con un deterioro en el medio ambiente, cuya muestra son las 18 excedencias de contaminación registradas en tres meses y medio de este año, Ciudad Juárez celebra hoy el “Día Mundial de la Tierra”.

Mientras que en el 2008 hubo sólo un exceso de monóxido de carbono (CO), en este mes han ocurrido dos, uno de los cuales incluso llegó a más de 200 puntos del índice Metropolitano de la Calidad del Aire (Imeca).

Es decir, se dobló el parámetro que marcan las autoridades de Salud, debido a que el límite son 100 puntos.

El resto de las excedencias han sido de partículas menores a 10 microgramos (PM 10), algunas a causa de los ventarrones que elevan los niveles.

Bernardo Escudero Ortega, director general de Ecología y Protección Civil, señaló que el programa de monitoreo ambiental se ha fortalecido con 11 estaciones más en los últimos dos años, las cuales miden además del monóxido de carbono (CO) y las PM 10, el ozono (O3) y las PM 2.5, éstas últimas muy finas que recientemente comenzaron a ser analizadas.

Sobre el Programa de Verificación Vehicular dijo que no conocer la estadística de cuántos automovilistas han obtenido el engomado ecológico y cuántos el condicionado, que significa que no aprobaron los exámenes en los centros.

El año pasado, Ciudad Juárez registró en total 37 excedencias, de las cuales cuatro fueron de ozono, una de monóxido de carbono y 32 de PM 10.

La contaminación de PM10 se debe principalmente al polvo en el ambiente a causa de las calles sin pavimentar, sobre todo en la zona poniente.

La polución por ozono se genera por la presencia de compuestos químicos como los óxidos de nitrógeno e hidrocarburos, el clima caluroso, la fuerte insolación y la ausencia de vientos, y se concentra principalmente de mayo a octubre.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the diet to help protect our planet. It is recommended that a regimen be put in place to fight climate change.](#)

Dieta para cuidar el planeta

Recomiendan ponerse a régimen alimenticio para combatir el cambio climático

El Universal, Monday, April 20, 2009

Tener un peso saludable no es bueno sólo para las personas, sino para el planeta, según un estudio británico publicado en International Journal of Epidemiology.

Una sociedad delgada, como la del Vietnam, consume 20% menos de alimentos y contamina menos que una en la que cerca de 40% de las personas son obesas (parecida a la de EU en la actualidad), según Phil Edwards e Ian Roberts de la London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Las emisiones relacionadas con el transporte también son menores porque se gasta menos energía en transportar a personas delgadas, y porque los que tienen sobrepeso tienden a andar menos y a depender más del automóvil, afirman.

En favor del medio ambiente

Edwards y Roberts calculan que una población de mil millones de personas delgadas emite mil millones de toneladas menos de dióxido de carbono al año que una población de personas gruesas. Sin embargo, en el mundo prevalece la tendencia a un aumento del Índice de Masa Corporal medio de la población, que entre 1994 y 2004 ha subido en el Reino Unido en los hombres de 26 a 27.3 y entre las mujeres de 25.8 a 26.9, lo que supone unos tres kilos más.

“La humanidad, ya sea australiana, argentina, belga o canadiense se está haciendo progresivamente más gorda”, señalan los autores. “Mantenerse delgado es bueno para la salud y el medioambiente. debemos hacer mucho más para revertir la tendencia global hacia la gordura y reconocer que es un factor clave en la lucha por reducir las emisiones y retrasar el cambio climático”, concluyen los científicos. (EFE)